

# The River Fury

Hiram Alfred Cody  
1930

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# THE RIVER FURY

By  
H. A. CODY

*Author of "The Frontiersman," "The King's Arrow," "Glen of the High North," "The Stumbling Shepherd," etc.*

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TO THE OLD  
SAINT JOHN RIVERMEN  
AND  
THE DAYS THAT ARE PAST  
THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

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# The River Fury

## CHAPTER I THE FLAG-SIGNAL

Dawn found them drifting down stream on the ebb of a lazy tide. There were twelve in all, squat, battered river craft, deal-laden from mills up river. They had come out of the night, shadowy and spectral, with sails empty, and a veil of land fog shrouding spars and masts. With the lifting sun, the air cleared and the sails gleamed white. Between soft verdant banks they glided steadily onward. Tall trees of elm, ash, birch and maple reflected their graceful forms in the liquid mirror at their feet, as if dipping their colors to the passing boats. As the vessels drifted, the sun rose higher and slowly dispelled the tenuous wreathes of hovering fog.

At the turn of the tide a breeze winged in from the sea. The sagging sails filled, men roused to action, and ere long the boats were beating strongly down stream. The race was now on in earnest, and the spirit of rivalry animated the hearts of those rugged rivermen.

The *Flying Scud* was leading, with the *Snag* close astern. Captain Nat stood at the wheel, and his eyes shone with pleasure as he gradually drew away from his

rival. He was in a fine rollicking mood, and his face, tanned by wind and sun, beamed with animation. His strong lithe body of over six feet in height was perfectly erect, and his broad shoulders were squared as he steered the *Scud* on the short tack across the river. His head was bare, and his wealth of black hair was tousled by the careering wind. The joy of victory glowed in his eyes, and a smile wreathed his face as he heard the angry words of his defeated rival behind. He was as proud of his achievement on this inland river as had been his father years before when he had raced a fleet of clippers around the Horn, and brought the *Nestor* home as victor.

With a word to Tom Burden, his shipmate, Nat brought the *Scud* sharply around, and soon she was thrashing through the water on her long-leg run for a cove far off in the distance. Tom stood watching the *Snag* as she fell farther astern, and his old weatherbeaten face wrinkled into a smile.

"Say, Nat, it's too bad we can't hear Ru now. The air must be blue with his cussin'."

"He boasted that he'd beat us on this run down," Nat replied. "But Ru Tettle will never see the day when he can lick the *Flying Scud* with that old tub of his. Look where he is now. I wonder—"

He stopped suddenly and stared straight before him. His eyes had caught sight of a flag far ahead fluttering in the breeze. Tom saw it, too, and knew its meaning.

"I guess Ru's boast'll come true, after all," he drawled. "That flag's upshot our reckonin'."

"It has, Tom," Nat agreed. "It must be important. Mother would never signal without some good reason. It is the first time she has done it this summer. I hope there's nothing wrong."

"True, Nat. Yer mother's not the kind of a woman to git scary over a mouse or a cut finger. Yes, ye'd better go ashore. But I do hate fer Ru to win out. He'll boast of it, an' say how he beat us, without explainin' the reason. But it can't be helped. When yer mother sets the signal there's to be no goin' by."

With his eyes fixed upon the flag and his hands gripping the wheel, Nat ran the *Flying Scud* into the calmer water of the cove. Here he brought her up to the wind, and Tom dropped the anchor. Behind came the other boats, with the *Snag* in the lead. Like gray hawks they seemed swooping down upon their prey. Then sharp orders rang out, swinging booms creaked, sails flapped, and they were off upon another tack. Ru was at the wheel of his boat, and as he passed, he shouted out words of triumph and derision which caused Nat's cheeks to flush and his hands to clench hard upon the spokes. Tom shook a gnarled fist after the boaster.

"Ye dirty shin-flint!" he roared. "Jist wait till I git me hands on ye."



“Never mind that thing now,” Nat ordered. “Mother’s waiting for me on shore. You stay here, and I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

Mrs. Royal stood beneath the shade of a large maple tree and watched her son as he stepped ashore and pulled the small boat up on the sandy beach. There was reason for her motherly pride as Nat came to where she was standing and kissed her. He was so big, strong and manly that she seemed small by his side. Her careworn face brightened as she returned his caress.

“I am glad you have come,” she told him. “But I am sorry that I have brought you ashore. Perhaps it was foolish of me to put up the flag.”

“What is the matter, mother? Nothing wrong, I hope.”

“You can judge for yourself. It is about our sheep. They have been worried for several nights. In fact, two of them have been quite badly torn.”

“What, was it a bear?”

“No. It was our new neighbor’s dog. He is a big savage brute, and runs about at night, that is, when his mistress is not with him. He jumped out of the yard last night when I shouted at him.”

“He did! Have you spoken to its owners?”

“Oh, no. I am afraid to do so. They are a strange lot, and will not associate with their neighbors. Although they have been here only two weeks, they have antagonized all they have met.”

“Who are they, anyway, mother? And where did they come from?”

“I do not know for sure. It is rumored, however, that they came from the States. They are seldom seen in the day-time, but prowl around at night. Henry Saunders told me only yesterday about their mysterious doings. Boats come and leave their shore after dark, and lights are often seen moving between the house and the river. Henry and several others have been trying to find out what it all means, but so far they have learned nothing.”

“How many are there in this strange family?”

“Three, so I have heard. Old Mr. Sarason is an invalid who never leaves the house. Bob, his son, a big powerful fellow, and a daughter, Sylvia.”

“How do they make a living?”

“I do not know. But they must have money as they do no work.”

“Have you seen any of them, mother? I am getting quite curious about them.”

“I have seen only the daughter, and that at a distance when she is out with the dog. She spends much of her time on the river in a small boat, and is very venturesome. She is certainly a good sailor, for she goes out no matter how rough the water.”

“Does she take the dog with her?”

“I cannot say. Anyway, it’s on shore at night and very active. If something isn’t done to stop it, we shall lose our sheep. And we can’t afford that, as I have been hoping to make something from them to help pay the balance on our boat.”

“It’s a hard struggle to lift that mortgage, mother. But this summer, if things go well, we may do it. Then, I suppose, I shall be bound to the river for life.”

They were walking from the shore up to the main road. Mrs. Royal understood the meaning of her son’s words, and she was worried.

“You are tired of the river, Nat. Is that it?”

“It is. What would father think if he knew that his son is running a wood-boat up and down the river? He never dreamed that I should come to this. Neither did I. Deal carrying was such a profitable business a year ago that we thought we could make money fast if we had a vessel of our own. But the high prices have dropped, owing to the number of boats on the river, and rates are now lower than ever. I long for the sea and want to command something better than that tub out there. Father said that I can handle a clipper as well as he could. He trained me well the four years I sailed with him. Didn’t I take charge of the *Nestor* when father took sick on his last voyage and brought her safely home through that terrible storm when so many ships were wrecked? I did it then, and I can do it again.”

Mrs. Royal knew that what he said was true. She had been very proud of his remarkable feat, and it had been the talk of old seaman for many a day. The newspapers had also said much about it. The mention of that voyage, however, brought sad memories to her mind. As she looked out at the *Flying Scud* there came to her another scene of years ago when she had viewed a fine ocean clipper down in the harbour ere she first boarded it for a voyage to distant ports as the young wife of Jim Royal, one of the best Bluenose sea captains who ever sailed out of the port of Saint John. Little wonder, then, that her eyes grew misty as she thought of the changes the years had brought about. Instead of the fine clipper ship, there was nothing now but a common river boat, and unpaid for, at that.

“I used to dream that you would one day be a sea captain, Nat,” she at length replied. “We have been a sea-faring people for generations. It is a noble calling, and the sea is in our blood.”

“Your dream will come true some day,” Nat firmly declared. “When the *Flying Scud* is paid for, I shall let Tom run it and take command of a clipper ship. It has been the great hope of my life.”

They were standing under the shade of a large maple tree where they had stopped to rest. Mrs. Royal smiled a little at her son’s enthusiasm. He had the

splendid confidence and audacity of youth. But she knew only too well how difficult it would be for him to attain to such an enviable position. Many years of training would be necessary before he could become master of a great ship. She believed, though, that he was perfectly capable of commanding such a vessel, for her husband had told her so. But ship owners were cautious men, and would entrust their vessels only to well-seasoned masters. Nat would have little or no chance, she felt sure. She did not express her opinion, however, as she did not wish to say anything that might dispel Nat's bright vision. It would encourage him at present, and something might turn up in the future.

While she was thus thinking, Nat was looking down-river at the large expanse of water below the point. He was watching a small boat beating from the upper island towards the mainland. The sail was lifting and dipping like the white wings of some beautiful bird. It fascinated him. He believed that the girl of the Creek House was in command, and a sudden desire came upon him to meet her. He turned to his mother.

"I might as well stay for dinner," he remarked. "I want to go over and see about that dog. It must be kept up at night, or something will happen to it."

"Don't do anything rash," his mother advised as she walked along by his side. "I am really afraid of those people, and I don't want any harm to come to you."

"You needn't worry, mother," Nat laughingly assured her. "Don't I look able to take care of myself?"

"Perhaps so. But be careful, anyway. One can never tell what those people might do."

## CHAPTER II

### CREEK HOUSE

The Creek House stood about two hundred yards from the water. It was a bleak lonely building, hidden from the highway by a heavy thicket of pine and fir trees. It showed unmistakable signs of neglect. The storms of many seasons had rotted and loosened shingles and clapboards. The verandah, facing the creek, was a broken-down affair, and only a few sticks remained of the railing that once had been there.

This house which at one time had been the pride of the parish, had fallen upon evil days. Since the mysterious disappearance of old Henry Tatlow forty years before it had changed hands several times. It was haunted, so people believed, and Henry's ghost had been seen roaming about the place at night. Ill luck had followed every family that had lived there since then. Tom Mixon, who defied the ghost, died suddenly while eating his dinner. The next owner had been struck by lightning while unloading hay in the barn one summer day. After that the place had remained vacant for several years, shunned by all, and the once well-cultivated fields were allowed to grow up in bushes.

The place looked more desolate than ever to Nat as he made his way along a path close to a steep bank on the left. He had not been near the house for years, and he was surprised at the changes he beheld on all sides. He knew well the stories that were in circulation, and as a boy he had often trembled when passing along the road at night on his way from the store. That same feeling returned to him now as he drew near the building. No sign of life could he see. There was something weird in the silence that brooded over the place, and the stark house standing there in the wilderness presented an unnatural appearance.

At length the front of the house became visible, and there upon the verandah he saw someone seated, looking out over the water. With almost noiseless footsteps Nat approached. Then he paused and looked intently upon the form huddled before him. It was that of an old man with long-flowing beard and white hair. In his right hand he held a stick upon which he was partly leaning as he peered forward. Nat turned his eyes upon the river, and there he saw the white sail of the little boat bending beneath the stiff breeze. It was some distance away, almost in the same position where he had seen it that morning. The old man was watching it. Again Nat looked at him. Was he anxious about his daughter? It seemed so. He hesitated about disturbing him, uncertain what kind of a reception he should receive. But he had come to see about that dog, so the sooner he was through with his disagreeable task

the better it would be.

His step upon the verandah aroused the silent man. He turned quickly, and a startled expression came into his eyes as he beheld the visitor. This changed immediately to anger, and straightening himself up with much difficulty, he lifted his stick in a threatening attitude.

“Who are you?” he angrily shouted. “And what are you doing here?”

These ungracious words instead of intimidating Nat, caused him to step swiftly forward until he stood near the old man.

“Excuse me for disturbing you,” he began, “but I have come to speak to you about your dog. It has been worrying our sheep.”

The only reply the old man made was a blow with his stick. He was quick, but Nat was quicker, and ere the cane struck he had caught it in his hands and wrenched it from his assailant’s grasp. With a shriek the latter attempted to rise, and in doing so fell from his chair upon the verandah floor. Nat was about to pick up the prostrate creature, when the sound of hurrying footsteps was heard within the house. Glancing around, he saw a man standing in the doorway a short distance away. Quickly Nat turned to meet him, for he at once realised that here was no ordinary opponent. Tall and straight, lithe of limb, and with a well-proportioned body, he was worthy of more than a passing notice. Coatless and hatless he stood looking curiously at the scene before him. Almost intuitively he seemed to comprehend what had taken place. Without the slightest sign of emotion his clear blue eyes surveyed Nat from head to foot, and an expression of satisfaction overspread his face. He then smiled, and his smile was like a challenge. It nettled Nat and brought the blood surging to his cheeks. His hands gripped hard upon the stick he was holding. The next instant, however, his hands relaxed, and he tossed the cane from him. It fell upon the floor with a bang. Again the man in the doorway smiled.

By this time the old man had scrambled to his feet, and was steadying himself by means of the chair.

“Bob! Bob!” he cried. “Kill him! He knocked me down! Don’t stand there like a fool! Kill him, I say! He knocked me down!”

“There, there, Dad, don’t get excited,” the son replied, as he stepped forward to his side. “Sit down.”

“But kill him first, Bob,” he pleaded.

“All right. But I don’t want to do it just now, Dad. I haven’t got my coat on, and I don’t want to kill a man in my shirt-sleeves. I might injure the shirt. Just sit down and wait.”

Grumbling and muttering, the old man did as he was ordered. He kept his eyes,

however, fixed upon Nat, as if longing to spring upon him and tear him to pieces. He then laughed.

“Yes, yes, you might injure your shirt, Bob, if you killed him now, ha, ha! But give me my stick and I’ll do it.”

The son, however, paid no heed to his father’s request but turned towards the visitor.

“Who are you?” he demanded. “And what are you doing here? We don’t allow strangers to see my father. They disturb him too much, as you can see for yourself.”

“How was I to know that?” and Nat shrugged his shoulders. “I came here merely to speak about a dog which has been worrying our sheep.”

“Why don’t you go to the owner, then? Why do you come here?”

“Because I have been told that the dog belongs to you. I have not seen it myself, as I only came home to-day.”

“What is your business?”

“Oh, just running a wood-boat on the river. I am captain and owner of the *Flying Scud*, and my name is Nat Royal.”

“So your place is near here?”

“Yes, just two lots away, up yonder.”

“So you think our dog has been worrying your sheep? Can you prove it?”

“I have only my mother’s word for it. She saw a big dog in the yard last night, which she chased away. She said it belonged to you.”

“She was mistaken, then. Our dog is chained up every night. I do it myself when I am here, and Sis looks after him when I am away. No, it can’t be our dog.”

Nat was certain that the man was lying, and a feeling of anger welled up in his heart.

“My mother could not be mistaken,” he declared. “The dog that has been worrying our sheep was the very one she saw several times with your sister. He was a big black brute, with a white spot on his chest.”

The man looked at Nat coolly, and half-pityingly as if he were a child.

“And if it is our dog, what are you going to do about it?”

“I have done all that I thought would be necessary. I came peaceably here and was insulted by your father who tried to hit me with that stick.”

“Oh, don’t mind Dad. He is not responsible for what he does. He acts the same way towards every stranger, and is anxious to have him killed. He then takes no further notice of him. Look, he has forgotten about you already, and pays no attention to what we are saying.”

Nat saw that this was so. The old man was staring as formerly out over the

water, his eyes fixed upon the sail which was now closer to shore.

"Is he like that all the time?" he asked.

"He is when Sis is out in the boat. She generally keeps in sight so he can see her."

"Your sister seems to be fond of boating."

"She is, and spends much of her time on the river."

"The dog is with her, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes. She always takes him along. They are great friends."

As Nat looked out over the water his mind was very active. These people seemed to be quiet and inoffensive. He recalled what his mother had told him about the strange doings around the place at night, and the mysterious lights which were seen between the shore and the house. So far he had found nothing of a startling nature, except the crazy old man. The daughter spent most of her time upon the water, and the son stayed at home with his father. They seemed a harmless family. And yet he had the feeling that there was more than appeared upon the surface. Who were they, anyway? And why had they come to this lonely place to live in such a broken-down house? He longed to ask this man standing before him, but there was something about his manner which deterred him.

"I must go now," he announced. "It is too bad I have disturbed you and your father to-day."

"Oh, I don't mind that. It is good to be disturbed at times. The loneliness of this place is getting on my nerves. I long for some excitement, and was just in the mood for a good fight when you arrived."

"Why didn't you start in, then? I was feeling the same way myself."

"Because I wish to reserve that pleasure for the future. It will be something to look forward to."

"What makes you think that we must fight?"

"Your make-up. It isn't often I come across such a worthy specimen. You do fight sometimes, I suppose?"

Nat laughed outright. This man amused him.

"I only fight when it is necessary. I have too many other things to attend to. Why should a man want to fight just for fun?"

"Some do, and I'm one of them. Now, I'd rather fight than eat any day. And if I had your build, with such chest, shoulders, and muscles, I'd go in for fighting as a profession."

Nat looked keenly into the man's face and his eyes twinkled.

"Did you intend to kick me off the verandah when your father yelled?" he asked.

“I certainly did.”

“And thought better of it, eh?”

“Yes, when I saw you. Say, I wish Sis could see you. She likes big strong men.”

Nat was somewhat drawn towards this odd fellow in spite of himself. He was somewhat flattered, as well, by his words of admiration. And in reality, he wished to see his sister. He pictured her as very beautiful, and strong like her brother. That she was skilful and daring, he well knew by the way she handled her boat. He longed to wait until she came ashore that he might meet her. But judging by the distance she was away, he knew that it would take too long for her to return. He turned to go, when Bob detained him.

“Just a minute, captain. You came here to see about our dog. Are you satisfied?”

“In what way?”

“That it is not our dog that has been worrying your sheep.”

“I have only your word for it. Anyway, I shall find out.”

“How?”

“Oh, that remains to be seen. The owner will know, too.”

Bob took a step forward, and his eyes flashed.

“Look here, if you kill our dog, you will rue it.”

“I’ll not harm him if he leaves our sheep alone.”

“Sheep or no sheep, don’t hurt him. I have warned you, so be careful.”



### CHAPTER III

#### “WHY DIDN'T YOU SHOOT?”

His visit to the Creek House gave Nat food for much thought. He longed to know more about the strange Sarason family, and why they were living in such a lonely place. What was the girl like? he wondered. Was she odd like her brother?

After supper he went on board the *Scud* for his shot-gun. Tom was annoyed at the delay, and spoke his mind very freely.

“Ru’ll have a great crow over us,” he declared. “Whoever heard of a boat bein’ held up fer a confounded dog! We’ll be the laughin’-stock of the river.”

“That doesn’t bother me one bit, Tom,” Nat replied, as he examined the gun. “I’m not going to let any dog worry our sheep and get off with it. You look after things here and we’ll sail in the morning at the turn of the tide.”

“Oh, a’right, me boy. But don’t shoot the sheep instead of the dog.”

With this parting thrust, Tom strolled across the deck, and went down into the cabin to finish his supper. When he was through, he washed up the dishes, and then sat upon deck, smoking to his heart’s content. He was not a man to let anything trouble him for any length of time so long as he had his pipe drawing to his satisfaction.

After dark Nat went to the barn and took up his position in the corner of an empty loft. Through an opening where a loose board had been torn off, he overlooked the yard where the sheep were gathered. At first it was difficult for him to see, but over in the east the moon, almost full, was rising above the distant hills. In a short time its light would flood the land and make everything visible.

Reclining upon a bunch of hay he waited and watched. As the moon rose higher, it traced a silvery path across the river and brought into view the *Flying Scud* lying at anchor in the cove below. He longed to be on board rather than in the barn waiting for the dog to appear. It seemed cowardly to be hiding in the loft. But what else was he to do? The sheep must be protected and saved. They were too valuable to be destroyed by a prowling cur. What right did anyone have to allow a dog to roam at large to injure the property of others? He thought of the man called “Bob,” and the words he had uttered that afternoon came to his mind. What did he mean by his warning? Suppose he should shoot the dog, what would Bob do about it? Who was he, anyway, and why had he brought his crazy father to such a place?

Slowly the time passed as he watched through the loop-hole. The moon was now riding high above the wooded hills, and he was able to see distinctly for some distance around. The sheep were quiet. A profound stillness reigned on river and

land. A drowsiness came upon him and he longed to sleep. Once he nodded, and aroused with a start. He peered keenly forth, but all was quiet. He was becoming impatient. Perhaps the dog would not come. Its owners might have tied it up for the night lest something should happen to it. He decided to wait a few minutes longer, and then if nothing occurred, he would go to the house and have a good sleep.

When his patience was at last exhausted, and he was about to leave the loft, he noticed a sudden stir among the sheep. They had risen to their feet, and were huddling together with their faces turned towards the left. Nat looked in that direction and saw a woman walking slowly along with a big dog by her side. At once he knew that she was Sylvia Sarason. She had heard about his visit to the Creek House that afternoon and had come with her dog to tantalize him. Yes, that, no doubt, was the reason, and the thought caused his heart to beat fast. She must have surmised that he would be lying in wait to shoot the dog, so she had accompanied it this night. It was a daring act of defiance, and most likely she was enjoying the joke, and was much amused at the embarrassment that she knew would be his. He longed to do something, but felt helpless. He was held spell-bound by the scene before him.

As the girl came nearer he could see her quite plainly, although he could not distinguish her features very clearly. The dog was restless, and strained at the leash as they came close to the sheep, which were now greatly alarmed and bleating piteously. The girl did not look towards the yard, but kept her eyes straight forward. Once she spoke in a low voice to the dog, although Nat could not make out what she said. It took only a short time for her to pass the barn, and then the concealed watcher breathed a sigh of relief. His tense body relaxed, and he rose to his feet. His watch had ended in a most unexpected manner, and he knew that it would be useless to remain there any longer. He waited, however, until he felt sure that the girl was far enough away, as he did not wish for her to see him when he came out of the barn.

When he at length ventured forth, he looked keenly in the direction the girl had gone. Seeing nothing, he stepped out of the shadow of the building into the moonlight, and walked swiftly towards the house. He had gone but a short way, however, when a ringing, mocking laugh to the right startled him. He stopped suddenly and his face flushed with anger. He knew the meaning of that laugh. The girl was hiding in a thick clump of bushes making fun of him. He felt deeply humiliated as well as angry. While he had been hiding in the barn waiting to shoot the dog, that strange girl had walked calmly by with the animal in leash. She must have suspected that he was there. What a fool he had made of himself. He was strongly tempted to go after her, meet her face to face and tell her just what he thought of her impudence.

But just then she began to sing, and as the notes floated out into the night, Nat forgot his anger. He did not understand the words, and the tune was strange to him. But that did not matter. It was her voice that thrilled his very soul, at times soft and plaintive, and again fierce and wild. Never before had he listened to such singing. It may have been the calmness of the night, and his own agitated emotions which wrought such a bewitching spell upon him. His heart beat fast and he longed to see the singer. That she was possessed of more than ordinary beauty he felt certain, for such a voice could only belong to one of surpassing loveliness. He took a step forward, moved by a sudden impulse, when the singing ceased and all was still. This brought him suddenly to himself, causing him to smile at his foolishness. He turned again towards the house, and as he drew near, his mother spoke to him from her bed-room window where she had been listening.

“Is that the girl of the Creek House?” she asked in a low voice.

“I think so, mother. What a wonderful voice she has.”

“She has, but her singing is uncanny. There is something very strange and wild about it.”

“Perhaps it is the night which makes it seem so. Have you been there long?”

“Ever since you went to the barn. I saw that girl with the dog. What was she doing here?”

“Making fun of me. She must have known that I was watching, and came along with the brute to annoy me. I wonder what I had better do now.”

“Come in and get some sleep. I am glad you didn’t shoot the dog, as I don’t want to have any trouble with those people. I am afraid of them.”

Nat found it difficult to get to sleep, for the thought of that girl with the wonderful voice was fresh in his mind. Who was she, anyway? He wished to know more about her, and why she and her brother had come to the Creek House with their crazy old father. He recalled the stories the neighbors had told about the lights seen there at night, and of boats coming and going. It was all very mysterious, and he was tempted to go over and spy upon the place. There might be something in the stories, after all. When at last he did sleep, he dreamed of the girl. He saw her standing before him, very beautiful, and smiling at him. He tried to reach out and catch her, but as he approached, she fled, always keeping him at a safe distance, and never allowing him to draw near. He pursued her through fields and woods until he came to the river. When he was sure that she was his at last, she stepped lightly into a boat, and pushed away from the shore, singing and smiling as she disappeared from view in a blanket of thick fog which had suddenly closed down over the river. As he stood imploring her to return, a great dog leaped out of the fog and hurled itself upon him.

As he sprang aside in an effort to avoid the attack, he fell with the dog upon him.

He awoke with a start and looked around. It was morning, and he heard his mother in the kitchen preparing breakfast. The spell of his dream was still upon him as he went downstairs. He could not rid himself of it as he talked to his mother as he sat at the table. It was with him, too, when he went on board the *Flying Scud*. The tide had turned, and the wind was favorable, having changed early that morning. Occasionally Nat glanced over towards the Creek House as he helped Tom to get the boat under way. His mind was not on his work.

"What's the matter, Nat?" Tom asked, "Not feelin' well this mornin'? Sorry ye didn't shoot the dog, eh?"

Nat laughed, and his bronzed face flushed.

"I'm thinking, Tom, that's all. I had a queer dream last night. Do dreams ever come true?"

"Some do, an' some don't. But mostly they don't, thank the Lord. I wouldn't like fer some of my dreams to come true. Hi, there, look out, or ye'll be on that foul ground."

Nat was at the wheel, and the warning was necessary, for in running out of the cove towards the main channel he almost ran the boat aground upon a spot filled with weeds and eel grass.

"Ye'd better let me take the wheel, lad," Tom suggested, "or we'll be here fer good. Yer mind's wanderin' this mornin'."

"Oh, I'm all right now, Tom. I'm wide awake after that narrow escape."

Tom went forward, wondering what had come over his young master to make him so absent-minded.

"It must have been something mighty important his mother signalled him fer," he mused. "Now, what in time kin it be? It was more'n the sheep, I'm sartin. There's something more'n sheep on Nat's mind."

Tom was of an inquisitive nature, and prided himself upon knowing more than most people. He was especially interested in the Royal family, and to him Nat was as his own son. He had known him since he was a baby, and he now looked upon him as a child who needed to be directed by his experienced counsel. He, accordingly, was somewhat annoyed that Nat should keep any family secret from him. Something was wrong, he felt sure, and he was determined to find out what it was as soon as possible.

The *Flying Scud* was plowing her way down the main channel, her two sails spread wide and as taut as a drum-head. Just a few minutes after leaving the cove, Nat had caught sight of a little sail-boat off to the right some distance ahead, and

knew it at once. Tom saw it, too, and watched it intently. He then came aft and stood at Nat's side.

"It's comin' straight towards us," he remarked. "I wonder who it kin be."

Nat made no reply, but kept his eyes fixed upon the little boat. It was beating up river, and the milk-white sail was bending beneath the stiff breeze. Tom's eyes glowed with admiration as he watched the craft as it at length cut across the *Scud's* bow.

"Whoever's handlin' that boat knows his bizness," he declared. "But he's got too much sail fer sich a tub. My! look at that!"

This exclamation was caused by the boat coming suddenly up to the wind and racing to meet them on a short tack. As it came nearer, Tom stared in amazement.

"Why, it's a woman!" he exclaimed. "Who in time kin it be!"

Nat paid no heed to his words, for his eyes and mind were upon the graceful figure at the tiller. Closer and closer swept the boat, and when it seemed as if it would hit the *Scud* amidship, it was brought up again to the teeth of the wind. As it surged by but a few yards away, the girl turned her face towards Nat.

"Why didn't you shoot my dog last night?" she called out. She was then away, with a merry ringing laugh at the men's surprise.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" Tom exclaimed. "I never saw a woman do sich a thing as that. Who in time is she, anyway?"

"A water-witch, I guess," Nat replied. "She lives at the Creek House when ashore, which is not often."

Tom glanced at his companion, but said nothing more. He was thinking of the words the girl had flung at them in passing. He wondered if she was the cause of Nat's strange manner. Nat, however, offered no explanation, but all through the day the image of that smiling girl with the wind-tossed hair and ringing voice was ever in his mind.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RIVALS MEET

"I am going ashore, Tom," Nat announced. "Anything you want?"

"Yes, a plug of tobacco. We need some grub, too, but we kin git that ag'in. By the look of things, we'll be held up here fer a couple of days."

The *Flying Scud* was lying at anchor below the Falls. Not far away a big lean ocean clipper was being loaded with deals. There were other boats ahead of the *Scud*, so she would have to wait her turn. The harbor was a busy place. Clippers and barques, ships and brigantines, schooners and river-boats were seen on all sides. Tom was seated aft, smoking his after-supper pipe, and watching the animated scene before him. But his attention for the most part was centred upon a noble clipper-ship that had just dropped anchor in the stream. She was from some far-off port, and Tom's eyes glowed as he watched her, and his heart was filled with a great longing.

"That's the ship fer a sailor like me," he remarked. "An' that's the kind yer father sailed when I was with him. An' to think that now I have to stick to an old tub like this. But, then, that's the penalty of bein' old an' poor."

"I'm going to command a clipper like that some day," Nat declared.

"I've no doubt but what ye will, me boy. An' I hope I'll be livin' to see ye sail. If ye make as good a master as yer father, ye'll be a'right. He was the best Bluenose captain that ever walked a deck, an' that's sayin' a good deal."

Nat drew the small tender alongside, and stepped aboard.

"If ye see Mr. Farthing, tell him about that pine stick we left on the wharf at Injuntown," Tom reminded. "An', by the way, give my love to Faith an' tell her I'll drop in to see her before we leave. She's a great gal, she sartinly is, an' I think a lot of her."

"You had better be careful, Tom, or Ru'll be after you," Nat laughingly reminded as he picked up the oars.

"H'm, I'll choke that skunk if he says a word to me. I can't see fer the life of me what a gal like Faith kin find in Ru. I'd hate to see 'em married, fer it'd be like hitchin' a snake to a canary."

Nat rowed swiftly to the shore, leaving Tom to his pipe and his musings. He felt, though, that he was right about Faith. He could not understand how Ru had cast such a spell over the girl. She could not surely know what kind of a creature he was. Perhaps he should warn her. He was fond of Faith, and he could not bear the thought of her marrying a brute of a man such as he knew Ru to be.

He landed at Market Slip, the spot where the Loyalists had landed so many years before. It was high tide and the place was well filled with wood-boats. From here he made his way along Prince William Street until he came to "Chubb's Corner." It was mere curiosity which led him hither, for here was the centre of the city's shipping world. Here stood the building where skippers who sailed the Seven Seas met, exchanged news, related yarns, and told of great deeds on the ocean's mighty highways. They were a rugged type of men, bronzed by wind and sun, tough and hardy, given to great oaths, accustomed to command, each master of his own kingdom on the reeling deck, and as quick with the blow as with the word. Little wonder, then, that Nat looked upon such captains with intense admiration. What a glorious life they led, and how mean in comparison was his own. His father would have been perfectly at home in such company, and could have more than matched any of their tales of the great deep.

Nat sighed as he thought of this as he stood watching at a respectful distance from a group of skippers gathered in a corner of the room. They did not know that he could command a vessel and had brought the *Nestor* home through rough weather. They would think him impudent if he mentioned it to them now. But some day he would be welcomed among them as their equal when he had a fine clipper of his own.

He left the building with its noise and bustle and walked rapidly towards the eastern portion of the city. Here he came in view of Courtenay Bay, where Marsh Creek poured down its stream of murky water. Here were several of the shipyards which made Saint John the fourth great ship-building city in the world, and famous in every shipping circle. Here had been built and launched many vessels of renown, such as the *Marco Polo*, and the *Star of the East*. And others were now in the course of construction, some almost ready for the water, and several with their keels just laid down. The work of the day was done, and the sounds of saws, axes and caulking-irons were stilled. Nat was glad of this, for he could view the whole scene quietly to his heart's content. One big vessel, almost completed, arrested his special attention. He would like to see her launched, and he decided to find out when it would take place. Suppose it were his own ship! How wonderful that would be. With what pride would he watch it being towed around to the harbor to have its masts set and rigged. Then when all was ready, he would step on board as master, and loaded with deals for some distant port, she would slip from her moorings, and with sails full set, she would tramp down the Bay and out into the great ocean beyond. And would anyone be waiting his return? His mother would, he was sure, and he hoped that she might live to see that day. But would there be anyone else?

Instantly there flashed into his mind a vision of the girl with the laughing eyes, the ringing voice, and the wind-tossed hair he had seen in the little boat that very morning. Would she be the one who would sail with him?

And as he thought of her, Faith Farthing came suddenly to his mind. Just why he should think of her he did not know. The contrast was startling. One so wild and challenging; the other so quiet and sympathetic. The girl up-river stirred the passions within him; the girl in the city stimulated his soul to higher and nobler things. Sylvia Sarason reminded him of a wind-swept sky, now black with clouds, and again radiant with sunshine. Faith Farthing suggested a summer meadow, peaceful, and fragrant with smiling flowers.

The sound of a church bell aroused him, and he glanced somewhat guiltily around. It was not his habit to be dreaming about women. Hitherto ships had completely filled his mind. Now they had rivals, and he had the feeling that henceforth they would be forced to take second place in his thoughts and affection.

Leaving the shipyards, he went down to Haymarket Square, crossed Marsh bridge, and entered upon the Westmoreland Road. Along this he walked until he came to the upper end of the old burying ground. Here a short street ran down to the flats beyond. Part way along this was the house of John Farthing, master ship-carpenter and figure-head carver. It was a small, snug cottage, sitting back about twenty feet from the street. In front was a picket fence, and a gravel walk led up to the house. Flowers lined both sides of the path, and formed a sharp contrast to several neglected places nearby. They were outward signs of those who dwelt in the cottage, telling most plainly of their neatness and love of the beautiful.

Nat found Faith at home, and she gave him a hearty welcome.

"You will have to come into the kitchen," she informed him. "I am just finishing the supper dishes. Ru is there," she added in a whisper.

This was not pleasant news to Nat. He had no use for Ru, and he did not wish to meet him, especially on this occasion. But there was nothing else for him to do, however, so he followed the girl through the dining-room into the little kitchen. Ru was seated near the stove with his chair tilted back against the wall. He was smoking a foul-smelling pipe, and the fumes of his vile tobacco filled the room. Nat was disgusted at the look of insolence on the fellow's face as he entered. He could also tell that Faith was not at her ease, and he noticed that her face was somewhat flushed.

"Hello, Nat," Ru accosted. "Got down at last, eh? I won out, after all. The *Snag* beat every boat on the river."

"Yes, because I took the *Scud* out of the race," Nat replied as he sat down near



the table where Faith was working.

“Oh, I’d have beaten you on the Reach, anyway, Nat. The *Snag*’s a holy terror when she has a big stretch of water.”

“You’ve never beaten me yet, Ru. The *Scud* has always come in ahead when we were racing, and you know it.”

“There, there, leave the boats alone,” Faith interposed. “You two are always wrangling over them when you meet here. Let us talk about something else. How is your mother, Nat?”

“She is well. And, by the way, I have a letter she asked me to give you. I almost forgot it.”

An expression of pleasure overspread Faith’s face as she read the letter. As Nat watched her he thought that she seemed more beautiful than ever. He had known her from childhood. They had played together, and she had been to him like a sister. Her presence had always inspired him, and when with her he felt better. Often as a boy he had discussed with her his plans for the future when he would be master of an ocean clipper, and her eyes had always sparkled with delight as she listened.

“I shall take you with me,” he had told her, “and you can do the cooking and mending.”

“And I shall help you sail the ship, Nat,” she had declared. “We will go to China and see the funny people with queer eyes and pigtails, who eat rice with sticks.”

They had both laughed in high glee at the fun they would have when they sailed together. The future looked very bright to them then, and they were so confident that their dreams would come true. That was years ago when such fancies filled their minds. Now they were older, and while one dreamed of a great ship, the other dreamed as when a child of the lands she would visit and the strange sights she would behold, although she no longer spoke about such things. Nat had always been a hero to Faith, even when he was a mere boy, and he was so still even when sailing an old wood-boat.

As Nat looked at her standing reading his mother’s letter, he wondered what he could do to save her from Ru. He was not worthy of such a girl, and her life would be made miserable if she should marry him. She was too bright and beautiful for such a scoundrel.

Just then the kitchen door opened, and Mr. Farthing entered. He was a tall, large, bearded man, with a noble head and honest rugged face.

“Oh, Daddy!” Faith exclaimed. “Mrs. Royal has asked me to visit her. Here is her letter which Nat brought.”

“That’s very kind of Mrs. Royal, my dear,” Mr. Farthing replied. “I expect to go

to Moss Glen before long to do some work there. You can make your visit while I am away.”

“When do you expect to go, Daddy?”

“I can not tell for sure. There is considerable work yet to be done here, and, besides, I have the figure-head to make. And that reminds me, did you bring a pine stick for me, Nat?”

“I did, sir, and it’s on the wharf at Indiantown.”

“I am glad of that, and I shall get it brought over in the morning. Sam Crabtree promised to send it a week ago. I hope it is a good one.”

“Sam put it on board just before we left Fredericton, sir. He told me to tell you that it is the best stick he has, and that it is well seasoned.”

“That’s good, for I wish to make a figure-head out of it worthy of the premier’s new clipper. The wood must be of the best. The premier is very particular about the figure-head. It is a hobby of his. I hope to send him the model I have made.”

Ru was never talkative when Mr. Farthing was present. He always felt uncomfortable when he was home. He liked to be there when Faith was alone so he could talk to his heart’s content. He was annoyed now, and sat with glowering eyes fixed mostly upon Nat. He did not know what to say until the conversation turned upon the ship and the figure-head. This gave him his opportunity.

“Didn’t it trouble you, Nat, to bring down that stick? You must have had a change of heart.”

A slight shade of annoyance darted over Nat’s face at this thrust. This passed instantly, however, and he smiled.

“Oh, not at all, Ru. I didn’t do it for the premier, but for Mr. Farthing. It had nothing to do with politics.”

“Is that so? Well, you were a long time gettin’ it here. I would have had it down much sooner.”

“Only because mother flagged me ashore, Ru. The *Scud* was leading, remember, at the mouth of the Belleisle.”

Ru rose to his feet, and picked up his hat.

“I beat you, Nat, an’ I kin do it any time, whether with the *Snag* or with me fists.”

Faith’s face turned somewhat pale at these words. But Nat only laughed. He was not afraid of his rival.

“All right, Ru, I’m ready whenever you are. Just step outside and see what you can do with me.”

Nat followed him to the door, but Ru did not wait. He hurried off, leaving Nat

standing in front of the house.

“Come back, Ru,” he called. “You’ve forgotten something.”

But Ru kept on his way, and disappeared around the corner of the grave-yard. Nat went back into the house.

“Ru’s in a hurry,” he explained. “I shall have to meet him some other time.”

Faith laughed, and the color returned to her cheeks. With Ru gone, she was much relieved. Nat was with her, so she was satisfied.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LAUNCHING

The next day the city was agog with excitement for a noble ship, the *Bonnie Doon*, was to be launched. For months she had been in the hands of skilled workmen. From the laying of the keel a small army of men had been busy. Framers, plankers, hole-borers, sparmakers, bolt-drivers, caulkers, dubbers, and joiners, had made the air musical with the sound of the hammer, axe, adz, and saw. All combined to bring the work to perfection, and harmony out of apparent chaos. And now she stood complete, the dream of the master-builder fulfilled, gaily decorated with flags and bunting.

An hour before high-tide people began to gather for the festive occasion. As the time for the launching drew near, every available spot was occupied by an eager and expectant throng. They had all come in holiday attire, for the *Bonnie Doon* was one of the largest vessels ever built at Marsh Creek. They were naturally proud of such an achievement in their city. Many of them were personally interested, for the work had been done by members of their own families.

Nat was standing on an elevated piece of ground, his eyes fixed on the new clipper. He was watching her with a great longing in his heart. Oh, to be in command of such a vessel! Suppose she were his own!

A woman's voice nearby aroused him from his reverie. She was talking to another at her side.

"Isn't she a beauty! My man worked upon her, an' he's down there now gettin' her ready for the la'nchin'."

"An' my man worked upon her, too," the other replied. "Jim's a caulker, an' he's had steady work fer months. He's goin' on the *Norseman* to-morrow. She's a fine vessel, too."

"Better than the *Bonnie Doon*, so I hear."

"Jim says she is. The premier's buildin' her, an' he's got plenty of money."

"An' he wants more, I s'pose. Some people are never satisfied."

"Well, that's his look-out. Anyway, he's not afraid to spend his money, an' it makes work for our men."

"My man says the premier's got too many irons in the fire. He's got all he kin attend to lookin' after the affairs of the province without goin' into ship-buildin'."

"Oh, he's able to do both. He's a smart man, an' mighty nice, too, so Jim says, an' kind to everybody."

"H'm, he must be when he puts up with such a critter as Sammy Shaver. He tags

after the premier like a dog. My! he's a funny little man."

"He certainly is, an' very important. He thinks the government couldn't get along without him."

This conversation was interrupted by a shout near the vessel.

"She's off! Look!"

Nat was already looking, and saw the *Bonnie Doon* start slowly down the greasy ways. Her props had been knocked out, and the workmen had moved back. Like some great monster suddenly aroused from slumber, and startled by the crowd and wild cheering, the clipper seemed to hesitate just for a few seconds. Then with a rush, leaving a smoking trail in her wake, she sped downwards and plunged into the creek beyond. Amid deafening cheers she soon righted herself, and quivering as with excitement, she was soon riding in grace and beauty upon the troubled water.

Nat watched it all with glowing eyes and fast-beating heart. He did not cheer with the others, as his emotion was too deep for any outward expression. His very soul was with that floating craft. He was her lover, emeshed in her stately dignity and charming loveliness.

"A fine job, that."

Nat turned at the words and saw Mr. Farthing standing by his side. Faith was with him, and her face was bright with animation.

"Great," Nat replied, drawing a deep sigh.

"Wish you owned her, lad?"

"Do I! Why, I'd give almost anything to command a ship like that."

"You will some day," Faith declared.

"Ay, ay," her father agreed. "You'll have your own clipper, my boy, never fear, and I hope I'll be around when you first head her down the harbor."

"I hope so, sir. But I have my doubts."

"Tut, tut. You're young, and with such a dream in your soul, you'll go far. Suppose we have a look at the *Norseman*. She's the kind you'd like to sail."

They left the knoll on which they were standing and made their way in the direction of Marsh Bridge until they came to where the *Norseman* was lying. Others were ahead of them, and all were admiring the stately proportions of one of the finest clippers ever built in the city. Words were unnecessary as they stood and looked upon her. The truest admiration is often silent. It goes deeper than speech, yea, to the very soul. And this was especially true with Nat. He was burning with an inward longing to command such a ship. He saw her reeling through the seas, engaged in the East India trade for which she was destined. He wondered who would be her master. He should like to see him that he might feast his eyes upon such a being.

At length they left the yard and walked slowly across the bridge and along the Westmoreland Road. It seemed but natural that Nat should accompany the father and daughter. In fact, he never thought of anything else until he came to the little cottage on the side street. Here he paused at the gate.

"Come in, lad," Mr. Farthing invited. "I want to have a few words with you about a matter of importance.

"Is that what made you so silent all the way home?" Faith smilingly asked.

"Was I silent, dear?"

"Yes, dumb as an oyster. And so was Nat. He didn't speak a word. What great company you two are for a lone woman."

Nat laughed as he looked at the girl.

"I am sorry, Faith. But my mind was on the *Norseman*, and I couldn't think of anything else."

"That's the way with men, it seems to me. You and daddy are just alike. You never think about women except when you want something. And now you want your supper."

"You are hard on us, Faith," Nat defended. "We think of women more than you imagine. But when I am thinking of a noble ship there's no room for anything else in my mind."

