

Roy Lillian Elizabeth

# Five Little Starrs in the Canadian Forest



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**Five Little Starrs in  
the Canadian Forest**

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**Roy L.**

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# **Lillian Elizabeth Roy**

## **Five Little Starrs in the Canadian Forest**

### **CHAPTER I**

#### **A LUMBER CAMP IN PROSPECT**

"DADDUM, are we 'most there?" asked Dorothy Starr, impatiently, as the uncomfortable local train creaked over its uneven tracks through dense forests in Western Ontario.

"Almost, Dot – have a little more patience and soon you will be able to exercise those active little legs," returned Mr. Starr, as he consulted his watch.

"Guess we'll all be glad to exercise after this awful smoky, crampy ride," grumbled Donald, Dot's twin brother.

"Our winter in the lumber camp will have to be mighty fine to make us forget this outlandish trip ever since we left Grand Forks," declared Meredith Starr, the oldest boy.

"We have one consolation, Mete, and that is, we don't have to travel home in the Spring by the same route," laughed his sister Lavinia.

"Well, children, you all have had some remark to make about the discomforts of this car and the dreadful condition of the tracks, but it is far better than riding in a springless lumber wagon for the same distance," commented Mrs. Starr, shifting the baby's sleepy head from her shoulder to her knees.

"We'd never have come if Daddum knew we had to travel *that* way!" exclaimed Don.

"No, but Daddum had to travel that way, and on horseback, years ago, before this track was laid," replied Mrs. Starr.

"Did you, Daddum? Oh, do tell us about it!" cried the restless children, as they crowded into the seat beside their father.

"It isn't an exciting tale, but it is very appropriate at this time," replied Mr. Starr, smiling at the eager faces. "I was a very young man then. I didn't find out until I returned to New York after that trip what a prize your mother was."

"Oh, how does Mumzie know about the trip, then?" asked Dot.

"Because I have often told her how that trip decided for me my future business life," replied Mr. Starr.

"Dot, please don't interrupt Daddum with silly questions again," said Lavinia to her little sister.

"When I got off the train at Grand Forks, on that trip, I expected to meet an old friend at the station, but he was not there. I stopped at the best hotel in the town, which would have been about sixth-rate anywhere else, and the next morning my friend Dean came in. He had had to ride about forty miles out of his way on account of a flooded river and that was why he was not on time to meet me.

"Well, after he had made a few purchases in town he was ready to start back. I had a good horse waiting for me at the hotel shed, and soon we were on the return trip.

"The further north we went the more beautiful and wilder the scenery became until I thought we would be lost in the dense primeval forests. How Dean managed to find his way I could not make out, but he seemed to know every stump, every mound, and every blaze on the trees along the trail.

"We stopped at noon to rest the horses and have a bite to eat. While we lay under the trees smoking our pipes and waiting for the horses to finish their oats, an old hunter passed by.

"We invited him to join us but he was anxious to meet an Indian trapper some miles further on, so we were compelled to decline Dean's invitation.

"After finishing our pipes, we started on the last half of our journey.

"We hadn't gone more than four miles before we saw in the trail the deep cut of a wagon-track that struck in from a side-trail that led to an eastern lumber-town.

"Huh! Must be pretty heavy pulling for the horses,' said Dean, knowing that it would take a heavy load to make the wheels sink down so far in the soft soil.

"Were they here yesterday, when you came by?' I asked.

"No, and I should say the outfit wasn't very far ahead, either,' replied Dean.

"And so it was. In a short time we caught up with a kind of 'prairie-schooner' wagon, and found that a pioneer with his family had dared the wilderness of the Canadian forest to wrest a living from the earth.

"Dean rode alongside for a time, giving the man some valuable points about the country, and advising him as to the best trails. The man thanked us profusely as we rode on.

"While Dean talked with the man I rode by the side of the wagon and spoke with the wife who was a very sweet woman of about thirty. She held a child about two years old in her lap while a boy of five slept upon a bundle of clothing on the rough wagon-floor.

