

There was a softness in his voice, a suggestion of tenderness that made me halt lest I might be intruding upon romantic ground and as the girl rose quickly to her feet, gazing with soft brown eyes at the figure beside her, the dreams of that summer afternoon seemed about to be realized in the picture before me.

All the poetry of the Canadian woods seemed to express itself in her sun tanned face. The depths of its forests lurked in her eyes and through them shone unmeasurable promise of youth and hope—the soul of a maid that loved. But only for a moment did she remain thus, for as Jacques began to fill the pail, the look of admiration died, changing suddenly to resolute firmness.

“It is not for a gambler, a drunkard to help me,” and with a toss of her head she snatched the empty pail and started up the path.

I watched her lithe figure disappear among the trees, then turned to Jacques. Looking half angry, half ashamed, he took my outstretched hand and stammered, “I am glad to see m’ sieu,” and then as if to excuse the incident I had witnessed, “He! Women is a fool. Will we fish tomorrow m’ sieu’?” and we were soon planning our trip.

When the trout and bacon were eaten and we were smoking our pipes in the cool of the evening before the log cabin, I noticed that Jacques was troubled. The mysterious fading day had always affected Jacques differently. But the spell of the twilight hours seemed to have lost their influence for him, and I waited in vain for the contented smile, and the woodland stories that flowed so smoothly through the fragrant tobacco smoke. And knowing the uselessness of trying to force a mood of fellowship, I silently watched the shadows deepen and the night come on.

The light grew dim. The outlines of the trees became hazy in the gathering gloom, when suddenly shouts of coarse merriment reached my ear. Jacques seemed to read my thought, for looking toward the village he quietly explained, “It is pay day, m’ sieu’, the boys have good time.”

“Drunk?”

“I guess.”

“Why do they do it?”

The question must have been unexpected, for Jacques looked surprised, and it seemed to me there was a wounded expression on his face, as if I were taking an unfair advantage. He drew several long puffs from his pipe, thoughtfully watched the smoke disappear, and then replied, “I guess it is the nature. It is fun. It is our life,