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Forest tavern: a State of Maine story

James Perrigo

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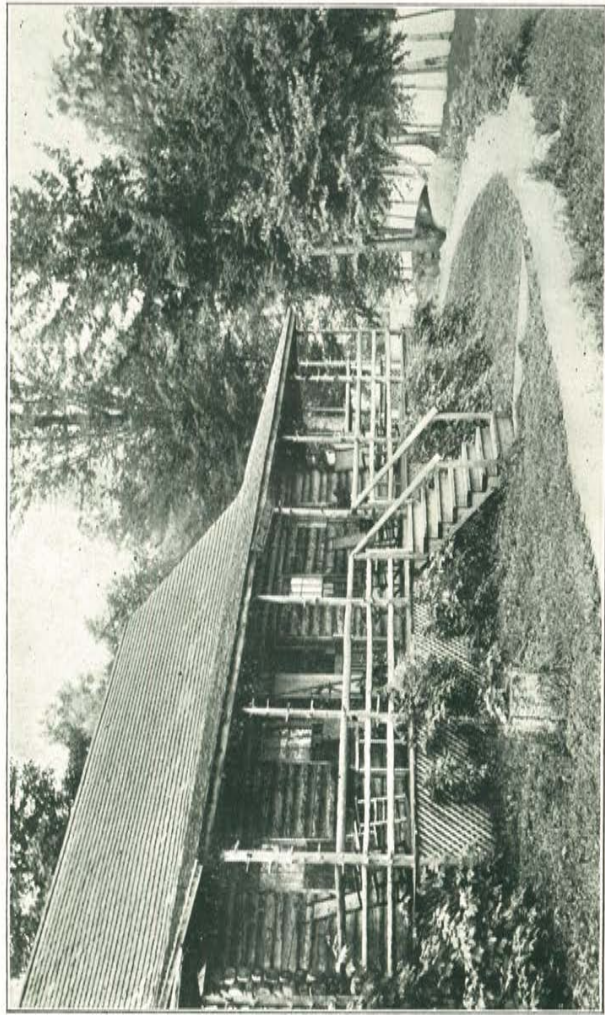
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The
Forest Tavern
A State of Maine Story

Price 10 cents

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The Forest Tavern

THE FOREST TAVERN

5370

BY

JAMES PERRIGO

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THE FOREST TAVERN
A NOVEL
IN THREE VOLUMES
BY
JAMES PERRIGO
NEW YORK
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THE FOREST TAVERN.

A long reach of dusty road shut in by "the forest primeval," rising abruptly over the steep crest of some great hill, and anon sinking into the depths of a shadowy valley or skirting the base of a wooded mountain.

On this hot, dusty July day, with not enough of a breeze to stir the branches of the solemn pines, Jake Brown, the driver of the Fort Kent stage, finding his load of freight unusually heavy, felt obliged to give his two sorry looking horses a "breather" now and then. At last as he paused at the foot of a long steep hill, one of his passengers, a young man of about twenty-four years, sprang to the ground expressing his determination to walk up the hill and thus ease the horses.

Slowly the tired horses ascended the hill, the two men walking alongside, while a garrulous old Frenchwoman, the only passenger remaining inside, kept scolding about the heat in unintelligible Madawaska *patois*.

When the crest of the hill was at length reached, a scene worthy of the most ardent painter's brush, or poet's song lay before them. Almost at their feet, and stretching afar into the wooded distance, lay one of the beautiful lakes for which Maine is so famous. Twenty miles in length, yet so narrow as to resemble a river rather than a lake, overshadowed on either side by great towering mountains, with wooded headlands jutting abruptly into the clear waters, and here and there an island of darkest green contrasting with the vivid light on the sunlit ripples, it was no wonder that Roger Noel paused in involuntary admiration.

"I must photograph that!" he exclaimed, and going to the back of the stage he brought out a tripod and a small polished box, containing a dry plate camera, with its accompanying outfit of holders and dry plates.

"Can't wait for no such foolishness as that!" said Jake Brown, stolidly puffing away at his black clay pipe.

"Never mind," replied Roger, "there are doubtless several views of the lake worth photographing, and I will spend the remainder of the day here. I suppose I will be able to find *some* shelter for the night?"

"*Oui, Oui,*" gabbled the Frenchwoman with great earnestness, pointing northward along the road.

"O, yes!" answered Brown, there's Joe Boskum's place about two miles ahead, where I allers take dinner, though I'm master late for it to-day, Joe's place ain't much on it for style seein' its built out of logs and splits and hain't got but four rooms and a loft; but he's got a purty girl there to wait on folks and he can give you as good a glass of lickor as you'll find in the State, has it brought over from Canada."

"What! liquor in the prohibition State of Maine?" said Roger in a surprised tone.

"Prohibition don't get up here in these woods," laughed Brown, and then, as though he had discovered that he had made a mistake in his man, he added, but old Joe only keeps a little for his own use." And cracking his whip lustily, as though to make up for lost time, he rattled down the hill and was soon hidden from Roger's view by the dark, fragrant pines.

Having made "an exposure" as photographers term it, of the general view of the lake, Roger quickly folded

his camera, and made his way with considerable difficulty over fallen trees and thick undergrowth to a steep rocky point overlooking a little bay or cove. Just beyond, on a similar point on the opposite side of the bay, and only a few rods distant, was a beautiful green island, ending in a great cliff on the lakeward side, which could be reached by a fallen tree whose length spanned the narrow strait from the shore. But "the light was not right" for an exposure just then, and after adjusting his camera in proper position and getting "a focus" Roger laid down in the shade of the trees to await "old Sol's" pleasure.

Just as the sunlight gave him the light and shadow that he desired, and he had risen to make the exposure, a figure stepped from the bushes on the opposite side of the cove and out on the fallen tree. Not a very remarkable figure; only a girl of twenty dressed in a patched and faded print of the cheap quality that peddlers exchange with the Madawaska French for socks and home-woven linen. Roger had only time to note her light, graceful step, and the great mass of California gold hair which fell in waves and ripples below her waist when, reaching the middle of the fallen tree, she paused for a moment, and looked down the lake, thereby turning her face almost directly toward Roger, yet without seeing him, for the thick foliage left only the lens unhidden.

He had thought, at best, to see the hoydenish face of some French girl, but the pure oval *spirituelle* face with its marks of culture and refinement, nearly took his breath away. Such a face! clear cut and beautiful, strong and fearless, trustful and true, loving and gentle, yet with an unutterable sorrow hanging veil-like over its every feature.

A quick movement of Roger's hand and the whole scene was transferred to a "dry plate" to be developed and prepared as a "negative." Roger little guessed then how he would value that negative in time to come.

