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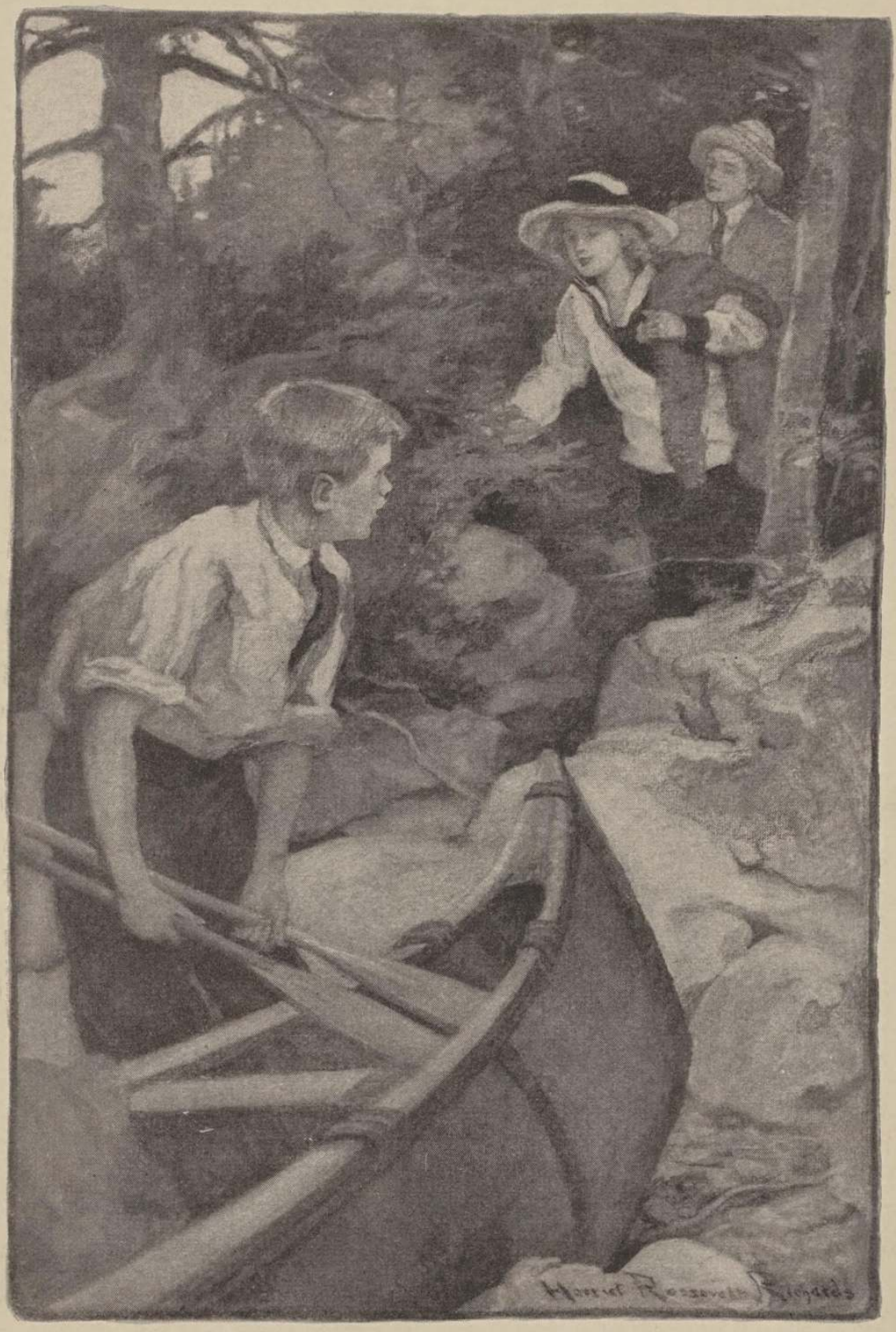
BUDDIE AT GRAY BUTTES CAMP



Buddie hailed them affably from the stern of the last one in line.

FRONTISPIECE. *See page 127.*

The Buddie Books

BUDDIE AT GRAY BUTTES CAMP

BY

ANNA CHAPIN RAY

AUTHOR OF THE "TEDDY" BOOKS, THE "SIDNEY" BOOKS, "BUDDIE," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS BY HARRIET ROOSEVELT RICHARDS

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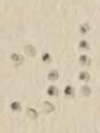

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CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

BUDDIE AT GRAY BUTTES CAMP

ANOTHER STORY ABOUT BUDDIE

CHAPTER ONE

WESTWARD HO!

OF the four of them who started off, next morning, Buddie was by far the least excited. Not that, as a rule, he was of a tranquil nature, given to placid boredom. But the edge of his excitement had been worn away a little, the night before, first when they all had sat around the open fire, discussing their summer plans, later when he and Chubbie Neal had taken themselves away in the direction of bed. It was only in the general direction of bed, however. Bed itself was a good two hours away. Even when one has never met somebody else till dinner time, under some conditions it becomes necessary to drag out the process of undressing until one is quite talked out.

When at last Buddie was attired in the pink pajamas which shrieked discordantly at his bright red thatch of hair, he let himself down on the edge of the bed and sighed contentedly.

"Well, anyhow, we'll have the time of our whole lives," he said. "The only thing that worries me is Ebenezer."

Deliberately Chubbie untied his four-in-hand. Then deliberately he spoke.

"What's the matter with Ebenezer?" he asked.

"He's got to be crated." Buddie's voice was disconsolate. "It is sure to be an awful journey for him." Then his disconsolateness yielded to curiosity. "How long have you worn that kind of ties?" he queried.

Chubbie, known by his unimaginative father as Thomas, and nicknamed by his mates because he was abnormally tall and thin for his years, ignored the question. It was still a sore subject to him that inches, not years, had forced him into long trousers and their accompanying haberdashery. In the end of all things, it would be good to be tall; for the present, though, he looked with envious eyes upon the sturdy, stocky frame of this red-headed youngster who was to be his summer companion.

"Why don't you leave him at home?" he questioned casually, after a pause devoted to unbuttonings.

Buddie, already prone upon his pillow, started up again at the question.

"Ebenezer?" he said sharply, and the accent was one of query, not of summons.

Nevertheless, there came an answering convulsion from underneath the bed. For a minute, the mattress surged up and down, after the fashion of a ship in a heavy sea. A minute later, a monstrous tangle of grizzly hair, with a dog inside it, came wriggling out from under the bed, turned and plunged directly on the top of his young master.

Chubbie, across the room, eyed the monster with

disfavour. His family menagerie consisted of one sleek canary, not dogs of Ebenezer's bulk and frowsiness.

"Oh, I say!" he protested.

Buddie flung an arm across the neck of his comrade.

"That's all right," he said easily. "He'll settle down, in a minute."

Chubbie sought to speak tolerantly; but there was more or less of the Thomas in his accent, as he said, —

"Not in the bed, though?"

"Of course. He always does. Quiet, Ebenezer!" For Ebenezer, flat on his back and with his four legs turned stiffly upwards, was growling and grovelling amid a tangle of the blankets. "He has slept on the foot of my bed, ever since he was a little puppy. He'd be cold, somewhere else. There! You see how he settles down. He'll be quiet as a mouse till morning."

"Ye-es." Again it was the Thomas who spoke, eyeing the small margin of bed remaining outside of Ebenezer's vast dimensions. "But where'll I sleep?"

"Where you like. There's plenty of room, only you'll have to fit yourself in a little. I always do. You won't mind it, after a night or two. Really, he lies very still. It would be quite different, if he kicked about. But hurry up and get in here. I'm sleepy."

"A fellow can't undress himself like a tramp," Tom objected.

"A fellow needn't dodder about and be all night about it," Buddie made counter objection. "If you

must prink, do it in the morning while I am waking up, instead of wasting both our times about it now."

In a silence which bordered on the resentful, Chubbie slid out of his remaining garments and switched off the light. Then, —

"I don't prink," he said curtly, as he tried his best to curl his long, lean person about the solid, unyielding lump of Ebenezer which blocked the exact middle of his allotted portion of the bed.

Buddie recognized the tone and respected it. His arm thrashed about vaguely for a minute, then clamped itself down across Chubbie's shoulder.

"Don't get huffy, old chap," he said. "I was only joking. Besides, I've got red hair; it's not wise to try to fight with me, you know, and I'd hate to lick you, especially as Daddy is down on that kind of thing." He chuckled reminiscently. "Remind me to tell you how he served me out, the only time I ever was in a real row with another fellow. I'm too sleepy now. Good night." And, a moment later, the gurgling snores of Ebenezer were the only sounds that broke the quiet of the room.

Next morning, it was Tom's turn to be sleepy, for the night had not been altogether restful. To anybody accustomed to having a whole room to himself, it was a trifle disturbing to share the bed with an Ebenezer who snored and gurgled, and an athletic Buddie who thrashed about in his sleep and now and then talked a little. Tom was not finical in the least; he had taken a liking to Buddie at the start, and their summer together promised to be all that was fascinating: horses to ride and game to shoot and an Indian reservation in the offing. Still,

just that last night before they started on their journey, Tom would have preferred to sleep.

Next morning, though, by the time he had dressed and eaten breakfast, sleep was forgotten, and excitement had mounted high. How could it well be otherwise, when this was to be his first long journey, a four-day journey that was to end nowhere in particular among some mountains where his uncle and Buddie's aunt, their belated honeymoon once over, were keeping house in a curious medley of log cabin and tent, with another tent next door for Buddie and Buddie's father and himself, to say nothing of the hairy Ebenezer who just now was being coaxed into a crate with a vaulted roof and patent attachments for administering food and drink at stated intervals?

"He hates it; but he is taking it like a little man," Buddie observed over his soup at dinner, two nights later.

Tom made no question. Long before this stage of their journeying, he had learned that, on Buddie's tongue, an unmodified *He* always referred to Ebenezer. In his secret heart, Tom was becoming a little tired of Ebenezer, tired of holding the second place in Buddie's interest. To be sure, there was Buddie's father to talk to; and Dr. Angell was that rare being, a grown-up and dignified man who knew about boy things and liked them, talking about them sensibly and as a man should do, instead of trying to pretend he was nothing but a boy, himself. Tom loathed grown-ups who tried to behave like youngsters. They were silly and they bored him. But Dr. Angell talked to him about

football and the thing he had done to both ankles in a Princeton game, just as if he had supposed that Tom knew the difference between a fibula and a fandango. Later and on the sly, Tom had looked up the new word in his pocket dictionary. He always carried the dictionary with him, when he went away from home, in deference to his father's fussiness as concerned his spelling.

Yes, all in all, Tom liked Dr. Angell; but he liked Buddie better, and he would have liked to hold first place in Buddie's conversation. Therefore he allowed a pause to fall upon Buddie's remark.

It was the man at the next table who broke the pause. All that day, he had been the man in the next section; and he and Dr. Angell had exchanged their morning papers, and then had exchanged their opinions of the papers when they gave them back again. The boys, though, had paid no especial attention to the stranger, beyond discovering vaguely that he was remarkably tall and that he had wavy hair, grizzly-gray like Ebenezer's, and a heavy grizzly-gray mustache. Buddie, as far as he had thought anything at all about him, had thought he looked a little haughty and indifferent, and, on that account, he was the more surprised, when the stranger flung him a smile of downright, utter jollity.

"He surely is, if you're talking about the dog I saw up in the baggage car, just now," he said. "What a frisky little beast he is!"

Buddie thawed promptly, less at the smile, even, than at the voice.

"You liked him?"

"He liked me, and that counted for a good deal

more. The men had him out of his crate; he was playing ball all up and down the car, till he saw me opening my trunk."

"What then?" Buddie queried, for the stranger had paused suggestively.

"There used to be a box of chocolates in the tray."

In his horror, Buddie dropped his spoon.

"You gave them to him? But I don't let him eat candy," he expostulated.

The man laughed.

"I'm sorry. I didn't give them to him, though. He found them and made off with them, when my back was turned. They won't hurt him any, and he really didn't eat much of the box."

"But — But — You don't mean he stole your candy?" Buddie burst out, in such evident contrition that his father felt it wise to come to the rescue.

"Too bad, Buddie; but the mischief is done, and we can't help ourselves," he said. "Of course, we are very much ashamed of Ebenezer. Still, I've a good-sized box of ginger in my suitcase; I was going to bring it out, to-night, and perhaps Mr. —"

"Kent." The stranger took his cue quickly.

"Thank you. I am Doctor Angell of New York, and this is my small son, and this is his friend, Tom Neal. Perhaps Mr. Kent will come and play hearts with us, and help us eat it up."

And come into their section Mr. Kent did. He ate the ginger, and he played hearts with Buddie for his partner, and he and Buddie won. Between the hands, he talked with Dr. Angell and the boys by turns, until, between them, they found out that

he liked athletics, and could swim three ways: dog fashion, and on his back, and just plain forwards; and that he was an artist who tried to paint really good pictures, only he never, he told them, quite could make it out. He liked mountains especially, with rough rocks and not many trees. All the summer before, he had been in the White Mountains near the Notch. This year, he was going —

"Four to two," Buddie reminded him sternly; "and your play. Let's see if we can make again."

But, before they had time to make again, before the words were fairly out of Buddie's mouth, there was a sickening jolt, a rocking of the car, another jolt and then a clashing of broken glass, a crashing of splintered wood. An instant later, a broken circuit left the train in total darkness, a darkness that went on swaying and rocking and smashing around them. From the family party at the other end of the car there came a chorus of short, sharp shrieks; but Buddie felt no especial wish to shriek. He merely shut his hand on his father's knee, and tried to fight down a horrible wonder about what was happening to Ebenezer, in the baggage car ahead. Chubbie sat still, too, his teeth shut hard together and his gray eyes staring at the noisy darkness, for he, like Buddie, had been trained that it was the hallmark of a gentleman to take what came, without much squealing. And Dr. Angell who, of them all, most keenly realized what was their present chance of danger, forgot the danger in sheer pride at his plucky young companions.

At last, when the darkness and the chaos had seemingly gone on for hours, the rocking stopped,

and with it stopped the crashing. There was a minute of stillness; then the car was invaded by the sound of voices, accompanied by the wavering cones of light from many lanterns.

"All right in here?" a man's voice called, and his strong Irish brogue acted like a tonic on the nerves of the excited passengers.

"All right here" and "All right" came simultaneously from Dr. Angell and the father of the family at the other end of the car. Then Buddie's curiosity overcame him.

"What's happened?" he demanded.

"Side-swiped by that confounded fast freight," the brakeman told him. "It caught us just on the car ahead of us. We're off the track, all right; and it's a close call you've had in here. There's a twenty-foot bank below us, and the forward trucks of this car aren't more than six inches from the edge."

Buddie whitened.

"And the baggage car?" he questioned breathlessly.

"Oh, that's all right," the brakeman reassured him. "The trouble is all just here. It might be worse; but it's bad enough. We'll have to lie here and wait for the wrecking train — Hullo! What's this?"

Sharply he turned the lantern towards the seat at Tom's side. Its light showed that their new companion had had his own share in the disaster. Dr. Angell bent forward suddenly.

"Steady with that lantern, man!" he bade the brakeman. "I'm a doctor; I rather think this may be a case for me."

But the stranger artist spoke so promptly as to dispel something of the doctor's fear.

"It's nothing," he said lightly. "My head bumped against the corner of the window casing, and is cut a little; that's all." He lifted his hand to his head where a narrow gash showed a red, angry line. A minute later, the indifference left his eyes, as they rested on his reddened fingers. "Oh, I say," he was beginning feebly, when, all at once, his face went very white and he lurched cornerwise against Tom's shoulder.

Later, after the artist had been laid down at full length in the aisle, while Dr. Angell brought him to his senses and then plastered up his damaged forehead, and after the artist had opened his eyes and abased himself and demanded the right to sit up like a gentleman once more, the two boys, retiring to the platform to inspect the damage, talked the matter over.

"Well, of all the babies!" Buddie remarked disgustedly.

"It really was rather bad, for a minute or two," Tom suggested.

"Bad, yes. Still, there isn't any sense in kicking up a row," Buddie made disdainful answer.

Again Tom sought to lighten Buddie's disdain. Like Buddie, he had felt the stranger's charm. Unlike him, he believed there might be extenuating circumstances, even for such unseemly behaviour as to faint away.

"He didn't make a row, exactly," he protested. "He just —"

"Funked." Buddie took the finish of the phrase

to his own lips. "Just fainted plumb dead away. Girl-trick, the way they do, when they run up against a mouse! I wouldn't have thought it of him, though; he's too big and healthy."

"Maybe he couldn't help it," Tom urged excusingly.

But Buddie eyed him loftily from the lower step.

"Could, too," he said briefly. "Don't be an ass, Chub. Any fellow needn't faint away, just because he cuts his head till it bleeds a little. It isn't man, and it isn't decent, and it isn't anything in this world but just plain, ordinary coward. I'm ashamed of him; and that's all there is about it."

However, Dr. Angell, out of his professional knowledge, would have been the first one to disagree with his young son's diagnosis. Unhappily for Buddie's later attitude towards the artist, though, Dr. Angell saw no need to discuss the matter with his son. The stranger was no patient of his; it was not for him to begin an argument in his defence, even granted that such defence were needed.

Therefore, Dr. Angell held his peace. Unfortunately he had no notion of the weight of scorn which that son was heaping on the luckless artist for his apparent funk, and consequent turning girl and fainting quietly away at sight of blood. Else, he might have intervened and rescued the man from the Coventry whither, despite Tom's arguments, Buddie summarily had dismissed him.

CHAPTER TWO

THE WRECKING TRAIN

WRECKING trains do not grow on bushes in the middle of Nebraska's plains. Therefore it was long after light, next morning, that Buddie was wakened by the distant thudding of the rails. Remorselessly he waked his father, across the aisle. Then he attacked the occupant of the upper berth.

"Get up, you mole!" he adjured Tom in a stentorian whisper. "She's coming."

"Who's coming now? G'way!" Tom muttered thickly through the swaddling blanket that he had wrapped about his mouth and ears in a sleepy effort to shut out the growing light. "Get out, you earnest angel, and let me alone."

"Shut up!" Buddie accompanied the bidding with a sounding slap, for his hereditary name was a sore spot in his consciousness, and woe was to the person who dared address him by it.

"Boys! Boys!" Dr. Angell urged, from across the car. "Do be quiet. You will be waking everybody, and it's hours and hours to breakfast."

"I know that, worse luck, Daddy," his son and heir responded in a cheery whisper that might have been heard by Ebenezer in his crate, three cars ahead.

"Then do keep quiet, and let us sleep away the empty hours," his father besought him, in an an-

swering whisper whose lightness was intended to convey to Buddie more than a hint of the proprieties of a sleeping car at crack of dawn.

Obediently Buddie took the hint, and reduced the volume of his voice by a good two thirds.

"All right, Daddy. Only it's an awful waste of time to stay asleep, when a wrecking train is coming down the track. Mind it, if Chub and I beat it to the scene of action?"

"I mind it, if you talk tramp slang, you sinner," his father assured him promptly.

Instantly Buddie's red-thatched head and snubby nose poked themselves between the paternal curtains. Below them were a pair of clasped and supplicating hands.

"Father dearest, may my little friend and I arise and go out to play?" he queried. Then, with a flop and a giggle, he landed on his father's prostrate body. "Oh, get up, Daddy!" he demanded. "How can we fellows take an intelligent interest in the situation, without you to explain things to us? The porter says that the car ahead of this is busted to smithereens, and the derrick has got to pick it off the track and then pick us on. Do get up, and watch things happen!"

In the end, Dr. Angell did get up to watch things happen. His motive in getting up, though, was less scientific curiosity than a general desire to remove his young son from the car, before the other, sleepier passengers should arise and flay him. The final impetus came when Buddie once more attacked the drowsy Tom, who had gone off to sleep again in the upper berth which the two boys occupied by turns.

Buddie, behind the curtains and standing on the edge of his own berth below, addressed Tom first with his garters, then with his voice, lowered, but still plainly audible.

"Get up, you moose!" he ordered. "Hurry up about it, too; but don't make any noise. Else, you might wake the baby."

"Baby?" Tom rubbed his eyes in sleepy bewilderment. To the best of his recollection, there had been no infant in the car, the night before.

Buddie answered briefly, but with pointed malice. In the section next to Dr. Angell, a long, lank artist, wakened against his will, writhed as he listened, because the judgements of fourteen are crudely merciless. For obvious reasons, the artist changed his mind, and decided that he would not show himself till time for breakfast.

The time till breakfast was totally unforgettable to Buddie. Like every other normal boy, he revelled in excitement, revelled yet more in machinery of new and unexpected sorts. With Ebenezer at his side, Daddy to explain things and Tom to share the thrills, he sat for two long hours upon a grassy hummock by the roadside, and watched the wrecking crews restore order out of a chaos which barely had missed being hideous tragedy.

As the porter had told Buddie earlier, the sleeping car ahead of them had been badly shattered. A freight train, backing just too far along its siding, had struck it sharply, as it passed. Only the chance of an almost empty sleeper had prevented loss of life; but that same chance had limited the human injuries to the bumped head of their companion, a

bruised nose for a Chicago clergyman whose profession forbade him to say what he thought about his personal appearance, next morning, and a fit of hysterics on the part of the fussy spinster invariably at hand in any crisis.

The car, though, was a sorry sight. One side of it was ripped quite open; the forward end of it was twisted cornerwise across the track and tilted slightly upward, as if it had meant to clamber on the roof of the car ahead, but, on second thoughts, had abandoned the attempt. The sleeper in the rear, Buddie's sleeper, had taken the blow indirectly. One corner had been crushed in; most of the glass along one side was broken, for it had jumped down from the rails and gone pounding along the ties for twice the train length. However, nobody had been in the crushed corner, and no one minded a little extra ventilation in the summer time. Besides, the car had obligingly stopped before it tumbled down the bank, so, all in all, Buddie judged that his first railway accident was a grand success: the greatest possible amount of wreckage for the slightest outlay of personal discomfort.

Therefore, with Ebenezer at his side, he settled himself at ease to watch the process of picking up the ruins, while Daddy sat beside him to play the part of chorus whenever there was any need for explanation. Indeed, it was a lasting wonder and delight to Buddie that Daddy always seemed to know the how and why of everything that happened. Some boys' fathers were such ninnies.

But Tom was less mechanical. His interest waned before the clamours of his inner man.

"I say," he observed at length; "it must be getting nearly time for breakfast."

Buddie turned upon him frowningly.

"Oh, I say, Chub!" he rebuked his mate. "A fellow can eat breakfast, any day."

Tom's answer came from his heart.

"I wish to goodness that he could," he said.

But Buddie was heedless of his words. With his hands gripped nervously into Ebenezer's topmost taglock, he sat with his eyes fixed upon the long steel derrick that looked like a huge human finger stretching out in search of the best place to grip the damaged sleeping car. Buddie's own car, artist and all, had been hauled and pushed off to a side track cleverly laid along a bit of level prairie, and now the engine and the car bearing the great steel derrick had come up behind the worst part of the ruins. Between the engine and the derrick was an ordinary flat car that seemed to Buddie rather a useless annex to the train. However, all the other things had had a use; and he was anxious to see what part in the scheme the flat car was destined to play. Therefore he forgot his breakfast and ignored the voice of Tom.

Tom spoke again. Speaking, he took out his watch.

"Almost nine," he said. "Three hours they have been working."

"Yes; but look at all they've done," Buddie made defensive answer.

All at once, it seemed to him he was watching the work with mind and eyes akin to those of the men who planned and toiled before him. If only he could squat on his heels beside the derrick, and

govern the fate of nations and their train wrecks by lifting up one finger now and then! That was all the chief seemed to do. Indeed, Buddie never would have known he was the chief, if Daddy had not been there to tell him. He had supposed that chiefs must wear badges of office, not sit about in shirt sleeves and a slouch hat. However, the man's young, clean-cut face was chief-like, his finger pointed with decision and command. Buddie, watching him, felt certain that he would not have fainted away, the night before. And, in that hour beside the track, Buddie cast aside certain imaginings that had grown out of the facile pencil sketches with which he had been wont to adorn his letters and the margins of his *Cæsar*. Artists were manifestly poor creatures, and very flopsy. It would be better far, far more manly to be the chief who went about the railroads, picking up wrecked cars. Later, the idea lost a little of its grip on him; but, later still, it was destined to bear much fruit. The time was going to come, some day or other, too, that Buddie would realize that even an engineering chief was better off for knowing how to use a pencil.

But, meanwhile, Tom was lifting up his voice again.

"Why doesn't that blooming porter give us first call for breakfast?" he demanded of the air around him.

It was Dr. Angell, though, who answered.

"Most likely because there isn't any breakfast to call us to," he said.

"Not any breakfast!" Tom echoed blankly. "Why, where is it?"

"In the dining car."

"Of course," Tom made placid assent. "But where's the car? Down behind our sleeper?"

But Dr. Angell put one hand into his pocket, drew out a gaudy leaflet and opened it to a many-coloured map barred with one straight, broad stripe.

"There," he said, as he laid his finger on the sheet.

Buddie nuzzled his head between his father's elbow and Tom's right ear. Quicker than Tom, he had been the first to catch his father's meaning.

"I see. And where are we, Dad?" he asked.

The doctor's finger shifted through a wide arc.

"Here."

"Whee — ough!" Buddie whistled. "And my tummy's flatter than a griddle cake."

"It's a long run from nine at night till eight, next morning," the doctor told him grimly. "I'm sorry now that I advised against two helps of pudding, last night."

Despite his hunger, Buddie echoed his laugh most jovially.

"I knew you would be, Dad. Still, I suppose I shall live through it. It is worse for Chub than me; he hasn't any extra fat to go on. Honest, though, when do you really think we can begin to feed?"

The doctor turned the question over to the porter, and the porter prudently passed the query up along the line. Finally it reached the shirt-sleeved chief, still squatting on his heels beside the derrick. The chief detached his attention from the men, now making fast certain chains around the car, and glanced cornerwise over his shoulder.

"Boys, you say? They are always starved," he told his questioner; "and it hurts a boy like thunder to be hungry. We can't get a diner down here till noon, at the earliest." He pondered. Then he lifted up his voice. "Mike!"

Mike came running. He was Irish, with a head as red as that of Buddie, and a smile like the Cove of Cork. The smile was at its widest, when he uttered the final "Yis, Sorr," that ended the swift colloquy. Then, still smiling, he drew near the hungry boys.

"The chief's compliments," he said; "and he's just about ready to knock off worrrking and take a snack of sandwiches inside that box car, over yonder. He was asking if the boys and you," the smile stretched to include Dr. Angell; "would do him the honour to have a bite with him." And then, the message duly given, he added on his own account, "You don't need to be hesitating any; there's grub enough for fifty in that car, let alone a brace of hungry boys."

It was long before Buddie and Tom forgot the meal that followed. No Pullman-built dining car with its brave array of silver and shiny glass ever could have seemed to them comparable to the cavernous gloom of the box car where they sat about on piles of bolts and coils of chain, eating vast ham sandwiches and drinking cold coffee out of the one tin cup the place afforded. Alternately, while they ate, they listened to the chief's stories of other wrecks, and worse ones, or plied him with questions as to his reason for doing this or that to this one, and as to his plans for the next thing to do, when breakfast was an accomplished fact. And the

chief, too lately come out of college to have forgotten how curious a boy can be in practical details, cut his own breakfast short and fed the scraps of it to Ebenezer, in order to give himself more time to expound the mysteries of his profession.

Later, after an interchange of cards and good wishes, they went their ways: the chief to his place beside the derrick, the boys, stuffed with many sandwiches and much coffee, to their roadside hummock. All morning long, the work went on, for the car was cracked to the point of breaking utterly, and needed to be lifted with much circumspection. Once, indeed, when the chains were well adjusted, it rose a few inches from the ground. Then the angle of its sagging warned the chief that he must hunt another spot on which to grapple it, or else the two ends would part company completely.

At last, though, the new grip was attempted, and the attempt made good. The long steel finger of the derrick no longer moved about uncertainly. Instead, it stiffened, quivered, stiffened, then rose upward; and the load rose with it, tilting to and fro a little rakishly, then steadying to the slow, slow motion of the powerful arm which more than ever seemed a thinking thing, and not a mass of interlocking bars and joints of steel. Slowly the chief moved his finger; slowly the great steel arm followed the pointing finger around a half circle towards the empty flat car just behind. As it drew nearer the direction of the car, the arm lifted a little more, and then a little more yet, still turning slowly. An instant later, the greater portion of the shattered

sleeping car was dangling in the air above the place made ready to receive it.

The chief lowered his pointing finger, and gave a slight sigh of relief; but the strain never left his face until, gently as one lays a baby in his cradle, the huge mass swinging in mid air was laid, slowly and without a jar of any sort, upon the flat car just behind the derrick. Then his face cleared, and his eyes unconsciously sought the rapt and admiring countenance of Buddie, although the only sound that broke the stillness was a yelp of agony from Ebenezer, who saw no reason that his master should throttle him in his excitement.

The dining car, rushed by a special engine, came speeding down the rails just then, and the chief accepted cordially Dr. Angell's invitation to him to make a fourth one at their table. To Buddie's mind, after their former eating, the well-ordered meal was flattest anticlimax. An even greater anticlimax, it seemed to him, confronted him, when his father roused him from his absorption in the chief to answer the morning salutations of their artist neighbour, Mr. Kent. Even reminded of his social duty, Buddie bestowed upon the artist a most cursory attention; but Buddie's father was quite insistent in his greetings.

"And you really find yourself quite all right again?" he said, in summing up the situation.

And Mr. Kent hurriedly bowed his plastered brow above his grape fruit, and muttered something quite inaudible. He had been quick to catch a mocking gleam in Buddie's eyes, and the gleam had reminded him of Buddie's accent, hours on hours

before. Therefore he had no mind to dwell upon the questionings of Buddie's father. He too had known just what it was to be a boy; he still knew that the boyish humour, the boyish point of view sometimes are a trifle merciless.

CHAPTER THREE

BUDDIE'S ARTIST

THE next night, their last night on the train, Tom made a discovery that seemed to him thrilling. Dinner over, he imparted the gist of it to Buddie. Moreover, being masculine and young, he imparted it tersely.

"He's going there, too," he said, when the two boys, leaving the doctor and the artist to discuss things over their coffee, had escaped to the more roomy quarters of the observation car.

Buddie hesitated as to which end of the mystery he should first attack.

"Where's *there?*" he demanded then.

"Gray Buttes."

"Oh." For Gray Buttes was their own destination. "Well, who's *he?*"

"Mr. Kent."

"Hm." Buddie's accent was disdainful in its note of carelessness. "What of it?"

Tom looked as if the wind had been taken from his sails a little unexpectedly.

"Nothing, only — I thought maybe — Why, it's a funny chance; that's all," he said flounderingly.

Buddie maintained his air of bored superiority.

"Yes, a strange chance, when this car runs directly there," he observed, his eyes upon the track that

came spinning out, rail after rail, from underneath their train.

Tom felt that it was time to assert himself.

"He needn't be getting out, though," he said.

Buddie arranged himself comfortably in his chair.

"No; he needn't," he agreed, with a finality that was crushing. "In fact, we can get along perfectly well without him."

"What makes you so down on him, Buddie?"

Buddie answered curtly and to the point.

"Baby-gaby!" he said. Then his accent changed, grew eager. "I say, Chub, that was a great fellow we were talking to, this morning. He knew his business through and through. I'd like to do things like that."

"Things like what?" the voice of Mr. Kent asked over Buddie's shoulder. Unseen by either of the boys, the artist had entered the car just in season to hear Buddie's enthusiastic outburst, and now was stowing away his long person in the chair at Buddie's side.

Buddie spun about to face him, his eyes alight with his own enthusiasm.

"Laying emergency tracks, and seeing just where to put on the chains to have them hold," he said alertly.

The artist smiled in comprehension. From the first, he had made no secret of the fact of his interest in Buddie. Now he determined, if it were possible, to awaken Buddie's corresponding interest in him. All day long, at intervals, his ears and cheeks had tingled at the memory of the brief word or two with which Buddie had summed up his impressions of

the incident of two nights before. Coupled with his own sense of ignominy, Buddie's scorn had set the artist's self-conceit to smarting. Instead of pitying himself for his bruised head, he merely had a healthy consciousness that he had something disgraceful to live down. And boyish memories were so very, very lengthy, when it concerned what they would term a bit of funking. Therefore, Mr. David Kent had set himself to work to remove the earlier impression that he had created. He judged the best method of removal would be the hurling himself into Buddie's interest of the moment.

"I fancy it's a thing that comes from a good deal of study," he made elaborately genial reply to Buddie's outburst. "One gets that sort of thing out of his training."

However, Buddie remained true to his reservations. Moreover, upon second thought, he saw no reason that this comparative stranger should hurl his long, lean self into the talk.

"Some men are born so," he made uncompromising answer, and the answer was intended to leave the clear impression that there were other, lesser men who weren't.

"Exactly," Mr. Kent admitted meekly. "That is true with most things. However, that man in charge of the work, this morning —"

Buddie capped his phrase sternly.

"— Was a corker."

Mr. Kent's meekness grew upon him. Buddie's accent continued to imply comparisons.

"I thought he looked a fine sort of man," he assented humbly.

"You saw him, then?" Buddie's voice became alert once more.

"Yes. I was in the diner, when you all came in."

Then Buddie delivered a final, albeit unconscious, blow.

"Were you? I didn't remember." And then he stood up and stretched himself. "I say, Chub, let's go and see what has become of Daddy."

And the artist, left alone, fell to meditating upon the unconscious discipline administered to their elders by the very young. It was evident that Buddie had no malicious intentions; he merely felt no interest in his adult companion, and he was unable to see any especial reason he should pretend an interest he did not feel.

During these latter days, David Kent had not had very much of the experience of being disregarded. Whatever their effect on strangers, his well-known eccentricities had made him beloved of all his cronies; and the fact that his name was signed to a round dozen capital paintings was cause enough that the strangers, however unappreciative, should turn to look after him in the street. Indeed, apart from his reputation, he was well worth looking after, so tall was he, so slim, so erect and agile. He moved with the careless lightness of a boy of the latter 'teens, not of the man of fifty that he was; and he accepted all his notice with an apparent disregard — had accepted it, that is, until Buddie's calm ignoring of his value led him to hanker slightly for his customary adulation.

Ten minutes earlier, he had not doubted his ability to win the youngster's liking. The summer

was all before them; for Dr. Angell had been telling him, over the coffee, about their plans for summering at Gray Buttes. His own quarters could not be far from the camp of Brooks MacDougall; it would be quite easy to follow up the acquaintance begun on the train. At least, it had seemed to him quite easy. Now, he doubted. And he liked the looks of Buddie, liked his downright, unmincing manners. More than that, he longed acutely to try to work him out on canvas. That red head was singularly well set on the sturdy shoulders. That snubby and prosaic nose was placed between thoughtful, honest eyes and a mouth that never kept the same expression for two minutes running. As a rule, Kent hated portraits. This one, though, would be intricate, well worth the doing. Half unconsciously he pulled from his pocket an envelope and pencil, and made a dozen lines to serve as memoranda.

"Say, now! That's ripping!"

Mr. Kent started a little guiltily, as the voice came from over his shoulder. The voice was promptly followed by a red head, round and sleek.

"You know it, then?"

The red head rubbed itself confidingly against the artist's ear.

"Rather! It's me, just. I don't see how you got it in six scratches and that messy blobble, though."

"Buddie," his father's voice queried from somewhere in the rear; "aren't you a little —"

"I suppose so; I generally am." Buddie spoke with serene resignation. Then his accent quickened. "But just you come along here, Daddy, and see if you much blame me."

And, for the scanty remainder of the evening, the artist sunned himself in Buddie's smiles.

Bedtime, though, found him once more relegated to the background, quite totally eclipsed by the superior charms of Ebenezer, with whom Buddie had been having his good-night romp, all up and down the baggage car. The presiding genius of the car did not like dogs; but he did like silver, and Daddy's adult persuasions did the rest. The result was that, for half an hour of each evening, Buddie and Ebenezer alternately played ball and sought imaginary rats amid the luggage, while Tom and the baggage master of the moment sat in a corner and looked on, with tolerant amusement, at their antics.

Later, that night, their antics ended and Ebenezer once more imprisoned in his crate, the two boys, shut in behind their green-curtain wall, discussed the events of the day in the intervals of their undressing.

"I knew you'd like him, once you got to know him," Tom said, as the talk was ending.

"Like who?" Buddie queried, with a fine disregard of grammar.

"Mr. Kent."

"Like your grandmother! Who said I liked him?" Buddie sniffed, for he found it hard to step down from his hauteur of a few hours before.

But Tom proceeded to take it out of him unsparingly.

"You did."

"Did not! You're dreaming, Chub. I never said a word about him, one way or the other."

Tom become runic.

"You can say some things, without saying a word about them. Anyhow, you did."

Buddie sat himself down on the edge of his berth and grappled with his boots.

"Don't be a silly, Chub. Did what?" he queried. "You sound like Lear,

> Said never a word,
> So far as we heard,
> This frabjous — "

"Did like him." Chubbie cut in calmly.

With a sudden jerk, Buddie snapped himself into the lower berth which, by all rights, should have belonged to Tom, that night.

"Spos'n' I did?" he argued tranquilly. "Now will you let me go to sleep; or must I make you?"

And it took all of Daddy's persuasion and authority to put an end to the subsequent turmoil. A lower berth may offer scanty room for a pillow fight; but for all that one can get in harder whacks than one would think. Buddie was more muscular; but Tom had had a year of boarding school, and so the odds were rather even, after all.

Next morning, though, brought a new mood to Buddie, one more pensive. He seemed to have forgotten the actual journey in anticipations of its end. The track no longer interested him, as it came sliding out from beneath the observation car, like a huge web unwound by a gigantic spider crawling across the western plains and up along the western mountain passes. He no longer hunted out the stations on the time card, nor counted stray coyotes.

He even gazed with indifferent eyes upon the Indian brave who came to beg at their car window, a spectacular brave with uncombed hair and a brown patch in the middle of his scarlet blanket. Indeed, Buddie went so far as to hint to Tom that he only put on his blanket, anyhow, at train time.

Tom, who had been rejoicing in the blanket, glared at Buddie disgustedly. Then he followed up the glaring with a question.

"What's gone on your temper, Buddie? You usedn't to be so plaguey bored. Something wrong with your breakfast; or what?"

Buddie shook his head a trifle gloomily.

"No; breakfast was all right," he said. "It's only that I'm getting in a sort of a hurry."

"What for?"

"To get there. We're so near, now, that I want to have it over, and see her," he answered.

"Her?"

Buddie's glance betokened scorn of his friend's comprehension.

"Aunt Julia," he said shortly. "Who do you suppose?"

"Oh!" Tom appeared to be pondering upon some new eccentricity cropping out in the mind of his friend. "Is that all?"

"Isn't it enough?" Buddie queried a bit testily.

"Ye-es, I suppose so. Without her, you wouldn't be going to camp out, all summer," Tom told him, with exceeding literalness.

The literalness displeased Buddie. As a rule, he was as matter-of-fact as a telephone pole. With Aunt Julia, though, it was different. He despaired

of making Tom comprehend the difference. None the less, he attempted to explain.

"It isn't the camping," he told his companion. "It's just Aunt Julia, something that makes me feel queer, right in here."

Here was apparently the seat of Buddie's digestive apparatus. Nevertheless, Tom nodded comprehendingly.

"I know. I had it, first vacation after I went away to school. I didn't want any breakfast, and it seemed to me I could walk ahead of the engine, all the last fifty miles. It was my mother. She was alive then, you know."

