

brushwood. Now there comes a low murmur, which soon swells into a louder sound.

"Hark!" Mary stands still. "Surely we are near a river; you said your friend lived near a river?"

"Yes, it is a river." Then he says more gently: "There, there, my dear, you mustn't take notice of my strange way, it's all along of my being glad to see you again; you mustn't mind; we are a bit rough out here, you know;" and he puts his hand on hers, draws it through his arm, and keeps it tightly clasped.

She has not known how frightened she was till now; her misgivings melt in a sob of relief, and, bending down, she kisses the hand that holds hers.

"There, there," he speaks roughly again, "we must hurry on if we're to reach Mrs. Davies before night; we shall have the old woman turning in before we get there."

"Doesn't she expect me?" Mary timidly asks.

"She expects you, sure enough," he answers, "but the day wasn't fixed; I wasn't sure about that till the vessel was signalled; seldom any one has so quick a passage." Then he says abruptly, "You must be very tired, I've half a mind to carry you," and he laughs loudly.

"No, oh, no, thank you!" She shrinks away, his strange manner frightens her; if she did not know it is impossible, she would fancy he has been drinking since he left the station. She has wakened thoroughly at last.

This is not the Willie Somerfield who left her sobbing her heart out for his sake—something has altered him. But she reproaches herself; when she is his wife he will soon be all right again.

The wood has become thinner; it is not so dark as it was, the noise of the river is nearer, they have reached the edge of the forest. As Mary looks out between the trees she sees that a deep gully separates them from the road. She cannot pass this without help.

"The devil!" her companion exclaims; "while you have been jawing me we have come out of the way, but it don't matter." He flings first one bag and then the other across, and then, bending down, he raises her in his arms, and goes carefully down one side of the cleft and up the other. "There!" he says, as he lands her safely on the other side.

"How strong you are!" She looks up admiringly, while he stands breathing hard from the exertion he has made.

"It don't take much to lift you." Then, turning to her, he adds, "You're such a dainty little morsel, lady-bird."

The sight of the broad, gray river makes Mary feel giddy, and she clings closely to her lover's arm as they walk beside it. She cannot help shivering, the water looks so cold and deep. Somerfield points onward. "There's the bridge," he says.

The place is so wild, so lonely, and the bridge is so slight, that it seems wonderful it has not been swept away.

"Shall we have to cross that bridge?" As she speaks Mary stands still, trembling. She feels a sudden dread; it seems to her the bridge will break when they reach the middle of the river, and the cold gray water will close over their heads.

Somerfield turns to her angrily. "Of course we must cross it, what fools women are!" and, catching her hand, he hurries her on at such a pace that she soon loses her breath.

"Stop, stop, Willie; oh, please stop," she gasps, "I can't go so fast."

He answers her with an oath, bends down his frowning face to her, and then he lifts her suddenly from the ground as if she were a child, and hurries on. At first she lies still in his arms, but as her breath comes back

she feels that he is turning to the bridge; again an irrepresible horror seizes her; she cries out and struggles violently to free herself. "Be quiet, you little fool." She sees Somerfield's red eyes glare fiercely as he swings her forward, then his grasp on her loosens, but she clings desperately to him now. He wrenches one hand, then the other, away, and pushes her from him. She feels that she is falling; there is a despairing cry, a splash, and the dark water closes over her.

IV.

Mary rouses from what seems deep slumber. There is a rushing sound in her ears, and she opens her eyes. She sees only the gray, cold river. Is she floating along with it? No, her right hand grasps some substance, and she feels fastened down by the weight of her clothes.

She cannot move, she looks up, the stars are shining overhead; and as by degrees she rouses to fuller consciousness, she sees that she has been caught among the roots of a huge withered tree.

She lies there white and exhausted, and as memory brings back the terrible scene she passed through she wishes she had never wakened.

But love of life soon asserts itself, and after a while she manages to free her hair and then her clothes, which have kept her fast to this refuge. Crawling along the far-stretching roots, she at last reaches the bank in safety. She is still too dazed to think—one idea only lightens through her stupefied brain—she must find the little station, get back to New York, and to a steamer returning to England. She feels dimly that the friendly captain will protect her. She does not dare to remember what she needs protection against, she is dully conscious that her senses may forsake her if she begins to think.

As at last she rises to her feet she trembles so violently that she can scarcely stand. She has lost her hat, and her long hair hangs round her like a dripping cloak. Wringing the water from it with both her cold hands, she rolls it up tightly, and then she begins to walk back beside the river. She can make out the bridge at a little distance off; and this tells her that she has not been carried far from where she fell into the water. It does not occur to her that in the darkness she may find it impossible to make her way back through the wood to the station. She goes on and on between the river and the wood in a dogged, determined way. She knows she can not cross the gully, but surely if she goes on there must be an easier way.

Suddenly the wood ends in another clearing; a wild heath stretches before her, overgrown with low bushes, and among these at some distance Mary fancies that she sees a light. She stops and gazes keenly; it may be only caused by some insect, but then it may come from a log cabin. But soon, as she walks toward the light, she feels sure that it is shining from a window. Every now and then she stumbles over the uneven ground, sometimes she gets entangled among brambles and brushwood, but sooner than she expects she comes to a long low cabin—a dark, solitary building—from which the light comes through a chink in the shuttered window. Too confused to seek for the door, Mary makes her way desperately toward the light and knocks on the shutter—no answer. She waits a minute or two, and then she knocks again vehemently.

"Who are you that knocks?" a voice says behind the shutter—a woman's voice, timid but not unkindly in tone. Mary feels her courage come back.

"I am a poor girl that has lost her way, and in the dark I fell in the water. I am dying of cold, please let me in."

Some instinct seems to warn her not to tell the truth.