Unconscious of it all, the girl passed on to the islet, and carefully watered and tended some beautiful flowers that were growing on a little mound not far from the shore. Then, kneeling for a moment as if to breathe a prayer over the dead, she turned and re-crossed the log, and disappeared again in the woods.

Waiting a moment so that his footsteps might not alarm her, Roger followed her back to the road, haunted all the way by the thought that the strange, lovely face, in spite of its setting of faded calico, was not new to him; that somewhere, if only in a dream, he had seen it before.

Though he walked quite rapidly, the girl kept some distance in advance of him, and entered "Joe Boskum's Tavern" just as he came in sight of it.

A dozen or more Frenchmen in ragged shirts and overalls were scattered about, sitting in various attitudes on logs and stumps, smoking their after-supper pipes, while a sleek Catholic priest occupied a pleasant seat near the door. But not a word of greeting was vouchsafed Roger, though many were the suspicious glances cast upon his camera and tripod carried lightly in his hand; and it was only after addressing the priest, who in turn shouted "Joe" in an authoritative tone, that he was able to see the landlord and engage quarters for the night.

After endeavoring without much success to satisfy his hunger from the buckwheat cakes and fried pork set before him, he was shown to his bed in the loft, taking

care to take his photographer's instruments with him, lest the inquisitive Frenchmen should spoil his "plates" by exposing them to the light.

The buzzing of Madawaska French had begun to grow indistinct, and fleeting visions of the girl he had seen by the lake, mingled confusedly with the memory of a girlish playmate of his childhood days were passing lightly before his brain, when a faint, hushed cry, as of someone in pain, brought him instantly back from the border-land of dreams.

"Keep still now, will you?" said a gruff voice in English, "you'll wake that feller overhead and he'll tell on us! Now I'll let go your arm if you'll crawl to the top of the ladder and see if you have woke him up with your noise?"

In a moment after a girl's face (the same marvelously beautiful face that he had seen a moment before in his dream) appeared for an instant above the opening in the floor, and a soft, musical, low voice reported him sound asleep.

"Then we'll be going!" said the same rough voice; and the heavy steps of three men were heard leaving the house.

One, two, three hours passed, and still Roger's eyes refused to close again in sleep, for thinking of the beautiful girl so strangely situated in the Madawaska woods.

It must have been about the middle of the night, when again the tramp, tramp of the three men sounded in his ears, this time heavier than before, as if they were carrying some heavy burden.

Soon they entered the house, and someone struck a light.

Very cautiously Roger arose and dressed himself, and placing his eye to one of the cracks in the loose board flooring, saw one of the men pry off the cover of a large box and take a bottle therefrom. The secret was out. These men were engaged in smuggling rum from the Canadian border; and this had doubtless been left by their confederates on the other side of the lake during the previous night.

Several trips were made to the boat, and soon a dozen cases of liquor were lowered through a trap door to a safe hiding place in the cellar. Then the men went out to cool off and take another drink, and Roger threw himself, dressed as he was upon the bed; and this time was soon in a sound sleep.

But suddenly his dreams were again broken by the sound of loud, angry voices just outside the house, and at the same moment a soft hand was laid upon his arm, and the musical voice of the Fairy of the Lake (as he had named her) whispered a warning to make no noise.

"The men have been drinking heavily," she said, "they were suspicious of you because of that curious box you carried; and now they think that you are a detective and will inform of their smuggling rum. You must get up quickly, and get out before they come in. I'm afraid that they mean to harm—to—to—kill you, perhaps. You must hurry! quick! quick! I will try to keep them at the back of the house until you can escape through the door!" And without waiting for a word of inquiry his would be deliverer disappeared down the rough ladder as silently as she had come.

Roger followed instantly but in the darkness he was

obliged to descend very slowly and cautiously, knowing that a fall would attract the attention of those without. Noiselessly he crossed the floor from the foot of the ladder, and was inwardly congratulating himself that he had escaped the wrath of the smugglers so easily when there was a sudden rush around the corner of the house, and with drunken oaths and cries of vengeance the three brawny backwoodsmen fell upon him.

Roger was strong and brave, and struck out lustily as his opponents closed in upon him, but of course such an uneven combat could have but one issue. There was a confused murmur of discordant sounds, several dull, heavy blows, and then a long blank, followed by a dim sense of being moved, and the faint sound of rippling water and plashing oars.

* * * * *

A last winter's lumber camp on the opposite shore of the lake. Within sat the garrulous old French woman, Mrs. Goland, with whom Roger had ridden on the stage, and a little to one side, in what had been the "birth," lay Roger himself, tossing from side to side in the delirium of fever, and ever and anon calling Alicia! Alicia! For still mingled in strange confusion in his feverish dreams were the faces of his childhood's friends and the girl whom he had met so strangely.

By and bye he sank into a more quiet slumber and a soft, restful expression crept over his worn face. Seeing this, Mrs. Goland arose softly and passed out and in a moment more was rowing swiftly homeward.

The shadows from mountain and wooded headland slowly lengthened over the waters of the lake, the sun-

light lost its blinding heat and glare, and yet lingered lovingly on the tops of the pines and hemlocks that surrounded the camp. Slowly Roger came back to life from his long, fevered sleep, and gazed wistfully out upon the lake as seen through a green vista of trees. Around the point of a dark green islet came a light birch canoe, propelled lightly but steadily by the Fairy of the Lake.

On she came like a fairy in a fairy boat with the golden glow of the sunlight just touching the moving ripples of her hair as it filtered through the tree tops of the opposite mountain. To Roger it seemed like the coming of an angel visitant; and it was only when she had entered the camp and laid her soft, cool hand on his temples that he could convince himself that it was at all real.

"I am so glad to see that you are better," she said softly, noting the expression of his face and the light of reason in his eyes.

"What does it all mean?" he asked, and wondered why it was so hard for him to articulate.

