

The House of Content



T was good to be again in the Canadian woods after a year's absence from their wholesome influence. As I meditated under the trees, there came a deep feeling of content. How detached from the noise of the city seemed this secluded world of beauty. So suggestive of unlimited power did the forest seem, that it inspired in me that happy frame of mind which dreams of perfection. So I lingered in the shade of the pines all the afternoon, looking far into the mysterious shadows or gazing through the over-hanging branches at the summer sky. And in my dreams, I pictured in fancy an ideal home among the pines, a home where simple love might dwell and be content.

I had not seen Jacques for a year and I tried to picture the towering guide that would greet me. He was an overgrown boy, was Jacques, not more than twenty-two I should judge, who had been with me on a fishing trip, the summer before. He was a typical woodsman, with rugged features and a manner as simple as his forest life. Along the streams and in the deep woods he was a most agreeable companion, and possessed a seeming great strength of character; but in the village he was ever ready for wild dissipation. I admired his rough good nature, and picking my way toward the trail took delight in anticipating our meeting.

As I reached the path I could see a group of loggers, great strong men clothed in overalls and blue flannel shirts. Their faces looked tired with labor but as free from anxiety as the faces of childhood. The last group passed, and fearing that I had missed Jacques, I was about to follow the men to the village, when I noticed coming around a bend in the trail, a girlish figure in a calico dress. Her black hair was hanging loosely over her shoulders and she carried in her hand a tin pail. As she advanced, a rabbit darted across her path, so close that she might have touched it, and as she gave a startled little scream, the pail slipped from her fingers, and wild strawberries scattered over the ground. I hurried toward her to assist, but had taken only a few steps when I saw the tall form of a logger behind her. It was Jacques.

He spoke with rich French Canadian accent as he stooped above the overturned pail, "It is too bad, Anette, will I help?"