"Oh." Buddie's eye rested on the band that barred Tom's sleeve. "So that's it? I didn't know. Same here."

Tom nodded.

"Uncle Brooks wrote me. Horrid; isn't it? It seems as if I'd never get used to knowing she isn't there." Then, as both boys were obviously ashamed of their emotion, Tom had the common sense to change the subject. "What's your aunt like?" he demanded.

For an instant, Buddie ransacked his brain for fresh and forcible adjectives. Then he fell back on triteness.

"Corking," he said. "Only," he laughed a little; "don't you let her know I called her so. She hates slang. Not that she ever lectures you about it. She has a way of letting you know things for yourself. Once you do know them, though, you do them the way she likes; not because you must, but because it's fun to do the things she cares about."

As Buddie paused in his vague summing up of his aunt and idol, Tom struck in with a comment wise beyond his years.

"Just womanish," he said concisely. And then his voice dropped a very little. "That's the way it used to be with my mother."

And, in the meantime, Aunt Julia, wife of Brooks MacDougall and, in consequence, the great lady of the entire little camp, was turning the whole camp upside down, in preparation for the coming of the two motherless youngsters who were to spend the summer in her neighbourhood. To be sure, Dr. Angell was nominally in charge of them; and Ebenezer would protect their goings out and their comings in. None the less, Aunt Julia felt herself directly responsible for the comfort of the summer and for the summer's fun. It was she who had coaxed her engineer husband to allow their protracted honeymoon to be disturbed by Buddie's advent, she who had insisted that the disturbance be increased by her husband's nephew, Tom. It was she who had promised to see to it that the boys neither broke their necks on the one hand, nor died of boredom on the other; she who had bullied and cajoled the respective fathers into full agreement with her plans.

Tom's father had been ready to agree with anything. He was a busy man; as yet, he had not become too much accustomed to having the sole care of a boy whose tricks and manners were not always like those of the archangels and their seraphim. He had drawn a deep sigh of relief and thankfulness, when he had read Aunt Julia's letter. Next morn-

ing, in hot haste, he had sent an emphatic telegram of acceptance. It was always well to clinch a good thing when it was offered.

But Buddie's father, on the other hand, had haggled basely over the terms of the invitation. It was only five months that he had had Buddie to himself again, after a nine-months separation made needful by his own dubious health. No other comrade in the world was quite so dear, so necessary to his happiness as was that same Buddie; he could not face another separation quite so soon.

At heart, Aunt Julia shared his attitude to Buddie, and the sharing made her tolerant of any possible upsetting of her plans. She amended her original form of invitation swiftly. Tom could come to them, if he preferred. As for her half-brother, why should he not come, too, and have a separate camp for himself and Buddie and for the omnipresent Ebenezer? Tents and cots were the easiest things to get, in that country. Even she might be able to manage a chair or two and a home-made rug, if they were very finical. Their meals, of course, they all would take together in the official dining-room which, she hastened to assure him, had slab sides and a tar-paper roof which leaked a little in bad storms. However, the cook was a Belgian, and moreover he knew how to move his stove from one corner of the cookhouse to another, when the wind went wrong. They would not starve, by any means.

In the end, after much interchange of persuasion and argument, Dr. Angell accepted this modified plan. Later, it was decided that Tom should live with Buddie in the smaller tent, for Dr. Angell was

a firm believer in the theory that boys, to be healthy, needed other boys. And now, all those last two days, Aunt Julia had been toiling with her own hands to make the simple quarters homelike and attractive for her coming guests.

The train was already whistling in the distance, as she added the finishing touches to her work. However, she had time enough to shake down her ruffled plumage and to stroll the short length of the street to the station platform, while the engine came puffing up the last stretches of the grade. There was no need for her to hunt the windows over for a sight of the familiar boyish face. From far, far down the track, she saw a soft hat waving madly, heard above the puffing, groaning engine, a voice shrieking in exultant salutation, —

"Whoop — ee — lá! Aunt Julia! He's in the baggage car, as natural as life, and twice as hungry."

The train came to a halt at last; Dr. Angell stepped from the car and greeted her, then introduced the tall, lank boy who followed him. The tall, lank boy greeted her with a grace which arose, as she learned later, more from shyness than from any especially elaborate sense of decorum. She had but an instant to take note of him, however. The next instant Tom was thrust aside, and dainty, immaculate Aunt Julia vanished inside a tempestuous embrace of rough boyish arms and sooty, shaggy paws.

Buddie and Ebenezer had by no means lost their memory of their nine months in Aunt Julia's heart and home.

CHAPTER FOUR

GRAY BUTTES

IT was not until the next afternoon that the boys found leisure to make a thorough exploration of their new quarters. The sun had been setting, when they had left the train; that, in the long summer twilights, meant that it was growing late. There had been just time to drop their luggage in their sleeping tent and to wash off a little of the surface of the dust accumulated in the train, before Aunt Julia had sent a man to summon them to dinner. And such a man, with a cook's linen coat and pinafore above a pair of service putties! And such a dinner! The countless "fixings" of the dining car seemed to the boys as futile as tissue-paper roses, while they stared hungrily at the smoking-hot pea soup and at the monster salmon trout that followed it. Then, to finish off, there was a pie, no finicky little tartlets, but a great, thick, fruity pie to be cut in wedges, after the fashion dear to boyish hearts. Moreover, out of deference to Buddie's appetite and for fear he would be lonesome, eating by himself, everybody took a second piece, everybody, even Mr. Kent.

It had been largely Daddy's doing that Mr. Kent had been asked to dinner with them, that first night. After Buddie's tempestuous greeting had

spent a little of its fervour, Daddy had brought the artist forward and introduced him to Aunt Julia, as a fellow traveller of theirs and a prospective fellow townsman of her own. Aunt Julia, with the ready tact which always had been her greatest charm, had remembered quickly that she had heard an artist was expected to spend the summer at Gray Buttes. He was to live in the last shack in the town, down towards the hills? Yes, it was a charming situation. And take his meals at the hotel? She smiled a little. He would find the Meteor not quite the Carlton. By way of letting himself down gradually, wouldn't he dine with them, that first night? He could send his luggage on ahead, and it would be quite safe. And, as she gave her invitation, Aunt Julia smiled with a sunny persuasiveness which appeared to be totally unconscious of the glance of approbation Daddy bestowed upon her.

Buddie, however, frowned. He would have preferred to have the dinner quite a family function, given over to reminiscence and to bringing his aunt up to date regarding Ebenezer's late achievements. Instead, they had to sit in a row and talk about things that were not too vital in their interest: the journey, and pictures, and whether the engineering camp would stay there, all summer, or move on to Moosehead, forty miles away. Once, for a minute, Buddie got the talk into his hands and started to tell his aunt about the accident. Tom, however, promptly began to kick his shins; moreover, he kept it up till Buddie, perforce, fell silent. At bedtime, though, Buddie took his revenge.

"Now will you kick my legs another time; or will you not?" he demanded, as he lifted up one corner of the pillow on which he had been sitting.

Tom's scarlet face appeared to view beneath the corner.

"Get up, you elephant! You walrus! Get — up!" With a scientific convulsion, he dislodged Buddie and sent him rolling prostrate on the floor. "I kicked your shins, because Mr. Kent looked so blamed uneasy, like a cat with his front foot in the cream. You shouldn't slang a man inside your own front door."

"I wasn't slanging him, and it isn't my front door, anyhow." Buddie sat up, and shut his hands about his sturdy ankles.

"No; but it's your aunt's. That's the same thing."

"'Tis not. It's your uncle's. Besides, I wasn't saying a thing about Mr. Kent."

"He didn't know that, though; and he looked queer. Honest, Buddie, I think he's a good sort of chap, even if he did go off into a fainting fit."

Buddie's reply was conclusive.

"Men don't."

Tom was more charitable.

"Depends on the man. Besides, I asked your father."

"When did you ask him?"

"Next day, while you were so taken up with your man in the wrecking train."

"What did he say?"

"Said Mr. Kent couldn't help it. He was made that way. Some people are."

"Precious poor piece of workmanship!" Buddie commented shrewdly.

"No matter. It shows he wasn't the one to blame, shows he didn't funk."

Reluctantly Buddie suffered himself to modify his point of view.

"Well, if Daddy said so —"

"He did."

Buddie dropped the major issue.

"Anyhow, he can draw. Did you see that Chinaman, shinning up a drain pipe? You could fairly hear him puff. Still, I'd rather have had Aunt Julia to ourselves, this first night."

Tom promptly struck a nail upon the head.

"Maybe Uncle Brooks feels something the same way about us."

Nevertheless, there had been nothing in Mr. Brooks MacDougall's manner to suggest this feeling, while they sat at dinner. There was nothing at all suggestive of it, next morning, when he asked the boys to ride out with him to inspect the work of the new railway. Daddy and Aunt Julia could go for a drive together, if they chose; but he had had his eye on a capital little pair of mustangs, and he wanted to see the boys astride them. A half hour later, the two boys were astride, and, bouncing rather wildly in their saddles, were following Mr. MacDougall up a trail that, to their unaccustomed eyes, appeared to be all high, and not any wide at all.

However, Budge and Toddie, as the mustangs called themselves, were as sure-footed as they were full of mischief. Quick to know that their new riders had never bestridden anything more active

than the things one finds in a gymnasium, they put their shaggy heads to work to make the ride a lively one for their young masters. Somehow or other, though, the boys hung on, not always gracefully, but with a sturdy determination that outweighed grace entirely. Once, Buddie nearly took a header into a heap of gravel; once Tom forsook his saddle absolutely and, for a good half mile, rode gripping Toddie with his knees and heels, and hanging gamely to his mane. Needless to say, they were stiff and breathless when, after seemingly endless miles, Mr. MacDougall negligently flung his leg over his mount and, sitting sidewise on his saddle, offered his congratulations.

"You're all right," he told them heartily. "I thought I might as well try you out, at the start. Like the ponies? They are jolly little beasts, full of impishness as a pair of puppies; but they aren't ugly, and they've been broken not to be afraid of anything the mountains have to show them, from dynamite to dragons."

"Do you have them up here?" Buddie queried, from the midst of investigations concerning the muscles of his left leg.

"Sometimes we think so, when they pull up our stakes to use for weapons in their scrimmages," Mr. MacDougall answered. "They're a long way more picturesque in the Sunday supplements than in real life, for all their blankets and bead trumpery that they bring out to show off to the stranger."

"Oh, Indians! Are there some about here?" And Buddie promptly lost all interest in the problem of his muscles.

"Any amount of them, and ugly ones, too. You see, we are near the corner of a reservation, and the beggars have got the notion in their heads we mean to oust them, if we can; to get the better of them, if we can't quite oust them. They are a crazy lot."

"We saw them, coming out," Tom volunteered, cutting short his conversation with Toddie whom he had adopted on account of their sharing the same initial.

His uncle laughed.

"Clad in their newest blankets and belted with wampum? That's the way one does see them, from the trains."

Buddie cast a glance of triumph upon Tom.

"How do you see them, Uncle Brooks?" he asked, with a quietness which veiled a hint of malice.

"Oh, dressed like any other navvy, only a trifle shabbier: bunchy coat and ragged trousers and bad boots. Generally he has a pipe."

"Feathers in his hair?" Buddie queried, with unabated interest and innocence.

Again his uncle laughed.

"Not outside of train hours, or the Sunday papers," he replied. "He prefers an old slouch hat, when he can get it. When he can't, he makes a cracked-top derby do."

"Exactly," Buddie assented. Then he asked gently, "What's the matter, Chub? Anything wrong with Toddie's mane?"

However, Budge, just then, decided he would dance, and Tom's response was lost in the general excitement. Before Budge had decided once more

that his front legs were made to stand on, Mr. MacDougall spoke.

"There come half a dozen of them now," he said. "You can see for yourselves, boys, whether I have told you the truth, or not."

Forgetful of their ponies, the two boys wheeled about and stared in the direction of the pointing finger. As they stared, bit by bit there fell away from them the memory of one picture cherished from their tiny childhood, the picture of a stalwart brave, glum and grim, standing erect and tall, his bare arms folded underneath his graceful blanket, his haughty head crowned with an upstanding wreath of feathers, toll of the fallen eagle's wing. And these! Were these those?

It was Tom who broke the silence, and disgustedly.

"I say, Uncle Brooks, let's be getting home," he said. "It must be almost time for luncheon."

"How do your legs feel about it, Buddie?" Tom queried confidentially, that noon, as the two boys followed their elders in to luncheon.

Buddie gave an experimental stretch. Then he suppressed a little groan.

"Blasted," he said succinctly. "How's yours?"

Tom made no effort to suppress his groan.

"Next time, I'll put a pillow on the beast's ridge-pole, or my name's not Neal," he answered. "Buddie Angell, do you think we ever can get used to it?"

But Buddie was always optimistic by nature. His optimism came out strongly now.

"I s'pose we'll get a little callous, in the course of time," he said.

Luncheon, however, brought forgetfulness of

minor details like stiffnesses and blisters and the like; and it was with energetic enthusiasm that, luncheon eaten, the two boys started out to explore their new domain. Already they had grown a little bit accustomed to the MacDougall end of it: to the long, narrow shack of slabs and cleated layers of tar paper, a shack that was chiefly windows on the sides and wholly fireplace at either end. One end of it was bedroom, furnished very simply and without any of the ivory and silver trumpery which always had aroused Buddie's disgust in his Aunt Juila's room at home. There were two comfortable easy chairs, though, and one good picture; but the fireplace was the great thing of the room, a fireplace so huge that one could put in a whole round of tree trunk without splitting. A similar fireplace filled the entire end of the living-room, which was larger and fitted up with lounging chairs and wicker tables and an enormous couch with the skin of a grizzly bear thrown over it. Ebenezer had taken to the bear on sight; it required a good deal of argument to convince him that a real grizzly, shot by Mr. MacDougall's own gun, must be treated with more respect than a mere common skin bought in a rug shop. Indeed, up to the very end of summer, Ebenezer had his doubts upon the subject, doubts that he manifested most strongly when he found the living-room given up to himself alone.

Close by the home shack and a little apart from the main engineering camp was the official dining-room with its cookhouse close behind, leading to the other dining-room, the one for the men, hidden somewhere in the rear. The staff dining-room had

two tables, one for the minor officials, the other, quite apart, for the MacDougalls and their clan. Buddie already was gazing upon the occupants of the smaller table with admiring eyes. The topographer was Psi U. and a Bones man, and he had hair redder than Buddie's own. Buddie felt that they were predestined to be friends.

For the rest, beyond a gun or two and a few trophies of the hunt, the dining-room was bare of ornament; but, three times a day, the tables held food which caused Buddie to regret that his inner man was not cut on the pattern of Goliath of Gath. Besides, it is a fact, melancholy, but distinctly true, that the average healthy youngster cares little for embroidery upon his table linen. As for Tom, he was at the epoch when he measured all things by the standards set by his boarding school; and boarding schools, as a rule, do not go in too much for elaborate daintiness.

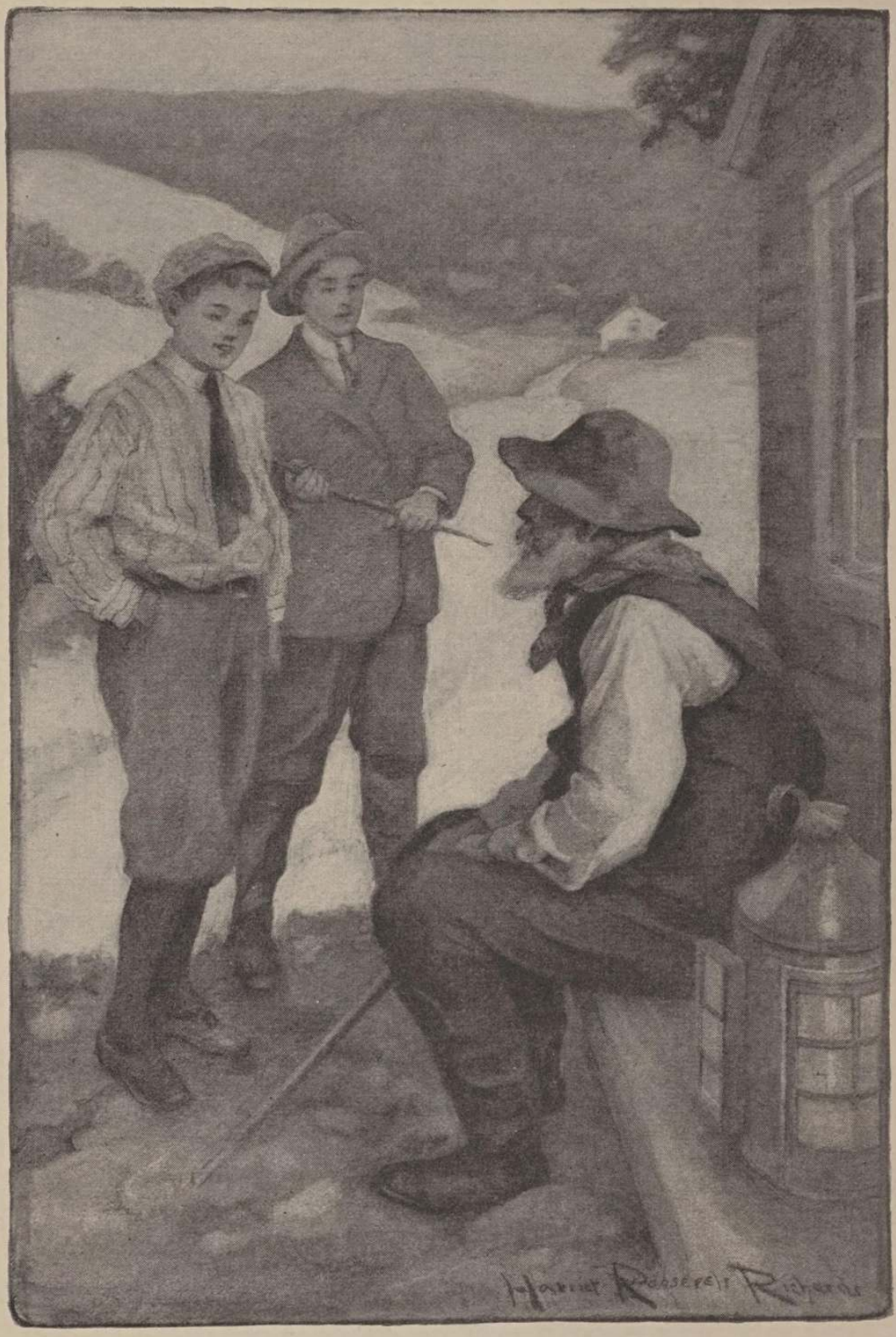
The tent where Dr. Angell and the boys were supposed to live, was six hundred feet away from the MacDougall home. Judged by the standards of Gray Buttes, it was quite a magnificent affair, for it had a board floor and was partitioned off into three rooms: one for Daddy, one for the two boys and Ebenezer, and a third which alternated between holding a portable tub and a vast heap of towels, and being set forth gayly with a table and three chairs. A long-tailed Chinaman in a blue jacket accomplished the alternations; his joy was unspeakable, when he had topped the table with a scarlet cover and a huge brass lamp. The second night, he added an array of smoking joss sticks; but the doctor, strangling violently and trying in vain to

look the pleasure that he was far from feeling, bade him reserve that final luxury for some more festal time.

In this magnificent establishment, the doctor and the boys and Ebenezer were supposed to live. As a matter of fact, from the hour of their arrival, they lived either out of doors, or else in the MacDougall shack, and only went home to sleep. Moreover, Aunt Julia's thoughtful provision of the tub became as much a matter of pure theory as did their living-room which shared accommodations with it. On the second morning of their stay, Buddie discovered a deep, still pool in the river that flowed down across one end of the little town. The morning after, a procession of four might have been seen marching towards the pool. Three of the four carried towels; the fourth was Ebenezer, hating baths on principle, and going along to see what the others meant to do about it. From that time forward, the procession took place daily; and, in time, the portable tub was filled with straw and devoted to the mid-day naps of Ebenezer whom it fitted to perfection.

The river flowed down, straight from the mountains, across one end of Gray Buttes street; then, bending sharply, it went sliding along beside the street, chattering noisily as it passed certain pebbly stretches in its shallow bed. Below the town, it took another turn, then aimlessly turned back again and finally lost itself in the narrow cañon that wound away into the mountains to the northward.

Just in the first bend of the river, just where one gained the first real look into the cañon, the single



It was not according to poor human nature to allow the boys to pass by unquestioned. — *Page 45.*

street began. There was not much street about it, merely a rutted road and two trodden lines of sidewalk which led from the end house of the town through the business centre of Gray Buttes, and on to the engineering camp quite at the southern end. There might have been nine houses in the whole of it; and the business centre held, in addition, the railway station and the Meteor Hotel. The post office was in the station; the hotel office answered all the purposes of country store. All in all, the little town was as self-contained as a city apartment house, and just about as narrow in its dimensions. Nevertheless, the two boys, with Ebenezer at their heels, were the whole afternoon exploring it. The inhabitants saw to that. It was not according to poor human nature to allow the boys to pass by, unquestioned and unquestioning. By dinner time, Buddie and Tom could have passed with honours an examination concerning the name, the occupation and the especial hobbies of every man, woman and child within the town.

"I say," Buddie remarked contentedly from between the sheets, that night; "I do believe we are going to have a great old time of it, this summer."

"It sure looks like it." Then Tom paused before blowing out the candle, paused and looked at Buddie. "When do you suppose we'll get over being stiff in all our joints?" he queried. "I feel exactly like a wooden doll."

Buddie yawned till Ebenezer, already snoring on the bed, appeared to be in mortal danger. Then, —

"I'd forgotten all about it," he said negligently. "Anyhow, it was awfully worth while."

CHAPTER FIVE

BUDDIE FINDS A CRONY

THREE days later, Buddie's sense of humour began to reassert itself. At home in New York, and even in the gentle decorum of Aunt Julia's domestic atmosphere, Buddie had not been exactly what one would term a meek and quiet spirit. Indeed, measured by some of his more unregenerate achievements, his hereditary name of Ernest Angell showed itself to be a palpable misnomer. The worst of it all was that one laughed at his performances, no matter how much one might deplore them. Buddie was used to being lectured for his many sins; but he had learned to ignore the stern lips of the lecturer, and to fix his gaze upon the eyes, instead, ready to catch the first dawning of the twinkle that never failed to come.

However, since the morning of their starting from New York, Buddie had behaved in most exemplary fashion. This was by no means the result of dawning conscience. It was merely that the problems of Ebenezer's transportation, coupled with the exciting events of the journey, had left him no leisure to set his inventive faculty to work. His first railway accident, his first live Indian outside a circus tent, his first acquaintance with a construction camp: these things were enough to keep his

mind absorbed and temporarily quiescent. Still, Buddie was Buddie; such an abnormal state of grace could not be lasting. By the end of the third day, he was casting about in search of mischief.

To his surprise and disappointment, no inspiration came to his brain, customarily so fertile in plotting small iniquities. Indeed, that was the trouble. Everything he could think of seemed so very small, in comparison with the magnitude of his surroundings.

"That's the whole real row," he explained at last to Chubbie, whom he had been driven to take into his confidence. "Things that seem funny as anything, inside a house, go flat when they have all outdoors as backing. Can't you think up something rousing, Chubbie, something to make this camp sit up?"

Chubbie pondered.

"In our school," he was beginning, at last; but Buddie cut in, —

"Stow that, Chubbie!"

Tom's countenance expressed surprise.

"What's the row?"

"That everlasting *our school* of yours," Buddie said warningly. "I'm getting slightly sick of hearing how you did things there. Next time you say one word about it, Chubbie Neal, I treat you the way Teresa used to treat old Rosa."

Chubbie looked interested. He liked things feminine.

"Who was Teresa?"

"The finest girl I ever saw, good as a boy, any day."

Tom silently digested the slight implied by Buddie's accent. Then, —

"Who was old Rosa?"

"Her chum," Buddie made answer. Not for worlds on worlds would he have confessed to any other boy his secret interest in the venerable doll, chastised by Teresa in the hours of agony when her world went wry.

"Oh."

"Yes, *oh!*" Buddie returned conclusively. "Well, anyhow, what are we going to do?"

Tom put his fists into his pockets and spoke with brief decision, for he had a general idea that it would be best for them both, if Buddie should be temporarily deprived of his society. Buddie was getting dictatorial, what Tom termed 'bossy.' Therefore, the best medicine for him would be the being thrown upon his own resources. In planning out his chastisement, however, Tom had no notion whatsoever whither Buddie's own resources were about to take him. Wherefore, —

"I am going fishing," he announced.

To his extreme surprise, Buddie's answer held neither regret nor pique.

"Go on, then. See you at dinner."

Then, his hands also in his pockets, he went tramping down the dusty road with Ebenezer at his heels.

Ebenezer, in those first days in the camp, was growing fat from want of exercise. The boys spent a good share of their time in learning to stick upon the agile backs of Budge and Toddie; and Budge and Toddie frisked along the roads too fast to make it

possible for Ebenezer, gorged on the débris of the camp table, to keep up with them for ten steps at a time. Accordingly, Ebenezer had sat at home and increased in fatness until, that noon, Buddie had felt called on to remonstrate, first with the cook, and then with Ebenezer.

This very afternoon, Buddie had put his foot down flatly: Ebenezer must not have his gallon bowl of scraps filled up but once a day; and Ebenezer must come out and take his exercise like a man, not lie in the sun like a soggy feather bolster. He gathered up Ebenezer's base-ball, and Ebenezer's small rubber ball, and whistled in a fashion which announced to the slumberer that he would have no shirking. However, Ebenezer was a creature of strong will; and his present will was to split the difference between his own plan and that of his master. He would go to walk, if need be; but a dog of his present fatness would not consent to run for a ball, so soon after his luncheon. He went trudging down the road at Buddie's heels; but only an apologetic convulsion of the taglock of hair which answered for a tail betokened any consciousness of the balls spinning down the road ahead of him. Buddie could run after them and pick them up, if he chose. He had not lunched from a small mountain of assorted goodies, and then washed the small mountain down with a quart of milk.

Buddie, marching down the road towards the entrance to the cañon, was chewing hard the cud of a great discontent. Like most of us, cloyed with goodies, he was finding life a colossal bore. Two weeks ago, he would have considered any one of a

dozen present interests enough to add spice to a whole week's existence. Now he took them as a matter of course, and demanded further interests of some new and exotic kind. Tom's desertion had not vexed him in the least. He liked Tom; but his liking was a temperate one. His happiness in no way was dependent upon Tom's society. But, with Ebenezer, it was different. He had learned to count on Ebenezer's enthusiastic interest in everything that went on about him; it was a new experience to find him bored and self-absorbed. Buddie liked it the less because, quite without his realizing it, the dog's mood was so exactly like his own: they both of them were seeking to digest too many agreeable novelties.

"Now, Ebenezer," he argued emphatically, as they drew near the end of the town's single street; "you must brace up and act a man. There is no sense in your being so lazy. See that ball? Well —" the ball went flying down the road — "s — sic — c — c — c it!"

To Buddie's manifest relief, Ebenezer obeyed his master's admonition and, regardless of his recent feastings, went flying down the road behind the ball. Unhappily, Ebenezer had grown clumsy with much dining, and no longer possessed his old-time agility in dodging. Unhappily, too, somebody undertook to cross the road just in the path of the flying ball and the equally flying dog, a tall, thin somebody beneath whose boyish cap there showed a rim of grizzled hair.

"Hi, Ebenezer!" Buddie clamoured, as he saw the collision waxing imminent.

But Ebenezer, apparently rejoiced to find that, after all his feasting, the muscles of his legs were still in working order, refused to *Hi*, and went pounding forward, regardless of possible collisions. A moment later, a tall, thin figure was arising from a gutter and seeking for the jaunty cap which should have concealed from view the tousled condition of his grizzled hair. Buddie, meanwhile, was hovering in the offing, trying to keep down his merriment long enough to offer the proper apologies.

To his relief, the victim broke the silence.

"That dog of yours is no light-weight champion," he remarked, as soon as he could get his breath. "I couldn't stand up against him, anyway; he took me squarely, just under the knees. Come along, old man, and shake hands on getting the best of a fair fight."

And Ebenezer came. His manner was a bit self-conscious, and his apology for a tail wagged in feigned contrition, as he drew near. But his lips, although distended around some precious bit of booty, were smirking in a fashion that betrayed his pleased surprise at his own achievement.

"What's in your mouth, old man?" the artist queried, giving over his search for the missing cap long enough to pull Ebenezer's ears in token of forgiveness.

"It's his ball," Buddie explained, for it seemed to him a prudent moment for entering the conversation. "He loves to play ball; he was rushing after it, when he upset you."

"I judged he was in a hurry about something," Mr. Kent responded gravely. Then his eyes met

Buddie's, and they both roared. Indeed, no man, however bumped and tousled, could have withstood the mirth in those gray eyes of Buddie, could have held out against the infection of his laugh. Even Ebenezer felt the infection and pranced around them gayly, wheezing and puffing with commingled fatness and enjoyment of the joke. Then, in one final outburst of appreciation, he lowered his blunt muzzle to the ground and laid before the artist, not his ball, but the sucked and sodden remnants of a cap.

Buddie pounced for the cap.

"Ebenezer!" And, this time, his voice betrayed his real contrition. Bones would grow again and bruises resume their normal tint and size; but caps of English tweed were another matter.

"Never mind. I've another in my trunk, and this was getting faded, anyway," Mr. Kent said quickly, for now he saw a cloud in the gray eyes before him, and clouds, he believed, should have no place on the horizon of a boy like Buddie Angell. "Besides," he took the cap from Buddie's hand; "really, he hasn't hurt it much; it is only rather sloppy. Anyway," he stuck it in his pocket as he spoke; "I meant to go bareheaded up here, when I came. This will be a good chance to begin; I can say the dog gave me an excuse. Like to play ball, you rascal? Go get it, then."

But Ebenezer's interest in his ball had abated. He preferred the cap. Accordingly, he pranced about the artist in clumsy appeal.

"No, sir; you can't have it. Where is your ball? No; your ball?"

"Here's another." And Buddie produced it.

"Oh. Plays two at once, like any other juggler? Good boy! Now — go!" And Buddie held his breath in wonder at the long, strong sweep made by the outflung ball.

Ebenezer, the cap forgotten, went scrabbling after it. He found it without delay; nevertheless, it was long before he was back again. This time, Buddie was prancing as excitedly as Ebenezer.

"You can't do it again," he proclaimed shrilly.

The artist laughed.

"Why not?"

"Because — nobody could; not even —" And Buddie uttered the name of the most famous pitcher of his day. "He's a young man, too; but he could never do that, twice running."

"It might depend a little bit upon his training." Mr. Kent bent down and took the ball from Ebenezer's jaws, whirled it up with a deft turn of his wrist, whirled it again; then, "Anyhow, let's try," he said nonchalantly.

A minute later, there came a little upward curling of his gray mustache, as he heard Buddie's roar of approbation.

"Done, by Jingo; and a good twenty yards to spare! Mr. Kent, you are a wonder."

The mustache curled a little higher, for the boyish praise was sweet. Mr. David Kent revered his art exceedingly; he revered yet more his supple, agile body whose every nerve and muscle he had trained to answer to the bidding of his brain. But few could be made into artists, he was accustomed to insist; a perfectly adjusted body was a gift within

the grasp of all men, and the more honour to those who were not too self-indulgent to ignore its possibilities. It was more worth while to make the most and the best of the common thing than of the uncommon one. Accordingly, nine men out of every ten counted David Kent an eccentric. The tenth man, though, insisted that David Kent was doing something worth the while. If the body had such splendid possibilities, then why not make it an extra duty to develop them to the very utmost? There was no reason that agility and suppleness should be the possession of boys alone. As for David Kent himself, he rarely boasted of his hobbies; he merely rode them. Therefore, —

"No; only a bit of an athlete," he said.

"A bit! Hh! What team are you on?" Buddie demanded.

"Team?"

"Yes. Aren't you professional?"

Once more the artist stooped to take the ball from Ebenezer.

"Oh, no."

Buddie's face fell.

"You aren't? I thought — But you play baseball?"

"I used."

"'Varsity?"

"Ye — es."

Buddie wondered at the hesitation. He did not like to ask its cause, although his companion would have chosen him to do so. The consequent confession that he had lost a close-drawn tenth inning for his team by collapsing utterly at sight of the injured

nose of one of his companions: this might have paved the way for a word of explanation of his apparent funk, the other night. It seemed so foolish to tell Buddie, apropos of nothing in particular, that from his childhood he had fainted always at the sight of blood. Unfortunately, though, Buddie had moments of remembering his good manners. He remembered them now, and forebore to ask a question. That long-drawn *ye-es* might have its origin in some boyish prank above which the artist would have chosen to draw the veil of complete forgetfulness. Instead of pressing the question, —

"What else can you do?" Buddie demanded, with surpassing tact.

"Else?"

"Besides pitching the greatest balls that ever were?" Buddie urged excitedly.

All of a sudden, the gray eyes lost their indifference, and twinkled with a mirth like Buddie's own.

"Sometimes I paint pictures."

"Oh, yes, that," Buddie admitted, with some impatience. "But I mean the other sort of things. Can you use a bat?"

"A little. I don't care too much about it, though."

"Why not?"

"Sluggy. It is more strength than skill, after all the fuss." And now there was no conscious effort in the way the speaker dropped into boy vernacular. "I like tennis better, myself. Here's something else I like. Look here." An instant later, three coins were spinning from one hand to the other, rising and falling in a rhythmic dance.

Buddie's eyes widened, threatened to drop from

his round, red head. Then he yielded to his overpowering curiosity.

"Were you ever in a circus?" he inquired.

"Not yet. I may be driven to it, some day. Do you think they'd have me?" As he put the question, Mr. Kent kept the coins spinning in the air with one hand, dived into his pocket with the other, took out three more coins and set them spinning in their turn. For a good two minutes, he kept up the dance. Then he let them fall together, clashing, into his outstretched right hand. "Want me to teach you how?" he asked.

"Do I?" Buddie's accent was sufficient answer.

The artist's voice lost a little of its nonchalance.

"All right, then. But on one condition."

"What's that?"

"That you let me try to paint you."

Buddie's face fell.

"Make it Ebenezer," he urged swiftly.

Mr. Kent's face fell, in its turn. Ebenezer was an excellent dog, and his hair would offer its own problems as to treatment. Nevertheless, dogs were not exactly in his line. Then a way of escape opened out before him.

"Together," he said firmly.

Buddie hesitated for one final instant. Then his pride in Ebenezer triumphed over the possibilities of boredom.

"Done," he said.

And so the bargain was completed. It was long, however, before it came to any practical fulfilment.

CHAPTER SIX

EBENEZER AND THE TIMBER WOLF

OUT in the long grass, a good two miles from town, Buddie and Tom lay prostrate, hidden. No eyes but the keenest could have discovered their retreat, and then only because they added to their keenness the surety that the boys were somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood. In the crook of Buddie's arm, cuddled against him with a familiarity that betokened apprecative friendship, was a small and shining rifle. The twin rifle lay in front of Tom; but it lay a long way in front of him, and it was not loaded. Whatever his superiority in point of school, heretofore Tom had not added target practise to his other accomplishments.

Indian Bill squatted on his heels between the boys. It was two weeks, now, since Mr. MacDougall had confided the pair of youngsters to Indian Bill's good care, two weeks that they had gone afield with him, sometimes pounding along on Budge and Toddie at the heels of Indian Bill's half-broken broncho, sometimes on foot and armed with rod or rifle, as the chances of the day and their own inclinations dictated. At the first, Dr. Angell had looked a little dubious over the boys' new monitor; but Mr. MacDougall had convinced him that Indian Bill was steadiness itself, the safest and the most re-

sponsible guide to be found within a radius of eighty miles.

Not content with outside testimony, Daddy had put Indian Bill through a searching catechism; the answers to the catechism had put his own woodcraft to the test, but Daddy had come out of the test like a man. He and Indian Bill had parted in a mood of mutual respect and satisfaction. Indian Bill had promised to teach the boys to cast a fly, to manage a canoe and to kill any game that offered, from rattlers to bison. Furthermore, that done, he promised to return them home, each night, undamaged. And, after an afternoon spent in his society, Daddy believed him implicitly. It was plain that Indian Bill knew what he was saying.

From that afternoon onward, a new life dawned for the two boys. That afternoon, in common boredom, they had gone their separate ways, the one to fish, the other to amuse himself as best he might with Ebenezer, until Ebenezer succeeded in focussing Mr. Kent's attention on their presence. The next day, severally forgetful of fishing and of the juggling artist, forgetful, too, of certain spots on their anatomy which were very far from callous, they had mounted Budge and Toddie and, with their luncheons lashed behind their saddles, had gone loping away into the cañon, with Indian Bill loping along between them. No sooner had the mouth of the cañon shut behind them, though, than Indian Bill's lope changed to a swinging gallop and the boys, perforce, must gallop, too, or else be left behind and out of sight completely.

The galloping was fun; but not its aftermath.

The boys groaned dolorously, once they dismounted from their saddles; but Indian Bill listened to their groans unpityingly.

"Man always get stiff, when he is learning to ride," he said. "No matter. He get better by and by."

"Hang by and by!" Buddie objected. "It's now that's the matter. I say, Bill, I'm about all in."

Indian Bill shrugged his shoulders.

"You grumble-bug?" he queried. "Mr. MacDoo said you were not cowards."

The word made Buddie testy.

"I'm not," he said. "I'm only beastly sore and stiff. How about you, Chub?"

"Worse," Chubbie responded tersely. "Also bumped." For Toddie, in sheer lightness of heart, had done his best to spill Tom off, that morning, and, in the end, he had succeeded.

Indian Bill hobbled the ponies. Then he lit his pipe.

"You must hold the saddle better," he instructed them. "Then they can't get you off. To-morrow by and by you'll get over being stiff, after you've had some grub."

Grub, accordingly, they had. Afterwards, Indian Bill insisted that they should gallop home. The boys protested vainly; to their later surprise, they found that the second gallop undid a number of the knots in their anatomies. Moreover, though Toddie was so far animated by his success of the morning that he tried all manner of tricks to unseat his rider, Tom held on manfully and came home without a tumble. As consequence, Buddie found

him disagreeably smug, all evening, after the curt word of praise with which Indian Bill had left him.

Next day, the ponies were left in their stable, and Indian Bill took the boys forth on foot, for a scramble up the mountain to a little lake much loved by salmon trout. Here, it was Tom's turn to score, for Buddie used his line as if it were a flail, lashing the waters until the hungry fish fled in consternation and huddled greedily at Tom's end of the little pool.

Next day after, honours were easy, for Indian Bill took them out on the river in his bark canoe. Both the boys could row more than a little, both were masters of the science and the art of steering, so it was but a step to learn to use a paddle with deftness and discretion. An intervening day on horseback kept the honours easy; but, once it came to marksmanship, Buddie was far in the lead. Not in vain had he been a pioneer among boy scouts, leading a company whose West Point scout master had focussed most of his attention upon drill and shooting. Buddie could hit his bull's eye, eight times out of every ten; and Indian Bill promptly set to work to teach him to hit a falling penny. The teaching, though, bade fair to last indefinitely. Tom, while it lasted, lay on his back in the shade and offered drastic comment. The burden of his comment, to the effect that some fellows thought they could do anything, till they found out that — and so forth, exasperated Buddie into a state of unsteadiness where he would have missed a barn door at four paces.