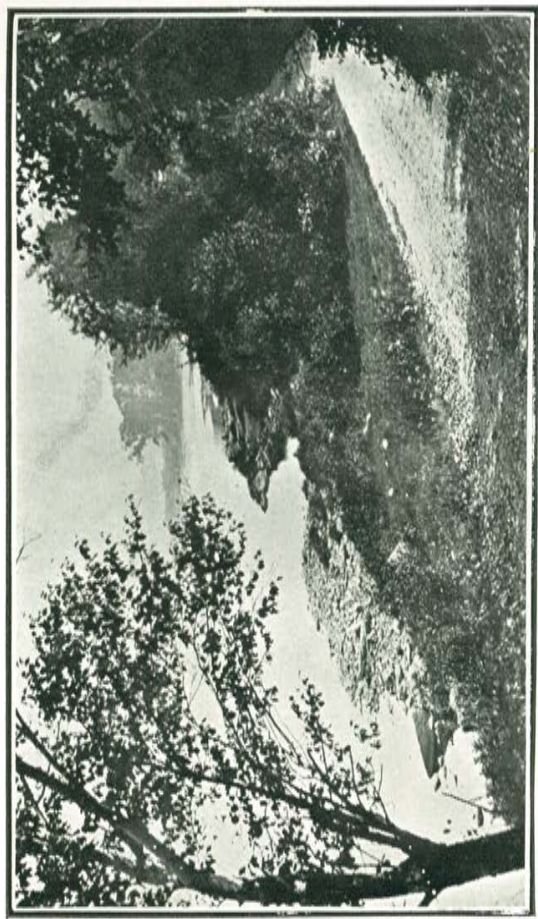
You mustn't talk now," answered the Fairy, "but drink this broth that Mrs. Goland has sent."

"But there was a fight and something happened, I don't know what—and I have been wandering in dark places and through fire bearing great burdens on my head—and—and I want—to—know."

"Mrs. Goland told me to be sure not to allow you to talk, because you need every bit of your strength to get well. Now if you will promise not to ask questions, I will tell you all you need to know. If you don't promise," raising her slender hand in mock menace, "I will



Alicia's Boat on the Shore



The Road by the Lake

go away and send Mrs. Goland to scold you her hardest—and she knows how to scold I can tell you. If you promise, close your eyes.”

Roger's eyelids obediently drooped over his eyes. He felt that he would promise anything to keep the Fairy with him a little longer.

Seating herself on the bench running nearly the entire length of the camp and known to woodsmen as “The deacon seat,” she clasped her hands in her lap and looked down upon him, trying bravely to hide the pity and fear in her face and the tremor in her voice.

“I was afraid for you when I first saw you enter the house. The men suspected you at once and I would have warned you to go as soon as possible, but there was no opportunity. Then, when I thought they were all outside, I started to climb the ladder to warn you. But I had only reached the third round when I saw that Joe Boskum was watching me, and so I pretended that I was reaching for my hat that was hanging on the wall—and slipped purposely. I thought that I could warn you while the men were away, but Joe seemed to be afraid that you would escape and it was only when the men came back and he was engaged with them for a few moments, that I had the opportunity that I was waiting for. When—the trouble began I was waiting a little way from the house so that I could tell you where to find a boat. I am only a girl—I couldn't fight to help you; but I ran to get Mrs. Goland. She has a strong influence over those men and I thought she could make them stop. But when we returned, you were lying as one dead and everything was quiet about the place. We

looked about and found that the men were all in a drunken sleep. It is only a few steps from the house to the lake. Mrs. Goland is very strong and we managed to get you into a boat and bring you here. That was nearly a week ago and you have been delirious. Mrs. Goland has been here a great part of the time, but we have had to be very careful lest the men suspect and have had to leave you alone a part of the time—but we didn't want to. You are quite safe now for each of the men appears to think that some of the others threw you into the lake."

The low, musical voice ceased and while the beautiful face was in repose, Roger noted the tender, wistful light in the brown eyes and the indefinable yearning expression of one who has suffered much and is still trying to hope, in a situation that seems hopeless. "How could it be," he thought, "she so young and beautiful and amid such sordid surroundings, yet with a life history of sadness written on her face."

The sun had entirely disappeared and all around the wooded shore of the lake lay the soft twilight shadow, like a great ribbon, its edges broken here and there and waving in unison with the treetops that swayed a little in the gentle breeze. The night birds chirped sleepily about the log camp and the frogs began to lift their voices. A moose with great branching antlers, strode in stately fashion down the slope and stood knee deep in the water to drink.

Suddenly the Fairy started from her reverie. "O, it is so late," she said nervously. "I—I—did not know. I must go now or I will be missed. Good night Ro—I

mean Mist—" and without completing the sentence she arose and started toward the door.

"But you will come again—soon!"

"Mrs. Goland will come early tomorrow."

"But you—you will come!"

"Yes, I will come in the afternoon, if I can get away without anyone suspecting the reason. I am out in the boat a good deal and they have not suspected yet."

Roger watched her as she pushed the light birch canoe from the shore and until it was lost in the deepening shadows.

"I cannot understand it," he thought. "I must be delirious yet for the thought that I have seen her before haunts me persistently, while I know that it is impossible for me to have seen a girl reared in the Aroostook wilderness where I have never been before. And yet she almost spoke my name. Well, I can't study it out; but I will make her tell me tomorrow."

The wind made ripples in the water and they sang sweet and low as they touched the pebbly beach and then, reaching up, it swung the branches of the pines until they joined sleepily in the song. And between them they sang Roger to sleep again, his lips murmuring softly, "Alicia," the name that seemed so evasive in his waking hours.

The next day when Mrs. Goland came with a nicely cooked meal, she found her patient so much better that she allowed him to get up and talk. But she seemed ashamed of her broken English and would do but little talking herself; and as Roger was not familiar with the *patois*, he found it hard to understand her.

In answer to his questions about the girl he could only elicit such replies (with the queer transposition of genders common to the Madawaska French) as "*he bon petite feé, oui* good girl, ver' good girl, not like *père*, no! she *mauvais*—what you call heem? droonk, oui, *ver'* bad droonk. And Piere Albert and Jean Peltier an' Joe Boskum they much blame—special Boskum." So he knew no more about the Fairy of the lake after she had gone away than he did before.

In the afternoon he was able to walk slowly down to the shore and, hidden from the view of anyone who might happen to be passing, by a clump of bushes, he waited long and anxiously for the time when the Fairy should come.

At last he saw the light canoe coming swiftly across the water.

"I am glad to see you so much better," she said, as she stepped lightly from the boat, "and I have brought you food for tonight and tomorrow."

"You are so very, very kind to me," he said, "I hope that I may be able to repay you sometime."

"We have been very glad to help you—it would have been so terrible if you had been killed," and she covered her eyes with her hands for a moment.

"Pardon me," continued Roger, "but will you tell me who you are and how you came to be here, for you certainly are not one of the Madawaska French girls."

"I was afraid that you would ask me that question—and I was hoping that you would not. I—I—didn't—want to—tell—you." And she looked down at the faded, patched calico dress and torn shoes while a burning blush spread over her face."

"Tell me please, Roger urged, it seems as if I had seen you before, but I do not know whether it was in a dream or real. But I can see that you have had much trouble for one so young and that your proper place is not here. Perhaps if you will tell me what the trouble is, I may be able to help you, at least I will try."