"Now, this family had come from a town eighty miles east of the trail where we met them, and they were bound for a distant, fertile valley about a hundred miles further to the west where they intended to stop and look about for a permanent home. The woman and children were stiff and sore from the jolts of the springless wagon as it bumped over huge rocks, or suddenly slid into wide ruts made by washouts. But they never complained about aching bones, for they knew the father couldn't help them, and they were trying to keep up his spirits.

"Dean and I continued along the trail until we came to the flooded region that made him miss my coming the day before. The river seemed higher than ever, Dean said, and we had to try the roundabout way again. We traveled along the banks for at least thirty miles, but not a spot could be found where we could ford, or even swim our horses.

"Finally, we pulled rein to discuss the problem, when Dean saw a thin wreath of smoke rising among the trees near at hand. As no forester ever permits the sight of smoke to go uninvestigated for fear of forest fires, he jumped off of his horse and rushed into the woods. After a short time he returned with our friend the hunter and an Indian.

"The men say we can't get over to-day – we'll have to wait about until the water recedes somewhat,' Dean explained.

"Can't we cross where you did last night?' I asked.

"Not to-day – the water has risen much higher since then and it would be taking too much of a chance to risk it. We'll stay here until it is safe,' said Dean, as he led his horse into the woods toward the Indian's temporary camp.

"I followed the three men and wondered how the Indian ever got the name of Mike. Later I heard that his own name was so hard to pronounce that everyone who knew him abbreviated it to 'Mike'.

"Well, we camped and hunted and fished there with the two elderly men for a week before we could go on, but it was a week of rare sport, for the hunter and trapper were experts, and they had many exciting stories to tell of narrow escapes from wild animals and other adventures.

"Dean and I finally arrived at the lumber camp where the men had decided to send out a scout to trail Dean, who they feared was lost, or injured somewhere on the way. So, they were greatly relieved to see us ride along the river-road that led into the camp which consisted of a small group of huts."

"Daddum, that story wasn't as good as most of yours are," criticised Don.

"Perhaps not, my son," laughed Mr. Starr, "for I see we are nearing our destination and I only planned to keep up the tale long enough to keep you from thinking of your tired selves."

"Get there in about seven minutes, sir," announced the old conductor as he shuffled through the car.

"Hurrah!" cried Don, jumping upon the seat to get his baggage.

"Why, I can't see any town!" exclaimed Dot, looking out of the car window.

"Don't bother about the town, Dot, but take your hat and jacket out of the rack," advised Lavinia, who was busy trying to gather together the various belongings of the family.

"Babs! Wake up, little sister," called Mrs. Starr as she gently shook the sleepy little girl.

"Is 't mornin'?" yawned the baby.

Everybody laughed so that Babs soon sat up and looked about in surprise.

"Oh, see out there – the funny place!" exclaimed Dot.

"That's the city where we shall stay over night," said Mr. Starr, carrying suit-cases and grips toward the door.

A surprise awaited the Starr family as they descended from the train, for Mr. and Mrs. Latimer were there to greet them.

"Well, when did you get here?" asked Mr. Starr, after greetings were over.

"Day before yesterday, so we thought we would wait and start for the camp together," returned Mr. Latimer.

As there were no porters or cabs in the isolated town, they had to carry their own luggage. Mr. Latimer undertook to find a boy with a wheelbarrow to take the trunks to the hotel. "Hotel! Is there such a thing here, Mr. Latimer?" laughed Meredith.

"Wait until you see! You will be very proud to send home picture post-cards of the place!" replied Mrs. Latimer.

"Where's Paul and Marjory?" suddenly asked Meredith, who had missed Jinks, his chum, on the trip from Oakdale.

"Why, Marjory is reading to an old invalid this afternoon and Paul went fishing with some boys," explained Mrs. Latimer.

While the Starrs are following their friends, the Latimers, from the station to the hotel, let us see how they all came to be in this faraway place in Canada.

When the Starrs left the island in Casco Bay in the early part of September, Mr. Latimer, who lived in Portland, Maine, mentioned a trip to the lumber regions of Canada. As Mr. Starr was interested in a large lumber deal with Mr. Latimer, and had spent his summer in Maine on that account, he decided to associate himself with Mr. Latimer in the Canadian Pine Investment Co.

