

Woolson Constance Fenimore

Anne: A Novel



Constance Woolson

Anne: A Novel

«Public Domain»

Woolson C.

Anne: A Novel / C. Woolson — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	17
CHAPTER III	25
CHAPTER IV	38
CHAPTER V	46
CHAPTER VI	57
CHAPTER VII	65
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	71

Woolson Constance Fenimore Anne: A Novel

CHAPTER I

*"Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy;
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy.
The youth who daily farther from the East
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."*

– Wordsworth.

"It is but little we can do for each other. We accompany the youth with sympathy and manifold old sayings of the wise to the gate of the arena, but it is certain that not by strength of ours, or by the old sayings, but only on strength of his own, unknown to us or to any, he must stand or fall."
– Emerson.

"Does it look well, father?"

"What, child?"

"Does this look well?"

William Douglas stopped playing for a moment, and turned his head toward the speaker, who, standing on a ladder, bent herself to one side, in order that he might see the wreath of evergreen, studded with cones, which she had hung on the wall over one of the small arched windows.

"It is too compact, Anne, too heavy. There should be sprays falling from it here and there, like a real vine. The greenery, dear, should be either growing naturally upward or twining; large branches standing in the corners like trees, or climbing vines. Stars, stiff circles, and set shapes should be avoided. That wreath looks as though it had been planed by a carpenter."

"Miss Lois made it."

"Ah," said William Douglas, something which made you think of a smile, although no smile was there, passing over his face, "it looks like her work; it will last a long time. And there will be no need to remove it for Ash-Wednesday, Anne; there is nothing joyous about it."

"I did not notice that it was ugly," said the girl, trying in her bent posture to look at the wreath, and bringing one eye and a portion of anxious forehead to bear upon it.

"That is because Miss Lois made it," replied William Douglas, returning to his music.

Anne, standing straight again, surveyed the garland in silence. Then she changed its position once or twice, studying the effect. Her figure, poised on the round of the ladder, high in the air, was, although unsupported, firm. With her arms raised above her head in a position which few women could have endured for more than a moment, she appeared as unconcerned, and strong, and sure of her footing, as though she had been standing on the floor. There was vigor about her and elasticity, combined unexpectedly with the soft curves and dimples of a child. Viewed from the floor, this was a young Diana, or a Greek maiden, as we imagine Greek maidens to have been. The rounded arms,

visible through the close sleeves of the dark woollen dress, the finely moulded wrists below the heavy wreath, the lithe, natural waist, all belonged to a young goddess. But when Anne Douglas came down from her height, and turned toward you, the idea vanished. Here was no goddess, no Greek; only an American girl, with a skin like a peach. Anne Douglas's eyes were violet-blue, wide open, and frank. She had not yet learned that there was any reason why she should not look at everything with the calm directness of childhood. Equally like a child was the unconsciousness of her mouth, but the full lips were exquisitely curved. Her brown hair was braided in a heavy knot at the back of her head; but little rings and roughened curly ends stood up round her forehead and on her temples, as though defying restraint. This unwritten face, with its direct gaze, so far neutralized the effect of the Diana-like form that the girl missed beauty on both sides. The usual ideal of pretty, slender, unformed maidenhood was not realized, and yet Anne Douglas's face was more like what is called a baby face than that of any other girl on the island. The adjective generally applied to her was "big." This big, soft-cheeked girl now stood irresolutely looking at the condemned wreath.

The sun was setting, and poured a flood of clear yellow light through the little west windows; the man at the organ was playing a sober, steadfast German choral, without exultation, yet full of a resolute purpose which defied even death and the grave. Out through the eastern windows stretched the frozen straits, the snow-covered islands, and below rang out the bugle. "It will be dark in a few moments," said Anne to herself; "I will do it."

She moved the ladder across to the chancel, mounted to its top again, and placed the wreath directly over the altar, connecting it deftly with the numerous long lines of delicate wreathing woven in thread-like green lace-work which hung there, waiting for their key-stone – a place of honor which the condemned wreath was to fill. It now crowned the whole. The little house of God was but an upper chamber, roughly finished and barren; its only treasure was a small organ, a gift from a father whose daughter, a stranger from the South, had died upon the island, requesting that her memorial might be music rather than a cold stone. William Douglas had superintended the unpacking and placing of this gift, and loved it almost as though it had been his own child. Indeed, it was a child, a musical child – one who comprehended his varying moods when no one else did, not even Anne.

"It makes no difference now," said Anne, aloud, carrying the ladder toward the door; "it is done and ended. Here is the ladder, Jones, and please keep up the fires all night, unless you wish to see us frozen stiff to-morrow."

A man in common soldier's uniform touched his cap and took the ladder. Anne went back. "Now for one final look, father," she said, "and then we must go home; the children will be waiting."

William Douglas played a few more soft strains, and turned round. "Well, child," he said, stroking his thin gray beard with an irresolute motion habitual with him, and looking at the small perspective of the chapel with critical gaze, "so you have put Miss Lois's wreath up there?"

"Yes; it is the only thing she had time to make, and she took so much pains with it I could not bear to have her disappointed. It will not be much noticed."

"Yes, it will."

"I am sorry, then; but it can not be moved. And to tell the truth, father, although I suppose you will laugh at me, *I* think it looks well."

"It looks better than anything else in the room, and crowns the whole," said Douglas, rising and standing by his daughter's side. "It was a stroke of genius to place it there, Anne."

"Was it?" said the girl, her face flushing with pleasure. "But I was thinking only of Miss Lois."

"I am afraid you were," said Douglas, with his shadowy smile.

The rough walls and beams of the chapel were decorated with fine spray-like lines of evergreen, all pointing toward the chancel; there was not a solid spot upon which the eye could rest, no upright branches in the corners, no massed bunches over the windows, no stars of Bethlehem, anchors, or nondescript Greek letters; the whole chapel was simply outlined in light feathery lines of green, which reached the chancel, entered it, played about its walls, and finally came together under the one

massive wreath whose even circle and thick foliage held them all firmly in place, and ended their wanderings in a restful quiet strength. While the two stood gazing, the lemon-colored light faded, and almost immediately it was night; the red glow shining out under the doors of the large stoves alone illuminated the room, which grew into a shadowy place, the aromatic fragrance of the evergreens filling the warm air pungently, more perceptible, as fragrance always is, in the darkness. William Douglas turned to the organ again, and began playing the music of an old vigil.

"The bugle sounded long ago, father," said Anne. "It is quite dark now, and very cold; I know by the crackling noise the men's feet make across the parade-ground."

But the father played on. "Come here, daughter," he said; "listen to this waiting, watching, praying music. Do you not see the old monks in the cloisters telling the hours through the long night, waiting for the dawn, the dawn of Christmas? Look round you; see this dim chapel, the air filled with fragrance like incense. These far-off chords, now; might they not be the angels, singing over the parapet of heaven?"

Anne stood by her father's side, and listened. "Yes," she said, "I can imagine it. And yet I could imagine it a great deal better if I did not know where every bench was, and every darn in the chancel carpet, and every mended pane in the windows. I am sorry I am so dull, father."

"Not dull, but unawakened."

"And when shall I waken?" pursued the girl, accustomed to carrying on long conversations with this dreaming father, whom she loved devotedly.

"God knows! May He be with you at your waking!"

"I would rather have you, father; that is, if it is not wicked to say so. But I am very often wicked, I think," she added, remorsefully.

William Douglas smiled, closed the organ, and, throwing his arm round his tall young daughter, walked with her down the aisle toward the door.

"But you have forgotten your cloak," said Anne, running back to get it. She clasped it carefully round his throat, drew the peaked hood over his head, and fastened it with straps of deer's hide. Her own fur cloak and cap were already on, and thus enveloped, the two descended the dark stairs, crossed the inner parade-ground, passed under the iron arch, and made their way down the long sloping path, cut in the cliff-side, which led from the little fort on the height to the village below. The thermometer outside the commandant's door showed a temperature several degrees below zero; the dry old snow that covered the ground was hardened into ice on the top, so that boys walked on its crust above the fences. Overhead the stars glittered keenly, like the sharp edges of Damascus blades, and the white expanse of the ice-fields below gave out a strange pallid light which was neither like that of sun nor of moon, of dawn nor of twilight. The little village showed but few signs of life as they turned into its main street; the piers were sheets of ice.

Nothing wintered there; the summer fleets were laid up in the rivers farther south, where the large towns stood on the lower lakes. The shutters of the few shops had been tightly closed at sunset, when all the inhabited houses were tightly closed also; inside there were curtains, sometimes a double set, woollen cloth, blankets, or skins, according to the wealth of the occupants. Thus housed, with great fires burning in their dark stoves, and one small lamp, the store-keepers waited for custom until nine o'clock, after which time hardly any one stirred abroad, unless it was some warm-blooded youth, who defied the elements with the only power which can make us forget them.

At times, early in the evening, the door of one of these shops opened, and a figure entered through a narrow crack; for no islander opened a door widely – it was giving too much advantage to the foe of his life, the weather. This figure, enveloped in furs or a blanket, came toward the stove and warmed its hands with deliberation, the merchant meanwhile remaining calmly seated; then, after some moments, it threw back its hood, and disclosed the face of perhaps an Indian, perhaps a French fisherman, perhaps an Irish soldier from the barracks. The customer now mentioned his errand, and the merchant, rising in his turn, stretched himself like a shaggy dog loath to leave the fire, took his

little lamp, and prepared to go in quest of the article desired, which lay, perhaps, beyond the circle of heat, somewhere in the outer darkness of the dim interior. It was an understood rule that no one should ask for nails or any kind of ironware in the evening: it was labor enough for the merchant to find and handle his lighter goods when the cold was so intense. There was not much bargaining in the winter; people kept their breath in their mouths. The merchants could have made money if they had had more customers or more energy; as it was, however, the small population and the cold kept them lethargically honest.

Anne and her father turned northward. The southern half of the little village had two streets, one behind the other, and both were clogged and overshadowed by the irregular old buildings of the once-powerful fur company. These ancient frames, empty and desolate, rose above the low cottages of the islanders, sometimes three and four stories in height, with the old pulleys and hoisting apparatus still in place under their peaked roofs, like gallows ready for the old traders to hang themselves upon, if they came back and saw the degeneracy of the furless times. No one used these warehouses now, no one propped them up, no one pulled them down; there they stood, closed and empty, their owners being but so many discouraged bones under the sod; for the Company had dissolved to the four winds of heaven, leaving only far-off doubtful and quarrelling heirs. The little island could not have the buildings; neither could it pull them down. They were dogs in the manger, therefore, if the people had looked upon them with progressive American eyes; but they did not. They were not progressive; they were hardly American. If they had any glory, it was of that very past, the days when those buildings were full of life. There was scarcely a family on the island that did not cherish its tradition of the merry fur-trading times, when "grandfather" was a factor, a superintendent, a clerk, a hunter; even a voyageur had his importance, now that there were no more voyageurs. Those were gay days, they said; they should never look upon their like again: unless, indeed, the past should come back – a possibility which did not seem so unlikely on the island as it does elsewhere, since the people were plainly retrograding, and who knows but that they might some time even catch up with the past?

North of the piers there was only one street, which ran along the water's edge. On the land side first came the fort garden, where successive companies of soldiers had vainly fought the climate in an agricultural way, redcoats of England and blue-coats of the United States, with much the same results of partially ripened vegetables, nipped fruits, and pallid flowers; for the island summer was beautiful, but too short for lusciousness. Hardy plants grew well, but there was always a persistent preference for those that were not hardy – like delicate beauties who are loved and cherished tenderly, while the strong brown maids go by unnoticed. The officers' wives made catsup of the green tomatoes, and loved their weakling flowers for far-away home's sake; and as the Indians brought in canoe-loads of fine full-jacketed potatoes from their little farms on the mainland, the officers could afford to let the soldiers do fancy-work in the government fields if it pleased the exiled ladies. Beyond the army garden was the old Agency house. The Agency itself had long been removed farther westward, following the retreating, dwindling tribes of the red men farther toward the Rocky Mountains; but the old house remained. On its door a brass plate was still fixed, bearing the words, "United States Agency." But it was now the home of a plain, unimportant citizen, William Douglas.

Anne ran up the path toward the front door, thinking of the children and the supper. She climbed the uneven snow-covered steps, turned the latch, and entered the dark hall. There was a line of light under the left-hand door, and taking off her fur-lined overshoes, she went in. The room was large; its three windows were protected by shutters, and thick curtains of red hue, faded but cheery; a great fire of logs was burning on the hearth, lighting up every corner with its flame and glow, and making the poor furniture splendid. In its radiance the curtains were damask, the old carpet a Persian-hued luxury, and the preparations for cooking an *Arabian Nights'* display. Three little boys ran forward to meet their sister; a girl who was basking in the glow of the flame looked up languidly. They were odd children, with black eyes, coal-black hair, dark skins, and bold eagle outlines. The eldest, the girl, was small – a strange little creature, with braids of black hair hanging down behind almost to her ankles,

half-closed black eyes, little hands and feet, a low soft voice, and the grace of a young panther. The boys were larger, handsome little fellows of wild aspect. In fact, all four were of mixed blood, their mother having been a beautiful French quarter-breed, and their father – William Douglas.

"Annet, Annet, can't we have fried potatoes for supper, and bacon?"

"Annet, Annet, can't we have coffee?"

"It is a biting night, isn't it?" said Tita, coming to her sister's side and stroking her cold hands gently. "I really think, Annet, that you ought to have something substantielle. You see, *I* think of you; whereas those howling piggish bears think only of themselves."

All this she delivered in a soft, even voice, while Anne removed the remainder of her wrappings.

"I have thought of something better still," said William Douglas's eldest daughter, kissing her little sister fondly, and then stepping out of the last covering, and lifting the heap from the floor – "batter cakes!"

The boys gave a shout of delight, and danced up and down on the hearth; Tita went back to her corner and sat down, clasping her little brown hands round her ankles, like the embalmed monkeys of the Nile. Her corner was made by an old secretary and the side of the great chimney; this space she had lined and carpeted with furs, and here she sat curled up with her book or her bead-work all through the long winter, refusing to leave the house unless absolutely ordered out by Anne, who filled the place of mother to these motherless little ones. Tita was well satisfied with the prospect of batter cakes; she would probably eat two if Anne browned them well, and they were light and tender. But as for those boys, those wolf-dogs, those beasts, they would probably swallow dozens. "If you come any nearer, Louis, I shall lay open the side of your head," she announced, gently, as the boys danced too near her hermitage; they, accustomed alike to her decisions and her words, danced farther away without any discussion of the subject. Tita was an excellent playmate sometimes; her little moccasined feet, and long braids streaming behind, formed the most exciting feature of their summer races; her blue cloth skirt up in the tops of the tallest trees, the provocative element in their summer climbing. She was a pallid little creature, while they were brown; small, while they were large; but she domineered over them like a king, and wreaked a whole vocabulary of roughest fisherman's terms upon them when they displeased her. One awful vengeance she reserved as a last resort: when they had been unbearably troublesome she stole into their room at night in her little white night-gown, with all her long thick black hair loose, combed over her face, and hanging down round her nearly to her feet. This was a ghostly visitation which the boys could not endure, for she left a lamp in the hall outside, so that they could dimly see her, and then she stood and swayed toward them slowly, backward and forward, without a sound, all the time coming nearer and nearer, until they shrieked aloud in terror, and Anne, hurrying to the rescue, found only three frightened little fellows cowering together in their broad bed, and the hairy ghost gone.

"How can you do such things, Tita?" she said.

"It is the only way by which I can keep the little devils in order," replied Tita.

"Do not use such words, dear."

"Mother did," said the younger sister, in her soft calm voice.

This was true, and Tita knew that Anne never impugned the memory of that mother.

"Who volunteers to help?" said Anne, lighting a candle in an iron candlestick, and opening a door.

"I," said Louis.

"I," said Gabriel.

"Me too," said little André.

They followed her, hopping along together, with arms interlinked, while her candle shed a light on the bare walls and floors of the rooms through which they passed, a series of little apartments, empty and desolate, at the end of which was the kitchen, inhabited in the daytime by an Irishwoman, a soldier's wife, who came in the morning before breakfast, and went home at dusk, the only servant

William Douglas's fast-thinning purse could afford. Anne might have had her kitchen nearer what Miss Lois called the "keeping-room"; any one of the five in the series would have answered the purpose as well as the one she had chosen. But she had a dream of furnishing them all some day according to a plan of her own, and it would have troubled her greatly to have used her proposed china closet, pantry, store-room, preserve closet, or fruit-room for culinary purposes. How often had she gone over the whole in her mind, settling the position of every shelf, and deliberating over the pattern of the cups! The Irishwoman had left some gleams of fire on the hearth, and the boys immediately set themselves to work burying potatoes in the ashes, with the hot hearth-stone beneath. "For of course you are going to cook in the sitting-room, Annet," they said. "We made all ready for you there; and, besides, this fire is out."

"You could easily have kept it up," said the sister, smiling. "However, as it is Christmas-eve, I will let you have your way."

The boys alertly loaded themselves with the articles she gave them, and went hopping back into the sitting-room. They scorned to walk on Christmas-eve; the thing was to hop, and yet carry every dish steadily. They arranged the table, still in a sort of dancing step, and sang together in their shrill childish voices a tune of their own, without any words but "Ho! ho! ho!" Tita, in her corner, kept watch over the proceedings, and inhaled the aroma of the coffee with indolent anticipation. The tin pot stood on the hearth near her, surrounded by coals; it was a battered old coffee-pot, grimy as a camp-kettle, but dear to all the household, and their principal comforter when the weather was bitter, provisions scarce, or the boys especially troublesome. For the boys said they did not enjoy being especially troublesome; they could not help it any more than they could help having the measles or the whooping-cough. They needed coffee, therefore, for the conflict, when they felt it coming on, as much as any of the household.

Poor Anne's cooking utensils were few and old; it was hard to make batter cakes over an open fire without the proper hanging griddle. But she attempted it, nevertheless, and at length, with scarlet cheeks, placed a plateful of them, brown, light, and smoking, upon the table. "Now, Louis, run out for the potatoes; and, Tita, call father."

This one thing Tita would do; she aspired to be her father's favorite. She went out with her noiseless step, and presently returned leading in the tall, bent, gray-haired father, her small brown hand holding his tightly, her dark eyes fixed upon him with a persistent steadiness, as if determined to isolate all his attention upon herself. William Douglas was never thoroughly at ease with his youngest daughter; she had this habit of watching him silently, which made him uncomfortable. The boys he understood, and made allowances for their wildness; but this girl, with her soft still ways, perplexed and troubled him. She seemed to embody, as it were, his own mistakes, and he never looked at her little pale face and diminutive figure without a vague feeling that she was a spirit dwelling on earth in elfish form, with a half-developed contradictory nature, to remind him of his past weakness. Standing at the head of the table, tall and straight, with her nobly poised head and clear Saxon eyes, his other daughter awaited him, and met his gaze with a bright smile; he always came back to her with a sense of comfort. But Tita jealously brought his attention to herself again by pulling his hand, and leading him to his chair, taking her own place close beside him. He was a tall man, and her head did not reach his elbow, but she ruled him. The father now asked a blessing; he always hesitated on his way through it, once or twice, as though he had forgotten what to say, but took up the thread again after an instant's pause, and went on. When he came to the end, and said "Amen," he always sat down with a relieved air. If you had asked him what he had said, he could not have told you unless you started him at the beginning, when the old formula would have rolled off his lips in the same vague, mechanical way. The meal proceeded in comparative quiet; the boys no longer hummed and shuffled their feet; they were engaged with the cakes. Tita refrained from remarks save once, when Gabriel having dropped buttered crumbs upon her dress, she succinctly threatened him with dismemberment. Douglas gazed at her helplessly, and sighed.

"She will be a woman soon," he said to his elder daughter, when, an hour or two later, she joined him in his own apartment, and drew from its hiding-place her large sewing-basket, filled with Christmas presents.

"Oh no, father, she is but a child," answered Anne, cheerfully. "As she grows older these little faults will vanish."

"How old is she?" said Douglas.

"Just thirteen."

The father played a bar of Mendelssohn noiselessly on the arm of his chair with his long thin fingers; he was thinking that he had married Tita's mother when she was hardly three years older. Anne was absorbed in her presents.

"See, father, will not this be nice for André? And this for Gabriel? And I have made such a pretty doll for Tita."

"Will she care for it, dear?"

"Of course she will. Did I not play with my own dear doll until I was fourteen years old – yes, almost fifteen?" said the girl, with a little laugh and blush.

"And you are now –"

"I am over sixteen."

"A great age," said Douglas, smoothing her thick brown hair fondly, as she sat near him, bending over her sewing.

The younger children were asleep up stairs in two old bedrooms with rattling dormer windows, and the father and elder daughter were in a small room opposite the sitting-room, called the study, although nothing was ever studied there, save the dreams of his own life, by the vague, irresolute, imaginative soul that dwelt therein, in a thin body of its own, much the worse for wear. William Douglas was a New England man of the brooding type, sent by force of circumstances into the ranks of United States army surgeons. He had married Anne's mother, who had passionately loved him, against the wishes of her family, and had brought the disinherited young bride out to this far Western island, where she had died, happy to the last – one of those rare natures to whom love is all in all, and the whole world well lost for its dear and holy sake. Grief over her death brought out all at once the latent doubts, hesitations, and strange perplexities of William Douglas's peculiar mind – perplexities which might have lain dormant in a happier life. He resigned his position as army surgeon, and refused even practice in the village. Medical science was not exact, he said; there was much pretense and presumption in it; he would no longer countenance deception, or play a part. He was then made postmaster, and dealt out letters through some seasons, until at last his mistakes roused the attention of the new officers at the fort; for the villagers, good, easy-tempered people, would never have complained of such trifles as a forgotten mail-bag or two under the counter. Superseded, he then attended nominally to the highways; but as the military authorities had for years done all that was to be done on the smooth roads, three in number, including the steep fort hill, the position was a sinecure, and the superintendent took long walks across the island, studying the flora of the Northern woods, watching the birds, noticing the clouds and the winds, staying out late to experiment with the flash of the two light-houses from their different distances, and then coming home to his lonely house, where the baby Anne was tenderly cared for by Miss Lois Hinsdale, who superintended the nurse all day, watched her charge to bed, and then came over early in the morning before she woke. Miss Lois adored the baby; and she watched the lonely father from a distance, imagining all his sadness. It was the poetry of her life. Who, therefore, can picture her feelings when, at the end of three years, it was suddenly brought to her knowledge that Douglas was soon to marry again, and that his choice was Angélique Lafontaine, a French quarter-breed girl!

Angélique was amiable, and good in her way; she was also very beautiful. But Miss Lois could have borne it better if she had been homely. The New England woman wept bitter, bitter tears that night. A god had come down and showed himself flesh; an ideal was shattered. How long had she

dwelt upon the beautiful love of Dr. Douglas and his young wife, taking it as a perfect example of rare, sweet happiness which she herself had missed, of which she herself was not worthy! How many times had she gone up to the little burial-ground on the height, and laid flowers from her garden on the mound, whose stone bore only the inscription, "Alida, wife of William Douglas, aged twenty-two years." Miss Lois had wished to have a text engraved under this brief line, and a date, but Dr. Douglas gently refused a text, and regarding a date he said: "Time is nothing. Those who love her will remember the date, and strangers need not know. But I should like the chance visitor to note that she was only twenty-two, and, as he stands there, think of her with kindly regret, as we all think of the early dead, though why, Miss Lois, why, I can not tell, since in going hence early surely the dead lose nothing, for God would not allow any injustice, I think – yes, I have about decided in my own mind that He does not allow it."

Miss Lois, startled, looked at him questioningly. He was then a man of thirty-four, tall, slight, still noticeable for the peculiar refined delicacy of face and manner which had first won the interest of sweet, impulsive Alida Clanssen.

"I trust, doctor, that you accept the doctrines of Holy Scripture on all such subjects," said Miss Lois. Then she felt immediately that she should have said "of the Church"; for she was a comparatively new Episcopalian, having been trained a New England Presbyterian of the severest hue.

Dr. Douglas came back to practical life again in the troubled gaze of the New England woman's eyes. "Miss Lois," he said, turning the subject, "Alida loved and trusted you; will you sometimes think of her little daughter?"

And then Miss Lois, the quick tears coming, forgot all about orthodoxy, gladly promised to watch over the baby, and kept her word. But now her life was shaken, and all her romantic beliefs disturbed and shattered, by this overwhelming intelligence. She was wildly, furiously jealous, wildly, furiously angry – jealous for Alida's sake, for the baby's, for her own. It is easy to be humble when a greater is preferred; but when an inferior is lifted high above our heads, how can we bear it? And Miss Lois was most jealous of all for Douglas himself – that such a man should so stoop. She hardly knew herself that night as she harshly pulled down the curtains, pushed a stool half across the room, slammed the door, and purposely knocked over the fire-irons. Lois Hinsdale had never since her birth given way to rage before (nor known the solace of it), and she was now forty-one years old. All her life afterward she remembered that night as something akin to a witch's revel on the Brocken, a horrible wild reign of passion which she trembled to recall, and for which she did penance many times in tears. "It shows the devil there is in us all," she said to herself, and she never passed the fire-irons for a long time afterward without an unpleasant consciousness.

The limited circle of island society suggested that Miss Lois had been hunting the loon with a hand-net – a Northern way of phrasing the wearing of the willow; but if the New England woman loved William Douglas, she was not conscious of it, but merged the feeling in her love for his child, and for the memory of Alida. True, she was seven years older than he was: women of forty-one can answer whether that makes any difference.