Mr. Farthing had gone into the house, leaving the two together. Presently he appeared at the door of his workshop, and stood watching the young couple with an expression of pleasure in his eyes. To him Nat was like his own son, and he enjoyed having him at the house. Ru's frequent visits worried him. He knew much about his evil ways, and on several occasions he had tactfully warned his daughter. But Faith had a mind of her own, so he did not dare to say too much. He trusted, however, that her common sense would direct her aright, and cause her to see the difference between Ru and Nat.

"When do you expect to sail, Nat?" he inquired.

"To-night, I hope, sir, when the tide serves."

"You must have tea with us, then. Faith will get it right away. Come in. I have something to show you."

The room at the rear of the cottage was more than a workshop. Although the floor was littered with shavings and chips, while several unfinished figure-heads were reposing on benches, there were outward signs of the owner's imaginative faculty. The rough board walls were adorned with various pictures of noble vessels under full sail taken from newspapers and magazines. Neat models, too, of ships fully equipped, were resting upon wooden brackets, as well as several beautiful figure-

head models. Here Mr. Farthing spent most of his spare time during the evenings when his work in the yard was done. And here Faith would come, bringing her needle-work, and sit near the window facing the west while the light of day lasted.

At such times John Farthing showed the real depth of his nature, and would bring forth work which was very dear to his heart and mind. Sometimes it would be a carving of a noted historical scene of Old Scotland, the land of his birth and childhood days. From a book of pictures he would choose one special appeal, and upon a fine piece of well-seasoned oak, clear of knots, he would carve the scene. Weeks, and sometimes months, he would take to complete his task according to the stress of other work. Then he would begin another. He had been doing this for years, until his collection was of considerable value. Very few were aware of these carvings, for John Farthing kept them in a little room partitioned off from the main workshop. These were shown only on rare occasions, and then to special friends, or to those who could appreciate the excellent quality of the work.

Faith was acquainted with the stories of those pictures, for her father had related them to her as he worked night after night. Among them all she had two favorites, one of the unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots, and the other the Noble Earl of Montrose. She never wearied of hearing her father tell about them, and how both went to their doom in such a high courageous manner. An old history of Scotland supplied her with many details which her father omitted. And when she came across two poems, one about her heroine, and the other about her hero, they fired her imagination and stirred her soul to intense fervor. The sad tragedy of those two lives affected her keenly. Sometimes she would go alone into the little room, look upon the face of the Queen, and repeat the verse which so strongly appealed to her. She needed no book, for the words were indelibly impressed upon her mind.

With slow and steady steps there came a lady through the hall,  
And breathless silence chained the lips, and touched the hearts of all.  
I knew that queenly form again, though blighted was its bloom,  
I knew that grief had decked it out an offering for the tomb.

Then she would turn to her hero, and looking upon his splendid features would whisper,

He is coming! he is coming!  
Like a bridegroom from his room,  
Like the hero from his prison  
To the scaffold and the doom,  
There was glory in his forehead,  
There was lustre in his eye,  
And he never walked to battle  
More proudly than to die.

Little wonder, then, that as Faith Farthing developed into womanhood, she should become imbued with the spirit of courage and high resolve caught from those noble souls of ringing far-off days.

Mr. Farthing was much pleased at his daughter's interest in the Scottish characters, and it made him happy to watch the animated expression upon her face and the proud look in her eyes as he talked. He liked for her to live in the world of great and worthy people. At the same time, he was puzzled at her toleration of Ru Tettle, so uncouth, low-minded, and boastful. For such a person he had no use, and never invited him into his workshop, nor even into his house, for that matter. But with Nat it was different, and he enjoyed having him with them. He felt that Faith was safe in his company, and he was never anxious when they were together as he was when Ru was around.

It was for a special reason that Mr. Farthing had invited Nat into his workshop this bright summer afternoon. Everything that he did was the outcome of careful thought. He never undertook anything upon the spur of the moment, and although his thoughts like his words and actions were somewhat slow, they were in the main sure. He never laid a hand to a stick until the image of the completed figure-head he wished to carve was clear and distinct in his mind. And so careful was he that he generally made a little model that he might be accurate in every detail. And this he had done with the figure-head designed for the *Norseman*. He now lifted it from the workbench and held it in his hands for a few minutes without saying a word. He was giving it a keen final inspection, viewing it at arm's length, and holding it at various angles to the light. This critical examination seemed to satisfy him, and a smile overspread his rugged face.

"Is that for the *Norseman*?" Nat asked.

"Ay, ay, if it will suit the premier."

"Has he seen it?"

"Not yet, lad, so I'm hoping you'll take it to him."



"What! you want me to do that? Why, I never spoke to him, and, as you well know, I have no use for that man."

"Oh, that needn't worry you, Nat. You can do that for me."

"Why not send it by Ru, Mr. Farthing? He would like to meet the premier. And, besides, he belongs to that party in politics."

"I suppose he does, and the premier is welcome to him. But I want this model to go by a man I can trust, and who will not blab the news all over the country."

Although Nat wished to oblige Mr. Farthing, he, nevertheless, hesitated. People would know of his visit to the premier in Fredericton. Somebody would be sure to see him and misconstrue his purpose. Word would go around that Nat Royal had asked the premier for some favor, a position, perhaps, on the *Norseman*. How would that sound? What would his mother think? And his father, were he alive, would be ashamed of him. And yet how could he refuse Mr. Farthing's simple request? The model was only a small thing. He examined it closely. It was a beautiful piece of carving, and he longed to own it. There was a reason, for it reminded him of the strange girl up-river with the wind-tossed hair and tantalizing face. Yes, she had been captured unconsciously in that little piece of wood. It was strange, and he looked curiously at Mr. Farthing.

"Have you ever seen anyone like that, sir?" he asked.

"I have, lad, and it was only a few weeks ago, at that. We were working over there in the yard when a girl, alone in a small boat, sailed up the creek. It was high-tide, with a light breeze blowing. The way she handled that boat was a marvel. We all stopped a few minutes to watch her, for it was most unusual to see a girl alone on the water. She ran the boat ashore and came up to where we were working, and watched us. She seemed interested in everything. And I was interested in her, for as soon as I saw her she brought to my mind a woman I knew years ago in the old country. The resemblance was most striking, the same face and figure, color of hair, and eyes with the dare-devil light in them."

"Who is she?" Nat asked as casually as possible, although greatly interested.

"I have no idea. She loitered around the yard for a while and watched us as we worked, but asked no questions. I could not get her out of my mind, for she was an unusual person to my way of thinking."

"So you intend to put her into the figure-head for the *Norseman*, Mr. Farthing."

"Yes, if the premier is satisfied. But if you won't take the model, I shall have to get some one else I can trust."

"I'll take it, sir. Wrap it up so nobody can see it. I'll do it for you."

He was going to add, "and for Faith," but checked himself in time.

## CHAPTER VI

### FAITH'S DEFENDER

That evening as Nat walked back to the city his mind was filled with many thoughts. Mingled with the vision of the *Bonnie Doon* and the *Norseman* was that of the strange girl who unknowingly had served as a model for Mr. Farthing's figure-head. He knew very well how she must have looked as she came up the Bay to the shipyards, for a picture of her was still vivid in his memory as she had sailed by the *Flying Scud* in her little boat. Who was she, anyway? A desire came upon him to unwrap the model he was carrying under his arm and look upon it again. He resisted this longing, however, and quickened his steps. The premier himself must be the first one to do that, and he was anxious to see the expression of surprise upon his face as his eyes rested upon the beautifully carved form. That the premier would be greatly pleased he had no doubt, for any man with the slightest artistic sense would surely be charmed by such workmanship.

His reverie was disturbed by the sudden appearance of Ru Tettle, who had come out of the Flood Gate saloon on the left. He had been drinking and was in an insolent mood. He was the last person in the world Nat desired to meet just then. He was annoyed, and was about to pass without a word, when Ru accosted him, and stepped to his side.

"What's the rush, Nat?"

"I'm in a hurry. It's getting late."

"Stayed too long with the old man, eh? Or was it the girl that kept you?"

"What girl?"

"Oh, you know a' right. Faith's a beaut. Ye had supper there, I s'pose."

"Well, what if I did? That's my own business."

"Had Bible readin' an' prayers afterwards, no doubt, with psalm singin' as an end up."

"No, Ru, we didn't. But I was far better off with Mr. Farthing and Faith than you were guzzling rum in the saloon."

"H'm, that's where ye're mistaken, Nat. A glass now an' then is good fer any man. It sets him up an' makes him feel good."

"It makes a devil of him."

"Oh, girls like men that way. They git disgusted with the straight-faced psalm singin' bunch."

"Some may, but not all, so don't be too sure."

"Aw, they're all alike. Faith's no different from the rest. She likes a man with

some devil in him.”

Nat stopped suddenly and looked at his companion.

“See here, Ru, we all have much of the devil in us, and you’ll soon find out how much I have unless you hold your tongue about Faith. She’s one of the truest girls that ever lived.”

Ru knew that Nat meant what he said, and but for the rum that had gone to his head, he would have heeded the warning. But he was in a quarrelsome frame of mind, so threw discretion to the wind.

“Faith’s like all the rest,” he declared with an oath. “But fer her old cuss of a father you’d soon see what she’d do. Jist give her the chance, an’ ye’d soon see where she’d land.”

Nat’s hands clenched hard, and he lifted his right arm for an instant, but let it fall again. His eyes blazed, and his bronzed face turned white. With an effort he controlled himself, and glanced to the left along a side street leading to the shipyards.

“Suppose we go and have a look at the *Norseman*,” he suggested as calmly as possible.

“A’right,” Ru agreed, somewhat surprised at Nat’s request.

At the eastern end of the street several large piles of deals were stored not far from the noble vessel lying upon her stocks. Coming to the first pile, Nat stopped.

“Come in here, Ru. I want to settle with you, and this is a quiet place.”

“What d’ye mean?” Ru demanded, shrinking back a little. “What d’ye want to settle?”

“Come in and I’ll soon show you.”

Nat went forward a few paces, stopped, and laid his parcel on the end of a deal. He then stripped off his coat and faced Ru.

“Perhaps you understand my meaning now,” he began. “You made an insulting remark about Faith, and I’m going to make you take it back. The police won’t bother us here. Come on, I’m ready.”

Ru was in a quandary. He was well aware of Nat’s strength and determination. This was not the first time he had stirred the captain of the *Flying Scud* to anger. But always then it had been the blow before the word. He was regaining his senses now, and had no relish for a fight with such an opponent. He was a bully and a coward at heart.

“There’s no sense in us fightin’,” he hedged. “I didn’t really mean any harm to Faith. She’s a cute little thing an’ I like her.”

“Take back what you said about her, then.”

“Sure I will. But I didn’t think what I said would make ye so mad.”

“You didn’t? Well, you must be mighty stupid. I won’t allow any good girl to be lightly spoken of in my presence if I can help it. You had better keep your dirty mouth shut when I am around.”

Nat was mad and he longed to get his hands upon Ru. But if the fellow would not fight, what could he do? He picked up his coat, put it on, and stepped forward.

“I am going now, Ru, but I don’t want you to come with me. I wouldn’t be seen walking along the street with a thing like you. I wish you would fight, for my hands are itching to get at you.”

He looked over at the *Norseman*, as if the sight of the noble vessel would clear his eyes and soul. And as he looked, he gave a start and peered keenly forward.

“The *Norseman’s* on fire!” he exclaimed. “There’s smoke at her bow!”

With a bound he sprang into the street, and raced into the shipyard straight towards the *Norseman*. He shouted as he ran, and his cries attracted the attention of several women standing at the doors of their houses. They in turn gave the alarm, and soon men, women and children were hurrying down the street.

In the meantime Nat had seized a bucket lying near and rushing to the shore brought it back full of water which he poured upon the flames which were licking up the shavings and other dry material lying near. Pail after pail he carried, and when he was joined by several men armed with buckets, the fire was ere long extinguished.

By this time a crowd had gathered, and many were the speculations as to the cause of the fire. Nat was not interested in the discussion. He had done all that he could, and he was no longer needed. There were more than enough men to keep watch over the *Norseman*. Then he thought of Ru. In his excitement he had forgotten all about him. What had become of the fellow, anyway? He looked keenly around, but he was no where to be seen. Then he remembered that Ru had not helped him to extinguish the fire. The cur! He had evidently stood and watched, but had done nothing. But perhaps he had hurried away, and by now he might be on board the *Snag* ready to sail. It was more likely, however, that he had gone back to the saloon for more rum.

Leaving the yard, Nat walked up the short street, and as he passed the piles of lumber he suddenly remembered the parcel he had left on one of the deals. He stopped short, and then hurried back, fearful lest it had been stolen. Great was his relief when he found it just where he had left it. To all appearance no one had touched it. He wondered why Ru had not meddled with the parcel, for he had seen him glance curiously at it when they had first met. But no doubt the rascal had thought nothing more about it, especially after the unpleasant interview between the piles of deals.

Tucking it under his arm, and determined that he would not let go of it again until he was on board the *Scud*, Nat hastened on his way. He knew that Tom would have everything ready, and would be impatiently awaiting his coming. Although Nat was captain, Tom, in a way, was the real commander. Age and years of experience at sea gave him considerable prestige, and Nat naturally depended much upon the man he had known all his life, and who had served his father so faithfully. He was very fond of the old sailor, and allowed him to speak his mind freely whenever he was in a critical mood, which was quite often. That he would be so this evening, Nat was certain. But a plug of his favorite tobacco would have a soothing effect, so Nat decided to make the purchase at a King street tobacco store.

As he walked rapidly along, he thought of Ru. It was his fault that he was late. The rascal! He had let him off too easily. He should have given him the thrashing he deserved for what he had said about Faith. A thorough beating was all that such a creature as Ru could understand. He would misinterpret gentleness as weakness. He might think that Nat was afraid of him, and even now he might be boasting in the saloon and making himself out as a hero. Ru was a past-master at the art of lying. This Nat knew, and as he thought of the stories Ru would be likely to trump up, his hands clenched hard, and his heart grew hot with anger. Why had he not given the fellow a sound drubbing? Then the marks upon his face would tell their own tale and belie his words.

But suppose he had not met Ru, the *Norseman* might have been destroyed. If they had not gone near the shipyard, that noble vessel might now be a seething mass of flames. And if Ru had not been such a coward, refusing to fight, the fire might not have been discovered in time. In another five minutes it would have been too late to save the ship.

These thoughts came to Nat with a rush shortly before he reached the tobacco store. His steps slowed, and he became oblivious to what was going on around him. His heart quickened at the idea that his meeting with Ru had been specially ordained. Nat had never been interested in theological questions, although he had often listened to Tom who considered himself an authority on predestination and election, even more so than Mr. Farthing. But this about the *Norseman* was something practical which appealed to him more than volumes of disputations. It did seem as if good sometimes came out of evil. This was a startling idea, and altogether out of his unusual line of thought. He dimly remembered how he had once heard old Parson Westmore say something like that in a sermon. He had wondered then for a few minutes how good could come out of evil, but so filled had been his mind with other things that he had thought nothing more about it until now. It was certainly puzzling.

He must ask Tom.

Coming to the store, he entered, and ordered the tobacco.

"Give me two plugs," he told the clerk. "They will last Tom until we get back."

"Leaving tonight?" the clerk asked.

"Yes, just as soon as the tide serves. I should have been on board sooner, but that fire under the *Norseman* detained me."

"I just heard about it, captain. Queer how the fire started. An accident, no doubt."

"I hope so."

The clerk tied up the tobacco and clipped the string with a pair of old scissors. He handed the package to Nat and took his money.

"I hope so, too," he remarked. "But it may have been set on purpose. I can't help being suspicious."

"Why? Surely no one would set that fire on purpose."

"That's what I try to think. But I've seen a number of queer characters around lately, and there's no telling what they might do."

"But why should they want to burn the *Norseman*? What could they gain by doing such a thing?"

"Revenge. The premier has enemies who hate him, and are jealous of his success. He is putting much money into that ship, and to see it destroyed would give some great joy."

"Nonsense," Nat declared. "I don't believe anyone started that fire. Most likely it was due to a hot bolt which the workman overlooked, or some other carelessness."

"Maybe so, captain. But it doesn't look reasonable to me. Fires, as a rule, don't start that way in the shipyards. No, you can't make me believe it was a hot bolt."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PASSENGER

Tom was impatiently awaiting Nat's return. He went ashore for him with the tender, and was unusually silent as he rowed back to the *Scud*.

"What's wrong, Tom?" Nat asked when they were at last on board. "You look as mournful as a funeral."

"An' I feel jist as mournful," Tom growled, as he let the tender fall astern, and tied the line to the rail. "Here I've been waitin' fer the last hour. If we git through the falls on this tide it'll be by a close squeak."

Nat realised that this was true and that there was no time to lose. Hurrying down into the cabin, he laid the figure-head upon a shelf over his bunk, changed quickly into his working clothes, and sprang on deck. They hoisted sail, weighed anchor, and soon were drifting on the flood tide up towards the falls. Nat was at the wheel, with Tom standing by his side, peering keenly ahead.

"Can we make it?" Nat asked.

"Guess so. But the tide's slackenin' fast. Keep her a little to the left, me boy. We should have been here sooner. Ru got away half an hour ago."

"He did! Why, he was with me when I first saw the *Norseman* on fire."

Tom started and turned quickly around.

"What's that ye say, Nat? The *Norseman* on fire! Is she much damaged?"

"Only a little blaze. But we got it out before any harm was done. It was a close shave."

"Ye don't say so! How d'ye s'pose it started?"

"No one knows. I was talking with Ru when I saw the smoke, and gave the alarm. A crowd soon gathered with buckets. Another five minutes, though, and it would have been too late."

"An' Ru didn't help?"

"No."

"The skunk! mebbe he started the fire."

"No, he didn't. I met him near the Flood Gate saloon, and we walked along together."

"Well, I take yer word fer it, Nat. But if Ru didn't set that fire, it wasn't fer lack of badness. I'm sorry he'll beat us on this run up. He'll do a lot of crowin' ag'in."

Having cleared the lip of the falls, a breeze from the west filled the sails, and Nat headed the vessel for Indiantown some distance ahead on the right. He drew up at length alongside of a wharf and went ashore to do some shopping, leaving Tom on

board. He was not gone long, and when he returned, he saw a man standing on the wharf.

“Going up river, captain?” he asked.

“Yes; right away.”

“Give me a lift?”

“Sure. Come on board. There’s plenty of room.”

The stranger followed Nat, and in another minute the *Scud* was on her way, headed for the Narrows beyond. Tom had taken the provisions down into the cabin, and soon the tempting odor of frying bacon was drifting up through the hatchway. The passenger smiled as he looked at Nat.

“That smells good. And I hear eggs sizzling.”

“Tom’s preparing his supper. Had yours yet?”

“Oh, yes, an hour ago.”

“How far are you going?” Nat inquired, as he swung the *Scud* to the right around a sharp bend at the entrance to the Narrows.

“To Fredericton. I’ve an uncle there I haven’t seen for years.”

“Where do you live?”

“In Boston. Been there since I was a boy. Poor health sent me on this trip. ‘Keep on the water all you can’ my doctor advised, so that’s why I’m taking the river route. There’s nothing like the great wide open out-of-doors for health. I feel like a new man already.”

Nat at first was quite impressed with the man. It was seldom he had a passenger, and this affable stranger promised considerable entertainment which would help to wile away many weary hours. He glanced at him occasionally and wondered how old he was. He was neatly dressed, and his hands were white and unaccustomed to manual labor. A ring on the third finger of his left hand contained a jewel, and Nat was curious as to its value. The man had a thin face, and a nose resembling the beak of a hawk. His forehead was low and narrow, crowned by jet-black hair, carefully parted in the middle. There was something about his mouth Nat did not like, especially when he smiled, which even the heavy moustache could not conceal. It gave him a creepy feeling once when he glanced at the man and saw those white teeth. They brought to his mind a picture he had seen of a shark’s teeth about to close upon a helpless victim. He was glad when Tom called from below that supper was ready.

“You had better go down and have some bacon and eggs,” he suggested. “Tom likes company.”

The passenger was nothing loth, and in another minute he was in the cabin. Nat



wished to have Tom's opinion of the man, and he wondered if it would be similar to his own. The stranger did most of the talking, and only once or twice during the entire meal did he hear Tom's voice.

When they at last came on deck, Nat handed over the wheel to Tom and went below. He wished to tidy up the cabin and store away the provisions he had brought on board. Half an hour later when he again went on deck, the stranger was seated on a box by Tom's side, talking and smoking.

"Yes, I've travelled a great deal," he was saying, "but I've never seen anything like this," and he waved his right hand towards the eastern shore lying soft and luminous beneath the last glow of departing day. "I've seen many rivers in the United States, but nothing to equal this."

"Jist wait till we git further up," Tom replied. "Ye'll see somethin' then that'll open yer eyes."

"Is that so? Well, I can't imagine anything more wonderful than this. Look at those fields with the farms, trees, and houses dotting the hillside. Just think what it must mean to people to live with such beauty around them. How their souls must expand amidst such scenes of nature."

"H'm," Tom grunted. "If their souls expand it's more'n their pocket-books do. They grub from mornin' 'til night, and then kin hardly make a livin'. They don't take much stock, I guess, in the soul-expandin' bizness."

"Ah, that's where they make a big mistake, my friend. There is something within each of us which craves for more than mere material food. The soul needs feeding as well as the body. It was Master Shakespeare who said, 'It's the mind that makes the body rich'. Ever read any of his works?"

"Naw. Never heard of him. What did he do?"

"Wrote wonderful plays and poetry. I could quote you yards of his stuff."

"Don't do it, Mister. I've enough troubles now, so can't stand any more."

Nat smiled at Tom's words. He was sitting on the curbing of the cabin, looking straight ahead. He took no part in the conversation, knowing full well that Tom could more than hold his own with almost anyone. A breeze from the west, soft and gentle, kept the sails full, and the *Scud* plowed steadily on her way. So long as the boat was moving Nat was satisfied. But should the wind die down, it would mean a serious delay. Slowly the darkness deepened and the stars appeared in the cloudless sky. Only the gentle creaking of the light-straining sails and the swish of water broke the stillness, for even the voluble stranger was awed into a respectful silence. But this could not last long.

"I don't believe I ever experienced such a perfect night," he at length declared,

as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and then began to refill it. "Have many like this?"

"Lots of 'em," Tom replied. "But sometimes its purty nasty, 'specially in the fall."

"Hard river to navigate, eh?"

"No, not too bad down here. But further up where its narrow, it gits somewhat ticklish."

"Ever had an accident?"

"Oh, yes, we've had our share. It's allus well to be a good swimmer when yer boatin', fer ye kin never tell when somethin' might happen."

"There's no danger to-night, I hope."

"Not likely, Mister. But one never knows when he might smash into a craft comin' down river. Kin ye swim?"

"No, not a stroke."

"That's too bad."

The passenger seemed to be so deeply affected by these words that Nat felt sorry for him.

"Don't mind what Tom says," he remarked. "He's always looking for trouble. We're about as likely to hit another boat as we are to smash into one of those stars. When it's very dark and stormy there's a risk, of course, but not to-night."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, cap," and the stranger gave a sigh of relief. "It makes me shiver to think of being plunged into that black water down there."

"Oh, I didn't mean to scare ye," Tom replied. "It was jist a warnin', that was all. Here, Nat, you take the wheel. I'm gittin' so sleepy I kin hardly keep me eyes open. I kin never sleep much down there in the harbor with sich an ever-lastin' racket goin' on all the time."

"And I feel sleepy, too," the passenger announced. "But no cabin for me on a night like this. I'm going to stretch out up forward, if you don't mind, cap."

"What! On the hard deck!" Tom exclaimed.

"Yes, right on the deck. I've been sleeping so much in the open, obeying the doctor's orders, you see, that I would suffocate down there in the cabin. If you let me have a quilt or a blanket I shall get along fine."

"Want to study the stars, I s'pose?" Tom queried. "Got a poetry kink like that feller ye was tellin' me about?"

The stranger laughed, much amused.

"An open deck and a night like this should stir the dullest soul. If the muse doesn't visit me to-night, then I'm hopeless."

Tom went below and tossed up a quilt and a pillow.

“There, take them. They need a little airin’, anyway.”

Picking them up, the passenger walked up towards the bow. Nat was glad to get the fellow out of the way, and he breathed more freely when his form could no longer be seen. Darkness and silence settled down over river and land as the vessel slipped up through The Reach towards the three islands in the distance. Soon he had the dim form of Caton’s Island on the left. Then came Rocky Island, much smaller, and the reputed burying place of Captain Kidd’s treasure. Beyond this the Isle of Vines, lifted high out of the water and thickly wooded. Beyond, Oak Point lighthouse sent forth its clear and steady rays. Steering by this, Nat glanced occasionally to the left, but no light shone from his own home. He glanced off towards the Creek House and saw it brilliantly illuminated. Every window seemed to be ablaze with light. The sight startled him and he was tempted to arouse Tom that he, too, might view the scene. What was the meaning of that lighted house? he asked himself. Was there something, after all, in those stories his mother had told him about the strange doings around the place at night? But he had not heard anything about the building being brilliantly lighted. Perhaps there were visitors at the house who were spending the night in revelry. And what kind of visitors would they be? He thought of the crazy old man and the odd son. Who would wish to visit such peculiar people? But perhaps they were young men and women from the city, guests of the girl with the wonderful voice, golden hair, and smiling face. Was it on her account that the house was illumined? And was she there, moving among her guests, and delighting all by her charming manner? It did seem so, and a sense of loneliness came upon him and his hands gripped hard upon the spokes of the wheel. He longed to go ashore that he might peer in through a window and behold her radiant beauty. Never before had any woman made such an impression upon Nat. He had been too much taken up with other things to think about women. A noble ship had always been his great love. Now, however, his heart was divided. There was a girl, living over there in the Creek House, who had woven a mystic spell around him. He had never spoken a word to her, but that made no difference. He was really in love with her. But what would such a girl think about him, a common river boatman? Were he the captain of a fine ocean clipper it might be different.

Nat thought of all this as he passed Oak Point, and the lighted house disappeared from view. But he could not get it out of his mind as the *Scud* plowed her way past the Belleisle, Spoon and Long Islands, the Washademoak, and the Jemseg where the river was narrow and greater care was necessary.

The first streak of dawn was visible beyond the eastern hills as Tom stuck his head up from the cabin.

“What’s the meanin’ of this?” he demanded.

“Meaning of what?” Nat asked.

“Lettin’ me sleep so long, of course.”

“Oh, don’t worry about that, Tom. I’ve been having a fine time all by myself. You needed the sleep, so quit your growling. Here, take the wheel.”

Nat did not at once go below, but went forward to see how the passenger was making out. Expecting to find him stretched out upon the deck asleep, he was surprised to see nothing but the quilt lying there. He looked around, straining his eyes through the gloom, thinking the man might be lying or sitting somewhere else. But not a sign of him could he behold.

With a great fear tugging at his heart, he hurried aft and notified Tom.

“Not there?” the latter asked in surprise. “What’s become of him?”

“That’s what I’d like to know. I’ll get the lantern and have a thorough search.”

But even with the lantern, Nat was not rewarded. He went back again to Tom’s side, carrying a coat and a hat.

“I’m afraid he’s drowned, Tom. Poor fellow! I found these near the port rail. I did not see them at first.”

Tom looked at the garments, and his face was very serious.

“Couldn’t swim a stroke, so he said.”

“And he was so afraid of the water.”

“He must have tumbled overboard. Mebbe he was walking in his sleep.”

“But I didn’t hear any splash.”

“That’s queer. Ye sartinly would have heard somethin’.”

“I surely would, for it was very still all night.”

“Didn’t do any dozin’ at the wheel, eh?”

“No. Do you think we would be here now if I had?”

“Not likely. But it’s queer how that feller went overboard an’ ye didn’t hear him when he hit the water. An’ we don’t know his name.”

“I should have asked him.”

“S’pose ye search the pockets of his coat. Mebbe ye’ll find a clue there.”

Nat did so, but found nothing.

“They’re all empty,” Tom mused. “That’s queer, too. Now, a man generally has his pockets stuffed with all sorts of things. Mine are, anyway. I wonder who he was. It was silly of us not to ask him his name.”

“I thought of doing so at first. But to tell you the truth, I took such a dislike to the fellow after he had been on board for a while that I didn’t care who he was.”

“Same with me, Nat. He talked too much. But fer all that, we made a mistake.

We let him come on board as a passenger, an' now that he's drowned, what will we say? We'll have to report to the police, an' it'll seem mighty strange if we can't tell the feller's name. It'll look s'picious. In all the years of my boatin' I've never run up ag'inst anything like this before. It'd be no use to turn back, I s'pose, an' look fer him."

"No, Tom. We were below Caton's Island when he went forward, and that's the last we saw of him. In fact, I forgot all about him for some time when I saw the Creek House all lighted up. There must have been a party there last night, for every window was ablaze with light."

"Ye don't say so! Wish I'd seen it."

"I wish now you had. I was tempted to call you, but didn't like to disturb you. Anyway, it was something unusual."

Nat went below and prepared breakfast. He was greatly disturbed over the accident, and racked his brain as to some solution to the mystery. Tom stood at the wheel, puffing steadily at his old clay pipe. He was thinking hard, and his faded gray eyes contained a far-away expression.

"Queer, queer," he muttered. "Why in time didn't that feller make a splash when he went overboard? An' if he was awake, why didn't he yelp?"

## CHAPTER VIII

### TREACHERY

“Ye’d better see the police at once, an’ tell ’em about the accident.”

Tom had rowed Nat ashore at Fredericton and was pushing off to go back to the *Scud* anchored out in the stream as he gave this advice. It was a fine calm evening, and the river was like a great mirror. Nat assured Tom that he would report to the police as soon as possible, so he need not worry. But as he walked from the shore with the parcel under his arm, a new idea came suddenly into his mind. Why not speak to someone before going to the police? It might be as well to explain what had happened without being subjected at once to a rigid examination. He wanted advice from some friendly sympathetic person. But who in the city would be willing to give him such a hearing? He knew several men in the way of business, but he did not feel inclined to go to any of them. They might help him, but he was not sure, and he did not wish to make any blunder.

It did not take him long to reach the hotel where he knew the premier generally stayed while in Fredericton. He disliked the idea of meeting such a prominent man of whom he had heard so much, and not always of a favorable nature from the political point of view. But against his personal character he had never heard one word. People talked much about his Party, and the tactics of some of his followers, but of Henry Burnside nothing but what was honorable could be said. He had fought his way up to a high position, but his fighting had been clean, and the success he had attained was due to his ability, indomitable courage and perseverance.

Nat was shown at once to the premier’s room. The latter rose from the table at which he had been seated and stepped forward to greet his visitor. He was a man of more than ordinary height, of commanding appearance, with a wealth of graying hair, and a close-clipped beard. His eyes, though mild now, could blaze with anger, as many of his enemies knew only too well. They were penetrating eyes, and Nat realised this at once. He felt that here was a man who could read his very thoughts, and who would tolerate no nonsense.

“I am Nat Royal, captain of the *Flying Scud*,” he explained.

“I am glad to meet you captain. Sit down, please.”

The premier motioned to a chair, and as Nat moved towards it, he stopped suddenly and his eyes opened wide in amazement. Lying upon the table he saw something that caused his face to turn pale and his hands to clench hard together. It was the model figure-head of the *Norseman*! He stepped quickly forward and seizing it in his hands examined it closely. It was the same one that Mr. Farthing had

entrusted to his keeping!

The premier noticed his interest, and attributed it to admiration.

"It's a beautiful piece of work, isn't it? I have never seen any better."

"But where did you get it, sir?"

"It was sent to me by Mr. John Farthing, the woodcarver and master shipbuilder. It reached me only a short time ago, and I was examining it when you arrived."

"Oh, I know where it came from, all right. But who brought it?"

"Ru Tettle, captain of the *Snag*."

With a swift movement Nat's fingers broke the string from the parcel he was holding, and ripped off the paper wrapping. Then, instead of the beautiful model nothing but a rough stick was exposed to view. As he stood staring at this, his face flushed, and his eyes glowed with anger. He lifted his head, and looking straight at the premier pointed to the model upon the table.

"Ru stole that, and put this stick in its place. The devil!"

"What do you mean?" the premier demanded, much astonished. "What was stolen?"

"That model, of course. Mr. Farthing gave it to me to bring to you. Ru stole it. Just wait till I get my hands on him."

"How did he do it, captain?"

"He must have done it when I was fighting the fire under the *Norseman*. I left it lying on a dealend, and—"

"What's that you say?" the premier excitedly interrupted. "Was the *Norseman* on fire?"

"Yes, and I discovered the blaze in the nick of time. It was under her bow, and I left Ru and gave the alarm. He must have taken the model then and put that stick in its place."

"Never mind about that now, captain. Tell me about the fire. Was there much damage done?"

"Oh, no. We soon put the blaze out. But it was a close shave. Another five minutes and it would have been too late."

The premier motioned to a chair, while he drew up another for himself. He was greatly concerned over the news he had just heard, and the hand that lifted a cigar from a box on the table trembled.

"Do you smoke? Help yourself, then."

He sat for a few minutes, lost in thought, while the smoke encircled his head. At length he looked at his visitor.

"Are you sure there was no damage to the *Norseman*?"

"I am certain. The hull near the bow was scorched, but that was all."

"Have you any idea how the fire started?"

"No. There was no one near the boat when I first saw the smoke."

"What was Captain Tettle doing there?"

"He was with me. I met him as he came out of the Flood Gate Saloon, and we walked along the street together."

"Did he help to put the fire out?"

"No. He was too busy stealing the model and getting back to his boat. I cannot understand why he did such a mean thing. I wonder how he knew what was in the parcel."

"He told me that Mr. Farthing had given it to him, and he demanded ten dollars for his trouble."

"He did! You didn't give it to him, I hope."

"Oh, yes, and I was glad to be rid of him. It's strange that Mr. Farthing didn't send a letter telling me how the *Norseman* is getting along, and when it is likely to be finished."

"I have the letter, sir," and Nat thrust his hand into a pocket of his jacket. "He gave it to me, and I forgot all about it."

As the premier read the letter his face brightened. Nat watched him with interest, for the letter was sufficient proof that he had told the truth about the model. He was much drawn towards the man sitting before him, and he was surprised at the feeling. He had heard so much about the premier, and as leader of the political party which his father had always opposed with considerable bitterness, he now believed that there had been a mistake somewhere. Politics proved a vital question to the older people, and entered into the very warp and woof of their being. The whole province was divided into two camps, and while feeling was always keen, it became intensified during an election. Bitter words and invectives were often exchanged when men of the opposing parties met. At times there were fights, but for the most part the battles were bloodless and ended in words. Children naturally sided with their parents. At school they waxed eloquent, and the boys often fought one another with fierce animosity. Nat had imbibed his father's views, and many a battle had he fought in defence of the "Champions." In his eyes the "Fair-Rights" were scoundrels of the deepest dye, robbing the country at every turn, while their leader was the worst of the gang, a regular monster of iniquity. He had even heard his father say that the leader of the "Fair-Rights" was the "Beast" mentioned in the Bible. Little wonder, then, that as a child Nat had always considered such a man as a terrible person, seeking by every means in his power to ruin the country. He had learned differently



since then, but the old feeling of animosity still remained, for what is implanted in the heart and mind in youth is hard to eradicate in after years.

But as he watched the premier reading the letter, and studied his face marked with lines of care and thought, his eyes became suddenly opened, and a new light dawned upon his mind. The leader of the "Fair-Rights" was not such a terrible monster, after all. He was very much like other men, with burdens and trials common to all. And, no doubt, his followers were the same, and, perhaps, there was no difference between them and the "Champions." There were good and bad men in both parties. He realised that now, and a feeling of anger filled his soul. He had always held his father's opinion in the highest regard, and his memory was most sacred. But he felt now that he had erred in judgment in condemning all who did not see eye to eye with him. It was ridiculous to believe that the "Fair-Rights" were all wrong, and the "Champions" alone right.

These thoughts passed rapidly through his mind as he sat there. At length the premier laid the letter upon the table and turned to his visitor.

"That letter gives me the information I have been waiting for. The work on the *Norseman* is going rapidly forward, and she will be ready for launching this fall. This is good news to me, as I have staked much on that ship."

"She's a beauty, sir. I have never seen a finer one. Any man would be proud to command her."

"You are right, captain. And he must be the best man I can find."

"So you haven't chosen him yet?"

"Oh, no. But there should be no trouble with so many excellent men to choose from. Our Bluenose clipper captains are known the world over. They are great men, and have done much to make our port famous."

"And a ship such as the *Norseman* will make it more famous."

"It will, it certainly will. I can hardly wait until she is finished. What a sight she will be under full sail, and with that figure-head—"

He ceased abruptly and looked again at the model. He then lifted it from the table and handled it fondly.

"John Farthing is a fine workman. He puts his soul into his carving, and his figure-heads live. I have seen a number of them, and they are wonderful."

"I am glad that you are satisfied with this model, sir. Mr. Farthing will be pleased, I know."

"Satisfied! Who wouldn't be satisfied? Mr. Farthing is afraid it will not suit me. What a man he is! He asks for suggestions and criticisms, as if I could add any thing to such a piece of work as that! I shall send it back at once. When do you expect to

sail?"

"As soon as we get loaded. To-morrow night, if possible."

"That is good. It will give me a whole day to keep the model and show it to my friends. I shall send it to your boat to-morrow evening. The *Flying Scud* is her name, I think you said."

"Yes, sir, and she's now lying in the stream."

A knock sounded upon the door. The premier glanced at his watch as he rose quickly to his feet.

"I have a meeting to attend, and did not know it was so near the time," he explained. "You will excuse me, captain."

Nat picked up the stick he had dropped upon the floor, and wrapped it up again. As the premier watched him, a twinkle appeared in his eyes.

"What are you going to do with that, captain?"

"I am going to show it to Ru. It will mean more to him than he ever imagined before I get through with him."

"Don't be too hard on the fellow."

"Oh, no. I'll handle him like a baby, soft and gentle."

The premier gave a quick keen glance at the tall erect young man standing before him. He appealed to him as a noble type of manhood, straight of limb, straight of eye, and straight of tongue. Impulsively he thrust his hand into a pocket and brought forth a crisp new ten-dollar bill.

"Here is something for you, captain."

"What for, sir?"

"For your trouble in coming here, and also for taking the model back to Mr. Farthing."

A gleam of anger leaped into Nat's eyes. Not only were his feelings wounded, but his opinion of the premier underwent a sudden change. The latter realized this, and he returned the money to his pocket.

"Excuse me, captain, I'm sorry."

"So am I, sir. I didn't think it of you."

"That I would offer you money?"

"Yes, sir."

"But what is wrong about this? Honest service deserves its reward."

"But this is different. I want no pay when I do a favor for Mr. Farthing. Good night, sir."

## CHAPTER IX

### JUSTICE

Nat's brain was in a tumult as he left the hotel. Ru's contemptible deed filled his soul with a burning rage. He could think of nothing else, and even the lost passenger was forgotten. He strode along the street hardly heeding where he was going, so engrossed was he with the thoughts that were agitating his mind. He wanted to get off somewhere by himself that he might think out his future course of action.

Coming at length to a park-like place where great trees lifted their massive forms into the night, he dropped upon the ground at the foot of one of the largest. It was quiet here, and the few people who occasionally passed did not notice the silent man nearby. The night was calm, and the rising moon threw its silver beams across the placid river. Off to the right came faint sounds from the city, and lights twinkled through the branches of the trees. The air was balmy, and peace lay like a benediction upon the river and land. But no peace came into Nat's soul. He longed to meet Ru and give him the thorough thrashing he deserved. That he could do it he had not the least doubt, for he had met him more than once in the past, and he knew what the outcome had been.

It was not Nat's nature to be downhearted. But now a strange and gloomy foreboding settled upon him. A subtle and sinister force seemed to be working against him. It loomed up out of the darkness like a terrible monster, reaching out to seize him in its grip. He had never experienced such a feeling before, and in order to dispel it he rose quickly to his feet.

As he did so, the sound of a woman's voice singing a familiar song floated alluringly from the river. He looked and saw a boat drifting across the lighted pathway of the moon. The woman continued her singing, and as Nat listened with straining ears, there came to his mind another woman down river who had held him spell-bound with her bewitching voice. He thought of her, too, as he had seen her in the little boat, with her wind-tossed hair, sending forth her challenging words. Then he remembered the run up river, the lighted house, and the mysterious disappearance of the passenger.

Sinking down again upon the ground he gave himself up to serious meditation. His brain was cooler now, and his anger had somewhat subsided. But still that strange depression rested upon him. The hand of fate seemed to be turned against him. He was not accustomed to such a feeling and it puzzled him.

He was aroused at length by the sound of voices not far away. One was a woman's, and as Nat listened he became interested in what she was saying. She was

pleading with someone, and there was a tragic intensity in her words.

"You said you would marry me, and you must before it is too late."

"Oh, there's no hurry. Wait till I make another trip an' have more money."

Nat was on his hands and knees now, crouching like a tiger ready to spring. He knew the man's voice, the man he wanted to meet more than anyone else. Yes, it was Ru Tettle. He could hardly restrain himself, and his body quivered with excitement. But he waited, and with a great effort held himself in check.

"No, no, we must not wait." It was the woman speaking again. "It might be too late, and—."

"Oh, shut yer mouth or I'll do it fer ye."

"Ru, Ru, don't say that! For God's sake, marry me before you go!"

"I can't, I tell ye, so stop yer whinin'."

The two were standing beneath the shade of a big tree, so Nat could only discern their dim forms through the darkness. But he could see the man move as if to go away and the woman spring towards him. Then followed a startled cry as the woman staggered back from a blow upon the face. She dropped to the ground, moaning and weeping bitterly.

Like a hound unleashed, Nat leaped forward and hurled himself upon the cowardly villain. Ru went down with a thud, and as Nat stood waiting for him to rise, the woman sprang to her feet and filled the air with wild and prolonged shrieks. Hurrying footsteps were soon heard, and in a few minutes they were surrounded by a crowd which had come as if by magic out of the night. Nat was confused by the noise and excitement and started to move away. As he did so, a firm hand was laid upon his arm. It was a policeman! Where he had come from Nat did not know. Neither did he much care. As in a dream he stood there and heard the woman tell of the assault which had been made upon her companion. He let her talk, preferring to say nothing on his own behalf. He felt that any explanation then would be useless, so the less said the better. And, besides, he seemed to be in the grip of some merciless fate, so he allowed himself to be led away without the slightest protest. A strange sense of apathy and indifference had settled upon him, making him careless of what might happen next. Not even when he was thrust into the jail cell and the door locked upon him, did he offer the least objection.

Everything had happened so swiftly that he was completely bewildered. But when alone, and lying upon his rude bed, his brain began to function, and he thought over all that had happened. He had always known that Ru was a cowardly villain, but what he had learned this night filled his soul with disgust. Ru had betrayed a woman, and hurled her from him with a blow. And yet the woman had defended

him, and turned against the one who had gone to her assistance. That was what puzzled Nat. But, perhaps, the woman was as bad as Ru.

At once there came into his mind the strong and beautiful face of Faith Farthing. And Ru had been making love to her! This thought caused Nat to sit suddenly up and his hands to clench hard together. Did Faith know of Ru's baseness? What a shock it would be to her should she learn of her lover's association with another woman, and evidently a low type of a woman, at that. It would almost break her heart, he felt sure. The mental vision of Faith was inspiring to him now. She stood out like a shining angel of light against the darkness of depression which overshadowed him. She was true, no matter who else might prove false. She would stand by him when others failed. And into this picture his mother appeared. Yes, she, too, could be depended upon. His mother and Faith. Upon them he could rely. It was strange that no vision came to him this night of the woman with the bewitching voice and the wind-tossed hair. In fact, he never once thought about her.

