



"It was right up there on the ceiling!" cried the man, "right up there!" and it had green eyes and a red-forked tongue! It was an awful snake, Lucy, and it jumped down onto me and got round my neck and was chokin' me! Oh, it was chokin' me!"

Paul got up and, lifting the little girl in his arms, looked at the children meaningly, and they looked him out. He placed his delicate burden on a bench in a sunny place down by the wall, and, asking Carl to watch them while they played, he went back to help his mother. She came into the room as he entered. It struck him to the heart, she looked so worn and pitiful.

"He's sleeping again," she whispered. "Don't you go in where he is, Paul, unless I call you; perhaps the spell won't come on him again."

The boy turned aside and sat down before the fire, and began drying his wet and clinging clothes. The woman went slowly about her work, and sounds from the children playing in the sunshine came floating in.

The two did not talk; some question touching the little stranger, who she could be, and through what mysterious peril she had come to them, may have ebbed through their thoughts, but they had no heart to speak of it. The children might gambol on the grass, with the deep indigo sky above and the fragrant rain-washed air coming through the pines and filling them with zest, but to these elder two the very atmosphere seemed thick and stagnant with the curse that lay upon the family.

After a time the woman finished washing the poor, cracked dishes and went out, and the boy roused himself and stirred wearily about. He felt stiff and heavy, much as if he were partly numb in body while his mind was painfully wide-awake. He found his mother putting the tubs in position under the shed, getting them ready at once for work.

"Mother, ye ain't fit to," pleaded the boy. "Ye ain't fit to work; ye didn't sleep none last night, I know ye didn't. See, ye're all of a tremble now, mother; can't ye wait till to-morrow?"

"We have nothing to eat in the house, Paul," she said. "We must get these mill-clothes done an' get something to feed the children. Your father may have to have some medicine, too," and her lips trembled.

The boy could have cried out against the whole world in his bitterness, but he shut his teeth hard, and, putting the water-yoke across his shoulders, went down to the spring.

He felt bruised and sore from his hard work on the face of the cliff, and came back slowly. His mother was not at the tubs, but he heard her soothing the poor man in the hut, the sounds being mingled with pitiful cries. He sprang to the door and waited. But she did not call him, and in a little time she came out. She was breathing hard and went unsteadily and sat down on the bench by the tubs.

"I guess he won't be bad like he is sometimes," she panted, "because he goes off to sleep so quick. It's not much more than bad dreams, I think."

"Why can't ye let me go in an' help ye, mother?"

"He might hurt you, Paul. You know what he did to you once. I never could bear to see you near him since when he's bad. He won't hurt me, no matter how wild he may be. He's kind, you know, Paul, only when the drink takes away his mind. You mustn't feel ill towards him, dear, for he's doing himself more harm than anyone else."

"Yes, mother," said the boy; "I'll try not to feel hard towards him," and his lips trembled with feeling.

As the day advanced the father ceased to leap up from the awful shapes that peopled his sleep, and sinking deeper and deeper in slumber lay as if he might never wake. The child slept a long time on a blanket near the fire, and when she awoke she began to play a little with the children. But she seemed frail, and ever and anon her blue eyes would fill with tears. She was lost from those who loved her, but no golden-haired fairy could ever have been more worshiped by four little rugged lads than was she. Paul and his mother saw it all as they worked on at the washing, and doubtless many little thrills of tenderness touched their hearts as they watched the pretty sight.



PUTTING THE WATER-YOKE ON HIS SHOULDERS, HE WENT TO THE SPRING.

But what of the child? This dainty stranger blown in upon their shame and poverty from Heaven only knew what quarter of the world. What had she to do with their destiny? Perhaps when he who was sleeping in the hut should wake, he could tell them something of this new but welcome burden he had added to their cares.

CHAPTER III.

The day went by and the night passed ere Trave Arrior awoke. When he came out the door the sun was shining and the earth seemed fresh as heaven. The children were racing about, and among them little Gale was flying her curls along the pine-scented wind; she could not sorrow, the air was so sweet and the morning was so fair.

Paul was up with the dawn and had caught a big salmon down by the rocks, and his mother was frying it on the stove under the shed. When Arrior, still a little unsteady of step, came through the low door he caught sight of Gale.

"Ha, there! Where are ye flyin', little canary?" he cried, and the child ran to him and he tossed her lightly up and down. How big and strong and good-natured he seemed. The children clung about his knees when he was washing his face and laughed and shouted when he dashed the cool fluid upon his feverish head and sprinkled them with the bright drops. When he was wiping his trembling hands he inquired for Paul.

"He got his breakfast early and went up the shore with the boat to see if he could get some fish," said the mother. "He'll be back about noon and take the clean clothes to the mill."

The man looked down. An expression of shame and unworthiness passed across his face. When they were seated he ate but little, but drank great draughts of coffee.

