

Bindloss Harold

For the Allinson Honor



Harold Bindloss
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CHAPTER I

THE TENANT AT THE FIRS

It was a hot autumn afternoon. Mrs. Olcott, a young and attractive woman, reclined in a canvas chair beside a tea-table on the lawn in front of the cottage she had lately taken in the country. Her thin white dress displayed a slender and rather girlish form; her dark hair emphasized the delicate coloring of her face, which wore a nervous look. As a matter of fact, she felt disturbed. Clare Olcott needed somebody to take care of her; but she had few friends, and her husband held a government appointment in West Africa. His pay was moderate and he had no private means. His relatives justified their neglect of his wife by the reflection that he had married beneath him; and this was why he had commended her, with confidence, to the protection of a friend.

Andrew Allinson, who had made Olcott's acquaintance when serving as lieutenant of yeomanry during the Boer campaign, sat on a grassy bank near by with a teacup in his hand. He was strongly built and negligently dressed, in knickerbockers and

shooting jacket. The bicycle he had just ridden leaned against the hedge. Andrew had lately reached his twenty-ninth year. He had large blue eyes that met you with a direct glance, a broad forehead, and a strong jaw. On the whole, he was a good-looking man, but his characteristic expression was one of rather heavy good-humor. Though by no means stupid, he had never done anything remarkable, and most of the Allinsons thought him slow.

Raising himself a little, he looked slowly round. Beyond the hedge the white highroad climbed a bold ridge of moor that blazed in the strong sunshine with regal purple; farther back, smooth-topped hills faded into an ethereal haziness through varying shades of gray. The head of the deep valley near the house was steeped in blue shadow, but lower down oatfields gleamed with ocher and cadmium among broad squares of green. There were flowers in the borders about the tiny lawn, and creepers draped the front of the house. The still air was filled with the drone of bees; all was eminently peaceful.

"How do you like the place?" he asked. "It's nicer than London in weather like this, and you're looking better than you did when I saw you there."

Mrs. Olcott gave him a grateful smile.

"I haven't regretted leaving town. I was miserable and scarcely saw anybody after Tom sailed. Our small flat was too far from the few people I knew; and even if it had been nearer, I couldn't entertain. I was feeling very downhearted the day you called."

Andrew remembered having found her looking very forlorn in a dingy and shabbily furnished room. She was sitting at a writing-table with a pile of bills before her, about which she had made a naive confession.

"I'm glad you find things pleasant here; I thought you would," he said.

"It's so fresh and green. In the morning and at sunset the moorland air's like wine. Then the house is very pretty and remarkably cheap."

She looked at him sharply, for he had found the house for her; but he answered with heavy calm.

"I don't think it's dear."

After that there was a few moments' silence, during which they heard the soft splash of a stream falling into the valley. Then he turned to her with a resolute air.

"And now, about those bills? You have put me off once or twice, but I want to see them."

Mrs. Olcott colored and hesitated, but she opened a drawer in the table and took out a bundle of papers, which she handed to him. To her surprise and consternation, he counted them before he put them into his pocket.

"These are not all. Give me the others."

"I can manage about the rest," she protested.

"Let me have them; you can't begin here in difficulties."

Mrs. Olcott rose and he watched her enter the house with quiet pity. She was not a capable woman, and he was thankful that

she had not got into worse embarrassments. She came back, still somewhat flushed, and gave him a few more papers.

"I'm afraid I'm a wretchedly bad manager," she confessed. "As soon as my next remittance comes, I will send you a check."

"When it suits you," he said, and added thoughtfully: "One of us should tell your husband about this; perhaps it had better be you."

She smiled, for he was now and then boyishly ingenuous. He sat directly opposite the gate, where all passers-by could see him, and he had somehow an unfortunate air of being at home in the place.

"Yes," she said, "I will write by the first mail. I feel less embarrassed because Tom told me that if I was ever in any difficulty I might consult you. He described you as the right sort – and I have found it true."

"I suppose you know that I owe a good deal to your husband," Andrew answered awkwardly.

"He told me that you and he were in the field hospital together for a time, and before then he helped you in some way when you were wounded, but he never said much about it. What did he do? You may smoke while you tell me."

"I think you ought to know, because it will show the claim Tom has on me."

Andrew lighted a cigarette and began in a disjointed manner, for he was not a fluent speaker:

"It was a dazzlingly bright morning and getting very hot – our

side had been badly cut up in the dark, and we were getting back, a mixed crowd of stragglers, a few miles behind the brigade. Tom and Sergeant Carnally, the Canadian, had no proper business with the wreck of my squadron, but there they were. Anyhow, only half of us were mounted, and when we found ourselves cut off we tried to hold a kopje – the horses back in a hollow, except mine, which was shot as I dismounted. I was fond of the poor faithful brute, and I suppose that made me savage, for I felt that I must get the fellow who killed it."

He paused and his face hardened.

"There we were, lying among the stones, with the sun blazing down on us; faint puffs of smoke on the opposite rise, spirits of sand jumping up where the Mauser bullets struck. Now and then a man dropped his rifle and the rest of us set our teeth. It wasn't a spectacular fight, and we kept it up in a very informal way; two or three commissioned officers, dismounted troopers, and a few lost line Tommies, firing as they got a chance. The man I wanted had gone to earth beside a big flat stone, and I dropped the bullets close about it; a hundred yards I made it and the light good. I suppose I was so keen on my shooting that I didn't pay much attention when somebody said they were flanking us; and the next thing I knew a Boer had put a bullet in my leg. Anyhow, I couldn't get up, and when I looked round there was no one about. Then I must have shouted, for Tom came running back, with the sand spiriting all round. Carnally was behind him. It looked like certain death, but Tom got hold of me, and dragged me a few

yards before Carnally came up. Then we all dropped behind a big stone, and I'm not clear about the rest. Somebody had heard the firing and detached a squadron with a gun. But I can still picture Tom, running with his face set through the spiriting sand – one doesn't forget things like that."

The blood crept into Clare Olcott's pale cheeks and her eyes shone. No one could have doubted that she admired and loved her absent husband.

"Were you not with Carnally when he broke out of the prison camp?" she asked presently.

"I was. Our guard was friendly and careless, and we picked up a hint of a movement we thought our army ought to know about. We were caged in behind a very awkward fence, but I'd found a wire-nipper in the sand – they were used to cut defense entanglements. Then we held a council and decided that somebody must break out with the news, but while two men might do so, more would have no chance to dodge the guard. Carnally and I were picked, and after waiting for a dark night we cut the wire and crawled out, close behind a sentry we hadn't seen. Of course, knowing what we did about the Boers' intentions, we couldn't give up our plan."

Mrs. Olcott recognized that Andrew Allinson was not the man to abandon a duty, though he was unarmed and the sentry carried a magazine rifle.

"Well," he resumed, "I crept up and seized the fellow by the leg. He dropped his rifle, and Carnally slipped away. We'd

arranged that if we got out one was not to stop for the other."

"But what happened to you? Did the Boer pick up his rifle?"

"No," said Andrew quietly; "I got it first."

"But – " said Mrs. Olcott, and stopped.

Andrew smiled.

"You see, he had called out when I grabbed him and several of his friends were running up. I didn't think he'd noticed Carnally, who had got clear off, and there was a chance of its being some time before they missed him. Then the fellow had shown us one or two small favors – given me some tobacco, among other things he might have got into trouble for."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Olcott expressively. "So you let them take you back to prison. But what about the Canadian?"

"He got through safely and they made a fuss over him. Offered him a commission, which he was too sensible to take."

"Tom came home promoted and got his West African appointment; Carnally could have had a commission; and you went back to prison. Though of course they deserved it, didn't it strike you that the rewards were not very fairly shared out?"

"I believe my people were disappointed when I returned as undistinguished as I went out, though I don't know that they were surprised. So far as I was concerned, it was an inglorious campaign – twice in a hospital, and some months in a prison camp. And yet, I'll admit that I left England determined on doing something brilliant."

Mrs. Olcott made no remark. He did not seem to attach

much importance to the incident that had secured his comrade's escape. His conduct was not of the kind that catches the public eye, but her husband, whose opinion was worth having, believed in Allinson.

"Well," he resumed, "I've stayed some time. Are you sure you're quite comfortable here? There's nothing you feel short of?"

"Oh, no," she said. "I ought to be happy. It's perhaps a trifle quiet: nobody has called on me yet."

"I dare say that can be altered," he replied; and though she did not suppose her solitude was likely to be enlivened at his request, she gave him her hand gratefully and let him go.

Picking up his bicycle, he wheeled it up the road, which wound between yellow harvest fields and dark-green clover to the long ascent of the moor. Here the gray stone walls broke off and the open heath ran up, steeped in strong color: the glowing crimson of the ling checkered with the purple of the heather, mossy patches showing lemon and brightest green, while the gaps from which peat was dug made blotches of rich chocolate-brown. Andrew noticed it all with quiet appreciation, though he was thinking hard as he slowly climbed the hill. He had made Mrs. Olcott a promise, and he meant to keep it, but the thing was beginning to look more difficult than he had imagined. His sisters might have helped him by recognizing the lonely woman, but they had shown some prejudice against her, and this was unfortunate, for their attitude would have its effect on their

neighbors.

The Allinsons were people of importance in the countryside and the history of the family was not without romance. Long ago an Andrew Allinson had become possessed, by violence most probably, of a strong stone peel, half fortress, half farmstead, that commanded a fertile dale up which the Scots moss-troopers often rode to the foray. Little was known of his descendants, except that they held the peel for several generations and were buried with a coat of arms roughly cut upon their tombstones in a moorland kirkyard. Then had come a break, when they were perhaps driven out by economic changes, for the family vanished from the dale and next appeared as London goldsmiths in Queen Anne's reign. Later, Andrew's grandfather, retiring from his banking business, resumed the coat of arms, bought back the peel and built a commodious house about it. On his death it was discovered that his property had shrunk in value owing to changing times, and his shrewd north-country widow gave up the hall and coat of arms and made her son reopen the family business. He had prospered and maintained the best traditions of the ancient firm, for Allinson & Son was noted for caution, decorum and strict probity. The firm was eminently sound and carried on its business in an old-fashioned, austere way.

To its head's keen disappointment, his only son, Andrew, showed no aptitude for commerce, and after two years in the counting-house was allowed to follow his own devices. Then

on the marriage of Andrew's sister to a clever young business man, the latter was made a partner. Soon after this Andrew's father died, leaving him a large share of his money, which was, however, to remain in the business, over which his brother-in-law, Leonard Hathersage, now had control.

When the gradient grew easier Andrew mounted, but got down again with a frown a few minutes later. The Boer's nicked bullet had badly torn the muscles of his thigh, and now and then the old wound troubled him. Though he loved horses, he could no longer ride far with pleasure, and, being of active temperament, had taken to the bicycle.

He had not gone far before he saw a girl ride out from behind a grove of gnarled spruce firs and he joined her when she pulled up her horse to wait for him. Ethel Hillyard looked well in the saddle: tall and rather largely built, she was nevertheless graceful and generally characterized by an air of dignified repose. Now, however, there was amusement in the fine gray eyes she fixed on Andrew.

"You look moody, and that's not usual," she said.

They were old friends, and Andrew answered her confidentially.

"I've been thinking and, for another thing, I found I couldn't get up this bit of a hill. I suppose it oughtn't to worry me, but it does. You see, a lameness that comes on when I least expect it is all I brought back from South Africa."

Ethel gave him a sympathetic nod as she started her horse.

"It's a pity, but you might have suffered worse; and, after all, distinction is sometimes cheaply gained."

"You don't win it by keeping people busy curing you and seeing that you don't break out of prison camps," Andrew retorted grimly.

"But what else were you thinking of that disturbed you?"

"My thoughts were, so to speak, all of a piece – one led to another. I did nothing in South Africa, and it has struck me lately that I haven't done much anywhere else, except to catch salmon in Norway and shoot a few Canadian deer. Now there's Leonard, who's not an Allinson, making money for all of us and managing the firm."

"Leonard got money and the opportunity for making more from Allinson's."

"That's true, but it doesn't excuse me. I ought to be a power in the firm, and I don't suppose I could even keep one of its books properly."

He walked on in silence for the next minute or two and his companion watched him with interest. His brows were knit, his brown face looked strong as well as thoughtful, and Ethel did not agree with his relatives, who thought him a bit of a fool. She was inclined to believe that Leonard had spread that impression and the others had adopted it without consideration. Andrew had been idle, but that was his worst fault, and he might change. There was, however, nothing significant in his taking her into his confidence; he had often done so, though she realized with half

regretful acquiescence that it was only as a confidante that he thought of her. He could not have chosen a better one, for Ethel Hillyard was a girl of unusual character, and she now determined to exert her influence for his benefit.

"Isn't Allinson's rather branching out of late?" she asked.

"It is. The West African goldfield was a new kind of venture, though it's paying handsomely; and we're now taking up a mine in Canada. Of course, the old private banking business has gone under and one must move with the times; but, in a sense, it's a pity."

