

THE LIFE OF THE WINDS OF HEAVEN

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ILLUSTRATED BY ORSON LOWELL

BARBARA hesitated long between the open-work stockings and the plain silk, but finally determined on the former. Then she vouchsafed a pleased little smile to her pleased little image in the mirror, and stepped through the door into the presence of her aunt. The aunt was appropriately astonished. This was the first time Barbara had spread her dainty chiffon wings in the air of the great north woods. Strangely, daintily incongruous she looked now against the rough walls of the cabin, against the dark fringe of the forest beyond the door.

Barbara was a petite little body with petite little airs of babylike decision. She knew that her greatest attraction lay in the strange backward poise of her head, bringing her chin, pointed and adorable, to the tilt of maddening charm. She was perfectly aware, too, of her very red, full lips, the color of cherries, but with the satiny finish of the peach; and she could not remain blind to the fact that her light hair and her violet-black eyes were in rare and delicious contrast. All these things, and more, Barbara knew, because a dozen times a day her mirror swore them true. That she was elusively, teasingly, judiciously, calmly distracting she knew, because, ever since she could remember, men

had told her so with varying degrees of despair or bitter humor. She accepted the fact, and carried herself in all circumstances as a queen surrounded by an indefinite number of rights matured to her selection.

After her plain old backwoods aunt had admired and exclaimed over the butterfly so unexpectedly developed from the brown tailor-made chrysalis, Barbara determined to take a walk. She knew that through that cool, fascinating forest, only a half mile away, dwelt the Adams. The Adams, too, were only of the woods people, but they were human, and chiffon is chiffon, in the wilderness as in the towns. So Barbara announced her intention, and stepped into the open sunlight.

The parasol completed her sense of happiness. She raised it, and slanted it over her shoulder, and drew one of its round tips across her face, playing out to herself a pretty little comedy as she sauntered deliberately down the trail between the stumps and tangled blackberry vines of the clearing. She tilted her chin, and glanced shyly from beneath the brim of her big hat at the solemn stumps, and looked just as pretty as she possibly could, for the benefit of the bold, noisy finches. With her light summer dress, and her big hat, and her beautiful open-work stockings, and her

absurd little high-heeled silver-buckled shoes, she had somehow regained the feminine self-confidence which her thick boots and sober brown woods dress had filched from her. For the first time in this whimsical visit to a new environment she was completely happy. Dear little Barbara—she was only eighteen.

Pretty soon the trail entered the great, cool, green forest. Barbara closed her parasol and carried it under one arm, while with the same hand she swept her skirt clear of the ground. She was now a grande marquise in the forest of Fontainebleau. Through little round holes in the undergrowth she could see away down between the trees to dashes of sunlight and green shadows. Always Barbara conducted

“Phew!” came a most terrible, dreadful sound from the thicket close at hand.

Barbara dropped her parasol, and clasped her heart with both hands, and screamed. From the thicket two slender ears pointed inquiringly toward her, two wide brown eyes stared frightened into hers, a delicate nose dilated with terror. “Phew!” snorted the deer again, and vanished in a series of elastic stiff-legged springs.

“Oh!” cried Barbara, “you horrid thing! How you frightened me!”

She picked up her parasol and resumed her journey in some perturbation of mind, reflecting on the utter rudeness of the deer.

Gradually the trail seemed to become more difficult. After a time it was obstructed by the top of a fallen basswood. Barbara looked about her. She was not on the trail at all.

This was distinctly annoying. Barbara felt a little resentful on account of it. She gathered her skirts closely about her ankles and tried to pick her way through the undergrowth to the right. The brush was exceedingly difficult to avoid, and a little patch of briars was worse. Finally an ugly stub ripped a hole in the chiffon skirt. This was unbearable. Barbara stamped her foot in vexation. She wanted to cry, and fully made up her mind to do so as soon as she should have regained the trail. In a little while the high beech ridge over which she had been traveling ended in a narrow cedar swamp. Then Barbara did a foolish thing. She tried to cross the swamp.

At first she proceeded circumspectly, with an eye to the chiffon. It was torn in a dozen places. Then she thrust one dear little slipper through the moss into black water. Three times the stiff straight rods of the tamarack whipped her smartly across the face. When finally she emerged on the other side of the hundred feet of that miserable

cedar swamp, she had ceased to hold up the chiffon skirt, and was most vexed.

