

disturbing sense of his own insufficiency would not trouble him. That dwelling place, quiet and secure, of the McIntyre's home in the midst of the wide waste about was to him for many a day a symbol of that other safe dwelling place for all pilgrims through earth's wilderness.

"Poor chap," said McIntyre to his wife when they had retired for the night, "I'm afraid he'll find it hard work, especially at The Fort. He is rather in the rough, you know."

"He has beautiful honest eyes," said his wife, "and I like him."

"Do you?"

"Yes, I do," she replied emphatically.

"Then," said her husband, "in spite of all appearances he's all right."

THE OLD PROSPECTOR

LOON LAKE lay in the afternoon sunlight, shimmering in its glory of prismatic colours, on one side reflecting the rocks and the pines that lined the shore and the great peaks that stood further back, and the other lapping the grasses and reeds that edged its waters and joined it to the prairie. A gentle breeze now and then breathed across the lake, breaking into myriad fragments the glassy surface that lay like sheets of polished multi-coloured metal of gold and bronze and silver, purple and green and blue.

A young girl of about sixteen years, riding a cayuse along the lake shore, suddenly reined in her pony and sat gazing upon the scene.

"After all," she said aloud, "it is a lovely spot, and if only father could have stayed, I wouldn't mind."

Her tone was one of discontent. Her face was not beautiful, and its plainness was increased by a kind of sullen gloom that had become its habit. After gazing across the lake for some minutes she turned her horse and cantered toward a little cluster of buildings of all sizes and shapes that huddled about the

end of the lake and constituted Loon Lake village. As she drew near the largest of the houses, which was dignified by the name of Loon Lake Stopping Place, she came upon a group of children gathered about a little cripple of about seven or eight years of age, but so puny and poorly developed that he appeared much younger. The little lad was sobbing bitterly, shrieking oaths and striking savagely with his crutch at the children that hemmed him in. The girl sprang off her pony.

"Oh, shame on you!" she exclaimed, rushing at them. "You bad children, to tease poor Patsy so. Be off with you. Come, Patsy, never mind them. I am going to tell you a story."

"He was throwin' stones at us, so he was," said his brother, a sturdy little red-headed lad of six. "And he hit Batcheese right on the leg, too."

"He pu—pu—pulled down my mountain right to the ground," sobbed Patsy, lifting a pale, tear-stained face distorted with passion.

"Never mind, Patsy," she said soothingly, "I'll help you to build it up again."

"And they all laughed at me," continued Patsy, still sobbing stormily. "And I'll knock their blank, blank heads off, so I will!" And Patsy lifted his crutch and shook it at them in impotent wrath.

"Hush, hush, Patsy! you must not say those awful words," said the girl, laying her hand over his mouth and lifting him onto her knee.

"Yes, I will. And I just wish God would send them to hell-fire!"

"Oh, Patsy, hush!" said the girl. "That's awful. Never, never say such a thing again."

"I will!" cried Patsy, "and I'll ask God to-night, and mother said He would if they didn't leave me alone."

"But, Patsy, you must not say nor think those awful things. Come now and I'll tell you a story."

"I don't want a story," he sobbed. "Sing."

"Oh, I'll tell you a story, Patsy. I'll come into the house to-night and sing for you."

"No, sing," said the little lad imperiously, and so the girl began to sing the thrilling love story of The Frog and The Mouse, till not only was Patsy's pale face wreathed in smiles, but the other children were drawn in an enchanted circle about the singer. So entranced were the children and so interested the singer that they failed to notice the door of the Stopping Place open. A slovenly woman showed a hard face and dishevelled hair for a moment at the door, and then stole quietly away. In a few moments she returned, bringing her husband, a huge man with a shaggy, black head and repulsive face.

"Jist be afther lookin' at that now, will ye, Carroll!" she said.

As the man looked his face changed as the sun breaks through a storm-cloud.

"Did ye iver see the loikes av that?" she said in a low voice. "She'd draw the badgers out av their holes with thim songs av hers. And thim little divils have been all the mornin' a-fightin' and a-scrappin' loike Kilkenny cats."