Ethel understood him. Her father had dealt with Allinson's and she knew the firm had hitherto been dignified and conservative, while Leonard was essentially modern in his methods and what is known as pushing. She foresaw disagreements if Andrew ever took an active part in the business, which he had a right to do.

"Perhaps it isn't necessary that you should be good at bookkeeping," she said. "Is there no place for you in these new foreign schemes? You have traveled in the Canadian bush to shoot deer, and you seemed to like it; wouldn't it be as interesting if you went there to look for minerals or manage a mine? You would have the free life in the wilds, but with an object."

"There's something in that," Andrew replied thoughtfully. "I happen to know the country where the mine is and it's unusually rough. It's curious that you have made a hazy idea I've had a little clearer. I'll think over the thing."

Ethel knew that she had said enough. She would miss the man

if he went away, but it would be better for him and she knew that she would never have more than his liking.

"Where is the mine?" she asked.

"It's among the rocks some distance back from the Lake of Shadows in western Ontario."

"The Lake of Shadows!" Ethel exclaimed. "A friend I made in London used to go there with her father for fishing and shooting; but that's not important."

"Well," said Andrew, "I've talked enough about myself. There's a favor I want to ask. Will you call on Mrs. Olcott?"

Ethel started. Mrs. Olcott was young and pretty; nobody knew anything about her husband; Andrew's visits had already excited comment.

"Why should I call?" she inquired.

He gave her the best reasons he could think of for befriending the lonely woman, and she pondered them for a moment or two. Then she asked bluntly:

"How was it that Mrs. Olcott chose this neighborhood, where she knows nobody?"

"I suggested it," said Andrew, simply. "The Firs was empty, and she has few friends anywhere."

Though she had attached no importance to the remarks that had been made about him, Ethel found his unembarrassed candor reassuring. He had, however, asked her to do something that was harder than he imagined, and she hesitated.

"Very well," she said; "I will call."

"Thanks. I knew I could count on you."

They had now reached the top of the hill, and Ethel took a crossroad while Andrew mounted his bicycle, but she turned her head, and watched him ride across the moor. Andrew, however, did not look back at her, and by and by she urged her horse to a trot.

CHAPTER II

THE FAMILY PRIDE

The hall which Andrew's grandfather had built around the peel had for years been let with its shooting rights. Ghyllside, however, where Andrew lived, was a commodious house, and Leonard Hathersage was frequently glad to spend a week-end there. He and his wife had arrived on the previous evening, and he was now busy in the library while Andrew sat talking to his sisters on the terrace.

Though the light was fading, it was not yet dark, and the air was still and fragrant with flowers. Yew hedges and shrubberies were growing indistinct; a clump of firs in a neighboring meadow loomed up black and shadowy, but a band of pale saffron light still shone behind the hall on the edge of the moorland a mile away. The square peel stood out harsh and sharp against the glow, the rambling house with its tall chimneys trailing away into the gloom on its flanks.

Andrew, who had early lost his mother, had three sisters. Florence, Leonard's wife, his senior by several years, was a tall, prim and rather domineering woman; Gertrude, who had married Antony Wannop, a local gentleman, was gentler and less decided than her sister; Hilda, the youngest of all, was little, dark, and impulsive.

Wannop leaned on the terrace wall between the flower urns with a cigar in his mouth. He was stout and generally marked by a bluff geniality.

"Where did you go this afternoon, Andrew, when you wouldn't come with us to the Warringtons'?" Hilda asked.

Andrew would have preferred to evade the question, but that seemed impossible.

"I went to see Mrs. Olcott."

"Again!" exclaimed Hilda, who prided herself on being blunt.

Wannop chuckled softly, but Florence claimed Andrew's attention.

"Don't you think you have been there often enough?"

"It hasn't struck me in that light."

"Then," replied Florence, "I feel it's time it did."

"Come now!" Wannop broke in. "Three to one is hardly fair. Don't be bullied, Andrew; a bachelor can be independent."

"How do you make it three?" Hilda asked. "Only Florence and I mentioned the matter."

"I am, of course, acquainted with Gertrude's views," Wannop explained.

Hilda laughed. Antony, with his characteristic maladroitness, had somehow made things worse, and Andrew's face hardened. His sisters were generally candid with him, but they had gone too far. With a thoughtlessness he sometimes showed, he had told them nothing about his acquaintance with Clare Olcott's husband.

"You're not much of an ally," he said with a dry smile. "Anyway, as there's no reason why I shouldn't go to The Firs, I'm not likely to be deterred. I may as well mention that I met Ethel Hillyard and begged her to call."

"On Mrs. Olcott?" Florence cried. "What did she say?"

"She promised."

The astonishment of the others was obvious, but Hilda was the only one who ventured to express it.

"Andrew, you're a wonder! You haven't the least idea of scheming, and you'd spoil the best plot you took a hand in, and yet you have a funny, blundering way of getting hard things done."

"You have hinted that I was a bit of a fool," said Andrew; "but I don't see why this should be hard."

As an explanation was undesirable, Hilda let his remark pass and addressed the others.

"He has beaten us and we may as well give in gracefully. If Ethel goes, all the people who count will follow her."

"There's more in Andrew than his friends suspect," Wannop observed, laughing.

They let the subject drop, and Florence went in search of her husband.

"What's your opinion of Allinson's new policy, Andrew?" Wannop asked.

"I don't know what to think. One can be too conservative nowadays, but I'll confess that I liked the firm's old-fashioned

staidness better. Even the old dingy offices somehow made you feel that the Allinsons were sober, responsible people. The new place with its brass-work, plate-glass and gilding was somewhat of a shock to me; but the business is flourishing. Mining speculation was quite out of my father's line, but Leonard makes it pay."

"I've a few thousands in the African concern," Wannop remarked with complacent satisfaction. "As it looks as if I'd get my money back in about seven years, I wish I'd put in twice as much."

Hilda let her eyes rest on the fading outline of the grim old peel.

"Well," she said, "I don't agree with Leonard's methods. They're vulgarly assertive, and the new offices strike me as being out of place. Allinson's ought to be more dignified. Even when we stole cattle from the Scots in the old days we did so in a gentlemanly way."

"Is stealing ever gentlemanly?" Wannop inquired.

"It's sometimes less mean than it is at others. Though I've no doubt that we robbed the Armstrongs and the Elliots, I can't think that we plundered our neighbors or took a bribe to shut our eyes when the Scots moss-troopers were riding up the dale. The Allinsons couldn't have betrayed the English cause, as some of the Borderers did."

"No," said Wannop, "it would certainly have been against their traditions. And in times that we know more about, nobody has

ever questioned the honor of the House."

Andrew looked up with a reserved smile.

"I don't think it's likely that anybody ever will."

He got up and started toward the house.

"I must have a talk with Leonard," he said.

When he had left them, Wannop turned to the others.

"Now and then you can see the old stock in Andrew; and, after all, he has a controlling interest in the firm."

"Andrew may not do much good," Hilda declared, "but he'll do Allinson's no harm. He'll stick to the best of the old traditions." She paused with a laugh. "Perhaps we're silly in our family pride and sometimes think ourselves better than our neighbors with very little reason; but it's a clean pride. We're a mercantile family, but Allinson's has always ranked with the Bank of England."

When Andrew reached the library, his brother-in-law sat at a writing-table on which stood a tall silver lamp. The light fell in a sharply defined circle on the polished floor, which ran back beyond it into shadow. The windows at the western end were open and, for it was not quite dark yet, the long rows of bookcases, dimly visible against the wall, emphasized the spaciousness of the room. The scent of flowers that drifted in was mingled with the smell of a cigar, and as Andrew's footsteps echoed through the room Leonard laid down his pen. The strong light fell upon him, showing his thin face and tall, spare figure. His hair receded somewhat from his high forehead, and he had

the colorless complexion of a man who lives much indoors; but his eyes were singularly penetrating. Dressed with fastidious neatness he had an air of elegance and, by comparison, made Andrew, who was of robuster build, look heavy and awkward.

"I'm glad of an excuse for stopping," he said. "Will you sit down and smoke?"

"What are you doing? I thought you came here for a rest," said Andrew, lighting a cigarette.

"The firm is a hard task-master, and it's difficult to get a few minutes undisturbed in town. That's why I brought these papers down. Writing a prospectus is a business which demands both caution and imagination. Would you like to see the draft?"

"I thought a boundless optimism was the most essential thing," Andrew replied, taking the paper handed him. "You're moderate," he continued when he had read it. "Ten per cent. is all you promise, though as far as my experience goes, twenty's the more usual thing."

"Allinson's does not promise more than it can fulfill."

"That's true and quite in accordance with my views. Until lately, however, prospectuses were very much out of our line."

Leonard was surprised and annoyed. Andrew was associating himself with the business in an unusual manner; although he had a right to do so.

"If there's anything you wish to ask, I shall be glad to explain it."

"These underwritten shares – I suppose you're letting the

fellows have them below par? Is that because you expect any difficulty in getting the money?"

"No; any project we're connected with will be taken up. Still, when you launch a good thing, it's policy to let a few members of the ring in at bottom and give them a share of the pickings."

Andrew frowned.

"It sounds like a bribe. But these pickings? They must come out of the shareholders' pockets."

"In the end, they do."

"Though I'm not a business man, it seems to me that capital put into shafts and reducing plant stands a fair chance of being productive. That spent in starting the concern is largely wasted."

"We are spending less than usual. May I ask what your idea of the object of floating a company is?"

"Mine would be the expectation of getting a good dividend on the stock I took in it."

Leonard looked amused.

"Excellent, so far as it goes; but there's sometimes a little more than that."

Andrew sat silent a while. Then he said:

"I gather that this new scheme will be subscribed for because Allinson's guarantees it."

"It's impossible to guarantee a mining scheme, but, in a sense, you're right. The firm's name will count."

"Well," said Andrew, "I'd like to go to Canada and take some share in starting things – you see, I know the country. Then, as

I suppose some of my money will be put into the business, you might, perhaps, make me a director. I'd be of no use in London, but I might do something in Canada."

Leonard was surprised, but the suggestion pleased him. The name of Andrew Allinson would have its influence on investors.

"It is not a bad idea," he said. "We'll see what can be done."

Andrew then changed the subject.

"How's business generally?"

"Pretty fair; we have made some profitable ventures in South America. You will remember my bringing Señor Piñola down? We made some money out of him."

"How?" Andrew asked without much interest. "The fellow had a dash of the nigger or Indian in him."

"He was Dictator Valhermosa's secret agent."

"Then you supported Valhermosa's administration during the unsuccessful revolution?"

"We did. They wanted to re-arm the troops quietly in preparation; Piñola came over to buy new rifles and machine-guns, and as he couldn't pay ready money we arranged the matter. There was a risk, but we got some valuable concessions as security, and turned them over afterward to a German syndicate on excellent terms."

Andrew's face was grim when he looked up.

"And I gave Piñola two days' shooting instead of pitching him into the nearest bog! To think of Allinson's backing that brute Valhermosa is somewhat of a shock."

"What do you know about him?"

"A good deal. Warren, the naturalist who was with me in Canada, spent some time in his country and has friends there. He used to talk about the things he'd seen, and the memory of his stories makes me savage yet, because I believe them. I have other acquaintances who have lived in parts of the world that business men don't often reach. If you don't know how rubber's collected and minerals are worked in countries where there's a subject native population, you'd better not find out." Andrew broke into a harsh laugh.

"You didn't suspect that while the firm helped the Dictator, I, its sleeping partner, gave Warren a check for the rebels, and I'd like to think that every cartridge my money bought accounted for one of the brutes who flog women to death and burn Indians at the stake when the revenue falls off."

Leonard looked grieved.

"I'm sorry to hear this; though it's possible that Warren was exaggerating. Anyway, we're out of it now. The deal was a matter of business – we couldn't be expected to know what was being done in the back-country, and after all it's no concern of ours."

Lighting another cigarette, Andrew smoked half of it in silence.

"The thing will hardly bear speaking of," he said finally; "and the fault is partly mine for not taking the interest in the firm I should have done."

He paused and looked Leonard steadily in the face.

"From what I've heard, those concessions may be good for another two or three years; and then, when Valhermosa's victims revolt again, if Allinson's can take any hand in the matter, it will be on the other side. Now we'll let the subject drop."

Leonard acquiesced with a tolerant gesture, though he was disconcerted by Andrew's tone. It implied that his opinions would have to be considered in the future.

"By the way," Leonard said, "there's a matter I must mention, though it's delicate. I saw Judson this morning and he grumbled about the liberality you have shown of late."

"Judson's niggardliness has lost me one or two good tenants."

"It's possible; but he told me that you had let The Firs to Mrs. Olcott for ten pounds less than he could easily have obtained. As he's a talkative fellow and nothing is kept secret here, do you think you were wise in letting her have the place below its value?"

"You have been given a hint, Leonard. What do you know about Mrs. Olcott?"

"Nothing. The point is that nobody else seems to know anything. I merely wished to suggest that it might be well to be more cautious."

The color crept into Andrew's face.

"The next time you hear Mrs. Olcott mentioned you may say that her husband is a friend of mine; that he served with credit as captain through the recent war; and that he now holds a government post in West Africa, though the climate compelled him to leave his wife at home. Now, would you like a game of

pool?"