Consequently, the Starr family packed up their belongings and returned to Oakwood from Maine several weeks sooner than they had expected, for it was necessary that the children be completely fitted out with warm clothing, and other necessities, if they were to spend the winter in a lumber camp with the Latimers.

Of course, Mrs. Starr worried about keeping the children from school all winter, but Mrs. Latimer said that the governess, who had been with her children for several years, could so arrange her hours that all the children could study under her direction. This arrangement satisfied Mrs. Starr, and the only drawback to enjoying the novelty of life in a lumber camp was entirely removed.

The Starrs left Oakwood the latter part of October and reached Grand Forks the first of November. From there they traveled by various routes until they reached their destination in the extreme southeastern part of Manitoba.

Here, the Latimers awaited them, and had made all arrangements for the further journey into the heart of the forests where the pine and other valuable timber stood.

The lumber crew, consisting of a foreman, cook and two helpers, hostlers, drivers, and most of those that felled trees, had gone on to the camp some time previous to the Starrs' arrival, but a few of the men were still in town waiting for their foreman.

The lumbermen who were waiting to start for camp stood about the small stoop of the house which was known as the "hotel," and scanned the group slowly walking toward them. The Latimers were already known to the men, but the new-comers were a source of curiosity.

The men who were to supervise the cutting, hoisting and hauling of the timber to be cut that winter were of a rugged, good-natured type, and the Starrs were glad to note their clean-cut appearance.

Mr. Latimer had explained to the new arrivals the presence of the crew at the hotel, and also the various work the different men had charge of. Don and Dot had overheard this conversation, and the moment the family reached the porch Don carefully looked over the group and whispered to Dot. Together they walked over to the men and entered into an animated discourse with them.

"I heard that one of you men was an engineer on the engine that pulls the trees out of the woods," said Don.

"I'm the one," remarked a tall muscular man, while his companions smiled at the two children.

"We know how to run an engine," began Dot.

"Sh!" interrupted Don to his sister. "We didn't come over to tell you that, but we wanted to say that we are glad to meet you. We three ought to have some nice rides this winter on that engine of yours."

This brought a laugh from all but the engineer. He looked very serious as he said, "I sure am glad to make your acquaintance. I reckon we'll be very friendly." And he stuck out his large hand and shook Don's and Dot's small hands most energetically.

"Did you say you run an engine?"

"Yep! when we were down on my grandfather's ranch in Texas. There were some Indians always stealing and hiding in the woods and Dot and I helped catch 'em," said Don, looking about to see if any of his family overheard his remark.

"Don, that wasn't when we drove the engine. You know – I mean the time the old thing ran away with us and everybody was so frightened!" corrected truthful Dot.

"Well, it doesn't matter, now," hurriedly said Don. "I haven't heard your name yet, mister. My twin-sister's is Dot an' mine is Don."

"My name is Jim – Jim Akerman, all told, but just call me Jim. An' now I'll introduce you to the crew if you like," said the man, smiling at the twins. "This man is fireman on the engine and his name is Pete. We call him Pete on account of his job of piling peat on the fire."

"Do you use peat? Why, I thought you burned wood," said Don.

"We do up here, but down in Carolina we used a lot of bog-peat, 'cause it's so hot a fire," explained Jim; then continued:

"Here's Bill, the tackle man; an' Jake, the swing-man; Ben and Johnny, there, are hook-men. Then there's Alf, Jerry, and Mack, who have charge of the cables."

Just as the introductions were over, Mr. Starr called from the front door telling the children to come in and dress for supper.



## CHAPTER II

### A LUMBER CAMP IN WINTER

THE boss of the machinery crew came by the morning train and the next day the entire party were ready to start on their way.

The men rode, while the women and children sat in a comfortable carry-all drawn by four horses. The baggage and extra camp outfits were packed in a cart drawn by two mules.