She looked into his face for a moment, a pathetic pleading expression in her eyes and then smiled brightly.

"So you don't remember your little girl friend, Alicia Fleming?"

"Ah! it all comes back to me now!" Roger cried, "the old home in the Massachusetts town and Mr. and Mrs. Fleming who lived next door to us; and the little girl that I used to lift over the fence when she wanted to see the 'chick-a-biddies' in our yard. I remember that your father and mother went away suddenly, of course taking you with them; and that I missed my child friend very much. But how did you know me?"

"O, that was very easy, your name is on a little plate on the side of your camera; and as soon as I saw it, I remembered the big, kind hearted boy who used to be so good to me."

"But how came you here, so far from the old home and apparently alone except for those people with whom I saw you?"

"I must tell someone or my heart will break; and you are the first good man I have seen for so long!" and hesitatingly and with an evident desire to shield her father, Alicia told the story, enacted in slightly different form in so many homes in our country day by day, of how the successful business man had been ruined and the kind

husband and father made unkind and neglectful through strong drink. Then the period of repentance followed when, hearing of the fine farming lands in northern Maine, and feeling that in that "Prohibition" State he would be free from all temptation to indulge his appetite for liquor, Richard Fleming betook himself with his wife and daughter to a hut in the wilds of Madawaska.

But he had found the work of clearing the land of trees and tilling the soil hard and the prospect of a competence far in the future.

"One day," continued Alicia, "a lawyer from one of the towns in the southern party of the county came to see father. They had a long talk and he told father that he could put him in the way of making quite a good deal of money very much easier than by clearing land for crops. I heard a part of the conversation and father at first refused. But the lawyer argued that the business was perfectly legitimate and offered at last to pay for the farm, which he knew somehow that father had bought on credit, and take a mortgage to run a long time without interest. Several times during the conversation he asked father to drink from a pocket flask, but he refused steadily, so that mother and I did not think it necessary to go out of the house to where they stood in order to prevent him drinking. But they walked away together; and when father returned we both detected the smell of whiskey on his breath. But he was very pleased with the arrangement that he had made about the farm and the new business that he was to take up."

"I did not know then who the man was or what the business was, but I learned afterwards that it was lawyer

Brown and that he was known as a political boss. It appeared that nearly all the men in this sparsely settled part of the country were Democrats and the Republicans felt that they needed their votes. I don't understand politics, but it seemed from several conversations that I heard later, that the county had always been reckoned surely Republican, but that recently many of the temperance people had become dissatisfied and formed a party of their own, which was likely to cause the defeat of the Republican party unless the votes of the people here could be obtained to offset the loss. And the work that he employed father to do was to get these votes for the Republican party."

"I suppose he thought that your father's superior education would give him a large influence over the people here?" said Roger.

"Yes, I heard him say that; and then he told him what kind of arguments to make; how much more prosperous the people would be and how certain men with a large amount of money were intending to build a railroad through this section, if their men should be elected—and about everyone was to be told that it would pass very closely to his farm."

"But there are very few settlers here, it seems almost like a wilderness to me."

"That is true, but there is quite a large settlement north of us and beyond that there are houses, such as they are, only a short distance apart for miles along the river."

"And what was the result of all that?"

"Brown gave father quite a large sum of money,

for expenses, he said, at first; later he gave him another large sum to be spent in buying votes. Father refused to use it in this way at first, but every time Brown or the other political workers from the lower towns came to see him, they brought liquor and he soon became a victim of his old habit. And when he had been drinking they could easily influence him. When mother and I remonstrated with them and tried to get them to stop bringing him liquor, they arranged to have their meetings at Joe Boskum's and then he drank more than before. We found that Boskum was selling liquor and we went to him and asked him not to sell father any more. He said that he would sell him all the liquor he was able to pay for. Then mother became angry and told him that if he didn't stop selling liquor entirely that she would make a complaint to the sheriff of the county, even if she had to walk fifty miles to the town where he lived. Boskum only laughed and told her to go ahead, that he had that all fixed with Brown so that the sheriff wouldn't interfere with him, no matter how much he sold. Father kept getting worse and worse and dear mother worried and fretted so that when she was taken sick with what appeared a slight ailment at first, she seemed to have no strength to resist it and died after only a short illness. She is buried on a little islet close to the other side of the lake. O, how I miss my dear mother!" and she paused to wipe the tears from her eyes and turned to look across the water with such a sad, pathetic expression that Roger's heart was touched with a stronger, more tender feeling than he had ever known before.

"I saw you there putting flowers on her grave," he

said tenderly, "on the afternoon that I went to Joe Boskum's. I seemed to know you even then. But do you feel able to tell me the rest, dear Alicia?"

"There is little more to tell. I am so sorry to have to say it, but father has been drinking more and more. He did not make his payments on the mortgage and Brown took the farm and sold it to another man. As soon as his object was accomplished he had no further use for father. But when he wants to have a spree without people where he lives knowing about it, he comes to Joe Boskum's and stays there drinking for days, and keeps father drunk too, though he ignores him when he is not drinking himself."

"And where is your home now?"

"O, we haven't any. Father works a little for the farmers and woodsmen and I have to work for Boskum in order to be near him and to earn my living. It is very hard, not on account of the work, but because of the people who come here. Brown is a married man, I know, but he says very insulting things to me. Father used to resent it at first, when he heard it, but he scarcely seems to notice now."

"But why do you stay here, Alicia? I will be able to travel very soon. Come with me and I will take you safely to my mother. You know how kind she used to be; no, I suppose you don't remember, but she will be very, very kind to you!"

"It is very kind of you to ask me and I am sure that your mother would be very kind to me, but don't you see Roger that I cannot possibly go?"

"Surely you are not afraid to go with me, your old childhood's friend?"

"Oh, no! no indeed, it is not that. I know that I can trust you; but it is father. Don't you see that I cannot leave him? I must stay and do the best I can for him. There seems to be no hope of me ever saving him from the drink habit, but I must try as long as we both live. And if I could only make the officers stop Joe Boskum from selling the stuff and Brown and those others from giving it to him, I believe he could be saved yet."

"But it is so hard, Alicia, that a sweet girl like you should have to continue this hopeless fight against the rum monster. But you shall not do it alone. As soon as I am able, I will go to the sheriff of the county myself and have Boskum arrested."

"It would be useless, Roger. One of his deputies comes here occasionally and I made a complaint to him. He replied that he could not do anything without orders from the sheriff. That same evening I saw him take a drink with Boskum, though he didn't know that I saw him, and must have told him that I had made a complaint, for Boskum swore at me dreadfully and called me very bad names."

"In that case it may not have been the fault of the sheriff—it is not likely that the deputy ever laid your complaint before him."