Judged merely as an Indian, Bill was a shocking

disappointment. Only his black hair, his jutting cheek bones and his apparently unending assortment of grunts betrayed his lineage. He dressed like a well-to-do tramp; he spoke a jargon culled from the broken English of the Italian gangs who laboured on the roadway, and adorned with the choicest flowers of college slang brought out by successive generations of assistant engineers. In short, he might have been anything from an ex-convict to an Oriental prince travelling incognito.

As guide, philosopher and friend, however, he was unexcelled. He knew every bypath and trail of the region; he could answer any question of woodcraft that the mind of boy could concoct and ask. As a rule, too, he answered accurately. When accuracy failed him, he answered with a grave air of general omniscience that was quite as satisfactory as mere accurate information, and gave the boys a sense of excited interest as to whether it would be safe to pass the information on, or no. It was good fun to pass it on, and see Aunt Julia and the doctor exchange glances of pleased surprise at their intelligence. There were other experiences, though, that were less good fun. Now and then, at some proudly-uttered bit of wisdom, Mr. MacDougall had been known to go off into a roar of laughter. Pressed for the reason, he could only be induced to gasp, —

"Oh, that Bill! That Bill!"

And Buddie, like every other boy at the transition age, hated intensely to be laughed at. Therefore, after a few experiments, he determined to keep Indian Bill's wise utterances for his own personal instruction.

Apart from the lore of woodcraft which Indian Bill, as the case might be, did, or did not, have, his scent for potential game was unfailing; his skill in making up a varied programme, comfortably exciting, and not too strenuous, was unrivalled. He never allowed the boys to miss a chance for really good sport; neither did he allow them to do too much of any one thing, or to do it too often. He trained them in a dozen things at once, and kept keen their interest in all the dozen.

This had been going on for two good weeks now, and the boys prudently had been making the most of all their chances. This sort of thing, they argued, was too much fun to last. They would take it as it came, until the annual arrival of the expert hunters who, Mr. MacDougall assured them, took Bill with them into the higher mountains during a part of each July and August. However, he had also told them, by that time they ought to know enough to take to the woods upon their own account, without the guiding brain and hand of Indian Bill to plan their expeditions for them. In August, too, his own work would slacken a little of its hold upon his time. Perhaps they all would try a bit of mountaineering, later on. Meanwhile, they best would get all the experience out of Indian Bill they could.

That very morning, Indian Bill had offered them a new experience. In spite of his stolid countenance, his eyes had glistened with delight, as he came galloping up to the MacDougall steps, directly after breakfast, drew up his broncho with a flourish, and, flinging his leg over the saddle, sat sidewise to face Buddie.

"You come shoot timber wolf, this morning?" he inquired.

"Sure." Buddie spoke as calmly as if he had ever shot anything larger than a jack-rabbit.

"All right. You get your gun ready and find Tom. I'll be back soon." And, with a second flourish, he flung his leg back to position, and gathered up the reins.

"Wait a jiffy. How far is it, Bill? Shall we walk, or ride?" Buddie cast the questions at Bill's retreating back.

"Can't hunt timber wolf on horseback," Indian Bill responded, over his retreating shoulder. "He's foxy. We must lie doggo, and wait for him to show up."

"Where? How do you know there is one, Bill?" Buddie shouted after him.

Indian Bill apparently thought better of his determination to be gone. Urging his pony to a gallop, he cut a wide circle in the offing and came tearing back again to bestow more information.

"Bill knows," he said, as he drew up so suddenly as to cause his pony to come dangerously near to seating himself upon his tail. "He has been round here, three-four nights. Last night and night before, he was in Stanway's corral."

"How do you know?"

Indian Bill paused to light his pipe.

"I watch him," he said calmly. "I sat in hay-heap, and watched him kill a lamb."

"Bill, you beast! Why didn't you stop him?" Buddie demanded, horror-stricken at the mental picture.

Indian Bill spoke unconcernedly.

"Because I wanted you bimeby to help me stop him. I follow him, where the lamb drip-drip on the ground, and I find out where he hides. Now we'll go kill him, so he won't come back, to-night. So long, then. I'll go put away my horse and pretty soon come back."

A half hour later, the two boys, guns on shoulder, were following Indian Bill into the cañon's mouth. Once inside the cañon, Bill turned sharply towards the eastern slope, went up it for a little way, turned again to follow the general direction of the cañon, and then came to a sudden halt.

"In there," he said briefly. "He's sleepy now, after much lamb-meat. Bimeby, though, he'll wake up thirsty and go get some water in the brook up there. He always trots along here; we can hit him, when he's going by."

"How do you know all this yarn, Bill?" Buddie made incredulous query, for it was not altogether plain whether or not Indian Bill was testing their credulity.

Indian Bill gave him a glance of frigid scorn.

"Bill's hunters coming, next week," he muttered; "real men hunters, not just boys. They believe Bill, when he talks."

Promptly Buddie abased himself, likewise he abased the innocent Tom who had not spoken an incriminating syllable. Indian Bill waited patiently, until he saw that no more penitence could be extracted from either of the boys. Then he expressed himself as being satisfied, and gave himself over to the task of showing the boys how to hide themselves in the tall grass above the trail. That done, —

"What's doing now?" Buddie queried flippantly, for Indian Bill's elaborate preparations seemed rather wasted upon one lonesome timber wolf.

Indian Bill lifted one warning finger.

"Hssssss!" he hissed. "Timber Wolf has big ears. We just wait here, till he comes out."

"How long?" Buddie demanded.

Indian Bill lowered his voice impressively.

"Who knows?" he said. "Maybe we wait one hour, maybe two, maybe all day. Nobody knows how long he sleeps, when he is very full. We just wait."

This time, it was Buddie who spoke impressively.

"Well, I am blessed!" he said.

Tom spoke too low for even Indian Bill to hear.

"Maybe so's the timber wolf," he said.

And Buddie chuckled.

Then, warned by something in the eyes of Indian Bill that this was no time for flippant mirth, the boys came to attention, and the silence fell about them, a silence so intense that, bit by bit, it imposed its spell upon the boys until they dared not break it. And, bit by bit, by that same measure, the morning dragged itself along, until the boys imagined that they had lain there in the grass for many hours, not merely half of one. And then, of a sudden, something broke the silence, a heavy something, wheezing and rushing to and fro distractedly.

An instant afterward, Tom showed the stuff he was made of, showed that he had within him fighting blood, albeit rather thinned by peaceful generations. Swiftly he flung his gun to his shoulder and took careful aim at the far horizon, totally

heedless of the fact that the gun was not loaded and that he was holding it carefully upside down. But Buddie, though cheered by this unlooked-for manifestation of the hunting spirit, yet knocked the gun aside with his unoccupied hand.

"Hold on, you idiot!" he bade his friend impolitely. "That's no timber wolf, thrashing about like that. Besides, it's coming from the wrong direction. You'll kill somebody yet, if you don't look out. It's — By Jove, put down your gun! It's Ebenezer."

And Ebenezer it surely was, breathless and triumphant, his shaggy coat plastered to his sides with specimens gathered from the burry patches he had traversed, and his bearded face wreathed in smiles that he had succeeded in tracking his adored master through two miles of mountain fastness.

Indian Bill grunted violently, as he sat up and scowled upon the rapturous Ebenezer who was dancing madly up and down their grassy hiding place.

Buddie, scenting damage to his pet, spoke hurriedly.

"It's all right, Bill. He'll be quiet in a sec. or two. Just let him work off a little steam, and then he'll stay — What do you call it? Doggo? — just as well as any of us."

"Puppy-o, you'd better say." And Tom made a snatch at Ebenezer's hairy flank, lost his balance and fell across Buddie's prostrate body. Naturally enough, Buddie yelped with mingled surprise and anguish, for Tom, though long and lean, was also solid, and he had given no hint of his intention to

arrive on Buddie's stomach. There followed the inevitable rough-and-tumble fray, a fray to which Ebenezer, according to his custom, lent himself with great enthusiasm; and, for a minute or two, the air was full of puffing sighs and sounding whacks and little canine gurgles and yelps of pleasure. Indian Bill shut his teeth and fixed his gaze upon the spot where his expected victim was supposed to be sleeping the sleep of sated gluttony.

"No good to try to hunt with little boys," he muttered. "They always make big noise and scare Mr. Timber Wolf away. Boys got no sense, anyhow."

Buddie laughed.

"No matter, Bill, so long as their Uncle Brooks has got the needful dollars to pay your wages," he retorted. "You can have your fun in any way you like. For my part, though, I'll take mine in Ebenezer."

Indian Bill shook his head disdainfully.

"That dog not good. He can't hunt, nor bite, nor kill; he can't do anything but eat. He'd be afraid and run away, if Mr. Timber Wolf should show himself."

"Let him try it and see." Buddie spoke derisively, and more for the sake of teasing Indian Bill than because he had any faith in the prowess of his pet.

He spoke carelessly; but his phrase was cut short by one of those coincidences which now and then arise to take one's breath away.

The timber wolf did try it. What was more, he saw.

Disturbed in his sleep, perhaps by the very clamour of which Indian Bill had been complaining, he stirred, then rose, and moving out of the rocky cleft where he had been lying hid, he stuck his head out into the open and stood, staring drowsily about him. What happened next inside of Ebenezer's wise gray head, it would be hard to say. Probably some hereditary recollection that his was the race born to safeguard the flocks, some hereditary realization that wolves were always foes of sheep; some ancestral nerve, it was evident, was set to throbbing, telegraphing its messages into Ebenezer's brain. The instant of the telling is many times longer than the instant of the fact itself. Before even Indian Bill, or much less Buddie, could bring his gun into position, Ebenezer, the fat and slothful, Ebenezer, the useless, had given utterance to a deep-throated snarl such as his own ears had never heard from him before, and, with one crazy leap and plunge, had hurled himself across the intervening stretch of grassland, to throw himself upon the astonished timber wolf with a suddenness and force that left him powerless to resist. There was a moment of chaos, a moment of stillness. Then Ebenezer licked his lips, shook himself till every hair danced beneath its burry meshwork; then he turned sedately and trotted back to Buddie's side.

Once more, generations of decent living had left their mark and told their tale. Ebenezer had showed himself a gentleman, even in the way that he did his hereditary ugly work.

That night, however, an irate and disgusted

Indian Bill sat long in council with Mr. Brooks MacDougall. There was the clink of silver, when they parted. Next morning, Mr. Brooks MacDougall announced to all whom it might concern that Indian Bill had been obliged to start suddenly on a hunting trip that would take him to the farther side of the range.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LONESOME TERESA

"AFTER all," Aunt Julia said to her half-brother, when they were left alone to finish their breakfast at their leisure; "I believe I am more than half glad of it."

"Really? Yes, a third of a cup, please. Well, I am wholly so."

Aunt Julia looked pleased.

"You, too?"

"Yes." The doctor spoke with deliberation. "I want my son to be an all-round man. That does not mean, though, that I care especially to have him turn out a butcher."

"No; it wouldn't sound well in the family annals," Aunt Julia assented gravely. Then she began to laugh. "From all accounts, though, I don't believe that there's much chance of any great amount of butchery at present."

"Only in intention?" the doctor queried whimsically. "Well, after all, that's what counts. I want Buddie to be a good marksman; nobody knows when it may be a help to him. Still, it was refreshing to hear him telling Tom, after they were in bed, last night, that he didn't believe he ever could kill anything that faced him and looked him in the eyes."

Aunt Julia nodded thoughtfully.

"I like that. Best not tell Brooks, though; he would be horrified. He has lived out here in the wilderness so long that he has become a thorough sportsman. But what is all right for forty isn't exactly what we want for fourteen. Aside from the killing things, Ernest, had it ever struck you that —," She hesitated, blushing a little as the idea occurred to her that she was no longer in the least responsible for the youngster who, for nine long months, had been her mingled joy and care.

The doctor took the phrase from her lips.

"That the boys were likely to turn into young savages? Yes, Julia, it had."

"And you didn't like it any better than I did?" As she put the question, Aunt Julia rested her elbows on the table and cupped her hands beneath her chin.

Unthinkingly the doctor copied her gesture and pose.

"No," he said then; "I did not. Still, I suppose it is only natural, considering the temptations, although I didn't foresee it, when I came."

"When you came?" his sister asked him quickly. "I hope you don't regret your coming, Ernest."

The doctor's accent reassured her instantly.

"Not a bit, dear girl. It was a tremendous chance for both of us. This out-door life is everything for me, this summer; and, as for Buddie, he must learn as soon as possible that, because on no account is he to be a milksop, neither on any account is he to be a young desperado. In time, that Buffalo Bill of Brooks's will be the best thing in the world

for both the boys. The only trouble was that he appeared upon the scene too soon, before they quite had found their balance in these new conditions. Instead of running wild, they bolted. After a little, they'll calm down. I wish —"

"Well?" Aunt Julia urged, for the doctor had caught himself up suddenly.

He laughed.

"I wish you had a daughter, Julia."

She lifted her brows mockingly.

"Just like Teresa?" she inquired.

"You mind-reader! How did you know?"

"I have felt it coming. In fact, I knew it was only a question which one of us spoke of it first. Ernest, how are we going to get her out here?"

The doctor whistled thoughtfully; but the new light in his eyes showed the content he felt at the suggestion.

"Would they let her come?"

"I think it could be arranged." Aunt Julia spoke decidedly. She was a woman resourceful in her methods of persuasion. Besides, she had lived for many years next house to Teresa and the other members of her clan.

"You mean that you would arrange it? But have we any right to take the child away, if her mother needs her?" Dr. Angell asked conscientiously.

But Aunt Julia merely repeated her former utterance, —

"I think it could be arranged."

Then she fell silent and began beating a light tattoo upon the table-cloth. Her brother watched her in respectful silence. The experience of the

past fifteen months, experience gained in part from personal observation, in part by way of the reports of Buddie, had taught him that his sister, left to herself, could find a way to the fulfilment of any plan she deemed expedient. In the difficult trails where he was wont to flounder, she walked steadily, securely, to her end. Therefore he saw no reason to disturb her, midway along her course.

"You can't," deliberately Aunt Julia spoke from out her meditations; "you can't very well wrap up a great girl like that in paper, and send her out here by Adams express."

"No," the doctor made grave assent; "no, you really can't."

After an interval, Aunt Julia pushed back her chair.

"I'll have to plan it out," she said, with calm decision. "Leave it to me. I'll think about it."

"And, if I can be of use —" her brother hinted respectfully.

"Perhaps. I'm not sure. I'll talk it over with Brooks," Aunt Julia answered. "Of course, though, you won't say a word yet to Buddie."

"Of course not." Dr. Angell rose. Then he turned to his sister again. "But, Julia, ought you to undertake any more care?" he asked affectionately.

Her eyes answered his accent, though her lips showed her amusement.

"You don't know Teresa yet, Ernest, if you can speak of her as a possible care. The child will be taking care of us, before she has been in camp an hour."

"In a way, yes. And yet —"

Aunt Julia interrupted with decision.

"In every way. You'll find she'll mend your socks, and mend my broken dishes, while she also is mending the manners of the boys. Teresa is as self-reliant as she is capable. Once we get her here, it is only a question of giving her a bed, and of seeing to it that she doesn't lure the boys on into breaking their own necks and hers."

The doctor looked a trifle startled. Such possibilities had not entered into any of his plans. His intermittent experiences of Teresa had been brief enough to conceal the fact that she had been poised insecurely upon the pinnacle of her company manners.

"But I didn't suppose she was that sort," he said.

His sister laughed at the consternation evident in his tone.

"She is, though; and therein lies her value in this especial case," she answered, with a shrewdness born of her months of studying Buddie's eccentricities and his needs. "If she were the other sort, mincing and finical, the boys would go their ways without her, and then good bye to her having the slightest influence upon them. Because she will insist on going with them until she is ready to drop, and because she is good, lively company, they will calm down and fit their pace to hers, rather than leave her behind. I know what I am talking about, Ernest. I haven't watched Buddie, all these weeks and months, for nothing. He has had spasms of being polite to other girls; but, in the end, they bored him, because they all insisted on being too girl-y. With Teresa, it was different. Half the

time they were together, I think Buddie didn't know whether she was boy or girl."

"Did you?" the doctor questioned keenly.

Aunt Julia understood his keeness, and she liked its cause.

"I did," she said, with crisp decision. "For all she isn't girl-y, she is a girl, and feminine down to the bottom of her soul. She may be a little boisterous, she might even be quite spunky on occasion; but she could never be rude or masculine, if she tried. It simply isn't in her."

Meanwhile, the subject of the discussion sat on her own front step, penning a letter to her former friend and crony, Buddie Angell. It was literally her own front step where she sat, the front door step of the playhouse built by an indulgent father for his solitary daughter at an epoch when he first had seen that that daughter's existence was likely to be cramped and crumpled by contact with too many younger brothers. There were nine of these brothers, ranging all the way from the solemn and sanctimonious Eric, just younger than Teresa, down to the fractious infant playing on the lawn, an infant baptized Toby, but commonly known as little Tootles. Nine brothers undoubtedly may be nine times a blessing; but no one sister can be expected to keep them properly in subjection. Teresa's father had foreseen, even when the nine were only four or five, that there would be periods when Teresa was in danger of being swamped completely; and it was to provide a safe harbour for such periods that the playhouse had been built.

One such period had just been taking place. There

had been disagreement, contest, threatened chastisement. Then Teresa, putting a strong curb on her girlish temper, had shut her teeth, elevated her chin and marched away in search of solitude and spiritual shelter, leaving the nine to fight it out alone, as best they could. Judging from the sounds which floated over to her, as she sat writing in the doorway, there had been no lack in their ability to carry on the strife. Indeed, its aftermath had come trailing after her in the person of a teary, mottled little Tootles. That was the worst of it all, Teresa reflected to herself disgustedly, the while she mopped the tears from the fat and mottled cheeks of Tootles: excepting the time that they were fighting her, never by any chance did the nine unite against a common foe. As result, there was always a worsted and wailing minority trailing after her in search of consolation. Not that Teresa failed to love her little brothers. It was merely that, just now and then, she found herself wishing vaguely that there were not quite so many of them, or else that six or seven of them had had a bit maturer grip on their emotions.

Tootles consoled and dismissed to his own amusement, Teresa returned to her interrupted letter which, to tell the truth, had progressed only so far as the single line which gave the date. Teresa detested writing letters; but she had promised Buddie she would write to him, every month, and she had kept her promise bravely, in spite of pens that blotted and words whose spelling passed her ken. Indeed, that was one reason Teresa disliked writing; the words she really cared to use, the words which told her meaning with the greatest

force and clearness, were just the words she could not spell, sometimes because they were too long and intricate, sometimes because they never had been set down in any dictionary. That last fact, though, made no difference to Teresa. As long as the words expressed the things she wished to say, that was all that counted. Dictionary or not, Buddie would find out their meaning from the rest of the sentence and his common sense. Long since, she had learned to count on Buddie's understanding, without the need for any explanations on her own part.

It was now a little more than a year ago that Buddie Angell had come over her back fence, one morning, and, at the same time, come into the very middle of her life. They had been friends from the start, albeit they had begun squabbling from the instant that their eyes first had rested on each other's faces. That was the joy of Buddie. One could squabble with him grandly, without its breaking up their friendship in the least. Rather, they had been all the better friends by reason of their little tiffs. The warmest air gets sultry, and needs an occasional thunder storm to cool it. And it would be idle to deny that the intercourse of Buddie and Teresa had been full of storms.

It was more than a year since Buddie, with Ebenezer at his heels, had come prancing across the threshold of Teresa's universe. It was now five months since Buddie had vanished from her visible horizon. The time, though, had not blunted Teresa's memories in the least, had not lessened her surety that, despite his sins, despite her proper

loyalty to her own retinue of brothers, there never would be another boy to equal Buddie.

At least, though, they had made the most of the months they had been together, had made the most of all their chances for good times. Teresa lived in a little house, next door to the large one which had been inhabited by Miss Julia Tenney before she had become Mrs. Brooks MacDougall. As long as she had been able to remember backward, Teresa had known and adored Miss Julia. Nevertheless, she had not known that Miss Julia owned a nephew, until the morning when that nephew had appeared. And such a nephew!

Miss Julia always was daintiness personified; and, at that epoch of her life, the epoch before she had had the chastening experience of Buddie's training, she was a little prim, more than a little given over to conventions. And this red-headed, freckled youngster with the frowsy dog trailing at his heels, this unexpected, unheralded nephew Buddie, was neither daintiness personified, nor yet was he conventional in the least. He was just plain, unregenerate human boy. Neither, to the end of things, had it been ever quite apparent on which side was the real training, whether Buddie or Miss Julia was its actual object. It was possible, however, that it had worked both ways.

Anyway, one morning early, Teresa had gone, according to her custom, to sit in the old lilac bush in the fence corner, and plan out her programme for the day. She had been singing contentedly to herself and, quite incidentally, to the entire neighbourhood, when a boyish voice, close at hand, had offered

disrespectful comment on her choice of song. She had retorted, and the rest had followed naturally, down to the moment when she had bidden Buddie and his woolly comrade to inspect the playhouse; down to the hour, nine months later, when she had waved a plucky farewell to a departing Pullman car, and then had gone back to hide herself in an abandoned playhouse and cry herself ill over the consciousness that that same Pullman car was carrying away with it a good half of her universe.

During the intervening months, she and Buddie had been practically inseparable. Not a day had passed without their meeting; all their best pranks had been concocted together and had been carried out in common; all their worst half hours had been shared jointly, as had been all their chiefest pleasures. Even they so far had contrived things as to have the need for discipline strike them both simultaneously, thus shortening the later fugue of agony into one grand, smashing chord of woe.

And now Buddie was in a remote corner of the earth called Gray Buttes, having the grandest possible times with a new boy called Chubbie Neal, and with an interesting background of Aunt Julia and wild Indian, and Ebenezer, and some mustang ponies, while she sat on the lonely doorstep, trying to write a letter, but really listening to the snifflings of a self-pitying little Tootles who, contrary to the creed of Buddie, believed in prolonging his woe in every possible variant of every different key. Gloomily Teresa bit the handle of her pen; gloomily Teresa eyed the sheet of paper, still guiltless of any ink save on the single line given to the date. She

had meant to write a long, a really interesting and long, letter to her absent friend, that day. What was the use, though, when her message could be condensed into half a dozen words? But letters were intended to carry news, not give one's personal opinion, or express one's personal desires. Valiantly she gripped her pen, shutting her ears to the faint whimperings of the injured little Tootles.

"Dear Buddie, —

"School closes, next week, and we all are to have declamations. I am going to say *Aunt Tabitha*, and Eric is to say *The Recessional*. Sandy's is shorter, but it is very earnest. It begins *Flower in the crannied wall*. He says he chose it for its thoughtfulness; but I believe it was because it's only ten lines, or else eight. I can say it; but I can't think just how it splits up.

"Next week comes vacation. I mean to —"

Lifting her face from above the paper, Teresa sat staring off across the lawn. Her eyes, at first fixed on little Tootles, at length grew wide and vague, and then so misty that little Tootles vanished in a fog. The next minute, two great tears went splashing down upon the paper, reducing the later phrases to an inky pool.

It was the final straw to Teresa's agony, this ruining her hard-written letter with such ignoble stains. For a minute or two, she sat gazing down at it forlornly. Then, with a sudden decisive gesture, she cast the spotted sheet aside, and gripped her pen with nervous fingers.

"You dear old boy," she wrote; "what's the use of my trying to sit here and write to you about all sorts of things that don't count, when all I want is just to see you, and have a good talk about the things we both are doing? I miss you, every single day. Of course, there are Eric and Sandy and the rest; but they aren't you, and they do make me very mad sometimes. Don't you suppose you'll ever come back here to live? It was circus, last week, and I could have gone; but I wouldn't, without you.

"Yours loyally,

"TERESA.

"P.S. I buried Rosa, last week. I didn't mean to; but she kept leaking out her stuffing, and I thought I'd like to remember her before she was nothing but an empty calico bag. It was hard; but so is life.

"Yours, T."

Four days later, Buddie's face was full of trouble, as he took his aunt apart from all the others and confided to her the contents of this harrowing epistle. Aunt Julia, as was her wont, accepted the confidence with all discretion, and administered just the proper amount of understanding and sympathy.

To Buddie, she said comparatively little; but, in her heart of hearts, reading the girlish nature from between the lines, she made up her mind that the time for her to act was come. If Adams Express and the paper parcel were impossible, then some practicable substitute for these must be found.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ON THE TRAPEZE

"I WOULDN'T do that sort of thing, if I were in your place, Kent," Dr. Angell was saying persuasively.

"But why?"

The doctor laughed.

"You're not as young as you used to be," he answered.

The artist's eyes twinkled.

"Physician, heal —" he suggested.

"Precisely. That is what I have been doing. It took nine months in my case. We older fellows can't afford to try tricks with Dame Nature, Kent; wherefore I advise against your doing too strenuous gymnastics in this altitude. At fifty more or less, one's pumping apparatus begins to lose a little force, gets a bit loose around the packings."

"Not necessarily; not if one is in perfect trim, as I am."

"In training, yes." And the doctor gave a glance of admiration at the long, supple body of his new friend. "However, *training* and *trim* are altogether different words."

"Think so?" the artist queried. "Look here, doctor; I doubt your young son's ability to do this." And, without an instant's preparation, he flung a hand-

spring, then another sidewise, and landed, right side up, to all seeming none the worse for the experience.

During the past two or three weeks, Dr. Angell had come to have a solid liking for the long, lean artist, had come to consider him a grand possibility by way of friend. His past observations, though, had not in the least prepared him for any such performances as these, and he confessed himself a little startled. Moreover, the doctor, despite his theories of democracy, was conventional; and it was not altogether according to his notions to have a man of fifty interrupt a serious conversation by cavorting in that fashion.

Buddie, however, had no such reservations. Unlike his father, his admiration for a well-developed, supple body was a matter, not of theory, but of fact. From afar, he saw the delectable manœuvre, and came running, shouting his admiration, as he ran.

"Bully for you, Mr. Kent! What a whopper! Can you do it backwards?"

"For heaven's sake, Kent, don't!" the doctor interposed a little hurriedly.

His warning came too late. The artist waved his hand in answer to Buddie's salutation, then sent his two heels flying through the air, landed right side up again, and came to demure attention just in season to receive Buddie's vociferous congratulations.

"But I know you must have been in a circus," Buddie clamoured wildly. "Was it Barnum and Bailey, or just Ringling; and when was it?"

"Not yet, Buddie. I need to add a few more tricks to my list. They won't have me on the strength of my handsprings."

"They say cartwheels are dead easy," Buddie said encouragingly.

"Did you ever try them?"

"N—no; not exactly. But all you have to do about it is to twist yourself into a ring, and roll," Buddie explained lucidly. "I watched one, last time I was at the circus. No; last time but one."

"Not the last time?" Mr. Kent put the question promptly, for he felt there was a history behind the swift correction.

The history came promptly, and not too fully edited.

"No; last time, we didn't get inside. It was Sandy Hamilton that proposed it. He is brother of Teresa, the one I was telling you about, only not half so good a sport as she is. We were to go at three in the morning, walk four miles to see it come in and unpack, because he couldn't raise the money to go as one generally does. But he overslept, and Teresa came, too. It was all a mix-up; but it was a good thing she came, because she brought some pie and things in a basket, to eat on the way."

"And you saw it come in?" David Kent's voice told Buddie that he had not forgotten certain daybreak hours of his own boyhood.

Buddie roused himself from sentimental memories of Teresa and the pie.

"Rather! Ask Aunt Julia. Maybe she'd laugh about it now. In the time of it, though —" Buddie's pause was expressive. Then he chuckled, as he met his father's eye and read therein that this whole tale was news to Dr. Angell. "She can give you points, when it comes to lectures, Daddy," he said.

"She knows just how and where to slam it on. You see, the train was late, and we got interested in the elephants, and it seemed a shame not to watch how they acted in the streets. You know you don't get elephants just walking around town, every day, except in a procession; at least, not except in India, and so we went, too. Really, it was great, you know; and all the side-show people were walking around like anybody else, the kind you generally have to pay for. Honestly, for all the three of us, we must have saved as much as —" Buddie lost himself in computation.

"Well?" his father urged him.

Buddie looked up, once more alert and eager.

"Oh, we just got a little late about going home. We were there, in time for lunch; but we had missed out on breakfast and school, and nobody knew exactly where we were." He shut one eye, and thrust his fists into his pockets. "Gee-whizzikins. I didn't suppose Aunt Julia had it in her to kick up such a tremendous row," he observed reminiscently.

Mr. Kent's mind was trained to see possible pictures in every phrase. Now, the mental photograph of dainty, discreet Mrs. Brooks MacDougall kicking up anything at all, even a row, appealed to him greatly. He longed for more details to fill in the barren outlines of the sketch.

"What sort of a row, Buddie?" he inquired.

But Buddie promptly rebuked him for his indiscretion, albeit the edge of the rebuke was somewhat blunted by the angle of the accompanying glance.

"I never tell tales on Aunt Julia," he replied

circumspectly. And then he harked back to his original subject. "Can you do cartwheels?" he demanded.

Mr. Kent shook his head. For the time being, it seemed to him that no rejection of any of his pictures by any hanging committee could be one half so painful to his feelings as that frank avowal of the hiatus in his acrobatic prowess.

Buddie turned philosophical, by way of hiding his real disappointment.

"Well, I suppose a fellow can't do everything," he remarked, with a slight tinge of condescension. "It's something to do a good handspring, anyhow."

"Yes, perhaps." The artist spoke with deep humility. Something in Buddie's accent made him forgetful of the many bumps and bruises that had gone into the making of this one accomplishment.

"Can you do anything else, Mr. Kent?" Buddie asked politely.

"Buddie!" his father's tone was chiding. "Mr. Kent is an artist, not a circus clown."

"Who is talking about clowns, Daddy? They are only bores, put in to fill up the time. It's the real fellows that we go to see, the acrobats and the jugglers and the trapeze men."

"You like trapeze work?" Mr. Kent interrupted him.

"Naturally. Who doesn't? We fellows had one in the barn, really a good one, with three swings to it and a lot of rings. I was wild to try it; but Sandy, the same one who started our circus plan, insisted he should be the first to go, because his name came ahead of mine in the alphabet."

"I don't quite — "

Buddie paused to catch breath. While he paused, he flashed on the artist a cold glance of scorn, for the limits of his understanding.

"Well, you don't see the queerest things," he remarked, with a crushing frankness.

Again Daddy felt it was time to sound his warning note of, —

"Buddie!"

"Yes, I know; but he really doesn't. Anybody ought to know that Alexander comes before Ernest, when you spell it, and — "

And then Mr. Kent fell into disgrace.

"Ernest Angell?" he queried. "I must say, you don't look it."

Buddie longed to resort to fisticuffs. He caught his father's eye, however, and desisted.

"Mr. Kent," he grumbled; "my hair is very red, you know; and it does queer things to my temper, when people get too funny about my name. It's a name that seems to run in the family, and the longer they keep it up, too, the more of a mismatch it is. They say I am even worse than Daddy used to be."

Daddy sought to create a diversion.

"Where is Tom, this morning?" he inquired.

Buddie refused to be diverted.

"Don't worry, Daddy. I'm not telling about the way you skewered great-grandfather's wig in church time. But, about the trapeze: Sandy was bound to go ahead, and he did go — on his head. It knocked him perfectly silly for about half an hour; and that frightened Aunt Julia so she made us take

it down. Shame, for it had been any amount of work to put it up! Still, women are nervous, I suppose." Buddie spoke tolerantly. Then he added, "Were you ever on a trapeze, Mr. Kent?"

"I always keep one in my gymnasium."

Buddie's eyes widened till they showed their surrounding whites.

"Do you keep a gymnasium, a real one of your very own?"

"Yes. I've always had one, ever since I was a boy."

"Your mother wasn't nervous." Buddie's accent betrayed his envy. "How large a boy?"

"Seven or eight."

"Really? And you have one now?"

"Next my studio. I use the whole top of the building. It is finished up into the roof; really, the rooms are high enough for almost anything."

"And you use it now, an ol—" Buddie caught himself up swiftly, swiftly made his substitution; "a grown-up man like you?"

"Every day, when I'm in town. Up here, I find I miss it," Mr. Kent told him, simply as another boy.

"Really, Kent," the doctor interposed; "this is beginning to be interesting. You really mean—"

"I really mean that I am a bit of an amateur gymnast," the artist answered. "It is unusual, I know; but, after all, there is every reason for it. I have always loved it. It seems to be in my blood; I fancy I must have had a circus rider among some of my many ancestors, and, in my crib, my mother says, I tumbled and twisted like a little eel. Since

I grew up and went about my art, I have cared for it more than ever."

The doctor nodded.

"I can see. You creative chaps always need a lot of exercise," he said.

"Not that at all. It's quite the other way. My art has taught me to see the beauty in a lot of dangling muscles, and in the mere rhythm of motion. Besides, there are such a lot of ugly, clumsy bodies about, that it is only right for those of us who can see the difference to keep as light and as lithe as we can. Fact, Buddie? You might put it a little more shortly; but doesn't the idea hold a little bit of common sense, after all?"

Carried away by his own enthusiasm, the artist turned to Buddie for complete understanding. However, Buddie failed him utterly.

"Ja," he answered, with polite indifference, for, at fourteen, one takes the athletics and leaves out the art.

Mr. Kent flushed to a rich, dark red. Never too self-trustful, he suddenly realized that, in all probability, he had been making himself and his theories a confounded bore. He had the common sense to retrieve his error promptly.

"I suppose there wouldn't be a place up here," he said thoughtfully.

Buddie's indifference vanished.

"For a trapeze?"

"Yes, for a little one. I might be able to show you the easy way to do some things, and your father would be on hand to pick up the broken pieces. What of it, doctor?"

"Agreed. That is, if you'll let me stop you, when I know you are overdoing it."

"Of course. Buddie must start slowly; else, he'll come a cropper."

"I mean both of you. What is more, unless you both obey me, I'll have your tackle cut down before your very eyes."

"What about Chub?" Buddie queried.

Both men suppressed their mental reservations. Concerning Chubbie's trapeze prowess, they had their vigorous doubts.

"If he cares about it," Mr. Kent assured him.

"Of course he will. But come along. Let's go hunting for the best place." And Buddie's whistle to Ebenezer betrayed his impatience.

In the end, though, the place had to be made for them. Gray Buttes architecture did not run to the sort of thing that can be converted into a gymnasium at a moment's notice. Something especial had to be provided for the purpose. Mr. MacDougall saw to that. Indeed, as the time went on, the two boys, and then the two men, even, came to look upon Mr. Brooks MacDougall less as an indulgent relative than as a latter-day Aladdin whose lamp was always bright with many polishings. This time, his power showed itself in the prompt erection of a tall, wide tent close by the shack where Mr. Kent had set out his boot-trees and set up his easels, a tent so large as to give a circus-like flavour to the entire community.

The tent set up and its floor heaped thick with straw, Mr. MacDougall's best bridge workman spent two long twilights in putting up the needful ropes

and pulleys. Used to walking on a single beam above any sort of a roaring chasm, the mere clambering about the upper stretches of a tent was to him the merest child's play; and Mr. Kent, lying at full length in the straw, since that position afforded him the best possible view of operations, issued his orders about the proper placing of the rings and swings. Buddie sprawled beside him, his red head nuzzled against the artist's elbow, for this present undertaking was going far to make him forget his earlier scorn of his companion's manliness.

Tom, meanwhile, a string of fish upon his shoulder, had betaken himself to Aunt Julia in search of the admiration which Buddie had withheld. Not that Buddie was a stranger to the charms of fishing; not that his boyish appetite ever quarrelled with the resultant meals. It was only that, for the moment, dangling fishlines had given place in his mind to dangling swings and rings and cross-bars, and he was too busy to halve his attention and apply the halves impartially to either interest.

Tom, therefore, left the pair of enthusiastic acrobats lying prone amid the straw, and went to look for his Aunt-by-Marriage Julia, as he sometimes dubbed her. He found her, sitting alone on the verandah, playing patience in the twilight, and doing her best to forget the fluffy Persian pussy who aforetime had been accustomed to play patience with her. She looked up alertly, as Tom came around the corner of the house; then she hailed him cordially, admiringly.

"Chubbie! What a lot of fishes! And you went alone? Splendid!"

Tom tried his best to conceal his pleasure at her frank enthusiasm. He answered, with the crisp elision loved of boys.

"Enough for breakfast?"

"I should say so. Enough for a dozen breakfasts. Where did you go? Tell me about it."

"Down the cañon. Wait a jiff, till I take them round to Chang." And Tom vanished.

His jiff was a long one; and, when at last he reappeared, he was perceptibly cleaner, and he had exchanged his mountain boots for patent-leather pumps. That was the extraordinary thing about Aunt Julia, both the boys admitted in their go-to-bed conversations. She never said a word to criticise; but somehow she made you know she liked to see you dressed up a little and sitting straight, not sprawling. And, when she showed how much she liked a thing, one really couldn't well help doing it. She would do as much for you, dozens of times. Even Tom had found it out, just in the short while he had known her. One day, he had said something to her about a brooch like one his mother used to wear, and now she took pains to put it on for dinner, every single night.

And so, for his part, Tom had taken off his wet and creaky boots, and brushed his hair, and rolled down his cuffs. He felt quite like a full-fledged society man, when once more he had joined his aunt in the verandah. Moreover, Aunt Julia strengthened the impression by the way she put aside her cards and gave to him her whole attention; by the way she

questioned him about his catch, and about his plans for to-morrow morning. She not only asked him questions; but, what was more rare in Tom's experience of women, she listened carefully to his replies, and made short comments which showed him that she understood and cared about the things he told her.

At last, when his tide of narration had slowed down a little, —

"Where are the others?" he inquired.

"Uncle Brooks and Dr. Angell drove out to the new bridge, this noon," Aunt Julia told him. "There was a good deal for Uncle Brooks to do; he told me they would be late home. Buddie —"

"I saw him," Tom interrupted. "He's out in the new tent, flat on the floor beside his latest hero."

Aunt Julia looked up suddenly.

"You think so?" she questioned.

Her phrase was dubious; but Tom caught her meaning.

"I know so. They are as thick as thieves, the two of them. Mr. Kent had it first, and now Buddie is catching it, catching it hard. The funny thing about it all to me is the way he adores Mr. Kent; and, all the whole time, he hasn't the slightest notion that he cares two straws about him."

There was no bitterness in Tom's tone, no envy. Nevertheless, something in the boy's eyes caused Aunt Julia to gather up her scattered cards.

"I was getting desperately lonely, when you appeared, Chubbie," she confessed; "lonesome and a good deal bored. It's nice of you to stay here and amuse me. Listen. I've just been learning a new

game of patience, a hard one that I can't seem to manage. I wonder if you'd be too busy to go through it with me, just this once."

Two hours later, when Buddie sauntered into the verendah upon his father's heels, he found Chubbie and Aunt Julia still bending intently above the orderly ranks of laid-out cards.

CHAPTER NINE

TERESA'S ADVENT

TWO thatches of red hair were intermingled. The topographer was bending over Buddie who, feeling curiously limp and dizzy, was sitting on his knee. Tom was fidgetting to and fro beside the pair of them, almost voiceless with the fear of consequences, yet seeking to explain the cause and nature of Buddie's present limpness.

The topographer, once he had satisfied himself that, despite his name, Buddie was not likely to join the heavenly host at present, turned an attentive ear to Tom's spluttering explanation. When it was evident that no more testimony was to be gained from Tom, the topographer spoke, and forcibly.

"Well, now you have been through a miracle and come out alive, I think it is my official duty to report the case to Mr. MacDougall, and ask him to spank you soundly."