On a brilliant, sparkling, clear June morning William Douglas went down to the little Roman Catholic church and married the French girl. As he had resigned his position in the army some time before, and as there was a new set of officers at the fort, his marriage made little impression there save on the mind of the chaplain, who had loved him well when he was surgeon of the post, and had played many a game of chess with him. The whole French population of the island, however, came to the marriage. That was expected. But what was not expected was the presence there of Miss Lois Hinsdale, sitting severely rigid in the first pew, accompanied by the doctor's child – a healthy, blue-eyed little girl, who kissed her new mamma obediently, and thought her very sweet and pretty – a belief which remained with her always, the careless, indolent, easy-tempered, beautiful young second wife having died when her step-daughter was eleven years old, leaving four little ones, who, according to a common freak of nature, were more Indian than their mother. The Douglas family

grew poorer every year; but as every one was poor there, poverty was respectable; and as all poverty is comparative, they always esteemed themselves comfortable. For they had the old Agency for a home, and it was in some respects the most dignified residence on the island; and they had the remains of the furniture which the young surgeon had brought with him from the East when his Alida was a bride, and that was better than most of the furniture in use in the village. The little stone fort on the height was, of course, the castle of the town, and its commandant by courtesy the leader of society; but the infantry officers who succeeded each other at this distant Northern post brought little with them, camping out, as it were, in their low-ceilinged quarters, knowing that another season might see them far away. The Agency, therefore, preserved an air of dignity still, although its roof leaked, its shutters rattled, although its plastering was gone here and there, and its floors were uneven and decayed. Two of its massive outside chimneys, clamped to the sides of the house, were half down, looking like broken columns, monuments of the past; but there were a number left. The Agency originally had bristled with chimneys, which gave, on a small scale, a castellated air to its rambling outline.

Dr. Douglas's study was old, crowded, and comfortable; that is, comfortable to those who have consciousness in their finger-ends, and no uncertainty as to their feet; the great army of blunderers and stumblers, the handle-everything, knock-over-everything people, who cut a broad swath through the smaller furniture of a room whenever they move, would have been troubled and troublesome there. The boys were never admitted; but Tita, who stepped like a little cat, and Anne, who had a deft direct aim in all her motions, were often present. The comfort of the place was due to Anne; she shook out and arranged the curtains, darned the old carpet, re-covered the lounge, polished the andirons, and did all without disturbing the birds' wings, the shells, the arrow-heads, the skins, dried plants, wampum, nets, bits of rock, half-finished drawings, maps, books, and papers, which were scattered about, or suspended from the walls. William Douglas, knowing something of everything, was exact in nothing: now he stuffed birds, now he read Greek, now he botanized, now he played on the flute, now he went about in all weathers chipping the rocks with ardent zeal, now he smoked in his room all day without a word or a look for anybody. He sketched well, but seldom finished a picture; he went out hunting when the larder was empty, and forgot what he went for; he had a delicate mechanical skill, and made some curious bits of intricate work, but he never mended the hinges of the shutters, or repaired a single article which was in daily use in his household.

By the careful attention of Anne he was present in the fort chapel every Sunday morning, and, once there, he played the organ with delight, and brought exquisite harmonies from its little pipes; but Anne stood there beside him all the time, found the places, and kept him down to the work, borrowing his watch beforehand in order to touch him when the voluntary was too long, or the chords between the hymn verses too beautiful and intricate. Those were the days when the old buckram-backed rhymed versions of the psalms were steadfastly given out at every service, and Anne's rich voice sang, with earnest fervor, words like these:

"His liberal favors he extends,
To some he gives, to others lends;
Yet when his charity impairs,
He saves by prudence in affairs,"

while her father followed them with harmony fit for angels. Douglas taught his daughter music in the best sense of the phrase; she read notes accurately, and knew nothing of inferior composers, the only change from the higher courts of melody being some of the old French chansons of the voyageurs, which still lingered on the island, echoes of the past. She could not touch the ivory keys with any skill, her hands were too much busied with other work; but she practiced her singing lessons as she went about the house – music which would have seemed to the world of New York as old-fashioned as Chaucer.

The fire of logs blazed on the hearth, the father sat looking at his daughter, who was sewing swiftly, her thoughts fixed upon her work. The clock struck eleven.

"It is late, Anne."

"Yes, father, but I must finish. I have so little time during the day."

"My good child," said Douglas, slowly and fondly.

Anne looked up; his eyes were dim with tears.

"I have done nothing for you, dear," he said, as she dropped her work and knelt by his side. "I have kept you selfishly with me here, and made you a slave to those children."

"My own brothers and my own little sister, father."

"Do you feel so, Anne? Then may God bless you for it! But I should not have kept you here."

"This is our home, papa."

"A poor one."

"Is it? It never seemed so to me."

"That is because you have known nothing better."

"But I like it, papa, just as it is. I have always been happy here."

"Really happy, Anne?"

The girl paused, and reflected a moment. "Yes," she said, looking into the depths of the fire, with a smile, "I am happy all the time. I am never anything but happy."

William Douglas looked at her. The fire-light shone on her face; she turned her clear eyes toward him.

"Then you do not mind the children? They are not a burdensome weight upon you?"

"Never, papa; how can you suppose it? I love them dearly, next to you."

"And will you stand by them, Anne? Note my words: I do not urge it, I simply ask."

"Of course I will stand by them, papa. I give a promise of my own accord. I will never forsake them as long as I can do anything for them, as long as I live. But why do you speak of it? Have I ever neglected them or been unkind to them?" said the girl, troubled, and very near tears.

"No, dear; you love them better than they or I deserve. I was thinking of the future, and of a time when," – he had intended to say, "when I am no longer with you," but the depth of love and trust in her eyes made him hesitate, and finish his sentence differently – "a time when they may give you trouble," he said.

"They are good boys – that is, they mean no harm, papa. When they are older they will study more."

"Will they?"

"Certainly," said Anne, with confidence. "I did. And as for Tita, you yourself must see, papa, what a remarkable child she is."

Douglas shaded his face with his hand. The uneasy sense of trouble which always stirred within him when he thought of his second daughter was rising to the surface now like a veiled, formless shape. "The sins of the fathers," he thought, and sighed heavily.

Anne threw her arms round his neck, and begged him to look at her. "Papa, speak to me, please. What is it that troubles you so?"

"Stand by little Tita, child, no matter what she does. Do not expect too much of her, but remember always her – her Indian blood," said the troubled father, in a low voice.

A flush crossed Anne's face. The cross of mixed blood in the younger children was never alluded to in the family circle or among their outside friends. In truth, there had been many such mixtures on the island in the old times, although comparatively few in the modern days to which William Douglas's second marriage belonged.

"Tita is French," said Anne, speaking rapidly, almost angrily.

"She is more French than Indian. Still – one never knows." Then, after a pause: "I have been a slothful father, Anne, and feel myself cowardly also in thus shifting upon your shoulders my own

responsibilities. Still, what can I do? I can not re-live my life; and even if I could, perhaps I might do the same again. I do not know – I do not know. We are as we are, and tendencies dating generations back come out in us, and confuse our actions."

He spoke dreamily. His eyes were assuming that vague look with which his children were familiar, and which betokened that his mind was far away.

"You could not do anything which was not right, father," said Anne.

She was standing by his side now, and in her young strength might have been his champion against the whole world. The fire-light shining out showed a prematurely old man, whose thin form, bent drooping shoulders, and purposeless face were but Time's emphasis upon the slender, refined, dreamy youth, who, entering the domain of doubt with honest negations and a definite desire, still wandered there, lost to the world, having forgotten his first object, and loving the soft haze now for itself alone.

Anne received no answer: her father's mind had passed away from her. After waiting a few moments in silence she saw that he was lost in one of his reveries, and sitting down again she took up her work and went on sewing with rapid stitches. Poor Anne and her poor presents! How coarse the little white shirts for Louis and André! how rough the jacket for Gabriel! How forlorn the doll! How awkwardly fashioned the small cloth slippers for Tita! The elder sister was obliged to make her Christmas gifts with her own hands; she had no money to spend for such superfluities. The poor doll had a cloth face, with features painted on a flat surface, and a painful want of profile. A little before twelve the last stitch was taken with happy content.

"Papa, it is nearly midnight; do not sit up very late," said the daughter, bending to kiss the father's bent, brooding brow. William Douglas's mind came back for an instant, and looked out through his clouded eyes upon his favorite child. He kissed her, gave her his usual blessing, "May God help the soul He has created!" and then, almost before she had closed the door, he was far away again on one of those long journeyings which he took silently, only his following guardian angel knew whither. Anne went across the hall and entered the sitting-room; the fire was low, but she stirred the embers, and by their light filled the four stockings hanging near the chimney-piece. First she put in little round cakes wrapped in papers; then home-made candies, not thoroughly successful in outline, but well-flavored and sweet; next gingerbread elephants and camels, and an attempt at a fairy; lastly the contents of her work-basket, which gave her much satisfaction as she inspected them for the last time. Throwing a great knot, which would burn slowly all night, upon the bed of dying coals, she lighted a candle and went up to her own room.

As soon as she had disappeared, a door opened softly above, and a small figure stole out into the dark hall. After listening a moment, this little figure went silently down the stairs, paused at the line of light underneath the closed study door, listened again, and then, convinced that all was safe, went into the sitting-room, took down the stockings one by one, and deliberately inspected all their contents, sitting on a low stool before the fire. First came the stockings of the boys; each parcel was unrolled, down to the last gingerbread camel, and as deftly enwrapped again by the skillful little fingers. During this examination there was not so much an expression of interest as of jealous scrutiny. But when the turn of her own stocking came, the small face showed the most profound, almost weazened, solicitude. Package after package was swiftly opened, and its contents spread upon the mat beside her. The doll was cast aside with contempt, the slippers examined and tried on with critical care, and then when the candy and cake appeared and nothing else, the eyes snapped with anger.

The little brown hand felt down to the toe of the stocking: no, there was nothing more. "It is my opinion," said Tita, in her French island *patois*, half aloud, "that Annet is one stupid beast."

She then replaced everything, hung the stockings on their nails, and stole back to her own room; here, by the light of a secreted candle-end, she manufactured the following epistle, with heavy labor of brains and hand: "Cher papa, – I hav dreemed that Sant Klos has hare-ribbans in his pak. Will you ask him for sum for your little Tita?" This not seeming sufficiently expressive, she inserted "trez

affectionay" before "Tita," and then, folding the epistle, she went softly down the stairs again, and stealing round in the darkness through several unused rooms, she entered her father's bedroom, which communicated with the study, and by sense of feeling pinned the paper carefully round his large pipe, which lay in its usual place on the table. For William Douglas always began smoking as soon as he rose, in this way nullifying, as it were, the fresh, vivifying effect of the morning, which smote painfully upon his eyes and mind alike; in the afternoon and evening he did not smoke so steadily, the falling shadows supplying of themselves the atmosphere he loved. Having accomplished her little manœuvre, Tita went back up stairs to her own room like a small white ghost, and fell asleep with the satisfaction of a successful diplomatist.

In the mean time Anne was brushing her brown hair, and thoughtfully going over in her own mind the morrow's dinner. Her room was a bare and comfortless place; there was but a small fire on the hearth, and no curtains over the windows; it took so much care and wood to keep the children's rooms warm that she neglected her own, and as for the furniture, she had removed it piece by piece, exchanging it for broken-backed worn-out articles from all parts of the house. One leg of the bedstead was gone, and its place supplied by a box which the old-fashioned valance only half concealed; the looking-glass was cracked, and distorted her image; the chairs were in hospital and out of service, the young mistress respecting their injuries, and using as her own seat an old wooden stool which stood near the hearth. Upon this she was now seated, the rippling waves of her thick hair flowing over her shoulders. Having at last faithfully rehearsed the Christmas dinner in all its points, she drew a long breath of relief, rose, extinguished her light, and going over to the window, stood there for a moment looking out. The moonlight came gleaming in and touched her with silver, her pure youthful face and girlish form draped in white. "May God bless my dear father," she prayed, silently, looking up to the thick studded stars; "and my dear mother too, wherever she is to-night, in one of those far bright worlds, perhaps." It will be seen from this prayer that the boundaries of Anne Douglas's faith were wide enough to include even the unknown.

CHAPTER II

*"Heap on more wood! the wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry-men go,
To gather in the mistletoe."*

– Walter Scott.

"Can you make out what the child means?" said Douglas, as his elder daughter entered the study early on Christmas morning to renew the fire and set the apartment in order for the day. As he spoke he held Tita's epistle hopelessly before him, and scanned the zig-zag lines.

"She wants some ribbons for her hair," said Anne, making out the words over his shoulder. "Poor little thing! she is so proud of her hair, and all the other girls have bright ribbons. But I can not make ribbons," she added, regretfully, as though she found herself wanting in a needful accomplishment. "Think of her faith in Santa Klaus, old as she is, and her writing to ask him! But there is ribbon in the house, after all," she added, suddenly, her face brightening. "Miss Lois gave me some last month; I had forgotten it. That will be the very thing for Tita; she has not even seen it."

(But has she not, thou unsuspecting elder sister?)

"Do not rob yourself, child," said the father, wearily casting his eyes over the slip of paper again. "What spelling! The English is bad, but the French worse."

"That is because she has no French teacher, papa; and you know I do not allow her to speak the island *patois*, lest it should corrupt the little she knows."

"But she does speak it; she always talks *patois* when she is alone with me."

"Does she?" said Anne, in astonishment. "I had no idea of that. But *you* might correct her, papa."

"I can never correct her in any way," replied Douglas, gloomily; and then Anne, seeing that he was on the threshold of one of his dark moods, lighted his pipe, stirred the fire into a cheery blaze, and went out to get a cup of coffee for him. For the Irish soldier's wife was already at work in the kitchen, having been to mass in the cold gray dawn, down on her two knees on the hard floor, repentant for all her sins, and refulgently content in the absolution which wiped out the old score (and left place for a new one). After taking in the coffee, Anne ran up to her own room, brought down the ribbon, and placed it in Tita's stocking; she then made up the fire with light-wood, and set about decorating the walls with wreaths of evergreen as the patter of the little boys' feet was heard on the old stairway. The breakfast table was noisy that morning. Tita had inspected her ribbons demurely, and wondered how Santa Klaus knew her favorite colors so well. Anne glanced toward her father, and smiled; but the father's face showed doubt, and did not respond. While they were still at the table the door opened, and a tall figure entered, muffled in furs. "Miss Lois!" cried the boys. "Hurrah! See our presents, Miss Lois." They danced round her while she removed her wrappings, and kept up such a noise that no one could speak. Miss Lois, viewed without her cloak and hood, was a tall, angular woman, past middle age, with sharp features, thin brown hair tinged with gray, and pale blue eyes shielded by spectacles. She kissed Anne first with evident affection, and afterward the children with business-like promptitude; then she shook hands with William Douglas. "I wish you a happy Christmas, doctor," she said.

"Thank you, Lois," said Douglas, holding her hand in his an instant or two longer than usual.

A faint color rose in Miss Lois's cheeks. When she was young she had one of those exquisitely delicate complexions which seem to belong to some parts of New England; even now color would rise unexpectedly in her cheeks, much to her annoyance: she wondered why wrinkles did not keep it down. But New England knows her own. The creamy skins of the South, with their brown shadows under the eyes, the rich colors of the West, even the calm white complexions that are bred and long retained in cities, all fade before this faint healthy bloom on old New England's cheeks, like winter-apples.

Miss Lois inspected the boys' presents with exact attention, and added some gifts of her own, which filled the room with a more jubilant uproar than before. Tita, in the mean while, remained quietly seated at the table, eating her breakfast; she took very small mouthfuls, and never hurried herself. She said she liked to taste things, and that only snapping dogs, like the boys, for instance, gulped their food in a mass.

"I gave her the ribbons; do not say anything," whispered Anne, in Miss Lois's ear, as she saw the spectacled eyes turning toward Tita's corner. Miss Lois frowned, and put back into her pocket a small parcel she was taking out. She had forgiven Dr. Douglas the existence of the boys, but she never could forgive the existence of Tita.

Once Anne had asked about Angélique. "I was but a child when she died, Miss Lois," said she, "so my recollection of her may not be accurate; but I know that I thought her very beautiful. Does Tita look like her?"

"Angélique Lafontaine was beautiful – in her way," replied Miss Lois. "I do not say that I admire that way, mind you."

"And Tita?"

"Tita is hideous."

"Oh, Miss Lois!"

"She is, child. She is dwarfish, black, and sly."

"I do not think she is sly," replied Anne, with heat. "And although she is dark and small, still, sometimes –"

"That, for your beauty of 'sometimes!'" said Miss Lois, snapping her fingers. "Give me a girl who is pretty in the morning as well as by candle-light, one who has a nice, white, well-born, down-East face, and none of your Western-border mongrelousities!"

But this last phrase she uttered under her breath. She was ever mindful of Anne's tender love for her father, and the severity with which she herself, as a contemporary, had judged him was never revealed to the child.

At half past ten the Douglas family were all in their places in the little fort chapel. It was a bright but bitterly cold day, and the members of the small congregation came enveloped in shaggy furs like bears, shedding their skins at the door, where they lay in a pile near the stove, ready for the return homeward. The military trappings of the officers brightened the upper benches, the uniforms of the common soldiers filled the space behind; on the side benches sat the few Protestants of the village, denominational prejudices unknown or forgotten in this far-away spot in the wilderness. The chaplain, the Reverend James Gaston – a man who lived in peace with all the world, with Père Michaux, the Catholic priest, and William Douglas, the deist – gazed round upon his flock with a benignant air, which brightened into affection as Anne's voice took up the song of the angels, singing, amid the ice and snow of a new world, the strain the shepherds heard on the plains of Palestine.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men," sang Anne, with all her young heart. And Miss Lois, sitting with folded hands, and head held stiffly erect, saw her wreath in the place of honor over the altar, and was touched first with pride and then with a slight feeling of awe. She did not believe that one part of the church was more sacred than another – she could not; but being a High-Church Episcopalian now, she said to herself that she ought to; she even had appalling visions of herself, sometimes, going as far as Rome. But the old spirit of Calvinism was still on the ground, ready for many a wrestling match yet; and stronger than all else were the

old associations connected with the square white meeting-house of her youth, which held their place undisturbed down below all these upper currents of a new faith. William Douglas was also a New-Englander, brought up strictly in the creed of his fathers; but as Miss Lois's change of creed was owing to a change of position, as some Northern birds turn their snow-color to a darker hue when taken away from arctic regions, so his was one purely of mind, owing to nothing but the processes of thought within him. He had drifted away from all creeds, save in one article: he believed in a Creator. To this great Creator's praise, and in worship of Him, he now poured forth his harmonies, the purest homage he could offer, "unless," he thought, "Anne is a living homage as she stands here beside me. But no, she is a soul by herself; she has her own life to live, her own worship to offer; I must not call her mine. That she is my daughter is naught to me save a great blessing. I can love her with a human father's love, and thank God for her affection. But that is all."

So he played his sweetest music, and Miss Lois fervently prayed, and made no mistake in the order of her prayers. She liked to have a vocal part in the service. It was a pleasure to herself to hear her own voice lifted up, even as a miserable sinner; for at home in the old white meeting-house all expression had been denied to her, the small outlet of the Psalms being of little avail to a person who could not sing. This dumbness stifled her, and she had often said to herself that the men would never have endured it either if they had not had the prayer-meetings as a safety-valve. The three boys were penned in at Miss Lois's side, within reach of her tapping finger. They had decided to attend service on account of the evergreens and Anne's singing, although they, as well as Tita, belonged in reality to the flock of Father Michaux. Anne never interfered with this division of the family; she considered it the one tie which bound the children to the memory of their mother; but Miss Lois shook her head over it, and sighed ominously. The boys were, in fact, three little heathen; but Tita was a devout Roman Catholic, and observed all the feast and fast days of the Church, to the not infrequent disturbance of the young mistress of the household, to whom a feast-day was oftentimes an occasion bristling with difficulty. But to-day, in honor of Christmas, the usual frugal dinner had been made a banquet indeed, by the united efforts of Anne and Miss Lois; and when they took their seats at the table which stood in the sitting-room, all felt that it held an abundance fit even for the old fur-trading days, Miss Lois herself having finally succumbed to that island standard of comparison. After the dinner was over, while they were sitting round the fire sipping coffee – the ambrosia of the Northern gods, who find some difficulty in keeping themselves warm – a tap at the door was heard, and a tall youth entered, a youth who was a vivid personification of early manhood in its brightest form. The warm air was stirred by the little rush of cold that came in with him, and the dreamy and drowsy eyes round the fire awoke as they rested upon him.

"The world *is* alive, then, outside, after all," said Miss Lois, briskly straightening herself in her chair, and taking out her knitting. "How do you do, Erastus?"

But her greeting was drowned by the noise of the boys, who had been asleep together on the rug in a tangled knot, like three young bears, but now, broadly awake again, were jumping round the new-comer, displaying their gifts and demanding admiration. Disentangling himself from them with a skill which showed a long experience in their modes of twisting, the young man made his way up to Anne, and, with a smile and bow to Dr. Douglas and Miss Lois, sat down by her side.

"You were not at church this morning," said the girl, looking at him rather gravely, but giving him her hand.

"No, I was not; but a merry Christmas all the same, Annet," answered the youth, throwing back his golden head with careless grace. At this moment Tita came forward from her furry corner, where she had been lying with her head on her arm, half asleep, and seated herself in the red light of the fire, gazing into the blaze with soft indifference. Her dark woollen dress was brightened by the ribbons which circled her little waist and knotted themselves at the ends of the long braids of her hair. She had a string of yellow beads round her neck, and on her feet the little slippers which Anne had fashioned for her with so much care. Her brown hands lay crossed on her lap, and her small but

bold-featured profile looked more delicate than usual, outlined in relief like a little cameo against the flame. The visitor's eyes rested upon her for a moment, and then turned back to Anne. "There is to be a dance to-night down in one of the old warehouses," he said, "and I want you to go."

"A dance!" cried the boys; "then *we* are going too. It is Christmas night, and we know how to dance. See here." And they sprang out into the centre of the room, and began a figure, not without a certain wild grace of its own, keeping time to the shrill whistling of Gabriel, who was the fifer and leader of the band.

Miss Lois put down her knitting, and disapproved, for the old training was still strong in her; then she remembered that these were things of the past, shook her head at herself, sighed, and resumed it again.

"Of course you will go," said the visitor.

"I do not know that I *can* go, Rast," replied Anne, turning toward her father, as if to see what he thought.

"Yes, go," said Douglas – "go, Annet." He hardly ever used this name, which the children had given to their elder sister – a name that was not the French "Annette," but, like the rest of the island *patois*, a mispronunciation – "An'net," with the accent on the first syllable. "It is Christmas night," said Douglas, with a faint interest on his faded face; "I should like it to be a pleasant recollection for you, Annet."

The young girl went to him; he kissed her, and then rose to go to his study; but Tita's eyes held him, and he paused.

"Will *you* go, Miss Lois?" said Anne.

"Oh no, child," replied the old maid, primly, adjusting her spectacles.

"But you must go, Miss Lois, and dance with me," said Rast, springing up and seizing her hands.

"Fie, Erastus! for shame! Let me go," said Miss Lois, as he tried to draw her to her feet. He still bent over her, but she tapped his cheek with her knitting-needles, and told him to sit down and behave himself.

"I won't, unless you promise to go with us," he said.

"Why should you not go, Lois?" said Douglas, still standing at the door. "The boys want to go, and some one must be with them to keep them in order."

"Why, doctor, imagine me at a dancing party!" said Miss Lois, the peach-like color rising in her thin cheeks again.

"It is different here, Lois; everybody goes."

"Yes; even old Mrs. Kendig," said Tita, softly.

Miss Lois looked sharply at her; old Mrs. Kendig was fat, toothless, and seventy, and the active, spare New England woman felt a sudden wrath at the implied comparison. Griselda was not tried upon the subject of her age, or we might have had a different legend. But Tita looked as idly calm as a summer morning, and Miss Lois turned away, as she had turned a hundred times before, uncertain between intention and simple chance.

"Very well, then, I will go," she said. "How you bother me, Erastus!"

"No, I don't," said the youth, releasing her. "You know you like me, Miss Lois; you know you do."

"Brazen-face!" said Miss Lois, pushing him away. But any one could see that she did like him.

"Of course I may go, father?" said Tita, without stirring, but looking at him steadily.

"I suppose so," he answered, slowly; "that is, if Erastus will take care of you."

"Will you take care of me, Erastus?" asked the soft voice.

"Don't be absurd, Tita; of course he will," said Miss Lois, shortly. "He will see to you as well as to the other children."

And then Douglas turned and left the room.

Erastus, or Rast, as he was called, went back to his place beside Anne. He was a remarkably handsome youth of seventeen, with bright blue eyes, golden hair, a fine spirited outline, laughing mouth, and impetuous, quick movements; tall as a young sapling, his figure was almost too slender for its height, but so light and elastic that one forgave the fault, and forgot it in one look at the mobile face, still boyish in spite of the maturity given by the hard cold life of the North.

"Why have we not heard of this dance before, Erastus?" asked Miss Lois, ever mindful and tenacious of a dignity of position which no one disputed, but which was none the less to her a subject of constant and belligerent watchfulness – one by which she gauged the bow of the shop-keeper, the nod of the passing islander, the salute of the little half-breed boys who had fish to sell, and even the guttural ejaculations of the Chippewas who came to her door offering potatoes and Indian sugar.

"Because it was suggested only a few hours ago, up at the fort. I was dining with Dr. Gaston, and Walters came across from the commandant's cottage and told me. Since then I have been hard at work with them, decorating and lighting the ball-room."