In the morning Nat was taken before the Police Magistrate upon the charge of assault. The courtroom was crowded, for news of the affair had spread with great rapidity. Ru and the woman were there and witnessed against him. He was not surprised at the lies Ru told, for it was second nature to him. But he was astonished at the woman's false words. She swore that she and Ru had been talking quietly together when the assault was made. She denied the statement that Ru had struck her. The piece of wood which Nat had dropped was produced as evidence, and Ru swore that Nat had hit him with it.

All this took considerable time. Nat noticed the look of triumph upon Ru's face, and the expression of hatred in his eyes as he glanced several times in his direction. Everything seemed to be against the prisoner, and to the crowd of curious spectators his case appeared hopeless. And so it seemed to Nat except for one thing, and that was the Magistrate's manner. When he spoke to the witnesses there was a note of severe sharpness in his voice which was not apparent when he addressed the prisoner. Just what was the meaning of that Nat did not know, but it gave him a certain degree of comfort and hope.

At last the Magistrate looked steadily at Ru, so steadily, in fact, that the young man shuffled uneasily and averted his eyes.

"Look at me," the Magistrate sternly ordered. "Did you ever see this before?" He held up the piece of wood for inspection.

"N-no, sir," Ru stammered, while his face turned suddenly pale.

"You didn't, eh? Your memory must be very poor. Let me freshen it up a bit. Don't you remember a little parcel you unwrapped, took out a ship's figure-head

model, and substituted this in its place?”

“I-I don’t—.”

“Just a minute,” the Magistrate interrupted. “Didn’t you steal this model in Saint John, bring it up river to the premier, tell him a bare-faced lie, and demand a payment of ten dollars for your trouble?”

The expression upon Ru’s face had undergone a remarkable change. His weak mouth was agape, and his staring eyes were filled with a nameless fear. He glanced nervously around, but he only saw now the hostile faces of those in the room. Then he realised that things were not going to his liking and a sudden rage smote his heart.

“What has all that to do with this case?” he growled.

“A great deal, I should say. It shows what kind of a man you really are, and that your word is of no value whatsoever. You stole this model, and then lied to the premier. If Captain Royal hit you with that piece of wood it served you right. I might have done the same myself if I had been in his position.”

“But Nat attacked me,” Ru defended.

“And why did he attack you?”

“Dunno.”

“You do. Didn’t you hit this woman?”

“Naw, never touched her.”

The Magistrate paused for a few seconds, and then motioned to a couple of men who had been seated nearby, to come forward.

“You have something to say, gentlemen, I believe.”

“We have, your honor,” one of them replied. “I shall speak first. Swear me.”

“Now, tell what you know, Mr. Beltwain,” the Magistrate requested as he leaned back in his chair.

“What the prisoner says is true, your honor. My friend here and I were strolling through the park last night and rested for a while under one of those big trees. We could not help overhearing the conversation which took place not far off. Captain Tettle did hit this woman. She staggered back with a cry and fell to the ground. We started to go to her assistance, but Captain Royal was there first. Yes, what the prisoner said is true.”

The other man confirmed what Mr. Beltwain had said, and when he was through a tense silence reigned for a few seconds in the room. Ru was ghastly pale, and he slumped down upon a nearby bench. The Magistrate ordered him to stand up, and eyed him sternly as he struggled to his feet.

“What have you to say now?” he demanded.

Ru, however, made no reply. His lips moved, but he uttered no sound.

“Speechless, eh?” the Magistrate queried. “And well you may be. You lied about Captain Royal, didn’t you? And you hit this woman?”

Again Ru looked helplessly and hopelessly around.

“Out with it. You lied?”

“I did.”

The Magistrate rose to his feet.

“The prisoner is honorably discharged, and the Court dismissed.” He then turned towards Ru. “I want you and this woman to remain. I have something to say to you both.”

## CHAPTER X

### THE "WIG-WAG"

Tom was anxiously awaiting Nat's return. He went ashore for him and tried to conceal his impatience as he rowed back to the *Scud*.

"I thought t' goodness ye was never comin'," he growled.

"So did I, Tom. You've heard, I suppose, what happened to me?"

"Oh, yes. I got word of it in no time. A purty mess ye got into. I'm glad, though, that ye punched Ru. How did ye manage to git out of jail?"

"I'll tell you later, Tom. Just now I want to know when we'll be ready to sail."

"T'night, by the look of things. We're gittin' loaded fast."

Nat was pleased to be back on the boat, and as he stood upon deck watching the deals being drawn up over the side, his former spirit of animation returned. The scenes of the past night, and the trial that morning seemed like a bad night-mare now. He wondered how the Magistrate knew the story of that model. Who had told him? Perhaps he had met the premier.

Tom was below preparing dinner, for it was near noon. The odor of frying bacon drifted up temptingly through the open hatchway. Nat was hungry, for he had eaten very little of the meagre jail food that morning.

"I'm nearly starved," he informed Tom a few minutes later as he took his seat at the small cabin table.

"Didn't take much to prison fare, eh?"

"I should say not. I wasn't hungry, anyway. My mind was too much disturbed to think about eating."

"An' I guess ye wouldn't have eaten much if ye'd been here, me boy. I didn't eat a bite of breakfast."

"What was the matter? Worrying about me?"

"Not exactly that. But me appetite was spiled by too many questions flung at me. Two of 'em police fellers were here inquiren' about that passenger we lost overboard."

"They were! How did they hear about it?"

"Oh, they hadn't heard about the accident till I told 'em. But they'd received word from Saint John early this mornin' about a robbery down there two or three days ago. Money was stolen, an' at last the police got wind that the thief had boarded an up river boat. That's what them fellers said."

"So that passenger was a thief!" Nat stopped eating and stared at his companion.



"It seems so. But he didn't git fer in this world with his swag, an' now, most likely, he's bein' entertained by the divil."

"Do you think so, Tom?"

"That's what I'd like to know fer sure, Nat. Why didn't he yelp or make a splash when he went overboard? But mebbe the divil took him right off the deck body an' britches."

"His disappearance is a great mystery to me, Tom. Do you suppose the police will believe our story? What did the men say when you told them what you know?"

"Nuthin' much, 'cept to fire more questions, sich as what the feller looked like, his build, and general make-up. They were curious to know, too, where he went overboard, but I couldn't tell 'em that."

"Did they seem surprised?"

"They did, 'specially when I told 'em that the divil must have taken that feller. They laffed at that, an' seemed to think it funny."

"But it's not funny to us, Tom. The police, and everybody else, for that matter, will doubt our story. It will seem too suspicious to them. How will we be able to make them believe that a man could disappear from our boat in mid-river without making some sound? I would hardly believe it myself unless I had been there."

"Quite true, Nat. But mebbe his body will come up. It'll take about nine days to float, an' sooner if we git a thunder storm. In the meantime we'll have to rest on our oars an' wait."

"But suppose the police suspect us of foul play, Tom?"

"Foul play! What d'ye mean?"

"That we killed that man to get the money."

Tom's eyes opened wide with astonishment and fear. He dropped his fork and stared at Nat.

"No one would think that about us, me boy. We're too well known an' respected fer anyone to suspect us."

"That won't count much when it comes to a man's death under mysterious circumstances."

"Mebbe yer right. We can't explain anything, that's sartin. An' t' think that the feller had money with him, tied around his waist, no doubt. The rascal!"

Nat pushed back the bench upon which he had been sitting, and rose to his feet.

"I'm going to the police station, Tom, and make my report. That's all I can do."

"Don't fergit to mention the divil, Nat. Some people are mighty superstitious, so if we kin make 'em believe that the Old Boy had a hand in this affair it might help us out a lot."

“So you want to put the blame on the devil, Tom?”

“Sure I do. He’s back of this hull mess. He’s to blame fer puttin’ that feller up to do the stealin’ just as much as when he got Eve to eat the apple in the Garden of Eden. Yes, he’s to blame fer all the cussedness in the world, so don’t fergit to mention that fact to the police.”

Nat went ashore and reported about the missing passenger. He told his story simply and in a straight-forward manner. Whether he was believed or not, he could not tell, but he felt relieved. He had done his duty, anyway, no matter what the outcome might be.

By sundown the *Scud* was loaded, the sails hoisted, and all in readiness for the run down river. Ru had left an hour before, so Nat was anxious to get under way. He knew that with reasonable success he could overtake the *Snag* and beat her down to the harbor. He had done it before, so he believed that he could do it now.

So far the premier had not sent the model, and Nat wondered if he had forgotten all about it. But just as the anchor was being weighed, a small boat put off from shore with two men on board. One was rowing, and the other was seated astern.

“Why, it’s the premier’s ‘wig-wag’!” Tom exclaimed. “What in time is he comin’ here fer!”

“Be careful, Tom, or Sammy will hear you,” Nat warned. “You must treat him with great respect, remember.”

“Oh, trust me fer that, Nat. Me an’ Sammy are good friends, even though he thinks I’m only a grub. But he’s the premier’s tail, fer all that, an’ does his wig-waggin’. But I like the runt. He’s great sport.”

In a few minutes the small boat was alongside, and then the man seated astern rose to his feet. He steadied himself with his cane and looked up at Nat.

“Give me a hand, captain.”

In another minute Sammy Shaver was standing on deck, brushing some dust from his clothes. He was an odd-looking man, almost diminutive in size. His silk hat added somewhat to his height, and, as he imagined, to his dignity. He was well past the prime of life, but no one knew his exact age. His was a serious wizened face, and so was his mind, for Sammy took life seriously. His head was large in proportion to his body, so large, in fact, that if he had not been Sammy Shaver he might have been a second Napoleon. Someone had once said that the Lord had intended to make him a great genius, but had repented and turned him into a premier’s wig-wag. Sammy, however, did not consider himself a mere appendage to his leader. In his own estimation he was a vital part of the government, and without his assistance his party could not possibly get along. He was no useless plaything, but a very important

person, charged with a heavy responsibility.

And many believed that the premier found Sammy most helpful. Apart from his sympathy for the unfortunate fellow whom he had known all his life, Sammy was able to supply him with valuable information. Through him he learned what people were talking about, and various political rumors. While all considered him as a joke, they were also aware of the unnatural and almost uncanny workings of his strange mind. His memory was very retentive, and his gift of speech most remarkable. Parrot-like he could harangue for hours at a time from the vast store of knowledge he had acquired about the government, and the evil deeds of the Opposition. He always caused much amusement wherever he went, especially where there was a crowd. He was then in his element, and perched on a box or a barrel he would harangue to his heart's content while his audience cheered. So satisfied was he with himself that he could never see that he was the laughing-stock of all. And, perhaps, it was just as well, for his self-importance gave him a great deal of pleasure, and harmed no one.

For years Sammy had been a peddler, travelling about the country with his pack, selling his wares at the farm houses. He was welcomed everywhere, for he always carried the latest news and knew the gossip for miles around. Nat as a child had known the fellow, and liked him. Sammy's arrival had always been a treat, for his pack contained so many wonderful and mysterious things to delight a boy's heart. Then later when he was a big husky lad, on his way home from the store one night when a furious north east storm was raging, he had rescued the peddler from a snow bank. Sammy would undoubtedly have perished but for this timely assistance. Sammy never forgot this, and no matter how much he might tongue-lash his other political opponents, he never uttered a word against his rescuer. Even after his peddling days were over, and the premier for old time's sake had taken him under his sheltering care, he always remembered the ones who had been kind to him in his days of adversity.

The *Scud* drifted slowly down river with just enough wind to bulge her sails. Nat was at the wheel, with Sammy seated upon a box by his side smoking a cigar of which he always had a plentiful supply. He had offered one to Tom, but the latter preferred his old blackened pipe.

"I like me aged friend best, Sammy. It stands by me through thick an' thin, an' doesn't burn out as quick as a cigar."

"Judging by the look and smell, Tom, that pipe is strong enough to stand anything."

"Yer right, Sammy, an' I guess me an' Nat'll need purty strong friends to stand

by us, judgin' from all appearance. Ye've heard the news, I s'pose?"

"About the scrape Nat got into last night? Wasn't that all settled in the court this morning?"

"Aw, that's not botherin' us now. It's the losin' of that passenger overboard, I mean."

"Yes, we've heard about that, too, and it's worrying us. We don't know what to think about it."

To Sammy the government consisted of himself and the premier. The various members of the Cabinet did not count for much in his eyes. He and his leader were the only ones worthy of consideration. Hence, he always said "we" and "us" when speaking about matters of importance.

"Ye're goin' down river to 'vestigate, I s'pose?" Tom queried.

"Not now. We have other business affairs on hand at present, the most important of which is the building of the *Norseman*. We are anxious to get the work done as speedily as possible. We like the figure-head Mr. Farthing sent us, so we are now taking it back to him."

"So that's what ye've got in that parcel, is it? I thought mebbe it was some of the government boodle."

"We don't need any boodle to support us, Tom. We stand upon our own merits, and people know it. We are not robbers and grafters like the Opposition."

"Not like that feller we lost overboard, eh? I wonder to which party he belonged. Anyway, he didn't git very fer with his swag. What d'ye s'pose he thinks about his diviltry now?"

"We cannot pierce the veil, Tom, which hides us from the Spirit world, so we cannot know what is taking place there."

"Mebbe not, Sammy, but I kin make a purty good guess how that feller's spendin' his time."

Tom pulled a plug of tobacco from his pocket, and began to carve off several liberal slices.

"Yes," he continued, "I think I know what he's doin', an' he doesn't like his job. Most likely we'll see his ghost on our way down river."

"Do you think so, Tom?"

"We're a'most sure to."

Sammy started, and a slight pallor overspread his face. He was terribly afraid of ghosts, and this Tom well knew. Nothing could induce him to pass a grave-yard alone at night. Of man and beast he had no fear, but the thought of seeing a ghost completely unnerved him. It was the one and only dread of his life.

“W-what makes you think we shall see a ghost, Tom?”

“Oh, I dunno. I’ve seen lots of ’em, ’specially ghosts of men who have been drowned. They allus come back fer a visit or two. Now, I wouldn’t be a bit surprised if we find out where that feller went overboard. Jist when we reach the spot where he tumbled in without a splash or a yelp we’ll see him standin’, mebbe, up forrard. The sight’ll lift the hair on yer head an’ send the cold shivers skitterin’ up an’ down yer spine. Oh, I know what the feelin’s like, fer I’ve had it often, an’ there’s nuthin’ so awful. An’ then—”

“Tom,” Nat interrupted, “take the wheel for a spell. I have some work to do in the cabin. Come with me, Sammy. I want to have a talk with you.”

Tom glanced at Sammy’s scared face as he rose slowly to his feet. His eyes twinkled as the frightened little man disappeared through the hatchway.

“I’ll wake ye up, Sammy, when the ghost shows up,” he shouted. “It’ll be night, too.”

“Stop teasing him,” Nat ordered. “He’s almost scared out of his senses.

“I know he is, Nat. But it’s great fun to see the little runt brought down from his high-horse. He’s got a swelled head, an’ a ghost is the only thing that’ll take the swellin’ down.”

## CHAPTER XI

### GHOSTS

Sammy came on deck early the next morning. Tom was at the wheel, and he smiled as he looked at the little man standing before him.

"Fine mornin', Sammy. Hope ye slept well."

"Fairly good, Tom. But the air was too close for a good sleep. You need better ventilation. My! this air is fine up here." He expanded his chest and breathed deep and long. "You and Nat will suffocate some night down there."

"Why, I thought ye liked sich a place, Sammy."

"Like it! Like that stuffy hole!"

"Sure. I thought mebbe ye'd feel perfectly at home, seein' ye belong to the government which needs ventilatin' bad. The air there is purty foul, so I understand."

This taunt stung Sammy to the quick. With hands clasped under the long tails of his black coat, he paced pompously to and fro across the deck. Tom knew what was coming and his eyes twinkled in pleasurable anticipation. Presently Sammy stopped and faced him.

"You are certainly wrong about us, Tom. Everything we do is honest and above-board. We welcome the most searching inquiry into our acts. Our doors and windows are always open, and we allow no foulness to gather such as you have charged. Our enemies will persist in their lies, but they cannot prove anything against us."

"H'm, is that so? But what about that bridge at Silver Trout Brook, me boy?"

"Well, what about it?"

"You ought to know, Sammy. Didn't the government give the contract to build that bridge to Jed Hickster, one of yer loyal heelers? Sure it did. Jed put all rotten logs into the piers which didn't last no time. He had the logs on hand an' wanted to git clear of 'em. Jed's brother, Sam, was inspector, an' he passed the job. Jed got the full amount of money, an' now the bridge is a wreck. What d'ye think of that?"

"We examined the bridge, Tom, and found it first-class. There was nothing wrong about the work."

"There wasn't!" Tom's eyes opened wide in amazement, and his hands dropped for an instant from the wheel. "Good heavens, man! ye must be jokin'."

"I am not. The work that we do is always good."

"But that wasn't. It rotted down in no time."

"It was the weather, and spring floods. This country is hard on bridges."

Tom looked quizzically at the little man standing so pompously before him.

"Sammy, yer either a fool or a liar. Ye know as well as I do why that bridge didn't last, an' yit ye have the gall to say it was a good job. It's another gov'ment skeleton, an' I guess there's plenty more of 'em locked up which yer all afraid to bring out into the light. Ye can't deny it, Sammy."

"We have no skeletons, Tom. But the old government had plenty of them. We found that out when we came into power."

"Their bones rattled, eh?"

"They certainly did. I could tell you some queer stories of crooked work you would hardly believe."

"Oh, I'd believe anything after what I saw last night."

"What was it?"

"A ghost, an' it came right on board this boat."

"It did!" The expression of uneasiness in Sammy's eyes satisfied Tom. He knew how to make the "government" quake. If rotten bridges and such things could not move this important little man, the mere mention of ghosts would.

"Yes, Sammy, I had jist relieved Nat, an' he had gone below when the thing appeared."

"My! my! wern't ye almost scared to death, Tom?"

"Scared? Not a bit. I knew the ghost, fer I'd seen it before. It was Clem Jones who was drowned, ye remember, several years ago. An' at the very place where he went down he allus comes up."

"He does!"

"Yes, right there. I knew Clem when he was a gov'ment heeler, an' though he's now a ghost, I'm allus glad to see him an' have a friendly chat. An' I guess he's glad to see me. Anyway, he says it's good to git a breath of fresh air, fer it's purty hot down below."

"Is he in hell now, Tom?" Sammy's eyes were bulging, and he came up close to the wheel.

"Yes, I guess that's where Clem hangs out most of the time. Ye see, he's gittin' punished fer what he done when he was on earth. He was a great gov'ment supporter an' got full pay fer the many rotten bridges he built. He made a lot of money, Clem did, but he's payin' up fer it now so he told me. It's a hard life he leads down there judgin' from what he says."

"In what way? Very hot?"

"Yes hot, an' somethin' more'n that. He can't git no rest. Everything is so rotten."

"Rotten! Rotten in hell!"

"So Clem says. If he sits down on a chair, it falls to pieces beneath him. If he lays down on a bed or a sofy, it drops right from under him. No matter where he walks everything gives way beneath his feet. He spends all his time fallin' down an' pickin' himself up ag'in. Everything is as rotten as the bridges he built, an' so that's his punishment. The only relief he gits is when he comes on board this boat."

"It's a wonder it doesn't go to pieces, too, Tom. It's old and rotten enough to collapse at any time."

"Guess yer right, Sammy. The *Scud* is sartinly old, an' there's no knowin' when she might drop apart. But so fer she's done her trick an' is able yit to outsail any boat on the river. Clem likes her, a' right. An', by the way, he asked about you, too."

"He did!"

"Yes, an' when I told him ye was down below havin' yer beauty-sleep, he wanted to go right down an' have a chat with ye."

"Lord!" It was all that Sammy could say. His pompous manner had vanished, and his teeth were chattering with fear. Even a half-fool would have known that Tom was lying. But Sammy was more than that at times, especially in his belief about ghosts. He had no doubt about their reality. He was not to blame for this peculiar twist in his nature. It was due to pre-natal influences, so it was generally believed. Several months before he was born, his mother had become wildly hysterical owing to a foolish person who had appeared suddenly before her one night, covered with a white sheet. Although the culprit did it only as a prank, it proved most serious, as it almost caused the death of Mrs. Shaver, and sadly affected the mind and body of her only child. Tom knew all this and felt sorry for the unfortunate fellow whom he really liked. He could not, however, resist the temptation of scaring Sammy, especially when he became unbearably important. It did no harm, so he believed, and a little fun relieved the monotony of the trip down river. But he also had the wisdom not to go too far, so when he saw Sammy's staring eyes and quaking body, he said nothing more just then. And, besides, a breeze had sprung up, so he and Nat had to give more attention to their work.

During the night their progress had been slow, but with a wind winging in from the west they sped forward, beating from side to side down the somewhat narrow channel. Both Nat and Tom were kept busy, so Sammy was left much to himself. But such was the little man's nature that he would not allow himself to be neglected. Childlike, he soon forgot his fright at Tom's ghost stories and became as pompous as before. He imagined that he was an experienced sailor and knew all about handling a boat. At first he began to give orders where orders were unnecessary. As the *Scud* swept to the left on her short-leg run, he paced the deck with watchful eyes. Then



when he thought the time had come to tack, he roared out his command, and was annoyed when it was not immediately obeyed. Nat, who was at the wheel, only smiled to himself and paid no heed to the order. But Tom was not as patient, so when Sammy had given his third command, he stepped swiftly to his side and glared down upon the little fellow.

“See here, me hearty, ye kin be the hull gov’ment show if ye want to, but yer not goin’ to run this boat. If ye don’t stop that clapper of yours, I’ll soon do it fer ye. D’ye hear?”

Sammy heard and heeded, for he had great respect for Tom when he glared at him so fiercely. He retreated to a safe place where he remained in silent dignity for some time. Nat felt sorry for him, and at the first opportunity he advised Tom to be more gentle.

“He means well, and I like to hear him. He sounds so funny.”

“But he doesn’t to me, Nat. I kin stand a hull lot from that little rooster, but when he undertakes to run this craft, then I object. If he isn’t careful I’ll tell him another ghost story. An’ I won’t let him off as easy as I did the last time.”

“You had better be careful, Tom, or something might happen to you for telling such lies. Like chickens, they sometimes come home to roost.”

“Mebbe they do, me boy, but they’ve been a long time on the way, an’ they haven’t got here yit.”

All the afternoon they beat down stream, past pleasant homes, fragrant meadows, and wide-spreading intervals. It was a voyage through fairyland on this bright summer day. Nature was at her best, and had lavished her gifts without stint upon the noble valley of the Saint John River. But so common were the scenes of beauty to the boatmen that they took them all as a matter of course. Their business was to get their deals to the harbor as soon as possible. That was their chief concern, and not the studying and admiring the beauty of the ever-changing panorama through which they were moving.

The wind went down with the sun, and with its last breath the *Scud* just managed to reach Oak Point and anchor in the cove on the upper side. Both Nat and Tom were surprised to see the *Snag* lying there with her sails down and old Jed Dicer sitting aft, calmly smoking. Tom stared hard at the *Snag* for a few seconds. He then lifted up his voice and called across the water.

“Hello, Jed, what are ye doin’ here?”

The man thus addressed raised his head and removed the pipe from his mouth.

“Hey, what’s that ye say?”

“What are ye doin’ here? Are ye deaf?”

“Jist restin’. Are ye blind, Tom?”

“Where’s Ru?”

“Ashore.”

Jed put the pipe back into his mouth and dropped his shaggy head. Tom gazed at him in disgust.

“The cranky bear! I’ll go over an’ rouse him up. But what in time is the *Snag* doin’ here! She should be well down the Reach by now. Ru’d never dilly-dally like this without some good reason. He’s up to more divltry, no doubt.”

Nat went ashore, but before he left Tom handed him a lantern.

“Take this along with ye, lad, an’ git a chimney fer it. We might need it before we reach the city. If yer ma hasn’t one to fit, ye’d better bring hers, an’ she kin git another at the store.”

Tom took Nat ashore in the small boat, and then rowed over to the *Snag* to pay Jed a visit. Thus Sammy was left alone on the *Scud*, which was not at all to his liking. He had asked to go ashore, but Nat did not want him tagging after him. He wished to have a quiet time at home, and that would be out of the question with Sammy present who would be sure to do most of the talking. And besides, he had the girl of the Creek House in mind. He might meet her, and if he did, he did not want the little man around.

So Sammy had to content himself as well as he could. He remained on deck until darkness settled over the land, and then went down into the cabin, lighted the lamp and stretched himself upon one of the bunks. Soon he was fast asleep and snoring loudly.

He was awakened by a crash right overhead. At first he thought the roof of the cabin was being torn off. To his relief he saw Tom standing by his side.

“What’s the matter?” he asked. “Or was it only a dream?”

“It’s the thunder, Sammy. It’s a bad storm. Listen.”

The crashing of the thunder was terrifying, and the lightning incessant. The matter-of-fact Tom was much awed, and he was in no mood to jibe at Sammy’s white face and trembling body. He even felt uneasy about the state of his own soul.

“Say, Sammy, d’ye s’pose the Day of Jedgment will be anything like this?”

“L-like this, Tom! Why, this is no more like the Day of Judgment than the squeak of a mouse is to a brass band. That’s according to the Bible.”

“Ye don’t say so! I wonder how we’ll fit in then, Sammy?”

“Oh, I’ll be all right. But I have my doubts about you, Tom.”

“Have ye?”

“Yes. I got religion at a revival meeting when I was young, so I’m saved, no

matter what happens.”

“Well, that’s interestin’, though no one would ever know it. My! jist listen to that clap! The storm’s gittin’ worse. Yer ’ligion’s been a great comfort to ye, I s’pose?”

“Yes, it has always supported me in times of trouble.”

“But it doesn’t seem to be of much comfort to ye now, Sammy, jedgin’ by yer looks an’ the way yer shakin’.”

“It’s my nerves, Tom. They always act this way during a thunder storm. I can’t control them at all. You don’t know what troublesome things nerves are. You never experienced the feeling.”

“No, mebbe I haven’t, but if they’re anything like me sins which are troublin’ me jist now they must be purty bad. An’ I ain’t got ’ligion to comfort me. But I’m not anxious fer the kind you’ve got, jedgin’ by yer appearance. But, say, there’s the rain, a reg’lar cloud-burst. I fergot to close the hatch.”

Springing up the stairway with the rain beating upon him, Tom was almost to the top step, and had just reached up to let down the door, when an unusually vivid streak almost blinded him. He glanced over the piles of deals, and as he did so, he gave vent to a wild yell of terror. He tore the hatch from its fastening, and as it slammed to with a bang, Tom tumbled down to the cabin floor, his face terror-stricken and his body shaking like a leaf in the wind.

At the yell of terror Sammy had leaped from the bunk, and was almost knocked down by Tom as he came hurtling down the stairs. He steadied himself as well as he could and peered down upon the prostrate form.

“Tom, Tom, what’s the matter?” he demanded.

Slowly the old boatman gathered his sprawling arms and legs together, scrambled to his knees and looked piteously into his companion’s face.

“It’s the Lord’s doin’s, Sammy. He’s punishin’ me fer the lies I told ye this mornin’. He hit me hard an’ I deserve it. But, oh, it was awful!”

He buried his face in his hands as if to shut out some horrible sight. Sammy was shaking from head to foot.

“Did the lightnin’ strike ye, Tom?”

“No, no. I saw a ghost.”

“A ghost!” Sammy staggered back as from a blow. “W-where? W-what? W-who? Clem Jones?”

“It was that feller’s ghost who fell overboard. It was standin’ up there on the deals lookin’ straight at me. Oh, Lord! I never saw sich a sight. But I deserve it fer bein’ sich a liar.”

“Will it come down here, Tom?”

"Can't say. Ghosts kin go anywhere. Doors an' walls mean nothin' to 'em any more'n air. Lord! what's that?"

This exclamation was caused by a fierce banging on the hatch above.

"It's the ghost!" Sammy shrieked, as he bounded back into the bunk and covered his head with a blanket.

Although startled at first, Tom's face at once cleared of its frightened expression. He reached into a corner and seized an axe standing there.

"Ghosts don't make a racket like that," he declared. "It's some bein' in human form an' I'm not afraid of any critter with flesh an' blood."

Springing up the steps he threw open the door. With lifted axe he was ready to smite down the intruder. The next instant, however, his arms dropped when the voice of old Jed sounded from above.

"Let me in, Tom. Are ye crazy?"

"Oh, it's you, Jed, is it? Yer welcome to come in, but ye needn't scare people out of their senses by sich bangin'."

"Did ye think I was a burglar?" Jed asked, as he followed Tom down into the cabin.

"I thought at first ye was the ghost I saw on deck. Sammy's scared into a fit there in the bunk with his head covered up."

"Did ye see a ghost, Tom?"

"Sure. It was on top of them deals. It's a wonder you didn't see it."

Jed laughed outright.

"Guess it was me ye saw, Tom. I came here fer company. The storm got on me nerves."

"Did ye come over the deals?"

"I did."

"An' did ye hear me yell?"

"Hear ye! I could have heard ye a mile away. I thought fer sure somebody was murderin' ye, so that's why I did so much thumpin'."

Tom dropped the axe upon the floor and slumped down upon a bench near the table. Sammy uncovered his head and leaned out of the bunk. A smile overspread Jed's wrinkled face.

"My, my, what heroes! Took me fer a ghost! Ha, ha! Me for a ghost! Old Jed Dicer a ghost! Ho, ho! That's a good one."

This was more than Tom could stand. He lifted his head and glared fiercely at his amused visitor.

"Ye kin 'ha, ha' and 'ho, ho' all ye like, ye old shrimp. But it wasn't you I saw

out on them deals. It was a ghost, an' it didn't have bandy legs like yours, let me tell ye that. Yes, it was that drowned feller I saw, an' all yer laffin' an' crowin' can't make me believe different."

## CHAPTER XII

### WHEN THE STORM RAGED

The sudden storm dispelled Nat's hope of seeing the girl of the Creek House. He had much to tell his mother, and she was not only interested but deeply concerned.

"What experiences you have had, Nat, since I saw you last. And to think that the man who was lost overboard was a thief! I wonder where he was drowned. How strange that you did not hear a splash and that he did not make any outcry."

"It is, mother, and that is what puzzles me. I was awake all the time and heard nothing unusual. One has to be very alert and attentive when steering at night, especially above the Reach. It is mighty lonely, too, and the only thing I saw of any special interest that night was the Creek House ablaze with light."

Nat was anxious to hear something about Sylvia Sarason, and he was disappointed when his mother showed no surprise at what he told her. She was much more interested in her son's experiences just then than the doings of her neighbors.

"Did you hear about that lighted house, mother? It was unusual."

"I suppose it was. But they are queer people living over there, so I am not astonished at anything they do. Henry Cross told me he saw the lighted house from his place across the creek. He was so curious that he rowed over to see if he could find out what was taking place there. He did not dare go near the house for fear of the dog, so kept a short distance from the shore. It was dark, so he could not be seen. He waited quite a while but could learn nothing. It was quiet about the place, and he saw no one moving in the house. He was about to go back home when some one came down to the shore, got into a boat and rowed off towards the island. Whether it was a man or woman he could not tell, as he could only see a dim form in the darkness."

"What time of the night was that, mother?"

"About midnight, I think Henry said."

Nat gave a slight start and became suddenly silent. He was thinking rapidly, and remembered that it was then that he passed Oak Point. Was it there that the passenger had left the *Scud*? And was there any connection between his disappearance and that lighted house? And what about that small boat which left for the island about that time? There was something in these events he felt sure, and he sat so long in thought that his mother wondered what had come over him. She believed that he might be brooding over his recent troubles.

"You must not worry too much, Nat. You had nothing to do about the death of that passenger. Surely no one can blame you."

"People will wonder, though, mother. Unless the body is found, or the mystery solved in some other way, Tom and I will be under suspicion. That man must have had a large sum of money on his person, remember. It's a nasty situation for us and I feel it keenly."

Just then the roll of thunder sounded off in the west, and a few minutes later the lightning became very vivid. As the storm increased in fury, Nat knew that his hope of seeing Sylvia Sarason that night was useless. She would not venture out in such a tempest, he felt sure. Mrs. Royal rose, closed all the windows, and then came back to where her son was sitting.

"This is a terrible storm, Nat. I am so thankful you are home to-night. Oh!"

The cause of this exclamation was a blinding flash, followed instantly by a deafening clap of thunder. Nat sprang to his feet and stood by his mother's side.

"My, that's close! Something's hit near here, I'm sure. I hope it's not the barn."

He went to the kitchen and looked out of the back window. As he stood there flash after flash illuminated the landscape, almost blinding him. He was about to turn away when he saw someone walking towards the barn, followed by a dog. That it was the girl of the Creek House he had no doubt. What could she be doing there in such a storm? Was she crazy? He thought of the night she had thrilled him with her strange sweet song, and of her challenge the next morning on the river. Who else but a crazy person would be wandering around on such a night as this?

As he watched with fast-beating heart, the sheep frightened by the dog, set up a piteous bleating. Mrs. Royal, hearing the cries, came into the kitchen. She saw Nat donning his oil-skin coat and sou'wester. He then reached up and lifted down a rifle from the wall. His mother was trembling with fear.

"Oh, be careful, Nat."

"I hope to be careful of my aim. That dog won't worry our sheep any more, if I can help it."

He flung open the kitchen door, stepped out into the storm, and hurried towards the barn. His blood was up. What business had that girl there with her dog? But he would soon stop her nonsense.

He had almost reached the barn when the girl stood suddenly before him. The dog was at her side. She raised her hand in warning, and as he stopped abruptly he caught a glimpse of her face. It was etched there for a fleeting second against the blackness of the night, stern, tragic, and beautiful. It unnerved him, and the rifle dropped to the ground at his feet. Again he saw her face, and the expression in her

eyes startled him. The rain streamed from the sou'wester and the rubber coat she was wearing. Long strands of her wet hair were wreathed in confusion over her neck and shoulders, giving her the appearance of some weird spectre of the night. A feeling of awe filled Nat's soul. He wanted to speak, but words would not come. He simply stared, now through the inky blackness, and then through the blinding light.

"Pick up your rifle."

The command was peremptory, and it roused Nat from his strange spell. It annoyed him, too, and he made no move to obey.

"Pick it up. You may need it."

Slowly Nat stooped and lifted the rifle from the ground.

"You are right. I may need it for your dog."

The girl gave a short sarcastic laugh, and took a step towards him.

"Don't be a fool, captain. The dog will not harm your sheep to-night. But something may harm you, so keep the gun handy."

"Harm me!"

"Yes, down on the point. Keep away from the old barn. Don't go back to your boat to-night."

These words were uttered rapidly, almost in gasps like one in great fear. Nat was deeply impressed.

"What do you mean? Who will harm me?"

"I must not tell you any more. But you have been warned, so remember."

She then turned and left him with the dog following. Nat stood looking after her, catching fleeting glimpses of her as she hurried away. He was bewildered by her strange manner and words of warning. What did she know? She had told him to keep away from the old barn, and not to go back to his boat that night. But he must go that he might be ready to sail on the ebb tide about midnight. He could not afford to wait until morning. And, besides, he was no coward. Yet he must be cautious. The girl knew something of importance and had come to warn him.

He thought of this as he walked slowly back to the house. His mother was waiting his coming. She had seen him talking with the girl, and was most curious to know what she had said to him.

"That girl must be crazy, Nat, to be out in such a storm."

"You saw her, mother?"

"Why, certainly. I have always thought she was queer, and now I am certain."

"She is odd. But she promised me that her dog would not harm our sheep."

"I am very glad you caught her with that brute, and hope it will be a warning to her. But she is a mystery."



“Crazy people do strange things, remember.”

“I know they do, and that is why I am afraid of that girl. One can never tell what she may do.”

“Have you ever seen her around here in the daytime?”

“Not often, for she spends most of her time on the river. Something will happen to her some day, mark my word.”

Nat laid aside his oil-skin coat, and picked up the lantern he had brought from the *Scud*.

“Have you a chimney that will fit this, mother?”

“Yes, I have a spare one, clean and ready for you. I thought you might need it in a hurry some day. Your father always depended upon me to look after the lantern. Men are all alike, I guess. They don’t look very far ahead, and when they want anything, they want it put into their hands, and growl if it’s not ready.”

Nat was only too glad to have his mother’s attention turned to the lantern. He did not wish her to know about the girl’s warning as it would only worry her. He would tell her all about it later.

The thunder was rolling away in the distance, but the lightning was still bright. The rain had not ceased, although it was lessening in intensity. In another hour it would be over, Nat felt sure, and then he would go back to the boat. He also wanted to find out about the mystery surrounding that old barn, and why the girl had warned him to keep away from the place. Somebody was hiding there, perhaps, to harm him. Who could it be?

Suddenly Ru flashed into his mind. He was ashore, so Jed had said. And why had he stopped at the Point when he might have made the Reach before the flood-tide set in? He turned impetuously to his mother who was giving the lantern chimney an extra cleaning with a dry cloth.

“Did you see Ru around here this evening?”

“I saw him only when he came ashore.”

“Which way did he go?”

“Down the road. It’s strange that he didn’t go home. But, perhaps, it was just as well he didn’t, for he’d only make more trouble for his poor mother. He’s very hard on her, so I hear, and when he does go home he’s generally drunk.”

Nat hardly heard these words, for his thoughts were elsewhere. He felt certain now that Ru had anchored at the Point for some special reason. And even now he might be waiting on shore with an evil design in his mind. He had gone down the road, to the Creek House, perhaps. Was he in league with the people there, and had the girl overheard their plans? But why did she come all the way in the storm to warn

him? What interest could she have in him? Until this night they had never had any conversation with each other. Did she care for him? The idea was startling and brought a flush to his face. No, it could not be that. It was too ridiculous. There must be some other reason, and he longed to know what it was.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AT THE OLD BARN

As Nat walked down the road leading to the Point his mind was very active. He moved most cautiously and his feet made scarcely any sound upon the rain-soaked ground. In one hand he carried the unlighted lantern, and in the other a basket of food, including home-made bread, cake and doughnuts his mother had prepared. It was not fear which caused him to walk so warily, but the desire to come suddenly upon the ones lying in wait for him. His movements were as stealthy as those of an Indian warrior gliding upon an unsuspecting foe. Anger alone filled his heart at the thought of Ru's contemptible plan to attack him on his way back to the *Scud*. As he thought of this his teeth set firmly together, and his hands clutched hard upon the lantern and the basket.

He passed the graveyard and reached the church. The rain had now ceased, and the white form of the building could be dimly seen with its tall spire reaching up into the night. Very carefully he walked past this for the assailants might be waiting for him behind the church. Nothing happened, however, and no sound broke the stillness but the slight swish of the tops of the trees, and the drip of rain from their branches.

Below the church he abandoned the road and crossed a field on the left until he came to the alder trees which grew thick along the low marshy swamp which sprawled out between the field and the river bank. He walked more cautiously now, every faculty alert for the faintest sound. When near the old barn he stopped and peered through the darkness. He was about to advance, when the sound of voices came faintly from the building. Placing the lantern and the basket upon the ground, he dropped upon hands and knees and crept stealthily forward, only pausing occasionally to listen. The voices grew more distinct and came from within the barn. That there were several people there, he felt certain, and no doubt they had taken refuge from the storm. But it was strange that they were talking, and not silently awaiting his coming.

At the back of the barn were several loosened boards, so as Nat crept close he could plainly hear everything that was being said inside. At once he recognized Ru's voice, and soon learned that his companion was none other than Bob Sarason, the man who longed for a fight. That they were more than half drunk was quite evident. This caused Nat to smile. What could these two men do in their present condition to him? They would be like children in his hands.

He listened attentively to their maudlin talk, but for a few minutes he could not

understand what they were saying. Ru was in an ugly mood and was complaining bitterly about something. Bob, on the other hand, was quite jovial, and ere long began to sing:

I w-was seeing N-Nellie home.

Ru interrupted him with an oath.

“Shut yer mouth, ye fool, or Nat’ll hear ye.”

“Doan c-care if he d-does.”

I-I was s-seeing N-Nellie—

A blow ended the song, and Nat could hear the two mauling each other. They soon tired of this, however, and stopped. Both were breathing heavily. Bob was the first to speak.

“W-where’s the b-bottle, Ru? G-give it t-to me.”

“Ye c-can’t have it. I w-want it meself.”

“G-give it t-to me, I s-shay.”

“I w-won’t.”

“Y-yah, ye w-will.”

“I w-won’t.”

“I’ll m-make ye.”

“I’ll g-give it t-to ye w-when ye t-tell me w-where that m-money is.”

“I w-won’t tell ye.”

“A-a r-right. S-Sam’ll t-tell me.”

“S-Sam’s a f-fool.”

“S-Sam’s no f-fool. S-Sam f-fool p-p’lice, a-a r-right. S-shay, g-give me that b-bottle.”

“W-where’s that m-money?”

“S-Silvy knows. A-ask her.”

“S-Silvy’s f-fool, too. S-she won’t t-tell.”

“D-d-lie. S-Silvy’s not a f-fool.”

“S-she ish.”

“Y-yer a l-liar.”

“I’m n-not.”

“Y-ye a-are.”

Again there were sounds of a fierce struggle, heavy breathings, and curses. Nat was disgusted with these brutes, and was about to leave the place when a sudden idea flashed into his mind. Why not frighten them? He might as well have some fun

out of the rascals. He at once began to growl in a most ferocious manner, and clawed upon the boards with his fingers. As he paused to listen, there was a death-like silence within the barn. Again he growled and clawed. Gasps of terror were soon heard.

“L-Lord; what is that?” Ru asked.

“A b-bear, m-mebbe. Oh! t-there he’s at it a-ag’in! He’ll g-get us. Oh!”

“W-where’s the p-pistol?”

“H-here ’t-tis. S-shoot the thing.”

“You c-come, too.”

“Doan w-want to.”

“C-come on, I s-shay. Doan be a c-coward.”

“I’m no c-coward.”

“Ye a-are.”

“C-come on, t-then, an’ I’ll s-show ye I a-ain’t.”

When Nat was sure that they were leaving the barn, he went back to the bushes. He could hear them talking in a maudlin manner as they groped their way through the darkness. He was enjoying their fright, and as he listened to their voices as they stumbled forward, he longed to laugh outright. What a story he would have to tell Tom.

The fierce growl of a dog startled him. It came from the road on the upper side of the barn. He listened with strained attention as the growling continued. Then followed a roar and the sharp stern command of a woman’s voice. That she was the girl of the Creek House Nat felt sure. But why had she come here? He had no time for thought, however, for from the yells, curses, and savage growls he knew that the dog had hurled himself upon the drunken men. Presently amidst the din a shot rang out, followed immediately by a shriek of pain. What had happened? To go forward in the darkness Nat knew well would be useless. He thought of his lantern. Groping around, he soon found it, struck a match and with trembling hands applied it to the wick. In another minute he was at the scene of conflict. The girl by this time had the dog under control, and was standing looking down upon a form at her feet. As Nat approached, an expression of relief overspread her face.

“It’s Bob,” she explained. “That thing shot him,” and she pointed to Ru leaning against the barn. “The brute!”

The tone of her voice was terrible, and Nat experienced a keen sense of awe. So cold was it and merciless. He glanced at Ru and by the dim light he saw his lips move.

“I s-shot at the d-d-dog,” he growled. “I d-didn’t s-shoot at B-Bob.”

“That’s just as bad, you coward,” the girl cried. “You wanted to kill my dog. I’ve a mind to let him tear you to pieces.”

Nat was really afraid that she would carry out her threat, so fierce was her anger. And standing there in the light of the lantern she did seem like an avenging goddess or demon he could not tell which. Never before had he seen such an expression of rage depicted upon a human face. Her wild glowing eyes and tousled hair gave her the appearance of some unearthly being. How terrible to have the wrath of such a woman. He even pitied Ru for incurring her anger.