"An' look at Patsy," said her husband, with wonder and pity in his eyes.

"Yis, ye may say that, for it's the cantankerous little curmudgeon he is, poor little manny."

"Cantankerous!" echoed her husband. "It's that blank pain av his."

"Whist now, Tim. There's Thim that'll be hearin' ye, an' it'll be the worse f'r him an' f'r you, beloike."

"Divil a fear have Oi av Thim," said her sceptical husband scornfully.

"Aw, now, do be quiet, now," said his wife, crossing herself. "Sure, prayin' is jist as aisy as cursin', and no harrum done, at all." She shut the door.

"Aw, it's the beautiful singer she is," as the girl struck up a new song. "Listen to that now."

Full, clear, soft, like the warbling of the thrush at evening, came the voice through the closed door. The man and his wife stood listening with a rapt look on their faces.

"Phat in Hivin's name is she singin', at all?" said Mrs. Carroll.

"Whisht!" said her husband, holding up his hand. "It's like a wild burrd," he added, after listening a few moments.

"The pore thing. An' it's loike a wild burrd she is," said Mrs. Carroll pityingly. "Left alone so soon afther comin' to this sthrange counthry. It's a useless man altogether, is that ould Prospector."

Carroll's face darkened.

"Useless!" he exclaimed wrathfully, "he's a blank

ould fool, crazy as a jack rabbit! An' Oi'm another blank fool to put any money into 'im."

"Did ye put much in, Tim?" ventured Mrs. Carroll.

"Too much to be thrown away, anyhow."

"Thin, why does ye do it, Tim?"

"Blanked if Oi know. It's the smooth, slippin' tongue av 'im. He'd talk the tale aff a monkey, so he would."

At this moment a loud cry, followed by a stream of oaths in a shrill childish voice, pierced through the singing.

"Phat's that in all the worrld?" exclaimed Mrs. Carroll. "Hivin preserve us, it's little Patsy. Tim, ye'll 'av to be spakin' to that child for the swearin'. Listen to the oaths av 'im. The Lord forgive 'im!"

Tim strode to the door, followed by his wife.

"Phat the blank, blank is this yellin' about? Phat d'ye mane swearin' loike that, Patsy? Oi'll knock yer blank little head aff if Oi catch ye swearin' agin."

"I don't care," stormed little Patsy, quite unafraid of his father when the other children fled. "It's that blank, blank Batcheese an' Tim there. They keep teasin' me an' Mayan all the time."

"Let me catch yez, ye little divils!" shouted Carroll after the children, who had got off to a safe distance. "Go on, Marion, an' sing phat ye loike. It's loike a burrd ye are, an' Oi loikes t' hear ye. An' Patsy, too, eh?"

He took the little cripple up in his arms very gently and held him for some minutes.

"You're a big man, dad, aint ye?" said Patsy, putting his puny arm round his father's hairy neck. "An' ye can lick the hull town, can't ye?"

"Who wuz tellin' ye that, Patsy?" asked his father, with a smile.

"I heard ye meself last week when the big row was on."

"Ye did, be dad! Thin Oi'm thinkin' ye do be hearin' too much."

"But ye can, dad, can't ye?" persisted the boy.

"Well, Oi'll stick to phat Oi said, anyway, Patsy boy," replied his father.

"An' I'll be a big man like you, dad, some day, an' lick the hull town, won't I?" asked Patsy eagerly.

His father shuddered and held him close to his breast.

"I will, dad, won't I?" persisted the lad, the little face turned anxiously toward his father.

"Whisht now, laddie. Sure an' ye'll be the clivir man some day," said the big man huskily, while his wife turned her face toward the door.

"But they said I'd niver lick anybody," persisted Patsy. "An' that's a blank lie, isn't it, dad?"

The man's face grew black with wrath. He poured out fierce oaths.

"Let me catch thim. Oi'll break their backs, the blank, blank little cowards! Niver ye heed thim. Ye'll be a betther man thin any av thim, Patsy avick, an' that ye will. An' they'll all be standin' bare-headed afore ye some day. But Patsy, darlin', Oi want ye to give up the swearin' and listen to Marion yonder,

who'll be afther tellin' ye good things an' cliver things."