"I don't know about that; but a short time afterwards I wrote to the sheriff. Mrs. Goland enclosed it in an envelope addressed to a friend of hers living in the town where the sheriff lives."

"And was no attention paid to the letter?"

"I heard nothing about it for several weeks, when one day Brown and the county attorney and several others

came to Boskum's for a 'spree'. I crept up stairs as soon as possible to my cot directly over my room where they were drinking and having a good time, according to their ideas of a good time. Brown began joking Boskum, telling him that the sheriff had received a complaint against him from a pretty girl and that he, Brown, would see that the sheriff did his duty. Boskum was furious and threatened to kill me, but Brown and the others only laughed at him. At last Brown said, 'see here, Joe, you are doing a good business and it is only fair that you pay back some of the money we spend with you. Besides the temperance people are getting ugly and we've got to do something to keep them quiet. You will have to be arrested and pay a fine of one hundred dollars to the county and another hundred to me for defending you.' Boskum declared at first that he would not but after teasing him for awhile, Brown reminded him that he had him completely in his power and that he must do as he was told, adding that all the rumsellers in the county were to be fined at the approaching session of the supreme court. Boskum was never arrested and I supposed that it was all a joke until the same people came again a month or more later. Then Brown and the county attorney told Boskum, in great glee, how they had satisfied both the rumsellers and the temperance people.

"'I called the grand jury together,' said he, 'and told them that they must indict every rumseller in the county.' I don't think I know just what indict means, do you?"

"Yes," replied Roger, "it means that the evidence of crime is presented to the jury and if they think it sufficient, they indict the person, or formally charge them

with the crime and the person is then held to appear for trial before another, the superior or supreme court."

"Then the county attorney told the jury that other people had to pay taxes and it was no more than fair that the rumsellers should pay their share. And so all were indicted, including Boskum. When the time came for trial, Brown, according to his own story, arose in court and addressed the judge in a sanctimonious voice, which he well knows how to assume, and said: 'Your Honor, I am here to defend Mr. Joseph Boskum on a charge of rumselling. It would be very difficult for the state to prove the charge but, Your Honor, it is the first duty of a lawyer to see that justice is done and the law respected. Mr. Boskum has honestly admitted that he has sold a little intoxicating liquor and in the interest of the law I advised him to plead guilty. He is an honest, industrious citizen, Your Honor, and I ask that you will make his sentence as light as your honor's sense of justice will allow'."

"He was fined one hundred dollars and paid it through Brown though he was not away from this place. The other rumsellers were fined the same amount."

"But how is it, Alicia?" asked Roger, "that you can remember Brown's words so accurately?"

"Boskum thought it was so great a joke that he kept repeating it for days, so that I could not help learning it by rote."

"And was that the end of the whole matter?"

"Boskum has not been disturbed since, but after the next term of court I heard them laughing and joking again about how some of the temperance people had sworn

out warrants against a lot of rumsellers and made the officers serve them. 'But I told the jury,' said the county attorney, laughing as if it was a great joke, 'that they had paid one fine each this year and that they must not indict them again, as it was our plan to make them pay only one fine a year; and they didn't indict any of them'."

"The county attorney really had no authority over the jury," said Roger, "but I suppose they did not understand that, or at least the honest ones did not."

"A long time after that," continued Alicia, "it must have been more than a year, I heard them tell about the county attorney having lost his job and another being elected in his place who really tried, according to their story, to have the rumsellers punished. He secured a lot of evidence, had them indicted by the grand jury and found guilty by the jury in the supreme court 'But,' said Brown with a wink at Boskum as he sipped his liquor, 'we had that all fixed. His honor asked our smart county attorney if the rumsellers had been warned that they were to be sent to jail and the county attorney had to admit that they had not. So the judge sentenced them to a fine of one hundred dollars each.' Is that right, Roger? do rumsellers have to be warned?"

"No, and by what you tell me of Brown it must simply have been another trick to let them off with a fine instead of sending them to jail. But you said that they thought me a detective and for that reason tried to get rid of me. Why should they be afraid of a detective, while having no fear of the sheriff or the courts?"

"They smuggle the liquor, and a great many other things as well, from across the Canadian line; and they

appear very much afraid of the Customs officers. I think Boskum has several old cases against him and serious ones, for he keeps a boat always ready so that he can get over the line at the shortest notice. And then there is something about a license that I don't understand. I know that there are not any liquor licenses in Maine, but there seems to be something in the way of a license that he thinks would be a protection to him, but which he is afraid to get."

"I think I understand about that. The United States government issues a tax receipt for which the dealer pays in advance and which in effect licenses him to sell liquors for the time specified. These tax receipts are issued to dealers in prohibition states as well as license states, but are no protection for the dealers from the state officials if they choose to do their duty. There is quite a heavy penalty imposed by the United States government though, for one selling without the tax receipt.

"Yes, that makes plain some of the things I have heard the men talk about. Boskum is afraid of the United States Deputy Marshall, I think that is what he calls him, because he hasn't a tax receipt and yet he is afraid to apply for one. I guess because of some of his past crimes he does not want to be known in any way to any of the revenue officers. I am quite sure that Boskum is not his real name. But it is growing late, I must go now."

"You will come again, tomorrow?"

"Yes, but I must not come after that, unless you get worse again and need me very much. I fear that they will suspect me. Goodbye."

And Roger was left alone again with his thoughts. Very pleasant thoughts too, for he was young and strong and recovering very rapidly from his injuries. The vision of Alicia, his little playmate of years ago merged into the thought of the beautiful girl who was sacrificing her young life in the vain hope of saving her father. And he knew beyond all question that he loved her as he could never love another.

On the next day he felt very much better and on the third he told Alicia that he felt fully able to start on his homeward journey on the day following.

"I will walk to the foot of the lake on this side," he told her, and reach the road several miles south of here. I am not afraid of Joe Boskum and his friends; but since they think me dead it is just as well to let them continue to think so. I mean to see the revenue officers and have them attend to Boskum's case. I suppose the head officer for the customs district lives in the principal village of the county, nearly a hundred miles away, but I will find him and have him send officers as soon as I can."

"I fear it will mean bloodshed," said Alicia, "for I know that they are desperate men, but I do so wish that the rendezvous could be broken up and I could get father away from them and the temptation to drink."

"And, of course it is wrong to allow a crime like this to continue if I can by any means prevent it. But I fear to leave you here, Alicia, unprotected among these criminals."