"Which one of the old shells have you taken?" asked Miss Lois. "I hope the roof will not come down on our heads."

"We have Larrabee's; that has the best floor. And as to coming down on our heads, those old warehouses are stronger than you imagine, Miss Lois. Have you never noticed their great beams?"

"I have noticed their toppling fronts and their slanting sides, their bulgings out and their leanings in," replied Miss Lois, nodding her head emphatically.

"The leaning tower of Pisa, you know, is pronounced stronger than other towers that stand erect," said Rast. "That old brown shell of Larrabee's is jointed together so strongly that I venture to predict it will outlive us all. We might be glad of such joints ourselves, Miss Lois."

"If it will only not come down on our heads to-night, that is all I ask of its joints," replied Miss Lois.

Soon after seven o'clock the ball opened: darkness had already lain over the island for nearly three hours, and the evening seemed well advanced.

"Oh, Tita!" said Anne, as the child stepped out of her long cloak and stood revealed, clad in a fantastic short skirt of black cloth barred with scarlet, and a little scarlet bodice, "that dress is too thin, and besides –"

"She looks like a circus-rider," said Miss Lois, in dismay. "Why did you allow it, Anne?"

"I knew nothing of it," replied the elder sister, with a distressed expression on her face, but, as usual, not reproving Tita. "It is the little fancy dress the fort ladies made for her last summer when they had tableaux. It is too late to go back now; she must wear it, I suppose; perhaps in the crowd it will not be noticed."

Tita, unmoved, had walked meanwhile over to the hearth, and sitting down on the floor before the fire, was taking off her snow-boots and donning her new slippers, apparently unconscious of remark.

The scene was a striking one, or would have been such to a stranger. The lower floor of the warehouse had been swept and hastily garnished with evergreens and all the flags the little fort could muster; at each end on a broad hearth a great fire of logs roared up the old chimney, and helped to light the room, a soldier standing guard beside it, and keeping up the flame by throwing on wood every now and then from the heap in the corner near by. Candles were ranged along the walls, and lanterns hung from the beams above; all that the island could do in the way of illumination had been done. The result was a picturesque mingling of light and shade as the dancers came into the ruddy gleam of the fires and passed out again, now seen for a moment in the paler ray of a candle farther down the hall, now lost in the shadows which everywhere swept across the great brown room from side to side, like broad-winged ghosts resting in mid-air and looking down upon the revels. The music came from six French fiddlers, four young, gayly dressed fellows, and two grizzled, withered old men, and they played the tunes of the century before, and played them with all their might and main. The

little fort, a one-company post, was not entitled to a band; but there were, as usual, one or two German musicians among the enlisted men, and these now stood near the French fiddlers and watched them with slow curiosity, fingering now and then in imagination the great brass instruments which were to them the keys of melody, and dreaming over again the happy days when they, too, played "with the band." But the six French fiddlers cared nothing for the Germans; they held themselves far above the common soldiers of the fort, and despised alike their cropped hair, their ideas, their uniforms, and the strict rules they were obliged to obey. They fiddled away with their eyes cast up to the dark beams above, and their tunes rang out in that shrill, sustained, clinging treble which no instrument save a violin can give. The entire upper circle of society was present, and a sprinkling of the second; for the young officers cared more for dancing than for etiquette, and a pretty young French girl was in their minds of more consequence than even the five Misses Macdougall with all their blood, which must have been, however, of a thin, although, of course, precious, quality, since between the whole five there seemed scarcely enough for one. The five were there, however, in green plaided delaines with broad lace collars and large flat shell-cameo breastpins with scroll-work settings: they presented an imposing appearance to the eyes of all. The father of these ladies, long at rest from his ledgers, was in his day a prominent resident official of the Fur Company; his five maiden daughters lived on in the old house, and occupied themselves principally in remembering him. Miss Lois seated herself beside these acknowledged heads of society, and felt that she was in her proper sphere. The dance-music troubled her ears, but she endured it manfully.

"A gay scene," she observed, gazing through her spectacles.

The five Misses Macdougall bowed acquiescence, and said that it was fairly gay; indeed, rather too gay, owing to more of a mingling than they approved; but nothing, ah! nothing, to the magnificent entertainments of times past, which had often been described to them by their respected parent. (They never seemed to have had but one.)

"Of course you will dance, Anne?" said Rast Pronando.

She smiled an assent, and they were soon among the dancers. Tita, left alone, followed them with her eyes as they passed out of the fire-light and were lost in the crowd and the sweeping shadows. Then she made her way, close to the wall, down to the other end of the long room, where the commandant's wife and the fort ladies sat in state, keeping up the dignity of what might be called the military end of the apartment. Here she sought the brightest light she could find, and placed herself in it carelessly, and as though by chance, to watch the dancers.

"Look at that child," said the captain's wife. "What an odd little thing it is!"

"It is Tita Douglas, Anne's little sister," said Mrs. Bryden, the wife of the commandant. "I am surprised they allowed her to come in that tableau dress. Her mother was a French girl, I believe. Dr. Douglas, you know, came to the island originally as surgeon of the post."

"There is Anne now, and dancing with young Pronando, of course," said the wife of one of the lieutenants.

"Dr. Gaston thinks there is no one like Anne Douglas," observed Mrs. Bryden. "He has educated her almost entirely; taught her Latin and Greek, and all sorts of things. Her father is a musical genius, you know, and in one way the girl knows all about music; in another, nothing at all. Do you think she is pretty, Mrs. Cromer?"

Mrs. Cromer thought "Not at all; too large, and – unformed in every way."

"I sometimes wonder, though, why she is not pretty," said Mrs. Bryden, in a musing tone. "She ought to be."

"I never knew but one girl of that size and style who was pretty, and she had had every possible advantage of culture, society, and foreign travel; wore always the most elaborately plain costumes – works of art, in a Greek sort of way; said little; but sat or stood about in statuesque attitudes that made you feel thin and insignificant, and glad you had all your clothes on," said Mrs. Cromer.

"And was this girl pretty?"

"She was simply superb," said the captain's wife. "But do look at young Pronando. How handsome he is to-night!"

"An Apollo Belvedere," said the wife of the lieutenant, who, having rashly allowed herself to spend a summer at West Point, was now living in the consequences.

But although the military element presided like a court circle at one end of the room, and the five Misses Macdougall and Miss Lois like an element of first families at the other, the intervening space was well filled with a motley assemblage – lithe young girls with sparkling black eyes and French vivacity, matrons with a shade more of brown in their complexions, and withered old grandams who sat on benches along the walls, and looked on with a calm dignity of silence which never came from Saxon blood. Intermingled were youths of rougher aspect but of fine mercurial temperaments, who danced with all their hearts as well as bodies, and kept exact time with the music, throwing in fancy steps from pure love of it as they whirled lightly down the hall with their laughing partners. There were a few young men of Scotch descent present also, clerks in the shops, and superintendents of the fisheries which now formed the only business of the once thriving frontier village. These were considered by island parents of the better class desirable suitors for their daughters – far preferable to the young officers who succeeded each other rapidly at the little fort, with attachments delightful, but as transitory as themselves. It was noticeable, however, that the daughters thought otherwise. Near the doorway in the shadow a crowd of Indians had gathered, while almost all of the common soldiers from the fort, on one pretext or another, were in the hall, attending to the fires and lights, or acting as self-appointed police. Even Chaplain Gaston looked in for a moment, and staid an hour; and later in the evening the tall form of Père Michaux appeared, clad in a furred mantle, a black silk cap crowning his silver hair. Tita immediately left her place and went to meet him, bending her head with an air of deep reverence.

"See the child – how theatrical!" said Mrs. Cromer.

"Yes. Still, the Romanists do believe in all kinds of amusements, and even ask a blessing on it," said the lieutenant's wife.

"It was not that – it was the little air and attitude of devoutness that I meant. See the puss now!"

But the puss was triumphant at last. One of the younger officers had noted her solemn little salutation in front of the priest, and now approached to ask her to dance, curious to see what manner of child this small creature could be. In another moment she was whirling down the hall with him, her dark face flushed, her eyes radiant, her dancing exquisitely light and exact. She passed Anne and Rast with a sparkling glance, her small breast throbbing with a swell of satisfied vanity that almost stopped her breath.

"There is Tita," said the elder sister, rather anxiously. "I hope Mr. Walters will not spoil her with his flattery."

"There is no danger; she is not pretty enough," answered Rast.

A flush rose in Anne's face. "You do not like my little sister," she said.

"Oh, I do not dislike her," said Rast. "I could not dislike anything that belonged to *you*," he added, in a lower tone.

She smiled as he bent his handsome head toward her to say this. She was fond of Rast; he had been her daily companion through all her life; she scarcely remembered anything in which he was not concerned, from her first baby walk in the woods back of the fort, her first ride in a dog-sledge on the ice, to yesterday's consultation over the chapel evergreens.

The six French fiddlers played on; they knew not fatigue. In imagination they had danced every dance. Tita was taken out on the floor several times by the officers, who were amused by her little airs and her small elfish face: she glowed with triumph. Anne had but few invitations, save from Rast; but as his were continuous, she danced all the evening. At midnight Miss Lois and the Misses Macdougall formally rose, and the fort ladies sent for their wrappings: the ball, as far as the first circle

was concerned, was ended. But long afterward the sound of the fiddles was still heard, and it was surmised that the second circle was having its turn, possibly not without a sprinkling of the third also.

CHAPTER III

"Wassamequin, Nashoonon, and Massaconomit did voluntarily submit themselves to the English, and promise to be willing from time to time to be instructed in the knowledge of God. Being asked not to do any unnecessary work on the Sabbath day, they answered, 'It is easy to them; they have not much to do on any day, and can well take rest on that day as any other.' So then we, causing them to understand the articles, and all the ten commandments of God, and they freely assenting to all, they were solemnly received; and the Court gave each of them a coat of two yards of cloth, and their dinner; and to them and their men, every one of them, a cup of sack at their departure. So they took leave, and went away."

– *Massachusetts Colonial Records.*

Dr. Gaston sat in his library, studying a chess problem. His clerical coat was old and spotted, his table was of rough wood, the floor uncarpeted; by right, Poverty should have made herself prominent there. But she did not. Perhaps she liked the old chaplain, who showed a fine, amply built person under her reign, with florid complexion, bright blue eyes, and a curly brown wig – very different in aspect from her usual lean and dismal retinue; perhaps, also, she stopped here herself to warm her cold heart now and then in the hot, bright, crowded little room, which was hers by right, although she did not claim it, enjoying it, however, as a miserly money-lender enjoys the fine house over which he holds a mortgage, rubbing his hands exultingly, as, clad in his thin old coat, he walks by. Certainly the plastering had dropped from the walls here and there; there was no furniture save the tables and shelves made by the island carpenter, and one old leathern arm-chair, the parson's own, a miracle of comfort, age, and hanging leather tatters. But on the shelves and on the tables, on the floor and on the broad window-sills, were books; they reached the ceiling on the shelves; they wainscoted the walls to the height of several feet all round the room; small volumes were piled on the narrow mantel as far up as they could go without toppling over, and the tables were loaded also. Aisles were kept open leading to the door, to the windows, and to the hearth, where the ragged arm-chair stood, and where there was a small parade-ground of open floor; but everywhere else the printed thoughts held sway. The old fire-place was large and deep, and here burned night and day, throughout the winter, a fire which made the whole room bright; add to this the sunshine streaming through the broad, low, uncurtained windows, and you have the secret of the cheerfulness in the very face of a barren lack of everything we are accustomed to call comfort.

The Reverend James Gaston was an Englishman by birth. On coming to America he had accepted a chaplaincy in the army, with the intention of resigning it as soon as he had become sufficiently familiar with the ways of the Church in this country to feel at ease in a parish. But years had passed, and he was a chaplain still; for evidently the country parishes were not regulated according to his home ideas, the rector's authority – yes, even the tenure of his rectorship – being dependent upon the chance wills and fancies of his people. Here was no dignity, no time for pleasant classical studies, and no approval of them; on the contrary, a continuous going out to tea, and a fear of offending, it might be, a warden's wife, who very likely had been brought up a Dissenter. The Reverend James Gaston therefore preferred the government for a master.

Dr. Gaston held the office of post chaplain, having been, on application, selected by the council of administration. He had no military rank, but as there happened to be quarters to spare, a cottage was assigned to him, and as he had had the good fortune to be liked and respected by all the officers who had succeeded each other on the little island, his position, unlike that of some of his brethren, was endurable, and even comfortable. He had been a widower for many years; he had never cared to marry again, but had long ago recovered his cheerfulness, and had brought up, intellectually at

least, two children whom he loved as if they had been his own – the boy Erastus Pronando, and Anne Douglas. The children returned his affection heartily, and made a great happiness in his lonely life. The girl was his good scholar, the boy his bad one; yet the teacher was severe with Anne, and indulgent to the boy. If any one had asked the reason, perhaps he would have said that girls were docile by nature, whereas boys, having more temptations, required more lenity; or perhaps that girls who, owing to the constitution of society, never advanced far in their studies, should have all the incitement of severity while those studies lasted, whereas boys, who are to go abroad in the world and learn from life, need no such severity. But the real truth lay deeper than this, and the chaplain himself was partly conscious of it; he felt that the foundations must be laid accurately and deeply in a nature like that possessed by this young girl.

"Good-morning, uncle," said Anne, entering and putting down her Latin books (as children they had adopted the fashion of calling their teacher "uncle"). "Was your coffee good this morning?"

"Ah, well, so-so, child, so-so," replied the chaplain, hardly aroused yet from his problem.

"Then I must go out and speak to – to – what is this one's name, uncle?"

"Her name is – here, I have it written down – Mrs. Evelina Crangall," said the chaplain, reading aloud from his note-book, in a slow, sober voice. Evidently it was a matter of moment to him to keep that name well in his mind.

Public opinion required that Dr. Gaston should employ a Protestant servant; no one else was obliged to conform, but the congregation felt that a stand must be made somewhere, and they made it, like a chalk line, at the parson's threshold. Now it was very well known that there were no Protestants belonging to the class of servants on the island who could cook at all, that talent being confined to the French quarter-breeds and to occasional Irish soldiers' wives, none of them Protestants. The poor parson's cooking was passed from one incompetent hand to another – lake-sailors' wives, wandering emigrants, moneyless forlorn females left by steamers, belonging to that strange floating population that goes forever travelling up and down the land, without apparent motive save a vague El-Dorado hope whose very conception would be impossible in any other country save this. Mrs. Evelina Crangall was a hollow-chested woman with faded blue eyes, one prominent front tooth, scanty light hair, and for a form a lattice-work of bones. She preserved, however, a somewhat warlike aspect in her limp calico, and maintained that she thoroughly understood the making of coffee, but that she was accustomed to the use of a French coffee-pot. Anne, answering serenely that no French coffee-pot could be obtained in that kitchen, went to work and explained the whole process from the beginning, the woman meanwhile surveying her with suspicion, which gradually gave way before the firm but pleasant manner. With a long list of kindred Evelinas, Anne had had dealings before. Sometimes her teachings effected a change for the better, sometimes they did not, but in any case the Evelinas seldom remained long. They were wanderers by nature, and had sudden desires to visit San Francisco, or to "go down the river to Newerleens." This morning, while making her explanation, Anne made coffee too. It was a delicious cupful which she carried back with her into the library, and the chaplain, far away in the chess country, came down to earth immediately in order to drink it. Then they opened the Latin books, and Anne translated her page of Livy, her page of Cicero, and recited her rules correctly. She liked Latin; its exactness suited her. Mrs. Bryden was wrong when she said that the girl studied Greek. Dr. Gaston had longed to teach her that golden tongue, but here William Douglas had interfered. "Teach her Latin if you like, but not Greek," he said. "It would injure the child – make what is called a blue-stocking of her, I suppose – and it is my duty to stand between her and injury."

"Ah! ah! you want to make a belle of her, do you?" said the cheery chaplain.

"I said it was my duty; I did not say it was my wish," replied the moody father. "If I could have my wish, Anne should never know what a lover is all her life long."

"What! you do not wish to have her marry, then? There are happy marriages. Come, Douglas, don't be morbid."

"I know what men are. And you and I are no better."

"But she may love."

"Ah! there it is; she may. And that is what I meant when I said that it was my duty to keep her from making herself positively unattractive."

"Greek need not do that," said Dr. Gaston, shortly.

"It need not, but it does. Let me ask you one question: did you ever fall in love, or come anywhere near falling in love, with a girl who understood Greek?"

"That is because only the homely ones take to it," replied the chaplain, fencing a little.

But Anne was not taught Greek. After Cicero she took up algebra, then astronomy. After that she read aloud from a ponderous Shakspeare, and the old man corrected her accentuation, and questioned her on the meanings. A number of the grand old plays the girl knew almost entirely by heart; they had been her reading-books from childhood. The down-pouring light of the vivid morning sunshine and the up-coming white glare of the ice below met and shone full upon her face and figure as she bent over the old volume laid open on the table before her, one hand supporting her brow, the other resting on the yellow page. Her hands were firm, white, and beautifully shaped – strong hands, generous hands, faithful hands; not the little, idle, characterless, faithless palms so common in America, small, dainty, delicate, and shapeless, coming from a composite origin. Her thick hair, brown as a mellowed chestnut, with a gleam of dark red where the light touched it, like the red of November oak leaves, was, as usual, in her way, the heavy braids breaking from the coil at the back of her head, one by one, as she read on through *Hamlet*. At last impatiently she drew out the comb, and they all fell down over her shoulders, and left her in momentary peace.

The lesson was nearly over when Rast Pronando appeared; he was to enter college – a Western college on one of the lower lakes – early in the spring, and that prospect made the chaplain's lessons seem dull to him. "Very likely they will not teach at all as he does; I shall do much better if I go over the text-books by myself," he said, confidentially, to Anne. "I do not want to appear old-fashioned, you know."

"Is it unpleasant to be old-fashioned? I should think the old fashions would be sure to be the good ones," said the girl. "But I do not want you to go so far beyond me, Rast; we have always been even until now. Will you think *me* old-fashioned too when you come back?"

"Oh no; you will always be Anne. I can predict you exactly at twenty, and even thirty: there is no doubt about *you*."

"But shall I be old-fashioned?"

"Well, perhaps; but we don't mind it in women. All the goddesses were old-fashioned, especially Diana. *You* are Diana."

"Diana, a huntress. She loved Endymion, who was always asleep," said Anne, quoting from her school-girl mythology.

This morning Rast had dropped in to read a little Greek with his old master, and to walk home with Anne. The girl hurried through her *Hamlet*, and then yielded the place to him. It was a three-legged stool, the only companion the arm-chair had, and it was the seat for the reciting scholar; the one who was studying sat in a niche on the window-seat at a little distance. Anne, retreating to this niche, began to rebraid her hair.

"But she, within – within – singing with enchanting tone, enchanting voice, wove with a – with a golden shuttle the sparkling web," read Rast, looking up and dreamily watching the brown strands taking their place in the long braid. Anne saw his look, and hurried her weaving. The girl had thought all her life that her hair was ugly because it was so heavy, and neither black nor gold in hue; and Rast, following her opinion, had thought so too: she had told him it was, many a time. It was characteristic of her nature that while as a child she had admired her companion's spirited, handsome face and curling golden locks, she had never feared lest he might not return her affection because she happened to be ugly; she drew no comparisons. But she had often discussed the subject of beauty with him. "I should like to be beautiful," she said; "like that girl at the fort last summer."

"Pooh! it doesn't make much difference," answered Rast, magnanimously. "I shall always like you."

"That is because you are so generous, dear."

"Perhaps it is," answered the boy.

This was two years before, when they were fourteen and fifteen years old; at sixteen and seventeen they had advanced but little in their ideas of life and of each other. Still, there was a slight change, for Anne now hurried the braiding; it hurt her a little that Rast should gaze so steadily at the rough, ugly hair.

When the Greek was finished they said good-by to the chaplain, and left the cottage together. As they crossed the inner parade-ground, taking the snow path which led toward the entrance grating, and which was kept shovelled out by the soldiers, the snow walls on each side rising to their chins, Rast suddenly exclaimed: "Oh, Annet, I have thought of something! I am going to take you down the fort hill on a sled. Now you need not object, because I shall do it in any case, although we *are* grown up, and I *am* going to college. Probably it will be the last time. I shall borrow Bert Bryden's sled. Come along."

All the boy in him was awake; he seized Anne's wrist, and dragged her through first one cross-path, then another, until at last they reached the commandant's door. From the windows their heads had been visible, turning and crossing above the heaped-up snow. "Rast, and Anne Douglas," said Mrs. Bryden, recognizing the girl's fur cap and the youth's golden hair. She tapped on the window, and signed to them to enter without ceremony. "What is it, Rast? Good-morning, Anne; what a color you have, child!"

"Rast has been making me run," said Anne, smiling, and coming toward the hearth, where the fort ladies were sitting together sewing, and rather lugubriously recalling Christmas times in their old Eastern homes.

"Throw off your cloak," said Mrs. Cromer, "else you will take cold when you go out again."

"We shall only stay a moment," answered Anne.

The cloak was of strong dark blue woollen cloth, closely fitted to the figure, with a small cape; it reached from her throat to her ankles, and was met and completed by fur boots, fur gloves, and a little fur cap. The rough plain costume was becoming to the vigorous girl. "It tones her down," thought the lieutenant's wife; "she really looks quite well."

In the mean while Rast had gone across to the dining-room to find Bert Bryden, the commandant's son, and borrow his sled.

"And you're really going to take Miss Douglas down the hill!" said the boy. "Hurrah! I'll look out of the side window and see. What fun! Such a big girl to go sliding!"

Anne was a big girl to go; but Rast was not to be withstood. She would not get on the sled at the door, as he wished, but followed him out through the sally-port, and round to the top of the long steep fort hill, whose snowy slippery road-track was hardly used at all during the winter, save by coasters, and those few in number, for the village boys, French and half-breeds, did not view the snow as an amusement, or toiling up hill as a recreation. The two little boys at the fort, and what Scotch and New England blood there was in the town, held a monopoly of the coasting.

"There they go!" cried Bert, from his perch on the deep window-seat overlooking the frozen Straits and the village below. "Mamma, you must let me take you down now; you are not so big as Miss Douglas."

Mrs. Bryden, a slender little woman, laughed. "Fancy the colonel's horror," she said, "if he should see me sliding down that hill! And yet it looks as if it might be rather stirring," she added, watching the flying sled and its load. The sled, of island manufacture, was large and sledge-like; it carried two comfortably. Anne held on by Rast's shoulders, sitting behind him, while he guided the flying craft. Down they glided, darted, faster and faster, losing all sense of everything after a while save speed. Reaching the village street at last, they flew across it, and out on the icy pier beyond,

where Rast by a skillful manœuvre stopped the sled on the very verge. The fort ladies were all at the windows now, watching.

"How dangerous!" said Mrs. Bryden, forgetting her admiration of a moment before with a mother's irrelevant rapidity. "Albert, let me never see or hear of your sliding on that pier; another inch, and they would have gone over, down on the broken ice below!"

"I couldn't do it, mamma, even if I tried," replied Master Albert, regretfully; "I always tumble off the sled at the street, or else run into one of the warehouses. Only Rast Pronando can steer across slanting, and out on that pier."

"I am very glad to hear it," replied Mrs. Bryden; "but your father must also give you his positive commands on the subject. I had no idea that the pier was ever attempted."

"And it is not, mamma, except by Rast," said the boy. "Can't I try it when I am as old as he is?"

"Hear the child!" said Mrs. Cromer, going back to her seat by the fire; "one would suppose he expected to stay here all his life. Do you not know, Bert, that we are only here for a little while – a year or two? Before you are eighteen months older very likely you will find yourself out on the plains. What a life it is!"

The fort ladies all sighed. It was a habit they had. They drew the dreariest pictures of their surroundings and privations in their letters homeward, and really believed them, theoretically. In truth, there were some privations; but would any one of them have exchanged army life for civilian? To the last, thorough army ladies retain their ways; you recognize them even when retired to private and perhaps more prosperous life. Cosmopolitans, they do not sink into the ruts of small-town life; they are never provincial. They take the world easily, having a pleasant, generous taste for its pleasures, and making light of the burdens that fall to their share. All little local rules and ways are nothing to them: neither here nor anywhere are they to remain long. With this habit and manner they keep up a vast amount of general cheeriness – vast indeed, when one considers how small the incomes sometimes are. But if small, they are also sure.

"Rast Pronando is too old for such frolics, I think," said Mrs. Rankin, the lieutenant's wife, beginning another seam in the new dress for her baby.

"He goes to college in the spring; that will quiet him," said Mrs. Bryden.

"What will he do afterward? Is he to live here? At this end of the world – this jumping-off place?"

"I suppose so; he has always lived here. But he belongs, you know, to the old Philadelphia family of the same name, the Peter Pronandos."

"Does he? How strange! How did he come here?"