Leonard said that he would be busy for a while, and when Andrew went out he leaned back in his chair to think. On the death of Andrew's father, he had been left in control of the business, though, as he had not brought much capital into the firm, his share of the profits was not large. There was a good deal to be paid over to members of the family and, getting tired of slow and steady progress, he had of late launched out into bold speculations.

Since his first advancement he had looked on his brother-in-law as an obstacle in his way, and had quietly strengthened his own position. He had made Andrew's brief business experience distasteful to him, by seeing that the young man was kept busy at monotonous tasks that he could take no interest in. Afterward, when Andrew retired from the counting-house, he had missed no opportunity for suggesting that he was right in doing so, because he was obviously unfitted for a commercial career. Now and then he went farther and hinted that the young man was not gifted with much intelligence. It was, however, done cleverly; nobody realized that the impression that Andrew was something of a fool had originated with his brother-in-law, but in time it was generally held. This promised to make Leonard's position safer, because the firm was a family one, and though Andrew held a good deal of the capital, his opinion would not have much weight with his relatives.

Nevertheless, to some extent, Leonard was honest in what

he had done. Andrew was undoubtedly not clever and Leonard believed that for him to have any say in matters would be detrimental to the firm. Now that he was inclined to assert his rights, it would be well to send him to Canada. This implied some risk, as there were matters connected with the mine which Leonard preferred to conceal, but it was unlikely that Andrew would make any undesirable discovery. However, as Andrew's inaptitude for business was taken for granted, it might be wise to give the family a reason for entrusting him with the post, and Leonard thought it could be supplied by making the most of his acquaintance with Mrs. Olcott. Having arrived at this conclusion, he dismissed the matter and busied himself with the prospectus.

CHAPTER III

A COUNCIL

Hot sunshine flooded the Ghyllside lawn, but there was a belt of shadow beneath a copper beech, where a family group had gathered. Leonard sat in a basket-chair, talking to Mrs. Fenwood, an elderly widow with an austere expression; his wife and Gertrude Wannop were whispering over their teacups; Wannop, red-faced and burly, stood beside Robert Allinson, a solemn-looking clergyman.

"We have been here half an hour and not a word has been said yet upon the subject everybody's itching to talk about. We're a decorous lot," Wannop remarked, surveying the others with amusement. "Personally, I should be glad if we were allowed to go home without its being broached. It's hardly the thing to discuss Andrew's shortcomings round his table."

"There are times when it's a duty to overcome one's delicacy," Robert replied. "If I have been correctly informed, the matter demands attention. Hitherto the Allinsons have never given their neighbors cause to criticize their conduct."

"None of them? I seem to remember –"

"None of them," Robert interposed firmly. "There was once a malicious story about Arthur, but I am glad to say it was disproved. But this Mrs. Olcott, whom I haven't seen – I suppose

she's attractive?"

Wannop smiled.

"Distinctly so; what's more, she has a forlorn and pathetic air which is highly fetching. Still, I'm convinced that there's no harm in her."

"A married woman living apart from her husband!" Robert exclaimed severely. "I understand that Andrew is at her house now, and I must confess that after walking some distance I feel hurt at his not being here to receive us."

"He didn't know you were coming," Wannop pointed out, and added with a roguish air: "We have all been young and I don't suppose you used to look the other way when you met a pretty girl; but I'll go bail Andrew only visits her out of charity. However, if you are determined to have your say, you may as well begin and get it over."

Robert left him and addressed Leonard in a formal tone.

"I am told that Andrew is going out to assist in the development of the new mine and wishes to be made a director. As a relative and a shareholder, may I ask if you consider him fit for the post?"

Leonard had been waiting for an opening, and he welcomed the inquiry.

"Andrew has every right to demand the position, which I could not refuse." He paused, for the next suggestion must be skilfully conveyed. "As it happens, his abilities hardly enter into the question. It is merely needful that we should have a representative

on the spot to whom we can send instructions, and I dare say he will get a good deal of the fishing and shooting he enjoys. All matters of importance will be decided in London."

"Then I take it that his inexperience and inaptitude can do the company no harm?"

Leonard was grateful to him for so plainly expressing his meaning.

"Oh, no! Besides, I imagine that the change will be beneficial in several ways."

Glancing at the others, he knew that he had said enough. It would have been difficult for any of the family to cite a remark of his in open disparagement of his brother-in-law, though he had cunningly fostered their disbelief in him. His wife, however, was endowed with courage as well as candor.

"There is nothing to be gained by shutting one's eyes to the truth," she observed. "We all know that Andrew's visits to this woman are being talked about. What is more serious is that he induced her to come here, and let her have The Firs on purely nominal terms."

"Is it so bad as that?" Mrs. Fenwood, with a shocked look, turned to the clergyman, as if begging him to deal with the painful situation.

"The thing must be stopped; nipped in the bud," said Robert firmly. "I agree with Leonard that our infatuated relative should be sent to Canada at once."

Wannop smiled.

"It strikes me as fortunate that Andrew is willing to go."

"It's a favorable sign," said Mrs. Fenwood. "He may be struggling against the creature's influence, in which case it's our duty to assist him."

"That wasn't what I meant. I've a suspicion that we have fallen into a habit of underestimating Andrew's abilities and determination." Wannop looked hard at Leonard. "You are going to put him into a position of responsibility and teach him to use his power. Are you prepared for the possible consequences?"

Nobody paid much attention to this, and Leonard after a moment's hesitation dismissed the matter. The Allinsons regarded Wannop as a thoughtless person whose moral code was somewhat lax. Nevertheless, he was shrewd and had read Andrew's character better than Leonard.

"If Andrew ever wishes to have his say in business matters, I should have neither the desire nor the authority to object," Leonard said.

"Then we may rest assured that everything will be done to facilitate his departure for Canada," Robert said decidedly. "There is only another point – I wonder whether Mrs. Olcott could by any means be induced to leave the neighborhood."

Wannop's eyes sparkled angrily. He was easy-going, but there was a chivalrous vein in him.

"It would be wiser to leave the hatching of the plot until Andrew has sailed!" he said indignantly.

"Plot is not the right word; and you are mistaken if you

imagine that any fear of Andrew's displeasure would deter me in a matter of duty. With the welfare of the parish at heart – "

Wannop checked him.

"Duty's a good deal easier when it chimes with one's inclinations; and the welfare of the parish isn't threatened by Mrs. Olcott. There are, however, one or two abuses you could put your finger on to-morrow if you liked, though I dare say it would get you into trouble."

Robert reddened and Mrs. Wannop made her husband a peremptory sign to stop.

"I think we needn't talk about the matter any more," she said. "It is decided that Andrew shall be sent to Canada."

They changed the subject, and a few minutes later Wannop left them. Crossing the lawn, he met Hilda in a shrubby walk.

"Where have you been?" he asked. "I haven't seen you since we came."

"Florence found me an errand that kept me out of the way," said Hilda pointedly. "Now what have you and the others been talking about?"

"I mustn't betray a confidence," answered Wannop with twinkling eyes. "Still, I dare say you can guess."

"Of course! They were discussing my erring brother. Aren't they silly?"

"I think so. It's curious that you and I, whose opinions don't count for much, should venture to differ with the rest."

Hilda gave him a grateful glance.

"But we are the ones who see most clearly. I have always felt that you are to be trusted."

He made her a humorous bow.

"I must try to deserve such confidence."

"Don't be foolish; this is serious. They mean well, but they're all wrong about Andrew. Of course, I make fun of him now and then, but I'm very fond of him. It's a mistake to think he's stupid; and Leonard's responsible for it."

"I'll admit that something of the kind has occurred to me," Wannop said.

Hilda hesitated.

"Well," she said, "I have never had much confidence in Leonard, though the others think him perfect. I've an idea that all along he has been gently pushing Andrew aside, making him look silly, and undermining the influence he ought to have. Now he's sending him to Canada – I very much wonder why? He has some reason."

Wannop started.

"My dear, your suspicions go a trifle farther than mine. You may be right, though it's not nice to think so. But where does all this lead?"

"Andrew may need supporters who don't altogether believe in the immaculate Leonard some day. I think, if needful, he could count on us."

"And on nobody else?"

"Not until the others understood; and it would be hard to make

them see."

"Uncommonly hard," Wannop admitted. "Well, Hilda, you and I will be allies. We can conspire together unsuspected, because we are the two who are not supposed to count – you because you're too young and charming; I because I haven't the fine moral fastidiousness and air of distinction that marks the Allinsons. But I'll let you into a secret – Gertrude's wavering in her ideas about Andrew: I'm perverting her."

"There's something I'd better tell you. I met Mrs. Olcott half an hour ago and I stopped and spoke. I like her – there isn't the least reason why I shouldn't – and I'm sorry for her. I know she feels being left alone, and we're going to be friends. Now if the others should try to make things unpleasant?"

"I imagine Robert means mischief."

"I was afraid of it," said Hilda. "Of course, he's as silly and unable to see things properly as an owl in daylight, but solemn stupid people often pass for being wise, and he might do harm. If he tries, can you stop him? I know Andrew would like it."

Wannop made a sign of rather dubious assent.

"As I'm unromantically stout, getting elderly, and devoid of personal charm, I might perhaps venture to interfere in this matter. After all, there's a sense in which Andrew is undoubtedly to blame. Why do you let him go to The Firs so often?"

"If I should give him a hint that people are talking, it would only make him angry. You know he really is slow at understanding now and then."

They strolled back to the party, which soon afterward broke up, for although Hilda begged them to wait for dinner nobody seemed anxious to meet Andrew. When they had gone, Hilda turned to Leonard with a smile.

"Had an interesting talk?" she asked. "You all looked so serious that I was afraid to join you."

Leonard glanced at her sharply.

"As you grow older you'll find that there are matters which can't be treated humorously."

"It's possible," Hilda agreed. "Still, that remark is too much in Robert's style. Improving conversation is apt to get tiresome."

She moved away and Leonard watched her with thoughtful eyes. He believed he enjoyed her sisters' confidence, but he was doubtful of Hilda.

Three weeks later Andrew sailed, and soon after he had done so Wannop called one afternoon at The Firs, where he was received by Mrs. Olcott in the garden. He thought she looked harassed, but he had expected this.

"I believe you have met my wife," he began, taking the canvas chair she indicated.

"Yes," said Mrs. Olcott. "She called on me and, if I remember right, stayed five minutes."

This was not encouraging.

"You know my sister-in-law, Hilda, better?" Wannop ventured.

Mrs. Olcott's expression softened.

"That is true; I have reason to be grateful to her."

"Hilda is a very nice girl. I verily believe that we are fond of each other, and as I am more than double her age, she now and then favors me with her confidence. In fact, she suggested that I might be able to help you out of a difficulty."

His hostess studied him carefully. He was burly and looked hot after his walk, but he had a reassuring smile and his red face seemed to indicate good-nature. She thought that he could be trusted.

"It's about the house," she said. "I don't know where else to go and it looks as if I might be turned out."

That this should distress her hinted at some degree of poverty, and Wannop felt compassionate. She was young and inexperienced, and had been coldly treated by her neighbors.

"How is that?" he asked.

After a moment of irresolution Mrs. Olcott decided to tell him.

"Mr. Allinson arranged about the house. Perhaps I shouldn't have allowed this, but when he was wounded in the war my husband carried him out of reach of the Boer fire."

"Ah! Andrew ought to have made that clear. But won't you go on with the explanation?"

"Mr. Allinson told me that no papers were needed, I was to pay the rent to a man called Judson. He came here and said that there had been some mistake. The rent was ten pounds more and I must share the cost of the alterations, while the field adjoining,

which must go with The Firs, would be another extra. When I declared I couldn't pay all this he said I was undoubtedly liable, but he could find another tenant who would take the house off my hands."

"I see a clerical finger in this pie," said Wannop half aloud, and smiled at his hostess. "I beg your pardon. I suppose you didn't know that this is Andrew Allinson's house."

Mrs. Olcott started and colored.

"I did not know. But if it is, I can't understand why his agent —"

"Somebody is back of him. Now we had better be candid. I venture to believe you can confide in me."

"What proof can I have of that? You are a connection of the Allinsons, who seem bent on persecuting me. Have they sent you here?"

"Hilda did," Wannop replied with quiet good-humor. "Perhaps I had better say that on some points she and I are not quite in accord with the rest of the family. I suppose Andrew promised your husband to look after you until his return?"

Mrs. Olcott agreed, for her suspicions about his errand had vanished. Wannop mused for a few moments.

"I think you should stay here and fight it out until he comes back," he said. "After all, your neighbors are honest as far as they see, and you'll find them ready to make amends."

Mrs. Olcott's eyes sparkled, but she hesitated.

"I'm afraid I can't hold out. They have attacked me where I'm

weakest."

"Will you leave the matter of the house to me? It can be put right."

"Why are you willing to take the trouble?"

Wannop laughed.

"For one thing, I enjoy putting a spoke in the parson's wheel; for another, Andrew made you a promise, and the Allinsons like to keep their word."

He got up and held out his hand.

