

him, "the colonel is a smart feller. He know's what he's about; and, fur all he's such a case on a spree, and 'pears to care so little about making plans, that are head of his'n does a plaguey sight of work, and he keeps a sharp look out arter the main chance."

CHAPTER XII.

MORE ABOUT THE LUMBERMEN.

"How are, you Simpson?" exclaimed Col. Gordon, dashing up to the door of that worthy's house in his usual whirlwind fashion and springing from his sleigh. "All well here?"

"Pooty well, Colonel, and glad to see you lookin' so rugged. Walk in! Walk in!"

Mr. Gordon obeyed, first spreading a buffalo over his horse; he was greeted by Mrs. Simpson with every appearance of cordial welcome; chucking Elvira under the chin he complimented her on her good looks, to which she replied, "oh, stop your nonsense!" though it appeared not at all offensive to her.

"I hear you've got one of my men sick here."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Simpson, "he's some easier now; walk into t'other room and see him."

Gordon did as requested, and greeted the sick man with a cheerful "How are ye, old boy? Keep up a good heart! You'll come out right end up!"

The invalid smiled as he pressed the hand that was extended to him, for there was something in the voice of the speaker that cheered him at once.

"It makes it mighty bad for me, though, Colonel, to be took right in the middle of the winter so."

"Have you any family?"

"My mother," replied the sick man, "she's a widow," and tears rushed to his eyes.

Gordon saw at a glance what was passing in the poor fellow's mind, that he was her only support, and that his wages were needed to maintain her.

"Where did you say your mother lived?"

"In Bradley."

"Oh yes, I know. She's a nice woman. You just get somebody to send her this in a letter, as a kind of a Christmas present from her friend Jim Gordon, will you?" he said, putting fifty dollars into the invalid's hand. Then before he could find words to express his thanks, away went the Colonel, and his merry laugh was echoed from the next room.

Just then Esther came down from her chamber. She was aware of the new arrival, for Mr. Gordon had not only a particular faculty of making a noise himself, but "of stirrin' every body all up in a heap," as Mrs. Simpson expressed it, and from the sounds of welcome, she had judged that some pretty important personage had arrived.

"This is Miss Hastings, Col. Gordon," said Mrs. Simpson as Esther entered the kitchen.

Mr. Gordon looked up, made a very polite bow, and addressed her in a very gentlemanly manner on that never failing topic the weather; she replied briefly, and then calling Sammy, told him it was time to get ready for school.

"Allow me to take you in my sleigh to your school house," said Col. Gordon.

"Oh, it is quite unnecessary," was Esther's reply. "It is not far from here; I can very easily walk. I am much obliged, but won't trouble you."

"But this light untrodden snow is very bad to walk in. It's no trouble at all; just get ready, and I'll take you there."

"That'll be raal nice," said Mrs. Simpson as Esther speedily attired herself and jumped into the sleigh.

Mr. Gordon managed to talk a great deal in the few moments ride that ensued, and his frank but yet gentlemanly manners pleased Esther much.

She thanked him as they parted and bade him good bye, as she said she should not probably see him again.

"Why? Do you expect to spend two or three days at your school house?"

"Oh no; but I supposed you only made a transient call at Mrs. Simpson's."

"Well you needn't be in a hurry to say good bye—I have business here that may detain me," he said as he turned away, lifted his cap, and was out of sight in a moment.

"That man reminds me of a March wind," thought Esther, "as bold and rough, yet stirring and invigorating."

"Where did you pick up that little school marm?" asked Mr. Gordon, as he entered Mrs. Simpson's kitchen.

"Oh, she cum from Bangor, and a nice gal she is tew. She's pooty, aint she?"

"Yes; she's as fresh as a rose. By Jove, she's got handsome hair and teeth—then what eyes she's got—and the way she steps off takes me. She's smart I know. I'm going to know more of her," thought he, as he lighted a cigar and walked out of the house.

At four o'clock again the frank, pleasant face of Col. Gordon appeared at the school house.

He walked in very composedly, and informed Esther that he had been sent by Mrs. Simpson to bring her home, as that good lady was fearful that she might take cold.

This was not strictly true, though Mrs. Simpson had in fact assented to his suggestion that it would be a good idea to go after her.

"I am much obliged," replied Esther, "but if you would take a load of these little ones, who are not very warmly dressed, to their homes, it would certainly oblige me far more."

Mr. Gordon laughed. He was not particularly fond of children, and the idea of carrying a load of them struck him as rather comical.

"Well, bundle in, young ones," he said, "and Miss Hastings, wait here till I come back;" and off he started with children all around him and boys hanging on to the runners, shouting merrily.

He was back again in an incredibly short time, and as he handed Esther into the sleigh, he said, "Now, didn't I obey you nicely? I think I deserve a reward, won't you give me one?"

"Oh yes, if you are not too exacting. I will write you a 'good boy' on a slip of paper, if that will do, or give you the highest prize, a certificate of merit with a flower in each corner."

"No, that won't do; this is what I want, that you will go to ride with me now. I want to get acquainted with you, and did you know that there is no way in the world so good for that purpose as riding with a person?"

"Oh well, I shall be happy to oblige you, particularly as sleigh-riding is a favorite amusement of mine; the only trouble is, I am afraid it will be a reward to me instead of to you. I don't agree with those people who say they would as soon sit with their feet in cold water, and jingle bells in their hands, as to go sleigh-riding."