"He was born here: Dr. Gaston told me his history. It seems that the boy's father was a wild younger son of the second Peter, grandson, of course, of the original Peter, from whom the family derive all their greatness —and money. This Peter the third, only his name was not Peter, but John (the eldest sons were the Peters), wandered away from home, and came up here, where his father's name was well known among the directors of the Fur Company. John Pronando, who must have been of very different fibre from the rest of the family, liked the wild life of the border, and even went off on one or two long expeditions to the Red River of the North and the Upper Missouri after furs with the hunters of the Company. His father then offered him a position here which would carry with it authority, but he curtly refused, saying that he had no taste for a desk and pen like Peter. Peter was his brother, who had begun dutifully at an early age his life-long task of taking care of the large accumulation of land which makes the family so rich. Peter was the good boy always. Father Peter was naturally angry with John, and inclined even then to cross his name off the family list of heirs; this, however, was not really done until the prodigal crowned his long course of misdeeds by marrying the pretty daughter of a Scotchman, who held one of the smaller clerkships in the Company's warehouses here – only a grade above the hunters themselves. This was the end. Almost anything else might have been forgiven save a marriage of that kind. If John Pronando had selected the daughter of a flat-boat

man on the Ohio River, or of a Pennsylvania mountain wagoner, they might have accepted her – at a distance – and made the best of her. But a person from the rank and file of their own Fur Company – it was as though a colonel should marry the daughter of a common soldier in his own regiment: yes, worse, for nothing can equal the Pronando pride. From that day John Pronando was simply forgotten – so they said. His mother was dead, so it may have been true. A small sum was settled upon him, and a will was carefully drawn up forever excluding him and the heirs he might have from any share in the estate. John did not appear to mind this, but lived on merrily enough for some years afterward, until his sweet little wife died; then he seemed to lose his strength suddenly, and soon followed her, leaving this one boy, Erastus, named after the maternal grandfather, with his usual careless disregard of what would be for his advantage. The boy has been brought up by our good chaplain, although he lives with a family down in the village; the doctor has husbanded what money there was carefully, and there is enough to send him through college, and to start him in life in some way. A good education he considered the best investment of all."

"In a fresh-water college?" said Mrs. Cromer, raising her eyebrows.

"Why not, for a fresh-water boy? He will always live in the West."

"He is so handsome," said Mrs. Rankin, "that he might go Eastward, captivate his relatives, and win his way back into the family again."

"He does not know anything about his family," said the colonel's wife.

"Then some one ought to tell him."

"Why? Simply for the money? No: let him lead his own life out here, and make his own way," said Mrs. Bryden, warmly.

"What a radical you are, Jane!"

"No, not a radical; but I have seen two or three of the younger Pronandos, of the fourth generation, I mean, and whenever I think of their dead eyes, and lifeless, weary manner, I feel like doing what I can to keep Rast away from them."

"But the boy must live his life, Jane. These very Pronandos whom you describe will probably be sober and staid at fifty: the Pronandos always are. And Rast, after all, is one of them."

"But not like them. *He* would go to ruin, he has so much more imagination than they have."

"And less stability?"

"Well, no; less epicureanism, perhaps. It is the solid good things of life that bring the Pronandos back, after they have indulged in youthful wildness: they have no taste for husks."

Then the colonel came in, and, soon after, the sewing circle broke up, Mrs. Cromer and Mrs. Rankin returning to their quarters in the other cottages through the walled snow-paths. The little fort was perched on the brow of the cliff, overlooking the village and harbor; the windows of the stone cottages which formed the officers' quarters commanded an uninterrupted view of blue water in summer, and white ice fields in winter, as far as the eye could reach. It could hardly have withstood a bombardment; its walls and block-houses, erected as a defense against the Indians, required constant propping and new foundation-work to keep them within the requirements of safety, not to speak of military dignity. But the soldiers had nothing else to do, and, on the whole, the fort looked well, especially from the water, crowning the green height with buttressed majesty. During eight months of the year the officers played chess and checkers, and the men played fox-and-geese. The remaining four months, which comprised all there was of spring, summer, and autumn, were filled full of outdoor work and enjoyment; summer visitors came, and the United States uniform took its conquering place, as usual, among the dancers, at the picnics, and on the fast-sailing fishing-boats which did duty as yachts, skimming over the clear water in whose depths fish could be seen swimming forty feet below. These same fish were caught and eaten – the large lake trout, and the delicate white-fish, aristocrat of the freshwater seas; three-quarters of the population were fishermen, and the whole town drew its food from the deep. The business had broadened, too, as the Prairie States became more thickly settled, namely, the salting and packing for sale of these fresh-water fish. Barrels stood

on the piers, and brisk agents, with pencils behind their ears, stirred the slow-moving villagers into activity, as the man with a pole stirs up the bears. Fur-bearing animals had had their day; it was now the turn of the creatures of the deep.

"Let us stop at the church-house a moment and see Miss Lois," said Rast, as, dragging the empty sled behind him, he walked by Anne's side through the village street toward the Agency.

"I am afraid I have not time, Rast."

"Make it, then. Come, Annet, don't be ill-natured. And, besides, you ought to see that I go there, for I have not called upon Miss Lois this year."

"As this year only began last week, you are not so very far behind," said the girl, smiling. "Why can you not go and see Miss Lois alone?"

"I should be welcome, at any rate; *she* adores me."

"Does she, indeed!"

"Yes, Miss Douglas, she does. She pretends otherwise, but that is always the way with women. Oh! I know the world."

"You are only one year older than I am."

"In actual time, perhaps; but twenty years older in knowledge."

"What will you be, then, when you come back from college? An old man?"

"By no means; for *I* shall stay where I am. But in the mean time you will catch up with me."

Handsome Rast had passed through his novitiate, so he thought. His knowledge of the world was derived partly from Lieutenant Walters, who, although fresh from West Point, was still several years older than young Pronando, and patronized him accordingly, and partly from a slender, low-voiced Miss Carew, who was thirty, but appeared twenty, after the manner of slender yellow-white blondes who have never possessed any rose-tints, having always been willowy and amber-colored. Miss Carew sailed, for a summer's amusement through the Great Lakes of the West; and then returned Eastward with the opinion that they were but so many raw, blank, inland oceans, without sensations or local coloring enough to rouse her. The week on the island, which was an epoch in Rast's life, had held for her but languid interest; yet even the languid work of a master-hand has finish and power, and Rast was melancholy and silent for fifteen days after the enchantress had departed. Then he wrote to her one or two wild letters, and received no answer; then he grew bitter. Then Walters came, with his cadet's deep experience in life, and the youth learned from him, and re-appeared on the surface again with a tinge of cynicism which filled Anne with wonder. For he had never told her the story of the summer; it was almost the only event in his life which she had not shared. But it was not that he feared to tell her, they were as frank with each other as two children; it was because he thought she would not understand it.

"I do not like Mr. Walters," she said, one day.

"He was very much liked at the Point, I assure you," said Rast, with significant emphasis. "By the ladies, I mean, who come there in the summer."

"How could they like him, with that important, egotistical air?"

"But it is to conquer him they like," said Tita, looking up from her corner.

"Hear the child!" said Rast, laughing. "Are *you* going to conquer, Tita?"

"Yes," said Tita, stroking the cat which shared the corner with her – a soft coated yellow pussy that was generally sleepy and quiet, but which had, nevertheless, at times, extraordinary fits of galloping round in a circle, and tearing the bark from the trees as though she was possessed – an eccentricity of character which the boys attributed to the direct influence of Satan.

Miss Lois lived in the church-house. It was an ugly house; but then, as is often said of a plain woman, "so good!" It did not leak or rattle, or fall down or smoke, or lean or sag, as did most of the other houses in the village, in regard to their shingles, their shutters, their chimneys, their side walls, and their roof-trees. It stood straightly and squarely on its stone foundation, and every board, nail and latch was in its proper position. Years before, missionaries had been sent from New England to work

among the Indians of this neighborhood, who had obtained their ideas of Christianity, up to that time, solely from the Roman Catholic priests, who had succeeded each other in an unbroken line from that adventurous Jesuit, the first explorer of these inland seas, Father Marquette. The Presbyterians came, established their mission, built a meeting-house, a school-house, and a house for their pastor, the buildings being as solid as their belief. Money was collected for this enterprise from all over New England, that old-time, devout, self-sacrificing community whose sternness and faith were equal; tall spare men came westward to teach the Indians, earnest women with bright steadfast eyes and lath-like forms were their aiders, wives, and companions. Among these came Miss Lois – then young Lois Hinsdale – carried Westward by an aunt whose missionary zeal was burning splendidly up an empty chimney which might have been filled with family loves and cares, but was not: shall we say better filled? The missionaries worked faithfully; but, as the Indians soon moved further westward, the results of their efforts can not be statistically estimated now, or the accounts balanced.

"The only good Indian is a dead Indian," is a remark that crystallizes the floating opinion of the border. But a border population has not a missionary spirit. New England, having long ago chased out, shot down, and exterminated all her own Indians, had become peaceful and pious, and did not agree with these Western carriers of shot-guns. Still, when there were no more Indians to come to this island school, it was of necessity closed, no matter which side was right. There were still numbers of Chippewas living on the other islands and on the mainland; but they belonged to the Roman Catholic faith, and were under the control of Père Michaux.

The Protestant church – a square New England meeting-house, with steeple and bell – was kept open during another year; but the congregation grew so small that at last knowledge of the true state of affairs reached the New England purses, and it was decided that the minister in charge should close this mission, and go southward to a more promising field among the prairie settlers of Illinois. All the teachers connected with the Indian school had departed before this – all save Miss Lois and her aunt; for Priscilla Hinsdale, stricken down by her own intense energy, which had consumed her as an inward fire, was now confined to her bed, partially paralyzed. The New England woman had sold her farm, and put almost all her little store of money into island property. "I shall live and die here," she had said; "I have found my life-work." But her work went away from her; her class of promising squaws departed with their papposes and their braves, and left her scholarless.

"With all the blessed religious privileges they have here, besides other advantages, I can not at all understand it – I can not understand it," she repeated many times, especially to Sandy Forbes, an old Scotchman and fervent singer of psalms.

"Aweel, aweel, Miss Priscilla, I donnot suppose ye can," replied Sandy, with a momentary twinkle in his old eyes.

While still hesitating over her future course, illness struck down the old maid, and her life-work was at last decided for her: it was merely to lie in bed, motionless, winter and summer, with folded hands and whatever resignation she was able to muster. Niece Lois, hitherto a satellite, now assumed the leadership. This would seem a simple enough charge, the household of two women, poor in purse, in a remote village on a Northern frontier. But exotics of any kind require nursing and vigilance, and the Hinsdale household was an exotic. Miss Priscilla required that every collar should be starched in the New England fashion, that every curtain should fall in New England folds, that every dish on the table should be of New England origin, and that every clock should tick with New England accuracy. Lois had known no other training; and remembering as she did also the ways of the old home among the New Hampshire hills with a child's fidelity and affection, she went even beyond her aunt in faithfulness to her ideal; and although the elder woman had long been dead, the niece never varied the habits or altered the rules of the house which was now hers alone.

"A little New England homestead strangely set up here on this far Western island," William Douglas had said.

The church house, as the villagers named it, was built by the Presbyterian missionaries, many of them laboring with their own hands at the good work, seeing, no doubt, files of Indian converts rising up in another world to call them blessed. When it came into the hands of Miss Priscilla, it came, therefore, ready-made as to New England ideas of rooms and closets, and only required a new application of white and green paint to become for her an appropriate and rectangular bower. It stood near the closed meeting-house, whose steeple threw a slow-moving shadow across its garden, like a great sun-dial, all day. Miss Lois had charge of the key of the meeting-house, and often she unlocked its door, went in, and walked up and down the aisle, as if to revive the memories of the past. She remembered the faith and sure hope that used to fill the empty spaces, and shook her head and sighed. Then she upbraided herself for sighing, and sang in her thin husky voice softly a verse or two of one of their old psalms by way of reparation. She sent an annual report of the condition of the building to the Presbyterian Board of Missions, but in it said nothing of the small repairs for which her own purse paid. Was it a silent way of making amends to the old walls for having deserted their tenets?

"Cod-fish balls for breakfast on Sunday morning, of course," said Miss Lois, "and fried hasty-pudding. On Wednesdays a boiled dinner. Pies on Tuesdays and Saturdays."

The pins stood in straight rows on her pincushion; three times each week every room in the house was swept, and the floors as well as the furniture dusted. Beans were baked in an earthen pot on Saturday night, and sweet-cake was made on Thursday. Rast Pronando often dropped in to tea on Thursday. Winter or summer, through scarcity or plenty, Miss Lois never varied her established routine, thereby setting an example, she said, to the idle and shiftless. And certainly she was a faithful guide-post, continually pointing out an industrious and systematic way, which, however, to the end of time, no French-blooded, French-hearted person will ever travel, unless dragged by force. The villagers preferred their lake trout to Miss Lois's salt cod-fish, their savory stews and soups to her corned beef, their tartines to her corn-meal puddings, and their eau-de-vie to her green tea; they loved their disorder and their comfort; her bar soap and scrubbing-brush were a horror to their eyes. They washed the household clothes two or three times a year: was not that enough? Of what use the endless labor of this sharp-nosed woman with glasses over her eyes at the church-house? Were not, perhaps, the glasses the consequences of such toil? And her figure of a long leanness also?

The element of real heroism, however, came into Miss Lois's life in her persistent effort to employ Indian servants. The old mission had been established for their conversion and education; any descendant of that mission, therefore, should continue to the utmost of her ability the beneficent work. The meeting-house was closed, the school-house abandoned, she could reach the native race by no other influence save personal; that personal influence, then, she would use. Through long years had she persisted, through long years would she continue to persist. A succession of Chippewa squaws broke, stole, and skirmished their way through her kitchen with various degrees of success, generally in the end departing suddenly at night with whatever booty they could lay their hands on. It is but justice to add, however, that this was not much, a rigid system of keys and excellent locks prevailing in the well-watched household. Miss Lois's conscience would not allow her to employ half-breeds, who were sometimes endurable servants; duty required, she said, that she should have full-blooded natives. And she had them. She always began to teach them the alphabet within three days after their arrival, and the spectacle of a tearful, freshly caught Indian girl, very wretched in her calico dress and white apron, worn out with the ways of the kettles and brasses, dejected over the fish-balls, and appalled by the pudding, standing confronted by a large alphabet on the well-scoured table, and Miss Lois by her side with a pointer, was frequent and even regular in its occurrence, the only change being in the personality of the learners. No one of them had ever gone through the letters; but Miss Lois was not discouraged. Patiently she began over again – she was always beginning over again. And in the mean time she was often obliged not only to do almost all the household work with her own hands, but to do it twice over in order to instruct the new-comer. By the unwritten law of public opinion, Dr. Gaston was obliged to employ only Protestant servants; by the unwritten law of her own

conscience, Miss Lois was obliged to employ only Indians. But in truth she did not employ them so much as they employed her.

Miss Lois received her young friends in the sitting-room. There was a parlor with Brussels carpet and hair-cloth sofa across the hall, but its blinds were closed, and its shades drawn down. The parlor of middle-class households in the cold climate of the Northern States generally is a consecrated apartment, with the chill atmosphere and much of the solemnity of a tomb. It may be called the high altar of the careful housewife; but even here her sense of cleanliness and dustless perfection is such that she keeps it cold. No sacred fire burns, no cheerful ministry is allowed; everything is silent and veiled. The apartment is of no earthly use – nor heavenly, save perhaps for ghosts. But take it away, and the housewife is miserable; leave it, and she lives on contentedly in her sitting-room all the year round, knowing it is *there*.

Miss Lois's sitting-room was cheery; it had a rag-carpet, a bright fire, and double-glass panes instead of the heavy woollen curtains which the villagers hung over their windows in the winter – curtains that kept out the cold, but also the light. Miss Lois's curtains were of white dimity with knotted fringe, and her walls were freshly whitewashed. Her framed sampler, and a memorial picture done with pen and ink, representing two weeping-willows overshadowing a tombstone, ornamented the high mantel-piece, and there were also two gayly colored china jars filled with dried rose-leaves. They were only wild-brier roses; the real roses, as she called them, grew but reluctantly in this Northern air. Miss Lois never loved the wild ones as she had loved the old-fashioned cinnamon-scented pink and damask roses of her youth, but she gathered and dried these leaves of the brier from habit. There was also hanging on the wall a looking-glass tilted forward at such an angle that the looker-in could see only his feet, with a steep ascent of carpet going up hill behind him. This looking-glass possessed a brightly hued picture at the top, divided into two compartments, on one side a lovely lady with a large bonnet modestly concealing her face, very bare shoulders, leg-of-mutton sleeves, and a bag hanging on her arm; on the other old Father Time, scythe in hand, as if he was intended as a warning to the lovely lady that minutes were rapid and his stroke sure.

"Why do you keep your glass tilted forward so far that we can not look in it, Miss Lois?" Rast had once asked.

Miss Lois did it from habit. But she answered: "To keep silly girls from looking at themselves while they are pretending to talk to me. They say something, and then raise their eyes quickly to see how they looked when they said it. I have known them keep a smile or a particular expression half a minute while they studied the effect – ridiculous calves!"

"Calves have lovely eyes sometimes," said Rast.

"Did I say the girls were ugly, Master Pert? But the homely girls look too."

"Perhaps to see how they can improve themselves."

"Perhaps," said the old maid, dryly. "Pity they never learn!"

In the sitting-room was a high chest of drawers, an old clock, a chintz-covered settle, and two deep narrow old rocking-chairs, intended evidently for scant skirts; on an especial table was the family Bible, containing the record of the Hinsdale family from the date of the arrival of the *Mayflower*. Miss Lois's prayer-book was not there; it was up stairs in a bureau drawer. It did not seem to belong to the old-time furniture of the rooms below, nor to the Hinsdale Bible.

The story of Miss Lois's change from the Puritan to the Episcopal ritual might to-day fill a volume if written by one of those brooding, self-searching woman-minds of New England – those unconscious, earnest egotists who bring forth poetry beautiful sometimes to inspiration, but always purely subjective. And if in such a volume the feelings, the arguments, and the change were all represented as sincere, conscientious, and prayerful, they would be represented with entire truth. Nevertheless, so complex are the influences which move our lives, and so deep the under-powers which we ourselves may not always recognize, that it could be safely added by a man of the world as a comment that Lois Hinsdale would never have felt these changes, these doubts, these conflicts, if

William Douglas had not been of another creed. For in those days Douglas had a creed – the creed of his young bride.

"Miss Hinsdale, we have come to offer you our New-Year's good wishes," said Rast, taking off his cap and making a ceremonious bow. "Our equipage will wait outside. How charming is your apartment, madam! And yourself – how Minerva-like the gleam of the eye, the motion of the hand, which – "

"Which made the pies now cooling in the pantry, Rast Pronando, to whose fragrance, I presume, I owe the honor of this visit."

"Not for myself, dear madam, but for Anne. She has already confided to me that she feels a certain sinking sensation that absolutely requires the strengthening influence of pie."

Anne laughed. "Are you going to stay long?" she asked, still standing at the doorway.

"Certainly," replied Rast, seating himself in one of the narrow rocking-chairs; "I have a number of subjects to discuss with our dear Miss Lois."

"Then I will leave you here, for Tita is waiting for me. I have promised to take them all over to Père Michaux's house this afternoon."

Miss Lois groaned – two short abrupt groans on different keys.

"Have you? Then I'm going too," said Rast, rising.

"Oh no, Rast; please do not," said the girl, earnestly. "When you go, it is quite a different thing – a frolic always."

"And why not?" said Rast.

"Because the children go for religious instruction, as you well know; it is their faith, and I feel that I ought to give them such opportunities as I can to learn what it means."

"It means mummery!" said Miss Lois, loudly and sternly.

Anne glanced toward her old friend, but stood her ground firmly. "I must take them," she said; "I promised I would do so as long as they were children, and under my care. When they are older they can choose for themselves."

"To whom did you make that promise, Anne Douglas?"

"To Père Michaux."

"And you call yourself a Protestant!"

"Yes; but I hope to keep a promise too, dear Miss Lois."

"Why was it ever made?"

"Père Michaux required it, and – father allowed it."

Miss Lois rubbed her forehead, settled her spectacles with her first and third fingers, shook her head briskly once or twice to see if they were firmly in place, and then went on with her knitting. What William Douglas allowed, how could she disallow?

Rast, standing by Anne's side putting on his fur gloves, showed no disposition to yield.

"Please do not come, Rast," said the girl again, laying her hand on his arm.

"I shall go to take care of you."

"It is not necessary; we have old Antoine and his dogs, and the boys are to have a sled of their own. We shall be at home before dark, I think, and if not, the moon to-night is full."

"But I shall go," said Rast.

"Nonsense!" said Miss Lois. "Of course you will not go; Anne is right. You romp and make mischief with those children always. Behave now, and you shall come back this evening, and Anne shall come too, and we will have apples and nuts and gingerbread, and Anne shall recite."

"Will you, Annet? I will yield if you promise."

"If I must, I must," said Anne, reluctantly.

"Go, then, proud maid; speed upon your errand. And in the mean time, Miss Lois, something fragrant and spicy in the way of a reward *now* would not come amiss, and then some music."

Among the possessions which Miss Lois had inherited from her aunt was a small piano. The elder Miss Hinsdale, sent into the world with an almost Italian love of music, found herself unable to repress it even in cold New England; turning it, therefore, into the channel of the few stunted psalms and hymns and spiritual songs of the day, she indulged it in a cramped fashion, like a full-flowing stream shut off and made to turn a mill. When the missionary spirit seized her in its fiery whirlwind, she bargained with it mentally that her piano should be included; she represented to the doubting elder that it would be an instrument of great power among the savages, and that even David himself accompanied the psalms with a well-stringed harp. The elder still doubted; he liked a tuning-fork; and besides, the money which Miss Priscilla would pay for the transportation of "the instrument" was greatly needed for boots for the young men. But as Miss Priscilla was a free agent, and quite determined, he finally decided, like many another leader, to allow what he could not prevent, and the piano came. It was a small, old-fashioned instrument, which had been kept in tune by Dr. Douglas, and through long years the inner life of Miss Lois, her hopes, aspirations, and disappointments, had found expression through its keys. It was a curious sight to see the old maid sitting at her piano alone on a stormy evening, the doors all closed, the shutters locked, no one stirring in the church-house save herself. Her playing was old-fashioned, her hands stiff; she could not improvise, and the range of the music she knew was small and narrow, yet unconsciously it served to her all the purposes of emotional expression. When she was sad, she played "China"; when she was hopeful, "Coronation." She made the bass heavy in dejection, and played the air in octaves when cheerful. She played only when she was entirely alone. The old piano was the only confidant of the hidden remains of youthful feeling buried in her heart.

Rast played on the piano and the violin in an untrained fashion of his own, and Anne sang; they often had small concerts in Miss Lois's parlor. But a greater entertainment lay in Anne's recitations. These were all from Shakspeare. Not in vain had the chaplain kept her tied to its pages year after year; she had learned, almost unconsciously, as it were, large portions of the immortal text by heart, and had formed her own ideals of the characters, who were to her real persons, although as different from flesh-and-blood people as are the phantoms of a dream. They were like spirits who came at her call, and lent her their personality; she could identify herself with them for the time being so completely, throw herself into the bodies and minds she had constructed for them so entirely, that the effect was startling, and all the more so because her conceptions of the characters were girlish and utterly different from those that have ruled the dramatic stage for generations. Her ideas of Juliet, of Ophelia, of Rosalind, and Cleopatra were her own, and she never varied them; the very earnestness of her personations made the effect all the more extraordinary. Dr. Gaston had never heard these recitations of his pupil; William Douglas had never heard them; either of these men could have corrected her errors and explained to her her mistakes. She herself thought them too trifling for their notice; it was only a way she had of amusing herself. Even Rast, her playmate, found it out by chance, coming upon her among the cedars one day when she was Ophelia, and overhearing her speak several lines before she saw him; he immediately constituted himself an audience of one, with, however, the peremptory manners of a throng, and demanded to hear all she knew. Poor Anne! the great plays of the world had been her fairy tales; she knew no others. She went through her personations timidly, the wild forest her background, the open air and blue Straits her scenery. The audience found fault, but, on the whole, enjoyed the performance, and demanded frequent repetitions. After a while Miss Lois was admitted into the secret, and disapproved, and was curious, and listened, and shook her head, but ended by liking the portraiture, which were in truth as fantastic as phantasmagoria. Miss Lois had never seen a play or read a novel in her life. For some time the forest continued Anne's theatre, and more than once Miss Lois had taken afternoon walks, for which her conscience troubled her: she could not decide whether it was right or wrong. But winter came, and gradually it grew into a habit that Anne should recite at the church-house now and then, the Indian servant who happened to be at that time the occupant of the kitchen being sent carefully away for the evening, in order that her eye

should not be guiltily glued to the key-hole during the exciting visits of Ophelia and Juliet. Anne was always reluctant to give these recitations now that she had an audience. "Out in the woods," she said, "I had only the trees and the silence. I never thought of myself at all."

"But Miss Lois and I are as handsome as trees; and as to silence, we never say a word," replied Rast. "Come, Annet, you know you like it."

"Yes; in – in one way I do."

"Then let us take that way," said Rast.

CHAPTER IV

– "Sounding names as any on the page of history – Lake Winnipeg, Hudson Bay, Ottaway, and portages innumerable; Chipeways, Gens de Terre, Les Pilleurs, the Weepers, and the like. An immense, shaggy, but sincere country, adorned with chains of lakes and rivers, covered with snows, with hemlocks and fir-trees. There is a naturalness in this traveller, and an unpretendingness, as in a Canadian winter, where life is preserved through low temperature and frontier dangers by furs, and within a stout heart. He has truth and moderation worthy of the father of history, which belong only to an intimate experience; and he does not defer much to literature."

– Thoreau.