Tom quaked at the note of scorn in the topographer's voice. And he looked too much a youngster, himself, to know how to be so stern. Buddie, however, although still leaning limply against the sturdy shoulder, yet refused to quake at all; but cocked his eyes up at the red-brown eyes above him.

"But you'd have done the same thing, yourself, if you'd had our chance," he murmured faintly.

The topographer realized that his official dignity was melting fast. The worst of it was, the little scamp sitting on his knee was quite aware of the fact, and framed his next remark accordingly. The topographer was just getting his breath from one of the worst frights of his experience. He longed to shake both the boys, and give them a large and spicy piece of his mind. But Buddie, comfortably settled against his shoulder, was so like his own favourite young brother at home that, instead of shaking him, he merely flung his arm across the boyish shoulder and left it resting there. Buddie cuddled to the touch, with the gesture of a Persian kitten. That was one of Buddie's peculiar tricks. All energy and independence, in short, all boy that he was, he responded instantly to any sort of petting. Moreover, for some obscure reason, his manliness lost nothing by it.

"Honest now," he queried cosily, while he cuddled; "didn't we give you a good run for your money?"

The topographer tried his best to stiffen up his thawing dignity, tried his best, and failed. In the end, he laughed.

"I should rather say you did," he assented.

Buddie felt his normal stiffening coming back to him. He sat up and faced his quondam nurse.

"Well, I am glad I did. You official fellows don't get half the exercise you need. Besides, it was the only way I could coax you into taking any notice of me."

"I? You?"

"Yes. You. Me," Buddie mocked him. "I've been here almost a month now, and I was dying to get acquainted. All I could get out of you, though,

was just a 'Do!' now and then. I had do-d as long as I could stand it, and so I thought I'd try to jar you out of your — " Then Buddie hesitated. After all, even if he wasn't much but a boy, the fellow was topographer, and therefore staff.

"My?" the young man queried.

Buddie dismissed his questionings concerning manners, and cuddled back against the sturdy shoulder.

"Your starch," he answered flatly. "I thought it was time I crumpled it a little bit."

The topographer's laugh showed that his official dignity was only skin deep.

"What do you think about it?"

"I think I can see a few small creases," Buddie responded. "My only fear is that they may flatten out again. I meant to give you enough of a jouncing to smash them entirely. However — Ouch!" he added sharply, as he sat up straight once more.

Instantly the red-brown eyes lost their laughter.

"Hurt, old man?" he asked.

"No; not enough to say so," Buddie answered pluckily. "It's only that the jar seems to have lapped over on to me. I'll be all right, once I get straightened out."

Tom, who had been calming down a little, once more became greatly agitated.

"Shall I go for Uncle Brooks?" he quavered, for stoicism in emergencies was not Tom's strong point.

Buddie's rebuke showed that there was some of the inherent boyishness still left inside him.

"Don't be an ass, Chub! Why don't you go for an undertaker, and done with it? I'll be all right in fifty seconds. Give me time."

The topographer passed an inquiring hand along down the sturdy, stocky frame. Buddie smiled cynically, as he felt it.

"Trying out my motors?" he inquired. "Sure, I'm all right; there's nothing busted anywhere. I'm only a little shaken up with the spill."

Involuntarily, the topographer glanced upward. About sixty feet above them was the single beam that linked the two ends of the approach span of their new bridge. The crumpled, broken thicket of young bushes, just underneath the beam, told to all comers what it was that had caused Buddie's longer tarrying upon this earth. Even with the tangled thicket to break the murderous fall, it seemed to the topographer little short of a miracle that —

"Can you stand up, a minute?" he questioned.

"Naturally, having two legs." And Buddie rose, albeit rather stiffly.

"Can you do this?" The topographer clasped his hands behind his head.

"Rather. What do you take — Ouch!" And Buddie whitened underneath his tan.

"Where's the *ouch?*" the topographer asked him.

"Here."

"Anywhere else?"

"No. My legs feel stiff a little; but that's all."

The young man's face cleared swiftly. This was by no means the first emergency case of his experience, although at the start he feared it might be one of the worst.

"All right. It can't be much but bruises. You'll be lame and sore for a good week to come, a long way more sore to-morrow than you are to-day. Still,

you were lucky to come out of it as easily as you did. You couldn't do it again, if you tried it, ten times running."

"Thanks. Once is enough, though," Buddie interposed hastily.

"I'm glad you've had the sense to recognize the fact," the topographer told him a bit dryly.

Buddie promptly shrivelled at the tone.

"Honestly, Mr. Hearn, I didn't mean to give you such a scare. It looked easy; else, I wouldn't have attempted it."

Hearn's accent softened. Buddie, meek, was Buddie irresistible.

"What were you trying to do, anyway?" he queried.

"Just getting across to where the real bridge began. We wanted to see what the men were doing with all the broken stone they were piling into the wooden frame."

"Oh, the concrete work. Well?"

"Well, the only way to see it was to get there. If we didn't walk the plank like little men, we'd got to climb up the bank, hanging on by our toenails, just about as hard and a long way more ignominious. We chose the plank, and we made it all right, going out there. 'Twas worth the seeing, too." And Buddie, forgetful of his fast-increasing stiffness, waxed enthusiastic at the memory.

Hearn nodded his red head. His own especial training had been all for bridges; his present duties were the intermediate stage that often intervenes between one's studies and the real specialty of one's profession.

"Glad you liked it. But, if you got over it once all right, how did you miss out, next time?"

Buddie's eyes met Hearn's eyes steadily.

"I just missed my footing and went overboard; that's all."

"That came near being quite enough," the topographer was saying, when Tom swiftly interrupted.

"It was no such thing, Mr. Hearn. I played the goat, and joggled him."

"You — little —" Then Hearn, glancing up to make sure that his words went home, caught sight of Tom's conscience-stricken face, and stayed his speech. Instead, "Those your ponies over there?" he queried. "How is it, Buddie? Can you ride?"

Buddie laughed a bit shamefacedly at his own confession.

"I can; but I don't care much about it."

"Shall I get —"

"Get nothing. I'd scare Aunt Julia purple, if I went home any other way than the way I came out here. I'll manage somehow. How far is it?"

"Five miles."

"Jerusalem! Well, here goes. It can't more than finish me; and at least I've just proved that I die hard. Go along, Chub, and bring Budge over here, that's a good fellow. I'll be hanged if I'll walk an inch farther than I have to, to-day." Then, Chubbie gone to fetch the ponies, Buddie turned and stuck out his hand to the topographer. "You've been mighty good to me, Mr. Hearn, both in the way you picked me up and dandled me on your knees, and the way you forebore to rub it in that I had been behaving like an idiot. Chub wasn't so

very much to blame. I dared him to do it, and no boy that's worth anything will ever take a dare. Thank you, lots; and, if you don't mind, please don't say anything about it, up in camp, and ask the men to keep still. Daddy would have a fit, if he knew about it, and most likely he'd say things to Chub. Therefore, let's all keep it very quiet."

Hearn liked his pluck. But, —

"Do you think you can?" he asked.

"Sure. I'll get after Chub, on the way home, and frighten him into keeping to himself his beating of his breast. I can do it. Chub is game in some things; but he's terribly weak-kneed, when it comes to a case of wrestling with his conscience. Then he kicks up a fearful shindig. Ready, Chub? Hold him, though. I don't want him to slip his moorings, till I get on board."

Buddie was rather white about the lips, however, by the time that Hearn had helped him settle into his saddle; but his lips were smiling bravely, albeit crookedly, as he rode away. Hearn stood looking after him with no small uneasiness. His recent question as to Buddie's ability to keep his fall a secret had by no means all had reference to Chubbie's conscientious scruples.

His fears were only too well grounded. He returned to camp, that night, to be met by a message from Buddie. If he had nothing better to do, after he had had his dinner, wouldn't he come along up to the tent and gossip with a fellow? And Hearn, who was tired and grimy and hungry, who also had any amount of office work ahead of him and his home letter to write before the mail went out, next morn-

ing, nevertheless swallowed his cooling dinner whole, gave himself a superficial grooming and went tramping along the dusty bit of road that led from the staff sleeping tent to that of Dr. Angell. He had liked the plucky, go-ahead youngster from the start, had liked him best of all, that day, when he had taken the penalty of his rashness without too much complaining. Of course, the boys had had no business to be skylarking out along the line, without some older person to tell them what they might, and might not, do. None the less, Hearn confessed to himself that he greatly preferred the courage that comes after, to the caution which comes before, the final catastrophe. Buddie, wondering whether he dared walk out across the beam that overhung a drop of sixty feet or so, would have been a far less interesting spectacle than the Buddie who had walked, and then had taken as it came the fall that had resulted from his walking.

Hearn quickened his pace, however, just a little. He knew too well that now and then the worst injuries are the slowest to develop. He hoped with all his energy that no harm had come to the bullet-headed youngster who was slowly winning the heart of every man in camp, from Chang the cook to the totally irrelevant person who sat about on a stool and did violent purple sketches of the pale greeny-blue mountains that edged the distant skyline.

To Hearn's infinite relief, he found Buddie enthroned like a king and lording it over his assembled subjects most vigourously. True, he was as near to being pale as his sunburn and tan would allow him; and he was sprawling on his bed on top of a heap of

pillows. However, the fact that he was thrashing about with an energy that greatly disturbed the slumbers of Ebenezer who sprawled beside him, coupled with the general serenity written on the faces of his subjects, restored somewhat of the topographer's peace of mind. No broken-boned boy, no victim of internal injuries could flop about as vehemently as Buddie was doing now; and Hearn, watching him for a minute, could only come to the conclusion that the accumulated pillows were merely serving to protect from too insistent contacts such portions of Buddie's surface as had not grown callous from his month of association with the anatomy of Budge, the mustang.

Despite his prostrate attitude, Buddie hailed him riotously.

"Hello, Mr. Hearn! Come to view the corpus? That's good of you; and Daddy is longing to congratulate you on the way you administered first aid. You know Mr. Kent? He is the man who sits around in the shade and does pictures, while all the rest of us are working. Likewise, he is the man who taught me, if ever I found I was really going to fall, to make myself as loose and flopsy as I could. Did it, to-day, all right; didn't I?"

"That's what I thought, when I was trying to hold you on my knees." The topographer laughed, as he prepared to seat himself on the edge of the bed.

"Steady!" Buddie cautioned him. "Don't go to sitting down on my leg. Something will be happening to us both, if you try that. Daddy says it isn't really injured; but I know better. It's the

colour of a pickled purple cabbage, and it's swelling visibly. Look — out!" But the last word slid off into a comfortable cadence, when Buddie realized that the topographer was safely seated.

"How are you feeling, anyway?" Hearn asked him then.

Buddie's reply was graphic.

"As if my skeleton had outgrown my skin," he said, and the topographer, with certain of his own experiences fresh in his mind, saw no need to press his questions further. Instead, he gave to Dr. Angell his own version of the accident.

The doctor's face cleared, as Hearn went on. In spite of the inextinguishable liveliness of Buddie, even in spite of his own examination, he had been wrestling with grim fears. The details of the topographer, who had seen the fall and had gone rushing to the rescue, dismissed the most spectral of the fears, albeit they deepened the sense of the miraculous which had lain over the doctor, ever since Buddie, limping suspiciously, had made his tardy appearance at the luncheon table.

When Hearn had finished, the doctor drew a long breath of relief.

"'Drunken men, idiots, and boys,'" he quoted. "Wherefore let us be truly thankful."

"Which am I, Daddy?" Buddie queried irrepressibly.

"Everything but the first, son," his father retorted. "Therefore you had a double share in the protection."

"So long as I get what's coming to me fairly," Buddie made serene response; "I've no especial

fault to find. Besides, it's worth a whack or two, to be sitting here like a Chinese idol with you to worship. Does anybody happen to know what has become of Aunt Julia? She appears to be the only one who's missing."

Seemingly, nobody did know. At least, nobody answered. Instead, Daddy created a diversion by inquiring of Hearn whether the work was seriously damaged by the thud of Buddie's fall, and Buddie had all he could do, for the next few minutes, to defend himself from the shower of chaff which rained on him from every side. He was still hunting suitable phrases for his own defence, when a little stir outside the tent door made them all look up, Buddie with the least alertness of any of the group.

Nevertheless, it was Buddie who spoke first.

"Hullo, Aunt Julia! Come and join the revel," he invited her with cordial promptness, the instant his eyes rested on her face. "You are the only missing member of the camp. Where have you been? I haven't seen you since this noon."

Aunt Julia came across the threshold of the tent, an eager, excited Aunt Julia, with her eyes shining and with two scarlet spots on her cheeks; an Aunt Julia who, contrary to camp custom, was arrayed in flowery hat and proper gloves.

"I had to go an errand," she replied. "It kept me just a little later than I thought it would. However, I've brought you something good, by way of making my apology."

As Aunt Julia spoke, she stepped slightly to one side, allowing the Something to pass in front of her. The Something proved to be human, something tall

and girlish, something clothed in trim brown garments, and equipped with two enormous pigtails of yellow hair.

"May I come in, too, Buddie?" the Something queried.

For just a minute, Buddie gazed at her, his lower jaw dangling in utter stupefaction. The next minute, he let forth a veritable roar of welcome, —

"Well, old chap! Where in the name of thunder —"

And then, forgetful of his recent injuries, Buddie arose and cast himself upon Teresa Hamilton.

CHAPTER TEN

BUDDIE POSES

UNLIKE most surprises, that of Aunt Julia was an unreserved success.

Buddie undertook, next morning, to explain to Mr. Kent the exact cause and nature of the success. He had sent Teresa out with Tom to view the camp, since the condition of his own anatomy led him to choose the quiet life for the next day or two. His two chums gone, Buddie decided to work off a little of his mood of sanctity by taking himself in search of the long artist.

"Sitting is cheaper than standing, for the next day or so," he remarked quite casually, as he and Ebenezer lined up beside the easel. "If you really want to do us, now's your chance."

The artist looked up in surprise, and then a little dubiously. There was a peculiarly enchanting light upon the mountains, that day; and he had set his easel up, directly after breakfast, and had been painting away like mad, to catch it before it faded. And it was a fact that Buddie was not likely to fade at present; surely not, if the events of yesterday were to be taken as any indication of his being booked for an early journey to the tomb. No; Buddie was apparently a long way more permanent than was the summer glow upon the mountains. None the

less, the artist dismissed the puzzled vagueness from his eyes and hurriedly called an alert smile to his lips. Buddie would keep; but how about his sudden willingness to pose? Best take it as it came. The clouds in the summer sky were not more fleeting than were the moods of Buddie Angell.

"Good for you, old man," Mr. Kent said heartily. "Sure you are willing? I've been waiting for you to say the word." And he swiftly gathered up his tools and prepared to shoulder his easel.

Buddie surveyed him with frank disfavour.

"Oh, I say, what's that for?" he queried.

"Just to get inside; that's all."

"Inside?"

"My studio."

But Buddie balked.

"Not on your life! I'll squat down right here, and Ebenezer can lie close beside me. He won't wriggle."

"I'm afraid —"

"Honest, he won't," Buddie insisted. "I'll keep hold of his collar, and you can get him right here, with the sun full on him, so. Down, Ebenezer! There! Isn't that all right?"

It took some courage on the part of Mr. Kent to dampen Buddie's enthusiasm. Nevertheless, he nerved himself to the task.

"It would make a good photograph, Buddie," he said tactfully. "Some day, I want to bring out my camera and have a try at him. But it — it — wouldn't be quite formal enough for a painting of such a dog as Ebenezer. He needs a little different treatment." The artist felt that he was progressing grandly. "Instead, I shall have to get you to take him under

"But you promised you would pose," he reminded Buddie. — *Page 109*.

cover, to get the right light on him. And then, about the pose? What if you sat in my high-backed chair, with Ebenezer leaning against your knees?"

And then the artist suddenly met with disillusion as to his grand progress, for, —

"Shucks!" Buddie said profanely. "Ebenezer and I are just going to sit down here naturally on the ground, and you can do us as we are. Afterwards, if you want to, you can twist us up into any shape you choose, and make your picture that way. It's you that's the artist. All we have to do is to furnish you the faces, and Ebenezer's hair."

"But I must get you in the right positions," the artist urged him feebly.

"That's up to you." And Buddie sought to finish the discussion by plumping himself down on the turf at what he judged to be a proper focussing distance from the easel. "Now fire ahead," he ordered. "We're all ready."

Mr. Kent sought to prolong the discussion.

"But you promised you would pose," he reminded Buddie.

"Sure. Well, aren't I?"

"Not exactly," Mr. Kent told him, with surprising mildness considering the fact that Buddie was sitting with his hands clasped around his drawn-up knees while, at his elbow, Ebenezer was contorting himself in pursuit of an escaping flea.

"What is it to pose, I'd like to know?" And Buddie's tone was so full of injury that Ebenezer left the flea to escape, and came to sympathetic attention.

The artist tried his best to furnish with a definition a word so familiar to him that it had ceased to need an equivalent.

"You — you — are expected to put yourself into the position you are to have in the picture," he explained a little lamely.

"And stay put?" Buddie's accent was explosive with horror.

"Naturally." And yet, Mr. Kent had no intention of making his answer snippy.

"Well, of all the — ! But do you mean to tell me you can't draw any boy and dog in the positions you like best, and put my head and Ebenezer's hair on them, when you get ready to finish up the picture?" Buddie asked.

"I am afraid not."

Buddie's sagging accent betrayed his disappointment.

"I thought you said you were an artist," he said, with the outspoken disappointment with which fifteen occasionally punctures the self-poise of fifty.

The man beside the easel wilted.

"After a fashion, Buddie," he confessed. "Really, that's about all."

Buddie, who had been picking out a snarl in Ebenezer's coat, looked up sharply. It did not please him to hear the note of sadness in the artist's voice.

"But you are, you know," he urged. "Aunt Julia knew all about you, and had seen some of your pictures in New York. After you had gone home, that first night, she told us about them. I'd like to see them, too; they must be awfully pretty."

If the artist winced at the phrase, he managed to conceal the fact from the watchful eyes of Buddie who now was lifting himself up from the ground,

with due precaution as to not disturbing the sleeping dogs of the day before. When he was on his feet, he held out an apologetic fist.

"Honestly, I didn't mean to be rude, Mr. Kent. I was half chaffing, anyhow. It's fine out here; but into the house we go. I promised I'd pose for you, and I keep my promises like a little man. Else, what's the use of making any?" And, with a sigh for the glories of the summer morning, he turned his back upon them, and led the way into the primitive establishment which Mr. Kent politely dubbed his studio.

It took some time to set up the easel. It took some more to cajole Ebenezer into adopting the attitude which Mr. Kent had mentally chosen for him, weeks before. At last, however, all was in readiness; and the artist, taking up a crayon, began roughing in a few preliminary lines. Then, —

"Mr. Kent, can I just wink once or twice?" Buddie queried, in a muffled voice.

The crayon dropped from Mr. Kent's fingers, and he let off a roar of laughter.

"You poor old chap!" he said, when he could speak. "I quite neglected to coach you in the rules of the game. Wink, of course, and talk all you like. You'll have to do a little wriggling, too. All is, I don't want you to get too far out of your general position. Else, you'd muddle things. And, just at the very first, while I am sketching in the outlines, I'll have to ask you to be a little stiller than you'll need to be, as we get on."

"Thank you." Buddie spoke gratefully, albeit in the same muffled tone that he had used before,

the tone one uses just before the photographer makes up his mind to squeeze the bulb.

Then the silence fell again. The artist, mindful of the limits of boyish patience, fell to sketching rapidly, anxious to set down the pose which was pleasing him even beyond his expectations. Buddie, meanwhile, sat rigid, his eyes goggling at nothing and his teeth shut hard together. At last, however, he could undergo the strain no longer. He spoke again, still in the muffled voice.

"Mr. Kent," he said pathetically; "I've really got to scratch."

And then Mr. Kent judged that it was time for him to relax a little of his effort, and become more entertaining. By way of start, he put a question, —

"Buddie, who was that nice girl who appeared, last night?"

Buddie promptly took the muffler from his voice.

"Isn't she a great one? She's Teresa Hamilton, the one I told you about. She is my best chum, except Daddy and Ebenezer and Aunt Julia."

Mr. Kent repressed a sudden longing to be included in the same circle with the privileged quartette.

"Is she a New York girl?" he asked.

"Not much! She's too go ahead in too many lines. She can cook and dance and sail a boat and nurse little Tootles through the measles without one particle of help from her mother," Buddie responded eagerly.

Mr. Kent shifted the chalk to his other hand and, with the right one, made a quick dab on each of the eyes in his sketch.

"How did that happen?" he inquired casually.

"Why, Sandy and Horace and Duncan all had them at the same time, and that kept Mrs. Hamilton rather busy."

"I should think it might have done," the artist commented, while he made a futile effort to set down the new curves about his sitter's lips. "Well, go on."

"Well, so when little Tootles came out all spotty, she just told Teresa she'd got to put him through. Of course, she told her how; but she did it all right. That's just it; she knew she would." And Buddie ended in a chaos of pronouns, result of his own enthusiasm.

Mr. Kent made no effort to sort them. He was too anxious to get at least a suggestion of the new eagerness in Buddie's face.

"Where did you know her?" he asked, as alertly as he was able, considering both his earlier knowledge, and his intentness on his work.

"At Aunt Julia's. You know I spent almost a year with her."

The artist nodded.

"I had gathered that fact. How did it happen?"

"Daddy thought he was going to be ill, and sent me," Buddie made lucid explanation.

"Your father?" For the instant, the artist forgot his tools, as he tried to reconcile this statement with his own observations of Dr. Angell.

Buddie became increasingly lucid.

"Yes; at least, they did. And they talked it over, and he decided to go away."

"What did he think it was going to be?"

"Lungs," Buddie answered simply, and then the artist understood.

"I am very sorry," he said.

"Oh, but you don't need to be," Buddie told him cheerily. "In the end, you know, it didn't come off. He had had a false alarm. But he hiked off to the Adirondacks, and sent Ebenezer and me to stay with Aunt Julia. I hated the idea, for I had supposed Aunt Julia was as prim as a last-year doughnut; but, once I really got inside her, I found she was A. 1. We did have great times together; and so did Ebenezer and her cat. Ask Teresa how we blued Pet-Lamb." And Buddie paused to chuckle, as one does chuckle over a well-tried joke.

"But where does Teresa come in?"

Buddie's reply was characteristic in its unexpectedness.

"Over the back fence, the morning after I got there; that is, I went over the fence, and Ebenezer went through a hole. That is one stunning thing about the Hamiltons, anyhow: they have any amount of holes, and they don't seem to care one bit. I never saw such nice people, without any more airs. They know just how nice they are, even if they are sort of poor; and they just take it as it comes and don't apologize. I think it's very vulgar to be always apologizing," Buddie added reflectively. Then his voice grew brisk again. "Teresa and I started off just about as we meant to keep it up. We were fighting, before you could say *Jack Robinson;* and we'd made it up again, before you knew it. That is the way it always has been with the two of us. We have had the most awful rows; but we were

such good friends we didn't mind them in the least."

"She rather looks it," the artist said, a trifle absently.

Instantly Buddie was on the defensive.

"Looks fighty?" he demanded. "She isn't, then; only just able to hold her own. That's really all."

"No. I meant she looked as if she would be a good, steady friend," Mr. Kent made hasty correction. "Then you hadn't any idea she was coming?"

"Not a suspish. That's the Aunt Julia of it. You never get wind of her surprises, until they are ready to come off. This one was the greatest ever. I knew she was most awfully fond of Teresa; but I'd as soon have thought of her digging up Pet-Lamb and getting her stuffed, as of her having Teresa come out here. She says she had an awful time, planning it out; and once she almost gave it up. Teresa couldn't take such a journey by herself. At least," Buddie explained, divided as he was in his allegiance between Teresa's fitness for any sort of exploit and Aunt Julia's sense of decorum; "she could have managed it all right, only it wouldn't have been quite proper. Aunt Julia is always very strong on the proprieties, you know. There wasn't a soul that she knew, coming, except men. And then, all at once, she heard that the undertaker's wife's mother from there was coming across to California. It's a little town, where you know all sorts; and, as long as she was nothing but his mother-in-law, she wouldn't be too gloomy, so Aunt Julia sent a pile of telegrams, night letters, you know, fifty words for ten; and they came through the Junction,

yesterday, at six-forty." And Buddie, exhausted by his long explanation, settled back in his chair and crossed his legs. "Gee! I forgot!" he added hurriedly, as he straightened up.

Mr. Kent stepped away from his easel, took a swift look at Buddie, another at his canvas. Then,—

"That's enough for this time," he said. "I'm tired, Buddie, and you ought to be. Come along and do some trapeze."

Buddie rose alertly. None the less, —

"Too stiff," he objected.

"Not a bit. You'll grow stiffer, if you sit still and nurse it. Come along."

"But it hurts like thunder, when I stretch," Buddie urged.

"Of course it does, old chap. And it's bound to hurt worse, unless you ease up on the stiffening a little, before it gets too bad. I'm not going to let you do much: just a turn or two on the bars and a little swing. You'll find, in the morning, it has done you good; and you aren't the one to funk a little hurt, for the sake of hurrying back into condition."

"No; I suppose not." But Buddie's tone was thoughtful. However, in the end, it was Mr. Kent who had to call a halt.

Meanwhile, —

"Who is Mr. Kent, anyway?" Teresa demanded of Tom when, their explorations ended, they were resting on a mossy hummock, far within the cañon.

"Aunt Julia says he is a very famous artist who has things in the Metropolitan. He isn't a very good shot; but he's a corking juggler," Tom answered.

"He's a good man, anyhow," Teresa said conclusively.

"How do you know?"

"His eyes, and the shape of the wrinkles at the corners. They look as if he didn't care much about most people; but they show he hasn't ever thought a mean thing about anybody in his life."

"How do you know that? You haven't seen him but a minute, and that was last night, with everybody asking you questions at once." Tom's voice was skeptical.

"Suppose it was? I have a pair of eyes, and I don't use them on the end of my tongue," Teresa answered, with a trifle more of spirit than her brief acquaintance with Chubbie seemed to justify. "I was watching him, while all the rest of you were talking; and I liked him at the start."

"Buddie didn't," Tom told her.

"Well, I'm not Buddie Angell; I am Teresa Hamilton. I have my own ideas, not Buddie's. How do you know he didn't?"

"Said so."

"To you?"

"Yes."

"Why not?"

Tom shrugged his shoulders.

"That's for him to tell you."

"Then I'll make him. I generally can get Buddie to tell me things, if I keep at him long enough," Teresa said reflectively.

"I like him, though," Tom volunteered.

"Of course. You didn't need to tell me that. And so does Miss Julia — Yes, she'll always be Miss

Julia to me, even if your uncle did marry her. I told her so in the train, last night, and she just laughed."

Tom echoed the laugh.

"You'd better tell my uncle, while you are about it," he advised.

Teresa tightened the ribbon on her left pigtail, then flung the pigtail back across her shoulder.

"I'm not afraid," she said. Then she returned to her former subject. "What is more, Buddie's got to learn to like him," she said decisively. "I'll tackle him, myself."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BUDDIE AND TERESA

BEING Teresa, she tackled him, that same night. "But I don't seem to catch your meaning, Buddie," she said, after a half hour of what appeared to her like talking in a circle. "You don't like him, and you do. You think he is a Miss Nancy, and you believe, under all his queerness, he is all there." She pondered for a minute. "Certainly he is very queer," she added then.

Buddie flashed instantly.

"What do you know about it?" he demanded.

"Only what you have told me," Teresa answered demurely.

"What have I told you?"

"Oh, his circus ways, and things like that. Besides, I have been watching him, myself."

"It isn't circus ways to be a good, all-round gymnast," Buddie said defensively. "Besides, what does a girl like you get out of watching a man like Mr. Kent?"

And then Teresa laughed.

"'Fess up, Buddie, like a man," she ordered him; "and say right out that you have changed your mind."

"But I haven't."

"You like him better than you did."

Buddie's eyes belied the pompousness in his voice and manner.

"I have modified my position, not changed it."

"That's sneaky, Buddie," Teresa chid him. "What is it, anyhow, that you don't like about him? He looks nice to me."

Buddie cast a glance backward at the open door behind him. Then he dropped his voice to a confidential murmur.

"It isn't sneaky, Teresa; it is a fact I do like him, and he has done no end of things for me, things like the trapeze and that. But I can't quite forget about the night we had our accident, coming out here, the one I wrote about in my first letter. You know he fainted dead away."

Teresa sniffed with sudden scorn.

"And you've been making all this fuss about a little thing like that, Buddie?"

"It wasn't such a very little thing. At least, it shows —"

"It shows how little sense you have," Teresa told him mercilessly. "It isn't decent to blame a man—"

"I didn't exactly blame him."

"Or make fun of him for something he can't help."

"How do you know he couldn't help it?"

"Because he would, if he could," Teresa argued superbly. "It probably isn't his courage that's wrong, Buddie Angell; it's his heart."

"What's the diff, so long as it makes him funky?" Buddie queried.

But Teresa was stronger in matters medical.

"I'm not talking about the heart we mean in Sunday sermons, Buddie," she told him, a bit impatiently. "I mean the thing inside us that pumps and makes the breath go in and out. There may be something queer with Mr. Kent's; you never can be sure. Why don't you ask your father? Miss Julia told me that he said Mr. Kent really was a good deal hurt, that night."

Buddie sat up straight, and stared across the moonlit stretch of country that led away into the mysterious shadow-land within the cañon.

"For a fact, Teresa?" he asked slowly.

"Miss Julia said so."

Suddenly, after the way of mankind in a crisis, Buddie turned very testy.

"What makes you call her *Miss Julia*, Teresa, when you know she is Mrs. Brooks MacDougall?"

But Teresa felt it was time she asserted her dignity of sweet sixteen and, with her dignity, her sentiment.

"I am loyal to the dear old name," she answered Buddie, and the *I* was heavily underlined. Then she swiftly flung away her sentiment. "Where going, Buddie?" she inquired.

"I want to find Daddy. I'll be back, in a few minutes."

"Now?"

"Yes. I want to know something."

"Know what?"

Buddie stared down at her accusingly, as if she had been his embodied iniquities rolled into one bundle and personified.

"Know just how great an ass I've probably been."

Something in his voice astonished Teresa, and she looked up sharply. In the white moonlight, Buddie's face showed worried.

"Why, Buddie," she queried hastily; "do you care as much as all that?"

"Shut up, Teresa!" And Buddie fled and vanished in the shadow of the house behind them, leaving Teresa, out of her past experience of her own nine brothers, to account for this sudden change of temper in the best way that she could.

Daddy was downright.

"No, Buddie; there isn't a thing the matter with his heart. Teresa wasn't quite so wise as you and she thought that she was. Mr. Kent is sound as a nut. It's only that, just now and then, we find somebody that faints at sight of blood. They can't help it; they are made so. There was a splendid man who started in my class in the medical school; he was strong as an ox, and as healthy as a man could be. For three days running at the start, he fainted in the laboratory. Then he gave up medicine and went in for law."

Buddie sniffed.

"I'd have kept at it, till I got over it," he said.

"No use. Mercifully, it doesn't happen often. But Mr. Kent isn't a coward. I'm sorry that you called him one."

Buddie's eyes clouded with sudden penitence.

"I'm sorry, Daddy. I wish now that I hadn't. Maybe, though, he didn't hear, and Tom won't tell, not if I rub it into him that he mustn't. If only Teresa can be kept from blabbing!"

"Horrid word, that, Buddie," his father rebuked

him. "It somehow doesn't match my idea of Teresa, either."

Buddie shook his head.

"Maybe not. Still, girls do talk an awful lot," he observed sagely. Then his accent dropped again. "Daddy, aren't there any healthy men?" he queried pessimistically.

His father laughed.

"I surely hope so, son. Why?"

But Buddie's pessimism grew blacker.

"Why, there was you, last year. And now there is Mr. Kent; at least, he isn't ill, but he gets to fainting, every now and then. Next thing I know, I'll be hearing that Uncle Brooks MacDougall has got something fatal the matter with him. It seems to me that it is a very sickly sort of world."

Then, for a space, Daddy argued: first to the effect that Mr. Kent's trouble was not illness in the least; and then that a great deal of possible illness might be avoided, if one took care about the way he lived; that it was as much Buddie's bounden duty to use good self-control as it was to keep from using poison; that, for the most part, the question of a man's health was left in his own hands for him to settle.

Buddie listened quite intently, so intently that Daddy believed that he was making an impression. All at once, though, Buddie's self-rebukings broke forth again in a great gulp of woe.

"But I said he was a coward, Daddy, and I meant to have him hear me. Can't I just explain it to him, and tell him I am sorry?"

But Daddy shook his head.

"The worst thing about our faults, Buddie, is that we never really can undo them. I am afraid that the mischief is done, and that you will have to let it go."

However, Daddy secretly resolved to explain to Mr. Kent Buddie's mistaken judgement and his consequent repentance. He could do it, without dwelling too much upon Buddie's reasons for his attitude, and he had a general theory that it was only fair to both Buddie and the artist to have the matter straightened out.

Buddie, meanwhile, had made his way back to Teresa, who still sat in the white moonlight where he had left her.

"Well?" she questioned, as his shadow fell upon the turf beside her.

"It's so." Gloomily Buddie cast himself down at her feet. "He can't help it, if he tries."

"Of course. I told you so. But do get up. That grass is wet, and you're only just out of bed, with any amount of stiff arms and legs. Get up, Buddie! You will catch your death, if you sit there," Teresa ordered maternally. Then, as Buddie reluctantly obeyed her, "Well, what did your father say about it all?" she queried.

"That it wasn't his heart, anyhow, and that you wouldn't have had any business to be talking about it, if it had been," Buddie said curtly, for his nerves were still on edge; and, moreover, he was smarting slightly at the maternal tone in which Teresa had addressed him. Now and then, a two-year gulf yawns widely.

"I didn't, till you asked me," Teresa defended

herself swiftly. "Anyhow, he's nice, and I mean to have all the fun with him that I can."

"Maybe he doesn't care much about girls," Buddie suggested, for his mingled gloom and testiness were playing havoc with his manners.

"Who said so?"

"I only said *maybe*."

"Well, who said that?"

"I did."

Teresa contemplated the ribbon on her nearer pigtail. Then she flung the pigtail backward with unnecessary violence. Then, —

"Buddie, I really think you'd better go to bed," she advised him. "You are tired; and it always makes you cross to get too tired. You'll feel better, in the morning. Good night."

She spoke demurely, yet with a trace of malice underneath the demureness. Buddie, from past experience, recognized the trace, detested it, and started to rebel. Then, so cast down was he by his late discussion, he lowered his head, stuck his fists into his pockets and went plodding off to bed, without a word in answer to Teresa's gibes.

Buddie's meekness endured a good half of the night, although all but the first ten minutes of it was carried out in dreamland, where he was sanctimoniously occupied in offering the other cheek to a smiting and vigorous Teresa. Towards morning, though, happier dreams prevailed, and Buddie was in full career across the plains to vanquish the Indians who had attacked Teresa's dwelling, when he was wakened by a tugging at his elbow.

"Ge' ou'!" he observed sleepily.

The tugging continued. Buddie gave a vague whack in the direction whence it came. Then he opened one eye to discover whether or not the whack had done its work satisfactorily. He saw Tom standing by him; and Tom, contrary to his custom at that hour, was fully dressed.

"Get out!" Buddie iterated, a shade less indistinctly. "Go 'way, Chub. You're waking Ebenezer."

"What if I am? He'll go to sleep again. But get up, you lazy duffer."

"What for?"

"Breakfast is ready."

"'Spos'n 'tis?"

"And the canoes are waiting."

"Waiting for what?"

"Us," Tom said tersely. "Not you, though, unless you get yourself out of bed in a hurry."

Buddie rolled over on his other side. Bed was sweet to him, at seven in the morning.

"All right," he mumbled calmly. "Let 'em wait."

Tom laid hold of him now in good earnest.

"Get up, Buddie. Honestly, you've got to; or you'll be left."

Slowly Buddie struggled to a sitting posture and dug his fists into his sleepy eyes.

"Left where?" he queried, as nonchalantly as if the argument had only just begun.

With a tweak and a pull and a jounce, Tom had him out of the blanket and on the floor. Then he went for the bath sponge and brought it, dripping.

"Buddie dear," he said persuasively; "a little

boy like you needs to have his face washed for him." And he did wash it most thoroughly.

When Buddie could once more splutter words, —

"What is all the row about, Chub?" he inquired.

Chubbie cast the sponge full into Buddie's countenance, already shining ruddily from its vehement scrubbing.

"Merely that my honoured uncle is about through breakfast and ready to launch his bark upon the flowing tide. In other words, we are starting up the river, in just ten minutes. It's up to you to decide whether you start with us, or whether you stop here and finish up your morning nap."

Needless to say that Buddie started. Moreover, he was the first man at the boats; for, under some conditions, it is quite possible to dress in seven minutes and to gobble down a fair amount of breakfast in two more. Therefore, when Tom, with Teresa at his side, came down the path to the bend in the river where the canoes were waiting, Buddie hailed them affably from the stern of the last one in line.

"Oh, you finally decided that you would come with us, eh? I was afraid we were going to leave you behind. Here, pile in here, Teresa. Chub and I want you to paddle us."

However, Mr. Brooks MacDougall intervened. He knew the river and its tricky rapids; he had no mind to allow the three youngsters to attempt it by themselves.

"Tom, your Aunt Julia wants you to help Mr. Hearn paddle her canoe. Buddie, you and I will take Teresa, and your father will go with Mr. Kent,"

But Buddie disapproved the finality of this arrangement.

"Where will Ebenezer go?" he demanded.

"Ebenezer? He will stay in camp, of course."

Buddie put one leg outside the canoe. The canoe promptly listed to one side; but Buddie was too much in earnest to mind that fact.

"If he stays, I stay, Uncle Brooks," he said firmly. "I don't want to upset any of your plans; but, really and truly, Ebenezer can't be left to keep house by himself. He'd starve."

"But the cook will be here, Buddie, and we only mean to be gone three days."

"Then he'll be dead from over-eating," Buddie persisted cheerily. "Sorry, Uncle Brooks; but you'll have to take us, or leave us. We hang together, Ebenezer and I. Since he was a baby puppy, I've never missed tucking him up in bed, a single night."

"Great lubber! Time you had," his uncle growled, in mock wrath. "Well, what do you propose to do, you young sinner? It's time we started."

"All right. Put Teresa over into Daddy's boat, and take Ebenezer in here with us. Hi, Ebenezer!" And Buddie whistled.

In an instant, Ebenezer came lumbering down the path and halted on the bank beside them, his gray eyes alight with pleasurable anticipation, his soft ears pricked eagerly.

"Buddie, he'll swamp us," Mr. MacDougall protested.

"Not on your life! Ebenezer is used to the water; he knows he must sit still, whenever he goes

out. Steady, Ebenezer!" And Buddie laid a warning hand upon his collar.

And Ebenezer steadied. With infinite care, he let himself down into the bottom of the canoe and settled himself at the exact spot which Buddie pointed out to him.

"Well, I must say—" Mr. MacDougall was beginning.

But Buddie interrupted.

"Good boy; isn't he? A whole heap better than you thought he'd be? He'll sit there, all day long, and never budge, just watch the water slide by him, and the paddles. He was out with us, almost every day, last summer."

Mr. MacDougall picked up his paddle, dipped it, dipped it again, then turned to look at Ebenezer. The great dog was sitting motionless in the stern, intent and watchful, his gray eyes smiling at the river, as it chattered past him.

"He certainly is discreet, Buddie. He has a wise old head."

Buddie cautiously stretched himself to reach Ebenezer's brow and administer a pat of approbation.