"Jus' like a picture of folks going west in the gold-fever time," ventured Don, looking ahead at the escort and behind at the cart and a few riders.

"Let's play we are pioneers, shall we?" cried Dot, always ready for an exciting adventure.

"And Mete can be the pioneer and Venie his wife. Babs will be their only child," explained Don.

"Then who are we?" asked Dot.

"Me and you? Why, we are the Indians that hold up the wagon and shoot everyone," replied Don, trying to look savage.

"Oh, dear, if we had only known this we could have worn our Indian suits that we left home," sighed Dot.

"Never mind; I'll pin on this horse-blanket that's under the seat, and you can wrap this linen dust-coat about you," said Don, dragging the blanket out from its hiding place.

"I won't look a bit like an Indian in that old coat. Can't you see another blanket with stripes on it?" asked Dot.

"Not a blanket, but here's a plaid lap-cover," replied Don, as he spied the cotton cover under the blanket.

"What are you children pulling from under that seat?" asked Mrs. Starr, who always watched the twins in fear and trembling.

"We're jus' goin' to be Indians and wear these things," explained Don, carelessly.

Meredith had been sitting with the driver of the cart for some time, hearing stories of life in the wilds, and Lavinia had been playing with Babs during the time the travelling was bad, when the wagons went slowly.

This was Don's opportunity.

Dot and he managed to get out of the back of the carry-all unnoticed.

They hid behind some bushes and as the leaders came opposite, Don jumped out and shouted, dancing about and waving a club over his head. Dot followed her brother's example, and both pranced and shrieked such blood-curdling yells that Mrs. Starr almost fainted while Mrs. Latimer hurriedly leaned out of the wagon to see who had been run over.

The horses merely jumped at the unexpected apparitions, then kept plodding up the hill. Don and Dot clambered up the steps of the carry-all trying to mimic the real scalpers, but Mrs. Starr caught each one by an arm and bade them sit down and not get out again without her permission.

Meredith had witnessed the whole performance from the cart and laughed teasingly at the climax of the raid.

The journey took two days; the first day, at five o'clock, Mr. Latimer called a halt for camp. This part of the trip was great sport for the children for they roamed about the woods while the men cut fir branches for beds, and watched the cook prepare a fine dinner out in the wilderness.

The second day, about noon, the travellers reached the place selected for a permanent camp. Of course, everyone was deeply interested in the novel appearance of their winter home and, as soon as the twelve o'clock dinner was served, started in to investigate the quarters.

The children trailed after the grownups, making their own observations of affairs.

The bosses' cabins were among some magnificent trees, about one hundred yards from the main camp. They were rough little log huts large enough to hold four bunks, two on either side – a lower and an upper bunk – and a chest of drawers at the side opposite the door. An opening in the roof gave ventilation, and a small square window at each side of the chest of drawers gave light in the daytime. The only light to be had at night was from a candle, and heat, if the city folks needed any, must be had from oil heaters, several of which had been included in the outfit.

The bunks of the crew were directly opposite the "bosses'" huts. A large cleared space lay between the two sections, and at one end stood the cook's quarters, with a long shed-like cabin in front of it to screen the kitchen from the company. This shed was dining-room, parlor, and general social center. At the fourth side, opposite the dining-room and kitchen, was a commodious office with three rooms. Here the clerical force worked, and the bosses planned and ordered the work of the company.

This sort of life suited Don and Dot perfectly, and they peeped into every bunk, and hovered about the kitchen, with the satisfaction of having reached the great goal in life.

"This bunk is for the children – Don and Dot, Venie and Babs," explained Mr. Starr, showing the bunks adjoining the hut which would be occupied by himself and wife.

"Can't Dot and I have a hut all to ourselves?" asked Don, who hoped to have great fun in these little huts.

"Not much!" laughed Mr. Starr. "I doubt if Venie can keep you two in order, but we will try it."

"Where's Mete going to live?" asked Dot eagerly.

"Meredith and Paul will have bunks in the same hut with the foreman, and Elizabeth has a bunk partitioned off from her father and mother's half of a hut," replied Mrs. Starr.