Immediately after the early dinner the little cavalcade set out for the hermitage of Père Michaux, which was on an island of its own at some distance from the village island; to reach it they journeyed over the ice. The boys' sled went first, André riding, the other two drawing; they were to take turns. Then came old Antoine and his dogs, wise-looking, sedate creatures with wide-spread, awkward legs, big paws, and toes turned in. René and Lebeau were the leaders; they were dogs of age and character, and as they guided the sledge they also kept an eye to the younger dogs behind. The team was a local one; it was not employed in carrying the mails, but was used by the villagers when they crossed to the various islands, the fishing grounds, or the Indian villages on the mainland. Old Antoine walked behind with Anne by his side: she preferred to walk. Snugly ensconced in the sledge in a warm nest of furs was Tita, nothing visible of her small self save her dark eyes, which were, however, most of the time closed: here there was nothing to watch. The bells on the dogs sounded out merrily in the clear air: the boys had also adorned themselves with bells, and pranced along like colts. The sunshine was intensely bright, the blue heavens seemed full of its shafts, the ice below glittered in shining lines; on the north and south the dark evergreens of the mainland rose above the white, but toward the east and west the fields of ice extended unbroken over the edge of the horizon. Here they were smooth, covered with snow; there they were heaped in hummocks and ridges, huge blocks piled against each other, and frozen solid in that position where the wind and the current had met and fought. The atmosphere was cold, but so pure and still that breathing was easier than in many localities farther toward the south. There was no dampness, no strong raw wind; only the even cold. A feather thrown from a house-top would have dropped softly to the ground in a straight line, as drop one by one the broad leaves of the sycamore on still Indian summer days. The snow itself was dry; it had fallen at intervals during the winter, and made thicker and thicker the soft mantle that covered the water and land. When the flakes came down, the villagers always knew that it was warmer, for when the clouds were steel-bound, the snow could not fall.

"I think we shall have snow again to-morrow," said old Antoine in his voyageur dialect. "Step forward, then, genteelly, René. Hast thou no conscience, Lebeau?"

The two dogs, whose attention had been a little distracted by the backward vision of André conveying something to his mouth, returned to their duty with a jerk, and the other dogs behind all rang their little bells suddenly as they felt the swerve of the leaders back into the track. For there was a track over the ice toward Père Michaux's island, and another stretching off due eastward – the path of the carrier who brought the mails from below; besides these there were no other ice-roads; the Indians and hunters came and went as the bird flies. Père Michaux's island was not in sight from the village; it was, as the boys said, round the corner. When they had turned this point, and no longer saw the mission church, the little fort, and the ice-covered piers, when there was nothing on the shore side save wild cliffs crowned with evergreens, then before them rose a low island with its bare summer trees, its one weather-beaten house, a straight line of smoke coming from its chimney. It was still a

mile distant, but the boys ran along with new vigor. No one wished to ride; André, leaving his place, took hold with the others, and the empty sled went on toward the hermitage at a fine pace.

"You could repose yourself there, mademoiselle," said Antoine, who never thoroughly approved the walking upon her own two feet kept up – nay, even enjoyed – by this vigorous girl at his side. Tita's ideas were more to his mind.

"But I like it," said Anne, smiling. "It makes me feel warm and strong, all awake and joyous, as though I had just heard some delightful news."

"But the delightful news in reality, mademoiselle – one hears not much of it up here, as I say to Jacqueline."

"Look at the sky, the ice-fields; that is news every day, newly beautiful, if we will only look at it."

"Does mademoiselle think, then, that the ice is beautiful?"

"Very beautiful," replied the girl.

The cold air had brought the blood to her cheeks, a gleaming light to her strong, fearless eyes that looked the sun in the face without quailing. Old Antoine caught the idea for the first time that she might, perhaps, be beautiful some day, and that night, before his fire, he repeated the idea to his wife.

"Bah!" said old Jacqueline; "that is one great error of yours, my friend. Have you turned blind?"

"I did not mean beautiful in my eyes, of course; but one kind of beauty pleases me, thank the saints, and that is, without doubt, your own," replied the Frenchman, bowing toward his withered, bright-eyed old spouse with courtly gravity. "But men of another race, now, like those who come here in the summer, might they not think her passable?"

But old Jacqueline, although mollified, would not admit even this. A good young lady, and kind, it was to be hoped she would be content with the graces of piety, since she had not those of the other sort. Religion was all-merciful.

The low island met the lake without any broken ice at its edge; it rose slightly from the beach in a gentle slope, the snow-path leading directly up to the house door. The sound of the bells brought Père Michaux himself to the entrance. "Enter, then, my children," he said; "and you, Antoine, take the dogs round to the kitchen. Pierre is there."

Pierre was a French cook. Neither conscience nor congregation requiring that Père Michaux should nourish his inner man with half-baked or cindered dishes, he enjoyed to the full the skill and affection of this small-sized old Frenchman, who, while learning in his youth the rules, exceptions, and sauces of his profession, became the victim of black melancholy on account of a certain Denise, fair but cold-hearted, who, being employed in a conservatory, should have been warmer. Perhaps Denise had her inner fires, but they emitted no gleam toward poor Pierre; and at last, after spoiling two breakfasts and a dinner, and drawing down upon himself the epithet of "imbécile," the sallow little apprentice abandoned Paris, and in a fit of despair took passage for America, very much as he might have taken passage for Hades *viâ* the charcoal route. Having arrived in New York, instead of seeking a place where his knowledge, small as it was, would have been prized by exiled Frenchmen in a sauceless land, the despairing, obstinate little cook allowed himself to drift into all sorts of incongruous situations, and at last enlisted in the United States army, where, as he could play the flute, he was speedily placed in special service as member of the band. Poor Pierre! his flute sang to him only "Denise! Denise!" But the band-master thought it could sing other tunes as well, and set him to work with the score before him. It was while miserably performing his part in company with six placid Germans that Père Michaux first saw poor Pierre, and recognizing a compatriot, spoke to him. Struck by the pathetic misery of his face, he asked a few questions of the little flute-player, listened to his story, and gave him the comfort and help of sympathy and shillings, together with the sound of the old home accents, sweetest of all to the dulled ears. When the time of enlistment expired, Pierre came westward after his priest: Père Michaux had written to him once or twice, and the ex-cook had preserved the letters as a guide-book. He showed the heading and the postmark whenever

he was at a loss, and travelled blindly on, handed from one railway conductor to another like a piece of animated luggage, until at last he was put on board of a steamer, and, with some difficulty, carried westward; for the sight of the water had convinced him that he was to be taken on some unknown and terrible voyage.

The good priest was surprised and touched to see the tears of the little man, stained, weazened, and worn with travel and grief; he took him over to the hermitage in his sharp-pointed boat, which skimmed the crests of the waves, the two sails wing-and-wing, and Pierre sat in the bottom, and held on with a death-grasp. As soon as his foot touched the shore, he declared, with regained fluency, that he would never again enter a boat, large or small, as long as he lived. He never did. In vain Père Michaux represented to him that he could earn more money in a city, in vain he offered to send him Eastward and place him with kind persons speaking his own tongue, who would procure a good situation for him; Pierre was obstinate. He listened, assented to all, but when the time came refused to go.

"Are you or are you not going to send us that cook of yours?" wrote Father George at the end of two years. "This is the fifth time I have made ready for him."

"He will not go," replied Père Michaux at last; "it seems that I must resign myself."

"If your Père Michaux is handsomer than I am," said Dr. Gaston one day to Anne, "it is because he has had something palatable to eat all this time. In a long course of years saleratus tells."

Père Michaux was indeed a man of noble bearing; his face, although benign, wore an expression of authority, which came from the submissive obedience of his flock, who loved him as a father and revered him as a pope. His parish, a diocese in size, extended over the long point of the southern mainland; over the many islands of the Straits, large and small, some of them unnoted on the map, yet inhabited perhaps by a few half-breeds, others dotted with Indian farms; over the village itself, where stood the small weather-beaten old Church of St. Jean; and over the dim blue line of northern coast, as far as eye could reach or priest could go. His roadways were over the water, his carriage a boat; in the winter, a sledge. He was priest, bishop, governor, judge, and physician; his word was absolute. His party-colored flock referred all their disputes to him, and abided by his decisions – questions of fishing-nets as well as questions of conscience, cases of jealousy together with cases of fever. He stood alone. He was not propped. He had the rare leader's mind. Thrown away on that wild Northern border? Not any more than Bishop Chase in Ohio, Captain John Smith in Virginia, or other versatile and autocratic pioneers. Many a man can lead in cities and in camps, among precedents and rules, but only a born leader can lead in a wilderness where he must make his own rules and be his own precedent every hour.

The dogs trotted cheerfully, with all their bells ringing, round to the back door. Old Pierre detested dogs, yet always fed them with a strange sort of conscientiousness, partly from compassion, partly from fear. He could never accustom himself to the trains. To draw, he said, was an undoglike thing. To see the creatures rush by the island on a moonlight night over the white ice, like dogs of a dream, was enough to make the hair elevate itself.

"Whose hair?" Rast had demanded. "Yours, or the dogs'?" For young Pronando was a frequent visitor at the hermitage, not as pupil or member of the flock, but as a candid young friend, admiring impartially both the priest and his cook.

"Hast thou brought me again all those wide-mouthed dogs, brigands of unheard-of and never-to-be-satisfied emptiness, robbers of all things?" demanded Pierre, appearing at the kitchen door, ladle in hand. Antoine's leathery cheeks wrinkled themselves into a grin as he unharnessed his team, all the dogs pawing and howling, and striving to be first at the entrance of this domain of plenty.

"Hold thyself quiet, René. Wilt thou take the very sledge in, Lebeau?" he said, apostrophizing the leaders. But no sooner was the last strap loosened than all the dogs by common consent rushed at and over the little cook and into the kitchen in a manner which would have insured them severe chastisement in any other kitchen in the diocese. Pierre darted about among their gaunt yellow bodies,

railing at them for knocking down his pans, and calling upon all the saints to witness their rapacity; but in the mean time he was gathering together quickly fragments of whose choice and savory qualities René and Lebeau had distinct remembrance, and the other dogs anticipation. They leaped and danced round him on their awkward legs and shambling feet, bit and barked at each other, and rolled on the floor in a heap. Anywhere else the long whip would have curled round their lank ribs, but in old Pierre's kitchen they knew they were safe. With a fiercely delivered and eloquent selection from the strong expressions current in the Paris of his youth, the little cook made his way through the snarling throng of yellow backs and legs, and emptied his pan of fragments on the snow outside. Forth rushed the dogs, and cast themselves in a solid mass upon the little heap.

"Hounds of Satan?" said Pierre.

"They are, indeed," replied Antoine. "But leave them now, my friend, and close the door, since warmth is a blessed gift."

But Pierre still stood on the threshold, every now and then darting out to administer a rap to the gluttons, or to pull forward the younger and weaker ones. He presided with exactest justice over the whole repast, and ended by bringing into the kitchen a forlorn and drearily ugly young animal that had not obtained his share on account of the preternaturally quick side snatchings of Lebeau. To this dog he now presented an especial banquet in an earthen dish behind the door.

"If there is anything I abhor, it is the animal called dog," he said, seating himself at last, and wiping his forehead.

"That is plainly evident," replied old Antoine, gravely.

In the mean time, Anne, Tita, and the boys had thrown off their fur cloaks, and entered the sitting-room. Père Michaux took his seat in his large arm-chair near the hearth, Tita curled herself on a cushion at his feet, and the boys sat together on a wooden bench, fidgeting uneasily, and trying to recall a faint outline of their last lesson, while Anne talked to the priest, warming first one of her shapely feet, then the other, as she leaned against the mantel, inquiring after the health of the birds, the squirrels, the fox, and the tame eagle, Père Michaux's companions in his hermitage. The appearance of the room was peculiar, yet picturesque and full of comfort. It was a long, low apartment, the walls made warm in the winter with skins instead of tapestry, and the floor carpeted with blankets; other skins lay before the table and fire as mats. The furniture was rude, but cushioned and decorated, as were likewise the curtains, in a fashion unique, by the hands of half-breed women, who had vied with each other in the work; their primitive embroidery, whose long stitches sprang to the centre of the curtain or cushion, like the rays of a rising sun, and then back again, was as unlike modern needle-work as the vase-pictured Egyptians, with eyes in the sides of their heads, are like a modern photograph; their patterns, too, had come down from the remote ages of the world called the New, which is, however, as old as the continent across the seas. Guns and fishing-tackle hung over the mantel, a lamp swung from the centre of the ceiling, little singing-birds flew into and out of their open cages near the windows, and the tame eagle sat solemnly on his perch at the far end of the long room. The squirrels and the fox were visible in their quarters, peeping out at the new-comers; but their front doors were barred, for they had broken parole, and were at present in disgrace. The ceiling was planked with wood, which had turned to a dark cinnamon hue; the broad windows let in the sunshine on three sides during the day, and at night were covered with heavy curtains, all save one, which had but a single thickness of red cloth over the glass, with a candle behind which burned all night, so that the red gleam shone far across the ice, like a winter light-house for the frozen Straits. More than one despairing man, lost in the cold and darkness, had caught its ray, and sought refuge, with a thankful heart. The broad deep fire-place of this room was its glory: the hearts of giant logs glowed there: it was a fire to dream of on winter nights, a fire to paint on canvas for Christmas pictures to hang on the walls of barren furnace-heated houses, a fire to remember before that noisome thing, a close stove. Round this fire-place were set like tiles rude bits of pottery found in the vicinity, remains of an earlier race, which the half-breeds brought to Père Michaux whenever their ploughs upturned

them – arrow-heads, shells from the wilder beaches, little green pebbles from Isle Royale, agates, and fragments of fossils, the whole forming a rough mosaic, strong in its story of the region. From two high shelves the fathers of the Church and the classics of the world looked down upon this scene. But Père Michaux was no bookworm; his books were men. The needs and faults of his flock absorbed all his days, and, when the moon was bright, his evenings also. "There goes Père Michaux," said the half-breeds, as the broad sail of his boat went gleaming by in the summer night, or the sound of his sledge bells came through their closed doors; "he has been to see the dying wife of Jean," or "to carry medicine to François." On the wild nights and the dark nights, when no one could stir abroad, the old priest lighted his lamp, and fed his mind with its old-time nourishment. But he had nothing modern; no newspapers. The nation was to him naught. He was one of a small but distinctly marked class in America that have a distaste for and disbelief in the present, its ideals, thoughts, and actions, and turn for relief to the past; they represent a reaction. This class is made up of foreigners like the priest, of native-born citizens with artistic tastes who have lived much abroad, modern Tories who regret the Revolution, High-Church Episcopalians who would like archbishops and an Establishment, restless politicians who seek an empire – in all, a very small number compared with the mass of the nation at large, and not important enough to be counted at all numerically, yet not without its influence. And not without its use too, its members serving their country, unconsciously perhaps, but powerfully, by acting as a balance to the self-asserting blatant conceit of the young nation – a drag on the wheels of its too-rapidly speeding car. They are a sort of Mordecai at the gate, and are no more disturbed than he was by being in a minority. In any great crisis this element is fused with the rest at once, and disappears; but in times of peace and prosperity up it comes again, and lifts its scornful voice.

Père Michaux occupied himself first with the boys. The religious education of Louis, Gabriel, and André was not complex – a few plain rules that three colts could have learned almost as well, provided they had had speech. But the priest had the rare gift of holding the attention of children while he talked with them, and thus the three boys learned from him gradually and almost unconsciously the tenets of the faith in which their young mother had lived and died. The rare gift of holding the attention of boys – O poor Sunday-school teachers all over the land, ye know how rare that gift is! – ye who must keep restless little heads and hands quiet while some well-meaning but slow, long-winded, four-syllabled man "addresses the children." It is sometimes the superintendent, but more frequently a visitor, who beams through his spectacles benevolently upon the little flock before him, but has no more power over them than a penguin would have over a colony of sparrows.

But if the religion of the boys was simple, that of Tita was of a very different nature; it was as complex, tortuous, unresting, as personal and minute in detail, as some of those religious journals we have all read, diaries of every thought, pen-photographs of every mood, wonderful to read, but not always comfortable when translated into actual life, where something less purely self-engrossed, if even less saintly, is apt to make the household wheels run more smoothly. Tita's religious ideas perplexed Anne, angered Miss Lois, and sometimes wearied even the priest himself. The little creature aspired to be absolutely perfect, and she was perfect in rule and form. Whatever was said to her in the way of correction she turned and adjusted to suit herself; her mental ingenuity was extraordinary. Anne listened to the child with wonder; but Père Michaux understood and treated with kindly carelessness the strong selfism, which he often encountered among older and deeply devout women, but not often in a girl so young. Once the elder sister asked with some anxiety if he thought Tita was tending toward conventual life.

"Oh no," replied the old man, smiling; "anything but that."

"But is she not remarkably devout?"

"As Parisiennes in Lent."

"But it is Lent with her all the year round."

"That is because she has not seen Paris yet."

"But we can not take her to Paris," said Anne, in perplexity.

"What should I do if I had to reply to you always, mademoiselle?" said the priest, smiling, and patting her head.

"You mean that I am dull?" said Anne, a slight flush rising in her cheeks. "I have often noticed that people thought me so."

"I mean nothing of the kind. But by the side of your honesty we all appear like tapers when the sun breaks in," said Père Michaux, gallantly. Still, Anne could not help thinking that he did think her dull.

To-day she sat by the window, looking out over the ice. The boys, dismissed from their bench, had, with the sagacity of the dogs, gone immediately to the kitchen. The soft voice of Tita was repeating something which sounded like a litany to the Virgin, full of mystic phrases, a selection made by the child herself, the priest requiring no such recitation, but listening, as usual, patiently, with his eyes half closed, as the old-time school-teacher listened to Wirt's description of Blennerhasset's Island. Père Michaux had no mystical tendencies. His life was too busy; in the winter it was too cold, and in the summer the sunshine was too brilliant, on his Northern island, for mystical thoughts. At present, through Tita's recitation, his mind was occupied with a poor fisherman's family over on the mainland, to whom on the morrow he was going to send assistance. The three boys came round on the outside, and peered through the windows to see whether the lesson was finished. Anne ordered them back by gesture, for they were bareheaded, and their little faces red with the cold. But they pressed their noses against the panes, glared at Tita, and shook their fists. "It's all ready," they said, in sepulchral tones, putting their mouths to the crack under the sash, "and it's a pudding. Tell her to hurry up, Annet."

But Tita's murmuring voice went steadily on, and the Protestant sister would not interrupt the little Catholic's recitation; she shook her head at the boys, and motioned to them to go back to the kitchen. But they danced up and down to warm themselves, rubbed their little red ears with their hands, and then returned to the crack, and roared in chorus, "Tell her to hurry up; we shall not have time to eat it."

"True," said Père Michaux, overhearing this triple remonstrance. "That will do for to-day, Tita."

"But I have not finished, my father."

"Another time, child."

"I shall recite it, then, at the next lesson, and learn besides as much more; and the interruption was not of my making, but a crime of those sacrilegious boys," said Tita, gathering her books together. The boys, seeing Père Michaux rise from his chair, ran back round the house to announce the tidings to Pierre; the priest came forward to the window.

"That is the mail-train, is it not?" said Anne, looking at a black spot coming up the Strait from the east.

"It is due," said Père Michaux; "but the weather has been so cold that I hardly expected it to-day." He took down a spy-glass, and looked at the moving speck. "Yes, it is the train. I can see the dogs, and Denis himself. I will go over to the village with you, I think. I expect letters."

Père Michaux's correspondence was large. From many a college and mission station came letters to this hermit of the North, on subjects as various as the writers: the flora of the region, its mineralogy, the Indians and their history, the lost grave of Father Marquette (in these later days said to have been found), the legends of the fur-trading times, the existing commerce of the lakes, the fisheries, and kindred subjects were mixed with discussions kept up with fellow Latin and Greek scholars exiled at far-off Southern stations, with games of chess played by letter, with recipes for sauces, and with humorous skirmishing with New York priests on topics of the day, in which the Northern hermit often had the best of it.

A hurrah in the kitchen, an opening of doors, a clattering in the hall, and the boys appeared, followed by old Pierre, bearing aloft a pudding enveloped in steam, exhaling fragrance, and beautiful with raisins, currants, and citron – rarities regarded by Louis, Gabriel, and André with eager eyes.

"But it was for your dinner," said Anne.

"It is still for my dinner. But it would have lasted three days, and now it will end its existence more honorably in one," replied the priest, beginning to cut generous slices.

Tita was the last to come forward. She felt herself obliged to set down all the marks of her various recitations in a small note-book after each lesson; she kept a careful record, and punished or rewarded herself accordingly, the punishments being long readings from some religious book in her corner, murmured generally half aloud, to the exasperation of Miss Lois when she happened to be present, Miss Lois having a vehement dislike for "sing-song." Indeed, the little, soft, persistent murmur sometimes made even Anne think that the whole family bore their part in Tita's religious penances. But what could be said to the child? Was she not engaged in saving her soul?

The marks being at last all set down, she took her share of pudding to the fire, and ate it daintily and dreamily, enjoying it far more than the boys, who swallowed too hastily; far more than Anne, who liked the simplest food. The priest was the only one present who appreciated Pierre's skill as Tita appreciated it. "It is délicieux," she said, softly, replacing the spoon in the saucer, and leaning back against the cushions with half-closed eyes.

"Will you have some more, then?" said Anne.

Tita shook her head, and waved away her sister impatiently.

"She is as thorough an epicure as I am," said the priest, smiling; "it takes away from the poetry of a dish to be asked to eat more."

It was now time to start homeward, and Père Michaux's sledge made its appearance, coming from a little islet near by. Old Pierre would not have dogs upon his shores; yet he went over to the other island himself every morning, at the expense of much time and trouble, to see that the half-breed in charge had not neglected them. The result was that Père Michaux's dogs were known as far as they could be seen by their fat sides, the only rotundities in dog-flesh within a circle of five hundred miles. Père Michaux wished to take Tita with him in his sledge, in order that Anne might ride also; but the young girl declined with a smile, saying that she liked the walk.

"Do not wait for us, sir," she said; "your dogs can go much faster than ours."

But the priest preferred to make the journey in company with them; and they all started together from the house door, where Pierre stood in his red skull-cap, bowing farewell. The sledges glided down the little slope to the beach, and shot out on the white ice, the two drivers keeping by the side of their teams, the boys racing along in advance, and Anne walking with her quick elastic step by the side of Père Michaux's conveyance, talking to him with the animation which always came to her in the open air. The color mounted in her cheeks; with her head held erect she seemed to breathe with delight, and to rejoice in the clear sky, the cold, the crisp sound of her own footsteps, while her eyes followed the cliffs of the shore-line crowned with evergreens – savage cliffs which the short summer could hardly soften. The sun sank toward the west, the air grew colder; Tita drew the furs over her head, and vanished from sight, riding along in her nest half asleep, listening to the bells. The boys still ran and pranced, but more, perhaps, from a sense of honor than from natural hilarity. They were more exact in taking their turns in the sledge now, and more slow in coming out from the furs upon call; still, they kept on. As the track turned little by little, following the line of the shore, they came nearer to the mail-train advancing rapidly from the east in a straight line.

"Denis is determined to have a good supper and sleep to-night," said Père Michaux; "no camp to make in the snow *this* evening." Some minutes later the mail-train passed, the gaunt old dogs which drew the sledge never even turning their heads to gaze at the party, but keeping straight on, having come in a direct line, without a break, from the point, ten miles distant. The young dogs in Antoine's team pricked up their ears, and betrayed a disposition to rush after the mail-train; then René and Lebeau, after looking round once or twice, after turning in their great paws more than usual as they walked, and holding back resolutely, at length sat deliberately down on their haunches, and stopped the sledge.

"And thou art entirely right, René, and thou too, Lebeau," said old Antoine. "To waste breath following a mail-train at a gallop is worthy only of young-dog silliness."

So saying he administered to the recreant members of the team enough chastisement to make them forget the very existence of mail-trains, while René and Lebeau waited composedly to see justice done; they then rose in a dignified manner and started on, the younger dogs following now with abject humility. As they came nearer the village the western pass opened out before them, a long narrow vista of ice, with the dark shore-line on each side, and the glow of the red sunset shining strangely through, as though it came from a tropical country beyond. A sledge was crossing down in the west – a moving speck; the scene was as wild and arctic as if they had been travelling on Baffin's Bay. The busy priest gave little attention to the scene, and the others in all the winters of their lives had seen nothing else: to the Bedouins the great desert is nothing. Anne noted every feature and hue of the picture, but unconsciously. She saw it all, but without a comment. Still, she saw it. She was to see it again many times in after-years – see it in cities, in lighted drawing-rooms, in gladness and in sorrow, and more than once through a mist of tears.

Later in the evening, when the moon was shining brightly, and she was on her way home from the church-house with Rast, she saw a sledge moving toward the northern point. "There is Père Michaux, on his way home," she said. Then, after a moment, "Do you know, Rast, he thinks me dull."

"He would not if he had seen you this evening," replied her companion.

A deep flush, visible even in the moonlight, came into the girl's face. "Do not ask me to recite again," she pleaded; "I can not. You *must* let me do what I feel is right."

"What is there wrong in reciting Shakspeare?"

"I do not know. But something comes over me at times, and I am almost swept away. I can not bear to think of the feeling."

"Then don't," said Rast.

"You do not understand me."

"I don't believe you understand yourself; girls seldom do."

"Why?"

"Let me beg you not to fall into the power of that uncomfortable word, Annet. Walters says women of the world never use it. They never ask a single question."

"But how can they learn, then?"

"By observation," replied young Pronando, oracularly.