"He sure has. And he'd have pined away, if we had left him alone in camp. He's never been deserted in his life." Buddie picked up his paddle and settled to the rhythm of Mr. MacDougall's strong, long stroke. After an interval of silence, "Uncle Brooks," he queried, with surpassing meekness; "when you have plenty of time and nothing else on your mind, would you be willing just to tell me where it is that this caravan is going?"

CHAPTER TWELVE

BY CANOE AND PONY TRAIL

EVERY now and then, it is the seemingly impossible that happens.

How Buddie had missed hearing about the trip on which already he had embarked: this would be a long and intricate story in itself. The real secret of it lay in the fact that Mr. Brooks MacDougall had been waiting for Teresa's arrival, before carrying out a plan he had been hugging ever since Buddie and his father had promised to join the MacDougalls in their camp. Everybody but Buddie had known that Teresa was expected; known, too, that the expedition was to come off, directly after her arrival. Merely because they could not talk to Buddie about her coming, they had neglected to talk to him about the other plan. And, since her coming, Buddie had been too much absorbed in the mere fact of her advent to have paid any great attention to a trip to the moon, had one been suggested in his presence.

Moreover, Buddie's exploration of the bridge, and his hurried descent to the lower levels had occupied them all, the night of Teresa's coming. Next day, Buddie had spent a good share of the time with Mr. Kent, and the rest of it with Teresa, and both of them had been too much interested in Buddie's conversation to introduce any subject of their own,

even one so thrilling as the morrow's early departure. Now he thought it over, Buddie did remember hearing some casual suggestion of canoes; but canoes had become such a normal detail of his daily life that he had thought nothing of the matter, one way or the other.

Expounded to him now, Mr. MacDougall's plan seemed to Buddie all that was charming. They were to spend three days in the wilderness; they were to go in canoes as far as they were able; then they were to take to ponies and strike into the very heart of the range, beyond the sources of the little river. Supplies had been sent on ahead, and men to pitch the tents, together with a Chinaman who could prepare and serve anything from a galantine of turkey to his national delicacies born of mice.

In reality, Mr. MacDougall explained to Buddie, this was not a picnic; but a business trip of some importance. He had received a letter from an Eastern syndicate, asking him to hunt up a waterfall said to be somewhere in the region, measure its power as best he could, and decide for them whether it would be worth their while to buy land enough to give them full control of all its rights. Mr. MacDougall had heard of the fall, though he had never seen it, nor had he any very accurate idea as to where it was to be found. As long as he was bound to make this tour of exploration, it seemed to him a great mistake to make it quite alone. Hence the canoes and the loads of supplies sent on ahead.

The plan unfolded in all its glorious details, Buddie shipped his paddle and sank back with a little sigh.

"Camp out, three whole nights, Uncle Brooks?"

"Yes. Four, perhaps, if we don't find it sooner."

"And eat out-doors, and sleep on beds of bracken?" Buddie demanded poetically.

His uncle laughed.

"I don't know about the bracken, Buddie. As long as it is good weather, though, I imagine we shall do our eating in the open."

But Buddie was not listening to anything but the suggestions of his own imagination.

"And, at night, we shall hear the sighing of the forest, mingled with the deeper notes of the hyena?" he queried.

"Buddie, I never realised how much of a poet you were," Mr. MacDougall told him gravely.

Buddie accepted the tribute with all due humility. None the less, —

"Most people don't," he replied briefly, as he took up his paddle.

However, it would have been hard for anyone, that morning, hardest of all for any boy, to have accepted life as being mere plain prose. The narrow river, winding smoothly away across the open stretch of country, twisted and turned upon its course, until it came inside the cañon where it ceased its lazy monotone and chattered sharply above pebbly reaches and grumbled at the rocks which tried to block its path. Then, as the cañon walls drew closer to its banks and became more rugged, the river ceased its chatter and its grumbling, and fell to roaring defiantly at the rapids in its course, rapids white with foam, rapids swirling and eddying crazily around jagged points of rock. And down the river, now babbling contentedly, now

roaring in its foamy rage, twisting and turning between the winding banks, slid the little line of canoes, the topographer and Chubbie paddling Aunt Julia far ahead, and Buddie and Mr. MacDougall bringing up the rear, with Ebenezer upright in the stern, staring with interested, fearless eyes at the swirling waters and balancing his shaggy body as deftly as if his whole life had been spent in shooting rapids. Now and then, a bird whirred past them. Now and then, a rabbit, startled by this unexpected invasion of his solitude, scuttled for safety. Once, as they rounded a sharp bend in the river, a mountain lion, poised on a point of rock above them, shrieked in defiance, as they passed. For the most part, however, the forest around them was very still, so still that, by degrees, they seemed to take the stillness as its right and forebore to break it by their jovial calls from one canoe to another.

And then, when the rocky walls had become so steep as to be well-nigh bare of trees, and when the river, narrowed to the merest thread, had turned to a line of churning, lashing foam, Mr. MacDougall dropped his paddle, and pointed to the mouth of a ravine cutting the nearer wall.

"There are the horses all right," he said contentedly. "I told them to be here at noon."

"Noon!" Buddie echoed.

Mr. MacDougall pulled out his watch.

"Yes. At least, it will be, in ten minutes. Aren't you getting hungry?"

For once, Buddie shook his head in answer to that question.

"I thought it was about ten o'clock," he answered. "Where has the morning gone?"

"Down the river, I suppose, with all the rest of us. Well, here we are. Out with you, Buddie. We have an hour more ahead of us, before we overtake the luncheon. Ebenezer, out you go."

And Ebenezer went. Buddie waited, though, while he put a question which had been troubling him, ever since the moment of his hearing the details of the plan.

"What about Aunt Julia?" he inquired.

"About her? How?"

"Can she ride; or how is she going to be managed?" Buddie queried bluntly, for somehow he had never associated dainty, decorous Aunt Julia with a mountain trail taken on a pony.

"Of course. How else? Everybody has to ride, out here," his uncle reassured him.

"And she really can stick on, even in the mountains? I'd hate like thunder to have her falling off," Buddie urged anxiously.

"No fear. She can go where I do; I proved that long ago. She is mounting now. Watch her, and see if she looks to you as if she didn't know how to stick to anything."

Buddie did watch. Watching, his eyes grew round with surprise and admiration. One of the men had just led forward a frisky little dark gray pony, a pony who seemed a trifle uncertain as to the proper number of legs which he should keep on the ground. The man, still holding the bridle, bent and stretched out his hand. An instant later, Aunt Julia had sprung into the saddle and was holding the reins

with one hand while, with the other, she gave deft touches to the folds of her divided skirt which hung about her as gracefully as the trailing frock in which Buddie had first beheld her.

"Cross saddle, too!" Buddie observed. "Well, by thunder!" And, an instant later, Budge, with Ebenezer pounding after him, had lined up at Aunt Julia's side.

"You never would have done it, in this created world," Buddie was assuring her volubly; "if I hadn't started the good work by teaching you to be a genuine boy scout."

It was Teresa, then, and not Aunt Julia, after all, upon whom the protective interest of the entire cavalcade was bent. Teresa had climbed trees long before she had left off bibs and tie-on mittens. She was as lithe as a monkey and as fearless. She could stick to any sort of perch, once she could get on to it. The only present trouble lay in her getting there in the first place, and then in the girlish grace with which she maintained her proper grip upon her moving pedestal.

Three times and four, seven, eight and nine, did Teresa plant her energetic foot in some outstretched hand and essay to vault into the saddle after the lightsome fashion of Miss Julia. Even in her best attempt, she only succeeded in twisting her fingers into her pony's mane, and hanging on to it, dangling and laughing madly, until she was removed by Daddy. Then she lifted her head and gave her orders proudly.

"Laugh, if you like. It's the funniest thing I ever saw, and I can't half see it; but I'm going to manage it in the end. Jim, bring the creature over

here beside this log, and hold him very tight. Now all the rest of you turn your backs and count one hundred, and I'll get on board somehow, or my name is not Teresa Hamilton."

Then there was an interval whose silence was punctuated by little puffs and grunts from Teresa, by badly-suppressed chuckles on the part of Jim.

"Fifty-one, fifty-two," Buddie counted aloud, just as a hint how the time was passing. "How are you getting on, Teresa?"

"I am on," she panted. "No. Wait, Buddie! Don't look yet; it isn't fair."

But Buddie had turned his head for just an instant. That instant showed him Teresa prone upon the saddle, her trim heels clasping her pony's neck and her yellow pigtails intermingling with his tail.

"Swimming?" Buddie queried. "Strike out with your left side, Teresa, and get yourself head on. Sixty-three, sixty-four."

The grunts renewed themselves. Then there came an interval of flapping, followed by a thud. Buddie's voice followed the thud, but quite unpitiful.

"All off?" he inquired composedly.

"No. Just me," Teresa responded, with frank testiness. "I'm awfully sorry to keep you all waiting; but I'm afraid I've got to begin it all over again."

But Daddy objected, albeit mildly.

"Teresa, we are four good miles from luncheon, and our inner mans are shrieking to be fed. We appreciate your perseverance; but, if you don't mind, we would prefer you showed it off, this evening, after we have dined. Hearn, you look lusty. Would

you mind giving me a hand?" And, the next instant, they had picked up Teresa bodily and planted her in her saddle, right side up and ready for her ride.

"Really, though," Teresa observed reflectively, that night; "I hadn't the slightest idea that it was such a piece of work to learn to ride."

"I am sure you got on splendidly," the topographer made encouraging reply, from his seat on the ground just at her feet.

All day long, the topographer had kept his eye upon Teresa. He was susceptible, and girls were scarce in camp life, nice girls like Teresa. And Teresa was nice; she showed it in all sorts of little ways. Moreover, in spite of the dangling pigtails which, up to now, she had steadfastly refused to pin up into a seemly coronet, she was by no means a child. She had confessed to sixteen, and the topographer knew of one sixteen-year-old girl being at his junior prom. Wherefore, and for several other reasons, he had turned his back upon the older men lounging in the door of the tent where Aunt Julia sat enthroned, and had joined the trio of youngsters in the open. Now, underneath his encouragement, his tone had been surcharged with sentiment.

Teresa swiftly shattered the sentiment, by the phrasing of her reply.

"Anyhow, I stuck," she answered crisply. "Buddie, what does a pony do when he bucks?"

Buddie refused to be sympathetic.

"Nothing you've seen yet, Teresa, so you won't get any glory on that score. Your brute came loping up the trail, steady as a cow."

"He kicked, though," Teresa retorted, prompt to defend her own skill in adverse circumstances.

Buddie continued to be quite merciless.

"Only when you wolloped all over his back, and let your hair tickle him. You are a good, smart girl, Teresa; but it will be some time yet before you really learn to ride."

Buddie spoke with perfect truthfulness. However, Teresa did deserve some credit in that, as she phrased it, she had stuck. Indeed, at times that afternoon, it had been no mean achievement, the clinging somehow, anyhow, to the backs of the ponies, as they went slipping and scrambling up the narrow, rocky trail. Buddie's own novitiate was not so far in the past that he should have been too forgetful of certain chapters in his experience; while, as for Tom, past and present had joined hands and shaken violently, so violently that, time and time again, Tom had had his match not to be landed in an ignominious heap upon the trail. Once he had saved himself just as he was sliding impotently backwards, once he had lost both stirrups and had floundered wildly until Mr. Kent had come to his rescue and once more made connections between the rider and his saddle.

For Teresa, however, there had been no floundering. Once she had been confronted by the real difficulties of the mountain roadway, she prudently had bowed her head upon her pony's mane, clasped his neck with her arms, dug her heels into his chubby sides and hung on for dear life, leaving it to his moral sense alone whether he should stick to the trail ahead of him, or go off prospecting upon his own

account. Therefore it was that, with one single exception, Teresa Hamilton was by far the least tired one of the party that had gathered about their out-door table. She had solved the problem of achievement by adapting herself to the unfamiliar circumstances swiftly, completely, although perhaps not gracefully. And Ebenezer, the one single exception, had also adapted himself to his opportunities. Luncheon over, he had mounted the one cart that accompanied the party to carry the heaviest of their camp equipment. Mounted, he totally refused to be dislodged. As result, it was a fresh and frisky Ebenezer who superintended operations in the region of the cook stove, that first night.

Afterwards, Buddie never could quite forget that dinner, eaten out of doors and beneath trees which never before had sheltered such a scene. Luncheon, taken in rather a haphazard fashion, half way up the ravine, had seemed to him all that was perfect; but luncheon slid quite out of sight, viewed in the glorious light of dinner, a dinner with three courses and an entrèe, eaten from a white cloth by guests who sat on canvas seats with backs. To be sure, the dishes were only of brand-new aluminium, shiny as silver, but far lighter to carry; and the spoons and forks were not of a kind to tempt a raid on the part of any passing highwayman. But the Chinaman could cook; and everybody was so hungry that Buddie began to be a little anxious concerning Ebenezer's later feastings. And it was such fun to give him the bones without waiting, and to fling your olive stones into the bushes.

After dinner, they sat long around the table,

telling stories and talking over their plans for the starting, early the next morning. Then the stars came out and the dew began to fall, and Aunt Julia declared that she would be too stiff to ride, next day, unless she went inside the tent. Daddy and Mr. Kent had followed, with Mr. MacDougall; but the four younger ones with Ebenezer chose to remain outside.

Even their chatter finally grew intermittent. Perhaps they all were a little tired; perhaps the stillness of the night-covered forest was throwing its spell over them. They had been sitting silent for some moments, when a tall shadow fell across the ground beside them.

"Anybody for a walk?" Mr. Kent's voice said in their ears.

The invitation was quite general; but Teresa looked up just in time to discover that the artist's eyes were fixed on Buddie.

"I don't know about Mr. Hearn," she answered, with the little air of quick decision which Mr. Kent had already learned to know and like; "but Chubbie and I are too deadly tired to stir. You go, Buddie. A little exercise may take a bit of the smugness out of you, so that, when you get back, you will show a little more appreciation of my riding."

Nothing loath, Buddie arose and, with Ebenezer at his heels, fell into step at Mr. Kent's side. An instant later, they had vanished in the shadows underneath the trees. Teresa looked after them thoughtfully.

"Buddie doesn't adore too easily," she said. "At least, though, when he does, it's generally thoroughgoing."

It was a good half hour afterwards that the two comrades came out upon a point of rock that overhung the cañon. Beneath them in the moonlight, the rocky walls swept down and down to lose themselves in blackness far below, a blackness full of the whisperings of many treetops, and of the murmurs of the river, now babbling cosily to itself within its narrow bed. Behind them, a half-grown moon was sliding towards a western sky, still violet with the glow of the vanished day. Above their heads, the stars were already dotting the dark purple archways with their myriad points and sparks and dots of yellow flame.

Buddie lifted his hand and touched his companion's elbow.

"Mr. Kent," he said impulsively; "aren't you glad that you got born?"

There came a little silence. Then, —

"Sometimes," the artist said.

"Yes; but always?" Buddie urged him. Then he added, still more urgently, "Aren't you, now?"

For just an instant, Mr. Kent's eyes swept across the starry arch above, across the dusky earth below, then came to rest on Buddie's snub-nosed, earnest face. Then he put one hand a little heavily on Buddie's shoulder.

"Yes, Buddie," he answered very gravely; "all in all, just now I am."

Forty-eight hours later, the words came back to Buddie very forcibly; and, with the words, their accent.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE WOES OF CAMP

MERELY because, forty-eight hours later, it seemed to Buddie and to them all that the breath of life had left the artist's lips for ever.

It was the next morning early, though, that things began to happen wrong. The head teamster gave it as his theory of the reason, that the moon had changed. The Chinese cook insisted, "Muchee gods anglee about no joss." Whatever the cause, the result was most accurately to be summed up in the one word *dank*.

Mr. MacDougall, optimistic by nature, and well accustomed to the summer climate of those mountains, had made no provision in his plans, almost no provision in his preparations, for a rainy day. The dawning of the next day, however, showed him that they were well in for one, and that one of the worst. It began early, just at the time when the sun ought, by good rights, to have been showing the world his first smile from above the horizon line, began with a patter on the canvas that soon changed to a pelting, and then to a roaring downpour which put a final end to all the morning naps.

Over the bacon and coffee, everybody smiled perkily and said, "How cosy!" By the time the bacon was eaten up, though, the deluge began to

damp their ardour as already it had damped the roof above their heads. Cosiness may be a mere matter of four snug walls and a light and happy heart; and yet, a ceiling that drips here and there, preferably just above the crack between one's neck and the encircling collar, does modify one's notions of exactly what is really cosy. And Mr. MacDougall, arguing from past summer droughts to future rainlessness, had chosen his tents more for lightness than for their rainproof qualities. By ten o'clock, eight exasperated people were huddled around the cook stove with sundry articles of bedding draped across their laps and shoulders.

"When is a roof not a roof?" Buddie inquired at last.

Teresa, enveloped, head and all, in a bright red blanket, peered out from her swaddlings and made a grimace of disdain.

"When it's aleak. Give us something fresher than that, Buddie. You stole that from Sandy's oldest list."

Buddie cast a warning glance up at the roof, whence a dribbling stream had just aimed itself down upon his head.

"Stow that," he ordered. "My back is no drainpipe." Then he turned to Teresa. "Anything can keep fresh, this weather. It is calculated to revive the juices in a palmleaf fan."

"But how long do you suppose it is going to keep it up?" Mr. MacDougall's voice, muffled a little by its enwrapping blanket, yet sounded fretty.

The question was directed to the general group. It was his wife who answered it.

"Brooks, we are so glad it was you who asked that question. We all have been longing to ask it; but

we felt that it might not be quite polite for guests to be too critical."

There was a convulsive twitching of the blanket which covered Mr. MacDougall's back. It looked as if, somewhere in the core of the bundle, somebody had meant to shrug his shoulders.

"I'm not responsible for this confounded weather," he said then. "Nobody ever knew a storm like this, in summer, out in these mountains."

"Everything has to have a beginning," Mr. Kent remarked, from the further side of the stove, where he was trying to dry out his left shoe without displaying his stockinged foot too prominently in the eyes of Mrs. MacDougall. Mr. Kent's corner had been directly in the path of the worst of the drizzle, and he reluctantly had pulled himself out of bed to face the fact that one of his solitary pair of reachable shoes was holding a good teacupful of water.

It was Buddie who had consoled him.

"What are you grumbling about, anyhow, Mr. Kent?" he had demanded most unsympathetically. "It was only yesterday that you were bragging to us all that your shoes were watertight."

And it was Buddie now who answered him.

"It's got to have a beginning," he assented. "The only question in my mind is whether it's also got to have an end. Teresa, you have a good, stout blanket on your back. What if you just run out and take a look at the western sky? Maybe it shows signs of clearing."

No signs of clearing came, however, until nearly noon. By that time, the little group around the stove had recovered from their earlier mood of exasper-

ation, and were inclined to accept the whole episode, discomfort and all, as being one prodigious joke. It had been next door to the annoying to be routed out of bed at some unearthly hour, by having a thread of water come trickling down across one's brow. Tragedy changed to comedy, when one sat, all morning long, wrapped in a blanket, after the fashion of an Indian brave, and kept one's feet either on the edge of one's neighbour's chair, or on the stove, because the tent floor was fast turning to the likeness of a lake. And when the Chinese cook donned the one pair of goloshes that the camp afforded, and sought to make room for his pots and kettles among the encircling feet, the last of the sense of injured innocence vanished before the rising wave of hilarity.

"Poor old Wang!" Aunt Julia wiped her eyes upon a corner of her blanket. "I thought I had seen domestic difficulties before this; but now I know they were mere imagination and nerves. Brooks, do make him understand that it will be all right, if we just have boiled potatoes with the chicken. The poor creature can't cook, without the stove; and, if he uses the stove for our dinner, where in the world are we going to put our feet?"

But Buddie and Hearn reappeared, just at that minute, from the tour of investigation they had made outside. Buddie's face was smiling broadly, and the topographer was armed with a small shovel.

"Party's over," Buddie announced. "It really does begin to look like clearing. It's only drizzling a little now."

"But what about the shovel?" Aunt Julia

queried, as she cautiously lowered the corner of the blanket which had served as hood, and drew a long breath of relief, for, despite the dampness, the tent was waxing hot.

Hearn laughed.

"Getting warm, Mrs. MacDougall? I bought those blankets, and the chap who sold them told me they were all wool. The shovel? It's what we might as well call anti-irrigation." And, with deft strokes, he cut a shallow trench across the floor of the tent, and then connected it with a deeper trench outside.

Aunt Julia watched the subsiding floods approvingly. Then, with a proper degree of care, she lowered her heels to the ground, but sat with her toes turned sharply upward.

"Such a relief!" she said. "Mr. Hearn, you deserve an addition to your salary. It's all very well to put our feet on the stove, as long as it doesn't spoil our chances for dinner; but the look in Wang's eyes was beginning to make me nervous."

Buddie, however, took a more cheery view of the matter.

"Wang can make even our boots into something eatable," he averred, nodding at the blue-smocked Oriental by way of making his compliment carry home. "About the rain, though, that's another matter. I honestly think that the worst is over and that, right after lunch, we'll be able to get on."

Luncheon over, though, the prospect of getting on seemed as remote as ever, perhaps even a little more so. Earlier, the rain had come splashing down with a fury which betokened that it must cease soon, if

only from sheer lack of moisture overhead. Now, on the contrary, it had settled into a mildly persistent drizzle that might keep on indefinitely, a drizzle that accomplished a vast amount of wetting in proportion to the actual supply of moisture it employed. Buddie, once more sent forth like Noah's dove, came back a little downcast.

"It's got its second wind and settled down to a steady gait that, unless something turns it off, can keep up for a week of Sundays," he reported. "It's all right to go out for a walk, if one has a camp in the offing; but Aunt Julia and Teresa would be soaked, if we tried to move camp."

His uncle repressed a smile at Buddie's magnificent use of the *we;* but he assented, —

"No use to break camp, Buddie. We'd best stay on here. Still, there is no especial use in sitting still, all day. Who wants a walk?"

Teresa did; but Aunt Julia finally succeeded in convincing her that such a storm was only good for girls who had a change of skirts in easy reach. Tom elected to stay with them, not that he objected to getting wet, but because his aunt's radius, in these latter days, was fast becoming his own. Since his mother had left him, to go on into the mysterious Beyond, no woman's voice and touch had counted much to Tom, until he had found Aunt Julia, and the long rainy morning of idling at her elbow had made him feel as if certain of the old days had come back again. Therefore, he preferred to stay and have the good of the experience.

The topographer stayed, too, and talked about a game of euchre, for he had a shrewd eye for com-

binations, and he foresaw that, if he kept still and hung back a little, he might find Teresa left over to be his partner. Unhappily, he did not foresee Teresa, who assented eagerly to his suggested game.

"Splendid!" she said. "Chubbie, I'll be your partner: youth against age, you know." And then she laid her hand in Aunt Julia's lap, in mute appeal to be forgiven for her inadvertent hint that Mrs. MacDougall was no longer young.

Meanwhile, the remaining quartette went faring forth, regardless of the weather and only bent upon a tour of exploration. At the turn of the road, they had to stop and wait for Buddie who had been forced into a little argument with Ebenezer. Ebenezer loved to get wet, soaking, sopping wet; but his plans for happiness also included a hot turkish towel, and, in view of the narrowness of camp supplies, Buddie judged that it would be quite as well for Ebenezer to remain under cover. Like Teresa, his getting wet demanded a prompt change of skirts.

Ebenezer at last convinced, and conducted back inside the tent, Buddie went rushing back to the others and then, their caps pulled down above their ears and eyebrows, their collars turned up and their shoulders shrugged together, they struck out along a trail which led away into the bushes at a sharp angle from the one which had brought them to their camp. The tents, for the sake of airiness and coolness, had been pitched in the open, just on the top of a small hillock where the full force of the storm had beaten down upon them. Among the bushes, one felt the rain much less; the patter on the leaves made far less noise than on the taut canvas of the tents,

and the boughs above their heads carried away the worst of the drip.

Accordingly, it was with a sense of lessening storm, of comparative comfort, that the four of them struck out along the trail which turned and twisted like a curly thread among the trees and through the undergrowth, lost itself completely in a little open glade, found itself again under some more trees, and then vanished finally in a thicket which, after the order of Melchisedek, appeared to be without beginning and also without end.

"What takes me," Buddie remarked, after vainly thrashing about in the undergrowth for several minutes; "is the way we got inside this thing, without being aware of the fact."

Mr. MacDougall adopted Buddie's form of phrase.

"What takes me," he said; "is the way the rain seems turning into a fog. Moreover, I don't like it."

Buddie cast a hasty glance about him. Then he turned to the tall artist who stood waiting, ten steps ahead.

"I say, Mr. Kent," he demanded; "do you see any landmarks anywhere, from up aloft?"

The artist shook his head.

"I'm not above the fog-line, Buddie," he responded. "Get down on the ground and listen. Maybe you can hear the trail running off somewhere."

"But, really, I don't like this thing," Mr. MacDougall iterated, and now his face showed true uneasiness. "This fog is getting thicker, every minute. Do any of you happen to know the shortest way back to the camp?"

Dr. Angell turned to his young son. Whatever he thought about the fog, his face betrayed no signs of anxiety.

"Scout," he said; "I think this ought to be a case for you."

"Not guilty," Buddie told him promptly. "I wouldn't take it on myself to watch the trail, when we have Uncle Brooks along. But, honestly, does anybody think we're lost?"

"Honestly, Buddie, somebody does think it," his uncle told him. "What is more, he thinks that somebody thinks true."

If his own boyhood were so remote from Mr. MacDougall that he expected Buddie to show consternation at the tidings, he was doomed to disappointment. Buddie elevated one leg in mid-air, and used the other as a pivot for much joyful spinning.

"Ripping!" he said. "Oh, bully! I've always wanted to get lost, and now we've done it. What do we do next: go out exploring, or sit down on our heels and wait till it clears?"

"Both," his uncle told him crisply. "One of us must stay here, as a steady point of hail. The other three can go exploring. Angell, will you stay here? And will you call to us, once every minute by your watch, call and make sure that we answer? Kent, will you start out that way? Buddie and I will try this."

Buddie balked.

"I want to go, my ownsome," he objected.

"Impossible," Mr. MacDougall said, and Daddy reinforced the saying.

"All right, then. Two to one, and I am downed,"

Buddie replied serenely. "If I must go double, though, Uncle Brooks, I'm going with Mr. Kent."

Even Daddy looked surprised at this decision.

"What's that for, Buddie?" he asked.

Buddie's reply was refreshing in its candour.

"Because everybody knows that artists aren't supposed to have much sense," he said. "I want to go along, to make sure that Mr. Kent gets back all right."

And the end of all things proved that it was as well that Buddie held to his decision.

It was only twenty minutes afterward that, to Buddie's full belief, the end of all things came. He was quite sure about the interval, because he knew just how many times Daddy had called and they had answered. Shoulder to shoulder, the tall, agile man and the sturdy boy had made their way along through the ever-thickening fog, talking little, merely hunting for the trail and listening for the calls from Daddy, standing still, watch in hand, somewhere in the milk-white distance. Then suddenly Mr. Kent spoke.

"Buddie, I think I see a tree over there that I remember noticing, as we came up here. It's the right shape; and, if it is the one, it has a round, flat stone like a toadstool just beside it. You stay here and answer the call, while I just go over there to look." And, an instant later, his tall, lithe figure was dimming in the fog.

"All right?" Buddie called after him, once he had answered Daddy's hail.

"I think so. I can tell, in just a minute. Ah-h-h-h-h!"

The words ended in a little cry, half of surprise, half of something else, something far less reassuring to Buddie's waiting ears. They were followed by a crashing, a breaking of the bushes, by the jarring fall of a loosened boulder and by another fall, a duller, thudding one. And then all the sounds ended in a silence more frightful far than the sum total of them all.

The silence lasted a full minute. Then it was cleft by Buddie's voice, shrill with a sickening, agonizing fear.

"Mr. Kent!" he called. "Have you fallen? Are you hurt?" And then, shriller and more agonized, he sent out a piercing shout for help from the one human being who would never fail him. "Oh, come quick! Quick! Oh, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

INDIAN BILL COMES BACK

"I WISH we were well out of this," Dr. Angell said, an hour later.

Mr. MacDougall nodded.

"I hate the night," he said tersely.

"So do I, and for more reasons than one." Dr. Angell glanced back over his shoulder towards the spot where Buddie squatted on his heels beside an improvised couch of pine boughs. "First aid is all very well in its way; but I'd like something a bit more final. I've things enough in camp to meet most emergencies; but every hour like this is a distinct disadvantage."

"Kent is a good fellow," Mr. MacDougall said, a little bit irrelevantly. "You don't feel worried?"

"Not really. Not at all for the final result. For the rest of it, I do. It's a nasty break in a nasty place, and I'd like to get him under cover, where I can look out for it."

"Lucky thing for him that Buddie was with him," Mr. MacDougall said reflectively.

"Still more lucky that he wasn't killed. That's a miracle I shall never comprehend."

But his companion disagreed.

"The miracle was that Buddie kept his head, and stayed on the spot as guide for us. Most youngsters

would have shouted for help, and then gone dashing off to the rescue, without leaving us any sort of notion as to what the fuss was all about."

"That isn't Buddie," Buddie's father said, with some decision.

"It is plain, unadulterated boy, though," the other man declared. "It's as well for Kent that Buddie is the exception, not the rule. But how the boy ever went down the cliff in the time he did and without breaking his neck: that will always be the mystery to me."

"He was ahead of you, then?" Dr. Angell knew the facts of the case by heart; but he could not resist the pleasure of hearing his companion go over them once more.

"Yes. I though I was quick; but he was a long way ahead of me. By the time I was down there, he had managed to pry and tug Kent into some sort of a comfortable position, and was off in search of water. Deuce knows where he found a spring; but, as I stopped to get my breath, he ran past me with his handkerchief asoak in his cap. Before I was really on the spot, he was down on the ground beside Kent, swabbing off his face in the most approved scout fashion. He was perfectly steady, till Kent opened his eyes and sneezed — some of the water apparently had gone wrong — and then he began to blubber like a baby; but he never left off his swabbing, for all that." And Mr. Brooks MacDougall blew his nose resoundingly, at the memory.

Daddy merely gulped, to down, not his emotion, but his pride. He was quite convinced in his fatherly mind that the world would have lacked a famous artist, had it not been for Buddie's promptness.

Moreover, there was some ground for Daddy's pride. In the face of an accident which might have sent many an older man into a panic, Buddie had kept his wits and, what was far more useful to him, his common sense. Instead of shrieking for help, and then bolting off to the rescue, leaving the help to find the way by purest intuition, Buddie had realized that he must stop just where he was, the one link between the rescuers and the rescued, and wait to speed them on their way. That done, however, there was nothing in the world to prevent his outspeeding them, and Buddie had accomplished that with a total disregard of his own safety which was little short of the appalling.

Nevertheless, Buddie was human, and he was very fond of Mr. Kent, albeit quite unconsciously. Therefore, it would be no use to deny that he had a minute or two of being very panicky. The crashing and the thudding had been bad enough. The stillness that came after, though, was the worst of all. It was a wholly terror-stricken Buddie who had let off the succession of calls for Daddy. Calling, he had been surrounded by visions of the worst end possible. By the time Daddy had appeared, however, with Mr. MacDougall by his side, Buddie had steadied to the need.

His explanation of his call was short and clear. Mr. Kent had gone forward just to that third tree. There the earth had given way beneath him. By the sounds, it must have been a long fall into a ravine beneath, and boulders, not very large ones, must have fallen with him. And Daddy, who knew that Buddie was summoning all his woodcraft to his assistance, listened intently. Then he had given it

into Buddie's hands to find a trail down the cliff to the scene of the disaster.

Buddie was quick to find the trail, quicker to follow it; and Mr. MacDougall and the doctor, despite their weight and years, made a respectable showing in the rear. None the less, it seemed a century to Buddie, before they stood beside the luckless artist who lay where he had fallen, with one leg doubled under him and his breath coming and going quickly under Buddie's vehement ministrations.

"Is it all right, Daddy?" Buddie questioned, in a breathless whisper. "He was all twisted over, with his head on his knees and fainted quite away. I straightened him over on his back and put on water. I knew he'd never get right, doubled up like that."

"Never," Dr. Angell echoed, with some energy, as he slipped his hand beneath the artist's waistcoat. He held his own breath during a moment of anxious waiting. Then he nodded. "Buddie, you've made good," he said. "Without you, though — No; lie still, man!" he broke off to say abruptly. "You are all right. You've had a bit of a tumble, and I want you to keep quiet, till you get your breath a little and allow us to get ours. What tumble? Oh, a small matter of an hundred feet or so. You walked off the edge of things in the fog. Evidently you are born for hanging. Else, you wouldn't have come out so well. Buddie's bridge exploit wasn't a circumstance to this."

As Daddy spoke, he turned to cast a reassuring glance at his son. His son, however, half hidden behind a clump of bushes, was digging into his eyes two smudgy fists and a most doubtful-looking hand-

kerchief, and, meanwhile, doing his level best to smother his feelings behind a hacking cough which would have gained for him admission to any tuberculosis sanatorium in the land.

"Where is Buddie?" Mr. Kent asked faintly. "I had to leave him up there, you know."

Buddie gave one final strangle. Then his emotions yielded to his irrepressible sense of fun, and he emerged from his sheltering thicket.

"Shame you didn't take me with you, Mr. Kent. You had a monopoly of the shortest path; I couldn't keep up with you, to save my neck. Still, you lit harder than I did."

The artist craned his neck a little, to look up in the direction of the voice. The exertion was too much for him, however, and he went quite white about the lips. Again Daddy's hand, as if by accident, slid up along his body; but Daddy's voice was cheery, nonchalant.

"Come and sit down here, Buddie. Mr. Kent wants to be sure you got down all right. No; sit a little farther back, where he can use your knee for a pillow. That it, Kent? Yes, he's all here. You can't lose him in any sort of fog. And now about you? Feeling a little dizzy? And a wee bit sickish? All right. Just lie still. We none of us mind resting up a bit."

It was a good many minutes later that Dr. Angell spoke again. In the meantime, he had moved around to Buddie's other side, and stood where Mr. Kent by no possibility could see him. He could see Mr. Kent, though, and his trained eyes took note of every change of colour and of expression in the face before

him. At length, he once more came out from the lee of Buddie's elbow.

"Feeling better, Kent? That's good. Any aches and pains in particular? How about your leg? Well, no wonder. You must have come down on it, come down hard. Besides, it is rather twisted under you. Now," and the doctor's voice was curiously quiet, curiously full of strength; "keep steady as you can, Kent, for I've got to hurt you, dear old chap. Hang on to Buddie's fist for a minute; it may help." And the doctor shut his teeth, as he bent above the artist. "There!" he said, and the bone grated into place. "I hope the worst is over now. How is it, Kent? Pretty bad?"

The beads of sweat hung on the artist's face; but his reply came with indomitable pluck.

"Not too bad. Did I pinch too hard, Buddie?"

But Buddie's pluck had vanished utterly. Mr. Kent smiled up at Daddy; then he put his hand on Buddie's knee.

"I'm all right, old man," he said. "It might be worse, lots worse. You and I are too good athletes to be knocked out by a thing like this."

The doctor looked at him approvingly.

"I'll be hanged, if you haven't got good grit, Kent," he said.

"Why not?" And then, "Perhaps I need it," David Kent added, after an instant.

"You will, if you don't keep quiet," the doctor ordered him. "Now stop talking and lie still. Buddie, you cuddle up against his back, and give him something he can rest against. No; closer than that. So. Now, Kent, old man, MacDougall

and I are going after wood. You've had a break, not a bad one; but we want to get your leg into an apology for some splints, so that we can get you home."

The doctor's accent still was nonchalant, careless. Kent mentally thanked him for it, though it did not deceive him in the least. Not for nothing had he spent a good share of his time inside gymnasiums; he knew as well as any surgeon what breaks were the bad ones, knew his own would be reckoned of their number. None the less, there was nothing especial to be gained by giving tongue to one's prospective woe. Therefore Kent smiled pluckily up at the doctor.

"Sorry to be muddling things for you like this; but don't go to worrying about me. Strap me up, so that I can't hurt myself, and go — No, confound it! You can't well go into camp for help. Really, MacDougall, you must be wishing you hadn't invited me for this trip."

Brooks MacDougall spoke crisply.

"For you, I am. For me, Kent, I'm glad of the chance to see the stuff you are made of."

The artist made a little grimace of disgust.

"All-fired brittle stuff, MacDougall. I'm no end sorry I was so indiscreet as to fall from grace. Now go along and buy my splints. Steady, Buddie! Am I too heavy for you?"

Buddie flung a protecting arm across the artist's shoulders.

"I like to do it," he said. "Besides, even if you did hurt me, it would only just begin to square things up."

However, not all the artist's later urging could bring Buddie to divulge his real meaning.

Once safely out of hearing, Dr. Angell freed his mind.

"It is about as bad as they make them, MacDougall, fracture of the upper leg and a nasty twist to the knee. It's my belief that the leg will mend before the knee does — if it ever does. And it would be a bitter thing for a man like Kent, a man who worships that fine lithe body of his, to have to end his days with a stiff knee." The doctor shut his teeth. "If only this confounded fog would lift!" he said from between them.

Mr. Brooks MacDougall peered this way and that through the milk-white blanket which seemed pressing down on them more thickly with each passing minute.

"What do you propose to do?" he asked a little impotently, or so it seemed to the doctor whose nerves were all on edge with this stern demand on his professional skill and resourcefulness.

"Get the poor chap into splints as soon as ever I can. You'll have to sacrifice your shirt in the process, too. Now and then, it would be well if men wore petticoats. Then we shall have to cut some sort of springy boughs for a bed, and lift him on it. It's no use to try moving him, till the fog breaks and we can find out how far we are from camp. How long do they generally hang on?"

"The fogs? We don't have them often enough to gain any ideas about them. You think Kent is down and out?"

"For the present, badly. For the future, I can't tell. His health is perfect, and he hasn't an ounce of extra flesh to complicate things. Still, it's an ugly break."

Mr. MacDougall frowned.

"Lucky for him he had a doctor in reach."

"Yes, all in all — Hush! Is that Buddie hailing?" The doctor's sudden whitening showed the alarm he was trying his best to hide.

"That's Buddie, right enough. He sounds cheerful, though. Oh-h-h-e-e! Buddie!" his uncle sent a counter hail.

Buddie caught the answer. In response, he delivered himself of a long oration, although the muffling blanket of the fog prevented either his father or his uncle from making out one single word.

"Anyway, he's cheerful," the doctor said. "It evidently is all right, unless Kent's nerves rebel at such a row. Let's hurry back and find out what is happening." And, shouldering the bundle of sticks he had been fashioning, he set out along the trail in the direction of the voice. The voice met him on the way. This time, it was understandable.

"There's somebody coming, Daddy, coming down the trail from up above. I heard him whistling and thrashing about, up there in the fog, and I hailed him. That was what you heard. He answered, and he's coming now. Maybe he can help us out. Splints? Oh, I say, what can I do, Daddy?"

"Keep quiet, and give Mr. Kent something to rest against. Kent, we've got to hurt you some more; but there doesn't seem to be much other way." As he spoke, Dr. Angell was taking off his shirt and methodically reducing it to three-inch strips. "Now yours, MacDougall. No, Buddie; this will do to start on, and I'd rather you stayed just where you are. Now, Kent, old man, can you stand it?"