"I am not very much afraid. Mrs. Goland is a firm friend to me, and a good woman. Mrs. Boskum is uneducated and not very good, but she is very much better

than her husband. And the men who live near here and come to the tavern have not been disrespectful to me. It is Brown and his friends whom I fear—they look so—and say bad things in my presence when they have been drinking. I—I— shouldn't tell this to a man, but there is no one else who I can tell except Mrs. Goland."

"Poor, dear girlie, of course you ought to tell me. And I so wish that I could take you with me."

Alicia blushed rosily as she heard the endearing words as they fell almost unconsciously from Roger's lips. There was a little embarrassed silence and then: "No, I cannot leave father, but—but—you—you will come again—sometime?"

"Yes, dear, I will come again and take you away. I love you, Alicia. It hardly seems as if I need to tell you for you must know it already. And it seems as if I had loved you ever since the days when you were the wee bit girlie whom I carried on my shoulder. Can you love me a little bit, Alicia?"

The rosy blush deepened and the beautiful eyes grew tender. Then a flush of shame took the place of the happiness in her face as she looked down upon her patched and faded print dress and the coarse worn shoes.

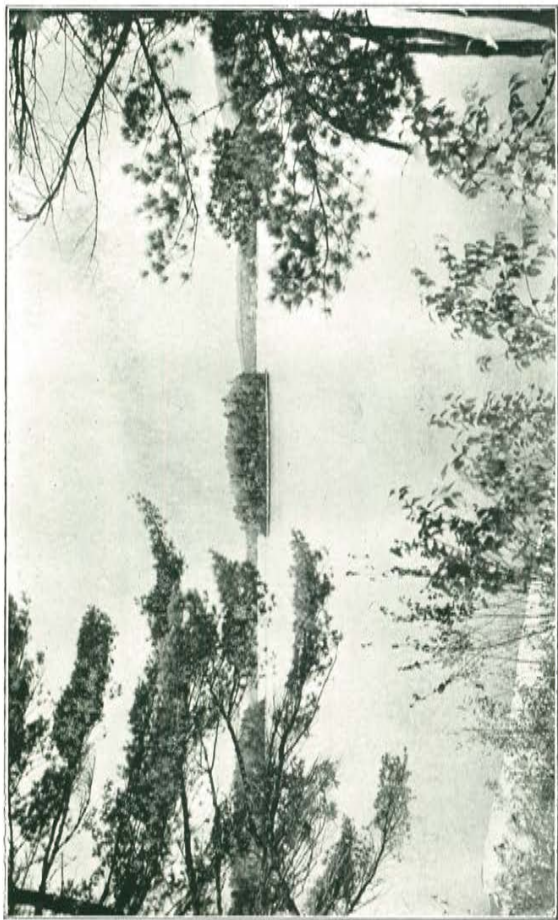
"Yes, I love you, Roger," she faltered, "but I am so ragged and poor and uneducated—and—you know about my—my poor father."

And then all her self control vanished and she fell to weeping softly.

"Never mind the clothes or your father or anything else in all the world dear, so long as you love me," whispered Roger as he caught her in his arms and tried to kiss the tears away.



Preparing to Cross the Lake



The Lake

But these sweet moments could not last. The time of parting came all too soon.

Long Roger stood on the little beach while softly out into the lake with the twilight shadows falling around her and only the plish, plash of her paddle breaking the wonderful silence, glided Alicia in her birchen canoe, leaving behind her a dream of youth and beauty and love, seeing before her a stern, hard, pitiful fight with the powers of darkness; and to human eyes, almost certain defeat in the end. But the battles that we fight for God's fallen souls are never quite lost to us though we may need to wait until the dawning of a better age before the good that we do now will appear.

* * * * *

Autumn! The maples flamed against their background of pine and hemlock. The haze of late September rested like a benediction on the forest crowned hills. Nature in peace preparing for her burial beneath the snows of winter.

The road, which wound so gracefully among the tree trunks and boulders between the shore of the lake and the hills, was still and dark, and lonely as Roger Noel walked rapidly along on that September night.

After leaving Alicia two months before, he had made his way to the shire town of the county, a two days' journey, and had promptly informed the Collector of Customs of the doings at Joe Boskum's Tavern in Madawaska.

The collector listened attentively to Roger's story, interrupting now and then to ask a question.

"There has been a lot of smuggling done in the

northern part of the county," he had said, "not only of liquors but of other things of much greater value. But we have been unable to locate the place where they were brought across the line, or who was at the head of the plan to defraud the government. I believe, young man, that you have discovered the parties that we have been trying to find for a long time. I suspect that Boskum is a deserter from the army living under an assumed name and acting as a sort of captain for a band of smugglers. I will send a deputy at once to arrest him."

"A deputy," Roger had replied, "you will need quite a force of deputies. They are a desperate set of men and one deputy would not be able to arrest Boskum while his friends are with him."

"I guess there'll be no trouble," the collector had answered, carelessly, "those fellows have a wholesome respect for the authority of the United States; and if he finds it necessary, he can get the local deputy sheriff to help him."

"But the local officers know perfectly well that Boskum is violating the state law against the sale of liquor, and yet they do not interfere," Roger had continued. Do you think that if the United States government should prohibit instead of license the liquor traffic, that the law could be more easily enforced than the state law now is?"

"Assuredly it could," the collector had replied, "there is altogether too much local politics mixed up in the enforcement of the state law and party managers protect rumsellers for the sake of votes and campaign contributions. For an illustration of what the federal government

can do, notice how the moonshiners of the South have been pursued, captured and punished; and keep your eye on us and see how we will handle this Boskum case."

"Then the Prohibitionists are right and the correct solution of the state prohibition problem is to elect a national prohibition party," Roger had said.

"That is the ideal solution," the collector had replied, "but you will readily see that I cannot advocate it, at least until my term of office expires."

Roger had again urged the collector to send more than one man to capture Boskum, but the collector said that one was all that he could spare and appeared to think that he had been needlessly scared.

Roger would have gladly accompanied the deputy, but his brief vacation time had come to a close and he must hasten back to his work in the city.

Later he had read in one of the daily papers a short account of how a deputy collector of customs had attempted to arrest a smuggler in Madawaska and had been seriously wounded by a rifle shot fired by the smuggler, who had then escaped across the Canadian border in a boat and was supposed to be there still; while the deputy had crawled to the house of a friendly French woman, named Goland, who had managed to stop the flow of blood just in time to save his life.

A sudden inspiration had come to Roger that he must go to Alicia at once if he would save her from some great danger. So he had obtained leave of absence, taken the first train from the city and was now nearing the "Tavern."

He had seen the collector of customs, who was ter-

ribly angry because of the attack on his deputy. He had only been waiting until he could learn that Joe Boskum had returned from Canada, to send a posse to take him.