“I think you’re just *mean*!” she cried pettishly to the still forest, and then caught her breath in the silence of awe.

The forest had become suddenly unfriendly: its kindliness had somehow vanished. In all directions it looked the same—straight towering trunks, saplings, undergrowth. It had



“The parasol completed her sense of happiness”

herself as though, in the vista, a cavalier was about to appear, who would sweep off his plumed hat in a bow of knightly admiration. She practised the curtsy in return, sinking on one little high-pointed heel with a downward droop of her pretty head and an upward cast of her pretty eyes.

“*Où, c’est un rêve, un rêve doux d’amour,*” she hummed.

shut her in with a wall of green, and hurry in whatever direction she would, Barbara was always enclosed in apparently the same little cell of leaves.

Frightened, but with determination, she commenced to walk rapidly in the direction she believed would lead her out. The bushes now caught at her unheeded. She tore through briars, popples, moose maples, alike. The chiffon was sadly marred, the picture hat stained and awry, the brave little shoes, with their silver buckles and their pointed high heels, were dull with wet. And suddenly, as the sun shadows began to lift in the late afternoon, her determined stock of fortitude quite ran out. She stopped short. All about her were the same straight towering trunks, the saplings, the undergrowth. Nothing had changed. It was useless.

She dropped to the ground and gave way to her wild terror, weeping with the gulping sobs of a frightened child, but even in extremity dabbing her eyes from time to time with an absurd tiny handkerchief of drawn-work border.

Poor little Barbara; she was lost.

II

AFTER a while, subtly, she felt that some one was standing near her. She looked up.

The somebody was a man. He was young. Barbara saw three things—that he had kindly gray eyes, which just now were twinkling at her amusedly; that the handkerchief about his neck was clean; and that the line of his jaw was unusually clear-cut and fine. An observant person would have noticed, further, that the young man carried a rifle and a pack; that he wore a heavily laden belt about the waist, and moccasins on his feet; that his blue flannel shirt, though clean, was faded; that his skin was brown as pine bark. Barbara had no use for such details. The eye was kindly; the jaw was strong; neatness indicated the gentleman. And a strong, kindly gentleman was just what poor little lost Barbara needed the most. Unconsciously she tilted her pointed chin forward adorably, and smiled.

"Oh! now it's all right; isn't it?" said she.

"I am glad," he replied, the look of amusement deepening in his gray eyes; "and a moment ago it was all wrong. What was the matter?"

"I am lost," answered Barbara contentedly, as one would say "My shoes are a little dusty."



"The brush was exceedingly difficult to avoid"

"That's bad," sympathized the other. "Where are you lost from?"

"The Adams, or the Maxwells. I don't know which. I started to go from one to the other. Then there was a deer, and so I got lost."

"I see," he agreed, with entire assurance. "And now what are you going to do?"

"I am not going to do anything. You are to take me home."

"To the Adams or the Maxwells?"

"To whichever is nearest."

The young man seemed to be debating. Barbara glanced at his thoughtful, strong face from under the edge of her picture hat, which slyly she had rearranged. She liked his face. It was so good-humored.

"It is almost sunset," replied the youth at length. "You can see the shadows are low. How do you hope to push through the woods after dark? There are wild animals—wolves!" he added maliciously.



"She wanted to cry"

Barbara looked up again with sudden alarm. "But what shall we do?" she cried, less composedly. "You *must* take me home."

"I can try," said he, with the resignation of a man who can but die.

The tone had its effect.

"What do you advise?" she asked.

"That we camp here," he proposed calmly, with an air of finality.

"Oh!" dissented Barbara in alarm. "Never! I am afraid of the woods! It will be wet and cold. I am hungry. My feet are just sopping!"

"I will watch all night with my rifle," he told her. "I will fix you a tent, and will cook you a supper, and your feet shall not be wet and cold one moment longer than you will."

"Isn't your home nearer?" she asked.

"My home is where night finds me," he replied.

Barbara meditated. It was going to be dread-

ful. She knew she would catch her death of cold. But what could she do about it?

"You may do the wet feet part," she assented at last.

"All right," agreed the young man with alacrity. He unslung the pack from his back, and removed from the straps a little axe. "Now I am not going to be gone a moment," he assured her, "and while I am away, you must take off your shoes and stockings, and put these on." He had been fumbling in his pack, and now produced a pair of thick woolen lumberman's socks.

Barbara held one at arm's length in each hand, and looked at them. Then she looked up at the young man. Then they both laughed.