CHAPTER V

*"It was Peboan, the winter!
From his eyes the tears were flowing
As from melting lakes the streamlets,
And his body shrunk and dwindled
As the shouting sun ascended;
And the young man saw before him,
On the hearth-stone of the wigwam,
Where the fire had smoked and smouldered,
Saw the earliest flower of spring-time,
Saw the miskodeed in blossom.
Thus it was that in that Northland
Came the spring with all its splendor,
All its birds and all its blossoms,
All its flowers and leaves and grasses."*

– Longfellow. *The Song of Hiawatha.*

On this Northern border Spring came late – came late, but in splendor. She sent forward no couriers, no hints in the forest, no premonitions on the winds. All at once she was there herself. Not a shy maid, timid, pallid, hesitating, and turning back, but a full-blooming goddess and woman. One might almost say that she was not Spring at all, but Summer. The weeks called spring farther southward showed here but the shrinking and fading of winter. First the snow crumbled to fine dry grayish powder; then the ice grew porous and became honeycombed, and it was no longer safe to cross the Straits; then the first birds came; then the far-off smoke of a steamer could be seen above the point, and the village wakened. In the same day the winter went and the summer came.

On the highest point of the island were the remains of an old earth-work, crowned by a little surveyor's station, like an arbor on stilts, which was reached by the aid of a ladder. Anne liked to go up there on the first spring day, climb the ice-coated rounds, and, standing on the dry old snow that covered the floor, gaze off toward the south and east, where people and cities were, and the spring; then toward the north, where there was still only fast-bound ice and snow stretching away over thousands of miles of almost unknown country, the great wild northland called British America, traversed by the hunters and trappers of the Hudson Bay Company – vast empire ruled by private hands, a government within a government, its line of forts and posts extending from James Bay to the Little Slave, from the Saskatchewan northward to the Polar Sea. In the early afternoon she stood there now, having made her way up to the height with some difficulty, for the ice-crust was broken, and she was obliged to wade knee-deep through some of the drifts, and go round others that were over her head, leaving a trail behind her as crooked as a child's through a clover field. Reaching the plateau on the summit at last, and avoiding the hidden pits of the old earth-work, she climbed the icy ladder, and stood on the white floor again with delight, brushing from her woollen skirt and leggings the dry snow which still clung to them. The sun was so bright and the air so exhilarating that she pushed back her little fur cap, and drew a long breath of enjoyment. Everything below was still white-covered – the island and village, the Straits and the mainland; but coming round the eastern point four propellers could be seen floundering in the loosened ice, heaving the porous cakes aside, butting with their sharp high bows, and then backing briskly to get headway to start forward again, thus breaking slowly a passageway for themselves, and churning the black water behind until it boiled white as soap-suds as the floating ice closed over it. Now one boat, finding by chance a weakened

spot, floundered through it without pause, and came out triumphantly some distance in advance of the rest; then another, wakened to new exertions by this sight, put on all steam, and went pounding along with a crashing sound until her bows were on a line with the first. The two boats left behind now started together with much splashing and sputtering, and veering toward the shore, with the hope of finding a new weak place in the floe, ran against hard ice with a thud, and stopped short; then there was much backing out and floundering round, the engines panting and the little bells ringing wildly, until the old channel was reached, where they rested awhile, and then made another beginning. These manœuvres were repeated over and over again, the passengers and crew of each boat laughing and chaffing each other as they passed and repassed in the slow pounding race. It had happened more than once that these first steamers had been frozen in after reaching the Straits, and had been obliged to spend several days in company fast bound in the ice. Then the passengers and crews visited each other, climbing down the sides of the steamers and walking across. At that early season the passengers were seldom pleasure-travellers, and therefore they endured the delay philosophically. It is only the real pleasure-traveller who has not one hour to spare.

The steamers Anne now watched were the first from below. The lower lakes were clear; it was only this northern Strait that still held the ice together, and kept the fleets at bay on the east and on the west. White-winged vessels, pioneers of the summer squadron, waited without while the propellers turned their knife-bladed bows into the ice, and cut a pathway through. Then word went down that the Straits were open, all the freshwater fleet set sail, the lights were lit again in the light-houses, and the fishing stations and lonely little wood docks came to life.

"How delightful it is!" said Anne, aloud.

There are times when a person, although alone, does utter a sentence or two, that is, thinks aloud; but such times are rare. And such sentences, also, are short – exclamations. The long soliloquies of the stage, so convenient in the elucidation of plot, do not occur in real life, where we are left to guess at our neighbor's motives, untaught by so much as a syllable. How fortunate for Dora's chances of happiness could she but overhear that Alonzo thinks her a sweet, bigoted little fool, but wants that very influence to keep him straight, nothing less than the intense convictions of a limited intelligence and small experience in life being of any use in sweeping him over with a rush by means of his feelings alone, which is what he is hoping for. Having worn out all the pleasure there is to be had in this world, he has now a mind to try for the next.

What an escape for young Conrad to learn from Honoria's own passionate soliloquy that she is marrying him from bitterest rage against Manuel, and that those tones and looks that have made him happy are second-hand wares, which she flings from her voice and eyes with desperate scorn! Still, we must believe that Nature knows what she is about; and she has not as yet taught us to think aloud.

But sometimes, when the air is peculiarly exhilarating, when a distant mountain grows purple and gold tipped as the sun goes down behind it, sometimes when we see the wide ocean suddenly, or come upon a bed of violets, we utter an exclamation as the bird sings: we hardly know we have spoken.

"Yes, it *is* delightful," said some one below, replying to the girl's sentence.

It was Rast, who had come across the plateau unseen, and was now standing on the old bastion of the fort beneath her. Anne smiled, then turned as if to descend.

"Wait; I am coming up," said Rast.

"But it is time to go home."

"Apparently it was not time until I came," said the youth, swinging himself up without the aid of the ladder, and standing by her side. "What are you looking at? Those steamers?"

"Yes, and the spring, and the air."

"You can not see the air."

"But I can feel it; it is delicious. I wonder, if we should go far away, Rast, and see tropical skies, slow rivers, great white lilies, and palms, whether they would seem more beautiful than this?"

"Of course they would; and we are going some day. We are not intending to stay here on this island all our lives, I hope."

"But it is our home, and I love it. I love this water and these woods, I love the flash of the light-houses, and the rushing sound the vessels make sweeping by at night under full sail, close in shore."

"The island is well enough in its way, but there are other places; and I, for one, mean to see the world," said young Pronando, taking off his cap, throwing it up, and catching it like a ball.

"Yes, you will see the world," answered Anne; "but I shall stay here. You must write and tell me all about it."

"Of course," said Rast, sending the cap up twice as high, and catching it with unerring hand. Then he stopped his play, and said, suddenly, "Will you care very much when I am gone away?"

"Yes," said Anne; "I shall be very lonely."

"But shall you care?" said the youth, insistently. "You have so little feeling, Annet; you are always cold."

"I shall be colder still if we stay here any longer," said the girl, turning to descend. Rast followed her, and they crossed the plateau together.

"How much shall you care?" he repeated. "You never say things out, Annet. You are like a stone."

"Then throw me away," answered the girl, lightly. But there was a moisture in her eyes and a slight tremor in her voice which Rast understood, or, rather, thought he understood. He took her hand and pressed it warmly; the two fur gloves made the action awkward, but he would not loosen his hold. His spirits rose, and he began to laugh, and to drag his companion along at a rapid pace. They reached the edge of the hill, and the steep descent opened before them; the girl's remonstrances were in vain, and it ended in their racing down together at a break-neck pace, reaching the bottom, laughing and breathless, like two school-children. They were now on the second plateau, the level proper of the island above the cliffs, which, high and precipitous on three sides, sank down gradually to the southwestern shore, so that one might land there, and drag a cannon up to the old earth work on the summit – a feat once performed by British soldiers in the days when the powers of the Old World were still fighting with each other for the New. How quaint they now seem, those ancient proclamations and documents with which a Spanish king grandly meted out this country from Maine to Florida, an English queen divided the same with sweeping patents from East to West, and a French monarch, following after, regranted the whole virgin soil on which the banners of France were to be planted with solemn Christian ceremony! They all took possession; they all planted banners. Some of the brass plates they buried are turned up occasionally at the present day by the farmer's plough, and, wiping his forehead, he stops to spell out their high-sounding words, while his sunburned boys look curiously over his shoulder. A place in the county museum is all they are worth now.

Anne Douglas and Rast went through the fort grounds and down the hill path, instead of going round by the road. The fort ladies, sitting by their low windows, saw them, and commented.

"That girl does not appreciate young Pronando," said Mrs. Cromer. "I doubt if she even sees his beauty."

"Perhaps it is just as well that she does not," replied Mrs. Rankin, "for he must go away and live his life, of course; have his adventures."

"Why not she also?" said Mrs. Bryden, smiling.

"In the first place, she has no choice; she is tied down here. In the second, she is a good sort of girl, without imagination or enthusiasm. Her idea of life is to marry, have meat three times a week, fish three times, lights out at ten o'clock, and, by way of literature, Miss Edgeworth's novels and Macaulay's *History of England*."

"And a very good idea," said Mrs. Bryden.

"Certainly, only one can not call that adventures."

"But even such girls come upon adventures sometimes," said Mrs. Cromer.

"Yes, when they have beauty. Their beauty seems often to have an extraordinary power over the most poetical and imaginative men, too, strange as it may appear. But Anne Douglas has none of it."

"How you all misunderstand her!" said a voice from the little dining-room opening into the parlor, its doorway screened by a curtain.

"Ah, doctor, are you there?" said Mrs. Bryden. "We should not have said a word if we had known it."

"Yes, madam, I am here – with the colonel; but it is only this moment that I have lifted my head to listen to your conversation, and I remain filled with astonishment, as usual, at the obtuseness manifested by your sex regarding each other."

"Hear! hear!" said the colonel.

"Anne Douglas," continued the chaplain, clearing his throat, and beginning in a high chanting voice, which they all knew well, having heard it declaiming on various subjects during long snow-bound winter evenings, "is a most unusual girl."

"Oh, come in here, doctor, and take a seat; it will be hard work to say it all through that doorway," called Mrs. Bryden.

"No, madam, I will not sit down," said the chaplain, appearing under the curtain, his brown wig awry, his finger impressively pointed. "I will simply say this, namely, that as to Anne Douglas, you are all mistaken."

"And who is to be the judge between us?"

"The future, madam."

"Very well; we will leave it to the future, then," said Mrs. Bryden, skillfully evading the expected oration.

"We may safely do that, madam – safely indeed; the only difficulty is that we may not live to see it."

"Oh, a woman's future is always near at hand, doctor. Besides, we are not so very old ourselves."

"True, madam – happily true for all the eyes that rest upon you. Nevertheless, the other side, I opine, is likewise true, namely, that Anne Douglas is very young."

"She is sixteen; and I myself am only twenty," said Mrs. Rankin.

"With due respect, ladies, I must mention that not one of you was ever in her life so young as Anne Douglas at the present moment."

"What in the world do you mean, doctor?"

"What I say. I can see you all as children in my mind's eye," continued the chaplain, unflinchingly; "pretty, bright, precocious little creatures, finely finished, finely dressed, quick-witted, graceful, and bewitching. But at that age Anne Douglas was a –"

"Well, what?"

"A mollusk," said the chaplain, bringing out the word emphatically.

"And what is she now, doctor?"

"A promise."

"To be magnificently fulfilled in the future?"

"That depends upon fate, madam; or rather circumstances."

"For my part, I would rather be fulfilled, although not perhaps magnificently, than remain even the most glorious promise," said Mrs. Rankin, laughing.

The fort ladies liked the old chaplain, and endured his long monologues by adding to them running accompaniments of their own. To bright society women there is nothing so unendurable as long arguments or dissertations on one subject. Whether from want of mental training, or from impatience of delay, they are unwilling to follow any one line of thought for more than a minute or two; they love to skim at random, to light and fly away again, to hover, to poise, and then dart upward into space like so many humming-birds. Listen to a circle of them sitting chatting over their embroidery round the fire or on a piazza; no man with a thoroughly masculine mind can follow them

in their mental dartings hither and thither. He has just brought his thoughts to bear upon a subject, and is collecting what he is going to say, when, behold! they are miles away, and he would be considered stupid to attempt to bring them back. His mental processes are slow and lumbering compared with theirs. And when, once in a while, a woman appears who likes to search out a subject, she finds herself out of place and bewildered too, often a target for the quick tongues and light ridicule of her companions. If she likes to generalize, she is lost. Her companions never wish to generalize; they want to know not the general view of a subject, but what Mrs. Blank or Mr. Star thinks of it. Parents, if you have a daughter of this kind, see that she spends in her youth a good portion of every day with the most volatile swift-tongued maidens you can find; otherwise you leave her without the current coin of the realm in which she must live and die, and no matter if she be fairly a gold mine herself, her wealth is unavailable.

Spring burst upon the island with sudden glory; the maples showed all at once a thousand perfect little leaflets, the rings of the juniper brightened, the wild larches beckoned with their long green fingers from the height. The ice was gone, the snow was gone, no one knew whither; the Straits were dotted with white sails. Bluebells appeared, swinging on their hair-like stems where late the icicles hung, and every little Indian farm set to work with vigor, knowing that the time was short. The soldiers from the fort dug in the military garden under the cliff, turning up the mould in long ridges, and pausing to hang up their coats on the old stockade with a finely important air of heat: it was so long since they had been too warm! The little village was broad awake now; there was shipping at the piers again, and a demand for white-fish; all the fishing-boats were out, and their half-breed crews hard at work. The violins hung unused on the walls of the little cabins that faced the west, for the winter was ended, and the husbands and lovers were off on the water: the summer was their time for toil.

And now came the parting. Rast was to leave the island, and enter the Western college which Dr. Gaston had selected for him. The chaplain would have sent the boy over to England at once to his own *alma mater* had it been possible; but it was not possible, and the good man knew little or nothing of the degree of excellence possessed by American colleges, East or West. Harvard and Yale and old Columbia would not have believed this; yet it was true.

Rast was in high spirits; the brilliant world seemed opening before him. Everything in his life was as he wished it to be; and he was not disturbed by any realization that this was a rare condition of affairs which might never occur again. He was young, buoyant, and beautiful; everybody liked him, and he liked everybody. He was going to set sail into his far bright future, and he would find, probably, an island of silver and diamonds, with peacocks walking slowly about spreading their gorgeous feathers, and pleasure-boats at hand with silken sails and golden oars. It was not identically this that he dreamed, but things equally shining and unattainable – that is, to such a nature as his. The silver and diamond islands are there, but by a law of equalization only hard-featured prosaic men attain them and take possession, forming thereafter a lasting contrast to their own surroundings, which then goes into the other scale, and amuses forever the poverty-stricken poets who, in their poor old boats, with ragged canvas and some small ballast of guitars and lutes, sail by, eating their crusts and laughing at them.

"I shall not go one step, even now, unless you promise to write regularly, Annet," said Rast, the evening before his departure, as they stood together on the old piazza of the Agency watching for the lights of the steamer which was to carry him away.

"Of course I shall write, Rast; once a week always."

"No; I wish no set times fixed. You are simply to promise that you will immediately answer every letter *I* write."

"I will answer; but as to the time – I may not always be able –"

"You may if you choose; and I will not go unless you promise," said Rast, with irritation. "Do you want to spoil everything, my education and all my future? I would not be so selfish, Annet, if I

were you. What is it I ask? A trifle. I have no father, no mother, no sister; only you. I am going away for the first time in my life, and you grudge me a letter!"

"Not a letter, Rast, but a promise; lest I might not be able to fulfill it. I only meant that something might happen in the house which would keep me from answering within the hour, and then my promise would be broken. I will always answer as soon as I can."

"You will not fail me, then?"

The girl held out her hand and clasped his with a warm, honest pressure; he turned and looked at her in the starlight. "God bless you for your dear sincere eyes!" he said. "The devil himself would believe you."

"I hope he would," said Anne, smiling.

What with Miss Lois's Calvinism, and the terrific picture of his Satanic Majesty at the death-bed of the wicked in the old Catholic church, the two, as children, had often talked about the devil and his characteristics, Rast being sure that some day he should see him. Miss Lois, overhearing this, agreed with the lad dryly, much to Anne's dismay.

"What is the use of the devil?" she had once demanded.

"To punish the wicked," answered Miss Lois.

"Does he enjoy it?"

"I suppose he does."

"Then he must be very wicked himself?"

"He is."

"Who created him?"

"You know as well as I do, Anne. God created him, of course."

"Well," said the child, after a silence, going as usual to the root of the matter, "I don't think *I* should have made him at all if I couldn't have made him better."

The next morning the sun rose as usual, but Rast was gone. Anne felt a loneliness she had never felt before in all her life. For Rast had been her companion; hardly a day had passed without his step on the piazza, his voice in the hall, a walk with him or a sail; and always, whether at home or abroad, the constant accompaniment of his suggestions, his fault-findings, his teachings, his teasings, his grumblings, his laughter and merry nonsense, the whole made bearable – nay, even pleasant – by the affection that lay underneath. Anne Douglas's nature was faithful to an extraordinary degree, faithful to its promises, its duties, its love; but it was an intuitive faithfulness, which never thought about itself at all. Those persons who are in the habit of explaining voluminously to themselves and everybody else the lines of argument, the struggles, and triumphant conclusions reached by their various virtues, would have considered this girl's mind but a poor dull thing, for Anne never analyzed herself at all. She had never lived for herself or in herself, and it was that which gave the tinge of coldness that was noticed in her. For warm-heartedness generally begins at home, and those who are warm to others are warmer to themselves; it is but the overflow.

Meantime young Pronando, sailing southward, felt his spirits rise with every shining mile. Loneliness is crowded out of the mind of the one who goes by the myriad images of travel; it is the one who stays who suffers. But there was much to be done at the Agency. The boys grew out of their clothes, the old furniture fell to pieces, and the father seemed more lost to the present with every day and hour. He gave less and less attention to the wants of the household, and at last Anne and Miss Lois together managed everything without troubling him even by a question. For strange patience have loving women ever had with dreamers like William Douglas – men who, viewed by the eyes of the world, are useless and incompetent; tears are shed over their graves oftentimes long after the successful are forgotten. For personally there is a sweetness and gentleness in their natures which make them very dear to the women who love them. The successful man, perhaps, would not care for such love, which is half devotion, half protection; the successful man wishes to domineer. But as he grows old he notices that Jane is always quiet when the peach-trees are in bloom, and

that gray-haired sister Catherine always bends down her head and weeps silently whenever the choir sings "Rockingham"; and then he remembers who it was that died when the peach-trees showed their blossoms, and who it was who went about humming "Rockingham," and understands. Yet always with a slow surprise, and a wonder at women's ways, since both the men were, to his idea, failures in the world and their generation.

Any other woman of Miss Lois's age and strict prudence, having general charge of the Douglas household, would have required from Anne long ago that she should ask her father plainly what were his resources and his income. To a cent were all the affairs of the church-house regulated and balanced; Miss Lois would have been unhappy at the end of the week if a penny remained unaccounted for. Yet she said nothing to the daughter, nothing to the father, although noticing all the time that the small provision was no larger, while the boys grew like reeds, and the time was at hand when more must be done for them. William Douglas's way was to give Anne at the beginning of each week a certain sum. This he had done as far back as his daughter could remember, and she had spent it under the direction of Miss Lois. Now, being older, she laid it out without much advice from her mentor, but began to feel troubled because it did not go as far. "It goes as far," said Miss Lois, "but the boys have gone farther."

"Poor little fellows! they must eat."

"And they must work."

"But what can they do at their age, Miss Lois?"

"Form habits," replied the New England woman, sternly. "In my opinion the crying evil of the country to-day is that the boys are not trained; educated, I grant you, but not trained – trained as they were when times were simpler, and the rod in use. Parents are too ambitious; the mechanic wishes to make his sons merchants, the merchant wishes to make his gentlemen; but, while educating them and pushing them forward, the parents forget the homely habits of patient labor, strict veracity in thought and action, and stern self-denials which have given *them* their measure of success, and so between the two stools the poor boys fall to the ground. It is my opinion," added Miss Lois, decisively, "that, whether you want to build the Capitol at Washington or a red barn, you must first have a firm foundation."

"Yes, I know," replied Anne. "And I *do* try to control them."

"Oh, General Putnam! *you* try!" said Miss Lois. "Why, you spoil them like babies."

Anne always gave up the point when Miss Lois reverted to Putnam. This Revolutionary hero, now principally known, like Romulus, by a wolf story, was the old maid's glory and remote ancestor, and helped her over occasional necessities for strong expressions with ancestral kindness. She felt like reverting to him more than once that summer, because, Rast having gone, there was less of a whirlwind of out-door life, of pleasure in the woods and on the water, and the plain bare state of things stood clearly revealed. Anne fell behind every month with the household expenses in spite of all her efforts, and every month Miss Lois herself made up the deficiency. The boys were larger, and careless. The old house yawned itself apart. Of necessity the gap between the income and the expenditure must grow wider and wider. Anne did not realize this, but Miss Lois did. The young girl thought each month that she must have been unusually extravagant; she counted in some item as an extra expense which would not occur again, gave up something for herself, and began anew with fresh hope. On almost all subjects Miss Lois had the smallest amount of patience for what she called blindness, but on this she was silent. Now and then her eyes would follow Anne's father with a troubled gaze; but if he looked toward her or spoke, she at once assumed her usual brisk manner, and was even more cheerful than usual. Thus, the mentor being silent, the family drifted on.

The short Northern summer, with its intense sunshine and its cool nights, was now upon them. Fire crackled upon the hearth of the Agency sitting-room in the early morning, but it died out about ten o'clock, and from that time until five in the afternoon the heat and the brightness were peculiarly brilliant and intense. It seemed as though the white cliffs must take fire and smoulder in places where

they were without trees to cover them; to climb up and sit there was to feel the earth burning under you, and to be penetrated with a sun-bath of rays beating straight down through the clear air like white shafts. And yet there was nothing resembling the lowland heats in this atmosphere, for all the time a breeze blew, ruffling the Straits, and bearing the vessels swiftly on to the east and the west on long tacks, making the leaves in the woods flutter on their branchlets, and keeping the wild-brier bushes, growing on angles and points of the cliff, stretched out like long whip-cords wreathed in pink and green. There was nothing, too, of the stillness of the lowlands, for always one could hear the rustling and laughing of the forest, and the wash of the water on the pebbly beach. There were seldom any clouds in the summer sky, and those that were there were never of that soft, high-piled white downiness that belongs to summer clouds farther south. They came up in the west at evening in time for the sunset, or they lay along the east in the early morning, but they did not drift over the zenith in white laziness at noontide, or come together violently in sudden thunder-storms. They were sober clouds of quiet hue, and they seemed to know that they were not to have a prominent place in the summer procession of night, noon, and morning in that Northern sky, as though there was a law that the sun should have uninterrupted sway during the short season allotted to him. Anne walked in the woods as usual, but not far. Rast was gone. Rast always hurried everybody; left alone, she wandered slowly through the aisles of the arbor vitæ on the southern heights. The close ranks of these trees hardly made what is called a grove, for the flat green plats of foliage rose straight into the air, and did not arch or mingle with each other; a person walking there could always see the open sky above. But so dense was the thickness on each side that though the little paths with which the wood was intersected often ran close to each other, sometimes side by side, persons following them had no suspicion of each other's presence unless their voices betrayed them. In the hot sun the trees exhaled a strong aromatic fragrance, and as the currents of air did not penetrate their low green-walled aisles, it rested there, although up above everything was dancing along – butterflies, petals of the brier, waifs and strays from the forest, borne lakeward on the strong breeze. The atmosphere in these paths was so hot, still, and aromatic that now and then Anne loved to go there and steep herself in it. She used to tell Miss Lois that it made her feel as though she was an Egyptian princess who had been swathed in precious gums and spices for a thousand years.

Over on the other side of the island grew the great pines. These had two deeply worn Indian trails leading through them from north to south, not aimless, wandering little paths like those through the arbor vitæ, but one straight track from the village to the western shore, and another leading down to the spring on the beach. The cliffs on whose summit these pines grew were high and precipitous, overlooking deep water; a vessel could have sailed by so near the shore that a pebble thrown from above would have dropped upon her deck. With one arm round an old trunk, Anne often sat on the edge of these cliffs, looking down through the western pass. She had never felt any desire to leave the island, save that sometimes she had vague dreams of the tropics – visions of palm-trees and white lilies, the Pyramids and minarets, as fantastic as her dreams of Shakspeare. But she loved the island and the island trees; she loved the wild larches, the tall spires of the spruces bossed with lighter green, the gray pines, and the rings of the juniper. She had a peculiar feeling about trees. When she was a little girl she used to whisper to them how much she loved them, and even now she felt that they noticed her. Several times since these recent beginnings of care she had turned back and gone over part of the path a second time, because she felt that she had not been as observant as usual of her old friends, and that they would be grieved by the inattention. But this she never told.