Roger knew that this posse was now only a few hours behind him, but his anxiety for Alicia was so great that he had pushed on ahead of them.

The sun disappeared behind the heavily wooded western hills; the frost reddened leaves of the maples no longer stood out in contrast to the dark green of the pines and hemlocks; and as Roger approached the tavern, darkness had settled down over lake and forest, the road showing like a dim tunnel between and beneath the great overhanging trees.

Mindful of his former experience, Roger approached cautiously, hoping to see Alicia without the others seeing him. The place seemed very still, but he was sure that all the inmates had not retired for a light shone dimly through the window of the main room. Very carefully he stole up the pathway and looked through the window. The scene startled him so that he came near betraying himself by crying out.

Alicia was kneeling on the rough floor, her beautiful hair falling in wild disorder over her shoulders, her face almost deathly in its whiteness and her hands clasped as if in prayer. "O, God," he heard her murmur sobbingly, "I am alone with these bad men, do not let them do me harm—send me help!"

A flashily dressed man of middle age stood over her. The sensual lips and evil eyes and very lines in his face told of the libertine. Farther back in the room sat Joe Boskum and two others who Roger took to be Jean and

Pierre, the "ver' bad men" whom Mrs. Goland had told him of in connection with the assault made on him. A little to one side sat another, apparently partially intoxicated, who Roger thought must be Alicia's father.

Alicia arose slowly and faced the flashily dressed man. "How dare you do this thing?" she cried, "you have ruined my father and now you are determined to drag me down to—shame. If you have no pity on me, think, Mr. Wilmot, of your wife and children! Perhaps you have a little girl who you want to grow up happy and pure. Have pity for her sake, if not for mine."

"The politician," thought Roger, "O, the dirty rascal, how I would like to get my hands on him! But it would be useless for me to rush in now; with four or five men against me, I would only be killed and then there would be no one to save Alicia. I wish the deputies were here, but as they are not I must wait for an opportunity to get her away. Help is near, dear girl, though you do not know it."

"Now just stop that snivelling and praying," said Brown, grasping her roughly by the arm, "I've coaxed more than I ever did anyone else and promised you dresses and jewelry and all that a Madawaska girl need ask for. You're not any better than a lot of other girls and you have got to be my wife when I am here in the woods, so just stop your crying and come along with me!"

"Coward!" cried Alicia, "to use your brute force with a girl that you think helpless. Jean, Pierre, Joe Boskum, will you sit there and let this villain—O, say that you won't let him touch me!"

Jean and Pierre looked enquiringly at Joe Boskum.

"There's nothin' doin' here, Sis," said Boskum, carelessly taking his pipe from his mouth. Brown has got too much of a holt on me fur me to interfere with any of his plans. Why not try your father, he's your nateral pertecter."

"O, my poor, poor father, he would be my protector if you and this villain had not ruined him. His mind is so clouded with your vile liquor that he does not know his child's danger. You have taken away his intellect and manhood and then tell me to ask his protection. I will! Father, can't you be a man once more and save your child?"

Richard Fleming rose slowly to his feet, drew his hand in a dazed way across his brow and stepped uncertainly toward Brown. "What is he trying to do, daughter?" he asked.

"O, Father, don't you understand? save me!"

Suddenly the lethargy of mind and body seemed to fall away from Richard Fleming and his voice rang out clear and strong: "Do you dare to insult my daughter?" he cried, "leave her at once, you dog!"

"You old, drunken fool," mocked Brown, "get out of my way!"

The answer was a blow in the face from Fleming's fist, that, catching Brown unawares, staggered him for a moment and enabled Alicia to free herself from his grasp. As she ran toward the door, Roger ran to meet her, hearing at the same moment the sound of someone falling to the floor.

Brown was but a few feet behind Alicia as he rushed

over the threshold, but was just in time to come in violent contact with Roger. Being totally unprepared for anything of the kind while Roger was expecting it, Brown went to the earth with a crash.

The light shining through the doorway revealed Roger to Joe Boskum and the two Frenchmen, but not plainly enough for them to recognize him, else the Frenchmen, at least, would have thought him a ghost. Instead, they thought he was a revenue officer seeking to arrest Boskum. Waiting a few moments to see if there were others, they decided that he was alone and, taking their revolvers, they started in hot pursuit.

"To the lake!" whispered Alicia as Roger caught her hand, "I know a place where we can hide."

The moments of delay on the part of their pursuers gave them a start of a few rods and they were soon on the shore of the lake.

"The boat is gone," said Alicia, as she felt about a clump of bushes, "but come, we may get away yet."

Still hand in hand, they ran along the shore until they came to the fallen tree which bridged the bit of water between the shore and the little island where Alicia's mother was buried.

"The other shore of the island is very high, a hundred feet or more," she gasped as she ran. It overhangs the water—slopes in instead of out—and there is a little cave in which we can hide if we can reach it without being discovered."

They hastily crossed upon the fallen tree and ran up the rapidly rising ground toward the further side. The moon had risen by this time and helped them much in

threading their way among the trees and over the rocks. But it betrayed them to their pursuers, for they heard a shout from Boskum. "There they are, don't let him get away!" and a revolver bullet struck on a rock near their flying feet. Others followed in quick succession and only the trees prevented them from being hit.

They soon reached the promontory overhanging the deep waters of the lake, but there was no time to swing to one side and make the necessarily slow, cautious descent to the cave.

"We cannot reach the cave; what shall we do gasped Alicia?"

"We must jump into the lake," answered Roger. "Are you afraid?"

"No, no! I'd rather drown than have Wilmot catch me."

"As they poised for an instant on the brink, several shots were fired and Roger knew that a bullet had struck his right arm. But they jumped so quickly that their pursuers evidently thought that their shots had killed them. They paused for a moment as they had seen the two apparently fall over the brink.

"Let's see if da' be sure dead," said Pierre in a scared voice.

"De poor gel, he dead too, whimpered Jean, "it was not me keel heem."

"Shut up, you fools!" cried Boskum, "nobody wanted the girl killed and if you had shot straight she wouldn't have been. If she is dead there'll be a big row with Brown. It's no use looking over the cliff. The water is fifty feet deep there. What we've got to do is

to hustle back and get a boat and see if we can pick her up. We can't get down the cliff and its no use wasting time looking over."

But the words were lost to Roger and Alicia as they shot down, down until their feet touched the water, then down, down into its chilly embrace for what seemed hours of time instead of seconds, until their feet touched the oozy bottom of the lake. Then the long struggle upward, bewildered, the noise as of "many waters" in their ears, their lungs feeling as if they would burst with the strain. Such a long, long struggle it seemed. But at last it was ended and they came to the surface, breathing delightful breaths of God's pure air.