While her new protector was away, Barbara not only made the suggested changes, but she also did marvels with the chiffon. Really, it did not look so bad, considering.

When the young man returned with an armful of hemlock bark and the slivers of a pine stump, he found her sitting bolt upright on a log, her feet tucked under her. Before the fire he shortly hung the two webs of gossamer and the two dear little, ridiculous little high-heeled shoes, with their silver buckles. Then, in a most business-like fashion, he pitched a diminutive shelter tent. With equal expedition he built a second fire, between two butternut logs, produced a frying pan and kettle, and set about supper.

The twilight was just falling. Somehow the forest had lost its air of unfriendliness. The birds were singing in exactly the same way they used to sing in the tiny woods of the picnic grounds. It was difficult to believe in the wilderness. The young man moved here and there with accustomed ease, tending his pot and pan, feeding the fire. Barbara watched him interestedly. Gradually the conviction overcame her that he was worth while, and that he had not once glanced in her direction since he had begun his preparations. At the moment he was engaged in turning over sizzly things in the pan.

"If you please," said Barbara with her small air of decision, "I am very thirsty."

"You will have to wait till I go to the spring," replied the newcomer, without stirring.

Barbara elevated her small nose in righteous indignation. After a long time she just peeped in his direction. He was laughing to himself. She hastily elevated her nose again. After all, it was very lonely in the woods.

"Supper is ready," he said, after a time.

"I do not think I care for any," she replied

with dignity. She was very tired and hungry and cross, and her eyes were hot.

"Oh, yes, you do," he insisted carelessly. "Come now, before it gets cold."

"I tell you I do not care for any," she returned haughtily.

For answer he picked her up bodily, carried her ten feet, and deposited her on another log. Beside her lay a clean bit of bark containing a broiled deer steak, toasted bread, and a cup of tea. She struggled angrily.

"Don't be a fool," the man commanded sternly. "You need food. You will eat supper, now."

Barbara looked up at him with wide eyes. Then she began to eat the venison. By and by she remarked, "You *are* rather nice," and after she had drained the last drop of tea, she even smiled, a trifle humbly. "Thank you," said she.

It was now dark, and the night had stolen down through the sentry trees to the very outposts of the fire. The man arranged the rubber blanket before it. Barbara sat upon the blanket and leaned back against the log. He perched above her, producing a pipe.

"May I?" he asked.

Then, when he had puffed a few moments in quiet content, he inquired:

"How did you come to get lost?"

She told him.

"That was very foolish." He scolded severely. "Don't you know any better than to go into the woods without your bearings? It was idiotic."

"Thank you," Barbara replied meekly.

"Well, it was," he insisted, the bronze on his cheek deepening a little.

She watched him for some time, while he watched the flames. She liked to see the light defining boldly the clean-shaven outline of his jaw; she liked to guess at the fire of his gray

eyes beneath the shadow of his brow. Not once did he look toward her. Meekly she told herself that this was just. He was dreaming of larger things, seeing in the coals pictures of that romantic, strenuous, mysterious life of which he was a part. He had no room in the fulness of his existence for such as she—she, silly little Barbara, whose only charm was a maddening fashion of pointing outwards her adorable chin. She asked him about it, this life of the winds of heaven.

"Are you always in the woods," she inquired.

"Not always," said he.

"But you live in them a great deal?"

"Yes."

"You must have a great many exciting adventures."

"Not many."

"Where did you come from just now?"

"South."

"Where are you going?"

"Northwest."

"What are you going to do there?"

There ensued a slight pause before the stranger's reply. "Walk through the woods," said he.

"In other words, it's none of my business," retorted Barbara a little tartly.

"Ah, but you see it is not entirely mine," he explained.

This offered a new field. "Then you are on a mission?"

"Yes."

"Is it important?"

"Yes."

"How long is it going to take you?"

"Many years."

"What is your name?"

"Garrett Stanton."

"I think you're just mean."

"You are a gentleman, aren't you?"

A flicker of amusement twinkled subtly in the corner of his eye. "I suppose you mean gently bred, college educated? Do you think it's of vast importance?"

Barbara examined him reflectively, her chin



in her hand, her elbow on her knee. She looked at his wavy hair, his kindly, humorous gray eyes, the straight line of his fine-cut nose, his firm lips with the quaint upward twist of the corners, the fine contour of the jaw.