"But, dad," persisted the little boy, "won't I be——"

"Hush now, Patsy," said his father hurriedly. "Don't ye want to go on the pony with Marion? Come on now, an' Oi'll put ye up."

"Oh, goody, goody!" shouted little Patsy, his pale, beautiful face aglow with delight.

"Poor little manny!" groaned Carroll to his wife, looking after the pair as they rode off up the trail. "It's not many ye'll be after lickin', except with yer tongue."

"But, begorra," said his wife, "that's the lickin' that hurts, afther all. An' it's harrd tellin' what'll be comin' till the lad."

Her husband turned without more words and went into the house. Meantime Marion and Patsy were enjoying their canter.

"Take me up to the Jumping Rock," said the boy, and they took the trail that wound up the west side of the lake.

"There now, Patsy," said Marion, when they had arrived at a smooth shelf of rock that rose sheer out of the blue water of the lake, "I'll put you by the big spruce there, and you can see all over the lake and everywhere."

She slipped off the pony, carefully lifted the boy down and set him leaning against a big spruce pine that grew seemingly up out of the bare rock and leaned far out over the water. This was the swim-

ming place for the boys and men of the village; and an ideal place it was, for off the rock or out of the overhanging limbs the swimmers could dive without fear into the clear, deep water below.

"There now, Patsy," said the girl after she had picketed her pony, "shall I tell you a story?"

"No. Sing, Mayan, I like you to sing."

But just as the girl was about to begin he cried, "Who's that comin', Mayan?" pointing down the trail.

The keen eyes of the lad had descried a horseman far away where the long slope rose to the horizon.

"I don't know," answered the girl. "Who is it, Patsy? A cowboy?"

"No," said Patsy, after waiting for a few minutes, "I think it's Perault."

"No, Patsy, that can't be. You know Perault went out with father last week."

"Yes, it is," insisted Patsy. "That's father's pony. That's Rat-tail, I know."

The girl stood up and gazed anxiously at the approaching rider.

"Surely it can't be Perault," she said to herself.

"What can have happened?"

She unhitched her horse, rolled up her picket rope, and stood waiting with disturbed face. As the rider drew near she called, "Perault! Ho, Perault!"

"Hola!" exclaimed Perault, a wizened, tough-looking little Frenchman, pulling up his pony with a jerk.

"Bo jou, Mam'selle," he added, taking off his hat.

Perault's manner is reassuring, indeed quite gay.

"What is it, Perault? Why are you come back? Where is father?" The girl's lips were white.

"Coming," said Perault nonchalantly, pointing up the trail. "We strak de bad luck, Mam'selle, so we start heem again."

"Tell me, Perault," said the girl, turning her piercing black eyes on his face, "tell me truly, is father hurt?"

"Oui, for sure," said Perault with an exaggeration of carelessness which did not escape the keen eyes fastened on his face, "dat ole boss, you know, he blam-fool. Hees 'fraid noting. Hees try for sweem de Black Dog on de crossing below. De Black Dog hees full over hees bank, an' boil, boil, lak one kettle. De ole boss he say 'Perault, we mak de passage, eh?' 'No,' I say, 'we try noder crossing.' 'How far?' he say. 'Two—tree mile.' 'Guess try heem here,' he say, an' no matter how I say heem be blam-fool for try, dat ole boss hees laf small, leele laf an' mak de start. Well, dat pony hees going nice an' slow troo de water over de bank, but wen he struk dat fas water, poof! wheez! dat pony hees upset hes-sef, by gar! Hees trow hees feet out on de water. Bymbe hees come all right for a meenit. Den dat fool pony hees miss de crossing! Hees go dreef down de stream where de high bank hees imposseeb. Mon Dieu! Das mak me scare. I do'no what I do. I stan' an' yell lak one beeg fool me. Up come beeg feller on buckboard on noder side. Beeg blam-fool jus' lak boss. Not 'fraid noting. Hees trow rope cross saddle. De ole boss hees win' heem roun' de