Stooping, he held the lantern to the face of the prostrate man at his feet. Bob opened his eyes, growled and uttered some unintelligible words.

“Get up,” Nat ordered.

Bob made no effort to move, but began to groan as if in great distress. The girl at once stepped forward.

“What’s the matter with you?” she asked.

Receiving no reply, she reached down, placed her right hand upon his shoulder and shook him.

“Can’t you speak? Or are you too drunk?”

“I’m not d-drunk, S-Silvy. I’m d-dying. Oh!”

Nat examined the man and at length, found that the bullet had struck his right foot, and that blood was trickling from the boot. Drawing forth his pocket-knife, he cut the laces and carefully removed the boot.

“It seems to be only a flesh wound,” he explained to Sylvia who was kneeling by his side. “He’ll soon be all right.”

“He’ll never be all right. He’s a brute. Bob, get up.”

She accompanied her words with a vigorous touch of the toe of her boot against her brother’s ribs. Bob groaned but made no effort to move. The girl looked up into Nat’s face.

“We must get him away from here. My boat is near on the shore. Will you help me?”

“Certainly. I think I can carry him.”

He was about to stoop and lift the prostrate man, when the report of a pistol startled him, while the girl gave a cry of fright. At once he understood the meaning, for there with his back against the barn was Ru making ready for another shot. He looked more like a madman than a human being. Nat saw him trying to point the pistol in his direction, but so unsteady was his hand that he could hardly hold the weapon. With a bound he was by Ru’s side, tore the pistol from his grasp, and seizing the villain by the throat, pulled him forward.

“So you tried to shoot me, did you?” he roared.

“I d-did, an’ I’ll s-shoot ye yit, ye d——.”

A light blow across the face from the back of Nat’s hand stifled his words. He staggered back against the barn and glared angrily at his opponent.

“Ye h-hit me,” he growled.

“I did, and I’ll do it again, and much harder, if you don’t behave yourself.”

“I am b-behavin’ meself. I’ll f-fix ye fer this s-some day. I’m too s-sleepy now.”

“Well, get into the barn, then, and sleep.”

“I doan want to s-sleep there.”

“That’s the best place for you, so come on.”

Nat caught him by the shoulder, and with some difficulty led him around to the front of the barn, Sylvia leading the way with the lantern. On a bunch of old hay Nat laid the helpless man and spread some of the hay over his body. Ru muttered several unintelligible words, and then sank into a deep sleep.

“What a brute!” the girl declared in disgust. “Is he any better when he’s sober?”

“He’s worse,” Nat replied. “He is bad through and through.”

“I wonder how Bob got acquainted with him.”

“Were they ever together before?”

“Yes, several times lately.”

“Why were they waiting for me here to-night?”

The girl did not reply, but walked over to where her brother was lying. Nat followed, wondering why she did not answer his question. That she knew something which she was afraid to tell was quite evident. She had warned him, anyway, of danger, and the thought brought a glow to his heart.

Bob was in a drunken stupor. He made no sound as Nat lifted him from the ground and carried him towards the shore. He was a dead weight, so Nat was forced to exert every ounce of his great strength. But the presence of the girl by his side with the lantern in her hand to guide him over the rough places inspired and sustained him.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FOLLOWING FOOTSTEPS

Nat was about to push the boat from the shore when the girl told him to wait. "Where is Sport?" she asked. "I have forgotten all about him."

She called and whistled, but the dog did not appear.

"Oh, well, we shall have to go without him. I never knew him to leave me before. It is strange."

Nat sent the boat reeling into the water and sprang on board. Sylvia picked up the oars and placed them in the row-locks. Nat wished to row, but the girl would not let him.

"I know the way better than you do, even though you are a captain. Please put out the light; it dazzles me."

"I will turn it down low and keep it out of sight here in the bow," Nat replied.

"No, put it out," the girl sharply ordered.

Nat did so, surprised at the tone of her voice. He wondered why she was so particular about the light. He sat very still in the bow as the boat cut through the water. An uneasy feeling stole over him. There must be some other reason why the girl wished to have the light extinguished. A mystery more impenetrable than the blackness of night surrounded him. Why had Ru and Bob planned to waylay him? And why would not this girl tell him the meaning of it all? Was she in league with them? Who were these people of the Creek House, anyway?

The howl of a dog from the shore on the right startled him. He had often heard such sounds while steering the *Scud* during the silent watches of the night and had thought nothing of them. But this one was different. It seemed laden with an ominous meaning, a foreboding of impending doom. He could not account for the feeling. Sylvia was resting on her oars and listening intently. That she was greatly agitated Nat knew by her deep breathing. He longed to see her face.

"It is Sport!" she presently whispered. "I never knew him to howl like that before. Listen!"

She dipped the oars into the water and again the boat sped forward. Several more howls winged through the darkness, and then all was still. No other word was spoken until the boat grounded upon the shore of the creek. Sylvia quietly drew in the oars and rose to her feet.

"Let me help carry Bob," she whispered.

"I think I can manage him all right, Miss Sarason, if you will carry the lantern. Just a minute until I light it."



"No, no!" The girl seized him by the arm. "Don't light it."

"Why?"

"Don't ask me, please."

Puzzled as to the meaning of the girl's words, Nat stooped, lifted Bob in his arms and carried him up the bank. At the top he stopped for breath, then bore his burden to the house not far away. Sylvia walked by his side, and in whispered words directed his steps as much as possible. From a window on the east side of the house a dim light gleamed. Before entering, Sylvia darted forward to the window and peered cautiously in. She then led the way along the verandah until she came to the front door. This she opened. All was dark within. But, when she had opened a door on the right, a light illumined the blackness. Seeing a cot against the wall, Nat dumped Bob upon it as if he were a bag of grain. He was almost exhausted, and his patience had well nigh reached the breaking-point. He was visibly annoyed at the mystery and secrecy which surrounded him. Such things were foreign to his nature. He had lived freely and openly, unafraid of the face of anyone. What sense was there in moving about at night with an extinguished lantern, trembling at the howl of a dog, and peering so cautiously through a window before entering the house? Bah! it was all nonsense, silly and childish. If Sylvia and her people liked such things, they were welcome to them, but they did not appeal to him. He turned abruptly and walked out of the house. Upon the verandah he paused, for Sylvia had laid a hand upon his arm.

"Don't go yet, captain. It's lonely here."

Although he could not see her, he felt her body tremble. His anger cooled. The glamor of her presence was strong upon him.

"I must get back to my boat as soon as possible, Miss Sarason. I have lost too much time already."

"What a wonderful life you lead, captain. You do not have to stay in one place, but have all the river for your roving. How you must enjoy it."

"I do. But it is nothing to being out upon the ocean. That's where I long to be, and that's where I intend to go some day."

"When?"

"Just as soon as I have a ship of my own, or am in command of one. The *Scud* will have to do until then."

The girl sighed and looked out towards the river, although she could see nothing.

"I like the water, captain, and the rougher the better."

"You spend much of your time there."

"I do, and but for the pleasure I get out of my boat, I would go crazy."

"You find it lonely here, then?"

“Lonely! It is hell!”

She accompanied her words with a vigorous stamp of her right foot. Nat was surprised.

“But you have your father and brother, Miss Sarason.”

“Yes, but what do they amount to as companions? Father’s mind is gone, and Bob’s soon will be by the way he’s drinking. They are no company for a woman.”

“But what about the neighbors? They are kind people, and would be glad to be your friends. My mother would, anyway.”

“I don’t think she would. She doesn’t like my dog. Anyone who doesn’t like Sport I don’t want as a friend.”

“Why do you stay here, then, if you don’t like the place?”

“I can’t help myself.” She then lowered her voice, “I am a prisoner, and my keepers are cruel devils.”

“What! your father and brother?”

“Yes, and others. They are here, there, and everywhere. They are always watching and won’t let me get away.”

“Where are they now?”

“They are not here just now, but they will come when you have gone. I can only get clear of them when I am out on the river.”

“Is that why you go there so often?”

“Yes, and because I like the water, especially when it’s very rough. It’s in harmony with my mind then.”

These words puzzled Nat. What did the girl mean by the “cruel devils” which guarded her? Were they real or only imaginary? He recalled her strange wanderings around the fields at uncanny hours of the night, her weird songs, and her challenge to him upon the river. There was something strange about her, and yet she was so fascinating.

From the woods to the west of the house came the “chirp, chirp” as of a bird half asleep. Nat would not have given it a second thought had not the girl started and clutched him by the arm.

“Go! Go!” she gasped. “It’ll hurt you!”

“But it’s only a bird. Why should it hurt me?”

“I know, oh, I know that. But I want you to go at once.”

She gave him a slight push, as if to make him hurry. Nat knew that she was greatly excited, and wondered. It was strange that the sleepy chirp of a bird should so disturb her. Was her mind really deranged? Seeing that the girl’s excitement was increasing, Nat bade her good-night and walked to the end of the verandah. He was

about to step upon the ground, when the girl sped after him, and again caught him by the arm.

“Here is your lantern. You forgot it. But for God’s sake, don’t light it! There, I have warned you.”

Nat no longer delayed, but taking the lantern, left the house. He did not hurry. In fact, he was loth to leave the girl who had exerted such a peculiar influence upon him. He believed that her agitation was purely imaginary, and he pitied her. What a shame that she should be forced to lead such a lonely life. She needed companions of her own age and sex, and brightness instead of the gloom of that old house. What a miserable existence for such a beautiful girl to lead with a crazy father and a drunken brother. It was enough to unbalance the mind of anyone.

As he moved forward he found it difficult to keep the narrow path which led along the edge of the forest. He thought of the lantern. Why not light it? The girl’s warning was mere foolishness. He was no coward, and he would prove that her fear was all nonsense.

He stopped and was about to strike a match, when he detected a faint sound which arrested his attention. He listened, but heard nothing more. But he was certain that he had not been mistaken, for his ears were well-trained to night sounds. Someone was following him! Was that what the girl meant? But who could it be? Why should anyone, except Ru, wish to harm him? Try as he might he could not dispel the feeling of impending danger. It made him angry. And yet it was well to be on his guard. There might be something, after all, in those “cruel devils” of which Sylvia had spoken. There was a mystery surrounding the Creek House, he felt sure, so he might as well heed the warning he had received. He longed, however, for immediate action. He would have enjoyed a good fight just then, for his blood was hot within him. He decided to wait for a few minutes and something might happen. Slipping aside amidst a clump of young firs he stood as still as the trees around him. But nothing more did he hear, and no one came his way.

Continuing his journey, he tried at times to assure himself that he had been the victim of delusion, and that what Sylvia had said was affecting his nerves. Suddenly he stopped again for one more definite proof ere banishing the notion from his mind entirely. As he did so, he heard once more the sound as of stealthy footsteps following him. He had no doubt now, and his first impulse was to rush back and find out who it was. This he immediately realized would be useless as his pursuer could easily escape in the darkness. To light the lantern would be of no avail. He hurried forward, pausing occasionally to listen to those following feet. He stopped near the barn and again strained his ears, but no further sound could he hear, except Ru’s

heavy breathing within the building. He longed to look upon the drunken brute, but that would mean lighting the lantern which he had no intention of doing now. In fact, the mystery surrounding him, and those uncanny footsteps following were affecting him. He knew it was so, and for the first time in his life a strange feeling of nervousness possessed him. He tried to shake it off, but in vain. He would get the basket of food he had left near the trees and go at once on board the *Scud*.

Walking to the place, he groped around for the basket, until he found it. Lifting it from the ground, he noticed that it was very light. Why was that? It had been quite heavy when he left it there. Thrusting his hand inside, he found it empty. All the food, the good things his mother had prepared with such loving care, were gone! Someone had stolen them. Who could it have been? And why had not the thief taken the basket as well? Ah, he knew. It was the dog! He had been eating when his mistress had called him. And what had become of him? He had not arrived at home, he was certain. Perhaps he had been around the house and had followed him back in the hope of getting some more good food. And was it really the dog that had been trailing him, when he thought it was a man? It did seem so, and Nat felt like laughing. What a story he would have to tell Tom. And yet upon second thought, he could not believe that a dog would make any sound. And he was sure that he had heard footsteps. Anyway, it was very puzzling.

Picking up the empty basket which he had dropped upon the ground, he made his way back to the *Scud* in a wondering mood.

## CHAPTER XV

### IN HIS WORKSHOP

Supper was over, and John Farthing was in his workshop at the back of the house. This was where he liked to be when the day's toil was done. Free from the bustle and noise of the shipyards, he could work in peace and quietness and develop the ideas which had come into his active mind. His figure-heads which adorned the bows of many stately clippers were to be found on all the Seven Seas, and were known in all the great ports of the world. He always did his best, no matter what he had in hand. But with his figure-heads he was supreme in design and execution.

"It's the inspiration which comes to me when I am working a form out of a block of pine which does the trick," he once explained to a friend who had complimented him upon his work. "I see beautiful things in the wood, and cannot rest until I have brought them forth. And I want each of my figure-heads to have life. Ah, the spirit's the thing that counts."

Faith liked to watch her father, and while he hewed and carved she often sat in her favorite corner by the western window. It was a joy to him to have her there, and several of his most famous figure-heads were modelled from her. All day long they were separated from each other, but in the evening they were much together, and they were then always happy.

So this evening when Faith had washed the supper dishes and tidied up the kitchen, she came as usual and sat in her customary place. The sun shining in through the small panes of glass fell upon her dark hair and touched her face until it seemed to form a radiant halo about her head. So she appeared to her father as he paused in his work to watch her. His heart was full of a great love for his only child and true comforter. But in his eyes was a slight expression of anxiety. This was due to Ru's frequent visits to the house. He knew far better than Faith, so he imagined, what kind of a fellow he really was. He was fearful lest she should be carried away by his attention and dare-devil manner, and he wondered how he could warn her.

This evening Faith had an open book on her lap, a well-worn copy of Shakespeare's plays. This, together with the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress* and a large volume of Scottish history, formed the library of the house. Upon these Mr. Farthing had fed for many years, and he had carved in oak a number of Scotland's most worthy heroes. He was never tired of talking about the deeds of the noble characters of his native land, and Faith's heart always thrilled with interest as she listened.

Her favorite characters, however, she found in Shakespeare, and among the

many she delighted in Miranda, and the love scene between her and Ferdinand. She knew the play almost by heart, and at times imagined that she herself was the beautiful maiden and that some young Ferdinand would one day come her way. And in these dreams Nat always rose before her. Known only to herself was this fair fancy, for neither in word nor action had she ever shown the least trace of her feeling.

The night before, a rare treat had been hers. *The Tempest* had been played at the Opera House, and she had seen it. She had been delighted, and the scenes so familiar to her assumed a new and a wonderful meaning. It was the first time she had ever seen any of Shakespeare's plays acted, and she had never imagined that it would produce such a deep impression upon her. She had talked about it to her father at supper, and she thought about it this evening.

As she settled herself comfortably, she glanced occasionally out of the window. It commanded a good view of the Bay, the shipyards, and the street leading to the city. Her father, noticing her glances, thought she was looking for Ru. He showed no sign of what he thought, however, but went on steadily with his work.

"I am glad you enjoyed the play last night, lass," he at length remarked. "It must have been a rare treat."

"Indeed it was, father, and I want to read *The Tempest* over again."

"How many times have you read it already?"

"I have no idea. But it will seem almost new to me after last night. Oh, it was wonderful to see the actors and listen to them!"

"What part did you like best?"

"The love-scenes, of course, between Miranda and Ferdinand. And Prospero appealed to me, too. He had such control over Caliban, and did so much for Ariel. Wasn't it splendid how he freed that spirit from the pine tree?"

"It was, Faith, and I have often thought about it. And that is just what I try to do with my carving. In every pine block I see something hidden, the spirit of beauty and power, it may be, and I try to bring it forth and give it a living expression in a figure-head. I have been doing it, in fact, for years. Everyone, in a way, should be a Prospero."

Mr. Farthing had paused in his work and was standing erect looking straight before him. His face was animated, and his eyes glowed with the light of vision. Faith was deeply impressed by her father's manner. She admired him; he looked so noble. To her he was the very embodiment of Prospero, and she was Miranda, while Nat was Ferdinand. A slight flush came to her face at the thought, which she hoped her father did not notice. But who was Caliban? In her own mind she had no doubt,

although she wondered what her father thought.

"Like Prospero you have freed Ariel, father. But have you subdued Caliban?"

Mr. Farthing started at this question, and looked keenly at his daughter.

"Not yet, not yet, my dear. But I hope and pray that I may do so for your sake."

"For my sake!"

"Yes. Don't you understand what I mean? Caliban tried to injure Miranda, but Prospero saved her from the brute. There are many Calibans around us to-day, and one, especially, I fear. Do you know him?"

"I do, father, and I am glad to hear you speak as you do. You have lifted a great load from my mind. I was afraid."

Mr. Farthing went to his daughter's side, and stooping, kissed her.

"I shall go away contented now, lass, knowing that all will be well. I must leave in two days for Moss Glen, and I dreaded the thought of Caliban prowling around."

"But how can I get rid of him, father? He comes here when I don't want him, and he will do the same when I am up river."

"Yes, yes, I suppose he will, and I shall not be there to look after you. Ah, I have it. You can go on the *Scud*, and I shall speak to Nat and Tom to keep a sharp watch upon Ru. Nat has no love for the rascal, so he will be only too glad to be your guardian. I can trust him, all right, for he is a splendid young fellow."

Mr. Farthing went back to his work, and Faith bent her head over the book lest her father should observe the radiance upon her face. But for the thought of Ru, and that he might arrive at any minute, she would have been very happy. Lifting her head, she again glanced out of the window. As she did so, she suddenly straightened up.

"Father, Sammy Shaver is coming!" she exclaimed. "He is almost here."

Lightly she sprang from her seat and hurried out to meet the visitor. He was always a welcome guest here, and he liked Faith. Other women often flattered him, but Faith appealed to the best that was in him. Her tenderness and sympathy stirred his heart, and she never made fun of him as did so many.

Sammy shook hands with Mr. Farthing, and then gave him the model he had so carefully guarded.

"Is it satisfactory?" Mr. Farthing asked.

"We have examined it most carefully, and are much pleased with it," Sammy pompously replied. "There is nothing we would wish changed, so you may go ahead with the larger one at once."

Mr. Farthing repressed a smile of amusement, and motioned to the block upon which he had been working.

"There it is, Sammy. I have been going ahead, for I knew the premier would be

satisfied.”

Holding his hat very carefully in his left hand, the little man stepped forward and viewed the work with critical eyes. He had absolutely no knowledge of wood-carving, but that made no difference to him. He imagined himself a competent judge of everything, and acted accordingly.

“Yes, it is getting along well,” he commented. “It will suit us. When will it be finished?”

“When the *Norseman* is ready for it. I have some special work to do at Moss Glen which will take me several weeks, so I shall finish this when I come back.”

“To Moss Glen, eh? And are you going there, too, my dear?” he asked, turning to Faith who was standing near.

“Oh, no. I am planning to stay with Mrs. Royal. She asked me to go, and I am looking forward to the visit. She is such a lovely woman.”

“She certainly is. But, poor woman, I hope she won’t worry too much over Nat.”

“Why, what’s the matter?” Faith’s face grew somewhat pale as she asked the question. “Nothing serious, I hope?”

“No one can tell at present. He’s at the police station now.”

“What! Arrested?”

“Oh, no, not exactly that. But as soon as we reached the city, the *Scud* was boarded by two police officers who took Nat away with them to headquarters. They want to question him about that man who disappeared from the *Scud* somewhere along the river. You heard about it, I suppose?”

“Yes, it was in the paper,” Mr. Farthing replied. “It stated that the thief boarded the *Scud* at Indiantown, and fell overboard at night while Nat was at the wheel. I have not heard, however, how the accident happened.”

“No one seems to know, Mr. Farthing, and that is the great mystery. It is a very puzzling affair, and we must make a thorough investigation. We shall not leave a stone unturned to get to the bottom of the whole matter.”

“But does anyone blame Nat?” Faith anxiously asked.

“I can’t say that anyone actually blames him, my dear. But there is much gossip. People are wondering how a man could fall overboard without making any sound, such as a cry or a splash. It was a calm night, too, and that makes it all the more strange.”

Faith was greatly disturbed at this news. Lest her agitation should be noticed, she went into the adjoining room and brought out an arm chair. She had to be doing something.



“Sit down, Sammy. Excuse me for not thinking of it before.”

“Thank you kindly, my dear,” the visitor replied as he settled himself down in a dignified manner. “I do feel weary after that trying trip down river. It was the worst I ever experienced. Thunder and lightning and Tom’s lies made it very unpleasant. And then to find the police waiting for Nat upset me entirely. I must send word to the premier at once. We must do everything in our power to clear up this mystery and clear Nat.”

“Did any other boat get down this evening?” Faith enquired.

“Not one. The *Snag* should be in soon, though. We left her at Oak Point. Ru was ashore and had not returned when we sailed.”

Sammy said nothing about what had happened in Fredericton, and not a word about the stolen model. He was afraid of Ru, and he did not wish to act as a tale-bearer and thus bring the villain’s wrath upon himself. He knew what that would mean, and he did not relish the idea of being beaten by Ru in some lonely place at night. Hence, he decided to say nothing, although he was most anxious to tell about the whole affair, for it was a delicious piece of news. But Nat would have to do that, as he was well able to take care of himself, and had no fear of Ru.

## CHAPTER XVI

### AT THE SHIPYARD

There were several questions Faith longed to ask, but hesitated about doing so. She was afraid lest her words would reveal something of the deep secret of her heart. Silence, she believed, would be the wiser course at the present time. In a few minutes her father and Sammy were engaged in government affairs which were of no interest to her. She slipped unnoticed out of the room, and made her way to the shipyards.

It was quiet here now, for the workmen had all gone home. It was a strange contrast to the noise and bustling confusion of the day. It was a pause, a rest in the great orchestra which from morning until evening had been beating out its music upon earth's noblest and most primitive instruments, the axe, the hammer, and the saw. Faith had often thought of this as she listened to the sounds which drifted over to the cottage. What to others were discords, to her were rhythm and harmony. She loved the yards with their purposeful disorder and confusion. She enjoyed too, the scent of the fresh-cut timber, the pungent oakum, and the tang of the salt water which laved the shore. Even the mud-flats, when the tide was out, were beautiful to her eyes.

But best of all she liked the great ships lying upon their wooden ways. She knew each one and watched it with special interest, from the laying of the keel to the proud launching. Often her mind went roving with these vessels upon the Seven Seas and to all the ports of the world.

This evening, however, it was upon the *Norseman* that her attention was centred. It was the largest of them all, and her eyes glowed with animation as she sat upon a block not far away and studied its graceful proportions. A wonderful vision rose before her, and she saw the noble vessel at sea, with sails set, loaded with deals from Saint John or tea from China, with Nat in command, and herself his fair bride making her first voyage. It was a rosy vision, with no dark clouds to mar the golden scene. Yes, it would be more than a dream some day, she told herself, while her heart thrilled at the thought and her face grew radiant. It was just such a dream as that which filled her days and surrounded her quiet life with the halo of romance.

For some time she sat there after the sun had dropped below the house-tops. A light breeze winged in from the sea on the flooding tide, and fanned her hair and face. She was about to leave the yard when a step startled her. Glancing quickly around, she saw Nat but a few yards away. Her face brightened, and she rose to her feet.

"Hello, Faith," Nat accosted. "I've found you at last."

"Were you looking for me, Nat?"

“Yes. I went to the house, but your father had no idea where you had gone. I suspected, though, that you were here admiring the *Norseman*. Isn’t she a beauty!”

Nat looked at the big ship, and his eyes glowed. Faith watched him with interest.

“How would you like to command her, Nat?”

“My, wouldn’t it be great to be master of such a ship?”

“You will some day.”

“I hope so. I am studying hard all my spare time, and Tom is helping me. But I’m in trouble now and don’t know what to do, so I have come to you for help.”

“Let us sit down, and you can tell me all about it,” Faith suggested.

Seated side by side upon the big square piece of timber, Nat told her all he knew about the passenger who had disappeared from the *Scud*. Faith listened with intense interest to every detail.

“You told this all to the police, I suppose, Nat?”

“I did, and they asked me all kinds of questions, some of which I could not answer. They wanted to know, for instance, how it was possible for a man to fall overboard without making any sound. Now, that is what has been puzzling me, and I told them so.”

“What did they say?”

“From their words, they seemed to think I was lying, and that I had not told them all I know.”

“Why should they think that?”

“Because of the money which the passenger is supposed to have had upon him. The police must make a thorough investigation and follow up every clue. As Tom and I were both on board that night, we are the only ones who can give any information.”

“I hope they don’t suspect you, Nat. How can they?”

“I believe they think that Tom and I were bribed to hide the thief, and that he was not really drowned.”

“Oh!” It was all that Faith said, but her eyes and her face expressed her concern.

“You see,” Nat continued, “the police have only our word that the man fell overboard that night when we were in mid-stream. It would be easy for us to lie about the whole matter. They have interviewed us separately to see if our stories agree, which I am sure they do. Although we are perfectly innocent, it is annoying to be under suspicion.

“Oh, I think it is terrible. But, perhaps, that man’s body will be found, and then you will be cleared. Has the river been dragged? It is always done when a man is

drowned, is it not?"

"It always has been, but I have not heard of it being done in this case. I do not know why, except that people were not enough interested in the stranger. Anyway, it is just as well that they didn't."

"Why?"

"Simply because I think the man is alive. I believe that his talk about being afraid of the water, and not being able to swim was nothing more than a ruse. He must have slipped quietly into the river, and either made his way to the shore or someone was waiting nearby to pick him up. It may all have been arranged beforehand, and at some signal he left the *Scud*."

Nat stopped suddenly as the lighted Creek House came into his mind. Had it anything to do with the affair? Perhaps it was really a signal. Faith noticed the expression upon his face and his staring eyes. She knew that something important had come into his mind.

"What is it, Nat? What makes you look like that?"

"An idea, Faith," and he gave a peculiar little laugh. "It was just a notion, that was all."

"About that man who disappeared?"

"Yes."

"And you think he is living?"

"I can't help thinking anything else. I certainly would have heard him if he had fallen overboard by accident. Nothing can make me believe otherwise. And, besides, Tom declares he saw his ghost that night of the terrible storm when the *Scud* was anchored at Oak Point. I believe it was the man himself, and not his ghost. I do not know what he was doing on top of those deals at that time of night and in such a storm. Up to some mischief, no doubt. No one else saw him, not even old Jed who came just then from the *Snag* which was lying near."

"What was the *Snag* doing there, Nat?"

"Waiting for the tide to turn."

"And was Ru ashore?"

"Yes."

"Did he sail when you did?"

"No. He was ashore when we left."

Nat decided to say nothing to Faith about what Ru had been doing since she last saw him. He disliked the idea of telling her about what had happened in Fredericton, and at Oak Point. Neither did he say a word about the theft of the figure-head model. He did want her, though, to know what kind of a life Ru led, and especially

about his association with the girl who had pleaded so earnestly for him to marry her to save her from disgrace. But he did not wish to be the tale-bearer. In fact, Faith always seemed to him so far removed from the sordid things of life that they were absolutely foreign to her nature. With her he always associated the pure and the beautiful. Her very presence inspired and lifted him to a higher plane of life. But that was all. Faith had always been to him a good companion, one to help him in time of need, and nothing more.

As he spoke about Ru, he noticed that the girl shivered slightly.

"Are you cold?" he asked. "It's getting quite dark, and I must not keep you here any longer."

"No, no, I don't mind. I like it here, and am not cold."

"You are going up river with us, so your father said."

"Did he? I am looking forward to a visit at your mother's."

"And I hope you will meet the most wonderful girl I ever saw. I'm sure you will like her."

"Who is she?" Faith's heart quickened.

"Sylvia Sarason, and she lives at the Creek House. Isn't Sylvia a pretty name?"

"Is she beautiful?"

"Beautiful! Just wait till you see her. And she has such wonderful hair, auburn, I think you would call it. She spends much of every day upon the river in her small boat, and walks through the fields at night with her dog. He is a noble brute, and no mistake."

"Why does she wander around the fields at night, Nat?"

"I don't know. Just a notion, I suppose. And you should hear her sing. I heard her one night not far from our house."

"What was she doing there?"

"Just strolling along with her dog. I didn't know what she looked like then, but the next morning when she sailed by the *Scud* in that little boat of hers I saw her. I really believe she could handle the *Norseman* in the biggest gale that ever blew, judging by the way she managed that tub of hers on the river that morning."

A heavy weight seemed to press upon Faith's heart as she listened to these words. Through the deepening twilight the *Norseman* had the appearance of a huge monster ready to crush her. It was no longer a friend, but an enemy. She saw Nat in command with Sylvia—the wonderful girl—by his side. It was all so real that she shuddered. Nat noticed this, and rose to his feet.

"You must go home. You are cold. I have kept you out too long."

Side by side they walked out of the yard and along the street to the cottage. Nat

still continued his talk about the girl of the Creek House, her queer father, her loneliness, and her charming voice. The wind, laden with the tang of the sea, brushed Faith's face and tossed her hair over cheeks and forehead. Always before she had loved the wind's vagrant caresses. But to-night its touch was cold and clammy like the touch of death. It oppressed her, and she wondered why.

That night in the seclusion of her own room she studied her face in her little mirror. She had always believed it was a beautiful face, although the thought had never made her vain. She had been thankful it was so, that was all. But it did not seem beautiful to her now. In what way was she different from the girl up river? she wondered. She longed to see her that she might learn the secret of her attractiveness. She had a wonderful voice, and could handle a boat well, so Nat said. Faith could not sing, but she could manage a boat, and was at home upon the water. Surely it was not the voice alone which appealed so strongly to Nat. There must be something else—something which a man liked that she did not possess. In a few days she would know.

As she knelt by her bed that night, the burden of her prayer was for sustaining strength in her time of need.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE RESCUE

The *Scud* was surging up the Reach with a strong westerly wind almost abeam. Nat was at the wheel with Sammy seated by his side. After several vain attempts to keep his hat from blowing off and overboard, the little man had placed it upon his lap. This gave the wind a full sweep of his head and tossed his carefully-brushed hair about in wild disorder. It was quite long hair, and Sammy was proud of it. Long hair was a sign of intellect and nobility, so he believed. Now, however, it proved a nuisance, for he was kept busy brushing back the flying streamers from his eyes with his right hand, while with his left he clutched the precious hat.

He was doing this when Tom and Faith came up on deck. They had been washing up the dinner dishes, and Faith had been tidying up the cabin, which certainly needed a woman's care. Tom stood and stared at Sammy. The wrinkles in his face deepened, and mischief beamed in his eyes.

"What's that ye've got there, Nat?" he asked. "It looks to me like one of them wild heathen Patergonians which I once saw. The missionaries couldn't do much with them critters, so I heard, till they got their long hair cut off."

"Not likely when you were around, Tom," Sammy retorted. "Your influence would spoil the work of any missionary, hair or no hair."

Tom brought forth a plug of tobacco, whittled off a few slices, and filled his old black pipe. With the latter between his teeth, and a match in his right hand, he stepped over to Sammy's side. Faith watched him with amused interest as she sat down upon the curbing of the hatchway.

"Sammy, you've got 'ligion, haven't ye?" Tom unexpectedly asked.

"Oh, yes. I got it years ago."

"That's good. Now, I want to ax ye a question. It's been on me mind fer a long time, so mebbe you kin answer it."

"Well, what is it? I'll do my best."

"That's encouragin'. Now, look here, ye believe in prayer, I s'pose?"

"I certainly do, Tom."

"An' ye believe in prayin' fer yer enemies?"

"I always do."

"Good fer you, Sammy. An' who is yer greatest enemy?"

For once Sammy had no answer. Tom smiled, faced the wind, scratched the match and sheltered the tiny flame in the hollow of his cupped hands. When the pipe was drawing to his satisfaction, he turned around.

"Thinkin' hard, Sammy? Don't know who is yer greatest enemy, eh?"

The little man glared as he furiously flung aside a mass of hair from his eyes.

"Come, come, Tom, don't tease Sammy," Nat remonstrated.

"I ain't teasin' him. I'm only askin' fer information. I know who my greatest enemy is, anyway."

"Who is he?" Sammy quickly enquired.

"The devil, of course. D'ye think I should pray for him?"

"Pray for the devil!" Sammy stared in amazement.

"Why not? Isn't he me greatest enemy?"

"Sure, sure—but—"

"But what? If prayin' would reform the devil, what a glorious thing it would be. Try it, Sammy, me boy."

Sammy was really angry. It was terrible, so he declared, to talk in such a way. He arose to his feet and loosened his tongue upon Tom. He had merely begun when he dropped his hat which was caught by the wind and hurled across the deck. The word he was uttering died upon his lips, as with an undignified leap he pursued the rolling headgear, and rescued it as it struck against a rail-post. Faith hurried to his assistance, took the hat from him and carefully brushed off the dust with her handkerchief. Sammy was much touched by her thoughtfulness.

"Thank you, my dear, for your kindness. It isn't everyone who would soil a nice clean handkerchief upon an old man's hat. My! my! how I wish I was young again."

This was too much for Tom, and he laughed outright.

"Ho, ho, Sammy, wish ye was young, eh? But ye was young once, remember, an' there were purty gals then as well as now. Ye did a lot of sparkin' in them days, but it all ended in sparks. Ho! ho!"

The next instant his laughter was changed into a yell. He had stepped back, and just behind him was the open hatchway. Before he could recover himself, down he went and disappeared from view.

Rushing to the opening, Faith peered down.

"Are you hurt, Tom?" she called.

A groan from below was the only response.

Swiftly descending, Faith bent over the prostrate man. He looked up into her face and his mouth broadened to a grin.

"I'm a'right, me dear. But, say, that was a sudden jolt, wasn't it? Won't Sammy have the laff on me now."

Faith smiled, much relieved.

"It serves you right, Tom, for teasing him."



"Guess yer right," Tom agreed as he scrambled to his feet. "I must go up now an' face the music."

Nat had not been paying much attention to the commotion that was going on around him. He was so accustomed to Tom's quips that he hardly gave them a second's thought. Anyway, for the last quarter of an hour his eyes had been fixed upon a white sail far ahead to the left. He knew it, for there was only one small boat that would be out on the river in such a strong wind. It was the girl of the Creek House, he was well aware. He watched anxiously as the sail lifted and fell, reeling so low at times that it seemed impossible for it to recover. But each time it rose like the wing of some great bird and sped forward. The boat was beating down river right in the teeth of the wind, and as he watched his heart thrilled with admiration. He could easily picture the girl in command, with her flushed face, sparkling eyes, and wind-tossed hair, calm and unafraid, her spirit in harmony with the whistling wind and the turbulent water. How daring she was! And yet, he wondered why she was so fool-hardy. Would any girl in her right mind take such a chance? He recalled her strange words and actions that night at the Creek House, and wondered.

With sails straining full, the *Scud* roared onward. Nat could see the little boat more clearly now, and Sammy saw it, too. He stood by the wheel and looked keenly forward.

"What fool is that, Nat? My! it's over! No it's righted again."

Sammy was breathing hard, and his eyes were staring wide. Just then Tom and Faith came on deck, and stood watching the reeling craft. The former recognized it at once.

"Why, it's that crazy Creek House loon!" he exclaimed. "Lord! she's over!"

This was only too true, for like a bird tired battling with the wind, the sail suddenly flopped down upon the water. Faith gave a gasp of fright, and Nat's hands gripped hard upon the wheel. Although the *Scud* was travelling fast, she seemed to him to be creeping. He threw over the wheel and the boat swerved to the left.

"That's good, Nat," Tom commented. "Don't come round too soon an' ye'll make it to a hair."

The anxious watchers kept their eyes fixed upon the submerged craft as the *Scud* made a wide circle in order to come up to the wind. Sammy was much excited. He had started to take command and give orders when Tom laid a heavy hand upon his shoulder.

"You jist keep yer clapper closed, me hearty. You may be the gov'ment when on land, but not here. This bizness means seamanship, an' we don't want you buttin' in and spilin' everything."

Sammy had sense enough to obey this peremptory order, so he suddenly ceased. The girl could be seen clinging to the overturned boat, waving to them as they approached. Faith watched with fast-beating heart. Once she glanced at Nat's face and noticed the expression in his eyes. All too well she knew its meaning. The girl's danger meant a great deal to him.

In a few minutes Nat had the *Scud* head up to the wind, and not far from the little boat. Tom was standing near his side. These men knew their business.

"I'll go, Tom."

"Very well, Nat."

That was all, and as Tom took the wheel, Nat drew the small tender alongside and dropped over the railing. In another minute he was rowing straight for the girl. She watched him with interest, and when he was close by, she scrambled on board. Her calmness and undisturbed manner surprised Nat. He had expected her to be almost helpless with weariness and fear. Instead, she treated the accident as a joke. Her only concern was for her wet clothes, and as she sat with the water streaming from her garments, she looked back at the overturned boat.

"D—— that thing!" she cried. "What business had it to capsiz?"

Nat looked at the girl in astonishment. What kind of a person was she, anyway? he asked himself. She was unlike anyone he had ever met. It was difficult for him to keep his eyes from her face during the few minutes he was rowing back to the *Scud*. Her beauty and imperious manner fascinated him. He was impressed, too, by her careless indifference to danger and her drenched condition. She never seemed to think about them, and she uttered no word of thanks for her rescue. She accepted everything as a matter of course.

Willing hands were ready to assist her on board the *Scud*. But she waved them aside and climbed nimbly up over the rail. Faith was anxiously waiting to see the girl who had captured Nat's heart, and to render her what help she could. But she never expected to behold such a strange creature. Turning, Sylvia saw her, and looked surprised. Then the expression upon her face changed, and a fierce angry light gleamed in her eyes. To Faith they were terrible eyes. She shrank back with fear and her face turned pale. Sylvia, seeing the effect she produced, gave an impudent toss of her head and began to sing:

It was a lover and his lass,  
With a hey and a ho, and a hey-nonino!  
That o'er the green cornfield did pass  
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,  
When birds do sing hey ding a ding:  
Sweet lovers love the spring.

She ended abruptly, and seeing Sammy staring at her in undisguised amazement, she stepped forward, caught him in her arms and waltzed with him around the deck, singing as she did so,

It was a lover and his lass,  
With a hey and a ho, and hey-nonino!

Sammy frantically tried to free himself from her embrace. But not until Sylvia was willing did she let go. With a gasp of terror he fled along the deck, and never stopped until he was well up forward. He then turned and looked fearfully back. But Sylvia was done with him. She subsided into a gloomy silence, and stood gazing shoreward. Nat stepped up to her.

"Suppose you go down into the cabin, Miss Sarason. You will get cold here. You will be out of the wind there, at any rate."

The girl started as if in a dream.

"All right, captain, but I'd rather go down there," and she motioned to the water. "It's softer, you know."

In another minute she had disappeared below the hatchway. Faith stood trembling, uncertain what to do. She looked at Tom who was wiping the perspiration from his forehead. He then beckoned to her.

"She's luney," he whispered when Faith stood by his side.

"She does act in a strange way, Tom. Perhaps the accident has unnerved her."

"Mebbe yer right; I never thought of that. Trouble does turn people's heads sometimes. Look at Sammy up for'ard. He's scared stiff."

Faith was watching Nat, who was standing looking out over the water in an absent-minded manner. She wondered what he was thinking about. Presently he turned and came towards her. He bent his head close to hers.

"Suppose you go below, Faith. She might like your company."

Before Faith could reply, Sylvia came up from the cabin. Her appearance was startling, for she was wrapped from head to foot in a large gray blanket. She saw Nat bending over Faith, and her eyes blazed with jealousy. She stood erect and

imperious for a few seconds, and then made them a profound bow. Faith watched her, fascinated by her wild beauty. Every motion she made was full of grace and subtle power as of a panther about to spring upon its victim.

The *Scud* was now bearing close to Oak Point. The land was on their left not far away. The water was exceptionally turbulent here where the racing current was lashed into foam by the driving wind. In fact, it is one of the roughest places on the river. As the boat plunged and lifted in its onward surge, Sylvia glanced shoreward. Then she looked straight at Faith and Nat, and lifting her right hand she threw them a kiss. Then with a wild laugh of derision, she swept the blanket from her body and stood for an instant before them clad only in her undergarments. Turning suddenly, she flung herself over the rail and disappeared beneath the waves.

With an exclamation of consternation, Nat sprang forward, and tore off his coat. He would have followed the girl had not a roar from Tom brought him to his senses.

“Don’t be a fool, Nat. The gal’s a’right. There she is now, swimmin’ like a porpoise.”

And as Nat looked, he saw Sylvia breasting the waves with strong steady strokes heading for the shore. Once she lifted a hand and waved to them ere the *Scud* swept around the rocky ledge on the upper side of the point, and she was lost to view.

Nat’s one desire now was to get ashore to find out if the girl had safely reached land. In another minute his attention was diverted by the Snag still lying in the very place where she had been anchored a few days before. And floating from a staff stuck up aft was a small ragged flag at half mast.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### HALF-MAST

The *Scud* was lying at anchor in calm water on the upper side of the Point with sails lowered. The wind roared in full diapason through the branches of the old gnarled oak trees which stood sentinel-like on the long sandy ridge which projected from the mainland to the channel beyond. This natural barrier was a great boon to rafts and boats, for while the waves surged and beat furiously on the lower side of the Point, the water on the upper side was scarcely ruffled.

Tom sat up on the deck near the wheel, smoking, with his eyes fixed intently upon the flag at half-mast on the *Snag*. The rest were ashore. Nat had gone to see what had become of Sylvia, while Faith and Sammy had taken the path leading to the main highway. Sammy wished to inspect a bridge a short distance down the road. As an important part of the government he considered it his duty to examine any work of construction, especially when it was convenient for him to do so. And in addition, he looked forward to a visit at Mrs. Royal's, for he was very fond of good food, and he was rather tired of the meals on the *Scud*.

Tom had two problems on his mind which gave him considerable concern. One was Nat's infatuation for the girl of the Creek House. Tom could not account for it, and the wrinkles in his brow deepened as he pondered the question.

"I don't know what's come over that boy," he mused. "I never saw him make sich a fool of himself before. Why, he was so daft that he was on the pint of jumpin' into the water after her, clothes an' all. What he kin see about that luney critter is more'n I kin fathom. If he'd take up with Faith, it'd show his good sense. Now, there's a gal any strappin' young feller should be proud to have in tow. But Nat's got eyes only fer that queer—"

He stopped suddenly, for his attention was arrested by a number of teams moving slowly along the highway road.

"It must be a fun'ral percession. What a lot of teams!"

He glanced at the flag on the silent *Snag*.

"Yes, it must be old Jed. Poor feller! He seemed purty well when I saw him that night of the thunderstorm. But he did complain about trouble with his heart. I allus liked Jed. Him an' me's been boatin' fer a long time. Mebbe my turn'll come next."

He looked over towards the church, the spire and roof of which could be seen through the tops of the trees.

"I ought to go to Jed's fun'ral, but dang it all! I left me good clothes home. I wonder if many people are there. I'd like to hear what the parson has to say 'bout

Jed. He was never much at church goin', same as meself. But mebbe the Lord won't be too hard on us river boatmen. He knows how we have to work Sundays as well as week days to scratch a livin'. Guess He'll understand."

He sat and mused for some time. At length his pipe went out, and his head dropped. He straightened up with a jerk.

"I'm tarnation sleepy. Guess I'll go below an' have a nap."

Going down into the cabin he found Sylvia's dress lying at the foot of the stairs. The floor was wet, and Tom gazed upon the soaked garment with disgust.

"Purty mess fer a gal to leave behind!" he growled. "What she needs is a good cow-hidin' an' I'd like to be the one to give it to her. That'd stop her shindies quicker'n anything else."