"No-o-o," she agreed; "I suppose it doesn't. Only I know you *are* a gentleman," she added with delightful inconsistency. Stanton bowed gravely to the fire in ironic acknowledgment.

"Why don't you ever look at me?" burst out Barbara, vexed. "Why do you stare at that horrid fire?"

He turned and looked her full in the face.

"Now," said he, "I will ask a few questions. Won't this all-night absence alarm your relatives?"

"Oh no. I often spend the night at the Adams. They will think I am there."

"Parents are apt to be anxious."

"But mine are not here, you see."

"What is your name?"

"Barbara Lowe."

He fell silent. Barbara was distinctly piqued. He might have exhibited a more flattering interest.

"Is that all you want to know about me?"

she cried in an injured tone.

"I know all about you now. Listen. Your name is Barbara Lowe; you are visiting the Maxwells, your relatives, for a few weeks; you came from Detroit, where you are not yet 'out'; you are an only child, and eighteen or nineteen years of age."

"Why, who has been telling you about me?" cried Barbara, astonished.

Stanton smiled. "Nobody," he replied.

"Don't you know that we woodsmen live by our observation. Do you see anything peculiar about that tree?"

Barbara examined the vegetable in question attentively. "No," she confessed at last.

"There is an animal in it. Look again."

"I can see nothing," repeated Barbara, after a second scrutiny.

Stanton arose. Seizing a brand from the fire, he rapped sharply on the trunk. Then, slowly, what had appeared to be a portion of the bole began to disinte-

grate, and in a moment a drowsy porcupine climbed rattling to a place of safety.

"That is how I knew about you," explained the woodsman, returning to the fire. "Your remark about staying overnight told me that you were visiting the Maxwells rather than



"Oh! now it's all right; isn't it?"

In a moment her eyes dropped before his frank scrutiny. She felt the glow rising across her forehead. When she raised her head again he was staring calmly at the fire as before, one hand clasped under his arm, the other holding the bowl of the brier pipe.

the Adams. I knew the latter must be relatives, because a girl who wears pretty summer dresses would not visit mere friends in the wilderness; you would get tired of this life at the end of a few weeks, and so would not care to stay longer. The maker's name in your parasol caused me to guess you from Detroit."

"And how about my being an only child?"

"Well," replied Stanton, "you see, you have a little the manner of one who has been a trifle——"

"Spoiled," finished Barbara with wicked emphasis.

Stanton merely laughed.

"That is not nice," she reproved with vast dignity.

Barbara was furious at herself for blushing. A cry, inexpressibly mournful, quivered from the woods, close at hand.

"Oh! what is that?" she exclaimed.

"Our friend the porcupine. Don't be frightened."

Down through the trees sighed a little wind. "Who! who! who!" droned an owl monotonously. The sparks from the fire shot up and eddied. A chill was in the air. Barbara's eyes grew heavier and heavier. The fire penetrated her through. She tucked her feet under her, and expanded in the warmth like a fireside kitten in purring content. Then, had she known it, the man was looking at her—looking at her with a strange, wistful tenderness in his gray eyes. Dear, harmless, innocent little Barbara, who had so confidently trusted in his goodness.

"Come, little girl," he said softly at last.

He arose and held out his hand. Awakened from her abstraction, she looked at him with a faint smile, and eyes from which the coquetry had gone, leaving only the child.

"Come," he repeated. "Time to turn in."

She arose dutifully. The little tent really looked inviting. The balsam bed proved luxurious, soft as feathers.

"When you are ready," he told her, "let me know. I want to open the tent flap for the sake of warmth."

The soft woolen blanket was very grateful. When the flap was open Barbara found that a second fire had been built, with a backing of green logs so arranged as to reflect the heat directly into her shelter.

She was very sleepy, yet for a long time she lay awake. The noises of the woods approached mysteriously, and drew about the little camp their mystic circle. Some of them were exceeding terrifying, but Barbara did not mind them, for he sat there, his strong, graceful figure silhouetted against the light,

smoking his pipe in contemplation. Barbara watched him for a long time, until finally the firelight blurred, and the solemn shadows stopped dancing across the forest, and she dozed.

Hours later, as it seemed, some trifling sound awakened her. The heat still streamed gratefully into the tiny shelter; the solemn shadows still danced across the forest; the contemplative figure still stared into the embers, strongly silhouetted by the firelight. A tender compunction stole into Barbara's tender little heart.