"I'll have a talk with Mr. Judson. Show your courage and hold your ground. You'll be glad you did so by and by."

The next morning Wannop called at the agent's office in a neighboring town. He was shown into a dingy room, where an elderly man with spectacles received him with deference.

"I've been looking into accounts, Judson," Wannop began abruptly. "After deducting your commission and the cost of the repairs you agreed to, I find that the return on my property for the past year is small. Now I met Maxwell the other day and he hinted that it might be managed to better advantage."

The agent looked alarmed.

"I understood you didn't wish to put the screw on your tenants; and it isn't good policy."

"No," said Wannop; "I want to be fair. I don't think Andrew Allinson would wish any undue pressure put on his tenants either. As we talk over things now and then, I know his views."

Judson pondered this without answering, and Wannop

resumed:

"My business and Andrew's should be worth a good deal to you, though Maxwell seemed to think that both could be improved."

"Maxwell couldn't get you a penny more than I have got," Judson declared. "I should be very sorry if you contemplated a change."

"I shouldn't do so without a strong reason. You look after the Reverend Robert Allinson's property, but your commission on it can't be large."

"It is not," said Judson, beginning to understand where the other's remarks led.

"Well," went on Wannop, "I saw Mrs. Olcott yesterday, and she mentioned the misunderstanding about her lease. I may tell you that Mrs. Wannop and Miss Allinson are friends of hers."

Judson was surprised, but decided that if he must offend either Wannop or the clergyman, it would better be the latter.

"Mr. Andrew called here in a hurry and said he had got a tenant for The Firs and I was to have some alterations made. He was driving, and as his horse was restive he ran out before we could talk over details."

Wannop thought this was correct, for Andrew was sometimes careless.

"Atkinson will take the field off your hands. It's not usual to charge a tenant with needful repairs; and you mustn't be hard on Mrs. Olcott about the rent. Perhaps you had better go over and

put things straight with her."

Judson promised to do so and Wannop took out some papers.

"Here's a more important matter. I've decided to buy Bell's place, and you can see his agent and the architect as soon as convenient."

He rode away, knowing that his hints would be attended to. During the evening he met Hilda.

"I've seen Mrs. Olcott and Judson," he told her. "It's very unlikely that she'll have any more trouble about The Firs."

"That's splendid!" cried Hilda. "But how did you manage it?"

Wannop chuckled.

"My dear girl, an explanation isn't always desirable. When you know how a thing's done it spoils the trick."

"Oh, well," said Hilda, "it doesn't matter, but you have a suspiciously complacent look. One could imagine that you felt satisfied with yourself."

"There's some truth in that," Wannop laughed. "I feel that we have held our own against the more brilliant members of the family. But here's Robert!"

The clergyman appeared around a turn in the road and joined them.

"You seem amused," he remarked. "May I share the joke?"

"The point's involved," Wannop said. "However, you'll agree that the wisest people's plans sometimes fail."

"I can't deny it," said Robert, looking puzzled. "Still, I fail to understand what the failure of wise people's plans has to do with

us."

"As a modest man," said Wannop, "I'll admit that it doesn't seem to have much to do with me."

CHAPTER IV

THE LAKE OF SHADOWS

The evening was gloomy and there was a boisterous onshore wind when Jake Carnally stood on a sawmill dump, looking out across the Lake of Shadows. Its troubled waters reflected the color of the leaden clouds above, though they were laced with tumbling foam, and short, white-topped waves broke angrily upon the sweating sawdust at Carnally's feet. The tall pines that rolled back from the beach had faded to a deep somber hue; the distance was blurred and gray. The lake is a large one, stretching many leagues to the south, but it is strewn with forest-clad islets, and those inshore obstructed Carnally's view. On the nearest of them wisps of smoke drifted out from among the shadowy trunks and an aromatic smell of burning cedar reached him across the spray-swept sound. Holiday-makers from Winnipeg had pitched a summer camp there.

Seeing nothing out on the lake, he turned and glanced past the tall iron chimney-stacks toward a row of pretty wooden houses beside the river mouth. A moving cloud of sooty smoke floated above them, and he knew that a west-bound train was pulling out of the station. Then a man came up to him.

"Why, Jake!" he cried. "You look as if you'd been up against it! When did you come down?"

Carnally smiled. He was tall, and sparely but strongly built. His knee-boots were dilapidated; his brown overalls badly torn.

"This afternoon," he answered. "Took the river for it with two of the boys, and a mighty tough time we had in getting through. Water was on the rock portages and we had to shove round through the bush. It didn't seem worth while getting out my glad rags, as I have to take the new boss up early to-morrow."

"Looks as if he'd got lost," said the other. "I guess you heard he left for Duck Island with two of the Company's roustabouts day before yesterday. They hadn't much grub with them, but he allowed he'd be back this morning."

"What did he go to Duck Island for?"

"To prospect the fireclay bed. Seemed to think the Company might put up a smelter."

"It's early for that," said Carnally with a grin. "They've got to raise milling ore and pack it down first. I suppose you've seen him; what's he like? I don't even know his name."

"Big man, about your age. Kind of slow, thinks before he speaks, but for an English sucker he shows some sense. It's my notion he's a stayer."

"Were they river-jacks he took along?"

"Struck me as more like railroad shovelers, though they could paddle in smooth water. As there's a nasty sea running in the open, you'd better look for him. If those fellows wreck his canoe and he has to spend the night on an island with nothing to eat while you sit in the hotel, it's steep chances he fires you."

"I don't care two bits whether I get fired or no. The Rain Bluff Mining Company is the meanest business proposition I've ever run up against, except the Mappin Transport, which is worse. All the same, I guess I'll have to go. If you're going back to the hotel, you might tell the boys to bring my canoe and blankets."

The man promised to do so, and Carnally sat down out of the wind to smoke until the craft arrived. He was tired by an arduous journey down a river swollen by heavy rain, which, throughout a good deal of its course, poured over ledges and ran furiously between fangs of rock. It had needed nerve and skill to shoot the rapids, and to force a passage over the rugged portages had taxed the party's strength. Now he must launch out again and paddle, perhaps all night, in search of his missing chief.

The canoe came lurching to the foot of the dump, and as there was a chance of swamping her alongside it, Carnally ran out on a treacherous drift-log and sprang on board. A man untrained to river work would have upset the craft or gone through her bottom, but Carnally came down safely and seized the steering paddle.

"This is rough on us, boys, but it has to be done," he said. "Shove her straight out for the gap."

His companions were wiry, dark-faced and dark-haired men whose French-Canadian blood had in it a strain of the Indian – hard to beat at river work or travel through the wilds. Toiling strenuously, they drove the light craft over the short seas, with the spray whipping their faces and the foam washing in at the

bows. Now and then they made no headway for a minute or two against a savage gust, but when it lulled they slowly forged on again, though they knew that to find a canoe among the maze of islands was as difficult a task as could be set them. When they labored out into the more open spaces of the lake as dusk was closing in, Carnally roused himself to keen alertness. Here the waves were dangerously high and an error of judgment might involve a capsizing.

As it happened, the craft they sought was battling with the breeze some distance offshore, and Andrew Allinson, kneeling astern, glanced anxiously to leeward when he dared take his eyes off the threatening seas ahead. They rolled down on the canoe, ridged with foam, and it needed quick work with the paddle to help her over them. To make things worse, she was half full of water, and nobody could spare a hand to bale it out. Andrew was not an expert at canoeing, but he had once made a journey up the Canadian waterways and had been a yachtsman at home; and when the breeze freshened and the waves got steeper it had become evident that neither of his companions was capable of managing the craft in broken water. He had accordingly taken the helmsman's post and after running before the sea for the greater part of the day without a meal, had discovered at dusk a long ridge of rocks and pines looming up not far ahead.

They lost it in the growing darkness, for Andrew knew the risk of trying to land among big boulders on which the surf was breaking. He must paddle out and clear the end of the island,

in the hope of finding a harbor on its sheltered side; but it still lay to lee of him, and breaking waves and savage gusts drove them nearer the threatening shore. He was wet through and very tired, one galled hand bled freely, and the party had consumed the last of their provisions at breakfast. This was the cause of the distressful stitch in his side, and he was painfully cramped, but he knew that he had to choose between paddling and trying to crawl out of the surf on a rugged beach amid the wreckage of the canoe. So far as the other two could judge, he was still serene, and now and then his voice reached them, hoarse but cheerful:

"A bit of a lull, boys; drive her at it in the smooth!"

He could see nothing to leeward except flying spray, but he was not deceived by the emptiness. The island must be close to them. He did not think he could clear it, but he meant to fight until the last moment.

"Put some weight into the stroke! We'll make a few yards now!" he cried.

"Hold on!" shouted one of the others. "What's that?"

A hail reached them faintly and, when they answered, rose again, a little nearer.

"Are you the Rain Bluff crowd?"

"Sure we are!"

"Then follow us!" cried a voice, as the blurred shape of a canoe appeared ahead. "Don't let her sag to lee; keep right astern!"

They got the canoe round, stern to sea, in some peril of being

overturned, and drove away at a furious pace, with the other craft lurching before them through the spray. In a few minutes shadowy pines appeared, then a strip of foam-swept beach, at which Andrew glanced anxiously. He could not turn back now; the dark, froth-ridged seas drove him on, but in a few more minutes the end of the beach slipped past and a narrow strip of water with pines about it opened up. They ran in, the wild lurching ceased, and they paddled through smooth water, until the craft ahead gently took the beach. Andrew now realized that he had mistaken two islands for one, and was in the sound between them. It was very dark among the trees when he came ashore, but he heard one of the strangers asking for the boss, and answered him.

"Sit down out of the wind while we make a fire and get supper," said the other. "I understood that your grub might be running out, so we brought some along."

The man's voice sounded familiar, but Andrew was too tired and cold to exert his memory. Finding a sheltered place among the rocks, he waited until he was called. Then he saw that a fire had been lighted, a shelter of bark and branches made, and a meal which looked very inviting laid out beside it. All had been done with remarkable neatness as well as celerity, and Andrew recognized the experienced bushman's skill. Then the firelight fell on his pilot's face, and he started.

"Carnally, by all that's wonderful!" he cried.

Carnally gazed at him in astonishment for a moment or two,

and then his expression grew reserved.

"Yes," he said; "that's my name."

"Then you ought to remember me!"

"Sure! You're Lieutenant Allinson, late of the Imperial Yeomanry, and, I understand, in charge of the Rain Bluff mining operations. I'm the mine boss's assistant, at your service."

It was the greeting of a subordinate to his superior, and Andrew was puzzled. He owed a good deal to the man and they had treated each other as comrades in South Africa when, as had happened once or twice, the accidents of the campaign had enabled them to sink the difference of rank. Now it was the inferior who obviously meant to bear their relative positions in mind; and that is not the Canadian employee's usual attitude toward his master. The man he had known and liked as Sergeant Carnally had rather pointedly declined to see that he wished to shake hands.

"I'm very glad to run across you again and to find that we shall be working together," Andrew said.

"Mutual pleasure," Carnally replied. "Sit right down; supper will be getting cold."

The united party gathered round the fire, sharing the meal, but Andrew failed in his attempts to lead Carnally into friendly talk. The man answered readily, but he would not continue a conversation and there was a strange reserve about him. Indeed, Andrew was glad when the meal was over; and soon afterward he lay down, wrapped in damp blankets, and went to sleep. The

next morning the wind had fallen, the lake lay shimmering with light under a cloudless sky, and they paddled smoothly between islands covered with dusky pines whose reflections quivered in the glassy water, until they reached the little wooden town. When they landed, Andrew touched Carnally's arm.

"Will you have supper with me to-night at my hotel?" he asked.

"Sorry I can't," said Carnally. "Got to meet a man at the other place. If it will suit, I'll come over during the evening."

Andrew told him to do so, though he was piqued. He took supper with Mappin, the head of a transport and contracting company with which it seemed he was to have business relations. Mappin, he thought, was about thirty years of age; a powerfully built man of city type, with sleek black hair and a fleshy but forceful face. His manner to the waitresses jarred on Andrew, for he gazed at one who was pretty with insolent admiration, and bullied another who was nervous and plain. In conversation he was brusque and opinionated; but Andrew was soon convinced that he possessed marked business ability. After supper they sat smoking on a wooden balcony while the clean fragrance of the pines and the murmur of running water filled the cooling air. Andrew, who was by no means oversensitive, was unpleasantly affected by the way Mappin bit off the end of his cigar. He had large and very white teeth, but his lower lip was unusually thick, and there was something suggestive of an animal in the trifling action which made it repulsive, though on the whole the fellow

was coarsely handsome.

"I noticed a very pretty wooden house on one of the islands we passed this morning," Andrew said. "Whom does it belong to?"

"You must mean Frobisher's place. Calls it a summer camp, though it's fitted up luxuriously. He's from across the frontier and a bit of a sport; the Americans are coming north largely now for shooting and fishing. However, as he'll be here soon, you're sure to meet him."

"A pleasant man?"

Mappin laughed.