He stood it, as most people do stand things, because he must. Daddy was skilled and very, very gentle. Nevertheless, there is a wide difference between the gentleness of a hospital and that which is possible in a woodland surgery. Mr. Kent was breathing badly, by the time the splints were put in place; but his blue lips had never lost their plucky little smile.

"There!" The doctor scientifically tore open the last inches of a shirt-sleeve bandage, and knotted the two ends strongly around the splints. "That's all, Kent. You'll do all right now, till we can get you home and into plaster. You may not be beautiful; but I assure you that the worst is over. Well, by all that's lucky! Bill!"

For, though all four of them had been too much absorbed to notice it, the sound of approaching steps and of crashing bushes had been growing louder. Now, with one final crackle, the last screen of bushes was swept aside, and in the opening stood Indian Bill.

"Plenty bad trail," he grumbled. "What's the matter? Man hurt?"

"A broken leg; that's all," the doctor answered, with professional lightness.

But Indian Bill took a more gloomy view of things.

"That is very bad. Sometimes men die of broke legs," he remarked pessimistically. "What doing here?"

"Same thing you are, you old fraud," Buddie told him. "We're lost."

Indian Bill shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not lost. This is Snake Cañon. I know him all the way through. Where you come from?"

"Camp."

"Where's camp?"

"That's for you to say," Buddie explained to him. "You are a guide; not we."

Indian Bill grunted.

"Where did you put the camp?" he demanded of Mr. MacDougall.

"At the head of the slope above Wind River rapids, ten miles in."

"Hm! Big ways from here, bad trail." Indian Bill paused and pondered. "First, we must make litter," he said, as the result of his ponderings. "Can't carry man with a broke leg in our arms."

Not all of Buddie's scouting had taught him to make a litter in the time that Indian Bill gave to the operation, let alone a litter long enough to accommodate a man of Mr. Kent's dimensions plus his splints. Indian Bill accomplished it, however. More than that, he showed himself past master of the art of moving invalids. The doctor gave a sigh of complete satisfaction, when Indian Bill, waving him aside, lifted the artist like a baby and laid him on the bed of springy twigs which lined the litter.

"Now," Bill said, as casually as if carrying a full-grown man up a rocky trail were a part of the task of every normal day; "now you each take a corner, so. And walk this way, so, two-two, not all together. Then he won't shake about so much. Now!" And the litter swung gently forward, upward, on the trail.

Once at the top of the cliff, Indian Bill kept on steadily, for a mile or two along the level ground at the summit. Then, all at once, he halted and stared

questioningly about him into the pearly mist, now darkening fast with coming night.

"Do you know," Dr. Angell spoke quite softly to his brother; "I am half afraid the old sinner has missed the trail, after all."

Softly as he spoke, the artist heard him and opened his eyes.

"Don't worry, old man, even if he has. I'm not in any great pain. I could keep on like this, all night," he said.

In his turn, Buddie heard, and a lump came to his throat. This was the man whom, on more than one occasion, talking to Tom, he had dubbed a coward. But cowards, as a rule, were not created of such stuff as this.

Indian Bill, however, still stood snuffing at the air like a hound on scent. Suddenly a change came over him, the indecision left his face, his body tautened.

"I hear dog," he said. "Listen!"

Sure enough, across the heavy, fog-laden air around them came a bellowing bark, a bark which could have had its source in but one pair of brazen canine lungs.

Buddie caught the sound rapturously.

"It's Ebenezer! Hear him! I'd know his voice out of a thousand. Camp must be somewhere near."

Five minutes later, Indian Bill tottered beneath the impact of Ebenezer's burly, welcoming body, and the litter tottered with him. However, Dr. Angell, as he afterwards confessed, was far too much relieved, to think of any temporary injury to his patient.

Indian Bill superintended the carrying of the litter inside the tent. Then he remarked, the while he rubbed his aching arms, —

"Dog not such an all-fool, after all."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

KENTING

"COME along, Buddie."

"Can't."

"Oh, come along!"

"Sha'n't, if you like that any better."

"But we're ready to start."

"Start, then."

"Isn't any fun without you." And, this time, Teresa's voice struck in, albeit without any desire to injure the feelings of Tom who stood waiting at her elbow.

Buddie's reply was unconcerned.

"Then don't go."

"But you will come, Buddie; won't you?"

The pause which followed, was filled with low arguments, proceeding from the next room whence Buddie's voice had come. Then Buddie's accents rolled out again, decisive and sonorous.

"I'm not coming. I'm having a better time here."

"Oh, blow!" Tom said comprehensively. Then, for Teresa's benefit, he added, "All off, then. Once he gets to Kenting, it's all up with us."

And Teresa nodded understandingly.

The new verb, *Kenting*, and *to Kent*, had been an evolution of these latter days. Tom vowed it was the only active verb that could describe the present deeds of

Buddie, while Teresa, accepting it, made no bones of declaring that her own nose was completely out of joint; that, imported to be guide, philosopher, and friend to Buddie, in reality, she was dying of his stern neglect.

Neglected or not by Buddie, however, Teresa was plainly flourishing in her new conditions, and Tom kept her so well occupied that her occasional demands for sympathy fell upon unheeding ears. Buddie was not a model of an attentive host, it is true; but Chubbie Neal was doing his fair share to make Teresa forget the fact, and Chubbie, taken by himself, was no mean source of entertainment. Even without Buddie at her beck and call, Teresa was forced to confess to herself and to Mrs. MacDougall that never in all her life before had she had so good a time. Budge and Toddie had been joined by a young brother, as spotty and as gentle as a tabby-cat. Chubbie had not only undertaken to teach Teresa to ride, but also to paddle, to cast a fly, and to play six kinds of patience. Moreover, both of them had agreed that, for the present, Buddie's neglect of them was quite excusable. Nobody could do everything at once, and he was busy, Kenting.

Being defined in cold and unelastic English, *Kenting* appeared to consist in sitting cross-legged on the edge of the artist's bed, the head-end edge, so as not to joggle the broken leg in moments of extreme excitement, and in talking over with him most of the events which had occurred since the world began. For, although it was now three weeks and more since the accident, the artist was still flat on his back, with an iron weight attached to the broken leg which had been dangerously near to being a broken hip.

The trials of that memorable foggy day had by no means ended, when the combined efforts of Ebenezer and Indian Bill had brought the litter to the temporary camp. The permanent camp was still to be gained; and not only was it a good twenty miles away, but the trail led down the roughest sort of a mountain side and then along a stretch of foaming, treacherous, rapid-spotted river.

As a matter of course, nothing could be done, that first night, beyond making Mr. Kent as comfortable as was possible with the resources of their present quarters. That done, Dr. Angell retired to his own tent to talk the matter over with his sister.

"It's bad, Julia," he said, at the end of the story. "What's more, I'm afraid it is going to be a good deal worse. Still, we shall have to take it as it comes, for Kent can't be sent East to his friends, and he doesn't seem to care to have any of them come out here. You and I have got to put this thing through together, once we get him back to camp. I must say, I dread the trip for him. He has good grit; but it is going to be tested to the very limit."

"Yes." Aunt Julia spoke crisply. "I can see that. Once we do get him home, though? What then?"

"Make him as comfortable as we can in that shack, I suppose."

Aunt Julia cast upon her brother a look of absolute rebuke.

"Ernest, are you a dunce; or are you just trying to draw me out?" she asked a little bit impatiently. "Of course, if ever we do get the man home alive, he'll be taken straight to our house. We both of us can look out for him better there."

"What about the nurse?" the doctor queried.

"Nurse! Nonsense! By the time you could get one out here, you would have ceased to need her. We can put this thing through together, as you say."

"I only referred to the planning," her brother told her meekly.

"That is the main part of it all, that and the surgery. You'll have to see to the bone, anyway; there isn't another doctor within seventy miles. The nearest one is a specialist in horses. No; this is your case. As for the nursing, you haven't another thing to do, and I have any amount of time on my hands. Anyway, we will try it, at the start."

"If Kent will let us," the doctor interposed.

His sister laughed.

"That just depends on our tact and common sense. If he rebels, leave him to me."

The doctor sat for a minute or two, staring at the trim, intrepid little woman at his side. Then, —

"Julia, you are a trump!" he said. And then he added, "All the same, I'd give a good year of Kent's life, if I had him back at Gray Buttes now."

Next morning, he said the same thing again, and with even better reason. Kent, after a night of total sleeplessness and much pain, had developed a high fever. Now and then, towards morning, he had even been a bit delirious. In the intervals of quiet, though, his courage never once had failed him, nor yet his courteous care for his campmates whose rest he had so broken. Uncomplaining, his attitude was one of half-humorous apology for his unintentional misdoing and the consequent inconvenience that he had hurled upon the camp. Nevertheless, by morn-

ing, Dr. Angell needed no clinical thermometer to assure him that he faced a dilemma, and that a grave one. Should he risk what might even be his patient's life by attempting the long, hard journey back to camp; or should he face the danger of permanent crippling, from subjecting the broken leg too long to the boggled surgery made needful by his remoteness from anything at all resembling the proper supplies? It was Buddie, whose quiet statement of an indubitable fact finally induced the doctor to order a start for home.

"Do you know, Daddy," Buddie had said gravely, when, at the first gray dawn, Dr. Angell had flung himself down for a moment at his son's side; "I've been thinking about this thing, almost all night. Mr. Kent isn't just like everybody. He would care more than most people, if this thing should make him lame; he'd almost rather be dead."

"Hush, Buddie!"

But Buddie snuggled to the remonstrant hand upon his shoulder.

"I mean it, Daddy. I know him more than you do, even if you are another man. I know how he loves to do all his queer tricks; how he likes to know that his body will do anything he tells it. And, if it shouldn't — That's why we every one of us have got to take hold of this thing to pull him through. Daddy," and, in his eagerness, Buddie straightened up upon his elbow, and delivered his charge directly down into his father's face; "whatever else you've done in your life, you've got to bring that leg out all right, no matter what other risks you take."

The doctor took the risk accordingly. He be-

lieved, down in his heart, that Buddie had spoken true: the artist would find it harder than most men to face life with a stiffened leg. Moreover, Daddy was a little superstitious. In his present great uncertainty as to the wise thing for him to do, he accepted it as an omen that Buddie should speak out and show him the way. He took his decision steadily. The early breakfast over, he ordered the litter brought again; and Kent, now babbling in delirium, was lifted from the comfortable camp bed and placed upon it, ready for the breakneck journey down the trail.

Afterwards, long afterwards, the doctor wondered at the endurance shown by them all, endurance of brain and brawn and nerve. Ponies were out of the question, save for Chubbie and Teresa who were sent forward at full speed, to order all things put in readiness for their coming. Aunt Julia stayed, because she was a woman and might be needed in some crisis; Buddie stayed, because he flatly refused to do anything else, stayed in absolute defiance of his father who would have chosen to spare his young son the memory of the experience.

"We've been the biggest sort of chums," he argued hotly. "I'd be a beast to leave him, now he's down and out."

"But he doesn't need you now," his father argued back again. "In fact, he doesn't even know you're anywhere about."

However, Buddie had the final word.

"That's no sign he won't, any minute," he retorted. "Anyhow, I stay."

And his father, though downed in the contest, yet

felt a thrill of pride in the indomitable, sunburned urchin who faced him, fists in pockets and cap shockingly awry.

By eight o'clock, then, they were up and off. It was slow and toilsome work, the picking a level footing, sometimes for two men and sometimes for four, along the narrow trail up which they had come trotting so buoyantly, not three full days before. In the rude litter, the patient lay and babbled, moaning a little now and then, when one or the other of his bearers stumbled over a rolling stone in the path. He was no light weight in himself; the crude litter had been made too hurriedly to allow much plan for lightness, and it took all of the strength of the men who could be spared from the burden of the camp equipment to help the doctor and Mr. MacDougall, the topographer and Indian Bill to bear their inert load. Buddie had begged to take his turn with the others; but on that point Daddy had held firm.

And so the sad little cavalcade set out, the litter first, with Buddie close beside it, then the extra bearers, changing often, then the camp equipment with which, in such conditions, it would have been madness to lose touch. And the trail, now tested carefully in its every inch, seemed to lengthen before them and grow rough, a cruel, tricky trail, and not at all the one up which their merry group had trotted, not two full days ago.

Early as had been their start, short as had been their halt for nooning, dusk found them still far from the river and the waiting canoes. The doctor gave one final look around him at the darkening forest; then he gave the order to halt, gave it curtly and with

a roughness which was meant to cover the deadly fear that swept over him, each time his eyes fell on that figure in the litter, not babbling now and restless, but lying still, with the head drooping slightly to one side.

Indian Bill came out with flying colours, that night. It was he who chose an ideal spot for camping, he who chopped wood and built the fire and helped the Chinaman to cook, he who developed a deft and gentle touch that rendered him invaluable as a nurse, he who brewed a weedy drink that quieted the sufferer while it quenched his raging thirst. Questioned and complimented by the doctor, though, he merely shrugged his scrawny shoulders.

"Indian trick," was all that he vouchsafed to say. "We all learn him; everybody die, some time or other."

That night and the succeeding morning seemed to Dr. Angell to surpass anything he had experienced before in his professional life. He had been used to facing bad emergencies, trained to make the best of sudden calls upon his resourcefulness and skill. Nevertheless, his years of practise in a city, varied as they had been, had never brought him face to face with the complicating factors of a serious surgical case and a slightly dubious heart, coupled with a total absence of all things from strychnine to cheesecloth and plaster of paris. Indian Bill's weedy brew, a pocket knife and an adjacent thicket, the fragments of such clothing as could be spared by the members of the party: these were the medical stores and the surgical appliances at his command. Small wonder that a weary, haggard doctor heaved a great

sigh of relief when, long past noon next day, the little column came to a halt beside a group of canoes drawn up upon the river bank. Indeed, such was the doctor's abject discouragement that he would have found it quite in keeping with all the rest of the bad matter, had the canoes been missing utterly, made off with by the same dire hand of Fate which had been the cause of all their past undoing.

On the river bank, the doctor wasted no time in giving orders. Home was in sight; the men could be left to rest and refresh themselves and straggle on as best they could. It was only a question of rushing the invalid on, now, as fast as possible. With a swift, measuring glance, he took heedful note of the canoes, picked out the longest and the slimmest.

"In there, Bill," he said. "It looks the best. No; not the litter. Just Mr. Kent. Careful!"

But the caution had been needless. Tenderly, skilfully, strongly, the ragged, unkempt Indian bent above the litter, lifted its inert occupant as if he had been a baby, and, with the very gesture of a mother placing her little baby in a cradle, so he placed the long, lean, inert man inside the bark canoe.

The doctor, white under his sunburn, nodded and relaxed the shutting of his teeth. Then his gaze swept the faces of the men before him, once, twice. In the end, it rested on the young topographer.

"Hearn," he said briefly; "you are the best one at the paddle. I rather fancy that it's up to you."

The topographer whitened in his turn. In his turn, too, he shut his teeth. Then, —

"I'll do my best, doctor," he said steadily. "It's

not going to be too easy; but, so far as possible, you can count on me."

Five minutes afterward, two canoes were shooting headlong down the rapids, bound for home. In the foremost canoe were the topographer and his almost lifeless freight. Buddie was with his father in the second.

And, most of the time since then, Buddie had been Kenting.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

EBENEZER OUSTS THE COOK

"STOP your worrying, and go and get Teresa," Buddie ordered.

The topographer, as well he might, looked somewhat astonished. He had come across the road, his face full of trouble, to make a sinister report to Mr. Brooks MacDougall. Mr. Brooks MacDougall missing, gone for a drive with his wife and Dr. Angell, he had been moved to make an unauthorized report to Buddie who had, quite as usual, been on picket duty beside the artist's bed. The topographer had grown to like Teresa Hamilton exceedingly. None the less, he could not see why she should be proposed as a plaster for his present woe. Therefore, —

"What can she do about it?" he asked.

"Anything you want, from boiling carrots to making fudge," Buddie answered, and by his answer he disclosed the fact that the crisis, whatever its exact nature, in some way or other concerned the kitchen.

"But she is too pretty," the topographer made somewhat irrelevant objection.

Buddie's answer showed his youth.

"What if she is? It doesn't hurt the flavour any. Besides, she doesn't stir the pudding with her nose."

"No; only —"

"Only what?" Buddie queried relentlessly.

"Only I wouldn't like to see a girl like that inside a kitchen."

Buddie chuckled.

"From all accounts, I'd a long way rather see her inside of ours than out of it." Then he raised his voice, for he had joined the topographer outside the door, and their talk had been carried on in the lowest tones possible, not to disturb the invalid within. "What were you asking, Mr. Kent?"

"What's the excitement?"

"Oh, did we wake you up? I'm so sorry." Buddie's penitence was manifestly genuine.

"It's high time. I've had an immense nap. Who is out there? Hearn? Come along in here, you youngsters, and tell me the news of the day."

Hearn took the nearest chair. Buddie, as a matter of course, coiled himself up on the bed, his arm against the artist's shoulder. Then silence fell. Neither one of them quite liked to break the news which, to their point of view, seemed totally appalling.

The artist urged them on. Tucked up in bed and nursed as never man was nursed before, he knew that no especial harm would be allowed to fall on him. Therefore, his curiosity was greater than his fear.

"What is it?" he demanded.

It was Hearn who answered, and with a bluntness that made no effort to break the news with caution

"The cook is drunk," he said.

"Oh. Well, what then?"

"Starvation, I should say," Hearn replied affably. "He never has done it before, so we hadn't provided

an understudy; and not a soul of us boys knows how to cook an ounce of food."

Artist though he was, Mr. Kent promptly gave proof of his practical mind.

"Isn't there anything cold?" he inquired.

"We looked, first thing. You see, it's only an hour to dinner. We've just found him."

"We can't eat him," Buddie objected, from his place at Mr. Kent's elbow.

"No; nor too much else. There's a pair of potatoes, and one chop, and a bowl of something that looks as much like beans as anything else, only we can't remember having any."

"It probably is porridge," Buddie suggested. "Well, go on. What else?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Bread, of course; but that doesn't count."

"Apparently," Mr. Kent appeared to be addressing the ceiling; "we shall have to eat the cook."

"He's raw."

"No; from all accounts — What were you saying, Buddie?"

"What I said before: that it's up to Teresa."

"But a child like that can't cook for a whole camp," Mr. Kent objected, even as Hearn had done before him.

"Can't she! Teresa has got nine brothers, and any one of them can eat for ten."

"She doesn't do the family cooking."

"She could, if she tried, though." And Buddie swiftly outlined the aims and methods of the playhouse. "Up to now, of course, it's mainly been for

fun. Now, though, she's got her chance to see whether she's able to make good."

The topographer shook his head.

"Hard on her, Buddie. She's guest here, not cook."

"Harder on her to see us starve," Buddie retorted. "Just think how she would feel, to see us lying, wan and lily-pale, about her feet, begging with our last breaths for the grilly mutton chops which she alone could give."

Mr. Kent laughed at Buddie's poetical effusion. Then once more he attacked the practical issue.

"Isn't there another cook in reach, Hearn?" he questioned.

"Not since Wang went off to Denver, Mr. Kent. Cooks don't grow on trees out here, by any means. It takes time and bribery to achieve them, I assure you. Even then, we sometimes find them missing, as in the present instance."

"He's gone, then?"

"His senses. His body is very present. In fact, just now it is underneath the table in the kitchen. One of my present problems is how to get it out, without sawing either it or the table legs to pieces. It is a grand fit."

"How long does it last?"

"The fit? Till I can pry it apart. I'm going to get the rodman to help me; he is a muscular creature. Oh, you mean the spree? How can I tell? I never saw him have one."

"Don't you know how to cook, Buddie?" Mr. Kent inquired.

"Only roast apples and peanut taffy. It doesn't

run in the family, Mr. Kent," Buddie assured him modestly.

"What about your aunt?"

"Aunt Julia!" Buddie's voice suggested that the thought would have led him to hold up his hands in horror, had they not been too comfortably clasped behind his head. "She cook! She used to have to get the maid to warm Pet-Lamb's milk. Pet-Lamb? She was the cat, a great, fat white beast that had to have her milk warmed up and sweetened for her. And Aunt Julia didn't even know how to do that. Most women don't," Buddie added conclusively.

The artist whistled. The action was very like a boy. Indeed, in spite of the whitening out of his sunburn and certain new lines around his lips, his face was boyish, as he lay there on his back with the iron weight always drag, dragging at his injured leg. Moreover, despite the ceaseless pain and boredom of his present predicament, something of the indifferent look had been going out of his eyes, in those last weeks. Daddy had been the first one of them all to note the change. Noting it, he had wondered whether any part of it had been caused by the constant presence of his son. Buddie, once his boyish liking was really aroused, was loyal to a fault and sympathetic. However, his sympathy was not exactly of the tender and sentimental species. It was too healthily exuberant for that. Buddie could cuddle; but he could not, would not, coddle.

Not that Mr. Kent, since his ugly accident, had lacked his own fair share of coddling. Aunt Julia was a past master of the art; and Teresa could,

when she chose, be a close second. Moreover, in the case of Mr. Kent, she did choose. She had liked the tall, lank artist from the start, partly from his eyes, in part because he treated her with the same deference he showed to Aunt Julia, asked her opinions and listened when she gave them, talked to her, without talking down to her. And then any girl, with any spark of womanliness in her, could not fail to be impressed with the plucky way in which he took his accident, making light of it when he could, shutting his teeth and burying his woe in the sheet when he could not. Yes, Teresa liked Mr. Kent absolutely. Liking him, she bestowed on him, despite his greater dimensions, much the same sort of treatment she accorded to little Tootles, when the ways of the world collided with his young ideals. And the artist liked it every bit as well as did the little Tootles.

Meanwhile,—

"Where is she?" the topographer was asking.

"Pet-Lamb? The happy hunting-ground of rats and mice. Or did you mean Aunt Julia?" Buddie queried lazily.

"Neither. Teresa."

"She and Chub went off, this noon. Fishing, I think. Anyhow, they had a lot of tackle of all sorts, and didn't ride."

"Why didn't you go, too, Buddie?" Mr. Kent asked.

"Because I wanted to hear the rest of the story you were telling, yesterday, the one about the artist chap in Brussels. You got out of finishing it, yesterday, and you went to sleep, to-day. I had been

hoping," Buddie cast a suggestive glance at Hearn; "that, once you did wake up, you would have a chance to finish it, before we were interrupted."

Hearn crossed his booted legs.

"Graceful hint, Buddie! I'm dumb, and the dinner can go hang. Go ahead, Mr. Kent."

But Buddie interposed.

"Not. You haven't heard the first end of it. It wouldn't be polite to tell the last, then, when you were present. Besides, in Uncle Brooks's absence, you are in charge of this expedition. It's up to you to see to it that the invalid is fed at the usual time."

Then Hearn gave tongue to the real uneasiness that possessed his soul.

"Hang it, Buddie! I can't cook. I don't know a gridiron from a grater."

"Time you learned, then," Buddie told him callously. "Go and find Teresa, and get her to show you."

"How can I find her, when I don't know where she is?"

"It wouldn't be finding, if you did know," Buddie made literal answer. "As for trailing her —"

"But I can't stand in the door of the cookhouse and roar *Teresa*," the topographer objected. "It wouldn't be decent; and, besides, she might not hear."

The artist, prone in the bed, chuckled.

"Likewise, if she knew what was ahead of her, she might not come," he said.

Then Buddie stuck up his red head and spoke defensively.

"That's not Teresa," he declared.

"What isn't Teresa? What haven't I been doing now?" Teresa's voice demanded from outside. "May I come in, Mr. Kent?"

"Always."

Teresa appeared in the doorway, her broad hat most gloriously askew, her skirts flapping dankly around her trim ankles. She waved away the chair beside the bed, and took her stand at the far end of the room.

"Mercy, no! I'd give poor Mr. Kent a cold in his head, if I came near him. I'm soaking wet."

"So we observe. What happened?"

"Chubbie. Next time you send me off alone with him, Buddie Angell, you can buy me an accident insurance policy, before we start."

"What's the row?"

Teresa cast a glance down across her skirt, now fringed with hanging drops of muddy water.

"Thomas has an adventurous nature," she replied demurely.

"Get out. You dared me, and said you'd follow," came an irate voice from the room outside.

"What if I did?" Teresa demanded superbly. "I supposed you had some sense."

"So I had, sense enough not to take a dare from a girl." There came a thump and then another.

"Probably taking off his shoes," Teresa interpreted swiftly. "It's foolish, too. He can't possibly get them on again, and he's too big to go barefoot."

"I've got another pair." The jerky accent suggested that Chubbie now was wrestling with adhesive stockings.

"Yes, in your tent."

Chubbie's sigh of relief, plainly audible, betokened that the worst was over.

"Buddie'll get them," he said serenely.

"Not on your life! I'm not your fag; I'm for Mr. Kent," Buddie made prompt retort. "Besides, what have you been doing to Teresa?"

"She did it. It wasn't my doing."

Prudently Teresa changed the subject.

"What were you discussing about me, when I came in?" she asked.

The others sought to temporize. Buddie, however, believed in the direct method.

"Whether you would get the dinner, to-night."

"Of course," Teresa made undaunted reply. "What do you want?"

"Anything you happen to find lying about."

"Except the cook," Mr. Kent suggested prudently. "You might find him a bit too large to handle."

Regardless now of her wet skirt and the possible consequent danger of imparting cold to the invalid, Teresa flounced down into the empty chair.

"Tell me," she ordered. "I don't see the joke."

"There isn't any joke," Buddie responded. "It is serious, sober earnest. The cook is on the floor, under the kitchen table, sleeping it off; and you are the only solitary soul in ninety miles who can keep this camp from starving."

Most girls would have quailed at such a prospect. Not so Teresa. She drew one long breath of delight. Then, —

"How lovely!" she said comprehensively.

A moment later, she was on her feet, and starting

off in the direction of the cookhouse. It was Mr. Kent who called her back, and sent her to her room to change her dripping raiment. He had the prudence of his years, the foresight. He realized the danger, not only to Teresa, but also to them all, if any disaster born of wetting should descend upon Teresa Hamilton, sole link between her comrades and cooked food. Therefore he spoke promptly and with authority, and Teresa obediently scurried off in search of dryer raiment.

Teresa was never one to waste much time in prinking. She was too trim for that, too deft and too efficient. If a girl could dress at all, she argued, she could do it as well in fifteen minutes as in fifty. Now, though, she made record time. Ten minutes later, she was back upon the threshold, spick and span and totally unruffled by her haste.

"Ready," she announced. "But who is going to sit on top of the table, to protect me from the cook?"

Hearn was, apparently, for he arose and went away at Teresa's side. Judged from the sounds of hilarity which presently emerged from the cookhouse, the policy of protection was enjoyable, at least to protector and protected. As for the other member of the little party, he slumbered on, peaceful and unconscious, in his improvised kennel among the table legs.

It was Ebenezer who finally dislodged him, Ebenezer, the always-greedy, whose stomach kept a better record of the hours than any ship's chronometer. Ebenezer had been reposing in the shade, under the window of the room where his master was chattering with Mr. Kent. At length, Ebenezer's inner man

stirred drowsily within him, drove off the dreams and, wide awake, announced his hunger. A minute later, Ebenezer was ambling along in the direction of the cookhouse.

For a mere canine, Ebenezer's logic was singularly trustworthy. Dinners were, nowadays, the main feature of his universe; dinners, moreover, nowadays were often served before the family meal, not after. Else, how could the cook conceal his errors and keep up his reputation? And Ebenezer's tastes were catholic, not critical. Quantity was his ideal, and quality go hang. Therefore, Ebenezer sought the cookhouse with an alacrity which turned his ambling into a waddling run.

To his surprise, he found a new order of things in the cookhouse. Mounted guard above the good-smelling things upon the stove was Teresa, Teresa whom aforetime he had learned to associate with discipline, and with a niggardly trick of putting the leavings away upon the pantry shelf, Teresa who now looked at him with stoic disregard and went on stirring things that gave forth luscious odours. That was bad enough; but worse awaited Ebenezer. Teresa's disregard was as nothing compared to that which met him from his quondam friend, the cook, source of bounties beyond Ebenezer's power to reckon. Instead of setting down toothsome jorums underneath the table, the cook himself was underneath the table, curled up like a badly-managed sausage, and deaf to the pathetic whimperings with which Ebenezer sought to communicate the full extent of the hunger gnawing at his vitals. Ebenezer sat down to consider the situation.

And, above the red-hot stove, Teresa and her topographer went on with their stirring, heedless of the effect of any luscious odours upon the nerve centres of the hungry Ebenezer.

Ebenezer considered, cocking his wise gray head from right to left and back again, whimpering suggestively, the while. Then he let himself down beside the disregarding cook, and fell to prodding him gently with one shaggy paw. The cook still disregarded him; indeed, his sole response to Ebenezer's pleading was to curl himself into a still tighter knot. The continued disregard did not please Ebenezer. He showed his displeasure by throwing himself back a little, and letting off a bark that set the pots and pans to throbbing in their places.

However, the good-smelling concoction on the stove was near to burning, and, —

"Hush, Ebenezer!" was all Teresa said.

Ebenezer obediently hushed, and gave another instant to consideration. The result of his musings seemed to be that, mannerly methods failing, it was time that he should take force. For one long minute and for two, he industriously prodded the slumbering cook, first with one paw, then the other, then with both. Even that failed to arouse the source of supplies to do its tri-daily duty, and Ebenezer took his final step.

He rose to his feet, backed off a pace or two to examine the geography of the mingled cook and table. Then he came forward daintily, daintily shut his jaws upon one of the jutting angles of the cook's anatomy, and settled slowly, slowly backwards.

The legs of the table were strong, the sinews of the cook were even stronger; but strongest of all were the jaws of Ebenezer. With the deliberate, resistless pulling of a surgeon-dentist on a double tooth, Ebenezer extracted the slumbering cook from among the table legs, dragged him, no longer slumbering, across the cookhouse floor, and deposited him in an untidy bundle at Teresa's feet beside the stove. That done, he relaxed his hold, backed off to a position midway between the stove and table, and demanded food with joyous certainty that it would be forthcoming.

Ebenezer's logic justified itself. Food was forthcoming promptly and in great abundance. While he ate it, the topographer escorted the cook, now well awakened, to the nearest spring, and finished up the work begun by Ebenezer. Moreover, taking pattern from Ebenezer, he finished it with such force and thoroughness that it was the cook himself, and not Teresa, who prepared next morning's breakfast for the camp.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

TERESA AND TOM

"ISN'T it funny," Teresa said to Buddie, that same night while they were washing up the last of the dishes; "how little common sense some people have?"

"As to who?" And Buddie polished a cup with a deftness born of many an hour inside Teresa's playhouse.

"Mr. Hearn, this time."

"Hearn is a good sort," Buddie remarked temperately.

Teresa suddenly departed from her thoughtful mood and sniffed.

"Yes; but he doesn't understand us," she said.

"Us?"

"You and me."

Buddie was masculine. Therefore, —

"Didn't suppose there was anything to understand," he said.

"There isn't. That's the point. That is the very thing they don't understand. Just as if I hadn't the sense to see how things are, and not care."

"What things?" Buddie asked obtusely.

"Mr. Kent, and the way you don't have all the time to frisk around with me."

Buddie set down his second cup with a whack,

and, the dish-towel in his hand, turned around to face Teresa.

"Do you honestly care, Teresa? I hadn't thought —"

"In other words, you knew too much about me," Teresa cut in. "That's the nicest part of you, Buddie. You know enough to take a few things for granted."

"But, for a fact, have you been lonesome?" Buddie queried penitently. "Of course, I know you came out here just to make more fun for me, and I never thought that perhaps you wouldn't understand —" Buddie, wallowing in a heavy sea of explanation, suddenly flung up his arms and dived to the bottom. "Why, I supposed of course you knew I'd rather be out with you than anybody else; only Mr. Kent —"

Once more Teresa cut in, and heartily.

"Of course," she assented. "Besides, you would be a little beast, if you didn't."

Buddie's face cleared suddenly.

"Anyway, it isn't going to last much longer, and we've got all the rest of the summer ahead of us."

Teresa gave a final polish to her emptied dish-pan; then she washed her hands as daintily as if she never had been in contact with anything more rudely practical than a pair of sugar-tongs.

"All the rest of the summer!" she echoed. "Buddie, do you realize that we are a third of the way through August?"

"No." Buddie looked a trifle blank. "I hadn't thought much about the time, one way or the other.

Out here, it doesn't seem to make much difference what day of the month it is."

"It does to me, though." Teresa sighed a little. "It would to you, Buddie, if you had nine brothers at home."

"I've got Ebenezer," Buddie responded.

"Yes; but you can hang him up in a corner now and then. I can't hang up little Tootles."

"And yet, you'd miss him?" Buddie's accent was full of thoughtful question.

"Bud—die!" This time, Teresa sounded shocked. "What an awful idea! Miss him!" And then she added, "Let's get Ebenezer and come outside. I want a walk, and he needs one. Besides, we need to show to the world at large that we haven't had a quarrel, or stopped being chums."

"What twaddle! As if we could! Hi, Ebenezer! Come along." And the two chums vanished around the corner of the cookhouse, talking busily as they went.

Buddie and Teresa had been telling the exact and literal truth. They both were perfectly aware that Teresa had been asked out to camp, that summer, because she and Buddie had been such splendid chums. Moreover, they were well aware that their chumship had not suffered in the least because Buddie had spent hours on hours in what Tom had dubbed *Kenting*, and because Tom had been left, meanwhile, to provide the greater part of Teresa's entertainment. In the intervals of Kenting and of Tom's social ministrations, there had been hours and hours that Buddie and Teresa had spent together, talking about the past and future while they

lived the present, making enough of the time they could be together more than to make up for the hours when they went their separate ways. It was a good deal as Buddie phrased it now, —

"What's the sense of kicking up a special rumpus, Teresa? We each know that the other is the best fellow going; but there's no need of lifting up our voices to proclaim a perfectly evident fact."

To be sure, Tom, in these latter days, was inflating himself with a smug consciousness that he was first-best in Teresa's estimation. It was he who, as a rule, walked abroad at Teresa's side and protected her from Indian Bill, who, once more much in evidence, filled with a mortal fear even her intrepid soul. It was Tom who rode with her on her pony, and took her for long jaunts up and down the cañon and into the hills beyond. He found Teresa the jolliest sort of a companion possible, as alert and daring as a boy, and infinitely better than any boy by reason of her variable moods which kept him busy wondering what she next would say and do. Most of the girls whom Tom had known would turn panicky, or self-conscious, or, still worse, get on their nerves over imagined slights to their dignity. Teresa balked at nothing, had no perceptible nerves, and took the world in as downright a fashion as any of the boys whom Tom had known in school. Added to this, moreover, was the little elusive charm born of her girlhood, a hint of gentleness and of comprehension which added tenfold to Tom's enjoyment of her comradeship.

Tom never forgot the first day he had been fully conscious of that charm. Up to that time, he had

taken it unthinkingly and as it came. That day, he found out just what it could count to him.

It had been one of his homesick days. They came quite regularly, and always on the nineteenth of the month — for it was not yet the full year since his mother had gone away from him, and he still reckoned up the time by months. He never said much about the days, when they came around. His father had not encouraged too much talking about the past; and Tom was a boy to take a hint of that kind without needing repetition. He merely went his own way for a few hours, talked little, walked heavily and, for the time being, parted with his sense of humour utterly. One such day had been forestalled by a totally contented evening with Aunt Julia and a pack of cards. Another of the same sort had been at hand, when Teresa had suggested a morning's fishing, up the cañon.

Directly she suggested it, the plan appealed to Tom. One need not talk too much, when one was fishing. One could draggle one's line about, and sit silent, and think about the things which rendered one a bore, if they were mentioned. Therefore he assented eagerly to Teresa's plan, and went trudging away beside her, immediately after breakfast. Their own particular pool once reached, however, Tom sat himself down, apparently to lose himself in contemplation of his line, while Teresa, never very dense, sat down beside him and, abandoning her line to its own devices, fell to studying his face.

It was a good face, as she well knew, and a strong one. Chubbie was not a beauty; he had shot up, all of a sudden, into a long, lanky stripling who

appeared to be chiefly composed of wrists and feet. But his frame was well-knit; his features, once they filled out a little, would be good. His eyes were steady, and his lips were thin. To-day, though, the eyes were overcast, and the lips were drooping at their corners. Moreover, as Teresa took swift note, two fish and then a third one came to nibble at his line without causing the slightest answering tension on the part of Chubbie's fingers.

For some time, she watched him furtively, studying his face, comparing it with that of Buddie which, as a rule, was serenity itself. Buddie's objections to the processes of Fate rarely descended to the level of dumb depression. Rather, they were cyclonic in their methods of expression. Even in the months of his separation from his father, his occasional gusts of misery had been divided by long stretches of a pure enjoyment of the good things of life which still remained to him.

But Tom was different. He had his hours of exuberance; but there were other hours, bad ones and long, when it seemed to Teresa that only the inherent dumbness of boyhood kept him from calling out for sympathy. And yet, strangely enough, she had never asked questions about him or his family. Teresa, as a general thing, was not a gossip; least of all now, when there were too many interesting things about to leave her leisure to talk about mere people.

Now, all at once, watching Tom, she realized that she was, not curious, but intensely interested, to know the secret of his drooping lips and heavy eyes. In the experience of Teresa Hamilton, an experience

culled from observation of her many brothers, boyish depression arose from one source only: parental discipline for misdeeds which had not been quite worth the while, in view of what came after. Sandy, putting angleworms in the bed of his serious-minded older brother, had looked liked that, the morning after; but there had been cause, physical, as well as moral, for Sandy's wave of pessimism. And no such cause had appeared above Tom's horizon, since the night of her arrival. Of so much, Teresa was convinced. Therefore, she watched her new friend all the more intently.

At length, however, being Teresa and used to boys, she spoke.

"Chubbie, what's gone wrong?"

"Nothing much."

"You look worried."

"I'm not — specially."

The dash betrayed him to the mercies of Teresa, for it gave her space to drive home an entering wedge of downright fact.

"I don't believe it, Chubbie Neal. You look exactly, if only you were a girl and could, as if you'd like to go off by yourself and have a good cry."

"Hh! That's all you know," Tom grunted a little bit disdainfully. However, the next minute, he rubbed his cuff across one eye. "That beastly dazzle on the water makes me wink," he explained curtly then.

Teresa was remorseless. She hauled in her line, left it lying in a tangle, moved across to Chubbie's side and shut her fingers on his wrist.

"What's the use of fibbing, Chubbie?" she

demanded, as she turned up the cuff for his inspection. "Besides, I don't tell tales."

"No; but you think things," Chubbie said, with the temper of a beast at bay.

"I do not."

"Girls always do."

"And, if I do, I forget them. Chubbie, what's gone wrong?"

Chubbie struggled hard to reassert his manliness.

"A fellow is bound to get down on his luck, once in a while. Then he worries," he explained a little loftily.

Teresa had the surpassing sense to allow the pause to lengthen. When at last she spoke, she wasted no energy in extra phrases.

"I wish I could help," she said.

Chubbie eyed her for a moment, quite undecided whether to accept her wordless pity, or to turn and rend her for her officiousness in her imagining that she, a girl, could administer any aid to him, a boy. Then, —

"You can't," he said; but his voice was by no means as forbidding as he had meant that it should be.

"Why not?"

"Nobody can. It just is, and can't be helped; that's all." Chubbie shut his fists, rod and all, and rested his chin upon them.

Teresa copied the physical attitude, though not the mental one.

"That's nonsense," she said flatly.

And Chubbie answered just as flatly, —

"Oh, shut up!"