"The poor dear," said she; "he has no place to sleep. He is guarding me from the dangers of the forest," which was quite ridiculous, as any woodsman will know.

Her drowsy eyes watched him wistfully—her mystery, her hero of romance. Again the fire blurred, again the solemn shadows paused. A last thought shaped itself in Barbara's consciousness.



"She looked up at the young man"

"Why, he must be very old," she said to herself. "He must be twenty-six."
So she fell asleep.

III

BARBARA awoke to the sun and the crisp morning air, and a delightful feeling that she had slept well, and had not been uncomfortable at all. The flap of her tent was discreetly closed. When ready she peeped through the crack and saw Stanton bending over the fire.

In a moment he straightened and approached the tent. When within a few feet he paused. Through the hollow of his hands he cried out the long musical morning call of the woodsman.

"Ro-o-oll out!" he cried. The forest took up the sound in dying modulations.

For answer Barbara threw aside the tent flap and stepped into the sun.

"Good morning," said she.

"*Salut!*" he replied. "Come, and I will show you the spring."

"I am sorry I cannot offer you a better variety for your breakfast. It is only the supper over again," he explained, after she had returned and had perched like a fluffy bird

of paradise on the log. Her cheeks were very pink from the cold water, and her eyes were very beautiful from the dregs of dreams, and her hair very glittering from the kissing of the early sun. And, wonderful to say, she forgot to thrust out her pointed chin in the fashion so entirely adorable.

She ate with relish, for the woods hunger was hers. Stanton said nothing. The time was pregnant with unspoken things. All the charming elements of the little episode were crystallizing for them, and instinctively Barbara felt that in a few moments she would be compelled to read their meaning.

At last the man said without stirring:

"Well, I suppose we'd better be going?"

"I suppose so," she replied.

They sat there some time longer, staring abstractedly at the kindly green forest; then Stanton abruptly rose and began to construct his pack. The girl did not move.

"Come," he said at last.

She arose obediently.

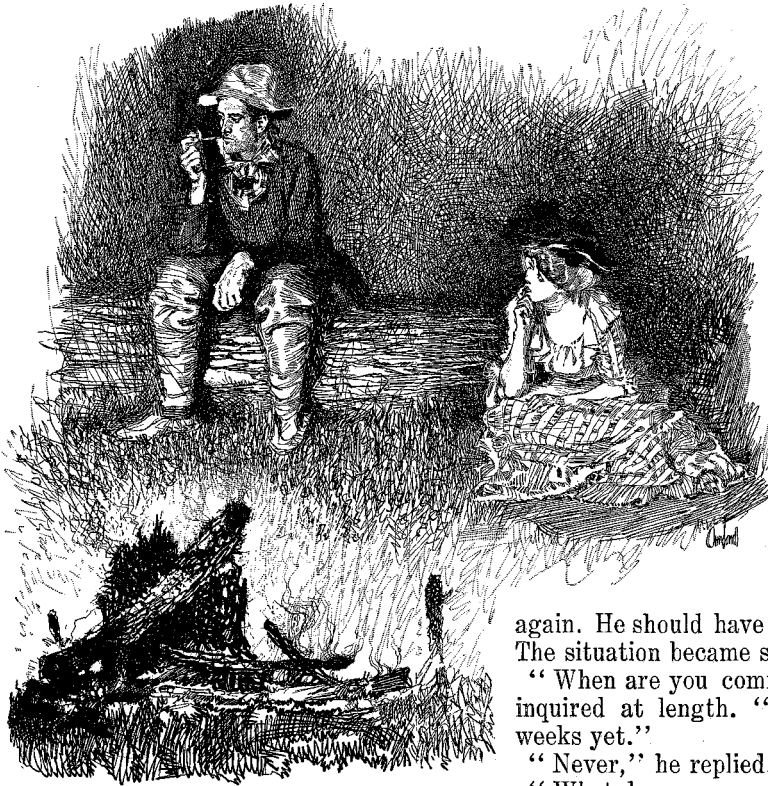
"Follow close behind me," he advised.

"Yes," said she.

They set off through the greenery. It opened silently before them. Barbara looked back.

"After all it was very lonely"





"Barbara examined him reflectively"

It had already closed silently behind them, shutting out the episode forever. The little camp had ceased to exist; the great, ruthless, calm forest had reclaimed its own. Nothing was left.