"Well, guess I'll have a look at my house," ventured Don, stepping into the log cabin which was to be his abode for a time.

"Dot, look'a here! they don't have bed-springs in these bunks," whispered Don, lifting up a corner of a sweet smelling mattress.

"And the mattress! What is it stuffed with?" exclaimed Dot.

"Don't know, but it smells fine, don't it?" said Don.

Meredith and Paul peeped in just then and seeing the two examining the beds, laughed.

"You ought to see ours, if you think the company ought to provide you with Dutch feather-beds," said Paul.

"What are yours?" Don asked.

"Just balsam branches heaped up in the bunks; we spread a blanket over them at night and sink into peaceful dreams."

"Then we want balsam branches, too," demanded Dot.

"Why should we have these things if the other men have branches?" queried Don.

"We'll ask Daddum next time we see him," said Meredith, as Paul and he continued on their way.

"Dot, we'll just go over and take a look at those balsam beds. If we like them better, we will ask Mumzie to have ours changed. If ours is best, we won't say anything," whispered astute Don.

They found Paul's bunk filled with balsam branches as he said, but they felt perfectly content with their nice soft mattresses after the balsam had been tested.

Before any further matters of interest could be found, a deafening sound came from the cook's quarters. The twins ran out to the clearing to find the meaning of the noise, and saw one of the cook's helpers walking about banging a wooden potato-masher furiously upon the bottom of a brass pan. The echoes of the strokes could be heard coming from every direction in the forest.

"What's that for?" asked Don, running over to Mose, the helper.

"I'se callin' you-alls for dinner," grinned Mose.

"Hey, Dot! come quick," called Don, turning to see if his sister was in sight. "It's dinner time, and Mose is ringin' the bell."

Without further ado, Don went over to the shed and looked for his place at the long table. For once he was undecided. There were two long tables, and the places set were so exactly alike that Don was not sure where he was supposed to sit.

"Where are all of the other men, Daddum?" asked Lavinia, seeing that only half of the men were present.

"They have been cutting out rough roads from our timber to the river, and have taken their dinner in pails, as it is too far for them to come to camp and then return afterward," said Mr. Starr.

"What river, Daddum?" asked Don, quickly.

"The river down which the logs float in the spring," said Mr. Starr.

"Do you own the river?" asked Dot, wondering how much of the earth her father possessed.

"We own the right to use it for our logging business," replied Mr. Starr, and smiled at his little girl's disappointed look.

"Why do they cut roads, Daddum? Aren't there any ready made that you can use?" asked Dot.

"Not in the forests, Dot. We have to break out roadways so the heavy skidding and loading machines can go in among the trees and lift the cut timber up and on the sledges that will cart it down to the water," explained Mr. Starr.

"You will soon be able to see the way it has to be done and then you will understand better," added Mr. Latimer.

"When can we see – this afternoon?" asked Don, impatiently.

"Maybe you will have time to go with me directly after dinner," hinted Mr. Latimer.

"Yes, yes! Of course we will, 'cause we don't begin lessons 'till Monday, you know," exclaimed Don and Dot together.

The rice pudding was almost forgotten that day, so eager were the children to go and see the interesting work of the men of the camp.

They trudged along the newly cut road which they had travelled over in the morning, but, after walking for half a mile, Mr. Latimer left the road and went along a narrow trail that ran into the thick forest. Walking along this for a mile or so, the children heard the sound of chopping, and crashes every now and then, and the shouting of men to each other. In about ten minutes' time they could see moving figures between the thick trunks of trees, and soon came to the place where the road was being broken out.

Here, indeed, was activity and exciting work. The children were cautioned about the danger.

Don watched with every faculty strained to its utmost. He saw an opening through the thick growth of pine trees running far into the depths of the forest. In the opposite direction, where the men were working, the forest remained intact.

"Guess that's the road Daddum said they were breaking out," he commented, to the other children.

"An' that's what they have to cut down to get out to the river," added Paul, pointing toward the thick trees on the other side.