Temporarily Teresa obeyed him. She knew her man, knew the symptoms of a fit of talkativeness

when all the worries would be cast at her feet. Therefore she waited, outwardly meek, inwardly a good deal amused by Chubbie's causeless testiness.

The long time, though, before Chubbie spoke again betokened to her mind that there might be more cause for testiness than she knew. She had expected to unearth some boyish disagreement with the people around him, some worrying detail that could be explained away immediately. Instead, she found that she was really face to face with trouble.

"What would you do, I'd like to know, if you didn't have your mother?" Chubbie flung the question at her, in the end, with a swift force that fairly took away her breath.

Teresa's mind rapidly went homewards, rapidly came back again to the boy beside her.

"Just die," she said tersely.

"No; you wouldn't. People don't. They have to stand it."

"It must be awful. But I didn't know—" Teresa was beginning.

Tom nodded slowly, his eyes now on the black stripe barring the sleeve of his gray coat.

"It's not a year yet, quite. And I don't get used to the feeling that I don't belong."

"But your father? You've got him?"

"Yes. He never talks, though, or wants me to. That's why he put me into school."

"He will talk, by and by. He is trying to get used to it, himself, I suppose," Teresa made charitable suggestion.

Tom shook his head.

"No; I heard him telling somebody that all he wanted was to forget. I don't see why. But he has gone at his business harder than ever, as if he really meant what he said."

"Haven't you any brothers?" Teresa asked, suddenly aware how little she really knew about this summer comrade.

"No; nor sisters. I am the only one."

"How queer!" Teresa meditated aloud, from out of her own experience of life. "I supposed everybody had some."

"Buddie," Tom suggested.

"That's different. His mother died, when he was a little tiny baby. But everybody else I know, has some. I have nine, myself; we're like peas in a pod at home. Generally it's nice; but sometimes it really is awful." Teresa trailed away into memories of her own rambustious family circle. Then she jerked herself back again to make a fresh suggestion. "There's your Uncle Brooks," she said.

"Yes; but he's a good deal more Buddie's Aunt Julia," Tom said shrewdly. "Besides, I've never seen much of him, anyhow. I honestly feel more related to her than I do to him."

"Don't we all?" Teresa queried. "I think we every one of us count her as our favourite aunt. I adored her, long before Buddie knew very much about her, and I never shall forgive your uncle for taking her away from next door to us. I used, just at first, to wish that Ebenezer hadn't captured him, that night." Teresa paused to laugh at the absurd old story. "Still, I suppose it was only a matter of time," she added resignedly. Then once more she

faced Tom, this time with a statement, not a question. "Tom, you're lonesome."

"Yes."

"And missing your mother more than usual?"

"She died, the nineteenth," the boy said, quite low.

"Yes. And it keeps coming back, I suppose. In time, it may not be quite so bad; but it isn't very long yet," Teresa made grave comment. "Still, Chubbie, isn't it better to be out here?"

"Ye-es. There are more of you, in a way. And yet, I don't quite seem a part of it."

"Why not?"

"Anyhow, not in the same way Buddie is," Tom added, as if in explanation. "No; I'm not jealous, Teresa. Buddie is all right; he gets on with all sorts of people, and they all like him, whether he wants them to, or not. I'm — different." The final word came heavily.

Teresa shook her head.

"Not if you didn't want to be," she said a little mercilessly, for it seemed to her that the boy beside her was in need of rousing, even by a flick of the spur, if need be.

Tom took the spurring like the thoroughbred he was.

"I hope that isn't quite fair, Teresa," he said. "Still, maybe it is. But I honestly don't mean to have it so. Buddie gets on with everybody. He hasn't any idea how many people like him; he hasn't any idea how much it counts, must count, to be popular. He just takes it as it comes, and thinks no more about it than you think about the water

when it runs down hill." And he pointed to the stream before them.

"No," Teresa assented. "No; he doesn't."

"But the stone knows it, when the water washes by and leaves it," Chubbie added gloomily.

And then Teresa arose and smote him.

"Chubbie, you are a dunce, and you're talking as if you were trying to fish for compliments. Stone! You're a trout, swimming alone, heels up." Teresa was too much in earnest to heed her metaphors. "Of course, you have your bad days; we all get them, and yours happen to be really bad ones, a little worse than most. Chubbie, I am more sorry for you than I know how to say. It must be awful for you not to have any particular family. And yet," Teresa's colour came, and she fell to plaiting her skirt with fingers that shook a very little. Then she looked up into Tom's face, and went on bravely, "And yet, do you really think it's any reason you should talk like a blighted being, with no good times at all? If you talk it, next thing you know, you will be believing it; and, next thing, you'll let yourself be it. It's no use arguing with you and telling you how lots of people care about you. That's not the point. The thing I mean is just this: because you've got one bad, bad thing to face, don't hold it so near your eyes that it shuts out all the other, nicer things. Sure as you do it, you'll be sorry." And then, aware that girlish tongues were not created just for lectures, she pulled herself up short, and stuck her hand out for forgiveness. "Don't think I am a beast, Chubbie," she implored him; "or that I don't feel sorry. It's only that I hate to see you

losing your grip on the best of things, every now and then — for, of course, I've known something was wrong. And," her colour heightened; "next time you are feeling lonesome, just remember that an adopted cousin is better than nothing, and come and talk it out with her. Will you, Chubbie?"

And Chubbie's fist, shutting upon her hand, bore witness of the way he took the invitation.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE LAW OF THE HUNT

AFTER that, of course, there had been signs of an alliance between Teresa and Chubbie. Chubbie came to Teresa's defence when Buddie, as it seemed to his more literal mind, teased her too mercilessly. Teresa sought out Chubbie and coaxed him either into the general group, or off into the open for hard exercise, whenever one of his heavy moods lay on him. Nevertheless, as she had said to Buddie, neither the alliance, nor the fact that Mr. Kent's accident had made him an absorbing feature of Buddie's daylight hours, had in any way modified the relation between Buddie and Teresa. They, each of them, were easily first best in the plans and interests of each other. The fact that circumstances modified the way this priority must show itself had no significance to them. Sometimes the strictest test of friendship comes with allowing one's self to be temporarily set aside.

Together, then, Chubbie and Teresa ranged the trails and fished the streams, while Buddie spent long hours, sitting cross-legged beside the artist and gossiping with him concerning all things from circuses to the night that Ebenezer trapped the Bishop, and from Daddy's illness to boy scouts. As a rule and preferably, Buddie sat on the edge of

the bed-head, keeping as still as lay within boy nature. Now and then, his enthusiasm overcame him, until he smote Mr. Kent's ear with his knee, or, worse, until the bed joggled dangerously beneath him. However, the distance was so long from the head of the artist to his heels that the joggling mainly died away before it reached the afflicted end of his anatomy. Besides, the mere presence of Buddie and his chatter would have atoned for much joggling, so long as the joggling did not impair the final success of Dr. Angell's surgery.

Day by day, nowadays, Dr. Angell was becoming increasingly content with the results of his skill. His had been no mean achievement, indeed. The fracture, taken at its best, had been a bad one, a very bad one. And it had been complicated by conditions that would have developed blood poisoning in nine people out of ten. Fortunately, Mr. Kent proved to be the tenth one. There had been three or four days, after reaching camp, when first the saving of his life, and then the saving of his leg, had trembled in the balance. Then he had pulled through the worst of the danger, less by the skill of any surgeon, Dr. Angell always protested, than by the force of his own indomitable pluck, and by the saving grace stored up from five decades of cleanly living. For it is in times like those that one reaps the harvest of his self-control. Certain habits of living and thinking, laid down for David Kent during his days at Lawrenceville, adopted unthinkingly and for all time, certain ideals regarding the decent thing to do: these were the things that sent him out from his accident upon two legs instead of one.

Moreover, as the weeks went by, long weeks and very boring, if not exactly dreary, Dr. Angell was promising to himself with more and more assurance that the two legs would one day be just as lithe and strong as ever.

Meanwhile, though, Mr. David Kent, artist and gymnast, still lay flat on his back in the MacDougalls' extra bedroom whither, by Mrs. MacDougall's orders, he had been brought and deposited, more dead than alive. And Buddie, for the most part, coiled himself up beside him and talked to his heart's content.

Teresa finally intervened, not out of jealousy, be it understood, but prompted by her elders who began to think that Buddie was spending far too little time afield for his own good. They approved of Buddie's devotion; but, after all, Mr. Kent was an outsider, an annex to their party, and Buddie had come West, that summer, in order to get the good of the out-door life, not to play nurse to any man, however healthy-minded and however appreciative of Buddie's attentions.

Teresa, who had some common sense, listened to the explanations of her elders and nodded understandingly. Then she put a question.

"But won't Buddie think it is because I am getting jealous of Mr. Kent?" she asked.

Mrs. MacDougall smiled.

"Teresa dear, aren't you broad enough not to care, if he does?" she asked.

"I'm not; but I suppose I ought to be," the girl said honestly.

Aunt Julia smiled again.

"I rather think you are," she said, and then she changed the subject.

"Buddie," Teresa said to him, that night; "I want a good, old-fashioned day with you. It is ages since we've had one."

Buddie nodded.

"Right, oh. When?"

"To-morrow?"

"Can't."

"Why not?"

"Going to do a lot of other things."

"For Mr. Kent?"

"With him," Buddie corrected her.

Teresa liked the correction, though she forebore to say so.

"Why can't Chubbie do them?"

"Chubbie's no good. He doesn't know the kind of things, either," Buddie said loftily.

"Have you ever tried him?"

"No use. Chub is a good sort; but he doesn't know Mr. Kent well enough."

"He likes him, though."

"I suppose." Buddie's accent was indifferent.

"And, if you like people, you can generally get on with them," she argued.

"Oh, yes, get on," Buddie echoed disparagingly.

"Well, what more do you want?" Teresa was human, and so it was no wonder that her voice betrayed impatience.

And Buddie added the finishing touch to her impatience by his nonchalant reply.

"Oh, I d' know," he said.

However, remembering Aunt Julia's smile, Teresa

knotted up the ravelling ends of her patience, and began again.

"Buddie," she said cajolingly; "I know how you adore Mr. Kent —"

Buddie faced her testily, for her choice of word had stung his boyish dignity.

"I do not adore him."

Teresa's dimples came. She turned her head away, but she rolled her eyes back towards Buddie.

"Well — er — like him," she corrected herself with caustic emphasis upon the verb. "And I like Chub. He is a good boy, and he," again the accent; "hasn't a bad temper. But truly, Buddie, it was you I came to play with; you owe me a day now and then. Moreover, what is more, I'm going to have my day, to-morrow." And, before Buddie could guess her intention and prevent it, she had turned on her heel and marched into the artist's presence, thereby putting a very final end to the discussion.

All the rest of the evening, Teresa kept out of Buddie's way. That is, with the most scrupulous care, she avoided being left alone with him, avoided the same side of any group. Next morning early, while they were still at breakfast, Hearn, who had finished earlier, came back into the room.

"Indian Bill is out here, asking for you," he told Teresa.

She nodded as unconcernedly as if Hearn were not inside the secret.

"All right. We'll be out, in a minute. How soon will you be ready, Buddie?"

"Me?" Buddie looked up. "For what?"

"Our ride. Bill is waiting." Teresa maintained her air of total unconcern.

"But I'm not —" Buddie blustered.

Teresa turned upon him airily.

"Oh, yes, you are. It was all arranged, last night." Then she turned back to the doctor. "And you said you'd ride out to meet us, and bring some lunch?"

In the end, as a matter of course, Buddie yielded, yielded with a sheep-to-the-shambles expression which taxed to the uttermost Teresa's sense of fun. She kept her countenance well, however, until Indian Bill had led up the ponies, they were mounted and Buddie already jogging down the trail. Then, for a minute, she yielded to the sheer iniquity that was possessing her. She turned to wave her hand at the group standing by the door; then, with the gesture of a saucy child of six, not of a budding woman of sixteen, she turned back to Buddie and waved at his disappearing, disapproving back a long, elastic scarlet tongue. That done, she gathered up her reins and went jogging off demurely after him.

Noon and Daddy overtook them simultaneously, overtook them in the midst of a hot discussion. Buddie, his indifference vanished utterly, was arguing, heart and soul, to maintain his ground; and Daddy, from the dozen words that came to him while he was still invisible around an angle of the trail, judged that it would be well to dismount and, lingering in the offing, leave his young son to fight his battle to a finish. Buddie's weapons might not be the sharpest, his methods of using them might not be absolutely scientific; but Daddy approved to the full the ground that Buddie was fighting to maintain.

The fight had started, half an hour earlier, in a grunt from Indian Bill, a grunt so full of derisive scorn that Buddie's dignity forbade him to overlook it. At Indian Bill's suggestion and with the full sanction of Teresa, Buddie had brought along his gun, not because their expedition was primarily for hunting, but because it was Indian Bill's policy to be ready for any sport that offered and at any time. As for Teresa, had she not worked, heart and soul, for the fund which had provided Buddie's cadet-like corps of scouts with rifles? Who was she, then, to cavil at the presence of a gun in any out-door party?

None the less, though, Teresa had her own fixed notions as to the proper objects for a gun, notions shared to the full by Buddie, even though he was a boy. And so, when they had dropped from their ponies, in obedience to a sign from Indian Bill, had tied them, and had gone creeping up a side trail on the points of their toes; and when, rounding an angle of the trail, they had come on a fat little brown bear standing full in their pathway; and when Buddie had lowered his rifle and knocked aside Bill's gun, Teresa gave to him her unqualified support. Indian Bill, though, took it much amiss, and vented his scorn of Buddie, his anger at him, in no measured terms, while the pudgy bear, taking advantage of the argument, went crashing through the underbrush in search of safety. Hence the fight.

"I wasn't going to shoot the little beggar," Buddie protested amicably, at the start.

"You won't get another chance like that," Indian Bill retorted sullenly.

"Maybe not. Anyhow, I'm glad I let him go.

He was nothing but a fat puppy. You might as well shoot Ebenezer."

Indian Bill's grunt became a veritable snort. Out of the sound there came plainly the words, "real hunters," and it also was plain that the words were not intended to refer to Buddie.

Buddie took fire immediately.

"That's not hunting: walk into a cub like that, head on, and pepper him while he stands and smirks at you."

"Might tried one shot," Indian Bill suggested sulkily.

"One shot be hanged! Even if I had wanted to get him, this rifle wouldn't have been any more use than a sling-shot."

"Didn't try," Indian Bill retorted.

"What's the use? I couldn't have killed him with this, I tell you; and I wouldn't be brute enough to send the little chap off with a bullet inside him, for all time. That's not sport; it's just plain beastliness."

"Maybe couldn't have hit," Indian Bill remarked at no one in particular. "Not such good shot, anyhow."

Buddie's eyes snapped. The bear had been as large as Ebenezer, had been not twenty feet away. Buddie suppressed an ardent longing to convert his rifle into a cudgel for the assault of Indian Bill, and pointed to a dead branch, an hundred feet and more down the trail.

"See that?" he queried curtly; and, an instant afterwards, the branch fell to the ground, clipped off as neatly as if by a woodsman's hatchet. Then

Buddie added, "Hit a bear at twenty feet! Rather!"

"Maybe 'fraid," Indian Bill suggested. "Mr. Bear very cross, when hit."

And then it was that Buddie either forgot, or wantonly forsook, his manners.

"Shut your mouth, you idiot!" he said; and, to Teresa's shame, be it recorded that she rejoiced in his saying.

By this time, the battle was well on, and the interchange of volleys became hot and heavy. Indian Bill led the attack, though, with a certain monotony, harping insistently upon either inefficiency or cowardice as the cause of Buddie's remarkable fiasco. Buddie, on the other hand, alternately parried the attacks and delivered counter attacks concerning butchers, while Teresa applauded him as a matter of course, not alone because of what he said, but also because it was he who said it.

And then, all at once, Buddie shifted his ground unexpectedly.

"And, after all, what's the use?" he demanded.

"Good shot. Everybody likes to shoot bear," Indian Bill responded promptly.

"Yes, I know. But why?"

"Grub meat."

Buddie made a gesture of disgust.

"Tough and stringy. Besides, Uncle Brooks has stuff enough on hand."

Indian Bill shrugged his shoulders.

"Bear meat better than lamb meat," he insisted. "Tastes more; takes heap longer to chew up."

In spite of himself, Buddie laughed.

"You've got me there, Bill, for it's the truth. I can't say I prefer bear steaks, though."

"Mr. Bear might bite somebody," Indian Bill added, as a final argument. "Got him dead, then he can't bite. Everybody quite safe."

"Fudge!" Buddie told him. "That cub was no more dangerous than Ebenezer. Hunting is all right, and good sport enough when there is any sense in it. But killing things, just to get as many of them dead as we can: that goes on my stomach. It's nothing in the world but murder; it's not half so decent as being a real butcher, even. And there's one thing meaner than that, meaner than killing things for the mere fun of seeing them pitch forward, dead. That's the leaving them alive, but hurt so that they can't spend a comfortable hour, or make a decent living. That's —" Buddie paused to ransack his vocabulary for a word sufficiently venomous.

"But, Buddie, they don't do that," Teresa interposed.

"Don't they? Daddy was telling me about it, not so very long ago. What do you think of cutting the tongues out of caribou and letting them go, alive? What do you think of breaking the hinge in the bird's bill, if you happen to get one that you don't want, and then turning it loose to starve? What do you think," and Buddie wheeled about, to turn on Indian Bill ferociously; "of trying to make me pepper this jolly little bear with bullets that I knew could never kill him, if I kept it up, all night? You know I don't mean to funk. You know," modesty was not Buddie's besetting sin; "I can hit just about anything I choose to try for; but I'll be hanged if I

care much to kill for the mere sake of killing. Live things weren't put into the world for that."

"Bravo, Buddie! Bravissimo!" And Daddy stalked into the open, applauding vociferously as he came. "I like the things you're saying, son, especially as I've been leaving you to think them out for yourself. After all, though, it has rather gone against the grain to see my only son pick up his rifle and go out to destroy the one thing I'm giving my time to preserving."

Teresa looked up sharply.

"What is that?"

"Life itself," the doctor answered, and his voice was grave.

There came a bit of a pause. The doctor broke it.

"Buddie, I want to talk, a minute," he said, still very gravely. "No; I am not going to lecture; I only want to help you fight your battle by making you realize that certain kinds of animals are likely to be wiped out entirely by you hunters."

"Not by me," Buddie objected promptly.

"By just you, unless you play fair in Nature's great game, Buddie. Ever so many kinds of animals are being killed off by hunters who end a dozen lives where one, at most, should do; by people who blaze away for the mere sake of hitting something, and only insist upon it that the something must be alive at the start and dead at the finish. I believe in sport, Buddie, I believe in decent hunting; but we doctors know so well what it is to spend years and strength on saving life, that we have our own opinion about the fellow who takes it away for the mere fun of killing. Ask Indian Bill, next time he

gets to arguing, where his own people would have been, if the game had been destroyed completely, years ago. Run out of itself, Teresa? It never would. That's the reason people are trying to found ranges where hunters can't come, guarded ranges where the beasts and birds can have a chance to live their lives and have their babies, undisturbed."

With an elaborate showing of mock deference, Buddie handed his rifle to his father; but Dr. Angell, laughing, gave it back again.

"Not a bit of it, son," he said. "I want you to be a good shot. Nobody knows when it may save your life. And I want you to know how to hunt; only I'd prefer to have you hunting like a gentleman, with some idea that there are beast rights, as well as human, that the different kinds of animals were not made just to be swept away by careless hunters who turn good sport into messy butchery. That's all, Buddie. Now let's have our luncheon."

Next day, he found Buddie back at his old attempts to hit a falling coin; and Buddie, patiently reloading, paused long enough to send a cheery hail.

"At it hard, Dad. Taken as sport, it beats bears hollow."

And Daddy smiled to himself, as he walked away. He knew that, in time, the falling coin would pall on Buddie; but he thought he also knew that his harangue of the day before, grafted on to Buddie's earlier conclusions, might save from ugly, needless, useless deaths more than one happy beast who ranged those mountains.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

A MAROONED TERESA

"BUDDIE'S trapeze will get the best of him, some day," Tom chuckled, one night.

Mr. Kent, the only person within reach, looked up from his paper.

"You think so?"

"Know so. If he doesn't end by falling on top of Ebenezer and smashing him flat, he'll catch himself in the gearing and get hung. He came within an inch of both, to-day."

Mr. Kent looked alarmed, the futile alarm of a man who is able to toddle up and down the house on crutches which, from sheer lack of familiarity with their possibilities, he employs as if they were rods of fragile glass, likely to collapse at any instant. Not the most adoring of art lovers, not Ananias himself, could have declared that Mr. Kent was graceful nowadays. However, it was something to be off from his back and beginning to navigate again, however clumsily.

Even the idolizing Buddie had found it next to impossible to sentimentalize over Mr. Kent's earlier efforts to walk with crutches. It seemed incredible that any human being could tie his legs and his wooden supports into such knots as did the tall, lean artist; it seemed impossible for any face to

wear such a look of pained anxiety as did his, while he was doing it. And, in view of the agility of his earlier achievements, it did seem to Buddie that he looked unduly smug, when once more he was seated safely in his chair.

For Mr. Kent's convalescence now was almost an accomplished fact. Not only was he out of bed and navigating himself to and fro and up and down the house; but the doctor was encouraging him to bend his knee and exercise it all he could, to throw off the stiffening effect of the plaster case which had shut it in so long. At the first, David Kent had taken his instructions literally. He had started to bend down his knee with the suddenness and force one uses upon the blade of a jackknife. His idea had been to accomplish a right angle; but, before the angle was one quarter made, the pain had been too much for him, and he had fainted.

He had come to himself almost at once, however, and had found himself surrounded by four anxious faces and one that was smiling broadly. It was Dr. Angell who was smiling, and his voice matched his face.

"I didn't tell you to try to create the impression that you had a swivel joint in your knee, Kent," he told him. "Go slow, man, or you'll break yourself again. One would think you'd never had a convalescence in your life."

"I never had," the artist confessed meekly.

"Or seen one."

"I never did."

"Time you had and did, then, if only to learn the ropes. Good heavens, man, if I tell you you can get out of bed for an hour, it doesn't signify that I

want you to go to turning handsprings. I don't know whether it is the athlete of you, or the artist; but I really can't say that you seem to have much sense. Where is Buddie?"

"Off with Teresa."

"Oh. Well, Tom, come here and mount guard, then. I've got to write some letters, and I want to leave somebody to see that Mr. Kent doesn't dance a fandango, while I am about it. Kent, you are to mind Chubbie, or he is to report to me. There is a three-days-old *Sun;* you are to sit here and read it, till I give you leave to move." And, grumbling jovially to himself, the doctor vanished in the direction of his tent.

But the *Sun* proved less amusing than the opening suggested by Chubbie's words, and the artist flung it down with perfect willingness.

"What happened?" he inquired.

Tom repeated his chuckle.

"The unexpected. Buddie fancies himself a good deal, now he has learned that twisty way of jumping from one swing to the other. You haven't seen him do it yet? It's something rich and rare to watch him. He grins and looks so contented, when he hits it off; and he turns red and rages, when he misses. He misses at least four times for every hit, so he's mostly raging, and I generally drop in to watch him, while he's at it. To-day, he got on better, and he was getting conceited as you please till, all at once, he forgot what he was doing and came down bang on top of Ebenezer."

"Hurt Ebenezer?"

"You'd have thought so. He was asleep, and

the sudden jounce went on his nerves, and he ki-yi-ed. That rattled Buddie; and, next time he tried it, he funked and didn't let go his hold on the first swing. The other one came up and took him in the legs and, from sheer force of habit, he gripped it with his toes. Next minute, there he was, swinging back and forth on his back, like a bit of ladder lashed between them. You never saw such a look of surprise on a fellow's face in all your life. And he couldn't seem to get his grip again and make up his mind just what to do about it."

"In the air?"

"Rather! About ten feet up. He looked like a box-turtle that has tumbled on his back, and he didn't have the sense to let go anywhere. He just hung on; he would have been there now, if Mr. Hearn hadn't come in and rescued him. Mr. Kent?"

"Well?"

"What's the use, anyhow?"

"Of what?"

Chubbie phrased it simply.

"Trapezing."

"Any number of uses, Chubbie. It teaches you to fall on your feet, for one thing."

Chubbie eyed him whimsically.

"Not on your life, if you and Buddie are fair samples. You lighted in a heap; Buddie hung on till somebody picked him off his stem and laid him on the ground. If that's all you can say for it, Mr. Kent, I think I'll take mine out in tennis. It's like your tossing up your pennies. I hit my nose so often it was all purple with the whacks. Now I think I shall follow the example of Aunt Julia, and play pa-

tience. It's stupid; but it doesn't maul one. Mr. Kent?"

"Well, Chub?"

Tom digressed.

"Strange how a name sticks to one!" he said. "I was named Thomas Augustus; but nobody would believe it now. Of course, it's pretty bad; but it isn't a circumstance to Ernest Angell. But, Mr. Kent?"

"Yes — er — Thomas Augustus?"

"Oh, you needn't feel obliged to call me by it," Chubbie told him hastily. "I was only offering it to you as a sample of the things we fellows have to bear. It's worse than being born with a pug nose. But what I started to ask you was what you really think about — well, about Teresa."

"I think she is an uncommonly nice sort of girl," the artist answered, with sudden energy.

Tom's face cleared.

"Do you?" he asked. "I do; but I wasn't sure about it. You see, she isn't a bit like most girls. She doesn't talk about you and her — I mean, about me and she — I mean —" Then Chubbie abandoned the effort to clarify his pronouns. "That is, she talks about the things that happen, not the things she's thinking. And she can drive nails, and get stones out of Toddie's hoof, when I can't. And, when Buddie cut himself, the other day, she wiped it off and put on the plaster without making hardly any fuss at all."

"Good for Teresa!" the artist said, with a show of hearty approbation intended to conceal his sudden wave of intense self-consciousness.

His rising colour betrayed him however, and Chubbie became self-conscious in his turn.

"Oh, I say, I wasn't aiming that at you," he blurted out, in his own self-consciousness rendering the bad matter vastly worse. Then he made a sudden rally. "It's only that I sometimes wonder — That is — Mr. Kent," he dropped his voice to a confidential murmur; "you don't suppose, do you, that Teresa is a suffragette?"

Mrs. Brooks MacDougall came running to find out the meaning of the roar which David Kent let off in answer to the question, and, amid the explanations, Chubbie made his escape. Later, though, he took the matter up with Buddie, and Buddie promptly smote him, first for his lack of tact, and then for his evil-minded imaginings.

"Teresa a suffragette!" he sniffed disdainfully. "Chub, you're a silly. Teresa doesn't break windows, and bat policemen with her bonnet; does she?"

"No. But, you see, she isn't afraid of blood, and she can bait her own hook, when she goes fishing," Chubbie argued.

"Who wants her to be afraid of blood and bait and things? Besides, what is a suffragette, anyhow?" Buddie demanded.

And Tom's answer contained the pith of modern politics.

"A girl that's looking for a row."

Buddie accepted the definition on its merits.

"Exactly. And that's not Teresa. She never fights, except when she knows she's cornered. Then she goes it. Moreover, Chubbie Neal, when she

does go, you have to stand from under. By the way, where is she now?"

"She went up the cañon, just a little while ago."

"With?" Buddie queried.

"Alone."

"Then she won't be left to stay so." And Buddie, whistling to Ebenezer, started in pursuit.

Contrary to his expectations, he experienced some difficulties in finding Teresa. The cañon was not very wide, nor was it overgrown with underbrush. Yet, for a time, he walked along the bank of the small river without catching a glimpse of the familiar yellow pigtails for which his eyes were bent. He was just about to give up the search, under the impression that Chubbie had directed him wrongly; but, upon second thoughts, he decided that he would give one call to assure himself whether or not she was within hailing distance. Accordingly, the rocks about him jarred with the *Teresa!* he sent out against them, and the walls of the lower cañon took up the echo and tossed it on and on. Buddie, though, was deaf to the echo, so surprised was he at the meek response which seemed to come from some point close to his right elbow.

"Yes."

Buddie spun about.

"That you, Teresa?"

"Yes."

"Where are you?"

"Here." And a yellow head appeared above the top of a rock in mid-stream.

"What in the world are you doing?" Buddie queried, with not unnatural surprise, for he could

see no especial reason that Teresa should be sitting, like a petticoated hen, between three or four small boulders which lay, a tiny island, just in the middle of the roaring river.

Her answer to his question in no way lessened the surprise, for, —

"Feeling like a fool," she said, with inelegant directness.

Buddie, his fists in his pockets, strolled farther up the bank, until he reached a spot whence he could obtain an uninterrupted view. Then, —

"Well, I should think you would," he said flatly, as his eyes roved from Teresa to the volume in her hand. A moment later, his eyes rested upon the wide margins of the open page. "Poetry, too, by jiggums!" he remarked uncouthly.

Teresa had the grace to blush.

"I was homesick," she explained.

Again Buddie's gaze rambled dispassionately up and down across the scene.

"Well, I should think you would have been," he said.

"No." Teresa spoke a little testily. It had seemed to her so very right and proper to construe a fit of indigestion into righteous homesickness, so very grown-up and romantic to attempt to cure it with a woodland walk in the society of *Lucile*. Not that Teresa had read *Lucile*. It had been a school prize, and she had put it in her trunk, partly for its pretty binding, partly because it was the one book of poetry that she chanced to own, and poetry was supposed to be a prime necessity of summer travel. To-day, however, the dull weight of indigestion had

convinced her that her hour for poetry was ripe. Besides, the soft green leather of the cover was most effective against her paler linen frock. It was disappointing to have her effect marred by certain practical considerations as to her return. But, "No," she answered swiftly; "that was before this happened."

"Oh." Buddie's accent was not too respectful. "Well, how are you getting on?"

"I am feeling better now," Teresa told him, with some dignity.

Buddie repressed a smile.

"I must say, you don't look it," he observed. "How long do you plan to stay there?"

Teresa's dignity increased.

"I think I am ready to come, any time," she answered sedately.

"All right. Where's the boat?"

"There isn't any."

"How did you get over there, then? Jump?"

"Don't be silly, Buddie."

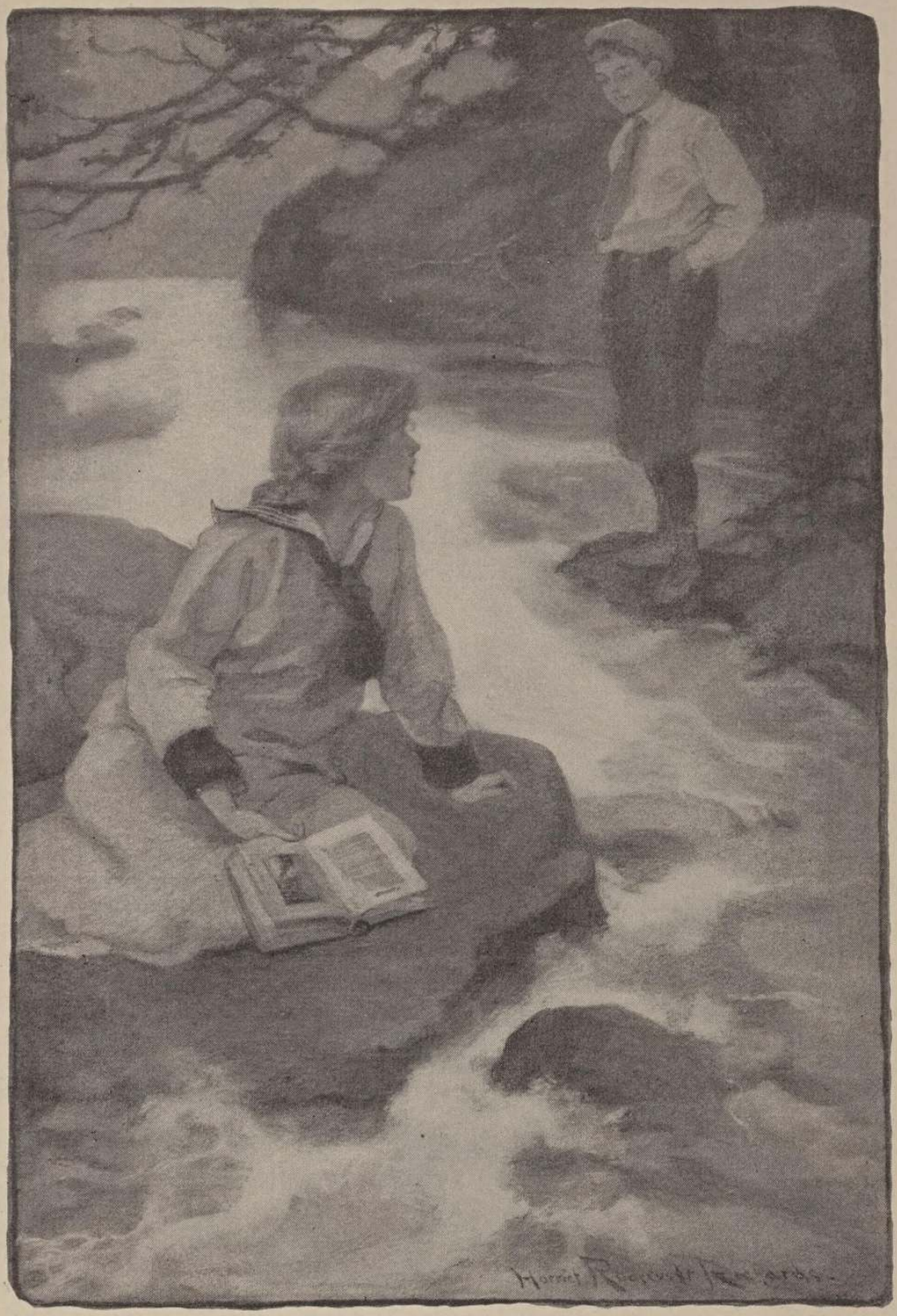
In his own mind, Buddie admitted the fairness of her rebuke. The rocky islet where she stood was a good ten feet from shore. Teresa was moderately agile; but not even her agility could take a leap like that, and land unerringly upon the little hummock of stones that clustered in mid-stream.

Buddie pursued his investigations.

"Did you wade, then?"

"N—no." Teresa plainly was faltering upon the verge of a confession. "Not exactly. At least — You see —"

"I don't see," Buddie said flatly. "If you've



"The stones tipped over, and I can't get back without them." — *Page 223.*

anything to tell, out with it, and then come along ashore."

Teresa blurted out the gist of her confession.

"That's just it. I can't."

"Why not?"

"The stones tipped over, and I can't get back without them."

"Stones?"

"Yes." Teresa made a hasty clutch at her vanishing dignity. "I felt lonely and blue, so I took my book and came here to read. I started up the cañon, and saw this island, and I knew, if I could get to it, I could have it all to myself."

"I thought you said just now that you were lonesome," Buddie said shrewdly.

"So I was. Only I didn't want the wrong people —"

"Am I wrong?" Buddie demanded.

"No; not more than everybody." Teresa had no intention of being malign; but there had been rice muffins with their luncheon. Teresa had eaten many, and their trail was still upon her. "But I thought I'd like to come across here, and read, and be quiet. So I crossed on the stones. But they wobbled and rolled over, and I had to jump, to keep from getting wet. That rolled them all the more, and, for all I know, they are rolling yet; and here I am."

"Like it?" Buddie queried, with a chuckle, for he had made out the geographical isolation of Teresa's present position.

Her dignity vanished before his mirth.

"Of course not, Buddie."

"But you're there, and you're all alone with your

book of poems. Moreover, you've pulled up your sidewalk behind you, so you are likely to have the place to yourself for some time yet. You ought to be contented."

Whatever Chubbie's opinion earlier, he would have been the first to say that now there was no hint of the suffragette in Teresa's answer. Rather than militant, it was frankly pleading.

"Get me ashore, Buddie; there's a dear."

"Wade," Buddie advised her tersely.

Teresa glanced at the swirling current that fretted and foamed between them.

"Too deep, and too fast, Buddie. I'm afraid."

Buddie sat down on the bank and clasped his knees with his arms.

"You needn't think I'm going to lug you," he argued. "You weigh every bit as much as I do. Besides, you have two perfectly good feet of your own. If I can wade it, you can."

"Yes, but —"

"Sure."

"It's cold," she urged.

"Naturally. Mountain streams generally are; that's why we quaff 'em," Buddie responded, with one of his occasional lapses into poetic phrase. "It isn't any colder for you than it is for me, and I didn't get you into the scrape, anyhow."

Teresa's feelings betrayed her into a sniff.

"I thought boy scouts had a little chivalry," she said.

"So they have," Buddie retorted sharply. "Still, it takes a stronger horse than chivalry to carry one hundred and thirty pounds of girl across ten feet of fizzy rapids. I'd do it, if I could, Teresa; but I

couldn't stir you an inch. It would be as much as I could do to get you pig-back, let alone carrying you. No; you've got to wade."

Teresa's answer renewed his former surprise, increased it, even.

"All right," she said. Then, quite calmly, she sat down on a corner of the largest stone, opened her mossy-green book and fell to reading with ostentatious absorption in her text.

Buddie waited for a minute. Then, —

"Oh, well, two can play at that game," he said and, lying back upon the river bank, he apparently lost himself in contemplation of the clouds above him.

For quite a long time, the clouds seemed to be occupying his thoughts completely. Then, despite his resolutions to the contrary, the vagueness left his eyes; they gathered focus, interest. The interest, however, appeared to concentrate itself, not upon Teresa, but upon a long, lithe sapling that sprang up from the river bank beside him and, after the fashion of cañon-growing trees, stretched up and up, almost unbranching, to its very top.

"Gee!" Buddie observed to himself, the while he studied it. "I'll be hanged, if she deserves it; but it looks fun enough to be worth the trying."

With Buddie, suggestions never waited for much pondering. A moment later, he was on his legs and moving towards the sapling. A moment later still, his arms and legs were knotted around the tree in the position of one who is doing the thing colloquially known as shinning. And Teresa, marooned in midstream, continued to read *Lucile* with a praiseworthy diligence born of self-conscious pique.

Suddenly a shadow fell across her book, a shadow whose arising had been heralded by grunts and sounds of scraping and scrabbling. Teresa saw the shadow and judged that the time had come for her to raise her eyes. Holding her curiosity in check so far as might be, she did raise them, deliberately at first, then with a sudden ducking of her head. Across the stream arched a small, slender sapling. From its slim top, Buddie was dangling in the air above her head.

"Catch hold!" he adjured her, as he met her eye. "It will take us both. Come on." Then he fell to kicking wildly, until the branches thrashed the air. "That brings it down a little lower," he explained breathlessly. "Can you make it?"

The stretch was a long one; but, quicker than thought, Teresa had dropped *Lucile* and made a snatch for the nearest tuft of leaves. A minute afterward, she too was dangling in mid-air above the rocky islet.

Buddie spoke with increasing breathlessness.

"Bully for you, Teresa! That's good! That's just great! Now you hang on, and I'll work down a little. That will shift the weight and let the tree straighten up again. Once she is straight," and now his phrases were punctuated by the sounds of shinning down; "and on her own side of the river, we can slide down her as easy as anything. This is better than a trapeze, any day. Wish Mr. Kent could see — Hull—l—l—looooo!"

For, with a sudden snapping of leafy twigs, Teresa and the sapling parted company. Teresa sought the deepest portion of the rapids, where she landed at

full length in the foamy water; while the sapling, relieved of her weight, went flashing upwards to its old position, with a sudden force that landed Buddie in the weeds, a good half way up the cañon's nearer bank.

And, as he landed, the voice of Tom came to his ears, a calm voice and not too sympathetic.

"Never mind, Buddie," it said. "I can tell him, so he will be quite sure to understand."