"He can be very dry and you'd find it hard to get ahead of him; but he's hospitable, and you can't get a dinner like he puts up out of Montreal. I'll take you across some evening; he's by way of being a friend of mine. Then Geraldine Frobisher's a picture: figure like classical sculpture, face with each feature molded just as it ought to be. It's a feast for the eyes to watch that girl walk."

Andrew had occasionally listened to similar descriptions of young women, but he resented something in Mappin's appreciation of Miss Frobisher. It struck him as wholly physical and gross.

"Well," he said curtly, "I'll think over the matters we have talked about and let you know my decision."

Mappin looked surprised, as if he had taken Andrew's assent to his suggestions for granted.

"No hurry, but you'll have to write," he said. "As you're going up to the mine, I'll pull out on the Toronto express in the morning."

And now there are some letters I must get off by the mail."

Andrew was not sorry to have him go; and when Carnally entered the balcony a few minutes later he was struck by the contrast between the two men. The bushman was lean and wiry; there was a lithe grace in his quick movements, and a hint of the ascetic in his keen, bronzed face. One could imagine that this man's body was his well-trained servant and would never become his pampered master.

"Sit down, Jake," said Andrew, determined to penetrate his reserve. "Take a cigar. Now, we got on pretty well in the hospital and the prison camp, didn't we?"

Carnally's eyes twinkled when he had lighted his cigar.

"That's so; I wasn't in your squadron then. Besides, you've got moved up since; you're colonel now."

"In a sense, I am. I don't know how you rank yet, but I have some say in choosing my officers. But we'll drop this fencing. Why did you hold off last night when I meant to be friendly?"

Carnally considered before he answered.

"I know my place; you're my boss. If my attitude didn't please you, tell me what you expect."

"I'll try. To begin with, when I speak as the Company's representative, I must have what I want done."

"That's right. I'm agreeable, so long as I hold my job."

"Don't you mean to hold it?"

"That depends. I haven't made up my mind yet."

"Then I want a man that I can rely on to help me through any

trouble I meet," Andrew went on. "One that I can consult, when it's needful, with confidence."

"It's quite likely that we might look at things from a different point of view."

Andrew was frankly puzzled by his companion's manner. His reserve and lack of response were not in accordance with what he knew of Carnally.

"Well," he asked, "what are you going to do?"

"We might give the thing a trial. Do you know much about mining?"

"Nothing," said Andrew. "I'll admit that to you. I don't think you'll take advantage of it."

"But how did you come to be sent over in charge of the mine if you don't know your work?"

"I'm a director of the Company, and a good deal of the family money has gone into it."

Carnally looked grave at this, and sat silent a few moments studying his companion.

"Did you have anything to do with fixing up things on this side?" he asked.

"No. My brother-in-law, Hathersage, came over and made all arrangements. I'm rather ignorant about them."

"Then he didn't take you much into his confidence about this mining proposition?"

"No; I can't say that he did."

"And you expect a fair return on your money and mean to see

that your friends who have invested don't get left? That's all?"

"Of course; I've no claim to anything else."

"That," said the Canadian dryly, "is a point on which there might be some difference of opinion. You want the shareholders to make a good thing?"

"Yes. The firm has backed this mine; I believe the name helped to float the scheme. That makes me responsible to the people who found the money."

Carnally gave him a long searching glance, and his expression changed.

"Well," he said with an air of quiet resolve, "I guess I'll have to see you through."

When Carnally left a half-hour later he met a storekeeper of the town outside the hotel.

"You're looking serious, Jake," the man remarked. "Been with your new boss, I heard. What do you think of him?"

"Well," Carnally answered gravely, "it's my idea he's white."

"Then you're not going to quit, as you talked of doing?"

"No, sir; I guess the new boss and I will pull along."

"If he's square, why's he working with Mappin and the other grafters?"

Carnally laughed.

"That's a point I don't understand yet. But it's my notion there's going to be less graft about this Rain Bluff proposition than you fellows think."

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST SUSPICIONS

Trails of mist floated among the pines that stretched their ragged branches across the swollen river. Though there had been rain in abundance, it flowed crystal clear out of the trackless wilderness of rock and forest that rolls north from the Lake of Shadows toward Hudson Bay. This rugged belt, which extends from Ottawa River to the fertile prairie, had until very recent days been regarded as valueless to man, except for the purpose of trapping fur-bearing animals. The pines are, for the most part, too small for milling, and there is little soil among the curiously rounded rocks. Moreover, the agents of the Hudson Bay Company, which long held dominion over the Canadian wilds, did not encourage the intrusion of adventurous settlers into their fur preserves. At last, however, the discovery that there were valuable minerals in the rocks was made, and hardy treasure-seekers braved the rigors of the North.

Andrew and Carnally knelt in the bottom of their canoe, plying the paddle, while a big half-breed stood upright, using an iron-shod pole when the nature of the bottom permitted it. The stream ran strong against them; they were wet, and had laboriously forced a passage between big boulders, up rapids, and a few slacker reaches, since early morning. A fine drizzle

obscured their view, but so far as they could see, the prospect was far from cheerful. Ahead, stony ledges broke the froth-streaked surface of the flood; the pines were green by the waterside, growing with vigor where they could find a hold among the rocks, but farther back they were small and tangled, leaning athwart each other, stripped of half their branches. Some had been blackened by fire, and there were unsightly avenues of tottering charred logs. The picture was dreary and desolate.

"Isn't it getting time for supper?" Andrew asked as they rounded a bend in the river.

"Not quite. Besides, there's a Mappin camp not far ahead, and if we can make it we'll be saved some trouble."

Andrew nodded, for he had discovered that cooking supper and arranging a shelter for the night is a tiresome business when one is wet and worn out by a long day's journey.

"Then we'd better go on. I suppose Mappin's boys are road-making?"

"Yes," said Carnally. "Transport is going to be one of the Company's biggest expenses. Though the river is available it pays to cut out the worst of the portages. Packing ore over a mile or two of slippery rock costs money, and the river makes a big bend full of rapids a little higher up."

"I remember now. The road is to go straight across by the old fur-trade traverse, and when it's finished we'll put wagons on. From the looks of the country it will be an undertaking."

"Sure!" agreed Carnally. "Still, if you get it done at a

reasonable figure, it ought to pay."

"It has struck me that we're giving a good deal of work to Mappin. Ever since we left the landing we have come across his men."

"It's usual to put jobs you're unable to attend to into a contractor's hands," Carnally replied.

The men were now on more friendly terms, but Andrew had noticed that his companion was generally content with answering questions and seldom made a suggestion. Moreover, he had an idea that Carnally was quietly studying him. The man's attitude was puzzling, but he thought he would in due time find an explanation.

They paddled on for another half-hour, and then a sharp report rang out of the mist ahead. It was followed by a succession of heavy crashes that might have been made by falling rock, and Carnally turned the canoe's head toward the bank.

"Giant-powder," he explained. "The camp's near by, and the boys haven't quit for supper yet."

On landing, they left the half-breed to look after the canoe, while they followed a narrow track through a belt of dismal tottering pines. A low log-building stood in a clearing and beyond it the new road led up a ravine with rocky slopes. In one place they had been violently rent, for the ground was strewn with great fragments, over which a cloud of dust still floated. A group of men stood a short distance away, as if afraid to approach nearer, and their attitude suggested that something unusual was

going on. As Andrew hurried toward them, two more appeared, staggering out of the dust and vapor in a curious drunken manner and dragging along a third. His limpness and the slack way his arms hung down were unpleasantly suggestive.

"What's happened? Has he been hit by a stone?" Andrew asked the nearest man; but the tall, light-haired fellow shook his head as if he did not understand.

Andrew questioned another, with no better success, and then noticed two others moving cautiously toward the dust and smoke. Their care seemed uncalled for, as the explosion had already occurred; but it was obvious that somebody was lying in need of assistance among the stones brought down by the shot, and Andrew ran forward.

Plunging into the dust he noticed that it had an acrid smell, and a moment later he felt dizzy. Then he was conscious of an intolerable headache and a feeling of nausea. He could hardly see; he was losing control of his limbs; but he struggled on and, overtaking the others, helped to drag out an unconscious man. Then he sat down, gasping, and found it difficult to prevent himself from slipping off the stone.

"I'm sorry," said Carnally, coming up at that moment. "I stopped behind to talk to one of the boys and as I didn't know what you were doing I couldn't warn you. You'll feel better presently."

"What is it?" Andrew asked. "What knocked me and the other fellows over?"

"Giant-powder gas. Some kinds are worse than others, though they're all poisonous. Sit quiet while it works off."

After a while Andrew's head got clearer and the pain less severe, and then Carnally took him to the log-building, where supper was ready. Finding him a seat at the end of a long table, he handed him a pannikin of strong tea. Andrew felt better when he had drunk it, and he began to look about.

The building was a wretched, decrepit hovel. The logs were small and sagged in the middle; one could hardly stand up in the room; and the rain that had run in through the leaking roof stood in pools on the earthen floor. The bunks consisted of two split-board ledges against the walls, littered with dirty, damp blankets and miry clothing which filled the place with a sour, unpleasant smell. The long table which ran up the middle of the one room was crowded with unkempt men, eating voraciously and talking in what Andrew presently recognized as Norwegian, though he thought he caught a word or two of German occasionally. A very neat Chinaman laid a plate before him; but, hungry as he had been before he breathed the powder fumes, he revolted from the food. The greasy pork smelt rancid; the potatoes were rotten.

"I couldn't eat this if I were feeling fit," he said disgustedly.

Carnally called the Chinaman, who took the plate away and substituted a piece of pie and one or two desiccated apricots. This was better, and Andrew ate a little, although he suspected that there was something wrong with the lard used in the pie, and the fruit was small and worm-eaten.

"Let's get out," he said. "I don't think I'm dainty, but this place is too much for me."

Leaving the building, they sat down at the foot of a rock which kept the drizzle off them. Andrew breathed the clean fragrance of the pines with delight.

"This is a great improvement," he declared. "Will you tell Lucien to pitch our tent where there's shelter?"

"As you wish," said Carnally. "I had figured on our sleeping and getting breakfast in the shack."

"Heavens, no!"

Andrew lighted his pipe.

"I've recovered enough to feel curious. How did the accident happen? The men who use it must know that the fumes of giant-powder are dangerous; why didn't they wait?"

"It might be better if I let the man responsible explain."

Carnally beckoned the foreman.

"Mr. Allinson wants to know why you didn't keep the boys back until the fumes had cleared."

"I gave them about the usual time; but it looks as if I'd cut it too fine. Guess the damp and there being no wind stopped the gas from getting away. Besides, we're not using a high-grade powder."

"But if there was any doubt, couldn't you have given them another few minutes?" Andrew asked.

The foreman smiled.

"I had to hold up a dozen men while that shot was fired, and

the rain has kept us back lately. Now a boss contractor knows how many yards of dirt a man can move in a day and how much rock you ought to shift with a stick of giant-powder. It's easy figuring how far the road should be pushed ahead for the money spent, and I've got to keep up to schedule."

Andrew studied the man. He looked hard, capable of getting the most out of his subordinates, but not brutal.

"Then no allowances are made?" he suggested.

"No, sir; not on a Mappin job. You have to put through the work or get!"

He left them and Andrew turned to Carnally.

"Is the shack these fellows live in better or worse than the average?" he asked.

"Worse. The boys are often quite comfortably fixed."

"What about the food?"

"You can judge for yourself," Carnally drawled. "It's the meanest hash I ever struck; and you want to remember it's no fault of the cook's. The stuff is mighty bad when a Chinaman can't dish it up fit to eat."

"Are the men boarded free?"

"Not much! They pay about six dollars a week; and it's enough. Now, as a rule, an employer doesn't look for a profit on the grub; taking camps all round, the boys get pretty good value for their money."

"Then it looks as if this one were an exception," said Andrew.

"Why do they employ so many Scandinavians?"

"They get them cheap: catch them newly landed, anxious for a job, before they find out what they ought to have. A dollar looks big after a kroner. That's my notion, but we'll see if it's right." He called a Canadian workman. "What would you fix a road-maker's wages at, Jim?"

"You ought to know. A good chopper and shoveler would get up to two-fifty, so long as he was west of cleared Ontario."

"Two dollars and a-half a day," Carnally repeated to Andrew in emphasis, and addressed the man again: "What are you making now?"

"Dollar, seventy-five. I was cleaned out when I took the job. These blamed Dutchmen get one-fifty. The Mappin crowd's the meanest I've ever been up against."

"That leaves them three dollars a week for clothing and all expenses," Andrew observed, when the workman went away. "Considering what things cost in Canada, it isn't a great deal. Mappin seems a hard master. Do you know anything about him?"

"He's a smart man," said Carnally with a smile. "I met him for the first time when I hired out with your Company, but I heard that he hadn't a dollar a few years ago." He paused and added: "In fact, I've wondered where he got the capital to finance this job."