He stooped, picked up the dress and flung it up on deck.

"I'll jist leave it there fer Nat to wring out an' dry. Mebbe the sight of that thing'll cool him off a bit. It would me, anyway. A gal that flings her dress on the floor will never make a fit wife fer any man. I hope Nat'll take the hint in time."

With an old cloth he mopped up the water, and threw the soaked rag after the dress.

"Nat kin 'tend to that, too. It'll be an extry job to do fer his lady-love. Now fer a good nap."

Tom was one of those lucky mortals who can sleep anywhere and at any time. His worries dropped away as soon as his head touched the pillow. This was largely due to his life as a river boatman when snatches of sleep had to be taken as opportunity afforded. His philosophic turn of mind had also something to do with it.

"What's the sense of layin' awake thinkin' 'bout the mistakes ye've made in the past, an' what might happen t'morrer?" he had often said. "Children don't do that, so why should grown up folks who think they have so much more sense? I lay down to sleep, an' sleep I sartinly do."

And so he slept this afternoon until he was aroused by the sound of footsteps on the stairs. They were heavy steps made by rough boots. He looked around and gave a gurgle of amazement. It was Jed! But Jed was dead, and buried in the churchyard. He had seen the flag at half-mast, and the funeral procession. This must be his ghost. An uncanny feeling smote his heart as he scrambled to his knees, and peered at the visitor.

"Are ye a ghost, Jed?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

"Ghost! Do I look like a ghost? Are ye crazy, Tom?"

"But wasn't that yer fun'ral I saw on the road?"

Jed slumped down heavily upon the bench near the table. He buried his face in

his hands in the attitude of despair. Tom sat upon the edge of the bunk and watched him.

"My, I'm glad yer not a ghost, Jed. But who's dead?"

"Ru."

"Ru!" Tom straightened quickly up. "Ru dead!"

"Murdered."

With a bound Tom was by Jed's side. He laid a heavy hand upon his shoulder and gave him a vigorous shake.

"Are ye foolin', Jed?"

"Do I look as if I am, Tom?"

"Well, no, that's a fact. But I can't believe what ye say. It knocks me off me pins."

"An' yer not the only one. Oh, it's awful! It seems like a turrible dream. I can't believe Ru's dead, an' murdered, at that."

"Who done the deed, Jed? Have they caught the murderer?"

"Let's go on deck, Tom. It's too close down here. I want more air afore I tell ye what I know."

Seated upon a small bench near the wheel, they filled and lighted their pipes. Jed gave a sigh of relief.

"I feel better now. My! I was dyin' fer a smoke in church when the parson was speakin' about Ru. Me nerves were all upshot, an' I needed me pipe to settle 'em."

"Now, out with yer story, Jed," Tom ordered. "Who murdered Ru?"

"I don't know. It's all a mystery. He was found dead in that old barn over there, with a bullet in his head."

"He was! When did it happen?"

"The night of the thunderstorm, so it seems. Ru was drunk that night, an' he must have crawled into the barn out of the rain. Anyway, that's where he was found the next mornin' by Sam Pittin, who was on his way to the lighthouse to put out the light. He saw Ru stretched out on a bunch of hay, and thought at first he was asleep. But when he found that he was dead, he was scared blue an' made up the road like a bull moose, bellerin' at the top of his voice. Sam is a mighty 'citable critter, anyway."

"Was there anyone with Ru that night?" Tom asked.

"They say there was that feller Bob from the Creek House. He was drunk, too."

"D'ye s'pose he shot Ru? Mebbe it was an accident."

"Mebbe so, but it's hard to tell. Henry Logan, the constable, went to the Creek House to make enquiries. He found Bob laid up with a sore foot, but he couldn't remember nuthin'. His sister said that she found Bob at the barn an' took him home

in her boat. Nat helped her, so she said.”

Tom jumped to his feet.

“He did! Nat was with that gal, ye say?”

“That’s what the gal said.”

“An’ Nat never told me a word about it! Now, why didn’t he, Jed?”

“H’m, young fellers don’t allus tell what they’re doin’ at night, ’specially when they’re chasin’ after gals.”

“But Nat was never like that. This is the fust time I’ve ever known him to lose his head over a gal.”

“Oh, they all come to it sooner or later. But it’s a queer bird Nat’s after, that’s sure.”

“She is, Jed, an’ that’s what’s worryin’ me. I wonder——.”

Tom paused abruptly and gazed out over the water.

“What are ye wonderin’ at, Tom?”

“Oh, I hardly know. It was jist a silly notion that flopped into me mind, that’s all. It was ’bout Ru. I sartinly would like to know who shot him.”

“An’ so would I, Tom. He was a rough cuss, an’ no mistake. But he had his good pints, fer all that. Everyone has ’em, I guess. He used me fair.”

“Cause he had to, Jed. You’re the only one who’d sail with him. I’ve heard him cuss you up an’ down lots of times. No one would stand his abuse. I wouldn’t, anyway, an’ neither would Nat.”

“No, him an’ Nat could never git on together, that’s a fact.”

“An’ whose fault was it, Jed? It was Ru’s. You know as well as I do what he done to Nat at Fredericton. I never saw Nat so mad before.”

“I’ve been thinkin’ a lot about that, Tom, an’ now that Ru’s dead, shot by somebody, I wonder what that trouble up there’ll amount to.”

“That Nat’ll be s’pected?”

“I wouldn’t be s’prised.”

“That’s all nonsense. Nat didn’t shoot Ru. I’d stake me life on that.”

“An’ so would I. But it’ll make no difference what we think. Everybody’ll soon know about that trouble in Fredericton, an’ they’ll think that Nat murdered him fer revenge. It’s too bad, but it can’t be helped. People’ll be mighty s’picious, anyway. An’ besides, this shootin’ is a nasty affair, an’ no stone’ll be left unturned to git the one who done the deed. They’ve sent to the city fer detectives, an’ they’re like ferrets. It’s the fust murder we’ve had around here, an’ it’s stirred up an awful excitement. The hull country fer miles around was at the fun’ral.”

“Did ye see Faith an’ Sammy?”



“Oh, yes. I was speakin’ to Faith an’ she asked me to tell ye about the murder.”

“I’m glad of that. I was thinkin’ that mebbe Faith had forgotten all about me.”

“Ye did, eh? Well, I don’t think much of yer judgment. That gal doesn’t fergit a friend, let me tell ye that.”

“Yer right, Jed. An’ how did she take Ru’s death. He used to go to see her quite often in town.”

“Yes, I know he did. An’ he used to talk a lot about her. I was afraid fer her, knowin’ Ru as I did. She didn’t seem to know anything about that other gal up river.”

“I wonder what’ll become of her now. It’ll be hard on her.”

“It will, it sartinly will. Poor gal, I pity her. But, there, I must be goin’. S’long, Tom, an’ if ye hear any more news, let me know.”

## CHAPTER XIX

### SUSPECTED

As soon as Nat was on land he left Faith and Sammy and went to the extreme end of the Point. Here the wind swept across the unprotected place, while the waves lashed the shore and beat furiously against the rocks. Searching, he found several footprints upon the sand between two large boulders near the lighthouse, which were gradually fading beneath the obliterating waves. Higher up the imprints were more distinct. These led to the dry sand and along the shore on the southern side until they turned to the right among the trees and were lost to view.

Nat knew their meaning. They told him plainly that the girl had reached the shore safely and had hurried away from the place. He stood staring at those tracks upon the sand, as if fascinated. He then sat down upon a stone and gave himself up to serious thought. And as he remained there, a feeling of revulsion gradually took possession of his soul. A slight shiver shook his body. This was due not to the wind, for it was laden with the warmth of summer, but to disillusionment. He had become infatuated with a girl who was either crazy or a fool. He thought of her strange actions ever since he had first known her, and then her wild behaviour on board the *Scud* before she had leaped into the river. He remembered, too, her imbecile father and drunken brother. What a family! Who were they, anyway? And to think that he had been ready to get mixed up with such people! It must have been the girl's face and wonderful voice which had ensnared him, so he believed. But no longer would he be enticed. His eyes had been opened in time to the real nature of the enchantress.

All at once there came to him a vision of Faith Farthing. The contrast between her and Sylvia was startling. He pictured the two upon the *Scud*; one so calm and gentle; the other so rough and excited. He could not imagine Faith dragging Sammy about the deck, singing and laughing in such a reckless manner. And how beautiful was Faith's face compared with Sylvia's. It was so noble and serene, and when she smiled how wonderful the effect. He thought, too, of her clear dark eyes and the expression he had often seen mirrored there. He had always known that she possessed more than ordinary beauty, but he had thought little about it. Now, however, his eyes were opened to her charms, and a sweet sense of love stole into his heart like the dew of the morning into a flower of the field.

Nat was about to rise and go up to see his mother, when a startling laugh sounded behind him. He looked quickly around, but could see no one. Peering keenly among the trees, his eyes at length caught sight of several garments hanging

from the limb of an oak, and swaying in the breeze. At once he understood. Sylvia was there drying her clothes. She had not gone home as he had imagined, but had concealed herself among the trees and the thick bushes. But why had she laughed? Modesty, at least, should have sealed her lips. But, no, that was evidently not her nature.

Nat wanted to get away from the place, and the presence of such a creature. He rose to his feet and stood for a few seconds undecided which way to go. Then he started forward, but as he did so, Sylvia began to sing in the strange bewitching manner which had formerly so entranced him. He slackened his steps and then stopped. There was an intense pathos and wistfulness in her voice. It was no longer wild and reckless, but the expression of a heart filled with deep sorrow. It strangely appealed to him. Had he been mistaken in the girl, after all? Perhaps he had judged her wrongfully. Her behaviour on the *Scud* might have been due to her accident upon the river. As he thought of this, and was tempted to delay, the song abruptly ceased. Then the girl's face appeared above the top of a clump of thick bushes. She looked at him and smiled, and that smile was more alluring than the song. She then lifted her right hand and beckoned to him. Nat stood transfixed. The effect of the song and the smile vanished, and an intense loathing possessed him. He had seen harpies in cities luring men, and had thought little about it. That was their profession. But this girl disgusted him. He turned angrily away, but Sylvia called after him:

"All right, then. You don't need me now, but you will before long. Go, and be damned!"

Nat waited to hear no more. He hurried forward, the blood surging madly through his veins. He had no doubt now about his feelings towards this girl. He wanted to get away from her and never see her again. Her parting curse rang in his ears, and the words about needing her before long. He would never need her. He was through with her forever.

Coming at length in sight of the church, he was surprised to see so many people and teams around the building and the graveyard. What was the meaning of the crowd? Was it a funeral? But he had heard of no death in the place, and he knew of no sick person.

When he reached the church he soon learned about Ru's death, for he met old Jed who was standing apart by himself. Groups of people were scattered here and there discussing the murder. Excitement was at fever heat, and the ears of all were strained to catch the latest bit of news. The burial had taken place, but a number still lingered in the graveyard. Many were leaving for the old barn out of morbid curiosity to view the scene of the crime.

As Jed talked, explaining what had taken place, Nat noticed that many were looking in his direction. At first he thought it was his rough clothes that were attracting their attention. He felt out of place, and decided to go back to the boat without visiting his mother. He looked searchingly around for her, but could not see her anywhere. But as Jed talked, the reason for the people's interest in him dawned upon his mind. They knew about his trouble with Ru at Fredericton, and the murder following so soon after had aroused their suspicions. He tried to banish the idea that he was suspected. It was too ridiculous to be entertained for a minute. But he found this impossible. He recalled with a start that he had passed the old barn the night of the murder. Would not that tell against him? But who would know that he had been there? Tom, of course, knew, and so did Sylvia. But what could they say? At once there flashed into his mind Sylvia's parting words, "You don't need me now, but you will before long." What did she mean? Was there something more in her words than he had imagined? Did she know anything about the murder, that suspicion would rest upon him, and that he would need her help? His brain was in a whirl, and he stood silent for a few minutes when Jed had finished speaking. Coming to himself with a start, he turned to the old boatman.

"Are you going back to the *Snag*?"

"Yes, in a few minutes."

"Tell Tom, then, about the murder, will you?"

"Sure. Faith an' Sammy asked me to tell him, an' I was on me way when I met you."

"Where are they now?"

"I left 'em at the upper end of the graveyard."

And there Nat found them. He did not heed his rough clothes now, for he had something more important to think about. He wanted to talk to Faith, to unburden his troubled mind to her. He was certain that she would understand and advise him in his perplexity.

Sammy was in his element, haranguing to a group of people. With his hat in his left hand he was pouring forth his eloquence as Nat arrived. He had told his listeners that the government would spare no effort to have the murderer captured. The government was always ready and willing to serve the public. This gave him a chance to branch out and tell how the government was constructing bridges, making good roads, and building wharves along the river.

All listened to the speaker with amused interest. They knew Sammy, and long since had judged him according to his real value. These honest, hard-working people were not easily duped by such a man. But they enjoyed hearing his wonderful flow

of words, and he diverted their attention for a time from the gloom of the tragedy which had settled over the community like a pall.

Nat paid no heed to what Sammy was saying, for standing by his side was Faith, and at her he looked. The girl merely glanced at him, and averted her eyes as if he were nothing at all to her. Nat was astonished at her manner, for it was unlike Faith whose face had always brightened at his approach. But the next instant he believed that he knew the reason. Like all the rest she suspected him of the murder. His brain reeled at the thought, and hardly knowing what he did, he left the place and walked with slow steps up the road. Faith suspected him! The words pounded through his brain. He could hardly realise it. No matter who else might consider him guilty, he had been certain that Faith would believe in him and stand by him to the last. But now she had turned against him in his time of need. And as he thus thought, unheeding the curious glances of people along the road, a deep anger came into his heart. Why were people suspecting, and, no doubt, condemning him when nothing had been proven against him? They had known him since childhood, and he had always led an upright life. Why were they so ready to turn against him upon the slightest suspicion? And the women, most likely, were just the same as the men. How they would talk about him in their homes and when they met one another. That would not trouble him so much if only Faith believed in him. But she was no different from the others. Bah! Women were all alike, and Faith was no better than Sylvia.

In this mood he reached home and found his mother working in the kitchen. Ah, she was true, for her welcome proved it. But perhaps she had not heard the rumors that were afloat. Mothers are sometimes the last to hear evil tidings about their children. As Mrs. Royal talked about the tragedy, Nat felt sure that she had no idea that he was suspected. In a way this was a relief, and yet he did long to unburden his heart and mind to her. But he had not the courage to tell her just then. Perhaps it would be better for her to hear it from others, he reasoned. And, besides, he had nothing to confess. He was innocent, but how could he prove it?

He thought of this as he made his way after supper back to the *Scud*. If arrested, what evidence could he produce on his own behalf? And against him would be the condemning fact that he and Ru had quarrelled, and that he was the last person, so far as was known, who had passed the barn that night when Ru was lying drunk within. It was an awkward situation, and as he meditated upon it, a foreboding of impending doom pressed heavily upon his heart.

## CHAPTER XX

“WHAT A FURY!”

Next to haranguing a crowd of interested listeners, Sammy's chief delight was in examining and passing judgment upon some government work. Only at rare intervals was he afforded this special pleasure, for Sammy did not like to make long tiresome journeys over the country to inspect the bridges that were being built. It gave him much satisfaction, therefore, at the opportunity of inspecting with little effort the work upon the bridge below the Point.

The day after the funeral he visited the place. It was about the middle of the afternoon, for he had been very busy until then interviewing several government supporters and giving them a vast amount of information for their use at the next election. Although the latter was more than a year off, Sammy believed in sowing the seed well in advance.

He found a number of men at work upon the bridge, which was nearing completion. The fact that he knew next to nothing about such work made no difference to him. He belonged to the government, so that was all-sufficient. He was well aware that others occupied positions for which they had little or no capability, so he felt that he was in good company.

With the foreman as guide, he examined every part of the bridge, and when he was through he expressed his complete satisfaction with everything that had been done. He did it in his usual manner by assembling the men before him and expounding to them the excellent service the government was rendering the country.

“It is our main object,” he said, “to see that the public money is well expended. We are keeping the taxes as low as possible, and whatever we receive is honestly administered. We do not squander it as did the former government, as you can readily see by the many improvements we have made and are making. We ask you to remember this when our enemies attack us with their infamous lies.”

The workmen gave Sammy their strict attention. They were glad of this respite, for the day was hot. But it was well for the little man that he could not read their thoughts. He would also have been shocked could he have heard their comments when he had gone, and their reference to him as the “little tail cuss.” But he did not know, so as he walked along the road to visit another piece of work over a mile away at the Creek, he felt that he had nobly performed his duty to the government of which he was such an important part.

Sammy disliked walking, so after he had gone about half a mile he felt very hot and weary. A big shady tree in a field studded with clumps of bushes looked inviting.

In another minute he was seated on the ground with his back propped against the trunk wiping the perspiration from his face. His hat he had placed carefully by his side, and the long tails of his coat he had spread out that they might not become too much wrinkled. He considered it beneath his dignity to travel around the country without his long black coat and high hat, even on a hot summer day along a dusty road. It was necessary for him to keep up appearances, for that meant a great deal to the people he met, so he believed.

Sammy was very comfortable in this cool quiet place, and in a few minutes he was fast asleep. He was suddenly awakened by a great noise. At once his eyes rested upon a big dog a few yards away, barking at him in a most furious manner. With a yell of terror, for he was mortally afraid of dogs, he seized his hat and held it before him as a weapon of defence. It was not needed, however, which was fortunate for him, as a sharp word of command checked the dog's barking. Looking eagerly around, Sammy saw the girl who had been rescued from the river, and who had led him such a lively dance on the deck of the *Scud*. She was coming towards him, smiling and evidently enjoying his terror.

"Come, Sport," she called, "what have you found here? Something that looks like a man! Why, it's my dancing partner of yesterday!"

Reluctantly the dog withdrew, and Sammy scrambled quickly to his feet. With hat in hand, he made the girl a profound bow. Agitated though he was, he did not forget his gallantry in the presence of a beautiful woman. And Sylvia did look beautiful as she stood there, her face aglow, and her eyes twinkling with merriment. She knew that she was fascinating the little man, and it pleased her.

"It's too bad that Sport disturbed your sleep, sir. He is a very naughty dog, and I am ashamed of him."

"It was well for him that you arrived when you did, Miss," Sammy replied. "I might have hurt him—killed him, in fact."

The girl laughed outright at such a ridiculous statement. Sammy's dignity was touched, and his face flushed with anger.

"You seem to treat my words with unbecoming levity, Miss. Do you think I am joking?"

"Not at all, sir. It would have been a great loss to me if Sport had eaten you."

"Eaten me!"

"Yes, that is what I mean. If I had not arrived when I did, his meal would be ended now, and he would have died from the effects. He never ate a man like you, so I know he would have died."

Sammy's eyes opened wide in amazement, and he glanced fearfully around at

the dog which was eyeing him suspiciously.

"Has he ever eaten a man?" he asked in a quavering voice.

"Oh, yes, lots of them. He likes to eat men better than anything else. But he only eats bad men, ones who are devils."

Sammy breathed a sigh of relief.

"He wouldn't eat me, then, Miss, for I am a Christian. I've got religion. It's a great thing. I hope you have it."

The brightness suddenly faded from the girl's face like a sun-lit garden darkened by a passing cloud. Into her eyes leaped a cold challenging expression. She looked contemptuously at his black coat, white cravat, and shining moon-like face.

"So you are a parson, a Gospel-slinger, trying to save people's souls! I wondered who you were, but I might have known as soon as I saw you on the *Scud*."

The look and tone of her voice were lost upon Sammy. He was interested and pleased that she had mistaken him for a clergyman. No words could have better suited his vanity.

"I am not really a parson, Miss, but I believe in doing what I can to spread the Great Message of salvation. It is the duty of everyone who has experienced religion."

"Is that so? And I suppose you practise it sometimes, on the *Scud*, for instance."

"Yes, all places are the same to me, whether on land or water. As a member of the government my duties lead me to many places, I try to——."

"Convert the sinners and keep them out of Hell, I suppose," Sylvia sternly interrupted. "Do you expect to accomplish anything with the captain of the *Scud*, and that—woman of his?"

"You mean Nat and Faith, Miss? Oh, they're all right. I've known them ever since they were babies, and I'm proud of them."

"You are! Proud of a man who keeps a girl like that on his boat?"

Slowly the meaning of Sylvia's words dawned upon Sammy's mind. His loyalty to his friends was like his loyalty to the government. Nothing could shake it, and now that the honor of Nat and Faith was being questioned, he was unusually aroused. He placed his hat carefully upon the ground, straightened himself to his full height of five feet two inches, folded his arms, and Napoleon-like faced the girl. Surely such an attitude would cause the most reckless person to quail. But to Sylvia he only appeared amusing and she laughed aloud.

"Oh, you look terrible, sir. I am almost scared to death. I must have pricked a tender spot—raw, perhaps."



“Yes, Miss, you did, for you pricked the heart of an old man who has very few sincere friends, and Nat Royal and Faith Farthing are two of them. I am that old man, Miss, and I am loyal to my friends, for they are loyal to me. They never make fun of me and laugh at me behind my back as others do. The insinuation you have made does them a grievous wrong. Nat has never kept a woman on board his boat. Faith was merely a passenger from the city. She sailed with us and landed at the Point. Her father is a loyal supporter of the government, and we have perfect confidence in him and his daughter. We gather around us only honorable people, for we seek the welfare of the public. We are building up this country, encouraging industry and agriculture, and improving roads and bridges.”

At first Sylvia had stared in astonishment at Sammy's eloquence. Then she became impatient, stamped her foot, spoke to him and tried to interrupt the flow of words. But all in vain. Sammy was lost to everything around him. The joy of speaking about the government had him in full possession. He waved his hands to the trees as if they were a great audience. In desperation, the girl thought of the dog which was crouching in an alert and watchful attitude nearby. She glanced down at the quivering brute, and in a twinkling her decision was made.

“Sic him, Sport,” she commanded.

With a savage growl the dog leaped forward. As he did so, the toe of Sammy's right foot caught him full on the nose, causing him to reel back with a yelp of pain. How he managed to do this Sammy was never able to explain. He saw the dog springing for him, and intuitively he kicked out with all the strength at his command. But the dog was by no means daunted by this unexpected blow. He was eager to return to the attack fiercer than ever, but his mistress checked him with a sharp word of command. He obeyed and slowly drew back, growling and keeping his fiery eyes fixed upon the terrified little man. Sylvia laid a hand upon his head.

“That will do, Sport. You have brought him down to earth, and that was all I wanted. He wouldn't make good eating, anyway. Gospel-slingers never do. They are too dry and tough.”

Sammy had retreated a few paces, with his eyes riveted fearfully upon the animal.

“My, that was a narrow escape, Miss!” he gasped. “I might have killed him if you had not called him off.”

“He might have killed you, is more like it. And you deserve to be killed for such a devilish harangue. I don't care to listen to such nonsense. I want to hear about Captain Nat and his girl. They love each other, I suppose?”

A shrewd expression came into Sammy's eyes. He was now beginning to

comprehend this girl's interest in Nat. She must be in love with him herself, and was jealous of Faith. This was a most interesting discovery he had made, and he felt quite proud of his cleverness. And here was his chance to have revenge upon this strange girl for setting her dog upon him, and making a base insinuation about his two good friends.

"Yes, Miss, Nat and Faith are certainly fond of each other. When they get married and settle down, Sammy Shaver will have a good home for the rest of his life. And it'll be a real home, too, for Faith will make it that. She's the finest girl I know, and that's saying a good deal."

"So you are certain they'll get married?" Sylvia queried.

"Sure."

"When?"

"Oh, I don't exactly know. Next summer, maybe."

Anyone else would have noticed the dangerous gleam in Sylvia's eyes and would have taken warning. But Sammy was too much absorbed with his own cleverness that he was blind to everything else. But he did see when the girl stepped swiftly forward, and glared so fiercely that he staggered back with fright. Seeing his fear, she laughed. Then calling to the dog, she sped away and disappeared among the trees.

Sammy stared after her until she was lost to view. He then picked up his hat, carefully brushed off several leaves and grass, and placed it upon his head.

"My! my! what a fury!" he exclaimed. "But I paid her back, all right. She's jealous of Faith, ho, ho! I know how to get even with such a person. She thought she could scare me and injure my good friends, the hussy!"

Sammy, however, had struck deeper than he realised. He thought that he understood women, but such a girl as Sylvia Sarason had never before crossed his path. Had he known how deep his words had gone into her heart, he would not have chuckled so much as he continued on his way down to the Creek.

## CHAPTER XXI

### “UNTO THE HILLS”

Faith's visit to the Point was altogether different from what she had expected. Instead of a free-from-care life, she found herself suddenly plunged into the midst of distracting affairs. One was Ru's death, which produced upon her a most disturbing effect. Although the tragedy came to her as a shock, at the same time a weight seemed lifted from her heart. She knew that this sense of relief was wrong, and to a nature such as hers it was a sin. She tried to crush back the feeling, but in vain. She had feared Ru, for she knew that he was bad and longed to possess her, not for any love that he had for her, but to satisfy his sensual desire. She had seen in him the brute Caliban who longed to ruin the fair Miranda. And now he was dead, and she felt relieved. It was wicked, she knew, to be glad of anyone's death, and her unhappiness increased the more she thought about it. Could she ever be forgiven? And there was no one to whom she could unburden her soul.

And in addition to this worry was Nat's infatuation for the girl of the Creek House. That scene on the *Scud* with Sylvia careering wildly around the deck with Sammy was ever in her mind. How could she forget it! And Nat had been fascinated by her! She had seen it in his eyes, and also in his impulse to leap into the river. She thought, too, of his ardent words about the wonderful Sylvia that night in the shipyard near the great *Norseman*.

Such were the thoughts which filled her mind by day and night, although she tried to be cheerful in the presence of Mrs. Royal. It was a comfort on the second afternoon at the Point to slip away by herself and visit the little house beneath the hill, close to the river. It was empty now, but there she had been born and spent her happy childhood. She stood upon the verandah and looked down at the trees where she and Nat had so often played together. Their great branches seemed to her like outstretched hands of welcome. But they only brought sadness to her heart now as she recalled the changes that had taken place since then. And through the branches gleamed the river beyond, dotted with the sails of boats going up and down. It was the same, and how often she and Nat had counted the vessels that passed the Point. But that was long ago, so it seemed to her now.

She went into the house and opened the windows to air the rooms. The place was the same as she and her father had left it the summer before when they had spent an all-too-brief vacation here. It was lonely now, and as she moved from room to room the memory of her mother was strong upon her. How she longed for her loving companionship that she might confide to her the troubles that were pressing

upon her heart.

Ere long she was startled by a step upon the verandah. Looking out, she saw old Mrs. Brindle standing there, her round cheery face beaming in at the door. She was a big stout woman, good-natured and garrulous, who knew all the gossip for miles around. Faith was really pleased to see this visitor whom she had known all her life. And, besides, she did need someone to cheer her up just then. She invited her into the house.

“No, Faith, dear, I’d sooner set out here on the verandy, if it’s all the same to you. I’m all het up.”

Faith brought out a splint-bottom rocking-chair, and as Mrs. Brindle seated herself, she sat down upon the top step nearby.

“An’ how’s yer pa, me dear?” the woman enquired. “I hope he’ll be up ag’in this summer.”

“He is a Moss Glen now, so that’s why I am here,” Faith explained. “I do hope he will find time to come, for a rest would do him good.”

“Indeed it would, me dear. Everyone needs it at times. But dear me! with sich excitement we’ve been havin’ of late there’s no rest fer anybody. I don’t know what this place’s comin’ to. Wasn’t that murder terrible? We never had one here before.”

“It was, Mrs. Brindle. Have the police found out anything yet?”

“I don’t know, though they seem to be doin’ all they kin. I hope t’ goodness it’s not true about Nat.”

“What about him?”

“Why, haven’t ye heard? No? Well, that’s not strange as yer stayin’ with his mother, an’ no one would like to say a thing to her.”

Unconsciously Faith had risen to her feet and had clutched Mrs. Brindle by the arm. Her face was pale and her hands trembling.

“What do you know? Tell me, quick.”

“Fer land’s sake, child, don’t git all worked up. Nuthin’ has happened to Nat yit, fer no one kin prove that he killed Ru. It’s only suspicion, so fer. But jist what’ll come out of it, no one kin tell.”

Faith made no reply to these words. Her hand which had clutched Mrs. Brindle’s arm was now pressed to her heart as if to stop its wild beating. She felt faint and was glad to sit down again upon the verandah step. So absorbed was the visitor in her story that she paid no heed to the girl’s agitation.

“No one kin make me believe that Nat done that terrible deed,” she continued. “He is too good a boy, an’ I allus liked him. But what I think won’t make no difference ag’inst them stories about the row Nat had with Ru at Fredericton.”

“What stories?” Faith asked as calmly as possible.

“An’ so ye haven’t heard about them, neither! That’s queer, fer they’re all over the parish. Jist who brought the news first I don’t know. But it was Sam Perkins who told me, an’ he had it from Captain Josh Sanders, of the *River Belle*. Josh was in Fredericton, loadin’ deal, the very night Nat was in jail.”

“In jail! Why, what was the trouble?”

“Yes, he was in jail, so Josh said, an’ it was all over a girl, so it seems. There was some trouble, an’ Nat knocked Ru down, so the police grabbed Nat an’ locked him up. He was tried the next mornin’ an’ let go.”

“Who was the girl?” Faith asked in a trembling voice.

“Oh, I don’t know. Some hussy, I s’pose, that Nat an’ Ru were daft over. I didn’t think Nat was that kind of a boy. But one kin never tell what young fellers are doin’ when they’re away from home. I don’t know what the world’s comin’ to, anyway, with sich goin’s-on between men an’ women. An’ there’s this awful murder. It wasn’t like that when I was young. But now young folks are goin’ to the bad as fast as they kin. It’s terrible!”

“Is there any proof that Nat was near the barn the night Ru was murdered?” Faith questioned. “Perhaps he will be able to prove that he was never there at all. Oh, I hope he can.”

“An’ so do I, me dear, though I’m afraid he can’t. He was with that crazy girl of the Creek House that night.”

“He was!”

“That’s what I’ve heard. He was up to his mother’s, an’ on his way back to the *Scud* he must have met that hussy, an’ went home with her. He would have to pass the barn on his way back to the boat. But, there, I must git on me way. Remember me to yer pa when ye write. I do hope he’ll come to the P’int fer a few days. It’ll do him a world of good.”

Faith felt that she could endure no more, and she was most thankful to be alone that she might think over all she had heard. Her brain was in a whirl, and she shivered as she sat crouched upon the step. What did it all mean? she asked herself over and over again. Could it be possible that Nat was guilty of that terrible deed! She could not believe it, for he had always seemed so noble and honorable to her. And yet what about his trouble with Ru over that girl in Fredericton? There was no doubt about his infatuation for the girl of the Creek House, and perhaps she was but one of several. It was hard for her to believe anything wrong about Nat. But why had he not told her that he had been in jail? Why had he kept it from her? Was he too ashamed to tell her? Had he been living a double life? And now people

suspected him of murdering Ru. The idea was almost more than she could bear. It was not true, she told herself. There had been some mistake. Oh, if she could only do something to defend him! So intense was her love that she would willingly have given her life in his defence. And she knew that she must suffer alone. Nat should never know of it. Neither would he care if he did, for his heart was too firmly set upon another.

She rose to her feet and looked through the trees out upon the river. She was weary, for the strain and excitement of the last few days had told heavily upon her. And as she stood there she noticed someone walking along the shore. In another instant she knew her. It was the girl of the Creek House! Faith stared, fascinated by her slow deliberate movements. The dog was close behind its mistress, and to the quivering watching girl upon the verandah they appeared like forms of doom moving silently among the trees. Again she shivered, not from coldness, but from an indefinable sense of impending calamity.

Closing the door, she left the house and walked slowly up towards the main highway. The weight upon her heart was almost overwhelming. How could she endure it? And it all had come upon her so suddenly. A few days before she had been so free from care, looking forward to a pleasant visit in the country. Now she was bowed down by doubts and fears with no apparent way of escape. She sighed as she walked thoughtfully along. What would be the outcome of it all? she asked herself. Everything seemed to be in a tangle and she could not see how the twisted threads could ever be unwound.

Nearing the road, she lifted her head, and as she did so, her eyes rested upon the distant tree-clad hills, aglow with the afternoon sun. She stopped and looked longingly upon them. How peaceful they seemed, undisturbed by human passions. And they had been the same for ages, calm and strong, symbols of eternity.

Suddenly there flashed into her mind the words of an old familiar psalm "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." Ah, why had she forgotten? Yes, she would lift up her eyes unto hills, and beyond, for there she would find the strength and comfort she so sorely needed. "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." "Unto the hills." The words kept ringing in her mind, and ere long the peace of the hills settled upon her heart and calmed its tremulous doubts and fears.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE CRUELTY OF JEALOUSY

Faith felt that she should tell Mrs. Royal what she had heard, but dreaded to do so. What sorrow it would bring to the mother's heart if she knew that her only son was suspected of murder. Would not the terrible news almost kill her? Perhaps it would be better for her to hear it from someone else. Faith did not lack moral courage. That had been proven over and over again. But now she had so many burdens of her own that she felt unequal to the strain of witnessing the widow's grief.

As soon as she entered the house, however, she knew that Mrs. Royal had heard something about her son. She was working in the kitchen, preparing supper, and she smiled as the girl entered. But the expression in her eyes told as plainly as words the worry on her mind.

"I am glad to see you, dear," she accosted, "for I need someone near me just now. You understand, I suppose?"

"I do, Mrs. Royal," Faith replied, as she crossed the room and put her arms lovingly around the woman's neck. "I heard it only this afternoon. But it is not true. Nat would never do such a thing. There is some mistake, I am sure."

"Of course there is. But it is terrible, all the same, to think people are suspecting my boy. I am completely bewildered, and don't know what to do."

"I wonder if Nat has heard."

"It is hardly likely. But he will before long, for he is bound to be arrested."

"Arrested!"

"Yes, nothing can prevent it, so far as I can see. The police have been very busy, and from what I have heard everything is against Nat. He and Ru had some trouble in Fredericton, and Nat was the last one to pass the barn the night of the murder. It seems that he helped that girl of the Creek House to take her drunken brother home, and from there he went back to the *Scud*. But Nat never murdered Ru. I would stake my life on that."

"And so would I, Mrs. Royal. But Nat may be able to explain everything."

"Oh, I hope so. My dear boy is innocent, I am sure."

Supper was over when a neighbor called at the house and left a letter for Faith. It had come up on the afternoon boat, so he said, and as he was passing, he brought it with him.

The letter was from her father, and contained startling news. Mr. Farthing had cut his hand, and would not be able to work for a couple of weeks, and perhaps longer.

"Do not worry, dear," he wrote. "Although it is quite a bad cut, the doctor says it is not serious. But it will lay me up for a while. I am in the city now, and am planning to go up on the boat to-morrow afternoon. I would go to-day only I have some business to attend to. You can get the house ready and order some provisions at the store. I am looking forward to a happy time with you in our little house under the hill. A holiday will do me good, although I did not expect to take one so soon. I am shocked at the news of Ru's death. There has been a great deal in the papers about it, and I am worried over the nasty rumors that are afloat here. I shall say no more about it at present, but wait until I see you."

Although Faith was anxious about her father's accident, yet she was glad that he was coming to the Point. His presence and advice would mean much to her now.

She found it difficult to sleep that night. A strong south west wind was sweeping in from the sea, rattling the window of her room, and lashing the big trees around the house. She always enjoyed listening to the wind, for it had sounded like music to her ears. But now it had an ominous meaning. Mingled with its wailing was the wild weird voice of the girl of the Creek House as she had heard her on board the *Scud*. She could not keep her out of her mind, nor the thought of her gliding form that afternoon among the trees followed by her dog. It filled her heart with a nameless fear. Just why, she could not tell. Not until the remembrance of the hills came to her mind did she find peace. "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help." There was an assurance in those words which she sorely needed. They gave her strength and courage for whatever might lie ahead. In Him who was above the silent hills she could trust and not be afraid.

Before she slept, the rain began to fall. It was a driving rain that beat upon the roof and ran streaming down the window panes. She liked the sound, for it was so soothing and companionable.

The storm beat itself out in the night, and when Faith opened her eyes in the morning the sun was shining into her room. The birds were chirping and singing in the trees, and the sweetness and freshness of clover, honeysuckle, and other flowers filled the air. The fears and forebodings of the night had now vanished, and Faith was eager for the work in the little house under the hill which would keep her busy through the day.

After breakfast she walked to the store and ordered a supply of groceries to be sent down during the afternoon. On the way back she stopped at Billy Slocum's, an old friend of hers, to see if he would go over and cut the long grass in front of the house.

"I'll be over in about an hour," he informed her. "I'll have to grind me scythe, an'



do a few chores around the barn. It's too bad about yer dad's accident. I'll go an' see him when ye git settled, fer I like to hear him talk about his wonderful figure-heads."

Billy was a most worthy man and a good neighbor. He was quite a student of nature, too, and could tell much about birds and animals, of which he was very fond. The hearty welcome that he and his wife gave Faith was delightful. As she left the house and walked along the road the world seemed brighter to her than it had for several days. She noticed how fresh the buttercups, daisies, and clover looked after the cleansing rain. The dust was all washed from their faces, and they seemed to nod and smile cheerfully to her as she walked by.

The morning passed rapidly as she worked in the house. There was much to do, but she was glad to be busy. The sound of Billy whetting his scythe drifted in through the open door, and it was pleasant to hear. Several times she went outside, spoke to him, and listened to his quaint remarks about nature's ways, as well as several of the interesting things he had recently discovered. As she sat for a few minutes to rest upon the verandah steps, he pointed to a fallen tree not far away.

"That went down durin' one of the big spring gales. It was dead, so it couldn't stand the strain. Now, the other trees came through all right because they were alive an' strong. Old nature can't stand dead an' useless things, so she soon gets clear of 'em. It's life she wants, an' she shows it in everything around us. Yes, beauty an' life, me dear, they always go together in nature."

It was well on into the afternoon before Faith rested from her labor. Although the house was not cleaned to her satisfaction, it would have to do for the present. She was tired, and as she sat down for a few minutes in the cosy sitting-room and looked around she thought of the time when she was a little child and her mother was with her. What happy days they seemed to her now, so free from care. Everything in the room reminded her of her mother, from the hooked mats upon the floor to the pictures upon the walls.

A step outside startled her, and looking quickly around she saw the girl of the Creek House coming up the steps. With fast-beating heart she rose to her feet and reached the door just as the visitor stepped upon the verandah. The two looked at each other, and then a smile overspread Sylvia's face. That smile dispelled Faith's fear, and stepping impulsively forward she held out her hand.

"You startled me. I did not know anyone was near. Will you come inside, or shall we sit out here?"

"This is nice," Sylvia replied, seating herself upon a rustic chair. "One can breathe freer here than in the house."

Faith sat upon the verandah railing, wondering why the girl had visited her. Although she did not feel so much afraid of her now, yet she stood in awe of this peculiar creature who acted so strangely at times. That she was beautiful in face and form, there was no doubt. But to Faith her expression and manner told only of tragedy. The smile she had given her seemed forced and unnatural. And it was quite evident that Sylvia was ill at ease. Her eyes were restless, looking now at Faith and then down at her dog who was attentively watching at the bottom of the steps. She was carelessly dressed, and her clothes, though of good material, were much worn. The bottom of her skirt was frayed, and her rough boots were soiled with mud and clay. But she appeared like one who paid slight attention to her personal appearance. Faith longed to know the story of her life, and why one so beautiful should show such signs of dejection and despair.

At length Sylvia aroused herself as from deep reverie, shivered, and looked keenly, almost fiercely at Faith.

“Who is coming?”

Faith started at this unexpected question, and before she could reply, Sylvia laughed.

“Oh, I know, so you needn’t try to hide it from me. You’re getting the house ready for him. You’ve been working here all day, and he’s coming soon.”

“I don’t know what you mean,” Faith replied. “I am getting the house ready for my father. He is coming to-night.”

Sylvia sprang to her feet, her eyes glowing with a strange light.

“Don’t lie to me. You can’t make me believe you’ve been working here all day because your father is coming. That’s not reasonable.”

“You needn’t believe it, then.” Faith’s fear had given way to anger. “What business is it of yours, anyway, what I am doing?”

“I’ve made it my business,” and Sylvia stamped her foot. “I know you are expecting your lover, and he is coming on the *Flying Scud*. He will be here to-night.”

Faith started as the meaning of the girl’s rage flashed into her mind. She was in love with Nat! It was jealousy!

Again Sylvia laughed, for she surmised what was in Faith’s mind.

“Ah, you can’t deceive me, you devil! You have taken Captain Nat from me. You have stolen his heart with your pretty face and lovely eyes. But you’ll never get him. I’ll scratch your cheeks and tear out your eyes. Then you’ll be a pretty sight for your lover.”

She took a step forward as if to put her threat into effect. But Faith was no

cowardly weakling. She was strong and active. With clenched hands she stood on the defensive. Her Scotch blood was stirred, and her eyes flashed their warning. Outwardly she was calm, terribly calm, and her steady unflinching eyes caused Sylvia to hesitate. She had expected this quiet girl to tremble with fear, to cry out in alarm, and to beg for mercy. But to see her standing so calmly erect, unnerved her. If she could only overcome those eyes! They seemed to her like flaming spear-points beyond which she could not go.

And as they stood facing each other, Sammy Shaver suddenly appeared around the corner of the house. He stopped short and stared in amazement at the dramatic scene that was so unexpectedly presented to view. In another minute, however, he knew that something of a most unusual nature was taking place. Sylvia's presence here was enough to make him anxious, for he remembered only too well his encounter with her the day before. It was necessary for him to act quickly and decisively.

Forgetting his dignity as an important member of the government he bounded up the steps. He had gone but part way when the watching dog leaped after him with a savage growl. Greatly alarmed, Sammy sped to the top, tore his high hat from his head, and just as the brute thrust up his muzzle to grip him by the leg, he brought the hat down with all his force upon the dog's nose. The sudden impact caused the crown, much frayed at the edges, to give way, with the result that the hat emeshed the dog's head like a band and stuck fast. The animal's savage growl was instantly changed to a sharp yelp of fear and surprise at such a strange reception. He staggered back, blinded, and losing his foothold, he hurtled down the steps and brought up with a thud upon the ground below. Half dazed he struggled to his feet and tore frantically with his paws at the encircling headgear. In another minute he was free, and growling with rage he began to tear the old beaver to pieces. Every bite seemed to increase his anger. Several times he glanced up at the man standing at the top of the steps, and his fiery eyes sent a chill into Sammy's soul. The little man sadly viewed the destruction of his precious hat. It was almost unbelievable that he should be thus humiliated by a dog. What would his enemies say should they hear of it? And what would he do without his hat? How could he appear in public bare-headed?

A sarcastic laugh aroused him. It came from Sylvia, and looking quickly towards her, he saw that her eyes were fixed upon him.

"I've a good mind to throw you down to the dog," she declared.

Sammy at once made a profound bow.

"Try it, madam. You might find it a much more difficult task than you imagine.

Like the great government to which I have the honor to belong I am not easily overturned, at least, not by a woman. Throw me to your dog if you think you can.”

Sammy was certainly rash in his challenge to the half-crazed girl, for he would have been as a child in an encounter with her. But it was his courage which saved him, as it had saved Faith. For the same reason Sylvia quailed before this virtue. Whether it stirred within her a sense of respect or fear it is impossible to say. Anyway, she made no move to lay her hands upon the defiant little man. She merely looked at him as if unworthy of further consideration. She then moved forward and walked slowly down the steps.

“Come, Sport,” she called, “let’s go. I would give you that little thing up there to eat, but I’m afraid he might poison you. He’s too dry and tough, anyway.”