There was, however, less and less time for walking in the woods; there was much to do at home, and she was faithful in doing it: every spring of the little household machinery felt her hand upon it, keeping it in order. The clothes she made for Tita and the boys, the dinners she provided from scanty materials, the locks and latches she improvised, the paint she mixed and applied, the cheerfulness and spirit with which she labored on day after day, were evidences of a great courage and unselfishness; and if the garments were not always successful as regards shape, nor the dinners always

good, she was not disheartened, but bore the fault-findings cheerfully, promising to do better another time. For they all found fault with her, the boys loudly, Tita quietly, but with a calm pertinacity that always gained its little point. Even Miss Lois thought sometimes that Anne was careless, and told her so. For Miss Lois never concealed her light under a bushel. The New England woman believed that household labor held the first place among a woman's duties and privileges; and if the housekeeper spent fourteen hours out of the twenty-four in her task, she was but fulfilling her destiny as her Creator had intended. Anne was careless in the matter of piece-bags, having only two, whereas four, for linen and cotton, colors and black materials, were, as every one knew, absolutely necessary. There was also the systematic halving of sheets and resewing them at the first signs of wear somewhat neglected, and also a particularity as to the saving of string. Even the vaguely lost, thought-wandering father, too, finding that his comforts diminished, spoke of it, not with complaint so much as surprise; and then the daughter restored what he had missed at any sacrifice. All this was done without the recognition by anybody that it was much to do. Anne did not think of it in that way, and no one thought for her. For they were all so accustomed to her strong, cheerful spirit that they took what she did as a matter of course. Dr. Gaston understood something of the life led at the Agency; but he too had fallen into a way of resting upon the girl. She took a rapid survey of his small housekeeping whenever she came up to his cottage for a lesson, which was not as often now as formerly, owing to her manifold home duties. But Père Michaux shook his head. He believed that all should live their lives, and that one should not be a slave to others; that the young should be young, and that some natural simple pleasure should be put into each twenty-four hours. To all his flock he preached this doctrine. They might be poor, but children should be made happy; they might be poor, but youth should not be overwhelmed with the elders' cares; they might be poor, but they could have family love round the poorest hearthstone; and there was always time for a little pleasure, if they would seek it simply and moderately. The fine robust old man lived in an atmosphere above the subtleties of his leaner brethren in cities farther southward, and he was left untrammelled in his water diocese. Privileges are allowed to scouts preceding the army in an Indian country, because it is not every man who can be a scout. Not but that the old priest understood the mysteries, the introverted gaze, and indwelling thoughts that belong to one side of his religion; they were a part of his experience, and he knew their beauty and their dangers. They were good for some minds, he said; but it was a strange fact, which he had proved more than once during the long course of his ministry, that the minds which needed them the least loved them the most dearly, revelled in them, and clung to them with pertinacity, in spite of his efforts to turn them into more practical channels.

In all his broad parish he had no penitent so long-winded, exhaustive, and self-centred as little Tita. He took excellent care of the child, was very patient with her small ceremonies and solemnities, tried gently to lead her aright, and, with rare wisdom, in her own way, not his. But through it all, in his frequent visits to the Agency, and in the visits of the Douglas family to the hermitage, his real interest was centred in the Protestant sister, the tall unconscious young girl who had not yet, as he said to himself, begun to live. He shook his head often as he thought of her. "In France, even in England, she would be guarded," he said to himself; "but here! It is an excellent country, this America of theirs, for the pioneer, the New-Englander, the adventurer, and the farmer; but for a girl like Anne? No." And then, if Anne was present, and happened to meet his eye, she smiled back so frankly that he forgot his fears. "After all, I suppose there are hundreds of such girls in this country of theirs," he admitted, in a grumbling way, to his French mind, "coming up like flowers everywhere, without any guardianship at all. But it is all wrong, all wrong."

The priest generally placed America as a nation in the hands of possessive pronouns of the third person plural; it was a safe way of avoiding responsibility, and of being as scornful, without offending any one, as he pleased. One must have some outlet.

The summer wore on. Rast wrote frequently, and Anne, writing the first letters of her life in reply, found that she liked to write. She saved in her memory all kinds of things to tell him: about

their favorite trees, about the birds that had nests in the garden that season, about the fishermen and their luck, about the unusual quantity of raspberries on the mainland, about the boys, about Tita. Something, too, about Bacon and Sir Thomas Browne, selections from whose volumes she was now reading under the direction of the chaplain. But she never put down any of her own thoughts, opinions, or feelings: her letters were curious examples of purely impersonal objective writing. Egotism, the under-current of most long letters as of most long conversations also, the telling of how this or that was due to us, affected us, was regarded by us, was prophesied, was commended, was objected to, was feared, was thoroughly understood, was held in restraint, was despised or scorned by us, and all our opinions on the subject, which, however important in itself, we present always surrounded by a large indefinite aureola of our own personality – this was entirely wanting in Anne Douglas's letters and conversation. Perhaps if she had had a girl friend of her own age she might have exchanged with her those little confidences, speculations, and fancies which are the first steps toward independent thought, those mazy whispered discussions in which girls delight, the beginnings of poetry and romance, the beginnings, in fact, of their own personal individual consciousness and life. But she had only Rast, and that was not the same thing. Rast always took the lead; and he had so many opinions of his own that there was no time to discuss, or even inquire about, hers.

In the mean time young Pronando was growing into manhood at the rate of a year in a month. His handsome face, fine bearing, generous ways, and incessant activity both of limb and brain gave him a leader's place among the Western students, who studied well, were careless in dress and manner, spent their money, according to the Western fashion, like princes, and had a peculiar dry humor of their own, delivered with lantern-jawed solemnity.

Young Pronando's preparation for college had been far better than that of most of his companions, owing to Dr. Gaston's care. The boy apprehended with great rapidity – apprehended perhaps more than he comprehended: he did not take the time to comprehend. He floated lightly down the stream of college life. His comrades liked him; the young Western professors, quick, unceremonious, practical men, were constantly running against little rocks which showed a better training than their own, and were therefore shy about finding fault with him; and the old president, an Eastern man, listened furtively to his Oxford pronunciation of Greek, and sighed in spite of himself and his large salary, hating the new bare white-painted flourishing institution over which he presided with a fresher hatred – the hatred of an exile. For there was not a tree on the college grounds: Young America always cuts down all his trees as a first step toward civilization; then, after an interregnum, when all the kings of the forest have been laid low, he sets out small saplings in whitewashed tree-boxes, and watches and tends them with fervor.

Rast learned rapidly – more things than one. The school for girls, which, singularly enough, in American towns, is always found flourishing close under the walls of a college, on the excellent and heroic principle, perhaps, of resisting temptation rather than fleeing from it, was situated here at convenient distance for a variety of strict rules on both sides, which gave interest and excitement to the day. Every morning Miss Corinna Haws and her sister girded themselves for the contest with fresh-rubbed spectacles and vigilance, and every morning the girls eluded them; that is, some of the girls, namely, Louise Ray and Kate and Fanny Meadows, cousins, rivals, and beauties of the Western river-country type, where the full life and languor of the South have fused somewhat the old inherited New England delicacy and fragile contours. These three young girls were all interested in handsome Rast in their fanciful, innocent, sentimental way. They glanced at him furtively in church on Sunday; they took walks of miles to catch a distant glimpse of him; but they would have run away like frightened fawns if he had approached nearer. They wrote notes which they never sent, but carried in their pockets for days; they had deep secrets to tell each other about how they had heard that somebody had told somebody else that the Juniors were going to play ball that afternoon in Payne's meadow, and that if they could only persuade Miss Miriam to go round by the hill, they could see them, and

not so very far off either, only two wheat fields and the river between. Miss Miriam was the second Miss Haws, good-tempered and – near-sighted.

That the three girls were interested in one and the same person was part of the pleasure of the affair; each would have considered it a very dreary amusement to be interested all alone. The event of the summer, the comet of that season's sky, was an invitation to a small party in the town, where it was understood that young Pronando, with five or six of his companions, would be present. Miss Haws accepted occasional invitations for her pupils, marshalling them in a bevy, herself robed in pea-green silk, like an ancient mermaid: she said that it gave them dignity. It did. The stern dignity and silence almost solemn displayed by Rast's three worshippers when they found themselves actually in the same room with him were something preternatural. They moved stiffly, as if their elbows and ankles were out of joint; they spoke to each other cautiously in the lowest whispers, with their under jaws rigid, and a difficulty with their labials; they moved their eyes carefully everywhere save toward the point where he was standing, yet knew exactly where he was every moment of the time. When he approached the quadrille which was formed in one corner by Miss Haws's young ladies, dancing virginally by themselves, they squeezed each others' hands convulsively when they passed in "ladies' chain," in token of the great fact that he was looking on. When, after the dance, they walked up and down in the hall, arm in arm, they trod upon each other's slippers as sympathetic perception of the intensity of his presence on the stairs. What an evening! How crowded full of emotions! Yet the outward appearance was simply that of three shy, awkward girls in white muslin, keeping close together, and as far as possible from a handsome, gay-hearted, fast-talking youth who never once noticed them. O the imaginative, happy, shy fancies of foolish school-girls! It is a question whether the real love which comes later ever yields that wild, fairy-like romance which these early attachments exhale; the very element of reality weights it down, and makes it less heavenly fair.

At the end of the summer Rast had acquired a deep experience in life (so he thought), a downy little golden mustache, and a better opinion of himself than ever. The world is very kind to a handsome boy of frank and spirited bearing, one who looks as though he intended to mount and ride to victory. The proud vigor of such a youth is pleasant to tired eyes; he is so sure he will succeed! And most persons older, although knowing the world better and not so sure, give him as he passes a smile and friendly word, and wish him godspeed. It is not quite fair, perhaps, to other youths of equal merit but another bearing, yet Nature orders it so. The handsome, strong, confident boy who looks her in the face with daring courage wins from her always a fine starting-place in the race of life, which seems to advance him far beyond his companions. Seems; but the end is far away.

Rast did not return to the island during the summer vacation; Dr. Gaston wished him to continue his studies with a tutor, and as the little college town was now radiant with a mild summer gayety, the young man was willing to remain. He wrote to Anne frequently, giving abstracts of his life, lists of little events like statistics in a report. He did this regularly, and omitted nothing, for the letters were his conscience. When they were once written and sent, however, off he went to new pleasures. It must be added as well that he always sought the post-office eagerly for Anne's replies, and placed them in his pocket with satisfaction. They were sometimes unread, or half read, for days, awaiting a convenient season, but they were there.

Anne's letters were long, they were pleasant, they were never exciting – the very kind to keep; like friends who last a lifetime, but who never give us one quickened pulse. Alone in his room, or stretched on the grass under a tree, reading them, Rast felt himself strongly carried back to his old life on the island, and he did not resist the feeling. His plans for the future were as yet vague, but Anne was always a part of his dream.

But this youth lived so vigorously and fully and happily in the present that there was not much time for the future and for dreams. He seldom thought. What other people thought, he felt.

CHAPTER VI

*"Into the Silent Land!
Ah! who shall lead us thither?
Clouds in the evening sky more darkly gather,
And shattered wrecks lie thicker on the strand.
Who leads us with a gentle hand
Thither, O thither,
Into the Silent Land?"*

*"O Land, O Land,
For all the broken-hearted,
The mildest herald by our fate allotted
Beckons, and with inverted torch doth stand
To lead us with a gentle hand
To the land of the great Departed —
Into the Silent Land!"*

— Longfellow. *From the German.*

Early in September William Douglas failed suddenly. From taciturnity he sank into silence, from quiet into lethargy. He rose in the morning, but after that effort he became like a breathing statue, and sat all day in his arm-chair without stirring or noticing anything. If they brought him food he ate it, but he did not speak or answer their questions by motion or gesture. The fort surgeon was puzzled; it was evidently not paralysis. He was a new-comer on the island, and he asked many questions as to the past. Anne sincerely, Miss Lois resolutely, denied that there had ever been any trouble with the brain; Dr. Gaston drummed on the table, and answered sharply that all men of intellect were more or less mad. But the towns-people smiled, and tapped their foreheads significantly; and the new surgeon had noticed in the course of his experience that, with time for observation, the towns-people are generally right. So he gave a few medicines, ordered a generous diet, and looking about him for some friend of the family who could be trusted, selected at last Père Michaux. For Miss Lois would not treat him even civilly, bristling when he approached like a hedge-hog; and with her frank eyes meeting his, he found it impossible to speak to Anne. But he told Père Michaux the true state of his patient, and asked him to break the tidings to the family.

"He can not live long," he said.

"Is it so?" said Père Michaux. "God's will be done. Poor Anne!"

"An odd lot of children he has in that ramshackle old house of his," continued the surgeon. "Two sets, I should say."

"Yes; the second wife was a French girl."

"With Indian blood?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. Who is to have charge of them? The boys will take to the woods, I suppose, but that little Tita is an odd specimen. She would make quite a sensation in New York a few years later."

"May she never reach there!" said the old priest, fervently.

"Well, perhaps you are right. But who is to have the child?"

"Her sister will take charge of her."

"Miss Anne? Yes, she will do her best, of course; she is a fine, frank young Saxon. But I doubt if she understands that elfish little creature."

"She understands her better than we do," said the priest, with some heat.

"Ah? You know best, of course; I speak merely as an outsider," answered the new surgeon, going off about his business.

Père Michaux decided that he would tell Anne herself. He went to the house for the purpose, and called her out on the old piazza. But when she stood before him, her violet eyes meeting his without a suspicion of the tidings he brought, his heart failed him suddenly. He comprehended for the first time what it would be to her, and, making some chance inquiry, he asked to see Miss Lois, and turned away. Anne went in, and Miss Lois came out. The contrast between the priest and the New England woman was more marked than usual as they stood there facing each other on the old piazza, he less composed than he ordinarily was on account of what he had to tell. But it never occurred to him for a moment that Miss Lois would falter. Why should she? He told her. She sank down at his feet as though she had fallen there and died.

Alarmed, he bent over her, and in the twilight saw that she was not dead; her features were working strangely; her hands were clinched over her breast; her faded eyes stared at him behind the spectacles as though he were miles away. He tried to raise her. She struck at him almost fiercely. "Let me alone," she said, in a muffled voice. Then, still lying where she fell, she threw up her arms and wailed once or twice, not loudly, but with a struggling, inarticulate sound, as a person cries out in sleep. Poor old Lois! it was the last wail of her love. But even then she did not recognize it. Nor did the priest. Pale, with uncertain steps and shaking hands, yet tearless, the stricken woman raised herself by the aid of the bench, crossed the piazza, went down the path and into the street, Père Michaux's eyes following her in bewilderment. She was evidently going home, and her prim, angular shape looked strangely bare and uncovered in the lack of bonnet and shawl, for through all the years she had lived on the island she had never once been seen in the open air without them. The precision of her bonnet strings was a matter of conscience. The priest went away also. And thus it happened that Anne was not told at all.

When, late in the evening, Miss Lois returned, grayly pale, but quiet, as she entered the hall a cry met her ears and rang through the house. It had come sooner than any one expected. The sword of sorrow, which sooner or later must pierce all loving hearts, had entered Anne Douglas's breast. Her father was dead.

He had died suddenly, peacefully and without pain, passing away in sleep. Anne was with him, and Tita, jealously watchful to the last. No one else was in the room at the moment. Père Michaux, coming in, had been the first to perceive the change.

Tita drew away quickly to a distant corner, and kneeling down where she could still see everything that went on, began repeating prayers; but Anne, with a wild cry, threw herself down beside her dead, sobbing, holding his hand, and calling his name again and again. She would not believe that he was gone.

Ah, well, many of us know the sorrow. A daughter's love for a kind father is a peculiarly dependent, clinging affection; it is mixed with the careless happiness of childhood, which can never come again. Into the father's grave the daughter, sometimes a gray-haired woman, lays away forever the little pet names and memories which to all the rest of the world are but foolishness. Even though happy in her woman's lot, she weeps convulsively here for a while with a sorrow that nothing can comfort; no other love so protecting and unselfish will ever be hers again.

Anne was crushed by her grief; it seemed to those who watched her that she revealed a new nature in her sorrow. Dr. Gaston and Père Michaux spoke of it to each other, but could find little to say to the girl herself; she had, as it were, drifted beyond their reach, far out on an unknown sea. They prayed for her, and went silently away, only to come back within the hour and meet again on the threshold, recognizing each other's errand. They were troubled by the change in this young creature, upon whom they had all, in a certain way, depended. Singularly enough, Miss Lois did not seem to appreciate Anne's condition: she was suffering too deeply herself. The whole of her repressed nature

was in revolt. But faithful to the unconscious secret of her life, she still thought the wild pain of her heart was "sorrow for a friend."

She went about as usual, attending to household tasks for both homes. She was unchanged, yet totally changed. There was a new tension about her mouth, and an unwonted silence, but her hands were as busy as ever. Days had passed after the funeral before she began to perceive, even slightly, the broken condition of Anne. The girl herself was the first to come back to the present, in the necessity for asking one of those sad questions which often raise their heads as soon as the coffin is borne away. "Miss Lois, there are bills to be paid, and I have no money. Do you know anything of our real income?"

The old habits of the elder woman stirred a little; but she answered, vaguely, "No."

"We must look through dear papa's papers," said Anne, her voice breaking as she spoke the name. "He received few letters, none at all lately; whatever he had, then, must be here."

Miss Lois assented, still silently, and the two began their task. Anne, with a quivering lip, unlocked her father's desk. William Douglas had not been a relic-loving man. He had lived, he had loved; but memory was sufficient for him; he needed no tokens. So, amid a hundred mementos of nature, they found nothing personal, not even a likeness of Anne's mother, or lock of her curling brown hair. And amid a mass of miscellaneous papers, writings on every philosophic and imaginative subject, they found but one relating to money – some figures jotted down, with a date affixed, the sum far from large, the date three years before. Below, a later line was added, as if (for the whole was vague) so much had gone, and this was the remainder; the date of this last line was eight months back.

"Perhaps this is it," said Anne; "perhaps this is what he had."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Miss Lois, mechanically.

They went on with the search, and at last came to a package tied in brown paper, which contained money; opening it, they counted the contents.

"Three hundred and ten dollars and eighty-five cents," said Anne.

Miss Lois took a pen and made a calculation, still with the manner of a machine. "That is about what would be left by this time, at the rate of the sums you have had, supposing the memorandum is what you think it is," she said, rubbing her forehead with a shadowy imitation of her old habit.

"It is a large sum," said Anne.

Nothing more was found. It appeared, therefore, that the five children of William Douglas were left alone in the world with exactly three hundred and ten dollars and eighty-five cents.

Dr. Gaston and Père Michaux learned the result that day; the story spread through the village and up to the fort. "I never heard anything so extraordinary in my life," said Mrs. Cromer. "That a man like Dr. Douglas should have gone on for the last four or five years deliberately living on his capital, seeing it go dollar by dollar, without making one effort to save it, or to earn an income – a father with children! I shall always believe, after this, that the villagers were right, and that his mind was affected."

The chaplain stopped these comments gruffly, and the fort ladies forgave him on account of the tremor in his voice. He left them, and went across to his little book-clogged cottage with the first indications of age showing in his gait.

"It is a blow to him; he is very fond of Anne, and hoped everything for her," said Mrs. Bryden. "I presume he would adopt her if he could; but there are the other children."

"They might go to their mother's relatives, I should think," said Mrs. Rankin.

"They could, but Anne will not allow it. You will see."

"I suppose our good chaplain has nothing to bequeath, even if he should adopt Anne?"

"No, he has no property, and has saved nothing from his little salary; it has all gone into books," answered the colonel's wife.

Another week passed. By that time Dr. Gaston and Père Michaux together had brought the reality clearly before Anne's eyes; for the girl had heretofore held such small sums of money in her

hands at any one time that the amount found in the desk had seemed to her large. Père Michaux began the small list of resources by proposing that the four children should go at once to their uncle, their mother's brother, who was willing to receive them and give them a home, such as it was, among his own brood of black-eyed little ones. Anne decidedly refused. Dr. Gaston then asked her to come to him, and be his dear daughter as long as he lived.

"I must not come with them, and I can not come without them," was Anne's reply.

There remained Miss Lois. But she seemed entirely unconscious of any pressing necessity for haste in regard to the affairs of the little household, coming and going as usual, but without words; while people round her, with that virtuous readiness as to the duties of their neighbors which is so helpful in a wicked world, said loudly and frequently that she was the nearest friend, and ought to do – Here followed a variety of suggestions, which amounted in the aggregate to everything. At last, as often happens, it was an outside voice that brought the truth before her.

"And what are you thinking of doing, dear Miss Lois, for the five poor orphans?" asked the second Miss Macdougall while paying a visit of general condolence at the church-house.

"Why, what should I do?" said Miss Lois, with a faint remembrance of her old vigilant pride. "They want nothing."

"They want nothing! And not one hundred dollars apiece for them in the wide world!" exclaimed Miss Jean.

"Surely you're joking, my dear. Here's Dr. Gaston wishing to take Anne, as is most kind and natural; but she will not leave those children. Although why they should not go back to the stratum from which they came is a mystery to me. She can never make anything of them: mark my words."

Miss Jean paused; but whether Miss Lois marked her words or not, she made no response, but sat gazing straight at the wall. Miss Jean, however, knew her duty, and did it like a heroine of old. "We thought, perhaps, dear Miss Lois, that *you* would like to take them for a time," she said, "seeing that Anne has proved herself so obstinate as to the other arrangements proposed. The village has thought so generally, and I am not the one to hide it from you, having been taught by my lamented parent to honor and abide by veracity the most precise. We could all help you a little in clothing them for the present, and we will contribute to their support a fish now and then, a bag of meal, a barrel of potatoes, which we would do gladly – right gladly, I do assure you. For no one likes to think of Dr. Douglas's children being on the town."

The homely phrase roused Miss Lois at last. "What in the world are you talking about, Jean Macdougall?" she exclaimed, in wrath. "On the town! Are you clean daft? On the town, indeed! Clear out of my house this moment, you lying, evil-speaking woman!"

The second Miss Macdougall rose in majesty, and drew her black silk visite round her. "Of whom ye are speaking, Miss Hinsdale, I know not," she said, growing Scotch in her anger; "but I believe ye hae lost your wits. I tak' my departure freely, and not as sent by one who has strangely forgotten the demeanor of a leddy."

With hands folded, she swept toward the door, all the flowers on her dignified bonnet swaying perceptibly. Pausing on the threshold, she added, "As a gude Christian, and a keeper of my word, I still say, Miss Hinsdale, in spite of insults, that in the matter of a fish or two, or a barrel of potatoes now and then, ye can count upon the Macdougalls."

Left alone, Miss Lois put on her shawl and bonnet with feverish haste, and went over to the Agency. Anne was in the sitting-room, and the children were with her.

"Anne, of course you and the children are coming to live with me whenever you think it best to leave this house," said Miss Lois, appearing on the threshold like an excited ghost in spectacles. "You never thought or planned anything else, I hope?"

"No," said Anne, frankly, "I did not – at least for the present. I knew you would help us, Miss Lois, although you did not speak."

"Speak! was there any need of speaking?" said the elder woman, bursting into a few dry, harsh sobs. "You are all I have in the world, Anne. How could you mistrust me?"

"I did not," said Anne.

And then the two women kissed each other, and it was all understood without further words. And thus, through the intervention of the second Miss Macdougall (who found herself ill rewarded for her pains), Lois Hinsdale came out from the watch-chamber of her dead to real life again, took up her burden, and went on.

Anne now unfolded her plans, for she had been obliged to invent plans: necessity forced her forward. "We must all come to you for a time, dear Miss Lois; but I am young and strong, and I can work. I wish to educate the boys as father would have wished them educated. Do you ask what I can do? I think – that is, I hope – that I can teach." Then, in a lower voice, she added, "I promised father that I would do all I could for the children, and I shall keep my promise."

Miss Lois's eyes filled with tears. But the effect of the loving emotion was only to redden the lids, and make the orbs beneath look smaller and more unbeautiful than before.

For to be born into life with small, inexpressive eyes is like being born dumb. One may have a heart full of feeling, but the world will not believe it. Pass on, then, Martha, with your pale little orbs; leave the feeling to Beatrice with her deep brown glance, to Agnes with her pure blue gaze, to Isabel with hers of passionate splendor. The world does not believe you have any especial feelings, poor Martha. Then do not have them, if you can help it – and pass on.

"I have been thinking deeply," continued Anne, "and I have consulted Dr. Gaston. He says that I have a good education, but probably an old-fashioned one; at least the fort ladies told him that it would be so considered. It seems that what I need is a 'polish of modern accomplishments.' That is what he called it. Now, to obtain a teacher's place, I must have this, and I can not obtain it here." She paused; and then, like one who rides forward on a solitary charge, added, "I am going to write to Miss Vanhorn."

"A dragon!" said Miss Lois, knitting fiercely. Then added, after a moment, "A positive demon of pride." Then, after another silence, she said, sternly, "She broke your mother's heart, Anne Douglas, and she will break yours."

"I hope not," said the girl, her voice trembling a little; for her sorrow was still very near the surface. "She is old now, and perhaps more gentle. At any rate, she is my only living relative, and to her I must appeal."

"How do you know she is alive? The world would be well rid of such a wicked fiend," pursued Miss Lois, quoting unconsciously from Anne's forest Juliet.

"She was living last year, for father spoke of her."

"I did not know he ever spoke of her."

"Only in answer to my questions; for I had found her address, written in mother's handwriting, in an old note-book. She brought up my mother, you know, and was once very fond of her."

"So fond of her that she killed her. If poor Alida had not had that strain upon her, she might have been alive at this day," said Miss Lois.

Anne's self-control left her now, and she began to sob like a child. "Do not make it harder for me than it is," she said, amid her tears. "I *must* ask her; and if she should consent to help me, it will be grief enough to leave you all, without these cruel memories added. She is old: who knows but that she may be longing to repair the harm she did?"

"Can the leopard change his spots?" said Miss Lois, sternly. "But what do you mean by leaving us all? What do you intend to do?"

"I intend to ask her either to use her influence in obtaining a teacher's place for me immediately, or if I am not, in her opinion, qualified, to give me the proper masters for one year. I would study very hard; she would not be burdened with me long."

"And the proper masters are not here, of course?"

"No; at the East."

Miss Lois stopped in the middle of a round, took off her spectacles, rolled up her knitting-work slowly and tightly as though it was never to be unrolled again, and pinned it together with decision; she was pinning in also a vast resolution. Then she looked at Anne in silence for several minutes, saw the tear-dimmed eyes and tired, anxious face, the appealing glance of William Douglas's child.