When they moved off to the camp which the half-breed had pitched, Andrew sat thoughtfully smoking outside the tent while the mist gathered thicker about the dripping pines and the roar of the river rang in his ears. He had been unfavorably impressed by Mappin, and had since learned that he treated

his workmen with marked injustice; indeed, he had suffered in person from the fellow's greed. Andrew felt that a Company of which he was a director ought not to make a profit by trickery and oppression; but that was taking something for granted, for he had not ascertained that the Rain Bluff Company received the benefit. He must reserve the question for future consideration. Moreover, he had been struck by the manner in which Carnally had explained how the contractor conducted his business. He had called in outsiders to check his statements, and allowed them to supply the most damaging particulars. It had been done with some skill. Andrew felt that Carnally was anxious that he should learn the truth about Mappin, though his object was far from clear.

Then he began to think about Carnally. He had learned in South Africa that the man had courage and keen intelligence; and that he was to be trusted. Though fond of the vernacular, his intonation was clean; he had good manners; and there were signs that he had enjoyed an excellent education.

"Jake," he said at last, "is there any reason why the Company shouldn't do its own transport work?"

"I don't know of any. You would have to let Mappin get through with his contracts first."

"Of course. What I mean is, could we do it as cheaply as he does and pay regulation wages?"

"It would take some figuring to answer that. Speaking without the book, you ought to do the work at the contractor's prices and

have a profit. He must make one; and you can buy plant and tools on as good terms as he can."

"That's obvious. Then, on the whole, it ought to pay the Company?"

"What do you mean by the Company?"

"Well, the shareholders."

"It might pay – them," said Carnally with suggestive emphasis.

Andrew smoked his pipe out before he answered.

"I'll consider it when I've a little more to go on. It strikes me that I'm learning things. And now I think I'll get to sleep; my head's aching."

He lay down on a bed of spruce twigs and soon sank into restful slumber, but Carnally sat a while in the tent door, watching the dark river roll by. Allinson evidently meant to make him his confidential adviser, and he felt his responsibility.

CHAPTER VI

DREAM MINE

The next morning the party broke camp, and after toiling hard with pole and paddle reached, toward evening, a forest-shrouded gorge through which the flood swept furiously. A quarter of a mile ahead steep rocks pent in the raging water, which was veiled in spray; but nearer at hand the stream widened into a pool at which Andrew gazed with misgivings. Evidently Carnally meant to cross it. A wall of crag formed one bank; the opposite beach was strewn with massy boulders, over which the pine branches stretched; and in between there ran a great wedge-shaped track of foam. No canoe, Andrew thought, could live through that tumult of broken water; but it ran more slackly near the boulder bank, and a short distance higher up an angry eddy swung back, close inshore, to the head of the pool, where it joined the main downward rush. At the junction a spur of rock ran out into the wild side-swirl of the flood. Shut in as it was by dripping pines, the place had a forbidding look.

"It strikes me that the Company will find carrying up its stores and plant very costly work," Andrew remarked, as they rested in an eddy behind a stone. "I'm beginning to understand why Leonard asked for so much capital. My idea is that we'll have to do some preliminary reducing on the spot to save mineral

transport."

Carnally nodded. For a novice in such matters, Allinson was showing an unusual grasp of details.

"It's a question of the quality of the ore. In the North you must have a high-grade product that can be handled at a profit in small quantities. It doesn't pay to work rock that carries a low percentage of metal."

"What grade of stuff are we turning out? I've been unable to learn anything about it since I saw the results of the first assays."

"So far, the Company has not got up much ore: the boys have been kept busy at development work. But you'll be able to judge for yourself shortly, and we had better get on. There's a slack along the edge of the spur at the head of the pool which we ought to make, and it will save us some trouble in portaging. I'll land you if you'd rather, but I want a hand, and Lucien must give us a lift by tracking."

"If you can take the canoe up, I'll go with you," said Andrew quietly.

They headed for the boulder beach, where they landed the half-breed. He made a line fast to the craft and went up-stream with the end of it, while Carnally thrust the canoe out and, with Andrew's help, forced her up against the current, aided by the line. It was arduous work. The foam stood high about the bows; eddies swirling up from the rough bottom swung them to and fro and, although they strained every muscle, now and then brought them to a standstill. Angry waves broke on board freely, and

Andrew realized that if Lucien lost his footing or slackened his efforts the line would be torn from him and they would be swept back to the tail of the pool. This, however, would be better than being sucked into the cataract close offshore, which would no doubt result in the canoe's capsizing. At last they reached a spot where they must stem the main rush, which swung in nearer the bank.

"Can we get through there?" Andrew asked breathlessly.

"I'll try," said Carnally. "If we fail, I guess you'll have to swim."

Andrew said nothing, but the swollen veins rose on his forehead as he strained upon his pole. Frothing water broke into the canoe; Lucien was knee-deep in the foam, braced tensely against the drag of the line. Spray lashed their hot faces, and the air was filled with the roar of the torrent. For nearly a minute they hung stationary, their strength taxed to the utmost, the pole-shoes gripping the bottom. Then they moved a foot or two, and the work was a little easier when they next dipped the poles. They made a few yards. With a cry to the half-breed, Carnally loosed the line, and they shot forward up-stream with a back-eddy. It swirled about them in curious green upheavals, streaked with lines of foam, and they sped with it past boulder and shingle at a furious pace. This was exhilarating; but when steep rocks dropped to the water Andrew glanced anxiously toward the white confusion where the eddy reunited with the downward stream. Its descent was not to be thought of, but he could see no alternative

except being dashed against the crag.

Carnally, however, did not seem disturbed. He knelt in the stern, his eyes fixed ahead, quietly dipping the steering paddle, for they had laid down the poles.

"Use all your strength when I give the word," he said.

They slid on, a tall, projecting spur of rock drawing nearer, with furious waves leaping down-stream a yard or two outshore of it. It seemed to Andrew that destruction surely awaited them. The turmoil grew closer, the rock was only a yard or two away; in another few moments the bow of the canoe would plunge into the tumbling foam. Then came a cry from Carnally:

"Now, with your right! Shoot her in!"

Andrew felt the stout paddle bend and afterward thought he had never made a stronger effort. The bow swung inshore, the rock unexpectedly fell back, and as they drove past its end a narrow basin opened up. The next moment they had entered it and, gliding forward, grounded on a gravelly bank. A man scrambled down a ledge and helped them to drag out the canoe.

"I've been watching you; didn't think you would make it," he said. "The stream's stronger than usual. Come along to my camp; I'll put you up to-night."

"Thanks," responded Carnally. "This is Mr. Allinson, of the Rain Bluff Mine." He turned to Andrew. "Mr. Graham, from the Landing."

Andrew saw that the man was studying him with quiet interest. Graham was elderly; his hair was gray, and his face and general

appearance indicated that he led a comfortable, domestic life. Andrew supposed he was in business, but when they reached his camp he recognized that it had been laid out by a man with some knowledge of the wilds.

Graham gave them a supper of gray trout and bannocks and they afterward sat talking while the half-breed went fishing. The rain had ceased, though the mist still drifted heavily down the gorge, and the aromatic smell of wood-smoke mingled with the scent of the pines. Somewhere in the shadows a loon was calling, its wild cry piercing through the roar of water.

"A rugged and beautiful country," Graham remarked. "Is this your first visit to it, Mr. Allinson?"

"No," Andrew replied. "I was once some distance north, looking for caribou. I'm glad of an opportunity for seeing it again. It gets hold of one."

"So you know that; you have felt the pull of the lonely North! Curious how it draws some of us, isn't it?"

"Have you been up there?"

"Oh, yes; as a young man I served the Hudson Bay. I've been through most of the barrens between Churchill and the Mackenzie. Perhaps that's the grimmest, hardest country white men ever entered; but it's one you can't forget."

"It's undoubtedly hard," said Andrew. "We scarcely reached the fringe of it, but I was dressed in rags and worn very thin when we struck Lake Manitoba. I suppose you live at the Landing now?"

"I've been there twenty years; built my house myself when there was only a shack or two and a Hudson Bay store. The railroad has changed all that."

"Mr. Graham is treasurer for the sawmill," Carnally explained.

"Didn't you find it tamer than serving the fur company?" Andrew asked.

A curious smile crept into Graham's eyes.

"One can't have everything, Mr. Allinson. I've been content, a willing slave of the desk, only seeing the wilds for a week or two in summer. But I've thought I might make another trip before I get too old."

"I think I understand," Andrew replied; "if I've a chance, I'm going before I return home. There's so much up yonder that impresses me – the caribou, the timber wolves, the lake storms, and the break up of the rivers in the spring. What a tremendous spectacle the last must be! – six-foot ice, piled up in wild confusion, thundering down the valleys. I've only followed the track of it in summer, but I've seen the wreckage of rubbed-out buttes and islands, and boulders smashed to rubble."

"It is grand," said Graham quietly.

"I wonder if you'd mind telling Mr. Allinson about the silver lode you found?" Carnally suggested. "I guess he'd be interested."

Graham needed some persuasion before he began his tale.

"It happened a long time ago and I seldom mention it now;

in fact, I'll confess that the lode is looked upon as a harmless illusion of mine. My friends call it my Dream Mine. When I was a young man I was stationed at a Hudson Bay factory about four hundred miles north of here and was despatched with two half-breeds and a canoe to carry stores to a band of Indians. No doubt you know that the great Company held sovereign authority over the North for a very long time and the Indians depended on it for their maintenance. Well, we set off with the canoe, paddling and portaging up rivers and across the height of land, toward the south."

"Then you were working across country toward the headwaters of this river," Andrew remarked.

"We didn't get so far, but I did my errand, and one day when crossing a divide we nooned beside a little creek. As I filled the kettle I noticed something peculiar about the pebbles and picked up a few. They were unusually heavy and dully lustrous, which made me curious. Following the creek back, I found a vein of the same material among the rocks. I filled a small bag with specimens and took the bearings of the spot, though we had to get on without loss of time because the rivers would soon be freezing up. On reaching the fort I showed the agent the specimens. I can remember his look of disgust. He was a grim old Scot.

"Just pebbles; I'm no saying but they might be pretty,' he remarked, and opening the door threw them out. 'Ye'll think nae mair o' them. The Company's no collecting precious stones, and ye should ken a souter's expected to stick till his last.'"

"I wonder," said Andrew, "which of you hailed from the Border."

"Both," laughed Graham. "He was a Hawick terry; I was born between Selkirk and Ettrick shaws. The official language of the Company was Caledonian; but that's beside the point. I was young enough to feel hurt; though I knew my man and how staunch he was to the Company's traditional policy."

"What was that policy?"

"The North for the Hudson Bay. As you know, in Canada all minerals belong to the Crown. The first discoverer can claim the right to work them, so long as he complies with the regulations."

"I see," said Andrew. "Prospectors might scare away animals with skins worth a good deal of silver. But I didn't mean to interrupt you."

"A day or two later I thought I would look for the stones, but there had been a heavy fall of snow and I found only a few of them. I never got the rest, because I was away when the thaw came. About a year later I was sent back with the same companions to the band of Indians. It was winter, they were starving, and the agent recognized their claim. There was no oppression of native races in the Hudson Bay domains; not a yard of the Indians' land was taken from them, and drink could not be bought at the factories. The Company offered them a higher standard of comfort if they would work for it, but there was no compulsion. If they found English guns and stores and blankets better than the articles they had used, the agents were there to

trade."

Graham paused with a smile.

"I'm discursive, Mr. Allinson, but I've a grievance against the Hudson Bay, and I want to be fair."

"I'm interested," Andrew declared. "It's a clean record for a commercial monopoly, considering how cocoa, rubber, and one or two other things, are often procured."

"We reached the Indian camp, handed over the supplies, and started back, with rations carefully weighed out to see us through. In winter starvation stalks one closely across the northern wilds. Now I had meant to visit the creek where I'd found the stones, but there was the difficulty that, as the Indians had changed their location, it would mean a longer trip. I couldn't rob the starving trappers of anything that had been sent them, and I must make our provisions cover an extra three or four days. There was a danger in this, because an unexpected delay might be fatal, and the dogs were already in poor condition. I faced the risk. We set off, the sledge running heavily over soft snow, and we reached the neighborhood of the creek in a raging blizzard, and camped for twenty-four hours. I could not find the creek, it was impossible to wait, and we went on through the bitterest weather I have known. Gales and snowstorms dogged our steps all the way to the fort and we reached it, starving, four days late. One of the half-breeds had a badly frozen foot and I'll carry a memento of that march for the rest of my life."

Graham held up his left hand, which was short of two fingers.

"The result of a small ax cut and putting on a damp mitten, when we were near the creek."

"That put an end to your prospecting?"

"It did. I think the agent suspected me, for he took care that I was not sent south again, and during the next year I left the Company's service. I kept the stones and after some time took them to an American assayer. He found them rich in lead and silver, which are often combined, and his estimate of the value of the matrix rock startled me. It was beyond anything I had imagined."

"Then there's a fortune awaiting exploitation beside that creek," exclaimed Andrew. "Did you do nothing about it?"

Graham smiled at him.

"I was married then, Mr. Allinson; a clerk in a small sawmill. What could I do? Stories of such strikes in the wilderness are common, and I had nothing but two or three bits of stone to show a capitalist. The country's difficult to traverse; it would have needed a well-equipped party to carry up stores and haul a canoe over the divides. In winter, provisions and sledge dogs could be obtained only from the Hudson Bay agents. The Company had to be reckoned with, and it was too strong for me."