"Nor I either," replied her companion; mentally adding, "when one has so pretty a lady by his side," as he gazed with undisguised admiration on Esther's face.

She did not notice it, for she was thinking of something else, and her utter unconsciousness of it pleased Mr. Gordon.

"What are you getting into such a brown study for?" he asked. "You look as serious as a man does when his notes are falling due, and he's got no money to take them up with."

"Do I? I was thinking what a nice opportunity I have now of asking you about the whole lumbering business. I want so much to ask any number of ques-

tions about it, and you are just the one to answer them."

"Do you think of investing the money you make this winter, in that business?"

"Nonsense! but I do really want to understand it from the very beginning, down to the end at the saw-mill."

"Well, that would be a long story."

"Never mind! tell me what you do first."

"Why, get some good timber-land looked out, and agree to give the owner so much on each thousand feet of lumber that we cut off; that's called stumpage. Then engage a crew of men; some of them go up early in the Fall, to make preparations for the Winter, build a camp, &c. You've seen a camp, haint you?"

"Yes, I went out to see one the other day."

"Well, then, you know all about that. This crew of men is divided into different sets, to do different kinds of work. There are the swampers, as they are called, who cut down small trees, in fact build roads from the most important part of the woods, that is, where there is the best timber, down to the river or lake where we haul the trees after they are felled. A good swamper is very much like a civil engineer. He wouldn't know so many scientific terms, but he will swamp out a road quick, and see very soon the easiest and best course to take. I remember hearing an anecdote of our army during the Mexican war, who had got to a place where it was thick woods, and they had to cross a river besides. I forget just where it was, but it was under the command of General Scott.

The army was rather short of provisions, and didn't feel quite so comfortable when the engineers decided that it would take at least two weeks to make a road to the river, because it had to be cut through a hill, and to build a bridge across. The officers held a consultation, and talked over all sorts of things without getting ahead any, till at last a Yankee colonel, who was then a captain of a volunteer company, got up and said: 'Give me two hundred men, and I'll have all ready to go over in twenty-four hours.' The officers thought it was Yankee brag, the engineers fairly laughed in his face, but he stuck to it. You know you can't laugh a Yankee down quite so easy. General Scott rather liked the idea of making the experiment, so the captain got the men. He was an old lumberman, and knew just what he was about, and how to go to work. He just *swamped* round the hill instead of making a straight cut through it, and threw a log bridge over the river. None of his work, I spose, was very handsome, but it answered the purpose, and in twenty-four hours, sure enough, the Yankee swamper had accomplished what the engineers wanted a fortnight for. Smart set of fellows these woodsmen are. They look rough, but that's no matter. Have you seen any of them travelling up to the camps?"

"Yes."

"Did you notice the packs that they carry?"

"No, not particularly."

"Well, they have the bottom of a red shirt sewed up, then fill it up, put it on their backs, and tie the sleeves around their waists. Rather a new kind of a

valise, but a first-rate one. You see it's a prominent trait of a lumberman to make the most and best out of everything, and it's astonishing how much anybody can do with a little if they only go on that principle. But I'm getting off the track a little."

"You were telling me about stumpage," said Esther, "but don't any of the head lumbermen own the land?"

"Oh, yes! I own a good many townships myself."

"You buy it of the State, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Does it cost a great deal?"

"Well, we manage to make ourselves *whole*, generally speaking. I can't say but what there is a little log-rolling about it."

"Log-rolling! what's that?"

"Why, a good many of us club together;—one wants one township, another wants another, and we play into each other's hands. If the State wants an unreasonable price, we make it up somehow; but I aint a-going to tell you all the secrets of the trade. You know there are a good many quirks in every business."

"I suppose, then, put into plain English, you sometimes cheat the State."

"Oh! that's rather a hard name; perhaps cheating is as good a word as any, but log-rollin is the fashionable term, and sounds much better. Oh, no; lumbermen don't profess to be saints, but then they aint the worst of sinners. We try to make the most money we can, just like any other set of men. We're no

better nor worse than the rest of the world. There's a great deal of log-rollin in all sorts of business, the world over. The merchants understand it; and if practice makes perfect, the politicians ought to be the best hands at it that ever was."

"I have no doubt there is a great deal of truth in what you say," said Esther, "but I never could see the propriety of calling a lack of principle at one time *shrewdness* in a man, and when the same thing is carried a little farther, branding it as dishonesty."

"Oh, there's a difference between cheating and making a good trade."

"Well, how about the swampers? I believe we were talking about them. Do they make roads, except in the fall?"

"Yes, though they make the principal ones early; but if there is a good tree or so, to fell, they swamp a track for that, so as to get the logs all together. It's astonishing how soon a lumberman can tell, by the looks of a tree, whether it's good timber or not."

"Don't they ever make a mistake?"

"Very seldom; and they have a way of making some trees pass for rather better ones than they really are. You have heard of *concussy* timber?"

"Yes, but never knew what it was."

"Well, it's a sort of a disease that rots a tree, and shows itself in little knots, toad-stool like, on the bark. The men have a way of cutting off the bunch, and driving a little wedged-shaped piece of wood in the place, that makes it look for all the world as if a limb had been lopped off there; and so the log goes; and,