Suddenly, a shout of "Ye-ho!" was heard and the lumbermen ran off in every direction, while a crackling sound came from the tree that was being cut; in another moment down crashed the giant pine, tearing away obstructing branches from other trees.

"Oh!" sighed Don, clutching his hands in tense interest, and the other children sat as rigid as statues until the tree was down.

Some men instantly hopped upon the fallen giant and started lopping off the branches, while the other men began work on the next tree in the road.

The "breaking out" of the road through the virgin forest kept on in this way until the men were some distance farther on than they were when the children first came upon the scene. When Mr. Latimer returned to take them back to camp they were quite willing to go.

That evening the children had a great deal to tell their mothers and Don added, "Guess I'll be a lumberman when I'm big."

"Have you decided to give up the canal-boat life that you promised Molly you would lead?" asked his father, teasingly.

"Well, a man can run a canal-boat and be a lumberman, too, can't he?" returned Don, not willing to admit his loss of interest in the canal-boat life.

"I always said that it was better for a man to do one thing and do that well, than to try and do several things poorly," hinted Mr. Starr.

The others laughed, for one of Don's weaknesses was to take a tremendous interest in anything new and then leave it half finished for the next absorbing idea.

"Well, I'm eating these pork and beans just now, and I'm doing it well, ain't I?" retorted Don, making everyone laugh again.

"Dot and you always do the meal-work thoroughly," replied Mrs. Starr, still laughing.

No one about the table that evening seemed to have a failing appetite, for the wonderful pine-scented air and the unusual life made everyone hungry for the brown bread, beans, baked potatoes, and slices of crisp ham.

A huge log fire was built in the center of the clearing and, immediately after supper, the crew and the bosses' families sat about it in a circle while the "timber-children," as Mr. Latimer called them, told the other children wild stories of adventures in the forests.

Don sat with wide-opened eyes and body leaning forward listening eagerly to every word. These tales were stored away in his mind for some future development or use.

At eight o'clock Mr. Latimer called out, "Youngsters' bedtime!"

"Why we never have to go so early as this," said Don.

"In a lumber camp every man goes to bed at nine o'clock, sometimes earlier, if the day is long. We are up at five, you see, and work from six. Just wait until you see us work some nights until long after your tired eyes have closed," explained Mr. Latimer.

"Crickets! From five until night! I guess I wouldn't like *that* life!" announced Don, emphatically.

"No, indeed," added Meredith, while everyone laughed at Don's honest confession. "Don loves his warm bed in winter."

As the children rose to leave the fire, they thanked the men for the entertainment and said good-night. The engine-driver had been quite near to Don all evening and now Don asked a question.

"Most ready with that engine that I'm goin' to help you with?"

"Not yet, Mister Don; we have to break out that road before I can run my engine in there, you see," whispered the man.

Perfectly contented to think that he wouldn't miss any fun on that engine, Don said good-night to Jim and ran after the family who were on the way to the bunks.

## CHAPTER III

### THE INDIAN TRAPPER

THE routine of life in a lumber camp never became tiresome, but it systematized matters for the children. Every morning at five o'clock the rising gong was beaten by the cook's helper, and at five-thirty the men had breakfast. The families ate at six-thirty, and at seven-thirty an hour was given to study of the daily lessons. Then an hour of freedom came, followed by three hours of close application to school. The classes met in one of the large rooms of the office building and Miss Miller had scholars who were eager to study, for not one of them wished to be detained after school; there were too many wonderful things to be done, and being detained after school hours meant the missing of some of the wonders.

After the first week in camp the children became quite resigned to the early rising and breakfast, for it seemed to lengthen out the hours of the day so that a great deal more could be crowded into the time for fun and play.

On the second Sunday in camp everyone was sitting in the dining-room listening while Mr. Latimer read the service. He had finished the Bible reading and suggested a hymn that all of the men knew by heart, when the door opened at one end of the shed and a queer old face peered in.

Don sat nearest the door and, seeing a stranger at the door, nudged his twin. She leaned over and stared at the wrinkled skin, twinkling eyes, and long straight hair.