Fortunately they came up beside a large floating log and Roger succeeded in getting Alicia's arms over it so it would sustain her weight. Being a strong swimmer, he was able to push it quite rapidly toward a part of the island shore away from the cliff, where the bank, though steep, could be climbed.

"The little cave that I spoke of is about half way up the bank just around that little point," said Alicia, between long drawn breaths, "it runs under the rock from which we jumped. Let us hide there as soon as we can."

Roger was about to reply that he thought there was no danger, as he could hear nothing of their pursuers. But before he could utter the words, he heard the men talking and a boat pushed into the water.

"They seem to have found the boat easily enough," said Alicia, "I suppose they hid mine, thinking I would try to get away with it and concealed the other one where Boskum could find it quickly in case of a surprise from the officers."

Only the jutting point of the island prevented them being discovered as they climbed the bank to the cave. In a moment the boat appeared around the point and by peering through the screen of bushes at the mouth of the cave, they could see it moving about in a circle, the men scanning the moonlight waters in all directions.

"It's no use," they heard Boskum say, "if the bullets didn't kill them, they are sure drowned—and we might as well go back. But I am a little sorry about the girl."

As they turned the boat, a shout was heard from the shore.

"That's meester Brown," said Pierre in a frightened voice, "she will us keel for we keel girl."

Brown burst into a torrent of profanity when he heard their report and made many threats as to what he would cause to be done to them because of the supposed death of Alicia. "If I had been with you, I wouldn't have let any fool shoot her. You could have caught them alive and then I could have had revenge on that fellow, whoever it was, that struck me. My head hit a rock and it was a long time before I could follow you."

Thus swearing and quarreling they passed out of hearing.

The air was cold and Roger and Alicia were thoroughly chilled in their wet clothing.

"We must make our way at once to Mrs. Goland's where you can get warm," said Roger rising from his cramped position. There is nothing to fear now; they have been gone some time and we can cross on the fallen tree and reach the road some distance below the house without them seeing us. They will not be on the lookout in any case, as they are sure that we are dead.

Assisting Alicia to her feet, they made their way across the island as well as their stiffened limbs would permit, stumbling painfully over the little obstructions that they had not noticed in their headlong flight of a short time before. But the exercise warmed them a little and relieved the stiffness in their limbs so that when they reached the fallen tree they were able to cross, though slowly and with difficulty.

They had scarcely reached the shore, when they heard the report of a rifle from the direction of the tavern. It was quickly followed by another and another. Then came a crashing through the bushes as of someone running rapidly. It proved to be Joe Boskum who reached the shore hatless and almost breathless, making every effort to reach his boat in advance of his pursuers, who could be heard following as rapidly as the nature of the ground would permit. Boskum, in his rush toward the boat gave no attention to anything else and did not see Roger and Alicia, though he passed very close to them. But as he leaned forward to grasp the prow of the boat, Roger quickly put out his foot and tripped him to the ground, purposely falling on top of him. Then ensued a struggle. Boskum was a powerful man and Roger, after his cold bath, was in poor condition for a prolonged struggle.

"Let me go, whoever you are," cried Boskum, "the officers are after me and I must get to the Canadian shore before they catch me."

"That is just what I thought," gasped Roger, "and you are going to stay right here until they come."

The words had hardly left his lips, when the deputies

from the collector's office bounded out upon the shore. Both Boskum and Roger were quickly handcuffed and then allowed to get to their feet.

Alicia had stood in dazed silence, so quickly had all this come about; but when she saw the handcuffs placed on Roger's wrist she stepped to his side and looking up into the face of the officer who seemed to be in command, asked in a quiet voice, "Why do you arrest Mr. Noel? he has done no wrong."

"Mr. Noel!" exclaimed the officer, "turn your face where the moonlight will shine upon it."

Roger did so.

The officer unlocked the handcuffs instantly. "I beg your pardon," he said, "in the faint light and excitement I did not recognize you and supposed you were one of Boskum's friends, though I could not understand what the struggle was about unless it was an accidental fall and you were both struggling to get up and get away. Now I see that you were holding him for us. If he had got a start in that boat, he would doubtless have escaped again. The credit for the capture is due you."

Then lifting his hat politely to Alicia, he added, "I see that both you and the young lady have been in the water and must be suffering with the cold. Let us return to the house at once."

On the way Roger explained what had occurred since his arrival on the scene.

The officer drew Roger a little to one side as he finished the brief recital. "Is this young lady the daughter of the old man whom you told the Collector about when you entered the complaint against Boskum?"

"Yes."

"Then it would be well for you to take her somewhere else, if possible. We found an old man dead on the floor, evidently from a blow on the head; and she had better not see him in her present condition."

Roger returned to Alicia's side and advised that they go immediately to Mrs. Goland's.

"No, no," she replied, "Father struck that villian Wilmot and I am afraid—I must go back and see what has happened."

Finding it useless to try to persuade her, Roger explained tenderly what had happened, while the kind hearted deputies went in ahead and laid the body of Mr. Fleming upon an improvised bench in another room. Alicia went in for a few minutes and then allowed Roger to lead her quietly to Mrs. Goland's.

On the morrow they laid him to rest beside his wife on the little island with only his name carved on the blazed side of a tree to mark the spot.

"Poor, dear Father," sobbed Alicia, "he was so kind and good before he drank so; and he would have been safe here had it not been for Wilmot and the political work that he induced him to do."

"Yes, dear," answered Roger, "your father was the victim of a political party—sold in exchange for votes. His case is in the hands of God and we must not worry over the things that are past, but instead devote our lives to a continual protest against this great political iniquity. I have never seen it in its true light before. Though always opposed to licensing the liquor traffic, I have thought that state wide prohibition was sufficient. I

now see that, while Maine had derived great benefit from the prohibitory law, that it has been in spite of such politicians as Brown and the political parties of which they are the bosses and that the only way to secure the full benefits of the prohibitory law is to elect a real Prohibition party, made up of the friends of the law and having no rumsellers or rum sympathizers in it. There would be then no incentive for an officer to nullify the law because it would be treason to his party and political suicide for himself to do so. Now an officer who does contrary to the dictation of the political bosses soon loses his job. With a real Prohibition party administering the laws of the state, he would lose his job if he failed to do his duty."

With reverend tread, the deputies, Mrs. Goland and others who had gathered, followed them across the fallen tree and to the road, where Jake Brown's stage, with the prisoners securely bound, awaited them.

From the hilltop farther on they looked back to see the forest lake and island all aglow in the sunset's dying splendor.



Come again, O golden days,
When you and I together,
Can row about the quiet bays
In the sunny summer weather.

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