And then the speaker took to his heels, before the onslaught of an irate and dripping Teresa.

CHAPTER TWENTY

CHUBBIE?

IT was only the next morning that Tom made a bleak discovery. Made, he reported it to Buddie without loss of time.

"I say," he announced, without preface; "school begins, in just two weeks."

"What of it?" Buddie demanded callously.

"Of it? We'll have to go back home."

"Well, don't you want to?"

Tom shook his head.

"Not much. I like it better here."

"For summer, yes. Not for always, though. Besides, you like your school. The first of the time I knew you, you bragged about it by the hour."

Tom had the grace to blush.

"That was before I got used to things out here. Besides, school is school. This is the kind of thing home — used to be."

And Buddie had the tact to nod in silence. At times, the point of view of Tom was more or less opaque to him; but he had learned to know Tom's moods of seriousness and to respect them. Besides, whatever the charms of boarding school, it must be a great bore not to have the right sort of place to go in vacation, a place where one belonged, where one could, if he chose, leave his boots beside the down-

stairs heater, over night. Therefore, Buddie had the sense and tact to demand no further explanation on the part of Tom. Instead, he asked a question.

"When do you expect to leave here?"

"That's just the trouble," Tom replied, a little blankly. "I hadn't expected. It didn't strike me, till this morning, that this sort of thing couldn't go on for ever. What's more, I don't believe it has struck my father, for he hasn't written one single word about my coming. When do you go?"

"Not for a month yet. Aunt Julia wants us to stay, and Daddy seems to think that school can wait. Why can't you stay on here, too?"

Tom shook his head.

"That's not my father," he replied; and Buddie, from his accent, judged that here was another theme to be avoided.

"Anyhow," Buddie remarked, after an interval; "I am not going away till I can hit a falling penny at one hundred yards, and till I can get that double turn in going from one swing to the other."

And then it was that Tom showed the first gleam of fun that he had betrayed, that morning.

"In that case," he retorted; "I advise you to send for your winter flannels. Else, you'd best go home, and finish off your lessons there."

"Can't. No teacher," Buddie told him briefly. "Anybody can toss a coin, and then dodge the results; and Mr. Kent lives in New York, too."

"He's staying on."

"Really? What for?"

"He says that it's by Daddy's orders; that he oughtn't to take the journey till his leg is strong.

But I imagine it is only so much vanity," Buddie answered shrewdly. "He probably hates to go limping around the city, leaning on a stick."

"There's always a taxi," Tom objected.

"Yes; but he couldn't have one driven in at his front door; that is, unless it skidded. And Mr. Kent is very vain," Buddie added reflectively.

"How do you know?"

"Watching. Ever notice the way he arranges his legs, when he sits down, and then waits till he thinks you aren't watching, before he hitches up his trousers at the knees? Ever notice the way he keeps his hands, and the colour of his ring?" Then Buddie relented swiftly. "I must say, it doesn't hurt him any," he added. "If he were littler, and not so healthy, and couldn't do handsprings and the pinky-purple pictures that Aunt Julia raves about, he would be just funny. As it is, one forgets the silly part, in thinking about the rest."

Tom heaved a sigh.

"His pictures are very queer," he said quite thoughtfully. "They look right, till you stop to think about them. Then you wonder why he paints pink bears in a garden of pale blue cabbages."

Buddie looked shocked.

"Chubbie, what twaddle! Mr. Kent doesn't do that," he protested loyally. "He just splashes on a lot of purple and blue paint, after the rest is done. I suppose he likes it, the way Teresa likes the coloured ribbons on her pigtails, thinks it sets the natural colour off. For my part, though, I don't care about it. I'd rather my own pictures would match up to the things I paint; but —"

Tom interrupted.

"By the way, how is your picture coming on?" he queried.

Buddie looked up blankly.

"I'm not making any pictures. I'm no artist."

"No. You're the Purple Cow." And Tom chuckled. "I mean the picture Mr. Kent was doing of you and Ebenezer."

"Oh, that's done," Buddie told him easily.

"Since when?"

"Since? Why, since then; since that morning. Mr. Kent was at it, more than two hours. Gee! How I ached, before he'd finished it!"

"But it isn't finished," Tom asserted.

"How do you know?"

"He said so. He said — at least, he wondered, when he would be able to finish it; and that's the same thing."

"When did he say that?"

"One day, about a week or ten days after he was hurt. He was fussing about it, all one morning."

"Fudge!" Buddie told him flatly. "It was done, that day."

"Did you see it?"

"N—no; not exactly."

"Then how do you know?"

"By the time he was about it. He was really just about all of one half day, with the getting ready, and all. It must be done."

"He said not."

Buddie shut his lips.

"I didn't think he'd be so dead slow as all that," he said disappointedly.

Tom's reply savoured of flatness.

"Well, he is."

"Hm! In that case, then, he'd better be getting about it," Buddie remarked, after an interval of pondering. "I told him I'd see him through, if he really can't get on without me; but, all things considered, the sooner he gets it done, the better."

"If he's able," Tom put in, by way of parenthesis.

"Able! He doesn't paint with his legs."

"No; but he paints on them."

"Ankles, or shins?" Buddie queried flippantly. "I've had mine black and blue, and green and yellow, myself; it's not too hard to do."

Tom became coldly literal.

"I mean that he stands on his legs, while he is painting," he explained laboriously. "I have watched him often."

"That's no sign he needs to," Buddie retorted. "When I had mumps, I took my paintbox into bed with me, and did a corking picture of Daniel and the other chaps, sitting in the furnace. There were four of them to manage, and all the flames besides, and there are only two of Ebenezer and me. He ought to be able to do as much as that, sitting down. Anyhow, I'm going to ask him now, for it's a shame to waste all these wet days, when we none of us can be doing much of anything but sit about. Where's my cap? Hi, Ebenezer!" And Buddie vanished on his errand.

To his extreme surprise, he found the artist missing. Also he found, sitting in the deck chair where, the past few days, the artist had been wont to sprawl, Aunt Julia with some flimsy bit of work or other in

her hands. She looked up, smiling, as Buddie's red head appeared within the framing doorway.

"Well, Buddie, good morning. You are looking for Mr. Kent? He's busy in the other room, answering some letters, so I took possession of his chair. Really, it is very comfortable. Sit down and amuse me."

For Aunt Julia was by far too wily to allow Buddie to suspect how deliberately she had placed herself there to await his coming. That would have been to handicap her purpose at the start.

Buddie cast a wistful glance in the direction of the other room. Aunt Julia caught the glance and answered it.

"He will be out in just a little while," she said. "I imagine they were business letters, or something else important, because he shut the door. He had an idea that you would be here early, and I promised him that I would hold on to you until he reappeared. Where is Tom?"

"Up at our tent."

"Why didn't he come down?"

Buddie looked a trifle feazed.

"Honestly, I didn't think to ask him. To tell the truth, I came for something special, and didn't think about much else."

"Anything wrong, Buddie?"

"No; not really. That is, well — no. It's only about a picture Mr. Kent painted of Ebenezer and me. Chub thinks it isn't done. I hated it; but I promised I would see him through it, so I thought perhaps I'd better come and ask him."

Aunt Julia threaded her needle. Then, —

"Nice of you, if you really do hate it, Buddie. I should hate it, I know; but a promise has to be a promise, hate or no hate. Really, I don't believe it can be finished yet; but we'll ask him."

"Chub is on his nerves, this morning," Buddie volunteered, during a momentary silence which Aunt Julia had employed in wondering how she could drag the talk around to that selfsame subject.

She looked up, with sudden interest.

"Tom?"

"Yes."

"I didn't know he was given to getting on his nerves."

"He is, just awfully. It comes on the nineteenth of the month, like the *Venite*, and on wet days, and nights when you've forgotten your theories and given him coffee. And then he takes it out on me," Buddie added plaintively.

"Poor Buddie! Does he fight?"

"Fight! I wish he would. He just gets sorry for himself, and that is worse than any amount of fighting."

Aunt Julia smoothed out her work on her knee, and studied it intently. Then, —

"Yes, Buddie, I honestly think it is," she assented then. "And yet —" She stopped her sentence abruptly, and fell to pulling her work this way and that to flatten out the stitches.

Patient endurance of his own curiosity had never been Buddie's strongest point. He prodded Aunt Julia past her pause.

"And yet?"

She lifted her eyes and looked at him as guilelessly

as if it all: conversation, and pause, and apparent absorption in her work, had not been the results of her long talk with Daddy, only the night before. The talk had ended with a charge laid upon her by Daddy, before he went away to bed.

"Sound him on it, then, Julia, and see just how he really feels. I wouldn't do it, if I thought it would make him one bit less happy."

"Even for a few weeks? Even if he would be happier than ever in the end?" Aunt Julia had questioned.

Daddy had shaken his head.

"I am not too sure," he answered.

But Aunt Julia had nodded. She was very sure. And, because of her surety of the final result of her talk with Buddie, she went on without much real hesitation, —

"And yet, I can't much wonder."

"That it is worse?" Buddie questioned.

"No; that Tom does feel just a little sorry for himself." Aunt Julia picked up her work again. "Anyway, I feel sorry for him."

"Why?" Buddie's accent was dispassionate, cheerful.

"No mother," Aunt Julia suggested.

Then her cheeks went scarlet at Buddie's answer, "But he's got you, same as I have, Aunt Julia."

For a minute, something glittered on Aunt Julia's lashes. She had supposed that she had gained her full reward for her hospitality to a motherless boy in the enjoyment she had taken out of his society. Now she found that a reward even greater, even more lasting, was awaiting her.

"Thank you, Buddie," she said gently. "That was very dear of you. But about Tom," she hesitated; then, as she met Buddie's adoring eyes, she determined to speak out; "Buddie, it ought not to be different, for I love Tom and he is the nephew of the other half of me; but I can't help feeling that I'm a little bit more related to you, after all."

Buddie gulped suddenly.

"Shake!" he said, as he stuck out his hand.

"But, to go back to Tom," Aunt Julia went on, after a little; "he really doesn't seem to have much of anybody belonging to him."

"His father?" Buddie suggested promptly.

"Yes, after a fashion. But Mr. Neal is — Well, he isn't just like your own father."

Once more Buddie's reply came promptly.

"Who is?"

"Not too many men. But poor Mr. Neal has never been the same, since Tom's mother died. It was as if something froze up inside him, then."

"Poor soul!" Buddie made sympathetic comment. "Can't they roast it out?"

Mrs. MacDougall barely repressed a smile. With the best of intentions to the contrary, the average healthy boy was bound to be prosaic.

"In time, perhaps. They haven't been able to do it yet. In the meantime, it is rather hard on Tom."

"He's got his school."

"So have you; but you don't find it everything you want."

"Oh, no." Buddie's voice was full of supreme content. "But then, you know, I've got Daddy."

"And Tom hasn't," Aunt Julia said, and then she began sewing rather steadily. Buddie watched her just as steadily. Her sudden industry, coupled with the curious watchfulness that had been in her eyes: these rendered him suspicious, though of what he did not know. According to the directness of his nature, he put the question to her flatly.

"What are you driving at, Aunt Julia? I can't well split up Daddy and make a pair of him."

"N—no." Aunt Julia still appeared to be absorbed in the setting of her stitches. "You needn't exactly split him; but you could share him, if you were willing."

"How?" Buddie flung the question at her with a bump.

Aunt Julia deliberately folded up her work, folded her hands upon it, and then smiled across at Buddie.

"Buddie," she asked him; "how would you like it, if Daddy should ask Tom to spend the winter with you?"

"Tom? Tom Neal? Chub?" The repeated question showed how far the idea had been from Buddie's heart.

"Yes."

"The whole winter?"

"Yes."

"And go to my school?"

"Yes."

"I shouldn't like it one little bit of a bit," Buddie assured her flatly.

"Why not?"

The flatness continued, even increased a little.

"Because he would be in the way."

"Of what?"

The meaning of his own phrase brought a note of content to Buddie's voice.

"Oh, just Daddy and me."

"He needn't," Aunt Julia said quietly.

"He would."

"Not unless you let him."

"Oh, I say!" Buddie stared at her rebukingly. "If he was really there, Aunt Julia, we couldn't shut him out."

But she cast the rebuke back upon him.

"I didn't mean that, Buddie. What I did mean was that you needn't allow yourself to think about him as being in the way. Daddy is broad enough to take in more than one person at a time; you ought to want to be as broad as he is."

Buddie flinched. Then he owned up.

"But I'm not, Aunt Julia. My world hasn't but one Daddy in it. I don't want to share him with anybody who happens to come along."

"If the anybody needs him?"

"They don't. That is, not as I do."

"But you have him, anyway."

"I wouldn't, though —"

Aunt Julia interrupted him, with a little smile.

"Buddie, if there were a dozen Toms in every single room in your house, do you believe it would make any difference in Daddy's ways with you?"

And Buddie made honest answer, —

"No; I don't."

"Besides," Aunt Julia added, after a minute more; "Tom isn't everybody."

"N—no."

"And you like him."

"Y—yes."

This time, Aunt Julia looked surprised in earnest.

"Don't you really like him, Buddie? I thought you were getting on all right."

Buddie plumped his elbows on his knees, folded his hands and spoke despondingly.

"So we are; that's just the trouble. We like each other, we never fight; but we never in this world are going to be chums."

"*Never* is a long word, Buddie."

"I know that; but I mean it, all the same. I don't know why we don't get on any better. We started off all right; we like each other. It's only that we seem to go our ways, unless there is somebody around: you, or Indian Bill, or Teresa, to hold us together."

"Whose fault is it, Buddie?" Aunt Julia put the question, not rebukingly, but with an honest effort to find out the truth.

Buddie's reply was just as honest.

"Not either of us, Aunt Julia. It just is. It is like a fence that we can't seem to climb. And the queerest thing about it all is that we honestly do like each other. Perhaps, if we fought, there'd be more hope for us. Anyhow, you must have seen," and once again a despairing note rang in Buddie's voice; "that our being together hasn't panned out exactly as you meant to have it."

For the moment, Aunt Julia lost a little of her downrightness. She had a notion that it would be best for Buddie not to know how far the intuition of his elders had been fallible.

"In that case —" she was beginning; but Buddie cut her short.

"No, wait," he bade her; "I want to think it over just a little." And think he did, biting his lips and scowling at the floor. Then, at last, his face cleared, the frown left his eyes, and the wonted happy curves came back about his lips. "Aunt Julia," he said then; "I think it's rather up to me. I've got more chances to make good than Chubbie has; it's fair I should let him have a show at any extra chance that's coming to him. I like him. We don't fight; and you say," he gulped a little; "that all the Chubbies in the world won't make the slightest difference between Daddy and me. Then, if that is true, let's have him come. It can't make any difference to me; and, in the long run, it may make a pile of difference to him. Will you tell Daddy; or shall I?" And thus, in apparent carelessness, but with an inward struggle that had cost him dear, thus had Buddie made his great renunciation.

And, in spite of Aunt Julia's surety, in the end it did make a difference with Daddy, a great, great difference; but the difference was all in Buddie's favour.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

BUDDIE EATS HUMBLE PIE

"ONCE I get rid of these other things, we'll proceed to enjoy ourselves," Buddie said to Teresa, the next day.

"Don't we now?"

"Yes; but it's different. We've been jogging along as if we had all the rest of time ahead of us. Now I mean to make the very most of every hour that's left."

"You talk as if you were expecting the end of the world," Teresa told him shrewdly. "Chubbie isn't so upsetting as all that."

"No; not really. And yet, after all," Buddie wrinkled his brows; "he doesn't quite belong, and it is going to be any amount of work to fit him in."

"Ye—es," Teresa agreed thoughtfully. "And the worst of it is that he won't be the one to go to work to fit himself. That's the trouble with Chubbie: he leaves you to do all the work; he takes it as it comes."

"And, if it doesn't come?" Buddie looked up from the shoe that he had stooped to tie.

"Then he doesn't take it. He just hangs back and looks dejected. I do hate that sorry-for-myself expression that he gets on sometimes." Teresa spoke with sudden energy. "I suppose he really is un-

happy about it; but he needn't take it out on us. I think it's a person's duty to look happy, however he is feeling. And misery isn't only unbecoming; it is very catching."

"Anyhow," Buddie tightened the shoestrings with a jerk; "you and I are going to make the most of our good times, Teresa. What is the very soonest day that you'll have to start?"

"Two weeks from yesterday."

Buddie whistled dejectedly, and hunched his shoulders.

"By Jove, I'll be catching misery on my own account, Teresa. That's awfully soon. And you've only just landed here."

"Seven weeks," she reminded him.

"Is it? It doesn't seem so long. And so many other things have come into the time. Of course, we've had any amount of fun; and yet I begin to wish there hadn't been so many other people in — But two weeks is better than nothing. We'll make the most of it."

"And Chubbie?" Teresa questioned.

Buddie's reply lacked the saving grace of charity.

"Chubbie go hang!" he said.

"Buddie!"

But Buddie continued unregenerate.

"Teresa!"

"I didn't think you'd be a pig," she told him.

"I'm not. I'm a good boy," Buddie retorted. "What's more, I want my reward. If I am going to have Chubbie Neal on my hands, all winter, I think I might be allowed to take a vacation from him now."

Teresa mounted the pinnacle of sanctimonious girlhood.

"But you like Tom, Buddie," she reminded her companion, and her accent was maternal.

"So I do like boiled mutton. That doesn't signify that I want to eat it, ten days out of every nine." And then Buddie added, with crushing finality, "But girls can't understand a thing like that, anyway."

However, Teresa helped herself to the last word.

"Maybe not; but at least they can understand things like you and Chubbie Neal. Before this winter is half over, you'll wonder how you ever were able to get on without him."

"You like Chubbie so much as all that, Teresa?" And Buddie stared at her in blank astonishment.

"I like him. What's more, I'm going to like him a whole lot better, after he has been in the same house with you, Buddie. You aren't very sanctified; but you do take it out of people for their general improvement. I watched it work with Eric, you know. He hasn't been half so priggy, since you went for him, a few times."

"I never went for Eric," Buddie protested.

But Eric's older sister disagreed.

"Perhaps you didn't know it; but you did. What is more, you did it so emphatically that Eric is still wondering what it was that struck him. If you'd meant to do it, it might not have had one half so much effect. And that's the way it's bound to be with Chubbie Neal."

"Chubbie is a good boy," Buddie observed, with a slight touch of condescension.

Teresa flashed.

"You needn't be so high and mighty, though. Of course he is. And," Teresa's charm lay in the agility with which she was able to shift her point of view; "and, if you try to take it out of him too much, Buddie Angell, you will be a beast."

Buddie stuck his fists into his pockets.

"In other words, you'll be hanged, if you do; and also hanged, if you don't. Any other good advice you'd like to pour out on me, Teresa?"

"No; that's all for now, so don't be cross, Buddie. Honestly, I do know how you probably feel about it, even if I won't give in and sympathize with you. It's going to be horrid, just at first. You'll write to me all about it? Yes, every single week. And I'll write to you, and tell you what I think you ought to do, in this first real crisis of your life, and —"

But Buddie cut her off in her prime.

"Stow your poetry, Teresa!" he warned her.

Her colour came. Then she laughed. That was the joy of Teresa, Buddie thought. She always could be made to see her own absurdity.

"All right. Now come along and do things," she said, with perfect good temper.

Buddie shook his head.

"Can't, to-day, Teresa."

"Why not?"

"I've got to sit."

"To —?" Then her accent changed to a real anxiety that betrayed her honest liking for her boy companion. "What's the matter, Buddie? Aren't you well?"

"Aren't I well?" Buddie stared at her in astonishment at her irrelevant question. "Yes, of course."

"Then why can't you come and do things? Why have you got to keep still?" Teresa questioned blankly.

Buddie stared at her for a minute. Then he burst into a roar of laughter.

"Teresa! Oh, Teresa! Well, if you aren't the limit!" he gasped. "I haven't got a pain, or faint, or anything like that. I mean I've got to finish sitting for my picture."

"What picture?"

"The one that Mr. Kent was doing of Ebenezer."

"Oh. But, if it's of Ebenezer, where do you come in?" Teresa inquired, with pardonable curiosity.

"I'm the background," Buddie answered. "Ebenezer has to have something to lean against, or else he would wiggle."

"Is it fun?"

"No; it's horrid. You just sit and sit, and think about the things you wish you were doing, and you get a cramp in your shin, and then you itch somewhere that is out of reach. And, most of the time, he is too busy to pay much attention to you, anyway. For all the good I did him, a good share of the time, I might as well have been swimming in the creek back of our tent. He looked at his picture ten times as often as he looked at me."

"How poky! How did you ever come to let him?"

"Look at his picture-thing? He didn't ask."

"No. Let him paint you, in the first place?"

Buddie sighed.

"He wanted to. When Mr. Kent wants things, Teresa, I don't know why it is, but I can't seem to stand up against him."

Teresa's words betrayed her comprehension.

"Queer; isn't it? I think it's his eyes."

"No; it's the way he half smiles, when he is talking to you, and talks somehow at the mountains ever so far away, but as if he knew that you were there with them, and listening." Then Buddie dropped his effort at analysis and spoke briskly. "Anyhow, I've got to go, Teresa. I'll see you after lunch."

"Let me go, too," she suggested.

But Buddie shook his head.

"Not this time. I want to go alone, to-day, because I've got some things I want to say to him."

"To Mr. Kent?"

"Yes."

"Secrets?"

"Yes."

"What sort?" she asked him coaxingly.

"Things I'd rather tell him, first," Buddie responded, with unusual gravity. "It's fairer, Teresa. I sha'n't feel quite square with him, either, until I get it done." And then, refusing all her efforts to worm her way into his confidence, Buddie turned on his heel and went tramping away in the direction of the studio.

He found Mr. Kent already there, ahead of him. When Buddie appeared, the artist, leaning on one crutch, was trying to drag his easel forward from the corner where it had been abandoned, weeks before. He looked up, as Buddie's shadow darkened the floor at his feet.

"Oh, Buddie, can you help me here?" he asked.

"Sure. Here, let me do it. It is too heavy for you, till you are steadier on your legs than you are

now. Where do you want it? Over there? All right; you just stand from under." And, with a twitch and a scrape, the easel was jerked into position. Then, "What next?" Buddie demanded.

"That square frame with the canvas stretched over it. Yes, that one. Careful, Buddie!" Then Mr. Kent edged backwards and stared with half-shut eyes. "Jove! I'd no idea it was so good," he said to himself, quite low.

Buddie, at his elbow, felt that his enthusiasm was hardly justified by the amount and clearness of the work already on the canvas. However, he judged that it was not for him to cast cold water upon the pleasure of any artist, let alone a well-tried friend like Mr. Kent. Accordingly,—

"You like it?" he offered non-committal query.

David Kent smiled.

"I am going to, Buddie, and that is rather more to the purpose. What is more, I think, in time, you'll like it, too."

"I suppose so," Buddie replied a little dubiously. "Anyhow, Mr. Kent, I promised that we'd see you through it, Ebenezer and I, and that appears to be our present job. But can't I do anything more to get you ready?"

"Yes, any amount; that is, if it isn't too much trouble. You're really very good to look out for me, Buddie."

"Good! Me! Mr. Kent,—" Then Buddie choked back the finish of his phrase. As he had told Teresa, there were things he had to say to Mr. Kent. However, as yet neither the time nor Buddie's courage were quite ripe for them. Buddie was as

downright as a boy is ever made; but there were certain phrases that did not come quite readily to him, phrases where his conscience had to supplement his will and break down his boyish reticence.

It was a matter of some time to get the easel lowered to a convenient level, and to get Mr. Kent settled comfortably before it, his convalescent leg stuck out before him, and a choice array of tubes and brushes spread out on chairs and stools in easy reach. That done at last, however, Buddie whistled for Ebenezer who had been busy, digging an imaginary mole from the soil outside; then, after scraping the thickest of the mud from Ebenezer's paws and whiskers, Buddie sat himself down before the easel and sat Ebenezer down beside him.

Then, for a while, silence descended on the tent. At first, it took all of Buddie's efforts to convince Ebenezer that the claims of manners and high art bade him to forget the imaginary mole. After that, he disregarded Ebenezer totally, and fell to studying the artist before him, now painting busily and with strong, sure strokes that would have told a maturer critic than Buddie that the enforced rest, as so often happens, had gone to the betterment of his art, not to its weakening. While he painted, for the moment too absorbed in the delight of once more feeling himself at work to think even about Buddie, his gray eyes lost their indifferent look, that, at the first, had puzzled Buddie mightily. Instead, it was the likeness of an absolutely happy man, an eager and enthusiastic man, who sat before the easel, working with a vigourous realization of his own ability that, for the minute, made him quite unaware of Eben-

ezer's muddy whiskers, of his own leg stretched stiffly out before him, even of the boyish eyes fixed on his face with a mute question in their gray and honest depths.

While the enthusiasm lasted, Buddie held his peace, although the rising colour in his cheeks and the bumping of his heart made him uncomfortably aware that he had a difficult task before him. Then, at last, Ebenezer's convulsive efforts to grasp and crush a flea, together with Buddie's equally convulsive efforts to restrain him: these broke the spell. The artist caught his breath, sighed a little and rubbed the back of his hand across his forehead.

"Tired, Buddie?" he questioned cheerily. "Or only bored? I'm sorry; but it was so good to get back to work again that I quite forgot my duties as a host."

Buddie took a quick breath. Then he sought to steady himself by gripping Ebenezer's left ear. As a natural result, Ebenezer whimpered, and the whimper was the last straw to break down Buddie's long-gathering composure.

"Oh, I say, Mr. Kent," he blurted out; "you are a wonder, even if I didn't use to think so."

The corners of the artist's mouth curved upward. Like all of his brotherhood, he found praise sweet. Moreover, it was no especial wonder, all things considered, that he mistook his model's meaning.

"You like the picture so much?" he queried.

Buddie's reply astounded him completely.

"Picture be hanged!" he said. "I am talking about you."

"About me?" the artist echoed, in not unnatural

surprise for, as a rule, he had found Buddie exceedingly averse to personal conversation.

"Yes, you. Oh, thunderation! I've gone and tackled the thing by the wrong horn," Buddie exploded, in mingled disgust and contrition. "I had a bully apology all ready for you, Mr. Kent; but I've bungled it now, till all I can do is to haul out my chunk of humble pie, and munch it in your presence."

David Kent laid down his brush.

"I am sorry, Buddie; but, really, I am afraid —"

"I shouldn't think you would," Buddie told him frankly. "I shouldn't, myself; and there is no reason you should know, till I told you. But I wanted to tell you. I thought it would sort of square things up. Daddy said I'd better not; but I told him I was going to. We'll both feel better, once it's over."

The artist's face became attentive, less for the sake of grasping Buddie's coming utterance, whatever it might be, than for the sake of watching the new Buddie who sat before him, a Buddie shorn of all his jauntiness, and only intent on making his meaning clear.

"What is it, Buddie," he asked kindly; "that you want to get over?"

Buddie's face became almost as scarlet as his hair.

"My two-sidedness," he answered bluntly. "Mr. Kent, I haven't been playing fair with you. You think I am friends with you; but, when I first used to know you, I told Chub — really, I quite stuck to it — that you were an awful coward."

A little of the light died out of David Kent's eyes. He had forgotten Buddie's early attitude; it was not altogether pleasant to be reminded of it now. He smiled; but the smile was not too jocular. And yet, he told himself, it was foolish to let the judgements of fourteen affect him so.

"I am sorry," he said, after a pause.

"I'm sorrier," Buddie told him downrightly. "I hadn't any business to say a thing like that."

"But, if you think so —" Mr. Kent was beginning.

Buddie stared. Then he blazed.

"Mr. Kent! You don't mean you think I think so now? Really, I'm not that sort. If I did, I wouldn't be telling you; would I? Oh, dear!" Buddie dropped his red head on his fists and spoke dejectedly. "Daddy said I'd make a mess of it, and advised me to keep still. Mr. Kent!" he sprang up and faced the artist, and, once on his legs, he felt that he could manage better with the theme of his apology.

"Well?"

"Now you just listen to me. What I started to say is this, only it came out all wrong. The night in the train, the night we had our smash, I set you down as being funky, a man that fainted dead away at sight of a little blood. Daddy said that you couldn't help it; but that didn't make me change my mind. Not that I cared to change it, then. But I've watched you, all this summer. I've seen you take risks, and do things I wouldn't have done for any money. I've seen you keep your head in an accident that would have knocked most men silly. I've watched you shut your teeth on a pain

that Daddy says must have been the worst ever, and never say a word to grumble or whimper. And then I've watched you stick it out without complaining, all those weeks you lay in bed, and didn't be too sure which side of it you were coming out again. And I called you a coward, and Tom said you heard me. And, what was worse, I honestly believed that you were one, and, away down inside me, I laughed at you, whenever your back was turned. But talk about your heroes!" Buddie stopped in his tempestuous harangue, and drew a long, slow breath. Then he spoke deliberately, while his honest gray eyes met the eyes of the artist. "Mr. Kent, if you really are a coward, as I said you are, I think I wouldn't much mind being one myself."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

TILL NEXT VACATION

"HUSH!" Hearn said. "She's singing."

But Buddie took the fact more temperately.

"No need of hushing," he remarked. "Teresa generally gets heard."

"If we listen."

"Anyhow," Buddie said conclusively; and, indeed, it seemed that he spoke the truth, for Teresa's voice left little to the imagination, as she warbled from afar, —

"Everybody knows
When the rooster crows
That his heart is blithe and gay."

Hearn laughed, as the cataract of song fell on his ears.

"Apparently she shares the feelings of the rooster," he observed to Buddie.

But Teresa, who seemed to be coming nearer to them, drowned out Buddie's answer in her own vigorous crescendo, —

"— full of cheer
That you'll have to crow, each day.

Hullo, Buddie! Good morning, Mr. Hearn."

"Feeling extra cheerful, Teresa?" Buddie queried.

"Wonderfully. I feel as if something good were going to happen, something outside the usual course of things. What are we going to do, to-day, Buddie?"

"It's up to you. I'm your man for anything."

"Ponies?"

"If you say so."

Teresa's cheer was punctuated with a little sigh.

"Buddie, I am getting spoiled out here. All of a sudden, I am painfully aware that there won't be any ponies for me to ride, when I get home. And it is so easy to get used to luxuries."

"Best make the most of them, then, while they do last," Buddie told her. "I am going to miss Budge, too, when I go back to New York."

Teresa, now quite forgetful of her recent cheer, shook her head disconsolately.

"There will be other things than Budge for me to miss, Buddie."

"Me, for instance?" the topographer asked hopefully.

Teresa nipped his hope in the bud.

"Mercy, no; not you," she told him. "I left nine perfectly good brothers at home. In fact, I've a rather better supply of them than of anything else in the world."

"You'll have your fill of them in just about ten days," Buddie reminded her.

Teresa clasped her hands, then swept them downward with a gesture that was not altogether happy.

"Buddie," she demanded; "am I a horrid little beast, that sometimes I dread the going back to them? I love them dearly; I miss them; and yet — You see, this is the first time, since Eric came, that I haven't had a baby brother on my conscience, and it has seemed rather good not to be worrying for fear something is going to happen to him, the next minute."

Buddie looked up at her in sudden consternation. He could not know how homesick for the camp Teresa already had become, how homesick before she had even left it. And yet, a curious throb in her voice rendered him uneasy.

"Teresa, you're — "

"A pig," she said, with a nervous little laugh. "Once I get home, though, I shall settle back into the old ways, Buddie. It is only that too good a time is bound to be demoralizing."

Buddie shook his head.

"Good for you, though. Those boys, every one of them, used to take it out of you, from Eric with his earwigs to little Tootles with his teeth. It's good for you to get away from it for a while, and leave them to look out for themselves. I only wish you could stay on, till we go back. Why can't you?"

"Mother expects me."

"Have you asked her if you could stay?"

"Of course not," Teresa told him simply. "I said I'd go back with Mrs. Munn, the fifteenth, and that is all there is about it."

"People change their minds."

"I don't."

"Now don't be pig-headed, Teresa," Buddie adjured her. "You listen to me. Daddy and I and Chubbie will be going back, a little later. It would be any amount more sensible, if you waited and went back with us." And Buddie swiftly outlined the advantages of his plan. "You see how it is, Teresa," he ended suddenly. "Now will you write and ask your mother what she thinks?"

"She'll think I ought to come, when I said."

"You can't tell. She'd rather you came with us, I know. Anyhow, there's time to get a letter back again. Won't you just write and ask her?"

And, before she went to bed, that night, Teresa did.

In the meantime, she spent the morning afield with Buddie and the ponies, riding far up the cañon and home across the range where, at the topmost point of the divide, Hearn came dashing up to them, lonely, he said, and demanding their escort back to camp. Contrary to his energetic custom, too, he stayed in camp, all the afternoon, helping Buddie to outline their plans for the next day, plans which included their joining forces in season for luncheon. To be sure, Buddie, as fitted his autocratic habits where Teresa was concerned, amended the plans from start to finish; but the single item of their joint luncheon remained unchanged.

Buddie was taking life most joyously, during those September days, for he was conscious that the worst of his responsibilities had fallen from him. The future connection with Chubbie made him feel free to neglect him somewhat in the present. Moreover, Mr. Kent was beginning to drop into his former independent habits, although, as yet, he had yielded to Aunt Julia's insistence and had delayed his return to his own quarters. Best of all, the picture was done; at least, so nearly that another sitting or two would finish it; and Mr. Kent, quite of his own accord, had suggested leaving those sittings until after the departure of Teresa.

To the mind of Buddie, looking backward, it seemed that the past two weeks had been chiefly sit-

tings. Only his ever-growing loyalty to Mr. Kent could have carried him through the ordeal; but he had borne the boredom and the loss of exercise most bravely, because it was David Kent who asked it, not David Kent, the famous artist, but the David Kent who could turn handsprings and keep a half a dozen coins flying in the air. As to the picture itself, Buddie had vouchsafed it only the most casual glances. Daddy had seen it, though. He had stared at it for a long time, and then, in the fewest words possible, he had requested Mr. Kent to name his price for it. But Mr. Kent had watched it grow, and he knew that it was good. Moreover, he liked Buddie. Therefore he told a regretful Daddy that, for the present, the picture would not be for sale.

Once Teresa's letter was written and sent, Buddie settled to the calm belief that her longer stay in camp was an assured fact, and he built his plans accordingly. His belief was so infectious that, by degrees, all the others accepted his way of thinking, while Aunt Julia surpassed them all in weaving the most elaborate plans for making the best of each one of the days before them. In her turn, she aroused her husband to the chances of the next week or two, roused him so thoroughly that, after an evening of discussion with his wife and Dr. Angell, an evening of consulting with certain of his own subordinates, he announced his intention of taking to the woods once more. This time, the trip would last a week; but, out of deference to Mr. Kent's fast-vanishing infirmities, they would go by easy stages and only over trails where it was possible for a pony cart to follow. They would go for sheer amusement, this time, not

for business. They would choose their country carefully, to get the best variety with the slightest effort; and they would start immediately after luncheon, just three days later.

"I told you so!" Teresa said to Buddie, in a triumphant aside, just as they were starting off for bed, the night before. "I knew that something heavenly was going to happen. I didn't care so much about the other trip; but I can't wait for this. I do wish it were morning, now." And then, by way of hastening the coming of the dawn, she lay awake to count the hours until it came.

Dawn did come at last, and then the morning, and then breakfast which brought them to within one meal of their time to start. Breakfast over, Buddie and Teresa, Hearn and Chubbie, gathered in the doorway of the dining tent to congratulate each other on the weather and on the brilliant prospects for their successful trip. They still were standing there, when a man came across the road from the station.

"For you, Miss," he said respectfully, as he handed an envelope to Teresa.

She paled a little, while her fingers shut upon it. Telegrams had played a curiously small part in her life.

"Oh, dear!" she said faintly. "I hope—" And then she tore the envelope across.

Buddie's eye was on her, as she read. He saw her whiten, then turn to a dark red, while her eyes glittered suddenly. She swallowed once or twice, and shut her lips. Then, to his everlasting pride in her, he saw her rally sharply.

"It might be lots worse, Buddie," she said, as she handed him the paper. "It ends the trip for me;

but I've had about all the fun, this summer, that I can well digest."

"Oh, hang!" Then Buddie took the paper and read the night letter copied on it.

"*Can you come home sooner than you planned mother needs your help Eric has broken arm not bad break but makes care ask Mrs. MacDougall if she can find safe person for you to come with*

"*Father.*"

"Hm!" Hearn said, as soon as Buddie had read the message. "That lets you out till after this trip, Teresa. Mrs. MacDougall can't possibly find you an escort, before we start, this noon."

"I sha'n't wait for any." Teresa's voice was very quiet; but it held its own note of determination.

"What do you mean?"

"That I shall start, to-night."

"Alone? You can't."

Teresa lifted up her chin. Buddie, watching, gloried in the gesture.

"Why not? I'm not a baby. I know the way perfectly; if I behave myself, nobody is going to molest me. Of course, I'd rather not go alone; but it can't well be helped."

Hearn sought to argue.

"Anyway, you may as well wait till after our trip. You are out here, and it is too bad for you to miss the chance. A few days more or less aren't going to make much difference."

Teresa's chin arose a little higher.

"But my mother needs me," she said. "Besides, there's Eric."

And Buddie, listening, albeit sorely disappointed, nevertheless came promptly to her support.

In the end, Teresa carried her point as to the main question, although not in the lesser one. Not all of her coaxing could make the others start away without her. Instead, after an afternoon of packing and of many telegrams, Teresa was escorted to the station by a small procession of her cronies, Buddie and Ebenezer at the head of it, and Mr. Kent hobbling along at Hearn's side, in the rear. Hearn was glum and silent. He had liked Teresa; he knew that he was sure to miss her, and he thought he also knew that there was scanty chance of his ever meeting her again. The coming year, however, was destined to prove the inaccuracy of this latter knowledge. As for Buddie, he was pensive, but not too depressed. Teresa's home was not far from New York; trains had been known to cross the distance. Moreover, even though they both were going home to be in school, they both were morally certain to have holidays, and wonderful things could happen during holidays. And yet, —

"Teresa, it's going to be lonesome without you," he said, as they neared the station.

She flung him a glance which, try as she would, she could not make cheerful, but only brave.

"With Ebenezer, Buddie?"

His fingers tightened on Ebenezer's collar; but his face was very sober.

"Ebenezer isn't you, Teresa."

"And Chubbie?" she added, a little bit of mischief downing the outer edges of her sadness.

"Chubbie! But, Teresa —"

"Well?"

"Do you feel as if we'd made the most of our summer?"

She faced him squarely now, and her eyes looked steadily into his.

"It depends on what we mean by *most*."

"The best, then," Buddie corrected himself gloomily.

The train whistled in the distance, and Mr. MacDougall gathered up the suitcases, for he was going with Teresa to the nearest junction.

Teresa, however, as if deaf to the coming train, swept her eyes across the group upon the platform, to David Kent, to Chubbie, then brought them back to Buddie's face.

"The best?" she echoed. "Yes, Buddie, I do." And then, as her hand shut hard on his, she added, "Besides, you know, it isn't as if we hadn't some more summers coming after this one."

And then, a minute later, Buddie was staring fixedly after the train, fast vanishing into the twilit distance.

Chubbie fell into step beside him, as the little procession wended its way home from the station.

"I tell you, Buddie, she's worth while," he said quite briefly, and Buddie blessed him that he made no further effort after consolation.

And, in his liking for the reticence, and in the gap which followed on Teresa's going, Buddie was to turn with a new reliance, a new appreciation, to the comradeship of Chubbie Neal.

THE END

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