"Why, Don, it's an Injun!" whispered Dot, with surprise.

By this time the door had opened far enough to admit the stranger and he stepped in and squatted down just inside.

Most of the men sitting with faces toward the door saw him but the reader and part of his audience were not aware of the visitor. Dot nudged her father and whispered about the Indian's presence. The service continued, however, without interruption, to the final song. Then many of the men rose and came over to the visitor.

"Hello, Wilotemike! Where'd you come from?"

"Wilotemike! Let me see him!" exclaimed Mr. Starr, in great surprise. He stepped out before the old Indian and saw the same friendly trapper that had advised his friend Dean about the flooded river, and entertained them for a week. He came forward and held out a welcoming hand.

"Well, well, I don't believe you know me, Mike, do you?" asked Mr. Starr, grasping the old man's hand.

After thinking deeply for a few moments, the Indian's face lit up and he smiled recognition at Mr. Starr.

"Mike know friend! Many moons he not come back!" said the Indian reprovingly.

"Not my fault, Mike. Me want to come but find a nice squaw and she keep me home," laughed Mr. Starr, beckoning for his wife to join him.

Of course the children were shown to Mike and the old Indian smiled as he allowed his hand to light gently upon Bab's yellow curls.

Most of the timber men knew Mike, or had heard of the trapper, and he was generally welcomed at any camp he visited. In this case, however, he was doubly welcome, for he was a friend of one of the bosses, and the story soon went the rounds of the entire camp.

"Going to visit us for the winter, Mike?" asked Mr. Latimer, thinking of the great boon he would be to go about with the children after school hours. Knowing the forests as he did, he could teach and show them everything and at the same time prevent any danger from coming to them.

"Mike set traps nex' moon, way up mountain," replied Mike, laconically.

"Mike stay here till time for trap to catch big game!" eagerly came from Mr. Starr, who sensed part of Mr. Latimer's plan.

"Mike, get much money for time he stay. Mike show little ones all over woods and teach many good things about everything!" added Mr. Latimer.

By this time the ladies realized what the two men were after, and abetted the plan with all of their persuasions.

Mike stood uncertain. He smiled down at the children who showed in their faces how delightful life would be with a real Indian trapper to show them about the woods, while the ladies urged the proposition resistlessly, and the men stood waiting expectantly for an answer.

"Mike not make much pelts las' year. Not eat much this year. Mike tink dis snow make a big pelt time – make much money," explained the trapper.

"Mike take all this money from this day to trapper's day. Mike go to mountain on trapper day and set traps. Watch much. Get big pelt and come back soon; Mike make more money here with white man," spoke Mr. Starr, taking a roll of bills from his pocket and counting out fifty dollars upon the table, giving Mike to understand that the money was his if he would remain in camp until December 15, which day was generally Trapper's Day in the North.

The Indian looked about at the faces and saw only the kindly desire to have him remain, and his eyes became misty at the unusual welcome from the white men.

Don and Dot could hardly restrain their impatience to have Mike say "yes," so Don ran over, took the dark hand of the trapper in both his and shook it, saying, "Come on, Mike, we want you."

The children all flocked about, coaxing the Indian to remain, until he smiled and consented to be their guard after school hours. Miss Miller heaved an audible sigh of relief, for she had had her troubles in the last two weeks, trying to keep Babs and the twins always in a "safety circle" beneath her watchful eye.

Cook came in just then and asked a question.

"Hey, boss, when is church out? My dinner is cooked an' waitin' fer the two boys to set up de tables."

At that everyone hurried out that the cook might not be delayed in his programme of feeding so many hungry people.

"Take Mike into the office and tell him all you have seen since you have been here," suggested Mr. Latimer to the children.

While the children danced over the frozen ground showing the Indian the way to the office, the elders gathered in the Starr's log hut and discussed the value of the trapper.

"Everybody knows Mike for hundreds of miles around this part of the country, and he knows every foot of ground, the depth of waters, the bog-lands, and the haunts of wild animals. He is as true and honorable as any white man, and more trustworthy than many," explained Mr. Starr.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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