"They couldn't have forbidden you to prospect in their territory."

"Oh, no; after all, it belongs to Canada. But their agents could refuse me the assistance and supplies I couldn't do without. It was impossible to hire an Indian guide or packer without their

consent. If I'd been able to raise a thousand dollars, I might have beaten them; but that was out of the question."

"You tried, I've no doubt?"

"I spent a year's savings on a visit to Montreal and made the round of the banks and financiers' offices. Here and there a man listened with some interest, but nobody would venture five dollars on the project."

"And then?" said Andrew.

"I gave up all idea of developing the mine. I had two children to bring up; my salary was small. From the beginning, my wife made light of my discovery – I dare say she feared I might go back to the North – the children as they grew up took her view, and my silver mine became a joke among us. For twenty years I've led a happy, domestic life; but I've never forgotten the lode and I've thought of it often the last year or two. My girl is teaching, the boy has got a post, and I have a few dollars accumulating in the bank."

Graham, breaking off, filled his pipe and laughed softly before he went on.

"That's my story, Mr. Allinson; but perhaps it isn't finished yet. I may take the trail again some day, but it will have to be soon. The North is a hard country, and I'm getting old."

Andrew was moved. Loving adventure as he did, he could imagine what Graham's self-denial had cost him while he had cheerfully carried out his duty to his family.

"Prospecting would no doubt be easier now?" he suggested.

"Much easier," said Graham. "The railroad has opened up the country, and the Company finds miners very good customers. Only, when you get back a short distance from the track, the North is still unsubdued. To grapple with its snow and ice, its rapids and muskegs, is mighty tough work."

They talked about other matters, until the chilly mist, gathering thicker round the camp, drove them into the tent.

CHAPTER VII

THE AMATEUR MINER

It was afternoon, and hot sunshine poured down into the little valley. Andrew stood at the foot of a low range, looking about with keen interest. The strip of level ground between rock and river was strewn with small fir stumps, among which lay half-burned logs and branches. On the edge of the clearing stood two log shacks and a smith's shop, with an unsightly heap of empty cans, broken boots and discarded clothing in front of them. A bank of shattered stone stretched toward the stream, and on a scarped slope of the hillside where the rocks shone a warm pink there was a black hole. A stream of water flowing out of it ran down a trench. This was the Rain Bluff Mine. Andrew felt disappointed. There was not much to show for the capital that had been subscribed. He supposed, however, that the pieces of machinery which lay in disorder about the waterside were expensive, and he meant to ascertain their cost.

"Why don't they get those things fitted up and working?" he asked Carnally, who stood near him.

"They're not complete. We're waiting until the Mappin people bring the rest of them."

Andrew pointed to several stacks of small logs.

"I suppose those are props? You seem to use a good many."

Do you cut them on the spot?"

"The Mappin boys do. The Company pays for them by the foot."

"It strikes me that Mappin's doing a good deal of the Company's work. However, it looks as if we meant to dig the ore out."

Carnally saw impatience and suspicion in his face.

"I'm asking a good many questions, Jake," Andrew went on: "but I'm in the unfortunate position of having to look after matters I know nothing about. That's a rather remarkable qualification for a director."

"It isn't altogether unusual," Carnally replied. "I could point out one or two men who couldn't tell a pump from a rock drill, and control mining concerns."

"It sounds surprising. How's it done?"

"By hiring subordinates with brains and keeping a careful eye on them."

"I'm serious, Jake. The Company pays my expenses and two hundred dollars a month while I'm in Canada. It's the shareholders' money; I feel that I ought to earn it."

"You may have trouble."

"That won't matter. I've had only a few words with the mine boss, Watson. What kind of man is he?"

"He's straight; a smart manager underground, good at timbering and getting ore out; but that's as far as he goes."

"Well, we'll look at the workings."

As they approached the adit Watson came to meet them. He was a short, wiry man, clad in wet, soil-stained overalls. Andrew indicated the drainage trench.

"There seems to be a good deal of water in the mine."

"That's so," said Watson. "We want to get rid of it. I've several boys in the sump, baling it up with coal-oil cans."

"You mean the five-gallon drums you get your kerosene in?" Andrew asked in surprise. "Why don't you order a pump?"

"We've got half of one and the engine's fixed. Guess we'll get the rest when Mappin's ready."

"I'll send down word about it to the Landing."

"You needn't. One of the river bosses is up here; he's getting his dinner now."

"But dinner has been finished some time."

"That don't count. We had pork to-day and the Mappin man figured he'd like trout, so I had to tell Yan Li to cook him some. If you want your plant brought up, you have to be civil to the transport people."

The color swept into Andrew's face.

"Bring the fellow here!"

Watson grinned and called to a miner at work on the dump. The miner disappeared and presently came back with a man.

"You sent for me, Mr. Allinson?" he said, as if he resented it.

"I did," answered Andrew curtly. "You have a pump of ours which has been in your hands some time. I want it delivered here immediately."

The man looked surprised at his tone.

"We'll do what we can, but most of the boys are busy on the road."

"Then you had better send them back to the canoes. Our supplies must not be stopped."

"It's awkward," said the other. "You don't quite understand yet how things are run here, Mr. Allinson. You want to give and take."

"I expect to understand them better soon," Andrew dryly rejoined. "What we want at present is the pump, and if it isn't here by next week I'll charge your employer with the extra expense we're being put to."

"The office wouldn't allow your claim."

"I won't make one," said Andrew. "I'll knock it off your bill. No accounts will be paid without my sanction."

"Oh, well," said the other, "since you make a point of it, I'll get down the river right away and see where that pump is."

He left them, and Watson looked at Carnally as they entered the mine.

"And I thought he was an English sucker!" he remarked.

"You were wrong," said Carnally. "You'll know Mr. Allinson better in a little while."

Seeing that Andrew was waiting, Watson gave him a small flat lamp to hook in his hat, and they went down a narrow gallery. By the uncertain smoky light Andrew could see that it was strongly timbered: stout props were ranged along its sides, and beams,

some cracked and sagging, spanned the roof between. The floor was wet and strewn with large fragments, which seemed to have fallen lately. Watson explained that they were working through treacherous rocks. Presently they stopped at the top of a dark hole, where a man was busy at a primitive windlass.

"Lode dips sharply here," Watson explained. "We had to go down a bit, but we'll push on this heading. Pay dirt's badly broken up, but we'll fix things different when we strike it fair. It's pretty wet in the lower level; do you feel like going down?"

Andrew put on the waterproof jacket that had been given him, and looked at the pit. A rough ladder ran down its side, but the man at the windlass turned to him as he emptied a big can into the drainage trench.

"The rope's quicker and quite as safe," he said. "One of the Mappin boys made that ladder and fixed it wrong. Catch hold here and get a turn round your foot; you don't want to go through the bottom of the can."

Andrew having done as he was directed, the man called a warning to somebody beneath and then let him go. When he had descended a short distance, the rope was checked, and a man seizing it swung him across a murky pool, in which the reflection of faint lights quivered; then springing down, he found himself in a short gallery. A smoky lamp burned here and there among the timbering, and shadowy figures were busy in recesses with hammer and drill. The floor was strewn with broken rock, damming back the stream that ran along it, and water freely

trickled in. Near at hand three or four men were building up a square pillar of timber and rock toward the roof. They wore no clothing above the waist, and the drips from the stone splashed on their wet skin. Watson spoke to one of them before he turned to Andrew.

"Ore's pretty good, here," he said. "We had to make a show for the people in Montreal to do some figuring on – that is why I cut so much stuff without leaving more support, though I didn't know the roof was quite so bad. We'll have her shored up in a day or two, but the worst trouble's the water."

Andrew asked him a few questions, and presently went back to the surface, where he sat down in the sunshine and lighted his pipe. A good deal of capital had already been expended, and the result looked discouragingly small. The Company owned a short tunnel, driven into what was evidently inferior ore, and another at the bottom of a pit, which might be choked up by a fall of roof and was threatened with inundation. Still, Andrew supposed that success depended upon the quality of the main body of the ore, which they had hardly reached as yet. When he had finished his pipe, he joined Carnally, who was busy among the machinery by the river.

"Jake," he said, "I want you to go to the Landing and see that the Mappin people send up the plant Watson expects as soon as it's off the cars. I shall stay here a while and try to learn something about my business."

"Well," drawled Carnally with signs of amusement, "there is

a good deal to learn."

He set off early the next morning, and Andrew, putting on a suit of overalls, went down into the mine and insisted on being given practical instruction in the use of the drill. It was a painful process: he was forced to kneel on sharp stones and sometimes in water while he held the steel bar, which jarred his hands when his companion struck it. Nor did he find the work easier when he came to strike, standing in a cramped position without room to swing the hammer, his eyes fixed upon the end of the drill, which must be squarely hit. To miss might result in the other man's knuckles being smashed. The inch of metal which glimmered in the lamplight formed a perplexing mark. Andrew had an accurate eye, however, and did not often miss; and he forgave his instructor for hitting him on the wrist, though this necessitated its being bound up for several days. He learned the quick twist of the drill which brings the cutting edge to bear, and how to wedge up the roof by setting a prop, sawed a little too long for the position, slantwise beneath a beam and hammering it straight; and then he turned his attention to more advanced subjects.

"Watson," he commented one morning, "this mine strikes me as being badly arranged. The best ore's on the lower level, the lode dips, and having the shaft underground must give you extra trouble in getting the stone and water out."

"It does," Watson assented. "You want to remember that we took over Rain Bluff after work had been begun, and the fellows

who locate these bush mines often don't know much about their job. If they think the ore's there, they start to get it out the best way they can. I've seen that we'll have to drive a lower adit right in from outside sooner or later, but I'm shy of the expense."

"It seems to me that the money will be profitably spent," Andrew said when they had discussed it for a while. "You'll get it back by saving labor and pumping, while the extra cost you're put to now would probably increase. You'd better start the work at once; I'll be responsible."

Watson was beginning to understand that the resident director possessed abilities which he had by no means suspected at first. He did as he was told, and for the next few weeks Andrew was pleasantly occupied. He learned to nip detonators on to fuses, and how a stick of giant-powder should be inserted into a firing hole. He studied the lines of cleavage in the rock, calculated the cost in labor and explosives of the stone brought down, and found it all interesting. As a matter of fact, it was the first time he had seriously interested himself in anything except sport, and there was encouragement in feeling that he possessed some useful powers. Watson spoke to him as to one who could understand; the miners did not seem to notice his clumsiness. He had expected some banter from them, but none was offered, and he remembered that it was Leonard and his relatives who had shown an amused disbelief in his capabilities.

One day he descended to the lower level, where the men were having trouble in the manager's absence. A number of

lamps were burning and the place looked wetter than usual in the unsteady light. Water trickled down the end wall, the rows of props were dripping, and the half-naked men splashed through pools when they moved to and fro. They were feverishly busy: one group building a massive pillar, others putting up fresh props, only two or three were breaking out ore at the working face. Then Carnally came toward him, and his wet face showed tense and anxious in the light of Andrew's lamp.

"The blamed roof's very shaky," he said. "We've had two ugly cave-ins. I wish Watson was back. And I'm getting scared about the water; expect we're tapping a tank-pot in the hill, but there's nothing to help us in locating it. You might give the boys a hand with the pillar."

Andrew stripped to shirt and overall trousers, and hurried toward the spot. He saw that the men needed help, for the cracked roof was bulging downward ominously and there were several heaps of freshly fallen stones. They were constructing a square frame of logs, crossed at the ends, and filling it in with broken rock as fast as they could; but there remained a wide gap between its top and the roof it was meant to support. For an hour he worked savagely, wet with falling water and dripping with perspiration, passing up heavy beams and stones to the men who laid them in place. He grew breathless and tore his hand, but the flakes of rock which fell at intervals urged him on. Once or twice there was a crash farther down the tunnel and he saw shadowy figures scatter and others run in with props, but for the most part

he fixed his attention on his task, because it looked as if they had no time to lose. When a gush of water flowing down the heading splashed about his boots, he called Carnally.

"Is this tunnel going to cave in?" he asked.

"That's more than I can tell," Carnally replied. "We may be able to shore her up, but if it's not done soon, the chances of her crushing in are steep."

"I see," said Andrew, and turned to his companions. "Boys, I'll stand for a ten-dollar bonus if this job's finished in half an hour."

One of them laughed, but there was no other response and they did not seem to increase their exertions much. This suggested that they had been doing their utmost already, with a clear recognition of the risk they ran. Their pay was good, but something besides their interest urged them to keep the mine open. These were men who would not easily be beaten by inpouring water or crushing rock: they had braced themselves for a grapple with their treacherous natural foes.

Andrew, however, was feeling the strain. His injured hand was painful, the stones he had to lift were heavy, his arms and back ached; but he meant to hold out, for the gap between roof and pillar was getting narrow. He had raised a ponderous piece of rock and was holding it up to a man who reached for it when there was a smashing sound above and a dark mass rushed past him. The tunnel echoed with a crash, and Andrew received a violent blow on his head. The pain of it turned him dizzy, but he heard a clamor of voices and harsh warning cries. They were followed

by a smashing of timber; he saw two or three props crush in; and then half the lights went out and he felt the water washing past his boots.