"You see, Lucy, when I dropped down out of Deep creek into the sea," he said, in answer to her inquiry, "I smelt a storm comin'. I wasn't very clear in the upper story, I guess, but I thought I could make the bay afore it struck, an' I rowed tremendous. But the hurricane came on like a race horse, an' with the first seven it lifted me an' the boat clean outen the water. I hung in 'er, though a good many times I thought she was goin' upside down, but she kep' on 'er bottom some way an' run on in the darkness an' lightnin' like all possessed. I nabbed hold of the rudder an' kep' rightin' her when the lightnin' fell, which was about every second. The sea looked white like a kettle of water bilin' over, an' suddenly I see a ship was about to run over me from behind. It was flyin' afore the wind like all creation and jist missed me. I heard things rippin' and breakin' on her an' shouts and screams as she passed; then something come crashin' agin the boat and knocked me outen it. The next second I see by the lightnin' that it was a big platform or stagin' of boards, an' I climbed up onto it. As soon as I got my breath I heard something cryin' by me and looked around, and lo and behold! this little thing was layin' there tied fast to the platform. I got her loose an' she coteched me round the neck and hit me fast, an' do you know, Lucy, in my scare an' confusion I thought it was Breeze? Wal, he continued, after a pause, "I hit to her an' she hit to me, an' I thought, my soul and body, woe'd be throwed often the pitchin' rollin' raft, but it went straight for the head, and all of a sudden I looked up and saw the front of the cliff as white as a terrible in the lightnin' as the face of a corpse, and the next minute we struck with a crash, and me and the child was shot up one of the pillars, and I clinched hold of it and I got a footin' an' hung there till Paul come with the rope."

A heavy silence fell between them.

He longed to speak of the boy's bravery, but in the face of his own shameful life, the words stuck in his throat. Presently he arose.

"I guess, Lucy, I'll go up to the wharf and see Eric Iverson," he said. "Mebby I ken get him to come around this way to-night and talk with the little thing. I'm thinkin' she's Norwegian, an' mebbe he can find out where she's from."

"Yes, Trave," said the woman. Then he stooped down and said: "Good-by, little canary; I'm goin' to fetch some one that can understand y'r pipin'." The child looked at him wonderingly a moment, then put her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"Oh, Trave," said the wife, "you won't drink any more, will you? See, it's like as if Breeze had come back from Heaven and was beggin' you with kisses not to be bad any more," and she was crying on his breast.

The man gave a groan of wild contrition and helplessness.

"No, Lucy, I won't ever tetch it again," he said. "I'll strive agin it, an' won't ever tetch it no more!" And he went away with clinched fists, swearing in his soul that liquor should never pass his lips again. But alas, for the man who once sets himself on fire with this inhuman thirst. His will is turned to ashes in the flames.

Paul came home at noon with a shining string of fish, but the father did not come. When dinner was over the boy shouldered his big bag of clothes and started for the mill.

"I'll bring him home, mother, if I ken," he said. "Don't worry," and he went limping on.

When he had delivered the clothes, he turned off into the town. There all the streets ran shambling down and converged upon the wharves, and he went up one and down another looking vainly for his father. Presently, with a thrill of horror, he saw the man come reeling from a little grog shop down by the water side. An aching heaviness spread through all his being as he stood dumbly watching him. What had it all come to, his saving this man and bringing him back into the world? With a bitter throb he started toward him. The man saw him coming, as he stood leaning about, and started down the shore toward home. The boy followed, hoping in some way to turn him aside that his mother might be spared this torturing sight. Suddenly, as the father zig-zagged forward, he turned and confronted the boy.

"Son, you're a tramp, and I want the money ye got for the washin'," he said, thickly.

Paul gave a cry of horror and sprang back, but in his lameness he stumbled and fell, and the father jumped heavily upon him.

(To be continued)

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Though partly incapacitated for active service, his patriotic zeal got the better of him, and when the call for more troops came, young Clark enlisted in a company formed by Capt. Joel I. Asper, at Warren.

It became Co. H. of the 7th Ohio Volunteers and was sent to the Army of the Potomac under General Grant then campaigning in Virginia against General Robert E. Lee.

In a skirmish near Richmond, he was wounded again and was sent to the hospital. He remained there for some time,

but finally recovered, and went home.

Shortly after, he began the study of veterinary surgery, and, when completed, went to Chicago, where he has resided for thirty years, and is now one of the leading surgeons of that profession in the city.

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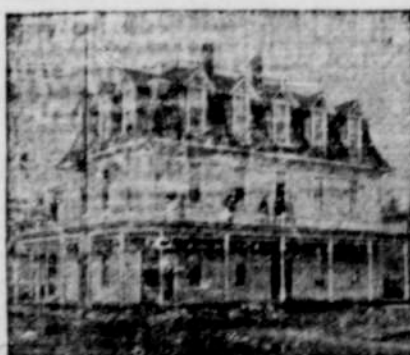
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