With the dog at her heels, she sped down among the trees, walked rapidly along the shore, and disappeared from view.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### TOM'S IN A HURRY

A sudden weakness came upon Faith and she sank down in the rustic chair nearby. She was trembling and her face was very white. She lowered her head as if to hide the vision of the infuriated girl. Sammy noticed her agitation and came to her side.

"What a fury!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad she's gone."

Faith lifted her head and looked at him.

"But she'll come back, Sammy. She's jealous of me."

"I know she is. But I'll take care of you, my dear."

"Thank you. I know you will do what you can, but she is terrible."

"Oh, I can handle terrible people, all right. I just look at them, and they become afraid. Dogs do the same."

Sammy felt very important, for he believed that he had a special work to do. Faith needed a protector, and who could do that better than himself? It would be an act of chivalry to defend this girl, and such a task appealed to him. His simple childlike nature which made him strut around and talk in such a manner about the government, now caused him to champion this distressed damsel. That she was beautiful added all the more to his interest, for Sammy was most susceptible to maidenly charms.

"You can trust me, my dear, to defend you," he impulsively declared. "That creature will not harm you while I am near."

To anyone else these words would have seemed ridiculous. But they touched Faith's heart. That he would be a poor protector so far as physical strength was concerned never entered her mind. It was his sympathy she valued, and his presence was comforting. Even the company of a poodle-dog in times of loneliness and trouble is of considerable worth. But to Faith Sammy seemed like a knight of true renown.

"I know you will help me," she replied. "But that girl does not seem human. Did you notice her eyes? They were terrible!"

"I did, my dear. She has the evil spirit, but I can overcome that. Now, I could not manage her by physical force, for she is big and strong, while I am small and old. But I can subdue her with my eyes. No devil can withstand my steady gaze, whether it's man, woman or dog. Did you notice how the evil spirit in that creature quailed when I fixed my eyes upon her?"

"I did, Sammy. But what about the dog?"

“Oh, I didn’t get time to catch his eyes, so had to use my hat. My, it’s too bad I lost my beaver. How shall I ever appear in public without it?”

“There’s one in the house, Sammy, which might fit you. It is father’s but he never wears it now. I know he will be pleased to let you have it because you lost your own in my defence. I will get it for you at once.”

Sammy’s face brightened, for he was much worried over the loss of his precious hat. Although he was such an important part of the government, he had no money to buy a new one. He waited upon the verandah, and in a few minutes Faith returned holding a shining beaver in her hand. Sammy’s eyes sparkled as he looked at it, for it was so superior to the one he had lost. But when he had placed it upon his head he was more pleased than ever, for it fitted him perfectly. As Faith watched his happiness her spirits revived, and her cheerfulness returned.

“Why can’t we be always happy, Sammy?” she asked. “I like to be bright and joyous, but something always happens to trouble me, like that murder and the coming of that girl to-day. I came up here to enjoy a pleasant visit, and there has been a black shadow over everything ever since I arrived. Why is it?”

“It’s the devil, Faith, and he’s everywhere trying to undermine all that’s good. We shall have to make more laws to check the devil.”

“But laws can’t do that, Sammy. They won’t make bad people good.”

“Our government can do it, my dear. We are framing new laws that will affect people physically, morally, and spiritually. We are doing such a wonderful work in this province that everybody will be influenced for good, and evil will be crushed. In a year or two you will see such a change that all nations will stare in wonder and admiration. I consider the present government as the divine means for bringing in the kingdom of God on earth, which is mentioned so often in the Bible.”

Sammy was thus once more started upon his favorite subject, and began to pace up and down the verandah as he talked. He would have continued for some time had he not been interrupted by the arrival of the groceries from the store. Faith was glad of this, for she was in no mood to listen to a long harangue about the blessings the government would bring to the country. Sammy stopped long enough to carry the supplies into the kitchen while Faith placed them upon the pantry shelves. But he was ready to continue as soon as they had returned to the verandah. Just then, however, Faith noticed the *Flying Scud* sweeping up the channel, so pointed it out to Sammy, and thus diverted his attention from his speech. She watched it with fast-beating heart, wondering if it would stop at the Point. Was Nat on board? Or had he been arrested? She longed to know, but she did not wish to meet Nat. And, besides, he would not want to meet her. If he did come ashore, most likely he would go at

once to see the girl of the Creek House. Was she, too, watching the *Scud* and anxiously waiting Nat's coming?

And as she looked, the *Scud* came sweeping around the Point before a strong westerly breeze. It then came up to the wind, and dropped anchor in the calm water on the upper side. Faith watched it with intense eagerness, mingled with anxiety. The sails were lowered, and a few minutes later she saw two men rowing in the tender towards shore. One man was left on the *Scud*. Who could it be?

"He must be a passenger, I guess," Sammy remarked. "Suppose we go down to the shore, Faith."

"You go, Sammy. I shall wait here."

She watched him as he walked down the steps and along the path leading to the river. He was certainly an odd looking little figure with his shining beaver and black coat with the tail-ends almost to his heels. Anyone else would have been highly amused at his attire and pompous manner. But Faith knew the goodness of his heart. He had been a great comfort to her that afternoon, and instead of smiling, a feeling of admiration possessed her. He was a man, lacking in many ways, the butt of the public, yet bearing up bravely against all odds, and overcoming as far as possible his serious handicap. He never complained, but faced the world like a hero, was true to his friends, and made the most of his meagre opportunities. As she thought of this she felt ashamed of herself. She had health, strength, youth, and yet she was on the verge of giving up in despair because of circumstances over which she had no control. Yes, she would learn a lesson from Sammy, so she decided, and strive to be braver and more cheerful.

And as she sat and thought of these things, she saw three men coming from the shore. As they drew nearer, she noticed that one had his left hand in a sling. It must be her father! She had not thought of his coming on the *Scud*. Her tired feeling vanished as she hurried down the steps and over the new-mown hay. What a joy it was to be with her father once again and to feel his strong right arm around her. It was like the shelter of harbor after the storm-tossed sea, and a comforting peace came into her heart. Mr. Farthing surmised that something out of the ordinary had taken place, but he made no comment. He knew that Faith would tell him later.

Loyal old Tom stood by and watched the meeting of father and daughter. Then when Faith held out her hand to him his eyes brightened.

"My! my! what a lucky man yer dad is to git sich a welcome as that. What wouldn't I give to be in his shoes an' have sich a daughter."

"Perhaps you are better without one," Faith laughingly replied. "You have no idea what a nuisance a daughter is, and expensive, too. Ask daddy and he'll tell you

what a worry I have been to him.”

“But I guess he’d raise ructions if anyone tried to take ye away from him. Hey, Sammy, old boy, what d’ye think about it?”

Sammy’s mind, however, was elsewhere, so Tom’s question was lost upon him. He was looking off towards the *Scud* with an expression of anxiety in his eyes.

“Who’s that ye’ve left on board, Tom?” he asked.

“Jed, of course. He came up with us.”

“Where’s Nat?”

This question was the one Faith had been longing to ask. Anxiously she waited Tom’s reply which seemed ominously long in coming.

“Oh, Nat stayed over this trip. He had special bizness to attend to. Jed took his place.”

Sammy wheeled suddenly and faced Tom.

“What business? With the police? You needn’t try to fool me. I have heard rumors, so you might as well tell. Has he been arrested?”

“Yes.”

There was a quaver in Tom’s voice, and Faith noticed that he was much agitated. And so was her father.

“Tell me, daddy, has Nat been charged with murder?”

“Not exactly charged, my dear, but he is under suspicion. Suppose we go up to the house and talk it over there.”

Seated upon the verandah, Faith learned a great deal about what had happened in the city and of Nat’s arrest. It was Mr. Farthing who told the news. Tom smoked, but said little, a most unusual thing for him. He seemed to be absent-minded, and when Mr. Farthing spoke to him he made no reply. He kept his eyes fixed upon the island below the Point as if he saw something of special interest there. Faith watching him, wondered at his silence.

Sammy, on the other hand, asked numerous questions. Being such an important part of the government he considered it his duty to make many enquiries. He wanted to know everything and even the smallest details were of interest to him.

“What evidence have they against Nat?” he asked.

“I do not know. The police have said nothing. But the fact that they have arrested him looks serious.”

“But surely Nat will be able to prove that he is innocent,” Faith remarked. “I cannot believe that he was connected with that terrible deed.”

“Neither can I,” her father replied. “But what can we say or do? We are helpless to assist him.”



“We shall have to take a hand,” Sammy declared. “I shall go to Fredericton and see the premier. We shall see that Nat gets the best lawyers in the province to defend him, and all the forces at our command shall be used on his behalf.”

He began to walk up and down the verandah, and was getting nicely started upon the grand and wonderful government, when Tom rose to his feet and laid a hand upon his shoulder.

“Look here, me boy, I don’t care a hang about the wonderful gov’ment, but I do care a great deal about Nat. It’s time to stop yangin’ an’ do somethin’.”

“But I am going to do something, Tom.”

“Ye are, eh? But it seems to me yer doin’s in danger of bein’ swamped by yer gab. Guess ye’d better come with me on the *Scud*. That’s the quickest way I know to git to Fredericton to see the premier.”

Sammy was not at all inclined to leave this pleasant place where he expected to sleep in a more comfortable bed than the wood-boat provided.

“I’m hardly ready to go yet, Tom. I’ve got important business to attend to here first.”

“It’ll have to wait, then, Sammy. Come on. I want ye.”

At any other time Faith would have urged Sammy to remain. Now, however, she wanted to be alone with her father. She believed, too, that Tom had some good reason for taking Sammy with him. What it was she did not know, but something in the old boatman’s manner gave her the feeling of assurance. She looked into his rugged face, and when she saw the serious expression in his eyes she knew that his love for Nat was as deep and true as her own. And Tom saw something in her eyes which brought a glow to his heart, and a brightness to his face. Then, lest his emotion should be noticed, he seized Sammy by the coat-collar.

“Come on, ye mighty gov’ment, an’ let’s git ’long. Step lively, fer I’m in a hurry.”

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A FRIEND IN NEED

Faith slept late the next morning, for the excitement of the previous day had tired her in mind and body. She could hear her father downstairs, and knew that he had been astir for some time, as he was always an early riser. The sun was shining brightly into her room, and through the open window came the murmur of bees in the vines outside, and the chirping of birds in the trees. Everything in the world of nature was beautiful, and as she looked out upon the mirror-like river, amidst its setting of great trees, her eyes shone with delight. It was a fairy-land which was thus presented to her view, and the beauty and wonder of it all thrilled her soul. It was good to be alive on such a morning, and in such an enchanting place.

Then she thought of Nat. How was he bearing his trouble? she wondered. She did long to see him, to express her sympathy. But perhaps he was thinking about the girl of the Creek House. She had hardly any doubt about that, and her heart sank within her. Why should she think or worry any more about him when his thoughts were all for another?

Going downstairs, she found that her father had breakfast ready, but he was nowhere to be seen. The coffee pot was upon the stove, and the toast he had prepared was crisp and warm. He had made porridge, too, for Mr. Farthing was a most handy man in the kitchen.

It did not take Faith long to find her father. He was in the little workshop at the back of the house, gazing thoughtfully upon a partly-carved figure before him, from which he had wiped an accumulation of dust. He did not notice Faith's approach until she stood by his side.

"I did not know what had become of you, daddy," she began. "What have you found here?"

"It's a piece of work I began years ago. Your mother was greatly interested in it, but when she left us, I never had the heart to finish it."

"Oh, I remember it now. It is Alfred the Great, and you used to tell me about him."

"I did, and he was a wonderful man, for he laid the foundation of England's greatness. I started to carve the figure from a picture I once saw. It showed the king standing nobly erect, holding a sword in his right hand, and a book, which I suppose contained the laws of the land, in the other. The spirit of King Alfred has made England what she is. Good laws upheld by the sword, ah, that is something to be proud of. I must finish this carving as soon as my hand is well."

Faith thought much about her father's words and the noble face of King Alfred, as she worked around the house that morning. When she had dressed her father's hand, she spent some time in the kitchen cooking. But her mind would wander off to Nat, no matter how hard she tried not to think of him. That he was innocent of the terrible deed she had not the shadow of a doubt. There had been some mistake, she was certain. If the spirit of King Alfred was the same to-day as her father said it was, then right would triumph, and Nat would be honorably freed. But suppose he could not prove that he was innocent, what would be the outcome? His word would not be sufficient when suspicion was so strong against him. She wondered what the girl of the Creek House knew. Nat was with her the night of the murder, so she had heard. Perhaps she would be forced to give evidence. If she knew anything, and if she loved Nat, would she not do all in her power for his welfare?

She suddenly paused in her work as she remembered Sylvia's words to her about the stealing away of Nat's heart. She had forgotten them until now. What did that strange girl mean? Why did she believe that Nat had been taken from her? Her heart beat fast as she thought of this. What had come between the two that had caused Sylvia to make such a charge? Something, anyway, must have happened. Was Nat tired of Sylvia? Perhaps he had found out what a wild girl she really was. Had he ever been in love with her? It might have been only a passing fancy, and when Sylvia had learned that he did not love her, she had been overwhelmed with rage.

Faith resumed her work, but this new idea lifted the load somewhat from her heart. Nat did not love that strange girl, after all. It was Sylvia who was in love with him, and he did not return her affection.

About the middle of the afternoon she made ready to go over to Mrs. Royal's. She needed butter, eggs, and milk. But this was not her main reason for going. She was anxious to hear something about Nat. Perhaps his mother might have heard from him.

She found her father in the workshop studying the partly-finished carving. He was greatly interested in it, and was as enthusiastic as a child with a toy that had been lost for some time.

"I must finish it," he declared. "It haunted me all through the night. As soon as my hand is well I shall set to work. This is the finest thing I have ever done, and it would be a pity not to complete it. But I wonder——."

He paused abruptly, and an expression of sadness came into his eyes, Faith waited for him to finish the sentence.

"I wonder," he at length continued, "if I can do as good work now as when I

began this. I was inspired then by your dear mother's presence and interest. I was younger, too, and the spirit of King Alfred filled my soul. He was a great ideal to me and I longed to be like him in service to others. Oh, I had a wonderful vision and tried to put all I saw into his face. You see how beautiful it really is, and somehow it reminds me of the face of the Great Master Himself. I know I had Him much in mind when I was working upon this figure, and I must have given King Alfred something of Christ's divine expression. And it was well, for any man who did what that noble king did must have had much of the likeness of the Master. Some changes I must make to give that likeness greater prominence. I hope my hand will quickly heal."

Faith listened to her father, but she was thinking more of another than she was of Alfred the Great. That old king, wonderful, no doubt, though he was, did not fire her imagination as did the captain of the *Flying Scud*. What were all the heroes of the past compared to him? They had been dead for many years, but Nat was a living personality. His voice, his eyes, the poise of his head, his broad shoulders, and strong lithe body, were real to her. And she knew what he looked like standing at the wheel driving the *Scud* through a heavy south-west wind on a long tack through Grand Bay. What a figure he would make for her father's skilful hands. And from the *Scud* it was but natural that her mind should wander to the *Norseman* with Nat in command, and herself standing by his side. What was King Alfred with all his greatness compared with such a scene?

This was still in her mind as she went over to Mrs. Royal's. She remained there for some time, but learned nothing new. The widow was greatly worried, and although she tried to conceal her anxiety, her face and eyes betrayed her feeling. She was most grateful for Faith's sympathy and words of hope.

"I am certain that Nat is innocent," she declared. "It is not in his nature to do such a terrible and cowardly deed. The murderer will be found and my boy will be cleared of all blame."

"I know he is innocent," Faith replied. "But we are so helpless and can do nothing to assist him. Oh, if I were only a man!"

Faith was standing at the door ready to leave the house, and her flashing eyes expressed the deep feeling of her heart. Lovingly Mrs. Royal put her arms around the girl.

"It is good to have your sympathy and interest, dear. They mean so much to me just now. But I have been wonderfully strengthened in this time of trouble, and it seems as if Another is standing by my side. It is that Unseen Presence which has been with me for years. I cannot explain it, I only know it is true. Last night I found it hard to get to sleep owing to the heavy weight upon my heart and mind. Then just

when I felt that I could stand the strain no longer, there came to me the words, 'I will trust, and not be afraid.' At once a wonderful peace came upon me, my fears vanished, and I slept. And all through the morning those words have been with me. I am sure they mean more than I can understand now. Anyway, they have given me great comfort and hope."

As Faith walked slowly along the road she thought over Mrs. Royal's parting words. Was there really anything in them? Of late a feeling had come to her that there was no justice anywhere, that all were at the mercy of some cruel fate which made sport of helpless mortals. It was not her nature to doubt, and it troubled her. She longed for someone to explain the mystery of life, why good people had to endure so many trials, while the bad seemed to be free, prosper, and have a good time.

As she thus meditated and wondered, she came to a turn in the road, and just around the bend she saw a woman sitting upon the bank under the shade of a maple tree. Faith's steps slackened and a slight fear stole into her heart at the woman's peculiar attitude. She was bowed forward, her knees drawn up almost to her chin, with her hair flowing like burnished gold over her shoulders. She presented a picture of abject despair, and Faith stared at her in astonishment. Who could she be? she wondered, and where had she come from? She stood very still watching, uncertain what to do. But when she heard a low moan, she stepped quickly forward and stood by the woman's side.

"Are you sick?" she asked. "Can I help you?"

Startled, the stranger raised her head. Her eyes were red and swollen, and her face white and haggard.

"I am sick," she moaned. "I want to die. There is no place for me here to rest."

"Yes, there is. Come with me. I live right near."

The girl, for so she really was, hesitated as if uncertain what to do. She then rose slowly and wearily to her feet, turned and looked down towards the Point.

"Is that where Ru was murdered?" she asked.

"Yes, in that old barn. Did you know him?"

"Did I know him! I knew him too well. He ruined me!"

## CHAPTER XXV

### A SCRAP OF PAPER

Faith helped the stranger down to the house, supporting her as well as she could. In the room facing the verandah she induced her to lie down upon the sofa.

"You rest here," she said, "and I shall bring you a cup of tea and something to eat. That will freshen you up."

When she at length returned with a tray, she placed it on a chair by the side of the sofa, and urged the girl to eat. Reluctantly she obeyed, nibbled the bread and drank the tea. She then laid her head back upon the pillow and closed her eyes. Faith watched her with sympathy, wondering who she was. She was evidently about her own age, so she thought. Her face, though white and haggard, showed marks of beauty and refinement. So Ru had ruined her! The thought caused Faith's heart to quicken with anger. Had Ru made love to this girl? And why had she come here? Was it merely to see the place where Ru had been murdered?

And as she thus mused, the girl opened her eyes and looked up into her face. They were large beautiful eyes, but heavy now with a weary hopeless expression.

"Why are you so good to me?" she murmured. "You do not know me."

"That makes no difference," Faith replied. "Why shouldn't I help you when you are in trouble?"

"But others would not. I went to Ru's home, but was driven out and called a terrible name."

"Why was that?"

"Because I told them the truth, that Ru had promised to marry me on his return to Fredericton. But they would do nothing for me. Oh, I don't know what to do! I am disgraced for life! What will my poor father and mother say! It will break their hearts."

She buried her face in her hands, but no tears came to give her relief. Faith, watching wondered what she could do or say to comfort the unhappy girl.

"How did you hear about Ru's death?" she asked.

"I saw it in the paper, but I couldn't believe it was true until I came here. Oh, I don't know what to do now! Ru's people turned me out, and laughed at my misery."

"Do they feel badly about his death?"

"They didn't seem to."

"Did they say anything about Nat's arrest?"

"Is he arrested? What for?"

"He is suspected of murdering Ru."

At these words the girl sat up suddenly and looked keenly into Faith's eyes. She was greatly agitated.

"It isn't true," she cried. "Captain Nat wouldn't do such a thing. He knocked Ru down one night in Fredericton, and was put in jail. But Ru deserved it, and much more, the villain! He made me lie and swear that Nat attacked us. But it was Ru that hit me, and threatened to kill me when Nat came to my help. Didn't you hear about it and the trial?"

"Why, no, Miss— What shall I call you?"

"Just Nora."

"Nora what?"

"Nora McWhin. But I'm going to change my name and go away where nobody knows me. People will never forget Nora McWhin, and how she disgraced the name. But in the United States people won't know."

The girl talked fast and in a somewhat hysterical manner. She breathed hard and her eyes glowed with a wild light. Faith became anxious, and she was on the point of calling her father, when the girl relaxed and dropped back again upon the pillow.

"I am talking nonsense," she said. "I am not going away until I find out who murdered Ru and got that money."

"What money?"

"Money that was promised Ru for keeping his mouth shut. He had a secret, but wouldn't tell me what it was. But he did say he knew where the money is hidden. Once when he was drunk he gave me a piece of paper with some marks upon it. But it's a puzzle to me. Anyway, I am going to find out."

"Have you that paper?" Faith asked as calmly as possible, certain that she was on the verge of some important discovery.

"Yes, I have it safe here," and the girl drew a small piece of folded paper from the bosom of her dress. "I was afraid that I might lose it. I have never shown it to anyone, but you have been good to me, and I want your help."

When the paper was unfolded, Faith saw some rude lines which meant nothing to her. They seemed like the scrawls of a child learning to draw. But to Nora they appeared quite clear and of great importance.

"Those lines show the Point," she explained. "And those are the island just below. Those marks are trees on the upper side, and just there at that mark the money is hidden. Ru talked much about it that night he was drunk, and explained the meaning of the lines. I remember every word he said."

"How did the money get there?" Faith questioned.

"I don't know. Ru wouldn't tell me, drunk though he was. And he wouldn't say

how he knew it was there, except that he found it out by chance, and, as I told you, he was going to get a lot of money for keeping his mouth shut. But I am going to get that money, and I want you to help me.”

“How can I? We don’t know the ones who promised Ru the money. And, besides, if we did know, what could we do?”

“We could scare them, and they would pay us to keep quiet. Oh, it would be easy enough if we only knew. I was sure I could find out if I came here.”

A great pity came into Faith’s heart for this unfortunate girl. She seemed so like a child in understanding. Was that the reason why she had become a victim to Ru? She did not know who had hidden the money on the island, and yet she believed that she could find out and be paid for remaining silent. Ru had been promised money for “keeping his mouth shut,” and it was that which filled her mind. She could think of little else. Faith, however, was of a more practical turn of mind, and she wanted to reason things out. Who had hidden the money on the island? Why had it been placed there? And if Ru had found out the secret, how easy would it have been for him to have stolen it. There must have been some other reason for the promise of the “hush” money. There was apparently more in this than appeared on the surface.

“When did Ru expect to get that money?” she asked.

“On his last trip down the river. I begged him to marry me before it was too late. But he told me that when he came back he would have plenty of money, and we would have a great time. He was short of money then, so he said. All he had was the ten dollars he got from the premier, and that would be only enough to pay for the license and the clergyman for marrying us. Ru was always hard up, for he spent nearly everything in rum.”

“Why did the premier give him the ten dollars?”

“For taking the model figure-head of the *Norseman* to him.”

“But Nat took it!” Faith exclaimed in surprise. “Father gave it to him.”

“I know he did, but Ru stole it, took it to the premier, and got the money. He told me so himself. He thought it was a clever trick and a great joke. Ru was bad enough to do anything.”

“I believe it.”

Faith spoke quietly, but emphatically. She was not thinking about Ru’s badness—she needed no further proof of that—but her sole thought was of Nat. He had been unjustly treated by Ru, and yet he had said nothing to her about it. That was just like him. For the moment he seemed more of a hero to her than ever. Surely the nobleness of his character was shown by such silence. She wondered, nevertheless, why he had not told her father what Ru had done. Was there some special reason?



All at once a thought came to her mind, startling her, and causing her to become suddenly weak. Had Nat really killed Ru out of revenge for the cruel way he had been treated? She tried to banish the idea, but it persisted in returning stronger than ever. Perhaps Nat had been goaded to fury by Ru's actions, and in the heat of passion had committed the deed. He may have been brooding over his injuries, and had been planning for days how to get even with the villain. Was that why he had said nothing to her and her father about what had taken place? Perhaps he was afraid to tell lest he should give himself away.

These thoughts flashed through Faith's mind with lightning rapidity. Then her loyalty to Nat and her confidence in him returned. No, she would not believe that he would commit murder. It was wrong for her to entertain such an idea even for a minute. Nat was true. She had never known him to do a mean cowardly thing. He would surely explain everything to her some day. The murderer would be found, and Nat would be cleared of all blame.

The girl on the sofa was lying very still with half-closed eyes, clutching the scrap of paper in her right hand.

"Did Ru give you that paper?" Faith asked.

The girl started as from a dream, and looked around.

"What paper?"

"The one you have in your hand."

"Oh, no. I took it from him when he was drunk, thinking it might be of use some day."

"Will you let me have it, Nora? I want to show it to my father. He might be able to help you."

"I don't mind," and the girl gave a deep sigh. "Yes, you may have it. I can trust you. I am so discouraged that I don't care what happens to me."

"You need a good sleep, so come with me and you shall have a little room where no one will disturb you. You will feel better in the morning, I know."

Gently as a mother Faith helped the weary girl upstairs. Then to her surprise Nora knelt down by the bed to say her evening prayers. Faith was deeply touched as she watched her. That simple act gave her greater confidence in the unfortunate girl. There must be much good in her, she thought, even though Ru had been her lover. When Nora rose at length from her knees, there was a new expression upon her face, and her eyes were moist.

"This is the first time I have prayed for months," she quietly confessed. "But your kindness and this little room made me think of my old home, and—God."

## CHAPTER XXVI

### AT DEAD OF NIGHT

Leaving the room, Faith went downstairs. Her eyes were misty as she thought of the troubled girl. She wondered what she could do to help her. At supper she discussed the matter with her father, and he was much interested in the visitor.

"We must do what we can for her," he said, "and send her home. Are her parents still living?"

"I believe they are. But perhaps she will not go. Her mind seems to be firmly set upon getting that money which was promised Ru."

"That's all nonsense. She'll never get it. Why, she doesn't even know the names of the ones who promised the money."

"But there is a mystery somewhere, daddy. Why did Ru tell her about the money hidden on the island, and make those lines upon the paper?"

"It is all a puzzle to me, dear," Mr. Farthing replied as he rose from the table. "After you get the dishes washed, I want you to dress my hand. You will find me in the workshop. I am reading the Life of Alfred the Great. I skimmed through it once, but am reading it carefully now to get the real spirit of that wonderful man before finishing my carving. It is a most interesting story, and I am thankful for this opportunity of reading it."

Faith hardly heard what her father was saying, for a new idea had come suddenly into her mind. She remembered about that robbery in the city, and how the suspected thief had boarded the *Scud* at Indiantown, and had disappeared from the boat somewhere on the river. Was there any connection between that passenger and the money hidden on the island? But how did Ru know about it? She was greatly puzzled, and naturally so, as she sat alone at the table lost in thought. Then her mind turned to Sylvia Sarason, her wild words and manner. Who was she, anyway? And why were such mysterious people living at the Creek House? They were strangers, with no apparent means of livelihood. But they must have money, or how could they get along? Perhaps they were rich. Or were they the robbers? Faith was fond of weaving romances about things she could not understand. Hitherto they had only served for amusement. But now this question she asked herself was startling. At first it seemed ridiculous, not to be entertained for a moment. But as it persisted in returning, it became more firmly embedded in her mind. And if they were robbers, Ru might have found out about them and demanded the "hush" money.

Faith's nimble wit was never as nimble as now. The idea which had come so unexpectedly to her was thrilling. She had at last hit upon a trail which might lead her,

she hoped, out of the darkness of mystery into the clear light of knowledge. And it was for Nat's sake. This thought rejoiced her, and brought a glow to her cheeks. Nat would be free. That was all she desired. For a few minutes she gave herself up to fancy, living in a dream-world, that sacred realm known only to those whose hearts are overflowing with a deep true love.

Presently she realized what a difficult task lay ahead of her. She needed help, and to whom could she turn? Her father would be unable to do anything owing to his injured hand. And, besides, she was afraid to tell him what was in her mind lest he should oppose her. Worthy man though he was, yet she was well aware of his strong opinions about women. They were to look after household affairs, and not meddle with things which concerned men alone. And the unravelling of a robbery and murder mystery was the work for the police and not for a woman. She was quite sure he would look at it in this light, and would strongly oppose any action on her part. No, she would say nothing to him at present, so she decided.

Suddenly she thought of old Tom. Yes, he was the very man she needed. His affection for Nat would give him the necessary interest. He was courageous, too, and could be trusted even to death.

Quickly she washed the dishes and tidied up the kitchen. She then went to her father to dress his hand. She found him seated at the western window deep in his book. He looked up and smiled as his daughter came to his side.

"Why, you're surely not through with the dishes already! It's been only a few minutes since I left the table."

Faith was amused at his astonishment.

"It's been nearly an hour, daddy. You have been so lost in your book that you have forgotten everything else. It must be very interesting."

"It certainly is. It is wonderful, amazing. Ay, there was a man every inch a king. He was one of the noblest men who ever lived. Soldier, statesman, student, artist, and saint. And religion was the groundwork of his character. What a man! What a king! His very name stirs the depths of one's soul. 'Alfred the Great' he is called, and rightly so."

Mr. Farthing's eyes glowed with the light of enthusiasm, and Faith was impressed.

"Why don't you put him into one of your figure-heads, daddy?"

"I have tried to do so time and time again, but have never succeeded. Pine is not suitable for such a carving. It needs firm oak for such careful and delicate work to express the living spirit. You cannot do that with soft pine. No, oak is the only wood for such an oak-like man as King Alfred. Just wait until my hand is well and you shall

see what I can do.”

He looked over at the partly-finished carving and remained lost in thought. Faith, on the other hand, was thinking of Nat. He was her king. Alfred the Great had been dead for many centuries, but Nat was alive and very real to her. She longed to discuss with her father the thought that was uppermost in her mind. If he would only leave the far-off past alone for a while and think of the present, what a comfort he would be to her now. But she knew very well that when his mind was set upon some special object, it was difficult to interest him in anything else.

In the night Faith was awakened by the sound of footsteps upon the verandah. Her bedroom was situated at the front of the house facing the river. The window opened out upon the verandah roof, which came up almost to the sill. It was quite easy, therefore, to hear sounds below. She listened attentively, thinking that perhaps she had been mistaken. It might be the strong wind blowing in from the south rattling a loose board or shingle. But as she strained her ears, she was certain that someone was below. She sat up, wondering what she could do. She had no idea what time it was, although she knew that it was a strange hour for anyone to be prowling around the place.

Then Sylvia flashed into her mind, for she had heard how the girl often roamed about at night. A great fear came into her heart, for she well remembered Sylvia's last visit there and her wild rage. She had come back under cover of darkness with some evil design, no doubt, in her mind. It was hard to tell what that revengeful girl might do, set fire to the house, perhaps.

Slipping out of bed, she groped her way to her father's room. Reaching his side, she laid her hand upon his shoulder and aroused him from a sound sleep.

“Father, father!” she whispered. “Get up! There's someone on the verandah!”

Startled and bewildered, Mr. Farthing sat up suddenly and asked her what was the matter. Faith repeated her words.

“Someone on the verandah, eh? I'll soon find out who it is. He's up to some mischief, most likely.”

In another minute he was partly dressed and following Faith out of the room. Down the stairs they moved as silently as possible, for Mr. Farthing wished to surprise and capture the intruder. Fear was unknown to him, but Faith was trembling from head to foot. She kept close to her father, and when they reached the lower floor they stood and listened intently. Only the wind could they hear at first as it beat upon the house and rattled the windows. Thinking that Faith had been mistaken, Mr. Farthing groped his way to the door. His hand was on the key, and he was about to turn it in the lock, when he heard someone outside touch the knob and try to open

the door. At once he turned the key, tore open the door, and sprang out upon the verandah. Reaching out, his right hand came into sudden contact with a human form, and closed with a strong clutch upon a woman's dress. At once a wild shriek rent the night, and something hard fell at his feet. The intruder reeled back, and as she did so, a ripping sound was heard as she tore herself away leaving a fragment of her dress in Mr. Farthing's gripping hand. Quickly he sprang forward, but ere he could lay a hand upon the retreating form, another shriek, this time of terror, fell upon his ears. At once he knew the cause. The visitor had lost her balance and had fallen down the steep verandah steps. He could hear the body hurtling downward, followed by a groan as it struck the ground below. He peered forth into the darkness, but could see nothing. Faith was by his side, clutching his arm.

"Is she killed?" she gasped.

"I don't know. Get the lantern, quick."

Hurrying back into the house, Faith found the lantern, and with trembling hands lighted it, glad that she had filled it with oil, trimmed the wick, and cleaned the chimney that very morning.

She stood upon the verandah while her father descended the steps with the lantern in his hand. But no sign of anyone could he find, although he searched for several rods around the front of the house.

"She wasn't killed, anyway," he said when he at length came back to where his daughter was standing. "I have this as evidence that our visitor was a woman," and he held up the fragment of cloth. "Who in the world can she be, and what was she doing around here at this time of night?"

"Come into the house and I shall tell you," Faith replied. "I think I know who she is."

They turned, and Mr. Farthing was about to move forward, when he saw something lying at his feet.

"Hello! What's this? Why, it's a revolver!"

Handing the lantern to Faith, he stooped, picked up the weapon and examined it carefully.

"And it's loaded! What did she intend to do with this?"

The revolver caused a shiver to pass through Faith's body. She surmised only too well for whom it was intended. The thought caused her to become faint.

"Let us go inside," she whispered. "I think I can explain something about that revolver. I don't feel safe here."

## CHAPTER XXVII

### KNIGHTS OF THE GREAT LOGS

There was no more sleep for Faith that night. After she had explained to her father more about Sylvia, she went back to her own room. Mr. Farthing took charge of the revolver and carried it with him upstairs. The sight of it frightened Faith. It was so cold, glittering and sinister that it reminded her of Sylvia's eyes the day she had attacked her upon the verandah.

While Mr. Farthing took charge of the weapon, Faith kept the torn fragment of cloth. It was merely a piece of faded blue calico, and yet it fascinated her. It had belonged to her deadly enemy, the only one she had, so far as she was aware. That little harmless fragment of cloth had lain very close, perhaps, to the heart of that strange wild girl. If it could speak it could tell something of its owner's mysterious life and fierce tumultuous moods. What did its faded condition signify? Did it mean that she was too poor to have another?

Thus for some time Faith remained in thought, fingering the torn fragment, spreading it out upon her lap, and smoothing it with infinite care. It seemed more than an ordinary piece of calico to her on account of its association with the girl of whom she had such a numbing fear. She knew quite well why she had come there in the dead of night with a loaded revolver. It was the unrestrained passion of mad jealousy. Although she had been foiled this time, perhaps she was even now planning some other way of revenge. Her defeat and fall down the steps would, no doubt, only increase her rage.

Faith glanced apprehensively around. The little lamp on the bureau dimly lighted the room, and there were dark corners where anyone could hide. Suppose Sylvia should steal into the house some evening and conceal herself in one of those dark places? The thought made her shiver. It was a terrible time Faith thus spent waiting for morning.

It was now three o'clock, and the wind was driving the rain in wild gusts against the window. She longed for daylight, but dawn would not come for some time yet. And in those few hours who could tell what Sylvia might do? Surely she would not continue her prowling on such a wild night. But was she prowling around? What was the meaning of that moan of pain she had heard at the foot of the steps? Had Sylvia been injured? She thought of this with fast-beating heart. But her father had searched around the front of the house and had seen nothing of the girl. She must have been able to walk away, at any rate. Perhaps she had only been bruised. But try as she might, she could not banish the idea that Sylvia was lying out there among the trees

where she had crawled in her desperate effort to escape. She could not forget that moan, and for a girl like Sylvia to give vent to such a cry was sufficient proof of the seriousness of her injury.

Faith allowed her imagination to run wild, like the storm raging outside. She pictured Sylvia lying among the trees, helpless, suffering, and with the pitiless rain beating upon her shivering body. She looked again at the piece of cloth lying in her lap. A thin calico dress was no protection on such a night. Suppose Sylvia should die out there alone, and so near the house! She almost decided to arouse her father again that he might make a more thorough search. She banished the idea, however, feeling certain that he would consider her fears as utter foolishness. No, she would wait until morning and then go herself.

Faith needed action to relieve her wrought-up state of mind. She dressed herself to be in readiness for the faint light of dawn. This did not take long. She then looked out of the window off towards the east in the hope that she might see some sign of morning. And as she stood there, she beheld a light out upon the water. At once she knew its meaning. It came from a tug-boat which had sought shelter for its raft of logs. That gleam streaking the darkness brought a ray of comfort to her troubled heart and mind. There was help near, and she did not feel so timid now about starting forth on her search among the trees. If she needed assistance, those knights of the great logs would be close by and would come at her call.

It was now drawing near the time when dawn would not be long delayed. Plucking up her courage, she went downstairs, opened the front door, and stepped nervously out upon the verandah. How dark and dismal everything seemed, and the feeble lantern light made the darkness surrounding her all the more intense. She was almost tempted to go back into the house and wait a while longer. The light of the tug could not be seen now owing to the trees which hid it from view.

As she hesitated, she suddenly noticed a faint glimmer down by the shore, off to the right. It was moving, too, towards the path leading to the house. Sometimes it was hidden by the thick trees, but it kept coming steadily forward until it reached the open space directly in front of the house when it shone clearly. Faith could then distinguish the forms of several men, and as they moved slowly up the path, she could tell they were carrying some heavy burden. At once she knew. They were raftsmen, and had found Sylvia! She had been right, after all. But was the girl dead?

Impetuously she hurried down the steps, and along the path, unheeding the rain and the wet bushes which swished her body. She reached the men, who paused as she stood before them.

“It’s Sylvia!” she cried. “Is she dead?”

"Should say not, judgin' by the way she's jabberin'," one of the men replied. "Just listen to her!"

"Poor girl. Bring her into the house. What strange things she's saying."

"And she's been goin' on that way ever since we found her. You lead with yer light, Miss, and we'll follow."

It took but a few minutes to reach the house, and Faith told the men to lay Sylvia upon the sofa. Then when she saw the girl's white haggard face, wet tangled hair, and soaked clothes, she dropped upon her knees by her side. She tried to make out what Sylvia was saying, but in vain. Rising to her feet, she turned to the men who were standing nearby.

"Will one of you go for Mrs. Royal?" she asked. "I need help. We must have the doctor, too. Perhaps Mrs. Royal will send for him."

"I'll go an' fetch her," one of the men volunteered. "Guess I'd better take the lantern along."

The talking aroused Mr. Farthing. Wondering what the commotion was all about, he quickly dressed and came downstairs. Seeing the men, and the girl lying upon the sofa, he stared in amazement.

"What's the meaning of all this, captain?" he demanded.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Farthing?" and the man looked his surprise. "I didn't know you were here. But she's the trouble," and he motioned to Sylvia. "She hasn't let up her jabberin' since we found her."

"Where did you find her?"

"Down by that big oak. Two of my men took a line ashore to make fast to that tree. But a dog sprang at them and drove them away. They were scared blue when they reached the tug, and they wouldn't go ashore again without a gun. I had to come with them, armed with cudgels and a lantern. No sooner had we stepped foot upon land, than the brute came at us, growlin' like mad. I wasn't goin' to let a dog stop us from hitchin' a line to that tree. And, besides, I wanted to find out what it was doin' there. But he would not let us go near, and came at us like a ragin' devil. It took the four of us to knock him out. Now, look at that," and he touched his coat where a piece of the cloth had been torn out. "That's what he did, and it's lucky his teeth didn't go deeper."

"And you found the girl there?" Mr. Farthing asked.

"Yes, right under the tree. We didn't know what to do or where to take her. But pretty soon we saw a light through the trees, so brought her here. Who is she, anyway?"

"She's Miss Sarason, I believe, and she lives over at the Creek House."



“What! that wild-flyer who’s on the water so much, no matter how rough it is?”

“The very one, captain.”

“Then, she’s crazy or a fool, for no sensible person would do what she does. Why, I’ve seen her goin’ up and down the channel when such a southerly gale was blowin’ that it was all we could do with the tug and lines to hold our raft on the upper side of the Point. No sensible person would be out in such weather.”

“I guess you are right, captain,” Mr. Farthing agreed. “And no person of sound mind would prow around on such a night as this with a loaded revolver. That’s what she was doing.”

“Is that so!” The captain was astonished, and so were his men. “With a revolver! Say, Mr. Farthing, you’d better get her locked up, and the sooner, the better.”

“I intend to. I am going to have her arrested. Our lives are in danger from such an irresponsible person.”

During this conversation Faith was busy in the kitchen. She had lighted a fire in the stove and was heating some water, which she knew Mrs. Royal would need to make ginger tea for Sylvia. It was her main remedy for warming chilled people, so Faith wished to be prepared. She had great confidence in Mrs. Royal, who was much in demand in times of sickness, when it was difficult to get the doctor who lived many miles away in another parish. Faith felt helpless to do anything for Sylvia. But Mrs. Royal would know, and anxiously she awaited her coming.

From the kitchen she could hear the men talking in the other room, and overheard part of their conversation, especially about the dog. Had they killed it? she wondered. Her heart went out in sympathy to the noble animal which had so bravely defended his mistress. How fond Sylvia must have been of the dog, and how angry she would be should it be dead. But perhaps it was not dead, only wounded, and was now lying under the tree in great agony. She could not bear the thought of any creature suffering, and she resolved to visit the place and do what she could for the poor brute, if it was alive.

It seemed to Faith that Mrs. Royal would never come. The kettle was boiling, and she saw the men preparing to leave. She went to Sylvia’s side and found her fast asleep. Her ravings had ceased, and her eyes were closed.

“I guess there is nothin’ more we can do, Miss,” the captain remarked. “We must go now and attend to the logs. But if you need help, just come to the shore and shout. We can’t leave until the wind goes down, and it seems to be set for an all day blow.”

“Oh, thank you so much, captain,” Faith replied. “You and your men have done a great deal already. But tell me, did you kill the dog?”

“I don’t know, Miss. We left him kickin’ on the shore, but didn’t pay any more attention to him after we found the girl. We’ll have a look, though, when we go back. I hope it isn’t dead, for I do like dogs. But we had to knock him out or else he would have torn us to pieces.”

It was now quite light outside, and as Faith watched the men go down the steps her heart stirred with admiration. What wonderful men they were! Although rough at times in speech and manner, they were big-hearted, and always ready to give a helping hand. They were strong, hardy men, bronzed by wind and sun, working by day and night in bringing the great rafts down river.

Faith watched them as they clumped along in their heavy rafting boots, and she was sorry to have them go. The life they led was most fascinating to her, and she longed to be a man that she might venture forth with them.

And as she stood there, Mrs. Royal suddenly appeared around the corner of the house.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH

Although the excitement of the night had tired Faith, the middle of the forenoon found her busy in the kitchen. There had been so many things to do that she had not a minute to rest. With the help of the raftsmen who had gone for Mrs. Royal, Sylvia had been carried upstairs. The widow was a tower of strength and knew just what to do, and as Faith watched her as she quickly changed the girl's wet garments and wrapped her up carefully in bed, she complimented her upon her skill.

"Your hands are wonderful, Mrs. Royal. Mine are so useless."

"No they are not, dear. Yours are all right. Mine have had more practice, that is all. Now for the ginger tea to warm this poor girl, and I think she will be comfortable."

"Should we send for the doctor?" Faith asked, as she returned a few minutes later with the hot tea.

"It is hardly necessary just now. We shall wait until she wakes. She may have had only a fainting spell, or the fall down the steps may have stunned her. A good sleep, perhaps, is all she needs."

Faith really dreaded Sylvia's awaking. What would she say and do when she learned where she was? This was the thought which worried her as she continued her work in the kitchen.