The next moment his legs were wet, and he set off for the shaft, knee-deep in a rushing flood. There was a confused uproar behind him: stones falling, timber breaking; and then the last of the lamps went out. It cost him an effort to keep his head. Hurrying men jostled him; he struck his feet against sharp stones and was thankful that he did not fall. While he battled with a growing horror, he made for the feeble glimmer which marked the bottom of the shaft. It was a short distance, and he presently stood in the gathering water among a group of half-seen men, watching one being slowly drawn up toward the brighter light above. Another was hurriedly climbing the ladder, while a comrade waited to follow as soon as he was high enough. Then Andrew felt a hand on his arm.

"I was looking for you," Carnally said. "You had better get up. Take the rope as soon as it drops."

Andrew felt a strong desire to do so, but he mastered it.

"No," he returned calmly; "not yet. In a sense, it's my mine; I must see the boys out."

A man near him raised a shout.

"What's the matter with the winch! Can't you heave on it?"

A deepening rush of water swirled about them and there were sharp cries:

"You above, get on to the handles! When's that rope coming?"

She ought to carry two!"

A man clutched at the rope, which fell among them but when another grasped it Andrew interfered.

"Steady, boys!" he said. "The winch won't lift you both. Being heaved up is too slow. Tell them to make the rope fast, and then climb; it's strong enough to carry two or three."

There was a growl of approval; instructions were shouted up; and while the water rapidly deepened, the group at the foot of the shaft decreased. Andrew, however, was above his waist before he clutched the ladder, while Carnally seized the rope. There was a man above him whose feet he must avoid, and he felt the timber shake, but it was with vast relief that he climbed out of the flood. He was near the top when a cross-batten broke and Grennan, the fellow above him, slipping down a foot or two, bruised Andrew's fingers with his heavy boot. For a brief moment Andrew clung by one hand, and then, his overtired arm suddenly relaxing, his fingers loosed their grasp and he fell, half dazed from pain and horror, into the swirling flood below. A crash of the timbers somewhere in the shaft preceded a fresh onrush of water. The flood was neck-deep and rapidly rising.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ISLAND OF PINES

When Carnally crawled out, wet and breathless, into the open air with the last of the men, he turned to speak to Andrew.

"Where's the boss?" he demanded quickly of Grennan.

Just then the roar of a fresh rushing of waters was borne up to them, and Carnally was filled with anxiety as he leaned over the edge of the pit.

"Allinson!" he shouted.

No answer came, and before the scared miners could fully realize what had happened, Carnally was sliding down the rope. In the feeble light at the bottom he saw Andrew's arms reaching above his head grasping desperately on to the ladder. He seemed unable to pull himself up, but held on with a vise-grip.

"All right, Allinson!" Carnally called across reassuringly.

Letting go of the rope, a few strokes in the water brought him to the ladder.

"My knee!" explained Allinson, his face gray with pain. "Struck a sharp ledge at the bottom!"

With Carnally's assistance, he managed to climb to the top of the ladder, where a dozen arms were extended to pull him to safety. He had a bad gash on his knee, his fingers on one hand were bruised and bleeding, and there was a large welt on his head

where the cross-beam had struck him; but there seemed to be nothing serious.

He held out his hand to Carnally, and they gripped in silence. Words were unnecessary.

"The cross-pieces of the ladder could not have been properly notched in," Andrew said after a while. "I think it was supplied by Mappin?"

"Yes," answered Carnally; "and it's a rough job!"

"I must endeavor to see that Mappin does his work better. But what's to be done about the flooded level?"

"Try to pump it out; it's fortunate that with a wood-burning engine fuel costs you nothing. I expect Watson will start all the boys at the new heading as soon as he gets back."

They discussed the mine until Yan Li called them to supper, and for the next two weeks they worked very hard. Then Andrew went down to the Landing on business, and one day he sat lazily in a rowing skiff on the Lake of Shadows. A blaze of sunshine fell upon the shimmering water, which farther on was streaked with deep-blue lines, but close at hand it lay dim and still, reflecting the somber pines. The skiff was drifting past the shore of a rocky island, on which a few maples, turning crimson, made patches of glowing color among the dusky needles, when Andrew saw a girl sitting on the shore. She was near when he noticed her, and it struck him that she was remarkably pretty. The thin white dress, cut in the current American fashion, left her finely molded arms uncovered to the elbow and revealed her firm white throat. Her

hands were shapely; and, for her hat lay beside her, he noticed the warm coppery tones in her hair. She had gray eyes and her face pleased him, though while observing the regularity of her features, he could not clearly analyze its charm. Then feeling that he had gazed at her as long as was admissible, he dipped his oars, but, somewhat to his astonishment, she called to him.

"Did you see a canoe as you came?" she asked.

"No," Andrew answered. "Have you lost yours?"

"It floated away; I didn't notice until it was too late. It went toward the point."

She indicated the end of the island, and Andrew nodded.

"It would drift to leeward. I'll go and look for it."

As he swung the skiff round it struck him that she had kept curiously still. Her pose was somewhat unusual, for she sat with her feet drawn up beneath her skirt, and skirts, as he remembered, were cut decidedly short. He rowed away and presently saw the canoe some distance off. On running alongside, he noticed a pair of light stockings in the bottom, and laughed as the reason for the girl's attitude became apparent. Pulling back with the canoe astern, he loosed the light craft and drove it toward the beach with a vigorous push.

"Thank you," said the girl, and he tactfully rowed away.

He had not gone far when he heard a hail and saw her standing on the point, waving her hand. For a moment or two he hesitated. As the canoe had grounded within her reach, he could not see what she wanted; and, in view of the discovery he had made, he

had imagined that she would have been glad to get rid of him. Still, she had called him and he pulled back.

"Can I be of any further assistance?" he asked, noticing with some relief that she now had her shoes on.

"Yes," she said frankly. "I am marooned here; there's no paddle in the canoe."

"No paddle? But how could it have fallen out?"

"I don't know; and it doesn't seem an important point. Perhaps the canoe rocked, and it overbalanced."

"I could tow you to the Landing," Andrew suggested.

His manner was formally correct and she felt half amused. This young man was obviously not addicted to indiscriminate gallantry.

"I don't want to go to the Landing, and the canoe would tow easier with no one on board. Your skiff should carry two."

He ran the craft in, made fast the canoe, and then held out his hand. When she was seated, he pushed off.

"Where shall I take you?" he asked gravely.

"To the large island yonder – the Island of Pines," she said, indicating it; and he knew that this was Geraldine Frobisher, whom Mappin had discussed. Andrew admitted that his description of her was warranted.

"You have been unlucky," he remarked.

"I've been careless and have had to pay for it. We got breakfast early and I've missed my lunch."

"It's nearly three o'clock," said Andrew, pulling faster. "But

how is it no one came to look for you?"

"My aunt goes to sleep in the afternoon; my father had some business at the Landing – if he had been at home it would have taken him some time to find me. He would have searched the nearer islands first, systematically and in rotation." She smiled. "That's the kind of man he is. I suppose you have guessed who I am?"

"Miss Frobisher?"

"And you're Mr. Allinson. It wasn't hard to identify you. Perhaps you know that your doings are a source of interest to the people at the Landing."

"I can't see why that should be so."

"For one thing, they seem to think you are up against what they call 'a tough proposition'."

Andrew's face grew thoughtful. Since the collapse of the heading, he had spent a fortnight in determined physical toil, as his scarred hands and broken nails testified. It had been a time of stress and anxiety, and during it he had realized that the mine would be a costly one to work. The ore must carry a high percentage of metal if it were to pay for extraction.

"I'm afraid that's true," he said.

"Then you won't get much leisure for hunting and fishing?"

Andrew laughed.

"After all, those were not my objects in coming out, though you're not the only person who seems to have concluded that they were."

"I have no opinion on the matter," Geraldine declared. "But at the Landing you are supposed to be more of a sportsman than a miner – isn't it flattering to feel that people are talking about you? Then you are really working at the mine?"

"So far, I've saved the Company about two dollars and a-half a day."

"But isn't your voice in controlling things worth more than that?"

"No," Andrew replied; "I'm afraid it isn't."

"Then you don't know much about mining?"

"I believe," Andrew answered dryly, "I know a little more than I did."

Geraldine was pleased with him. The man was humorously modest, but he looked capable and resolute.

"Well," she said, "it can't be easy work; though one understands that getting the ore out is not always the greatest difficulty."

"It's hard enough when the roof comes down, and the props crush up, and the water breaks in. Still, I believe you're right."

"I know something about these matters," she said, and then surprised him by a sudden turn of the subject. "There's one man you can trust. I mean Jake Carnally."

"Do you know him?"

"He built our boat pier and cleared the bush to make our lawn. We often made him talk to us; and I know my father, who's a good judge, thought a good deal of him."

"Jake," said Andrew cautiously, "rather puzzles me: I can get so little out of him, though I like the man. As you seem to know the people I have to deal with, is there anybody else whose trustworthiness you would vouch for?"

Geraldine's face hardened.

"No, I don't know of anybody else; but you will soon be able to form your own opinion."

This struck Andrew as significant, because she must have heard of his connection with Mappin, who visited the house. Just then he caught sight of a boat that swung around the end of an island and headed toward them with bows buried in foam.

"A gasoline launch," he said. "She's traveling very fast."

"It's ours," explained Geraldine. "My father must have got back from the Landing and has come to look for me."

The launch was soon abreast of them and stopped near the skiff. A man of middle age, in light clothes, held the tiller and looked at Geraldine inquiringly.

"I suppose you have been dreadfully worried," she said with a smile at him. "I was cast away on a desolate island when the canoe went adrift, and should have been there still, only that Mr. Allinson came to my rescue." She turned to Andrew. "My father, Henry T. Frobisher."

Andrew noticed that Frobisher glanced at him keenly when he heard his name, but he started the engine and ran the launch alongside.

"Come on board and see our island," he said. "I'll take you

back to the Landing afterward."

Andrew followed Miss Frobisher into the craft and made the skiff and canoe fast astern, and they set off and presently reached a short pier which ran out into still, clear water. A lawn stretched down to the shore, bordered with flowers, and at the end of it a wooden house stood against a background of somber pines. A veranda ran across the front, the rows of slender columns braced by graceful arches; above were green-shuttered windows, steep roofs, and gables. Moldings, scrolls and finials had been freely and tastefully used to adorn the building, though Andrew understood that Frobisher used it only occasionally as a summer resort.

Andrew was taken in and presented to Frobisher's sister, Mrs. Denton, a lady with a languid expression and formal manners. Then tea was served in artistic china, and after some general conversation Frobisher led Andrew to a small room on the upper story, which looked out upon the lake, and gave him an excellent cigar. Noticing him glance at the maps unrolled on a table, he smiled.

"I find that I can't get away from business," he explained. "It follows me down here; and in a new country like this there's generally some interesting project cropping up. I go off into the bush hunting, and see something that looks like an opportunity; the idea sticks to me and begins to develop."

"So far, I haven't found the prospects here very encouraging; but I suppose mining's slow," Andrew responded. "What do you

deal in?"

"Land, lumber, waterfalls that will drive turbines – anything in the shape of natural resources. But how are you getting on at Rain Bluff?"

Andrew reflected that as the Company's operations would be freely discussed at the Landing, there was no reason why he should be reticent. Besides, he felt inclined to trust his host. The man had a keen, thoughtful face, but its seriousness was relieved by his genial smile.

"I'm afraid we're not getting on very fast," he said, and related the mishaps they had met with.

"You seem to find the work harder than you expected."

"I must admit it," said Andrew. "If it were merely a question of propping up the roof, getting rid of the water, and cutting out the ore, I'd feel less diffident. It's the business complications that I have the most trouble in understanding."

Frobisher gave him a keen glance.

"That side's generally involved. Rain Bluff, however, has a good big capital, I understand."

"Which means big liabilities. We're naturally expecting to pay dividends on it."

"It's an expectation that's not invariably realized," Frobisher remarked dryly. "You feel that your shareholders ought to be satisfied?"

"Of course. That's why I'm here."

"Our acquaintance is short, but if you don't feel that I'm too

much of a stranger, I might perhaps be able to throw some light on any points that you're puzzled about. I've had a pretty extensive experience in these matters."

He was mildly gratified by his guest's ready confidence, but Andrew had been endowed with a quick and accurate judgment of character. He talked without reserve as Frobisher drew him out; and the American listened with unusual interest. The affairs of the Rain Bluff Company were no concern of his, but the working of Allinson's mind fixed his attention. Allinson was obviously a novice in such matters, but, for an untrained man, he showed a grasp of the salient points and a boldness in attacking difficulties which Frobisher thought remarkable. Lighting a fresh cigar when Andrew had finished, he smoked a while in silence. With a few words he might explain the Company's situation in a manner that would fill his guest with astonishment and perhaps dismay, but on the whole it did not seem advisable that they should be spoken. It would be better that Allinson should find out for himself how matters stood. Frobisher felt strongly curious about what he would do then.

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