"I have not one word to say against it," she remarked at last, breaking the silence; and then she walked out of the house and went homeward.

It was a hard battle for her. She was to be left with the four brown-skinned children, for whom she had always felt unconquerable aversion, while the one child whom she loved – Anne – was to go far away. It was a revival of the bitter old feeling against Angélique Lafontaine, the artful minx who had entrapped William Douglas to his ruin. In truth, however, there had been very little art about Angélique; nor was Douglas by any means a rich prey. But women always attribute wonderful powers of strategy to a successful rival, even although by the same ratio they reduce the bridegroom to a condition approaching idiocy; for anything is better than the supposition that he was a free agent, and sought his fate from the love of it.

The thought of Anne's going was dreadful to Miss Lois; yet her long-headed New England thrift and calculation saw chances in that future which Anne did not see. "The old wretch has money, and no near heirs," she said to herself, "why should she not take a fancy to this grandniece? Anne has no such idea, but her friends should, therefore, have it for her." Still, the tears would rise and dim her spectacles as she thought of the parting. She took off the gold-rimmed glasses and rubbed them vigorously. "One thing is certain," she added, to herself, as a sort of comfort, "Tita will have to do her mummeries in the garden after this."

Poor old Lois! in these petty annoyances and heavy cares her great grief was to be pressed down into a subdued under-current, no longer to be indulged or made much of even by herself.

Anne knew but little of her grandaunt. William Douglas would not speak of what was the most bitter memory of his life. The address in the old note-book, in her mother's unformed girlish handwriting, was her only guide. She knew that Miss Vanhorn was obstinate and ill-tempered; she knew that she had discarded her mother on account of her disobedient marriage, and had remained harsh and unforgiving to the last. And this was all she knew. But she had no choice. Hoping, praying for the best, she wrote her letter, and sent it on its way. Then they all waited. For Père Michaux had been taken into the conference also, and had given hearty approval to Anne's idea – so hearty, indeed, that both the chaplain and Miss Lois looked upon him with disfavor. What did he mean? He did not say what he meant, but returned to his hermitage cheerfully. Dr. Gaston, not so cheerfully, brought out his hardest chess problems, and tried to pass away the time in mathematical combinations of the deepest kind. Miss Lois, however, had combinations at hand of another sort. No sooner was the letter gone than she advanced a series of conjectures which did honor even to her New England origin.

The first was that Miss Vanhorn had gone abroad: those old New-Yorkers were "capable of wishing to ride on camels, even"; she added, from habit, "through the eye of a needle." The next day she decided that paralysis would be the trouble: those old New-Yorkers were "often stricken down in that way, owing to their high living and desperate wine-bibbing." Anne need give no more thought to her letter; Miss Vanhorn would not be able even to read it. The third day, Miss Vanhorn would read the letter, but would immediately throw it on the floor and stamp on it: those old New-Yorkers "had terrible tempers," and were "known to swear like troopers even on the slightest provocation." The fourth day, Miss Vanhorn was mad; the fifth day, she was married; the sixth, she was dead: those old New-Yorkers having tendencies toward insanity, matrimony, and death which, Miss Lois averred, were known to all the world, and indisputable. That she herself had never been in New York in her life made no difference in her certainties: women like Miss Lois are always sure they know all about New York.

Anne, weary and anxious, and forced to hear all these probabilities, began at last to picture her grandaunt as a sort of human kaleidoscope, falling into new and more fantastic combinations at a moment's notice.

They had allowed two weeks for the letter to reach the island, always supposing that Miss Vanhorn was not on a camel, paralyzed, obstinate, mad, married, or dead. But on the tenth day the letter came. Anne took it with a hand that trembled. Dr. Gaston was present, and Miss Lois, but neither of them comprehended her feelings. She felt that she was now to be confronted by an assent which would strain her heart-strings almost to snapping, yet be ultimately for the best, or by a refusal which would fill her poor heart with joy, although at the same time pressing down upon her shoulders a heavy, almost hopeless, weight of care. The two could not enter into her feelings, because in the depths of their hearts they both resented her willingness to leave them. They never said this to each other, they never said it to themselves; yet they both felt it with the unconscious selfishness of those who are growing old, especially when their world is narrowed down to one or two loving young hearts. They did not realize that it was as hard for her to go as it was for them to let her go; they did not realize what a supreme effort of courage it required to make this young girl go out alone into the wide world, and face its vastness and its strangeness; they did not realize how she loved them, and how every tree, every rock of the island, also, was dear to her strongly loving, concentrated heart.

After her father's death Anne had been for a time passive, swept away by grief as a dead leaf on the wind. But cold necessity came and stood by her bedside silently and stonily, and looked at her until, recalling her promise, she rose, choked back her sorrow, and returned to common life and duty with an aching but resolute heart. In the effort she made to speak at all it was no wonder that she spoke quietly, almost coldly; having, after sleepless nights of sorrow, nerved herself to bear the great change in her lot, should it come to her, could she trust herself to say that she was sorry to go? Sorry! – when her whole heart was one pain!

The letter was as follows:

"Grandniece Anne, – I did not know that you were in existence. I have read your letter, and have now to say the following. Your mother willfully disobeyed me, and died. I, meanwhile, an old woman, remain as strong as ever.

"While I recognize no legal claim upon me (I having long since attended to the future disposal of all my property according to my own wishes), I am willing to help you to a certain extent, as I would help any industrious young girl asking for assistance. If what you say of your education is true, you need only what are called modern accomplishments (of which I personally have small opinion, a grimacing in French and a squalling in Italian being not to my taste) to make you a fairly well qualified teacher in an average country boarding-school, which is all you can expect. You may, therefore, come to New York at my expense, and enter Madame Moreau's establishment, where, as I understand, the extreme of everything called 'accomplishment' is taught, and much nonsense learned in the latest style. You may remain one year; not longer. And I advise you to improve the time, as nothing more will be done for you by me. You will bring your own clothes, but I will pay for your books. I send no money now, but will refund your travelling expenses (of which you will keep strict account, without extras) upon your arrival in the city, which must not be later than the last of October. Go directly to Madame Moreau's (the address is inclosed), and remember that you are simply Anne Douglas, and not a relative of your obedient servant,

Katharine Vanhorn."

Anne, who had read the letter aloud in a low voice, now laid it down, and looked palely at her two old friends.

"A hard letter," said the chaplain, indignantly. "My child, remain with us. We will think of some other plan for you. Let the proud, cold-hearted old woman go."

"I told you how it would be," said Miss Lois, a bright spot of red on each cheek-bone. "She was cruel to your mother before you, and she will be cruel to you. You must give it up."

"No," said Anne, slowly, raising the letter and replacing it in its envelope; "it is a matter in which I have no choice. She gives me the year at school, as you see, and – there are the children. I promised father, and I must keep the promise. Do not make me falter, dear friends, for – I *must* go." And unable longer to keep back the tears, she hurriedly left the room.

Dr. Gaston, without a word, took his old felt hat and went home. Miss Lois sat staring vaguely at the window-pane, until she became conscious that some one was coming up the path, and that "some one" Père Michaux. She too then went hurriedly homeward, by the back way, in order to avoid him. The old priest, coming in, found the house deserted. Anne was on her knees in her own room, sobbing as if her heart would break; but the walls were thick, and he could not hear her.

Then Tita came in. "Annet is going away," she said, softly; "she is going to school. The letter came to-day."

"So Miss Vanhorn consents, does she? Excellent! excellent!" said Père Michaux, rubbing his hands, his eyes expressing a hearty satisfaction.

"When will you say 'Excellent! excellent!' about me?" said Tita, jealously.

"Before long, I hope," said the priest, patting her small head.

"But are you sure, mon père?"

"Well, yes," said Père Michaux, "on the whole, I am."

He smiled, and the child smiled also; but with a deep quiet triumph remarkable in one so young.

CHAPTER VII

*"To all appearance it was chiefly by Accident, and the grace of Nature."
– Carlyle.*

It was still September; for great sorrows come, graves are made and turfed over, and yet the month is not out. Anne had written her letter immediately, accepting her grandaunt's offer, and Père Michaux gave her approval and praise; but the others did not, could not, and she suffered from their silence. It made, however, no change in her purpose; she went about her tasks steadily, toiling all day over the children's clothes, for she had used part of the money in her hands to make them comfortable, and part was to be given to Miss Lois. Her own garments troubled her little; two strong, plain black gowns she considered amply sufficient. Into the midst of all this swift sewing suddenly one day came Rast.

"Why did I do it?" he said, in answer to everybody. "Do you suppose I was going to let Annet go away for a whole long year without saying even good-by? Of course not."

"It is very kind," said Anne, her tired eyes resting on his handsome face gratefully, her sewing for the moment cast aside. Her friends had not been overkind to her lately, and she was deeply touched by this proof of attachment from her old playmate and companion. Rast expressed his affection, as usual, in his own way. He did not say that he had come back to the island because he wished to see her, but because he knew that she wished to see him. And Anne willingly agreed. Dr. Gaston, as guardian of this runaway collegian, gave him a long lecture on his escapade and its consequences, his interrupted studies, a long train of disasters to follow being pictured with stern distinctness. Rast listened to the sermon, or rather sat through it, without impatience: he had a fine sunny temper, and few things troubled him. He seldom gave any attention to subtleties of meaning, or under-currents, but took the surface impression, and answered it promptly, often putting to rout by his directness trains of reasoning much deeper than his own. So now all he said was, "I could not help coming, sir, because Annet is going away; I wanted to see her." And the old man was silenced in spite of himself.

As he was there, and it could not be helped, Rast, by common consent of the island, was allowed to spend several days unmolested among his old haunts. Then they all began to grow restive, to ask questions, and to speak of the different boats. For the public of small villages has always a singular impatience as to anything like uncertainty in the date of departure of its guests. Many a miniature community has been stirred into heat because it could not find out the day and hour when Mrs. Blank would terminate her visit at her friend's mansion, and with her trunk and bag depart on her way to the railway station; and this not because the community has any objection to Mrs. Blank, or any wish to have her depart, but simply because if she is going, they wish to know *when*, and have it settled. The few days over, Rast himself was not unwilling to go. He had seen Anne, and Anne was pressed with work, and so constantly threatened by grief that she had to hold it down with an iron effort at almost every moment. If she kept her eyes free from tears and her voice steady, she did all she could; she had no idea that Rast expected more. Rast meanwhile had learned clearly that he was a remarkably handsome, brilliant young fellow, and that the whole world was before him where to choose. He was fond of Anne; the best feelings of his nature and the associations of his whole boyhood's life were twined round her; and yet he was conscious that he had always been very kind to her, and this coming back to the island on purpose to see her – that was remarkably kind. He was glad to do it, of course; but she must appreciate it. He began now to feel that as he had seen her, and as he could not in any case stay until she went, he might as well go. He yielded, therefore, to the first suggestion of the higher powers, saying, however, frankly, and with real feeling, that it was hard to bid farewell for so long a time to his old playmate, and that he did not know how he could endure the separation. As the last words were spoken it was Rast who had tear-dimmed eyes; it was Rast's voice that faltered.

Anne was calm, and her calmness annoyed him. He would have liked a more demonstrative sorrow. But as he went down the long path on his way to the pier where the steamboat was waiting, the first whistle having already sounded, he forgot everything save his affection for her and the loneliness in store for him after her departure. While she was on their island she seemed near, but New York was another world.

Down in the shadow of the great gate there was an ancient little cherry-tree, low and gnarled, which thrust one crooked arm across the path above the heads of the passers-by. As Rast approached he saw in the dusky twilight a small figure perched upon this bough, and recognized Tita.

"Is that you, child?" he said, pausing and looking up. She answered by dropping into his arms like a kitten, and clinging to him mutely, with her face hidden on his shoulder.

"What an affectionate little creature she is, after all!" he thought, stroking her dark hair. Then, after saying good-by, and giving her a kiss, he disengaged himself without much ceremony, and telling her to be a good girl and mind Miss Lois during the winter, he hurried down to the pier, the second whistle summoning all loiterers on board with shrill harshness. Tita, left alone, looked at her arms, reddened by the force with which she had resisted his efforts to unclasp them. They had been pressed so closely against the rough woollen cloth of his coat that the brown flesh showed the mark of the diagonal pattern.

"It is a hurt," she said, passionately – "it is a hurt." Her eyes flashed, and she shook her small fist at the retreating figure. Then, as the whistle sounded a third time, she climbed quickly to the top of the great gates, and sat there high in the air while the steamer backed out from the piers, turned round, and started westward through the Straits, nothing now save a moving line of lights, the short Northern twilight having faded into night.

When the long sad day of parting was at last over, and everything done that her hands could find to do in that amount of time, Anne, in her own room alone, let her feelings come forth; she was the only watcher in the old house, every other eye was closed in sleep. These moments alone at night, when she allowed herself to weep and think, were like breathing times; then her sorrows came forth. According to her nature, she did not fear or brood upon her own future so much as upon the future of the children; the love in her heart made it seem to her a bitter fate to be forced to leave them and the island. The prospect of the long journey, the city school, the harsh aunt, did not dishearten her; they were but parts of her duty, the duty of her life. It was after midnight; still she sat there. The old shutters, which had been rattling for some time, broke their fastenings, and came violently against the panes with a sound like the report of a pistol.

"The wind is rising," she thought, vaguely, as she rose to fasten them, opening one of the windows for the purpose. In rushed the blast, blowing out the candle, driving books and papers across the floor, and whirling the girl's long loosened hair over her face and round her arms like the coils of a boa-constrictor. Blinded, breathless, she hastily let down the sash again, and peered through the small wrinkled panes. A few stars were visible between the light clouds which drove rapidly from north to south in long regular lines like bars, giving a singular appearance to the sky, which the girl recognized at once, and in the recognition came back to present life. "The equinoctial," she said to herself; "and one of the worst. Where can the *Huron* be? Has she had time to reach the shelter of the islands?"

The *Huron* was the steamer which had carried Rast away at twilight. She was a good boat and stanch. But Anne knew that craft as stanch had been wrecked and driven ashore during these fierce autumn gales which sweep over the chain of lakes suddenly, and strew their coasts with fragments of vessels, and steamers also, from the head of Superior to the foot of Ontario. If there was more sea-room, vessels might escape; if there were better harbors, steamers might seek port; in a gale, an ocean captain has twenty chances for his vessel where the lake captain has one. Anne stood with her face pressed against the window for a long time; the force of the wind increased. She took her candle and went across to a side room whose windows commanded the western pass: she hoped that she might see the lights of the steamer coming back, seeking the shelter of the island before the worst came.

But all was dark. She returned to her room, and tried to sleep, but could not. Dawn found her at the window, wakeful and anxious. There was to be no sun that day, only a yellow white light. She knelt down and prayed; then she rose, and braided anew her thick brown hair. When she entered the sitting-room the vivid rose freshness which always came to her in the early morning was only slightly paled by her vigil, and her face seemed as usual to the boys, who were waiting for her. Before breakfast was ready, Miss Lois arrived, tightly swathed in a shawl and veils, and carrying a large basket.

"There is fresh gingerbread in there," she said; "I thought the boys might like some; and – it will be an excellent day to finish those jackets, Anne. No danger of interruption."

She did not mention the gale or Rast; neither did Anne. They sat down to breakfast with the boys, and talked about thread and buttons. But, while they were eating, Louis exclaimed, "Why, there's Dr. Gaston!" and looking up, they saw the chaplain struggling to keep his hat in place as he came up the path sideways, fighting the wind.

"He should just have wrapped himself up, and scudded before it as I did," said Miss Lois.

Anne ran to open the door, and the old clergyman came panting in.

"It is such a miserable day that I thought you would like to have that dictionary, dear; so I brought it down to you," he said, laying the heavy volume on the table.

"Thanks. Have you had breakfast?" said Anne.

"Well, no. I thought I would come without waiting for it this morning, in order that you might have the book, you know. What! *you* here, Miss Lois?"

"Yes, sir. I came to help Anne. We are going to have a good long day at these jackets," replied Miss Lois, briskly.

They all sat down at the table again, and Gabriel was going to the kitchen for hot potatoes, when he spied another figure struggling through the gate and driving up the long path. "Père Michaux!" he cried, running to open the door.

In another moment the priest had entered, and was greeting them cheerfully. "As I staid in town overnight, I thought, Anne, that I would come up and look over those books. It is a good day for it; there will be no interruption. I think I shall find a number of volumes which I may wish to purchase."

"It is very kind; I shall like to think of my dear father's books in your hands. But have you breakfasted?"

No, the priest acknowledged that he had not. In truth, he was not hungry when he rose; but now that he saw the table spread, he thought he might eat something after all.

So they sat down again, and Louis went out to help Gabriel bring in more coffee, potatoes, and eggs. There was a good deal of noise with the plates, a good deal of passing to and fro the milk, cream, butter, and salt; a good deal of talking on rather a high key; a great many questions and answers whose irrelevancy nobody noticed. Dr. Gaston told a long story, and forgot the point; but Miss Lois laughed as heartily as though it had been acutely present. Père Michaux then brought up the venerable subject of the lost grave of Father Marquette; and the others entered into it with the enthusiasm of resurrectionists, and as though they had never heard of it before, Miss Lois and Dr. Gaston even seeming to be pitted against each other in the amount of interest they showed concerning the dead Jesuit. Anne said little; in truth, there was no space left for her, the others keeping up so brisk a fire of phrases. It was not until Tita, coming into the room, remarked, as she warmed her hands, that breakfast was unusually early, that any stop was made, and then all the talkers fell upon her directly, in lieu of Father Marquette. Miss Lois could not imagine what she meant. It was sad, indeed, to see such laziness in so young a child. Before long she would be asking for breakfast in bed! Dr. Gaston scouted the idea that it was early; he had often been down in the village an hour earlier. It was a fine bracing morning for a walk.

All this time the high ceaseless whistle of the wind, the roar of the water on the beach, the banging to and fro of the shutters here and there on the wide rambling old mansion, the creaking of the near trees that brushed its sides, and the hundred other noises of the gale, made the room seem

strange and uncomfortable; every now and then the solid old frame-work vibrated as a new blast struck it, and through the floor and patched carpet puffs of cold air came up into the room and swept over their feet. All their voices were pitched high to overcome these sounds.

Tita listened to the remarks addressed to her, noted the pretense of bustle and hearty appetite, and then, turning to the window, she said, during a momentary lull in the storm, "I do not wonder that you can not eat, when poor Rast is somewhere on that black water."

Dr. Gaston pushed away his plate, Miss Lois sat staring at the wall with her lips tightly compressed, while Anne covered her face with her hands to keep back the tears. Père Michaux rose and began to walk up and down the room; for a moment, besides his step, there was no sound save the roar of the storm. Tita's words had ended all pretense, clothed their fear in language, and set it up in their midst. From that moment, through the long day, there was no more disguise; every cloud, every great wave, was watched, every fresh fierce blast swept through four anxious hearts. They were very silent now, and as the storm grew wilder, even the boys became awed, and curled themselves together on the broad window-seat, speaking in whispers. At noon a vessel drove by under bare poles; she seemed to be unmanageable, and they could see the signals of the sailors as they passed the island. But there was no life-boat, and nothing else could live in that sea. At two o'clock a large bark came into view, and ran ashore on the reef opposite; there she lay, pounding to pieces for two hours. They saw the crew try to launch the boats; one was broken into fragments in a moment, then another. The third and last floated, filled with humanity, and in two minutes she also was swamped, and dark objects that they knew were men were sucked under. Then the hull of a schooner, with one mast standing, drove aimlessly by, so near the shore that with the glass they could see the features of the sailors lashed to the pole.

"Oh! if we could but save them!" said Anne. "How near they are!" But even as she spoke the mast fell, and they saw the poor fellows drown before their eyes.

At four the *Huron* came into sight from the western pass, laboring heavily, fighting her way along inch by inch, but advancing. "Thanks be to the Lord for this!" said the chaplain, fervently. Père Michaux took off his velvet cap, and reverently made the sign of the cross.

"'Twouldn't be any harm to sing a hymn, I guess," said Miss Lois, wiping her eyes. Then Anne sang the "De Profundis." Amid the storm all the voices rose together, the children and Miss Lois and the two priests joining in the old psalm of King David, which belongs to all alike, Romanist and Protestant, Jew and Christian, bond and free.

"I do feel better," said Miss Lois. "But the steamer is still far off."

"The danger will be when she attempts to turn," said Père Michaux.

They all stood at the windows watching the boat as she rolled and pitched in the heavy sea, seeming half the time to make no headway at all, but on the contrary to be beaten back, yet doggedly persisting. At five o'clock she had reached the point where she must turn and run the gauntlet in order to enter port, with the gale striking full upon her side. Every front window in the village now held gazing faces, and along the piers men were clustered under the lee of the warehouses with ropes and hooks, waiting to see what they could do. The steamer seemed to hesitate a moment, and was driven back. Then she turned sharply and started in toward the piers with all steam on. The watchers at the Agency held their breath. For a moment or two she advanced rapidly, then the wind struck her, and she careened until her smoke-stacks seemed almost to touch the water. The boys cried out; Miss Lois clasped her hands. But the boat had righted herself again by changing her course, and was now drifting back to her old station. Again and again she made the attempt, now coming slowly, now with all the sudden speed she could muster; but she never advanced far before the lurch came, throwing her on her side, with one paddle-wheel in the air, and straining every timber in her frame. After half an hour of this work she drew off, and began to ply slowly up and down under the partial shelter of the little island opposite, as if resting. But there was not a place where she could cast anchor, nor any safety in flight; the gale would outlast the night, and the village harbor was her best hope. The

wind was increasing, the afternoon sinking into night; every one on the island and on board also knew that when darkness fell, the danger, already great, would be trebled. Menacing and near on every side were long low shore-lines, which looked harmless enough, yet held in their sands the bones of many a drowned man, the ribs of many a vessel.

"Why doesn't she make another trial?" said Dr. Gaston, feverishly wiping his eyeglasses. "There is no use in running up and down under that island any longer."

"The captain is probably making everything ready for a final attempt," answered Père Michaux.

And so it seemed, for, after a few more minutes had passed, the steamer left her shelter, and proceeded cautiously down to the end of the little island, keeping as closely in shore as she could, climbing each wave with her bows, and then pitching down into the depth on the other side, until it seemed as if her hind-quarters must be broken off, being too long to fit into the watery hollows under her. Having reached the end of the islet, she paused, and slowly turned.

"Now for it," said Père Michaux.

It was sunset-time in pleasant parts of the land; here the raw, cold, yellow light, which had not varied since early morning, giving a peculiar distinctness to all objects near or far, grew more clear for a few moments – the effect, perhaps, of the after-glow behind the clouds which had covered the sky all day unmoved, fitting as closely as the cover upon a dish. As the steamer started out into the channel, those on shore could see that the passengers were gathered on the deck as if prepared for the worst. They were all there, even the children. But now no one thought any more, only watched; no one spoke, only breathed. The steamer was full in the gale, and on her side. Yet she kept along, righting herself a little now and then, and then careening anew. It seemed as though she would not be able to make headway with her one wheel, but she did. Then the islanders began to fear that she would be driven by too far out; but the captain had allowed for that. In a few seconds more it became evident that she would just brush the end of the longest pier, with nothing to spare. Then the men on shore ran down, the wind almost taking them off their feet, with ropes, chains, grappling-irons, and whatever they could lay their hands on. The steamer, now unmanageable, was drifting rapidly toward them on her side, the passengers clinging to her hurricane-deck and to the railings. A great wave washed over her when not twenty feet from the pier, bearing off several persons, who struggled in the water a moment, and then disappeared. Anne covered her eyes with her hands, and prayed that Rast might not be among these. When she looked again, the boat was fastened by two, by ten, by twenty, ropes and chains to the end of the pier, bows on, and pulling at her halters like an unmanageable steed, while women were throwing their children into the arms of those below, and men were jumping madly over, at the risk of breaking their ankle-bones. Anything to be on the blessed shore! In three minutes a hundred persons were on the pier, and Rast among them. Anne, Dr. Gaston, Père Michaux, Miss Lois, and the children all recognized his figure instantly, and the two old men started down through the storm to meet him, in their excitement running along like school-boys, hand in hand.

Rast was safe. They brought him home to the Agency in triumph, and placed him in a chair before the fire. They all wanted to touch him, in order to feel that he was really there, to be glad over him, to make much of him; they all talked together. Anne came to his side with tender affection. He was pale and moved. Instinctively and naturally as a child turns to its mother he turned to her, and, before them all, laid his head down upon her shoulder, and clung to her without speaking. The elders drew away a little; the boys stopped their clamor. Only Tita kept her place by the youth's side, and frowned darkly on the others.

Then they broke into a group again. Rast recovered himself, Dr. Gaston began to make puns, and Père Michaux and Miss Lois revived the subject of Father Marquette as a safe ladder by which they could all come down to common life again. A visit to the kitchen was made, and a grand repast, dinner and supper combined, was proposed and carried into effect by Miss Lois, Père Michaux, and the Irish soldier's wife, the three boys acting as volunteers. Even Dr. Gaston found his way to the distant sanctuary through the series of empty rooms that preceded it, and proffering his services,

was set to toasting bread – a duty he accomplished by attentively burning one side of every slice, and forgetting the other, so that there was a wide latitude of choice, and all tastes were suited. With his wig pushed back, and his cheery face scarlet from the heat, he presented a fine contrast to Père Michaux, who, quietly and deliberately as usual, was seasoning a stew with scientific care, while Miss Lois, beating eggs, harried the Irish soldier's wife until she ran to and fro, at her wits' end.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.