She also had another patient on her hands. Nora had slept soundly through the night, and had not been disturbed by the noise downstairs. She was quite bright when Faith visited her, and later brought up her breakfast. She was much interested in hearing about Sylvia.

"It is so good of you to wait upon me like this when you have so much to do," she said. "It has been a long time since anyone has been so kind to me. I feel quite strong now, so I am going to help you. Please give me something to do. It will keep me from thinking too much about my own troubles."

Faith was relieved at this request, for she did need somebody just then.

"Yes, there is something you can do. When Sylvia wakes, there should be someone near her. I have work to do downstairs, so if you will look after her I shall not have to come up so often. Mrs. Royal has gone home, but she will be back after awhile."

Faith was most thankful now that she had Nora in the house. Sylvia would not be annoyed, perhaps, when she awoke and saw a stranger by her side. But what she would do later was another question. She hoped that Mrs. Royal would come back

soon. As for her father, he would not be of much assistance, owing to his injured hand, should Sylvia become violent.

Gradually the morning wore on to noon. Several times Faith went to the foot of the stairs and listened, but all was quiet. Once Nora came down and told her that Sylvia was still sleeping.

Mr. Farthing spent most of the morning in his workshop, not in reading the Life, but planning several new figure-heads. He was sitting at the window, lost in thought, when Faith entered. He looked up and smiled.

"And how is the nurse now?" he inquired. "I had no idea that our house would become a hospital."

"It is more than a hospital, daddy. It is a place of refuge for the unfortunate in mind more than in body. Nora is all right, and she is quite useful. But I am worried about Sylvia. It is hard to tell what she might do when she wakes."

"Oh, I have arranged to have her looked after, so you needn't worry. Mrs. Royal said she would send for the constable."

"When will he be here?"

"I do not know. It all depends, I suppose, upon how busy he is."

"I don't want him to come," Faith declared. "Can't we think of some other way?"

"What way? She is a dangerous person and must be restrained."

"But she has a brother, so why shouldn't he look after her?"

"He is drunk most of the time, so I have heard. Little use would it be to appeal to him."

Faith said no more just then, but her heart was heavy. As she went back to the kitchen to prepare dinner she wondered what she could do for Sylvia. Surely there was some good in her, and how sad it would be to have her locked up.

Dinner was over, and Nora kept her faithful watch. Mrs. Royal had come to the house, but finding Sylvia still sleeping, she had gone home to attend to her many duties there. Faith had gone out of doors, for she was anxious to find out something about the dog. The wind had died down, and the sun was struggling through masses of heavy clouds. All was quiet in the house, so Nora was not disturbed as she sat by the bedside, lost in thought. She was more hopeful now than she had been for weeks, for she believed that in Faith and Mrs. Royal she had found true friends. That they would help her in her time of need she was certain. She had suffered much in mind and body, and a deep despair had settled upon her when Faith had suddenly appeared. A friendly hand had been stretched out to her at the critical moment, and loving sympathy had done the rest. She had gone astray, she knew, but now she felt

that she could face the future with a new courage.

She was thinking of these things when a movement from the bed caused her to look quickly up. Sylvia was awake, and her eyes were fixed intently upon her face. She rose to her feet and stood by the bed.

"I am glad you are awake," she said. "Are you feeling better?"

"Who are you?" Sylvia abruptly asked.

"Your nurse at present. I am Nora McWhin."

"Where am I? And how did I get here?"

"You are in Mr. Farthing's house. Some raftsmen brought you here."

"Faith's father?"

"Yes."

A flush suddenly mantled Sylvia's cheeks, and an angry gleam came into her eyes. She started to rise, but sank back again upon the pillow.

"Where did the raftsmen find me?"

"Down by the shore under a big tree. You must have fainted."

"Most likely. I have had such spells before. Where is Faith now?"

"She went out for a walk awhile ago. I wanted her to lie down and rest, for she was up all night with you. But she was anxious about your dog."

"What's the matter with him?" An expression of concern appeared in Sylvia's eyes.

"He attacked the raftsmen, and they had to beat him off with sticks before they could get to you."

"Did they hurt him? Did they kill him?"

"That's what Faith wanted to find out."

"Are you a relative of hers? Do you live here?"

"Oh, no. I never knew her until yesterday. She found me down and out by the roadside, and brought me here. She has been like a sister to me."

"What's the trouble with you?"

"Ru Tettle ruined me. I came here to see his people, but they drove me from their house with curses. Faith has been good to me."

"So you are the victim of a man, too?"

"Yes, and are you, Miss Sarason?"

Sylvia, however, made no reply to this direct question. Her thoughts were elsewhere.

"So Ru was your lover, eh?" she at length queried.

"He was. But he's dead now."

"And good riddance. He was a villain and deserved to be killed."

“Who murdered him?”

“Nat Royal, of course.”

“He didn’t!”

So emphatic was this denial that Sylvia looked keenly at Nora.

“How do you know?”

“Because Nat wouldn’t do such a thing. He’s too good a man.”

“H’m, all seem to be good until you get your eyes opened—and then, God help the women! You ought to know.”

“I suppose so, but Nat is different. I’m sure he didn’t kill Ru.”

“Well, he’ll have to prove that at the trial.”

“When will it take place?”

“Next week, I hear.”

“Who is his lawyer?”

“I don’t know.”

To Nora’s surprise Sylvia got out of bed and began to dress.

“Why, where are you going, Miss Sarason?”

Sylvia, however, deigned no reply, but continued her dressing. When she was through, she turned towards Nora.

“You think Nat is innocent, eh? Well, don’t change your thought. Keep on thinking that way.”

With that she was gone, leaving Nora staring after her in wonder. When out of the house, Sylvia hurried down the path and made her way swiftly along the shore. Coming in sight of the big tree, she saw Faith kneeling upon the ground intent upon some object before her. Sylvia advanced, her feet making no sound upon the soft sand. When a short distance away, she stopped and watched. Faith was so much taken up with the dog, trying to get it to eat some food she had brought, that she did not notice the approach of her enemy. That the dog was suffering a great deal was quite evident to Sylvia. She stood like a statue. Her clenched hands and quick breathing told something of her emotion. A nobleness within her was fighting a hard battle against the demon that had possessed her for days. The sight of her enemy, the girl she had tried to kill, caring for her wounded dog, stroking it lovingly, and offering it food and water was something to which she had not been accustomed. Hatred and revenge she could understand, but not this. Had she found Faith beating the animal, it would have been comprehensible to her. But to see her doing everything she could for its welfare was bewildering.

An involuntary groan escaped her lips which startled Faith and caused her to look quickly around. The next instant she was on her feet, her face white with fear.

She tried to speak, but words would not come. Sylvia noticed her terror, and it brought a thrill of pleasure to her heart. She swiftly advanced, and as Faith retreated a few steps, she knelt by the dog. Feebly the brute wagged its tail, wriggled a little towards his mistress, and licked her hand. This was more than Sylvia could endure. With a cry, she put her arms around the dog's head, held him close and wept like a child. Faith watched her in amazement. It did not seem possible that Sylvia was capable of such affection. How great must be her love for the dog, she thought.

As she watched Sylvia's bowed head so close to the dog, and listened to her sobs, a deep sympathy for this distressed girl came into her heart. Perhaps her dog was her only true friend. And now that it was mortally wounded, as it appeared, it was no wonder that her grief was overwhelming.

Faith stepped to her side and laid a sympathetic hand on her bowed shoulder. She wanted to be her friend, to win her love and confidence. Perhaps this was the opportunity.

"Let me help you," she said. "Won't you trust me?"

Sylvia, however, made no immediate reply. She remained as before, her body shaken with her sobs. Faith's heart beat with hope. Sylvia had not turned fiercely upon her as she had partly feared. Perhaps her grief had softened her, and she would respond to sympathy.

But this hope was soon dispelled. Sylvia rose slowly to her feet and looked into Faith's eyes, as if she read her very soul. She exhibited no sign of rage now, but only despair. She seemed as one devoid of all hope, and indifferent to anything on earth. Her appearance was startling.

"Leave me," she said. "No one can befriend me now. Thanks for your kindness to me and my dog. But wait, there is one thing you can do. Pray for me. There, go, quick. Leave me. I can't bear the sight of you."

Faith knew that further words would be useless, so she walked slowly away. But ere she reached the path leading to the house, she turned and looked back. Sylvia was again huddled by the dog, her arm around its body, and her face pressed close to his.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE HOLE IN THE SAND

All day the *Flying Scud* had pounded her way down river against a south west wind, and it was night when she at last dropped anchor in the calm water on the upper side of Oak Point. Tom was restless and anxious as he peered through the darkness towards the Farthing house on the hillside. Sammy was standing nearby, and to him Tom had given definite orders.

"Find out what ye kin, Sammy, but keep yer clapper shut as to what's goin' on here. Nobody's to know anything but you an' me an' our passenger. Remember that, now."

Tom had not been idle while in Fredericton. He had gone to see the premier, which was most distasteful to him. But his affection for Nat compelled him. In fact, he would have given his life, if necessary, for his young commander. He had always expressed his dislike for government officials, and boasted that they were useless beings, and that the country could get along better without them. But he had a change of mind, and believed that the premier could help him, if he so desired.

Neither was he mistaken, for when the interview was over, he went back to the boat with a lighter heart and his eyes shining with hope. The premier was a real man and a gentleman, so he decided, and he would certainly vote for him at the next election.

When the *Scud* left Fredericton, loaded with deals, she carried an extra deck-hand, and one passenger. Sammy, too, was on board, more important than ever owing to a weighty commission he believed he had received from the premier. Old Jed was annoyed, and when on deck, with the others below, he expressed his feelings to Tom in no uncertain manner.

"What in the name of heaven are ye doin' with two extry hands on board? D'ye think this old tub is an ocean clipper?"

"Jist keep cool, Jed," Tom advised. "I'm runnin' this boat, an' if I want an extry hand an' a passenger, besides, it's me own bizness. What's yer objection, anyway?"

"Oh, I can't think of any at present, that's a fact. But mebbe I'll find one before we reach the city."

"I should think ye'd be glad to have extry help. Nick'll do yer work, an' he's a good cook."

"No, I don't object to Nick, I confess. An' I don't mind that little rooster Sammy. His crowin' is funny. But that other feller, who doesn't say nuthin', gits on me nerves."



"It's the first time I ever knew ye had nerves, Jed. Ye must have kept 'em purty well in hand when ye sailed with Ru."

"Oh, I could git along with him, a'right, fer he was a hustler. But to see that passenger feller lookin' like a bloomin' owl an' never openin' his mug to say 'How do ye do?' is more than I kin stand."

"Mebbe yer right, Jed. Ye see, it's his bizness to stare at queer things. He's a specialist on bugs, worms, snakes, an' other rep-tiles. He studies 'em fer the government, that's what he does."

"But why does he stare at me, Tom? I'm not a bug, nor a worm, nor a snake."

"Can't say fer sure, Jed. But mebbe he's tryin' to find out what kind of a critter ye are. He's puzzled, most likely."

"H'm!" Jed gave the wheel a yank to the right, which brought the *Scud* up closer to the wind. He could never get ahead of Tom in a discussion, and it made him mad. Then he thought of the extra deck-hand. What could Tom say about bringing him along. It wasn't merely as a cook, he was sure of that. There must be something else in the wind.

"I 'spose Nick's a specialist, too? Knows a hull lot more'n us about handlin' a boat. We need him about as much as we do wig-wag Sammy."

"I'll tell ye, Jed," and Tom lowered his voice to a confidential whisper. "His grandmother is sick in Saint John, an' he's mighty anxious to see her before she dies. That's why he's with us on this trip. I'm givin' him a passage jist to oblige the poor feller."

A smile of satisfaction overspread Jed's withered face. He had caught Tom at last.

"Nick's grandmother died five years ago, Tom. I knew her well."

"Is that so, Jed? Well, I guess I was mistaken. Yes, I'm sartin of it. He said it was his mother."

"But she died before his grandmother."

For once Tom was outdone, and the way Jed grinned was most annoying to his dignity. In his perplexity he pulled out his pipe and began to fill it. He was wondering how he could get out of the pit into which he had fallen. Jed was merciless.

"Say, Tom," he drawled, "that passenger feller makes a speciality of bugs and sich things, but you make a speciality of lyin'. I've caught ye, though, ye old liar. Ye don't want to tell me why ye've brought Nick an' that passenger on this trip. Ye've some reason, so ye might as well quit yer lyin' an' out with it."

Jed's curiosity was Tom's only comfort in his humiliating defeat. He would keep him guessing as long as possible, so he decided. That would be his revenge. But

when at last Oak Point was reached, he was compelled to tell Jed a part of his plan.

"The passenger is goin' to git off here," he explained, "to hunt fer bugs an' reptiles. He wants me to stay, too, as I'm familiar with this locality. You an' Nick kin take charge of the *Scud*."

"So that's yer plan, eh?" Jed queried. "Queer job fer an old boatman like you huntin' fer bugs. Where d'ye expect to find 'em?"

"Right on board the *Snag*. There must be plenty of 'em there, as you should know from experience. We're goin' to make our home on that tub fer a night or two, though it makes me shiver to think of stayin' in that cabin. Guess I'll sleep on deck; it'll be safer. That specialist feller kin stay below. He'll find enough specimens down there to keep him busy all night. They must be purty hungry by this time. Sammy's gone ashore, so you an' Nick kin git under way ag'in jist as soon as Sammy gits back."

While Tom and Jed thus talked, Sammy was hurrying along the shore towards Mr. Farthing's house. As a rule he was not afraid of the darkness. But this errand was not altogether to his liking. For one thing, the graveyard was too near, and ghosts might appear at any minute. And then, he was not very far from the place where Ru was murdered. His ghost, too, might suddenly confront him, and if not his ghost, the one who had murdered him might be prowling around. He had heard how murderers sometimes came back to the scenes of their crimes. Suppose Ru's should be hiding among the trees! It was a gruesome thought. Sammy was fully convinced in his own mind that Nat was innocent. Someone else had done the deed, he was sure, and that someone might be very near this night. If he had killed one man, he would not hesitate to kill another, and Sammy did not relish the idea of being the next victim. The perspiration came out in beads upon his forehead as he thought of all this. Often he stumbled as he hastened forward, and it seemed a never-ending distance to Mr. Farthing's house.

He had gone more than half way, when just ahead among the bushes on the left he saw a faint glimmer of light. He stopped dead in his tracks, and with fast-beating heart peered keenly forward. Then slowly he advanced until he came close to the big tree where the dog had been wounded. The light was brighter now, and soon he was able to discern a human form engaged in some strange work. Was it a ghost? He gave a slight exclamation of fear, and retreated a few steps as the light moved back farther among the trees and the worker with it. Sammy's curiosity now overcame his fright. He longed to know why anyone should be working there at such an hour. And whoever it was, wished to escape, and no ghost would do that. He was up to no good, he felt certain, and as an important government official, it was his duty to find

out.

Throwing discretion to the wind, he swiftly advanced towards the light, which was now stationary. He would catch the night worker and force him to confess what he was doing there. He had gone but a short distance, however, when his feet suddenly gave way beneath him and he plunged into a deep hole. With a yell, he tried to save himself, but all in vain. Then when his clawing fingers clutched upon something soft and hairy at the bottom of the hole, his yells changed into wild shrieks of terror. He was frantic and tore at the yielding sand in his mad struggles to extricate himself from his horrible situation. As he twisted himself with difficulty into an upright position he could feel the soft uncanny thing beneath his feet. His cries had now ceased, and he was reaching up into the darkness for something upon which to lay his hands that he might pull himself out of the hole.

And as he stood there, his body shaking with terror, a mocking laugh sounded forth from among the trees. He turned quickly and saw the light coming towards him. Then Sylvia appeared, with a lantern in her hand. Calmly she viewed the little man's white upturned face and soiled clothes. Again she laughed. This was more than Sammy could endure. His self-importance now returned, and he was angry.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded.

"Meaning of what, sir?" Sylvia asked in apparent surprise.

"This hole, of course. What business have you here? Who are you, anyway? I shall have you arrested. I shall have you locked up. I shall—."

Sammy paused for breath and for lack of words to express the terrible punishment he would have meted out to the culprit who had caused his downfall. But Sylvia was not in the least intimidated by his threats.

"Don't get excited, sir. I was only burying my dog."

"Your dog! Is he dead? Am I standing on him now?"

"You are, sir. And you should be glad he is dead. He will never chew up your hat again."

"You know me, then?"

"Oh, yes, I know you, Mr. Shaver. I remember very well how you defended Faith Farthing. She is to be congratulated upon having such a worthy champion. I suppose you were on your way to see her when you fell so suddenly into this hole."

The tone of Sylvia's voice sent a chill up and down Sammy's spine. She looked so large to him, and he wondered what she intended to do. He wanted to get away, and at once.

"Help me out of this hole, please. It is very uncomfortable here. And, besides, I am in a great hurry."

“Why should I help you out, Mr. Shaver? You will have to go into a bigger hole than this some day, and stay there, too, so it might as well be now as any other time.”

Sammy gasped, for he well understood the meaning of her words. It was terrible! He was at the mercy of this crazy girl!

“You’re surely not going to kill me, Miss?” he cried.

“Why not? You will have no more trouble in life. What’s the use of living, anyway, when it’s so easy to die? Now, with one blow of this shovel, your troubles would be all over.”

This was more than Sammy could stand. He was not going to remain calmly there and allow this demented creature to brain him. He suddenly turned and with a mighty effort scrambled out of the hole on the opposite side. How he did it, he never could tell. But do it he did, and dashed among the trees and raced madly along the shore. And following him came the mocking laughter of the terrible girl he had so narrowly escaped.

## CHAPTER XXX

### “SPECIMENS”

The entire country was deeply stirred over Ru's murder. The parish, especially, was wrought up to a high pitch of excitement. And added to this came the strange and wild doings of the girl of the Creek House. When news spread of her attack upon Faith Farthing, people called imperatively for protection and immediate action from those in authority. Simon Steeples was forced to leave his work to arrest the girl. His efforts, however, were in vain. So the night that Sammy Shaver fell into the hole under the big oak tree, Simon was endeavoring to explain to several men gathered at Mr. Farthing's house what he had been doing.

“I have hunted fer that critter high an' low, but not a sight of her have I seen.”

“Have you been at the Creek House?” Ben Rawlins asked.

“Sure I've been there, an' I don't want to go ag'in in a hurry.”

“Why?”

“Oh, I hardly know. There's something queer about that place that gives me the shivers. The first thing I saw was an old man settin' on the verandah. He wanted to hit me with his cane, an' when I dodged back, he fell down flat an' yelled something awful. Then a big feller came out of the house an' asked me what I wanted. When I told him me bizness, I thought he would kill me there an' then. But I stood up to him, an' dared him to lay hands upon an officer of the Queen. At that he cooled down mighty quick an' told me he didn't know where his sister was, as she hadn't been home all day. He promised me, though, that he'd keep an eye on her an' not let her wander around the country tryin' to harm people. That was all I could do, an' I don't want to go there ag'in. Them people are all queer, to my way of thinkin'.”

As Simon finished speaking, the door was suddenly thrust open, and Sammy entered. All stared in amazement, for his face was white with fear, and his clothes covered with dirt. This was not the immaculate little man they had always known. Something out of the ordinary must have happened, they were well aware, and eagerly they questioned him. Pantingly Sammy told them of his terrible experience, and his narrow escape.

“She's mad, she's raving mad!” he shouted. “She's a wild fury and she must be arrested. We have a law and it must be enforced. Who is the constable in this place?”

“I am,” Simon acknowledged, stepping forward. “I tried to arrest her, but she could not be found.”

Sammy fixed his eyes sternly upon the constable. He was calmer now, and his

self-importance was returning. He was the centre of attention, and these people were looking to him as their superior. This pleased his vanity.

“So you couldn’t find her, eh?” he queried. “Where did you look for her? Around your barn?”

“Indeed I didn’t,” Simon stoutly declared. “I went to her own house, but she wasn’t there. What more could I do?”

“Your’re a numb-skull, Simon. Of course you couldn’t find a girl like that. And it was fortunate for you that you didn’t find her, for she would have torn the eyes out of your head. She is a very dangerous person, and we must see that she is kept secure. We must have her arrested at once.”

Simon’s pride was touched by Sammy’s words. He was no numb-skull, neither was he a coward.

“You come with me, Sammy, show me where the girl is, an’ I’ll take her alive or dead. By jiminey! there’s no female woman in this parish kin scare me. I don’t care how mad she is, neither. Come on and show me where she is. Ye called me a ‘numbskull’ an’ believe I’m afraid. But I’ll show ye what I am an’ what I kin do.”

Sammy was now in a quandary. He had said too much, and Simon had showed an unexpected spirit. The fear of Sylvia was still strong upon him. He did not want to meet that wild girl again, even with the constable along. And yet how could he refuse to go after what he had said to Simon? He did not know how to get out of his difficulty.

It was then that Faith came to his rescue. She noticed his weariness, and how unusually old and frail he looked. Her heart was touched by his pathetic appearance.

“You must rest before you go, Sammy,” she said. “You are very tired.”

“I certainly am, my dear. In fact, I can hardly stand. I’ve had a very trying experience.”

“Perhaps a cup of tea would refresh you.”

“Indeed it would. It would give me new life.”

“Sammy would like something stronger, Faith,” Tom Decker bantered. “Give him something with a kick in it.”

Sammy understood the meaning of these words, and his face flushed with indignation.

“Keep your advice to yourself, Tom,” he retorted. “And as for ‘something with a kick in it’, I don’t want any of it, judging by the way it kicks you around when you’re beastly drunk.”

“Good for you, Sammy,” Ben Rawlins gleefully cried, giving the little man a friendly clap on the back. “Tom deserved all you gave him.”

“And I’ll give him more if he doesn’t hold his tongue about rum. There’s too much of it drunk, and it always brings a curse. Look what it did to Ru Tettle. If he hadn’t been drunk that night in the old barn he wouldn’t have been murdered. The premier and I have discussed this matter, and we have made up our minds to put an end to the liquor traffic. We are going to pass a law to that effect.”

Sammy was on the point of launching forth upon a harangue about the wonderful government and its blessing to the country, when Faith interrupted him.

“Never mind that now, Sammy. Come with me and get your tea.”

Faith was not interested in the liquor question just then, as something else occupied her mind. She wanted an excuse to get Sammy away from the men that she might talk to him privately. When she had him at last by herself in the kitchen, she stirred up the fire, closed the door, and placed a chair for Sammy near the table. Then while waiting for the partly-heated water to boil, she sat down by his side.

“Where did you leave Tom?” she asked.

This unexpected question surprised Sammy, and he looked keenly into her eyes.

“On board the *Scud*, of course. Why do you ask that?”

“I wanted to be sure, that’s all. But what is the latest word about Nat? Did you hear anything new in Fredericton?”

“Nothing, my dear. I suppose you know his trial is to take place next Thursday.”

“Yes, so I have heard. Just think, less than a week, and we have done nothing to help him.”

“What can we do, Faith? Tom sent me ashore to find out if you have heard anything new.”

“Why didn’t he come himself?”

Sammy hesitated, and while Faith prepared the tea, he sat lost in thought. He remembered Tom’s warning about keeping his “mouth shut” and wondered what to say. What did Tom mean, anyway? He sipped the tea and ate a piece of cake. Faith watched him.

“You didn’t answer my question, Sammy.”

“What was it, my dear? This is good cake. Did you make it?”

“I did. But you won’t get another piece unless you tell me why Tom didn’t come.”

“Aren’t you just as glad to see me, Faith? Won’t I do as well as Tom? Maybe he’s better looking than I am, and girls like handsome men. Now, if you could see that government specialist on the *Scud*, you would see a fine looking man, and no mistake.”

“What is he doing there?”

"Oh, he's looking for bugs, worms, and reptiles," so Tom said. "He's going to begin his search around here, and Tom's going to stop over to help him."

"Why, I never heard of such a thing," Faith exclaimed in surprise. "And what does Tom know about it?"

"I asked him that, and he said he was going to learn. The government is doing it, you see, so it must be the premier's idea. He is always working out something for the good of the country. Now, bugs, worms, and reptiles are a nuisance and should be destroyed. Yes, we have a great government, and when people learn how we are determined to clear the land of bugs, worms, and reptiles they will stand solidly by us at the next election."

Faith, however, was not at all interested in the government, so she hardly heard Sammy's words. Her mind was very active.

"What kind of man is that specialist?" she asked.

"What kind of man, eh? Well, it's hard to say, my dear. He doesn't do much talking, seems rather mysterious, and stares at one in a queer sort of a way. Tom said it's because he looks so much at bugs and worms, and as they are queer things, it takes queer eyes to find them."

"Oh, I see." Faith began to understand matters now, and her heart beat fast. She looked into Sammy's eyes and felt certain that he had no idea who the "specialist" really was. He was as unsuspicious as a child.

"When will that man begin his search for the specimens?" she asked.

"To-night, so Tom told me. He said that the specialist could do better work at night, and could generally find bugs and snakes better when it was dark. In the daytime they don't show up much because they are afraid. But at night when all is still they do their work. My! that specialist must be a wonderful man. I would like to see him prowling around in the darkness. He must have great eyes."

"Where will they stay when the *Scud* leaves?" Faith enquired.

"On the *Snag*. There are some good specimens there, Tom said."

Sammy helped himself to another piece of cake, and handed over his cup for more tea. Faith was certain now that she had rightly surmised the purpose of the "specialist". Tom had brought him. He was a special detective. There could be no doubt about it, and her heart thrilled at the idea. She thought, too, of the scrap of paper that Nora had given her. Would it be any help in the search for the murderer? Anyway, she must see Tom, and at once. There was no time to lose.

When Sammy had finished, he rose to his feet. Faith laid a hand upon his arm.

"Just a minute, Sammy. I want to see Tom. Hurry back and tell him to come here to-night. There, don't ask any questions."



"But, my dear, how can Tom come? He will have to stay with the specialist."

"Let the specialist come, too, then. There are some bugs I want them to find for me, and I am very grateful for what you have told me."

"But I haven't told you any secret, Faith, have I, now?"

"Certainly not. Why do you ask that?"

"Because Tom told me to keep my mouth shut. I have, now, haven't I?"

"You have done very well, Sammy: You haven't told me anything but what is right for me to know."

"I'm very glad to hear you say that, Faith. But don't let on to Tom that I told you about the specialist, and the bugs. Tom's queer at times. He's a good friend of mine, but I wish he had religion. He needs it more than any man I ever knew, especially when he gets mad."

"I won't give you away, Sammy," Faith assured, "so you need not worry. Hurry away now and tell Tom to come at once. It is very important that I should see him."

Sammy, however, was not anxious to hurry away. Neither was the constable, for that matter. Notwithstanding his bold talk about arresting Sylvia, he was very glad of the delay. The thought of facing that crazy girl out there in the night sent a chill through his body. Sammy would be of little or no assistance, and he did not like to ask any of the other men to go with him. They would tell the story as a great joke. He was, accordingly, pleased that Sammy stayed in the kitchen as long as he did. It would give Sylvia time to finish burying her dog and leave the place.

Faith was glad when the men at length departed, and she and her father were alone. Nora was staying the night at Mrs. Royal's. The widow had invited the girl to her house, for she knew how helpless Faith would be should Nora take suddenly ill during the night. Faith was most grateful to Mrs. Royal for her thoughtfulness, for the fear of what might happen had been weighing heavily upon her throughout the day. Mrs. Royal, she well knew, would be equal to any emergency.

She followed her father into his workshop and sat near his side as he continued his work which had been interrupted by the arrival of the neighbors. And his work was the drafting of the plans of several figure-heads he had in his mind. Faith was not interested in them now, for her mind was upon something altogether different. She thought of Nat in his lonely cell awaiting his trial. And what would that day reveal? Less than a week and the result would be known. And what would the verdict be? She trembled at the thought. Her only hope was in what Tom and the detective might do. Just how the scrap of paper would aid them in their search she did not know. Nevertheless, she fondly cherished the hope that it might prove a valuable clue in unravelling the mystery surrounding that stolen money and Ru's death.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE NIGHT VISITOR

It was Tom's firm conviction that the people of the Creek House knew a great deal about that robbery in the city, and also about the man who had disappeared so mysteriously from the *Flying Scud*. He had meditated much about the lighted house, and the strange appearance of the "drowned" man on board that night of the thunderstorm. That it was no ghost, he was now certain, notwithstanding the great scare he had then received. He believed that the man was alive and still in the neighborhood. But how was he to be found? And if found, what assistance would that be to Nat? It would, no doubt, settle definitely Nat's connection with the robbery, and free him from all suspicion. But how would it unravel the mystery of Ru's death? The city detectives had been foiled in the robbery affair, and as far as he knew they had accomplished nothing about the murder except to have Nat arrested. This annoyed Tom and though at first he felt inclined to tell them what he knew, he finally decided to keep his knowledge to himself. He had not much use for detectives, anyway, and if they captured the robber, they would be sure to take the entire credit to themselves. Only to the premier had he unburdened his mind, and very reluctantly accepted the service of a special government detective, of considerable repute. It was Tom's suggestion that the search should be made under cover of darkness, and with great secrecy. Just how the detective would go about his work he had no idea, for he was a stranger at Oak Point, and knew nothing about the locality. He would, accordingly, be compelled to depend much upon him, so Tom believed. That the Creek House would be the main object of their investigation was quite evident. But to approach the place at night with a savage dog on guard, would be most difficult. This was a serious problem, and Tom racked his brain in an effort to overcome the difficulty.

Sammy's return with the news of his experience was a great relief to the old boatman. He was more interested in learning that the dog was dead and buried than he was in Sammy's recital of his narrow escape from the wild girl. When, however, he visited Faith, heard about Nora McWhin, and saw the scrawl upon the little scrap of paper, his excitement was intense. He was like a boy in his enthusiasm, and his eyes glowed with animation.

"This is a great find!" he exclaimed. "I really believe it'll be a clue to something else."

"So do I," Faith quietly agreed. "I hope so, anyway."

Tom looked keenly at her serious face, and his heart was touched, for he truly

surmised of whom she was thinking. His soul was stirred with the spirit of chivalry, and he was ready for any deed of daring no matter how reckless.

"I'm goin' to find that murderer," he declared, hitting out violently with his clenched right hand. "I'll do it even if I have to turn this parish upside down, by jingo, I will!"

"And the Creek House, too, Tom."

"Yes, it'll come in fer its share, a'right."

"Perhaps you will stop when that is done."

"Ah, mebbe so. I know what yer thinkin' about, me dear. Anyway, we'll save Nat. That boy's like me own son, an' I'm goin' to stand by him through thick and thin."

A mistiness came into Faith's eyes as she listened to the words of this worthy old man. She tried not to show her emotion, but Tom's eyes were exceptionally keen.

"I know jist how ye feel, Faith. Ye think a lot of Nat, an' when I see him, I'm goin' to tell him what a true friend ye are to him."

"No, no, you must not say a word to him about me," Faith replied, laying a firm hand upon his arm. "He must never know. I am only doing it because—because I believe he is innocent. Promise me that you won't tell."

"Well, well I don't want to go ag'in yer wish, me dear," and Tom scratched his head in perplexity. "But he ought to know, that's a fact. Anyway, if ye don't want him to know, that settles it."

Before Tom left, Faith asked him where he and the detective would get their food.

"Oh, we brought some from Fredericton. I guess we'll make out, a'right."

"I don't believe you will, Tom. I am going to be your cook while you are here. I know you will keep hidden during the day. But come to-morrow night and I shall have a basket prepared for you. Now, don't forget."

"Bless yer heart, me dear! Ye'll see me here, a'right, fer I don't feel much like cookin' jist now with sich important bizness on hand."

Faith really wanted some excuse for bringing Tom back that she might hear about their progress. She was impatient for results. There were only a few more days before the trial, and there was so much to be done in that short time.

Tom chuckled as he left the house and walked down the path to the shore.

"Faith is a great gal, an' no mistake," he mused. "Mebbe she thinks she kin fool me. But I kin read her like a book. Her heart's with Nat, an' she'd be willin' to give her life fer his sake. If Nat can't see it, he's a fool an' I'll tell him jist as soon as I git me tongue on him. To think of him goin' daft over that crazy loon of the Creek

House when there's sich a gal as Faith pinin' fer his love! It makes me bilin' mad when I think what a fool he is."

Tom passed the tree where the dog had been buried, when a strange sense of fear came upon him. He stopped, looked keenly back, and listened. He had the feeling that something was following him stealthily through the darkness. But as he heard nothing, he decided that it was only imagination, and chided himself for being startled. But as he continued on his way, he could not rid himself of the thought that there was something not far behind him. He had always boasted about his courage, but now he was really frightened. The thick darkness beneath the branching trees, and the remembrance of Ru's murder brought the perspiration out in beads upon his forehead. His whole body trembled, and he stumbled at times over stones as he sped forward. Not until he had reached the little boat, pushed it from the shore and leaped in, did he feel safe. He shivered as he looked landward. Nothing could have induced him to go back alone to that uncanny place with that unknown something lurking there in the darkness.

Hardly a sound did he make as he sent the boat reeling through the water, and when he reached the *Snag* he climbed on board as quietly as possible. Groping his way down into the cabin, he could tell by the loud snoring that the detective was in a deep sleep. The place was stuffy, and he was in no mood for sleep. Filling and lighting his pipe, he went up on deck and seated himself upon the end of a big deal. The pile of timber which towered above him formed a heavy shade and a comfortable retreat. It was absolutely impossible for him to be detected in such a place. The *Flying Scud* had left for the city, and complete silence reigned over the river. The wind had died down, the clouds had rolled away, and the stars were shining. There was peace everywhere except in Tom's heart. He was greatly disturbed, and he tried to reason out the strange sense of fear that had come upon him while walking along the shore. But the harder he thought, the more puzzled he became. He was certain that something had followed him, a human being, no doubt. And who could it be there in the darkness? Was it a man or a woman? It might be Ru's murderer prowling around the scene of his terrible crime.

As he thus sat lost in thought, he was suddenly aroused by a sound near the shore. There was a slight noise as of something coming towards him on the water. What could it be? He listened with a fast-beating heart, and strained his eyes through the darkness in an effort to see. More distinctly now came the sound, and he knew that it was something swimming. Was it the murderer pursuing him! It made him tremble with fear. This changed at once to anger, and when Tom was angry he was not a pleasant man to meet. Groping around he laid his hands upon a stout piece of

scantling. Thus armed, he strode aft and waited.

The swimming something was quite close now, though Tom could not make out what it was. When, however, the side of the tender, which was tied astern, was clutched by a hand, Tom's uncertainty vanished. It was a human being, and he felt relieved. In another instant a form appeared out of the water, crawled over the side of the boat and stood very still. It then moved to the bow, caught the loose rope and drew the boat close up to the *Snag*. Tom could endure the strain no longer. He was prepared to strike, but he would first give the visitor warning.

"Jist stop where ye are," he ordered. "Come any closer, an' I'll brain ye."

A gasp of surprise followed these words, and the intruder remained motionless and silent.

"Who are ye?" Tom demanded. "Speak, or I'll hit."

"Hush," came a low voice. "Don't talk so loud. I am Sylvia Sarason, and I want to speak with you."

"Lord! A woman!"

Tom was so amazed that he let the stick drop upon the deck with a bang.

"Yes, I'm a woman, but you needn't get scared and make such a racket. You'll arouse the neighborhood."

"But what in time are ye doin' here at this hour of the night?"

"Just keep quiet and I'll tell you. Come close and listen. Bend down low, for I must whisper."

Tom did as he was bidden. He dropped to his knees and bent over the rail. He shivered as he felt a wet hand laid upon his arm. This was an uncanny business, and he did not feel at all comfortable.

"Are you Tom?" Sylvia asked.

"I'm not sure, Miss. Jedgin' by the way I feel I seem to be somebody else. What d'ye want with me?"

"Are you going to hunt for that stolen money to-night?"

Tom merely gasped, so great was his astonishment.

"There, now, don't get excited. I've come to help you."

"Ye have! But how do you know what I'm plannin' to do?"

"Oh, I know, for I had a talk with that girl, Nora. And, besides, you saw Faith Farthing to-night and she gave you a piece of paper."

"How did ye know that?"

"Never mind. I know a great deal, so that's why I'm here."

"Was that you follerin' me along the shore t'night?"

"That doesn't matter. I'm here, so that's enough. I'm crazy sometimes, I guess.

But I'm not now, and I want to help you."

"To find that money?"

"To show you where it was hidden."

"You know the place?"

"I do. You think you can find it by that piece of paper. But you can't."

"But why d'ye want to do this, Miss?"

"I have my own reason."

"D'ye know who stole that money?"

"Never mind about that now. Do you want me to help you, or not?"

"Sure I do, but—"

"That will do, then. I am going back to the shore now and you can come for me when I whistle three times."

"But why not stay here now, Miss?"

"I can't very well. My clothes are on the shore."

"Holy smoke! Ain't ye got any duds on?"

"Not a stitch."

A queer gurgle sounded in Tom's throat, and the girl gave a low chuckle of amusement.

"Do I shock you, Tom? So long as you can't see me what's the difference? Night makes a very good dress."

"I s'pose it does, but it's not overly warm. Ain't ye cold?"

"I do feel a little chilly, though I'm used to that. I'll go ashore now and get dressed. But be sure to come when I whistle. And come alone, remember."

"Why, what makes ye say that, Miss? Who else would be likely to come with me?"

"I don't know for sure. But do as I say or you won't find that place."

Without another word, she slipped quietly into the water, leaving Tom staring through the darkness like a man in a dream.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE ISLAND

Tom stood staring for some time, although he saw nothing with his outward eyes. He was trying to collect his bewildered senses and to grasp the meaning of what had just taken place. For a girl to visit him in such a strange manner was astounding. Never before had he undergone such an experience. But, then, she was crazy, so that, no doubt, accounted for what she had done. And could he depend upon what she had told him? Was it a mere illusion of her unbalanced mind that caused her to speak about the hidden money? And if not, there might be something else. He thought of her revengeful attitude towards Faith. Perhaps she felt the same about him. In some mysterious way she might have found out his intention to find Ru's murderer, and had thus formed a scheme to entrap and, perhaps, murder him. The thought sent chills through his body. Who was she, anyway? That she belonged to the group at the Creek House was sufficient to arouse suspicion. Who could tell what desperate characters were aiding her, and using her as a pawn in their evil deeds. And besides, she might not be as crazy as she at times appeared. He remembered with what skill she had handled her boat upon the river. Could a crazy person do that? He recalled, too, her wild actions on the *Scud* the day she had been rescued. Had she been merely acting a part, or was it due to her disturbed brain?

The more Tom thought of these things, the more puzzled he became. He did want to find where that money was hidden, and he well knew how difficult it might be to locate the place without some one to direct him. The piece of paper Faith had received from Nora did not indicate any exact spot, and on that rough forest-covered island he might search long and in vain. But was the girl's proposition only a ruse to prevent him in his search, and, perhaps, endanger his life? And why did she want to show him the place? What purpose did she have in view? There was nothing, so far as he could see, and this made him uneasy.

He was thus thinking when a clear low whistle sounded from the shore. It startled him, although he had been expecting it. Twice it was repeated, and then all was still. Every nerve in Tom's body quivered, so weird did that whistle sound through the darkness. But it was a challenge, as well. He was no coward, and he had promised the girl that he would go. And if he did not go, what other chance would there be to find the money? In some unknown way this venture might be the means of saving Nat, and for his sake he must take the risk. Yes, he would go and get through with the nasty job as speedily as possible. If he drew back now he would feel ashamed of himself for the rest of his life.

As he rowed towards the shore, his conscience somewhat troubled him for leaving the detective behind. What would he think and say should he learn what had taken place without his knowledge? But Tom had promised that he would go alone. Did the girl have any suspicion that the detective was on board the *Snag*? And if she knew, how had she found out? There was a mystery connected with this affair which he could not fathom.

Sylvia was waiting for him, and without a word she stepped on board and seated herself astern. Tom could dimly discern her form, but not her face. As he pulled off towards the Point, not a word was spoken. Tom did not know what to say, and as Sylvia evidently preferred to remain silent, he decided to do the same for a while, at least.

The water was calm, and a great stillness reigned over land and river. Tom was far from happy. He did not like this undertaking, with the girl sitting silently before him. If he had the detective along he would feel more satisfied. He rowed steadily, and the oars made no sound as they touched the water. He realised the importance of quietness this night, for who could tell what keen ears might be listening in the dark depths of those great trees along the shore?

He thought of this as he rounded the Point and made out into the main channel. He wished to be some distance from those menacing trees, so out in the stream he felt safer. Caution would not be so necessary here.

As if divining what was passing through his mind, Sylvia moved slightly and gave a deep sigh. Tom at once stopped rowing, and allowed the boat to drift downstream.

"Anything the matter with ye, Miss?" he asked in a low voice, glad for some excuse to speak.

"Nothing more than what troubles you," was the reply.

"Me! Why, what's troublin' me?"

"Why are you keeping so far from the shore, then?"

"To git the help of the tide, of course."

"Is that all?"

"Why d'ye ask that? What other reason would there be?"

The girl gave a low laugh, which nettled Tom.

"Explain what ye mean by them words, Miss. An' what's that laff about?"

"Oh, I guess you understand, all right. You feel safer out here than near the shore. I know I do, anyway."

"Ye do!"

"Certainly. I always feel safer on the water. It's the only friend I have now since



my dog's gone."

There was such a note of sincere pathos in the girl's voice that Tom's heart was touched. He longed to see the expression upon her face.

"Why d'ye feel safer out here, Miss? Why shouldn't ye feel safe on shore? What's t'harm ye there?"

"Why do you feel safer here, Tom?"

"Me! Oh, I feel safe anywhere. Land or water's all the same to me."

"You don't seem to act that way, though. You don't like those great dark trees along the shore any more than I do. Isn't that so?"

"Mebbe yer right. I do have a funny creepy feelin' when I look at 'em. I don't know why, but it's a fact, fer all that."

"That's just it. You don't know why. But you don't feel safe, and when you have that feeling you're not comfortable."

Tom was not satisfied with this conversation. Sylvia's words stirred his curiosity. She was afraid of something, and knew, no doubt, what that something was.

"Look here, Miss, what are ye afraid of, anyway? Why d'ye feel safer out here than on land? Out with it."

"I can't tell you now, Tom. You will know before long, however."

"When?"

"That remains to be seen."

"T'night?"

"No, not to-night. To-morrow, maybe."

Tom dipped the oars into the water and pointed the boat down stream. He was sorely puzzled. He longed to know what the girl was thinking about. Had it anything to do with Ru's death? It might be so. Again he rested on his oars, and once more allowed the boat to drift.

"Has yer fear anything to do with Ru's murder?" he asked.

Sylvia gave a slight gasp of surprise, but said nothing. With much difficulty Tom suppressed a chuckle of satisfaction. He knew that his question had struck the bull's-eye, right in the centre. This girl did know something about the murder, he felt sure. And would the hidden money be an important clue in unravelling the mystery? But why had she not told and thus freed Nat? She must have some important reason for remaining silent. But she must be made to divulge what she knew. If she would not do so freely, means would have to be brought to bear to make her tell. He would let nothing stand in the way that justice might be done to Nat.

By now the boat was almost opposite the upper end of the island, and Tom was wondering when she would order him to turn towards the shore. He was not left

long in doubt, however, for in a few minutes Sylvia gave the command. Her voice was little more than a whisper.

“Land just below the sandy bar where the trees come close to the water,” she said.

Tom did so, and as the bow touched land, Sylvia rose to her feet and stepped lightly out. Tom followed her, and made the boat fast to a nearby tree. This done, he turned to his companion.

“What now, Miss?”

“S-sh! speak low. Keep close to me, and I’ll lead the way.”

