

kind o' a risk.' Well, Grillis stamped 'n' swore. "I've paid 'nough money for nothin' ter insurance companies," said he, "'n' Brigham's done his share, too. I don't know what fool business you're a talkin', but the insurance companies 'll pay or build a new mill,' then out he went, 'n' Hawkes was a grinnin' when he made out my check."

"Well, this will settle the trouble between the men and the bosses," said Bob. "It's queer that every time some one has to be killed or some one's property is ruined before those things are adjusted. They're talking that all the business will be working full time in less than a week. The small mill owners have agreed to the men's demands, and the trouble is about over. I'm glad we don't live in a mill town. Rialwich is slow, but it's good enough for me. Marie appears to be thriving here, mother."

"She is happier than she ever was before, she tells me," said Bob's mother. "It's wonderful how she has picked up. She insists on doing more than half of my work."

"I've ben a thinkin', Bob," said Bill, slowly, "that so long's we've gut the same kind o' interest in her, you'd orter keep a sorter board account. I'm willin' ter pay half o' Marie's keep; in fact, I'd like ter. I'm kind o' proud o' my interest in her. I likes ter see her 'round my place, 'n' she's learned that greenhorn girl o' mine how ter keep house ship shape. I want ter help support her."

"Her board amounts to nothing," said Bob's mother. "I want her. I don't know what I shall do without her."

"Ye ain't gut ter go 'ithout her, hev ye?" asked Bill, eying the woman. "She ain't gut no other home, has she?"

Bob had also cast an inquiring look at his mother, but as she did not seem disposed to say anything further on the subject, he said—

"There's one thing you can do, Bill. You might put a light boat on the river for her. She's growing strong, and it seems to me you might teach her to row. She'd enjoy it, and she and mother could put in many an afternoon on the water before cold weather. It would do them both good."

"I'll git a boat ter-morrer!" exclaimed Bill. "I'll bring it down on the team 'n' git her learnin' at once. What was you a thinkin' of when you spoke as though she might go away?" to Bob's mother.

"I don't know that I'm betraying a confidence," she answered, musing. "I hope she won't go away. I have learned to love her very much, and I should be lost if she left me. Last evening as she sang, her voice trembled, and I asked her if she was unhappy. She kissed me, but did not answer; then I took her face in my hands, for something came to me suddenly, and I asked her if another were necessary to her happiness. Her eyes drooped, and she laid her head on my knee, but did not say a word. I thought perhaps—"

"She's gut a young man!" said Bill, testily, after a pause. Then, after another thoughtful silence. "Well, if he's stiddy 'n' worthy o' her, 'n' poor, I'll give him somethin' ter start out on. I've saved up somethin', so's I can start her off 'ith a couple o' thousand 'n' not feel the loss, but I want him ter come down here 'n' go in partnerships 'ith me. Ye'll need

yer money," to Bob. "Ye're goin' ter git married. But I'll give her a starter, so I don't see but what she's provided for, feller or no feller. Don't say a word!" as Bob essayed to speak. "I'll do it. We must find out what sorter feller he is, 'n' 'f he ain't square we must talk her outer it. Girls gits taken in mightily sometimes. Fellers don't 'mount to much as they run, 'n' ter be fit fer her a feller must be a mighty proper sorter feller, in my way o' thinkin'."

After the friends had separated for the night, Bill sat in his front room examining papers that had not been out of his brick closet for many a day. A look of determination was on his bearded face as he leaned his elbows on his knees, and with his chin resting in his hands, studied the well worn woolen carpet.

"If he's wuth her, he'll get em," he soliloquized, "'n' when I pops off he'll git everythin' that belongs ter me."

The next night there was launched in Rialwich river the most beautiful boat ever seen on that water.

"I thought it would have ter be a proper sort o' craft ter fit 'long o' ye," Bill said, as he handed the girl over the rail on to the cushioned seat. Then Bob embarked, and soon the boat was shooting through the water under Bill's sturdy strokes. As they floated in with the tide Marie received her first lesson at the oars, then, at Bob's request, she sang an old ballad. In the quiet that followed the song, she placed a little hand on each of theirs.

"What shall I ever do to repay your kindness?" she said. "I am so happy here that I often stop to ask myself if it is not a dream from which I shall wake to sadness—"

"There's one thing you can do," interposed Bill, "'n, that is, give us yer confidence. Trust us. Now I wa'n't goin' ter speak 'bout it jest yit, but I've ben a thinkin' fer some days that ye might hev a feller, or I mean a young man, as was a waitin' on ye afore ye come down here, 'n' p'raps he don't know where ye are. Well, now, Bob 'n' me, we hope ye ain't gut none—that is, Bob 'n' me 'n' Bob's mother want ye ter stay 'ith us. O' course we ain't no style nor scholars, that is, I ain't. Bob is—"

He had seen her head droop, and he looked wistfully toward Bob for assistance, but that worthy from behind huge clouds of tobacco smoke was enjoying the predicament into which his partner was foundering.

"As I said," Bill continued, in a half confused, halting fashion, "we want ye ter stay 'ith us, so 'f ye've gut a young man, Bob 'n' me ain't goin' ter bluster 'bout it. We calculate the best thing as can be did is ter git him down here fust as last 'n' git acquainted. We'd thought we'd take him inter partnerships 'ith us. We're gittin' old, Bob 'n' me is, or I am—Bob ain't. Bob's goin' ter git married, he is," with a rasp at his partner, who was making ineffectual attempts to conceal his laughter, "'n' we need some young feller round ter look after things. There, I've said it, 'n' ye may laugh out loud now, dam ye!" with a baleful glower at Bob.

Bob did laugh; he roared.

"I was afraid you had attempted too much," he said, when he had recovered himself. "I couldn't help you out," with a sly glance at the girl's dainty bowed head. "I wouldn't have undertaken to broach such a subject. It's dangerous," and he roared again.