horn. Poof! das upset dat pony once more. Hees trow hees feet up on water, catch ole boss on head an' arm, knock heem right off to blazes. 'Good bye,' I say, 'I not see heem more.' Beeg feller hees loose dat rope, ron down on de bank hitching rope on willow tree an' roun' hees own shoulder an' jump on reever way down on bend an' wait for ole boss. For me? I mak dis pony cross ver' queek. Not know how, an' pass on de noder side. I see beeg feller, hees hol' de ole boss on hees coat collar wit hees teef, by gar! an' sweem lak ottar. Sap-r-r-e! Not long before I pull on dat rope an' get bot on shore. Beeg feller hees all right. De ole boss hees lie white, white and still. I cry on my eye bad. 'Go get someting for dreenk,' say beeg feller, 'queek.' Sac-r-re! beeg fool messes! Bah! Good for noting! I fin' brandy, an' leele tam, tree-four minute, de ole boss hees sit up all right. Le Bon Dieu hees do good turn dat time, for sure. Send beeg feller along all right."

The girl stood listening to Perault's dramatic tale, her face growing white.

"Is father not hurt at all, then?" she asked.

"Non. Hees tough ole man, dat boss," said Perault. Then he added lightly, "Oh! hees broke some small bone—what you call?—on de collar, dere. Dat noting 'tall."

"Oh, Perault!" exclaimed the girl. "You're not telling me the truth. You're keeping back something. My father is hurt."

"Non, for sure," said Perault, putting his hand over his heart. "Hees broke dat bone on de collar.

Dat noting 'tall. He not ride ver' well, so hees come on beeg feller's buckboard. Dat's fine beeg feller! Mon Dieu! hees not 'fraid noting! Beeg blam-fool jus' lak boss." No higher commendation was possible from Perault.

"But why is father coming back then?" asked the girl anxiously.

"Mais oui! Bah! Dat leele fool pony got himself dron on de Black Dog, an' all hees stuff, so de ole boss he mus' come back for more pony an' more stuff."

"When will they be here, Perault?" asked the girl quietly.

"Ver' soon. One—two hour. But," said Perault with some hesitation, "de ole boss better go on bed leele spell, mebbe."

Then the girl knew that Perault had not told her the worst, turning impatiently from him, she lifted little Patsy on to the saddle and, disdainingly Perault's offered help, sprang on herself and set off toward the village about a mile away at full gallop.

"Das mighty smart girl," said Perault, scratching his head as he set off after her as fast as his jaded pony could follow. "Can't mak fool on her."

Half way to the village stood the old Prospector's house, almost hidden in a bluff of poplar and spruce. A little further on was Perault's shack. At her father's door the girl waited.

"Perault," she said quietly, "I left the key at your house. Will you get it for me while I take Patsy home?"

"Bon," said Perault eagerly. "I get heem an' mak fire."

"Thank you, Perault," she replied kindly. "I'll be right back."

But it took some time to get Patsy persuaded to allow her to depart, and by the time she had returned she found Perault had the fire lit and Josie, his bright-eyed, pretty, little wife, busy airing the bed-clothes and flitting about seeking opportunities to show her sympathy.

"Ma pauvre enfant!" she exclaimed, running to Marion as she entered and putting her arms about her.

"Josie," warned Perault gruffly, "shut up you. You go for mak fool of youself."

But Josie paid no attention to her husband and continued petting the girl.

"Josie," cried Marion, fixing her eyes upon the Frenchwoman's kindly face, "tell me, is my father badly hurt? Perault would not tell me the truth."

"Non, ma petite, dat hur's not so ver' bad, but de cole water—das bad ting for fader, sure."

The cloud of gloom on the girl's face deepened. She turned away toward the door and saying, "I'll go and get some crocuses," she mounted her pony and rode off toward the Jumping Rock.

Within half an hour the girl came galloping back.

"Josie," she cried excitedly, springing off her pony, "they're coming. I saw them up the trail."

She tossed her flowers on the table and hurried to arrange them in basins, cups, old tin cans, and all

available vessels, till the whole house seemed to be running over with those first and most exquisite prairie spring-flowers. And for many following days the spring-flowers filled the house with their own hope and cheer, when hope and cheer were both sorely needed.