Tom soon found that it was by no means an easy task to keep close to her as she sped up the bank. She did not seem to mind the darkness as she threaded her way among the trees and rocks. But with Tom it was different. He had to grope blindly forward, stumbling at almost every step and bruising himself upon some stone or stick. He was angry, and longed to give vent to his feelings in strong language. With an effort he kept himself in check and toiled painfully onward.

At length higher ground was reached, but the walking was still difficult, for they were on the upper side of the island where it fell abruptly towards the narrow channel which made in from the main river. Tom tried to keep up with Sylvia, but she was fleet of foot, and only by listening with strained attention could he detect the way she was leading. He was swearing softly and upbraiding himself for being such a fool. The girl was crazy, and he might have had enough sense not to believe her yarn about the hidden money.

As he was thus thinking, he almost collided with Sylvia. She had stopped, and was standing as motionless as the trees around her.

“Lord!” he gasped. “I nearly knocked ye down.”

“S-sh!” she whispered. “We are right at the place. Take off your coat. I want it.”

“Want me coat! What in time—.”

“There, now, keep still, and do as I say. You will know soon.”

More puzzled than ever, Tom tore off his jacket. Sylvia took it and ordered him to kneel down. Reluctantly he obeyed. The next instant Sylvia was kneeling by his side. Then a match snapped, and at once Tom understood what she was doing. She was lighting a small piece of candle, and with the coat thrown over her head and shoulders she was shielding the light, not to prevent it from being blown out, for there was not a breath of wind astir, but to keep it hidden from view. Tom at once gave a helping hand, and held out the coat to conceal the light as much as possible. Within this little confined circle the candle gave its glow upon the ground. As Tom watched and waited, Sylvia touched a flat stone lying before them.

"This is the place," she whispered. "Under this stone. Lift it."

Tom's heart beat fast, and eagerly his hands raised the stone from its position. Beneath was a little hole, formed by nature between two boulders. Seizing the candle from Sylvia, he held it down close to the opening. But nothing could he see. Impulsively he thrust in his right hand and felt carefully around, but nothing could he find. He looked up into Sylvia's face, and saw an expression, almost of triumph, in her eyes.

"What's the meanin' of this?" he demanded. "There's nuthin' here."

"I know there isn't."

"Ye do! Why did ye bring me here, then? To make a fool of me?"

"I didn't say you'd find the money."

"Ye didn't! Heavens, gal! what d'ye mean by sayin' that?"

"I told you I'd show you the place where it was hidden, and so I have. It was right in that hole."

"But where is it now?"

"You will have to wait a while."

"How long?"

"Don't ask me now."

"But why in all creation did ye bring me here, then?"

"To show you the place, of course."

"H'm is that all?"

"No, it's not. I want you to come back here to-morrow night, and bring some one with you. Get a man who is big and strong. And bring several stout cords, too. But a small rope will do, all right."

Tom's eyes were staring wide with astonishment at this strange request. He shrank away a little from Sylvia. She seemed uncanny, and her queer words and actions were affecting his nerves. A slight semblance of a smile flitted across her face. It was a weary face, and her eyes bore a hopeless expression.

"Yes, I want you to come to-morrow night," she repeated. "And I shall show you where you are to hide."

Shading the light beneath the coat, she walked a short distance up the hill, with Tom following. Presently she stopped by a thick clump of trees in the midst of which were several large boulders.

"That is where you must hide," she whispered. "Don't ask me why, but if you do as I say, you will not be sorry. Keep as still as death until the right moment, and then your own judgment will tell you what to do. Be here by nine o'clock, and sooner if you like."

Sylvia spoke so calmly, and with such assurance that Tom could not doubt what she said. In some mysterious manner she had cast a spell upon him, and he was ready to obey her slightest command. All her craziness had disappeared, and she was a quiet girl, working out some definite plan known only to herself. Tom's curiosity was now keenly aroused, and he felt that this adventure would lead to something of great value.

Having given her orders, Sylvia blew out the candle, and handed Tom his coat.

"There, I guess that is all," she said. "I know you do not understand the meaning of all this. But you will have to trust me, and if you follow my instructions to the letter, you will never regret it. You can take me back to the Point now."

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### ENTRAPPED

The detective awoke when Tom went into the cabin. He was annoyed that he had not been called to take part in the island adventure. But when Tom explained what had taken place, and the prospect in store, he had to be satisfied.

"That gal made me promise to go alone with her," he said. "She was very pertic'ler on that pint."

"Did she know about me, Tom?"

"I can't say fer sure, Mister. But most likely she did, fer she's a wonder at findin' things out. Why, she kin see in the night jist like a cat, so I wouldn't be s'prised if she kin smell things, too, like a dog. Yes, she must have got the scent of you here, that's a fact. Some folks have a gift that way."

"What is she like, anyway?"

"She's not like anybody I ever met. Sometimes she's as crazy an' wild as a hawk, an' then ag'in she's as gentle an' sensible as anyone. An' as fer looks, my, she's a beauty, a'right! But it's a queer, creepy kind of a beauty that sends the chills up and down yer spine. She reminds me of a cat that's soft an' purry one minute an' a ragin' tager the next. That's what she's like."

"Yes, I have come across such women before," the detective replied. "But what do you suppose is back of all this? Why does she want us to go to the island to-night, and with cords, too?"

"Can't say, Mister, any mor'n I kin fathom why she took me there an' showed me that hole where the money was hidden. She must have something important in mind, though."

"It seems so, but just what it is I'd like to know. We must be very careful, as she may be laying a trap of some kind for us."

"But she told me to bring help, somebody who is big an' strong. That doesn't sound as if she's plannin' any harm to us."

"It doesn't satisfy me, though. It may be a ruse to get us there, thinking that we are going to find something or somebody of importance. And suppose we are not there first?"

"What d'ye mean, Mister?"

"Well, suppose there are men with guns, lying hidden over there when we arrive?"

"H'm, that doesn't worry me one bit. This old river-rat has been in too many tight corners to be caught in a hurry by a gal with a gang of men at her heels."

“What do you intend to do, then?”

“Git there first, of course. I’m not goin’ to wait till t’night. I’m going to sleep through the day, an’ over there on the island will be a dang sight more comfortable than this stuffy cabin. You kin come, if ye want to. Anyway, I’m goin’ back now.”

Tom rose to his feet, went to a corner of the room, and picked up a gun. This he examined with considerable care. He then slipped into his pockets several biscuits and cakes which Faith had given him. He next rolled up a blanket and tossed it upon deck.

“There, I guess I’m fitted out. Are ye comin’, Mister?”

“There is nothing else for me to do, so far as I can see,” the detective growled. “I have been thinking of another plan, visiting the Creek House, for instance. But as you and that girl have taken matters into your own hands, I might as well wait and see how this island affair turns out. Then, if we live through it, I shall take my own head for it in the future.”

“Or yer feet, why don’t ye say?” Tom retorted, somewhat nettled at the detective’s contemptuous words. “Three fellers who foller your perfession have been snookin’ around here ever since the murder. An’ what have they done? Nuthin’, ’cept arrest an innocent man. It’s my turn now. Come on, fer I’m tarnation sleepy.”

The dawn of a new day found Tom and the detective lying in a sheltered nook on the eastern side of the island. Tom was asleep, wrapped up in his blanket. The detective was awake, gazing out upon the river over which a thick fog was hovering. As the sky beyond the distant hills brightened, the sun at length appeared above the tops of the pointed trees. It rose higher and its warm beams fell upon the bank where the men were lying. Beneath its rays the fog gradually thinned, lifted in long fleecy wisps, and then vanished. The watching man looked up and down the river, but no sign of life could he see. The small boat had been securely hidden among the trees, so in this snug retreat there was no likelihood of their being observed by anyone passing up or down the river. The heat of the sun was pleasant, and in a few minutes the detective was fast asleep.

When the men awoke, the sun was high in the heavens. Both were hungry, so the food they had brought in their pockets was most acceptable.

“I feel better now,” Tom declared as he filled and lighted his pipe. “That sleep did me a world of good, an’ I’m fit fer anything.”

The detective silently smoked a cigarette. He was a man of few words, anyway. And, besides, he did not find the old boatman a companion to his liking. Tom was taking matters out of his hands, and if something of importance turned up he would get the credit.

At length Tom rose to his feet and picked up his gun.

"We might as well git on our way, Mister. I want to show ye where that money was hidden."

Together they made their way up among the trees until they came to the place. Tom stopped and pointed downwards.

"That's the spot, so the gal said."

The detective dropped upon his knees and examined the hole.

"It's a snug place. I wonder what has become of the money."

"The gal said I'd find out in time. She must know. I'll now show ye where she wants us to hide."

He led the way to the clump of trees not far off.

"There 'tis, but we'll not hide there."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I kin hardly explain. But something tells me it'll be better fer that gal not to know where we are. We'll hunt up a better place in another direction."

After searching around, Tom located a spot which suited him.

"This'll do fine, Mister. It's jist in the opposite direction, an' among these trees an' stones we'll be as snug as bugs in a rug."

This done, they took up their position on the western side of the island. Here hidden among the trees, they could watch the Creek House in the distance. Slowly, all too slowly for the detective the day passed. He dozed part of the time, but Tom never relinquished his watchful attitude until the sun sank below the far-off hills, and darkness deepened over the land. Only then did he and his companion conceal themselves in the place which had been chosen for their night vigil.

Slowly the time wore on, and in their cramped position the men became tired and impatient as they listened with strained attention for approaching footsteps. The detective was angry, and longed to be out of the narrow hiding-place, and done with such nonsense. In a low voice he told Tom what he thought about the whole affair. It was all a silly undertaking, anyway, and that crazy girl was making fools of them.

Tom made no reply, for, in fact, he knew not what to say. He was beginning to feel that perhaps the detective was right, and that the girl had deceived them. If so, how could he ever hold up his head again, and face the world should the story leak out, as it assuredly would? He would be the laughing-stock of all. People would be sure to chaff him about the island and the sleeping accommodations there. Oh, yes, he knew only too well what it would be like, and the thought made him feel most uncomfortable. It was humiliating to think that he had been so easily fooled, and by a crazy girl, at that.

When their patience was at last strained almost to the breaking-point, Tom's keen ears detected a slight noise on the left. He clutched his companion's arm.

"They're comin'!" he gasped. "Over there!"

The sound was more distinct now, and in another minute a faint gleam of light glimmered among the trees. Instinctively the men crouched lower, and waited with almost bated breath. Nearer and nearer came the light, straight towards them. Then the forms of two people could be dimly discerned moving among the trees. One was a man, the other a woman. The former had slackened his pace now and seemed to be peering cautiously around. He stopped and listened.

"What's the matter, Sam?" the woman asked. "Are you afraid?"

"Afraid? No! But it's just as well to be careful. One can't tell who might be prowling around."

Tom was quivering with excitement. He knew that the woman was Sylvia, and the man's voice sounded familiar. Where had he heard it before? Instantly he remembered. On the *Scud*! This man approaching was the passenger who had mysteriously disappeared that night on the river. He wanted to give a whoop, or do something desperate to relieve his feelings. But all he could do was to remain silent and listen.

The man had now reached the hole where the money had been hidden. He dropped upon his knees before the opening. Sylvia was standing a few paces behind, and Tom saw her glance off towards the clump of trees where she had told him to hide.

The kneeling man had now removed the stone, and his right hand was clawing about in the hole in the bank. Then a yell, followed by a wild curse, broke from his lips. He sprang to his feet and faced Sylvia.

"It's gone!" he shrieked. "The money's not there!"

"Are you sure?" the girl quietly asked. "You may be mistaken."

"I'm not. Somebody has stolen it. It's not there!"

He then reached out and clutched Sylvia fiercely by the arm.

"Do you know what has become of it?" he demanded. "You knew where it was."

"And so did Ru."

"Yes, yes, Ru knew, but he didn't take it."

"How do you know that?"

"He's dead."

"But he might have stolen it before you killed him."

Sylvia had raised her voice, and the man staggered back.



"Shut up, for God's sake! Somebody might hear you."

"Who's to hear you in a lonely place like this? Ru knew where that money was. He brought it from the city for you, while you came up on the *Scud* and swam ashore. Didn't I keep the windows of our house ablaze with light to guide you?"

"Shut up, Sylvia. I don't want to hear about that. I want to know where the money is."

"I'm not going to shut up, and you can't make me. You have treated me like a brute ever since we were married, and if I am crazy at times, it's your fault. I'm going to have my say now to get even with you, and then you can do what you like. I don't care if you kill me like you did Ru."

The man struck out furiously at the girl, but she sprang nimbly out of his way. Tom could hardly believe his senses. He was forced to lay his hand firmly upon the detective to restrain him from rushing forth and seizing the criminal.

"You can't finish me as easily as you did Ru," Sylvia jeered. "You'd like to do it, though. All I have to do is to speak and the noose would be around your devilish neck, and you know it. You're jealous of me, too, and think I'm in love with Captain Nat, of the *Flying Scud*."

"So you are, you d—— hussy. I'd been away out of this with the money days ago, but I couldn't trust you here with that man."

"And you tried to get him out of the way. You killed Ru the night Captain Nat helped me take Bob home. You followed the captain that night, murdered Ru in the barn, and let Captain Nat be arrested."

"Shut up, or I'll kill you, too." The man was mad with rage.

"Kill me, then, but I'll have my say. You want to kill me, I know. But haven't I hidden you ever since that night you swam ashore from the *Scud*? No one suspected you, for you are not known here. And you have planned to get the money, clear out and leave me without a cent, with father helpless, and Bob just as useless, on my hands. But you'll not get the money."

"So you know where it is, then? Did you take it?"

"Yes, I know, but you'll never get it."

"I will."

"No, you won't. Keep back, and don't come a step nearer, or I'll shoot you. I'd like to do it. My finger is just itching to pull this trigger and send you to join Ru. What a great meeting it would be."

"You devil! So you're the kind of a wife I have. Running after a d—— river captain, and willing to shoot me to get him. But I'll block you."

With a lightning movement, he struck the revolver from the girl's hand, leaped

upon her, and hurled her backwards. There was a cry of pain as Sylvia struck the ground, followed by a moan. The infuriated man was upon her in an instant. His terrible rage was like an insensate beast of the jungle. He would undoubtedly have killed the girl had not Tom and the detective hurled themselves upon him, caught him, held him fast, and tore him struggling and cursing from the body of the girl. He could not see his captors, and he had no idea who they were. His rage changed to a wild fear as he presently lay full length upon the ground, his arms and feet securely bound. He knew that these men must have heard every word that had passed between him and Sylvia. In an instant he understood the meaning of it all. His wife had brought these men here, and she had told the story of Ru's death that they might hear every word. It was terrible, and he struggled like a madman to tear his bonds asunder. Tom, seated astride his body, ordered him to be still.

"It's no use strugglin', me hearty," he said. "Ye won't git clear this time as easy as ye did from the *Scud*, not by a jugful. Jist keep yer kickin' till the rope gits round yer neck."

The unhappy man made no reply. He was too dumbfounded for words. He was trapped, and he knew it. Everything had happened so swiftly that he was not only bewildered but cowed, as well. And from his terrible predicament he could see no way of escape.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### REVELATIONS

Faith had spent the afternoon at Mrs. Royal's helping to make little baby garments. The widow had taken a strong liking to Nora, and did everything she could for the unfortunate girl.

"You and Faith have been so kind to me," she had said to Mrs. Royal when they were alone together. "I was treated so cruelly before I came here. No one wanted me, and I was completely discouraged when Faith found me by the road and took me to her home. When I get that money I shall repay you both."

Mrs. Royal made no reply. She did not wish to dishearten the girl just then. But she very well knew that there would be no money for Nora. When the ordeal was over, and the girl had recovered her strength, she would then tell her the truth.

Mrs. Royal presented a bright brave appearance to the world. But a great weight rested upon her heart, for night and day Nat was in her mind. She thought of him in his gloomy prison cell, awaiting his trial. His letters to her were always brave and cheerful. The last one, however, which she had read so many times with tear-dimmed eyes, revealed something of the great mental strain he was undergoing.

"I have no idea how this is going to end," he wrote. "My lawyer is doing all he can, but he has so little upon which to work. He has only my word. I have no witnesses to bring to my defence. Everything seems to be against me. That trouble in Fredericton between Ru and me will, no doubt, go hard against me. The premier has most kindly offered to get me out on bail, but I would rather stay here until it is over. There is nothing I could do if I were out, and I do not care to face the world with this terrible charge hanging over me. Next week will tell the tale, and I wonder what the outcome will be. It is hard, when I am perfectly innocent. I know how worried you must be, and I am so helpless to do anything. Remember me to Faith."

Mrs. Royal showed the letter to Faith, and she read it with fast-beating heart. How precious to her was that piece of paper because Nat's hand had rested upon it. In fact, she longed to press it to her lips, so full of love was her heart. "Remember me to Faith." These were the words she cherished most of all, and thought over that night in the quietness of her own room. Nat had not forgotten her. She was in his mind when he wrote that letter. But was he thinking, too, of Sylvia, even though he had not mentioned her name? But he had written "Remember me to Faith." How lonely he must be. Perhaps he would like a letter from her. She had thought of it before, but that was as far as she had gone. Now, however, she resolved to write to him as a friend only. It might be of some comfort to him.

At first she thought it would be a hard thing to do. But after she had begun, she found it easier than she had expected. She was most careful, however, not to betray her feelings, and not to write more than was proper. It was just a friendly letter, not long, telling about the commonplace affairs at the Point, and ending with her confidence that he would be freed and the real murderer would be found.

When she had finished, she read the letter over very carefully, folded it and placed it in an envelope which she had addressed. How surprised Nat would be to get a letter from her. But would he be pleased?

She sat late in her room, lost in thought. She wondered how Tom and the detective were making out. She had expected the old boatman that night, and was disappointed that he had not come.

A noise outside startled her. She heard footsteps upon the verandah which caused her heart to beat wildly. Was it Sylvia! Had she returned for some deed of violence? But when she heard a loud rap upon the front door, and Tom's voice calling to let him in, her fear vanished, and with candle in hand she hurried downstairs. Faith was delighted to see the worthy boatman, and as he stepped into the room, she looked keenly into his eyes. What had he found out? she wondered.

"My! I'm glad ye wasn't in bed, me dear," Tom began. "I saw the light in yer room as I came up the path. I'm all tuckered out. But we've got him, Faith. Yes, we've got him, an' he won't git away from us, let me tell ye that."

"What do you mean, Tom? Sit down and tell me what has happened."

Tom slumped down into a nearby chair, and dropped his hat upon the floor. He then told what had happened on the island, and the capture of the murderer. Faith could hardly believe that he was telling the truth, so wonderful did it seem. She waited until he had finished, and then tried to speak. But words would not come. Her eyes became misty, and unable to control her emotion any longer, she sank down upon a chair, buried her face in her hands and sobbed like a child. Tom was by her side in an instant, and laid a hand upon her shoulder.

"Faith, Faith, what's the matter?" he asked, greatly puzzled. "I didn't intend to make ye feel bad. I thought ye'd be glad to hear sich news."

"And so I am, Tom," Faith replied, lifting her tear-stained face to his. "But such wonderful news overcame me, and I—I just couldn't help it. I feel better now, though."

"Well, I declare!" Tom scratched his head in perplexity. "If that don't beat all! Cryin' when yer happy! I feel like whoopin'. But who kin understand women, anyway? I can't, that's a fact. An' there's that poor gal, Sylvie. T'think that she led her husband into that trap she set fer him on the island! My! he must have treated her

bad to make her do sich a thing as that. She surely knew it would lead him to the gallows.”

“Do you suppose she had any other reason?” Faith quietly asked.

“What other reason could there be, me dear?”

“Didn’t Sylvia think a great deal of Nat?”

Tom’s mouth suddenly opened wide, and he stared hard at the girl.

“Well I’ll be darned! Excuse me, Faith, but I’d like to use a stronger word. I believe yer right an’ it’s a wonder I didn’t think of it before. She sartinly did think a lot of Nat, an’ at one time he was quite bamboozled by her. Ye’ve hit it, a’right, that’s sure. It takes a woman every time to fathom sich things as love-kinks. They’re beyond me.”

“Doesn’t Nat think a great deal of Sylvia now, Tom?”

Faith slightly averted her face lest Tom should see the flush that mantled her cheeks.

“No, I guess Nat has more sense than to be caught by sich a gal. I gave him a piece of me mind, an’ it opened his eyes. It was jist a silly notion he had, anyway, sich as all young fellers have, like the mumps, an’ measles. He told me on that last run I made with him that he’d been a fool to be bamboozled by that gal. He didn’t want sich a critter fer a wife. When he married, he wanted a nice quiet gal, one who’d love him, look after the house, an’ be waitin’ fer him when he came home. He knows, I guess, the right gal, an’ if I’m not mistaken, he’s pinin’ fer the sight of her jist now.”

Tom was at his old lying trick again, but he knew that his words made Faith very happy. He understood the meaning of her question, and smiled to himself. A few lies more or less didn’t trouble his conscience so long as he could make happy the girl who was as dear to him as his life.

Tom’s words were embarrassing to Faith, although they were pleasant to hear.

“Where is the captured man now?” she asked.

“On his way to the city. An’ Sylvie’s gone, too.”

“To the city! Who took them?”

“Didn’t I tell ye? No? Why, I thought I did. Well, ye see, when we had that feller tied hand an’ foot, we were in a fix. We couldn’t take him and the gal in the little boat. An’, besides, that detective chap wanted to git the prisoner to the city as quick as possible. An’ he wanted Sylvie, too, as star witness. To make a long story short, I took the boat, rowed out to the channel, an’ waited. After a while I seen a light roundin’ the P’int, an’ knew it was some tub driftin’ with the tide. When it came close, I yelled, an’ found it was the *Raven* with me old friend, Bill Taber, at the

wheel. When I told him I wanted him to take the prisoner an' the gal to the city, he objected. But sez I to him, 'In the name of the Queen, God bless her! I order ye to take 'em down. The detective's on the island waitin'. It's his orders I'm givin' ye, remember.' That changed his tune, an' he was only too glad to help, fer he was gittin' mighty scared when he found I had the Queen an' the gov'ment detective at me back. Well, we had quite a time gittin' 'em on board. The man was as stubborn as a mule, but I gave him a few good thumps which livened him up. We made him walk to the shore, but the detective kept right near with his revolver in his hand. The gal was off her base, an' she clung to me fer pertection. I really did feel sorry fer her. But she was plucky, fer all that. My! I was glad when we at last got 'em on board, an' the *Raven* was ag'in on her way."

"Why didn't you go, too, Tom?" Faith questioned.

"I knew ye'd ask me that, me dear. But I'm comin' to that now. Ye see, as I was helpin' that gal along, fer she was mighty weak from her excitement an' fall, she stopped an' put her mouth up close to me ear. I thought at first she was goin' to bite me. But when I found she wanted to tell me something, I listened. An' what d'ye s'pose she told me? Ye could never guess."

Tom paused and seemed to be enjoying the choice bit of news he had to impart.

"What was it, Tom? Tell me, quick. I can hardly wait."

"Dig up me dog,' she sez, 'an' bury him on higher ground.'"

"Why?" sez I."

"Because he's layin' on something hard,' sez she."

"What is it?" sez I."

"I don't want to tell ye,' sez she. 'But ye'll find something under him if ye do. I don't want my poor dog layin' there with that awful thing under him.'"

"A'right,' sez I. 'I'll do it.' I jist said that to humour her, thinkin' she was ravin', fer I never heard sich a foolish thing in me life. That satisfied her, an' she said nuthin' more. We were almost to the *Raven* when something came into me mind like a flash. I nearly let out a whoop, I was so excited. But I kept as calm as I could until they had gone. Then I rowed to the shore like mad, an' here I am."

"What came into your mind, Tom?"

"Don't ye understand, Faith? I thought ye'd ketch on in a jiffy to the meanin' of that gal's words. Ye've got a quicker brain than me, an' so——."

"Oh, Tom, never mind about that. Do tell me. Oh, I think I know," and the girl clasped her hands together in her excitement. "It's the money! Is that it? The money is hidden under that dog?"

"Ah, I knew ye'd guess it. Yes, I believe that's it. Of course, we can't be sure

until I dig an' find out."

"I can hardly believe it, Tom. It seems like a dream or a fairy-tale."

"H'm, I thought the same about that island affair. But it turned out to be more'n a dream, 'specially fer that feller, Sam. It was a mighty bad nightmare to him, a'right. An' it'll be worse before he's through."

"What was he going to do with the money?"

"Clear out, I guess, from what I heard t'night. My, he was mad when he found that money was gone."

"It's a wonder he didn't go away before, right after he murdered Ru."

"Oh, he was jealous of Nat, an' stayed to keep him from gittin' her. But jist why he didn't go when Nat was arrested is beyond me. But murderers generally make some blunder, an' this one sartinly did. Mebbe he wouldn't have gone at all if Nora hadn't suddenly turned up with that piece of paper."

"How did he know about that?"

"Why, Nora told Sylvie, of course, an' she must have told him. When Sylvie knew I was stayin' over here, she must have suspected what I was after, so took t'night to head that feller into the trap. That's only my surmise, of course, but mebbe I'm not fer astray. My! my! she's a sharp one, a'right, even if she is crazy at times. She's got a wonderful head on her shoulders, an' no mistake."

"Do you intend to see if that money is under the dog?" Faith asked.

"I sartinly do, jist as soon as it gits light enough to see. An' I want you an' yer dad to be with me as witnesses if we find it. It must be in a box, from what Sylvie said. Then I'm goin' to the city as soon as I kin git a passage down. I want to see Nat, an' most likely I'll be needed at the trial. Hope t'goodness I'll have that money to take with me. It'll open the eyes of them smart detective fellers, an' free Nat an' me from all blame. Mebbe I'll say something, too, what's on me mind an' give them guys a bit of needed advice. I'd like to have a good long sleep first, but bizness is bizness an' must be 'tended to."

Faith noticed how weary Tom looked. She had not realised this before, so taken up had she been with the news he had brought. She now felt ashamed of herself.

"You are tired out, Tom. You look ready to drop."

"Yer quite right, me dear. An' I'm hungry, too. A good strong cup of tea an' a snack of something to eat would put new life into me."

"Come with me to the kitchen, then, and you shall have the best in the house. It won't take me long. Then you must have a sleep. Won't daddy be interested in hearing the good news."

"It's a wonder our talkin' hasn't aroused him, Faith."

“Oh, he’d sleep through almost any racket,” Faith laughingly replied as she led the way to the kitchen.



## CHAPTER XXXV

### FREE

Nat received the news in his cell, and he could hardly believe his eyes. But there it was in the paper which had been brought him by a friendly guard. It was on the front page in big letters:

“Murderer Captured! Wife Drowns Herself On Way Down River!”

Eagerly he read every word. It told about the capture of the murderer on the island, and how while coming to the city on the *Raven* the prisoner's wife leaped overboard, and was drowned. Search parties were grappling for the body, but so far it had not been recovered.

Nat's joy at thus being freed from the terrible charge of murder was dampened by the sorrow which filled his heart at Sylvia's death. Although his feelings towards her had undergone a decided change, he could not easily forget her peculiar charm and the mysterious spell she had cast upon him. He could hardly believe it possible that her wild nature was stilled forever, and how she had sought death in the river where she had spent so much of her time, and which she had loved so dearly. It was a suitable ending to her strange career.

During his imprisonment he had done a great deal of serious thinking. Faith had been almost constantly in his heart and mind. But he was uncertain how she would receive him should he obtain his liberty. He remembered only too well her coldness towards him the day of Ru's burial. He knew the reason now. It was because of his infatuation for the girl of the Creek House. He shuddered as he thought of his strange attraction for Sylvia. He contrasted the two. What a difference there was between them. One was so wild and erratic; the other so gentle and loving. He could not imagine Sylvia making a home such as he had always pictured in his mind. It was not in her nature. But with Faith it was different. Any kind of a place, a rude hut, in fact, would be a home in the real sense of the word with her there. So as Sylvia receded more and more into the background of his mind, Faith stood out more clearly as his ideal of true womanhood. He thought of her as he had known her through the years, her patience, buoyant cheerfulness, and charm of face and manner. He had always been fond of Faith, but not until his fondness burst forth into the bright flame of love, did he fully realise her worth, and how much she meant to him. Over and over again in the loneliness of his cell he had chided himself for his stupid blindness. And now that he was certain of being freed, his one desire was to go to her as soon as possible, to look upon her face, and to hear the music of her voice. But would she receive him and return his love? That was what worried him as he impatiently

awaited his release.

There was some delay before Nat was at last free to go forth into the world. As he was leaving the jail, he learned that Sylvia's body had been found, and was lying at the room of a city undertaker. Thither he made his way and looked upon the face of the girl lying in the plain casket. It was a beautiful face, peaceful in the repose of death. It was difficult for him to realise that it was the same face which had so often exhibited violent storms of passion, such as he only too well remembered. Her eyes were closed, but about the corners of her mouth there was a faint semblance of a smile. So it seemed to him, at any rate, and as he stood there he wondered if she knew that he was near her side. And what was the life her strange wild soul was now living? Was there an abode prepared for such a nature as hers? He did not know, anyway, he hoped there might be some place where she had at last found peace from the turmoils of earth.

Nat learned that the funeral would be held that very afternoon, and in less than an hour. He went at once to a florist's and bought some flowers, roses and carnations. Lest there should be a delay in sending them, he took them himself and laid them upon her breast. This done, he waited for the service to begin. It was short, and when it was over, he watched the casket closed and carried out of the room. He then walked slowly and thoughtfully along the street towards the harbor front. He had done all he could, and he was glad that he had placed the flowers of remembrance upon her bosom. Perhaps Sylvia knew of his sympathy. Who could tell?

Tom was waiting for Nat on the *Scud* and he was much delighted to see his young master back again.

"Come down to the cabin, me boy, an' have a snack before we sail. Jed an' Sammy are ashore, so I want to have a chat with ye before they turn up."

Nat was delighted to be on board again, and as he sat at the little table, he listened attentively to Tom's description of the capture of the murderer. Although he had read about it in the paper, Tom was able to give him more in detail about what had happened. But when he told about finding the box of money under the dog, Nat was amazed.

"What a place to hide it!" he exclaimed. "Who would ever have thought of looking for it there!"

"Yer quite right, Nat, an' if that gal hadn't told me, the money would never have been found. I thought it was all nonsense, an' called meself a fool when I began to dig. But there it was, as she said, safe an' sound. An' to think that Sammy tumbled into that hole an' had no idea what was there besides the dog! Sylvie was a smart

one, a'right. She'd been a fine woman if her head hadn't been twisted. I wonder when she'll be buried."

"She was buried this afternoon. I took some flowers, and stayed for the service."

"I'm glad ye did that, me boy. I was thinkin' I'd like to do something, but jist didn't know what was proper. I'll pay fer half them flowers. They'll be from you an' me, though I don't want people to know anything about it. That gal, queer as she was, done a mighty good turn in helpin' us out of a nasty fix, let me tell ye that."

"She did, Tom, and I wish she had lived so I could have thanked her. I do not know how I could have cleared myself but for her. Things looked pretty bad for me."

"They sartinly did, an' that was what was worryin' Faith a'most t'death. She had quite a hand in the affair, too. She took in that gal, Nora, who had that slip of paper which Faith gave me. It was the first inklin' I had where the money was hidden. Sylvie heard about it from Nora, an' in some way or another it led on to the end."

What Tom said about Faith's worry on his behalf brought a new hope into Nat's heart. So she had been interested in him and had done all she could for his benefit. That was good news, better than he had expected.

"I thought that perhaps Faith didn't bother her head about me, Tom, owing to my infatuation for Sylvia."

Tom looked keenly at Nat, and his eyes twinkled. He remembered the lies he had told Faith. A few more would not matter, so he believed, if he could bring these young people together again, and make them happy for life.

"Yer wrong there, Nat. No matter what ye done, made no difference with Faith. She loves ye jist the same as she allus has, though you was sich a cussed fool ye couldn't see it."

"I was, Tom, I certainly was. But my eyes have been opened."

"I'm mighty glad to hear ye say that, Nat. Faith's waitin' fer ye to come to her."

"Are you sure, Tom?"

"Sure! I should say I am. She said so herself, but if she ever finds out that I told ye, she'll never fergive me. It was that night we caught the murderer. When I went to her home I saw a light in her room. An' what d'ye s'pose she was doin' up so late? Ye couldn't guess. Writin' a letter to you, me boy, to comfort ye. That's what she was doin'. An' she gave the letter to me to bring to ye, an' there 'tis. It'll speak fer itself. While yer readin' it, I'll leave ye an' tend to things on deck. We must git away when the tide serves."

Tom knew that Nat wished to be alone with Faith's letter. His heart was happy,

for he understood how the young lovers felt towards each other. He was quite proud of himself, for he believed that he had done something of real importance, even though he had to tell a number of lies.

"I guess the Lord will fergive me. He knows why I told them lies, an' He'll understand."

When he had filled and lighted his pipe, he stood looking out over the harbor at the busy scene where noble clippers were being loaded with deals. But his mind was not upon them. He was thinking of other things, and his thoughts caused his rugged face to beam with happiness.

It was not long before Jed and Sammy arrived. They had hired a man to bring them from the shore, and as they stepped on board, Tom at once noticed that Sammy was more pompous than ever. He strolled up and down the deck, with hands clasped behind the long tails of his coat. His chest was expanded, and his eyes glowed with animation. Tom watched him with amused curiosity for a while. He then lifted his pipe from his mouth, and laid a hand upon the little man's shoulder.

"What's the kink now, Sammy? Ye seem excited."

Sammy turned, and with a haughty air calmly surveyed the old boatman.

"We've done it, Tom," he announced. "We're a great government."

"Done what?"

"Saved the country from that gang of thieves and murderers. We're going to deport old Sarason and his son."

Tom gasped, and his eyes opened wide with amazement.

"You caught 'em! Yer gov'ment did that?"

"Yes, we engaged that detective, and he did noble work. People will now realise how we're looking after their interests, and rounding up criminals."

Lifting his right hand, Tom struck Sammy's high hat and sent it flying across the deck.

"Ye little shrimp!" he roared. "D'ye dare to tell me that the detective caught that murderer! I'll learn ye a lesson that'll stop yer lies."

He dashed forward, but Sammy was too quick for him. He made for the hatchway and ran right into Nat's arms as he came up from below.

"Save me!" he gasped. "He'll kill me!"

Tom stopped and glared at the terrified man.

"Yer not worth killin', ye little wig-wag. But if I hear ye praisin' that detective fer what he didn't do, I'll-I'll-."

"There, that will do," Nat ordered, as Tom paused for words strong enough to express his wrath. "Leave Sammy alone, and let us get under way."

“But he’s nuthin’ but a yappin’ wig-wag, Nat. I’m not goin’ to let him go round shoutin’ about what his wonderful gov’men’t’s done. It done mighty little to git that murderer. It was that poor gal Sylvie who done it, that’s who it was.”

With Nat to defend him, Sammy had recovered his courage, and his pompousness revived. He turned his back disdainfully upon Tom and faced Nat.

“On behalf of the government, let me congratulate you, captain,” he began. “We knew that you were innocent of that dastardly crime, and were sure that you would be honorably acquitted. We have at last brought the guilty one to the bar of justice, and—.”

“Liar!” Tom interrupted.

“And, as I was saying when that dog yelped,” Sammy calmly continued, “we wish all to know the truth about the whole affair. And as an important member of the government, the premier has entrusted me with the delivery of this message.”

As he finished his harangue, he thrust his right hand into an inside pocket, and brought forth a telegram which he handed to Nat.

“It is from the premier, captain, and will speak for itself.”

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### CAPTAIN AND FIRST MATE

The news of the capture of the murderer on the island caused intense excitement along the river and throughout the entire province. Everywhere it was eagerly discussed, and much sympathy was expressed for Captain Nat Royal, of the *Flying Scud*. And added to this was the suicide of Sylvia Sarason. People clamored for a thorough investigation, and the arrest of old Sarason and his son. Stories of the strange folks at the Creek House spread far beyond the bounds of the parish, and it was the opinion of all that it had been the centre of a band of thieves and that a number of mysterious robberies might be thus solved. It was, accordingly, a satisfaction to all when it was learned that the money from the last robbery had been found.

Faith heard of Sylvia's death with a mingled feeling of relief and sorrow, relief because that wild girl would trouble her no more, and sorrow at the sad ending of a young life. She thought much about Sylvia's strange actions, and although she knew the reason of her hatred towards her, she could not understand why she had caused the capture of her husband. Never for a moment did Faith suspect that Sylvia had done it for Nat's sake, and to punish the man who had treated her so cruelly. She discussed this with her father, and also the mystery connected with the money. Why had Sylvia taken it from the island and buried it beneath the dog? Did she consider it the safest place? It seemed so, at any rate, and they racked their brains in their efforts to solve the problem.

There was something else which took much of Faith's time and attention during these days of suspense. A little stranger had arrived at Mrs. Royal's. The widow had been a real mother to Nora, and she cared for her with true loving sympathy.

"I always remember the Master's words," she told Faith. "I was a stranger and ye took me in.' And 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me.' Yes, that is what He said, and I find a real joy in helping this poor unfortunate girl."

"I wonder what will become of her?" Faith replied. "She has no home, and no one will want her now."

"She shall stay with me as long as she likes. I am fond of her, and she will be company for me. And, besides, I am going to do it for the thankfulness I feel because Nat has been so wonderfully helped and cleared from all blame. I suppose I could thank God in words, but I want to do something practical, and the opportunity is right here. If Nora wants to work later, she can. But she will always have a home

with me while I live. I have enough and am only too glad to share it with her.”

Faith was deeply touched by Mrs. Royal’s words. And she was glad that Nora would have a good home. The baby delighted her, and it was pleasant to watch the expression in the mother’s eyes as she looked at the little one.

“I pity the poor wee thing,” she told Faith. “But she will be something for me to live for and love. I should like to name her after you. Faith is such a pretty name, and it will always remind me of you and your kindness to me.”

She paused and lay very still, with a far-away look in her eyes.

“And her name,” she at length continued, “will also remind me of what I need—faith to go bravely forward. My faith in God and people was about shattered, for I had been so cruelly betrayed, and treated as a miserable outcast. But when you and Mrs. Royal were so kind to me, my faith returned. I have done wrong, I know, but I hope to do better in the future.”

Faith’s eyes were misty as she listened to this candid confession. She stooped and gave Nora a loving kiss.

“You must not worry, dear. We shall do what we can for you. Our home in the city will always be open to you and your baby.”

“Thank you, Faith. That is a great comfort. I expect to go to the city to work when I am strong enough, and it will be nice to have you as a friend there. Mrs. Royal will look after the baby, and I shall pay for it. I know now that I can never get that money which Ru talked about, so I shall have to depend upon myself. It will be hard, I know, but with your love and help I shall try to be brave and true.”

As Faith left the house and walked down towards the church, she thought over what Nora had said. She looked out upon the river and saw several boats bearing steadily upstream. She hoped that one of them might be the *Flying Scud*. If so, would Nat be on board? Was he anxious to reach the Point to see his mother and to tell her about his trying experience? And after he had seen his mother, where would he go? Would he come to see her? She remembered what Tom had told her about Nat, and she wondered if he had spoken the truth.

Almost unconsciously Faith’s steps led her to the church nestling among its setting of maple and oak trees. Every Sunday while at the Point she had attended service here, and had always received comfort and inspiration. She needed help now, for she felt much depressed. The tense strain of the past weeks was now relaxed. While Nat was in trouble she had been nerved up in mind and heart on his behalf. Nora, also, had caused her considerable anxiety. But now that Nat was free, and Nora was provided for, there seemed nothing for her to do, and her watchful care was needed no longer. Nat had not come, and she had received no word from

him. He had not even replied to the letter she had sent by Tom. She almost regretted now that she had written it. Perhaps she had said too much, and had revealed the deep longing of her heart.

The church door was unlocked, so entering, she sat down in one of the pews near the door. How restful was the place, and a sweet peace came upon her. A mystic presence seemed to surround her, bidding her to be strong and of a good courage. So real was this impression that she looked around as if expecting to see someone. But she was alone. Then she understood the meaning. Dropping upon her knees, she bowed her head and asked for help. And she received it. When she arose and left the church, there was the light of courage in her eyes, and a new hope in her heart. She would go forward bravely and cheerfully, no matter what might happen.

Walking along the little path leading to her home, she came at length to the river. The water gleamed before her, and as she reached the shore and stood beneath the shade of an old oak tree, she saw the *Flying Scud* at anchor in the cove beyond. She knew that it must have just arrived, for the sails were being lowered, and she could see several men on deck. Was Nat one of them?

And as she stood there, she saw Nat coming towards her along the shore. He was hurrying, and she awaited his approach with fast-beating heart. She decided to go back among the trees that he might not see her. But she was too late, for she had gone only a short distance when Nat was by her side. Impulsively he caught her in his arms and held her fast. She struggled slightly at first to free herself, but at last gave herself up to the supreme joy of his presence and the music of his voice.

"Were you waiting for me?" he whispered. "Did you want me to come?"

Faith's only reply was to lift her flushed face to his, and entwine her arms around his neck. Then their lips met, and their betrothal was sealed.

"And you were really waiting for me?" Nat again asked.

"Yes, I have been waiting for you a long time. But I thought you didn't care for me."

"I did care, Faith, but I was blind and stupid. Now I know what I should have known before. It is all so wonderful that I seem to be in a dream."

"I was afraid you would not come, Nat. You have been through such a terrible experience, that——."

"Don't let us talk about the past," Nat interrupted. "I want to forget. Let us think only of the present and the future. And just think, Faith, I am to be master of the *Norseman*!"

"Nat!" Faith merely gasped the word, so great was her astonishment.



Nat smiled, and thrust his hand into an inside pocket of his coat.

"You don't believe me, eh? Well, then, here is the telegram I received from the premier. He wants me to take command of the *Norseman* when she is ready. I am to go to see him as soon as I can that we might talk everything over and arrange matters. And I am going to take you and Tom along as first and second mates. How will that do?"

"Oh, Nat, I can hardly yet believe it is true. But I know it is. And to think I shall be the wife of the captain of that wonderful ship! The great dream of my life is coming true, after all."

That evening Tom and Sammy came ashore. When they heard the good news they were delighted. Tom rose from his chair and took their hands in his.

"I want to congratulate yez both," he said, and there was a huskiness in his voice. "Yez are like me own children. I wasn't really lyin' when I told sich yarns to bring yez together, fer I surmised what was goin' on in yer hearts. My! my! this is great news to me, an' to think I'm to sail on the *Norseman*! I never expected sich a thing at my time of life. That premier is a man through an' through. Jist wait till the next election, an' if I don't give him a good plumper, then my name's not Tom Burden. Hey, Sammy? Yer gov'ment's no good, but the premier's a'right, an' I'll tell him so when I see him ag'in."

Sammy was on his feet in an instant to defend his beloved government. This was too good an opportunity to miss, and he launched forth upon his favorite subject. Mr. Farthing and the others watched him with twinkling eyes. They could afford to be tolerant of the little man this night. They knew his worth, and his loyalty to his friends. He repeated what they had all heard so many times, and to their surprise he ended his harangue sooner than they had expected. He turned to Faith and Nat who were sitting side by side, and made them a profound bow.

"Like my friend, Tom, I congratulate you both. You have always been good to me, a lonely homeless old man. May the Lord bless you all through life, and when the *Norseman* sails, may I be there to see you off and wave you a farewell."

Faith and Nat were deeply touched by the words of their two old sincere friends, and were about to express their thanks, when Tom suddenly caught Sammy in his arms and whirled him about the room.

"Dance, Sammy, dance!" he cried. "Limber up them religious legs of yours an' step lively now in honor of Captain Nat an' the first mate of the finest ship ever built in Saint John—the *Norseman*."

THE END.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

Inconsistency in hyphenation has been retained.

[The end of *The River Fury* by Hiram Alfred Cody]