Nothing was left but the memory and the dream—yes, and the Beginning. Barbara knew it must be that—the Beginning. He would come to see her. She would wear the chiffon, another chiffon, altogether glorious. She would sit on the highest root of the old elm, and he would lie at her feet. Then he could tell her of the enchanted land, of the life of the winds of heaven. He would be her knight, to plunge into the wilderness on the Quest, returning always to her. The picture became at once inexpressibly dear to her.

Then she noticed that he had stopped, and was looking at her in deprecation, and was holding aside the screen of moose maples. Beyond she could see the familiar clearing, and the smoke from the Maxwell cabin.

She had slept almost within sight of her own doorstep.

"Please forgive me," he was saying. "I meant it only as an interesting little adventure. It has been harmless enough, surely,—to you."

His eyes were hungry. Barbara could not find words.

"Good-bye," he concluded. "Good-bye. You will forgive me in time—or forget, which is much the same. Believe me, if I have offended you my punishment is going to be severe. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Barbara a little breathlessly. She had already forgotten the trick. She could think only that the forest, the unfriendly forest, was about to recall her son. "Good-bye," he repeated

again. He should have gone, but he did not. The situation became strained.

"When are you coming to see me?" she inquired at length. "I shall be here two weeks yet."

"Never," he replied.

"What do you mean?" she asked after a moment.

"After Painted Rock, the wilderness," he explained almost bitterly, "the wilderness and solitude for many years—forever!"

"Don't go until to-morrow," she urged.

"I must."

"Why?"

"Because I must be at Painted Rock by Friday, and to reach it I must travel fast and long."

"And if you do not?"

"My mission fails," he replied.

They stood there silent. Barbara dug tiny holes with the tip of her parasol.

"And that is ruin?" she asked softly, without looking up.

"I have struggled hard for many years. The result is this chance."

"I see," she replied, bending her head lower. "It would be a very foolish thing for you to stay, then, wouldn't it?"

He did not reply.

"But you are going to, aren't you?" she went on, in a voice almost inaudible. "You must not go like that. I ask you to stay."

Again the pause.

"I cannot," he replied.

She looked up. He was standing erect and tall, his face set in the bronze lines of a resolution, his gray eyes leveled, straight and



“ ‘Come and I will show you the spring’ ”

steady, beyond her head. Instantly her own spirit flashed.

“I think now you’d better go,” she said superbly.

They faced each other for a moment. Then Barbara dropped her head again, extending her hand.

“You do not know,” she whispered. “I have much to forgive.”

He hesitated, then touched the tips of her fingers with his lips. She did not look up.

With a gesture which she did not see, he stooped to his pack, and swung into the woods.

Barbara stood motionless. Not a line of her figure stirred. Only the chiffon parasol dropped suddenly to the ground.

IV

AFTER a time she lifted her head and blinked bravely at the sky. She raised the parasol and slanted it over her shoulder, and drew one of

its tiny beadlike rib-ends across her face. Then she began elaborately to saunter through the clearing, playing out to herself and to the solemn stumps a brave little tragedy that she was happy.

The fringe of the primeval forest watched her through its inscrutability. Barbara dared not look toward it. Instead, she examined attentively the familiar clearing, taking intimate note of trifles that she might postpone the encounter with greater things. At the big elm she seated herself with exaggerated nonchalance, spreading the abused chiffon in a cloud about her. She hummed a little song.

"*Oui, c'est un rêve!*—" she sang, and broke off with a tiny gulping sob. This brought her to the reckoning.

"He might have stayed," she parried the question. "It would only have been polite, after tricking me so. I do not think it was very nice of him."

She was hurt, as a child is hurt at an unkindness which it does not comprehend. Events had always treated her well. She could not understand the mistake which somewhere must have been made, for affairs were intended to run smoothly and pleasantly in this bright, pretty world.

A porcupine trundled out from the edge of the forest, and paused to reconnoitre. She did not notice him. She was trying to see.

"I suppose I am unreasonable to expect him to ruin his chances," Barbara conceded thoughtfully. "But he might have seemed a little sorrier about it."

No, it was not his fault. She could not make it so. He had treated her well, and if he had not seemed to notice appropriately his companion, it was because his eyes were filled

with stars. Barbara's own eyes were filled with something wistfully pathetic.

The porcupine, concluding thus that the coast was clear, ambled, after the phlegmatic manner of porcupines, in the direction of possible barrels.

"I wonder if he really cared to see me again," pursued Barbara. "I don't suppose he thought much about it. Most men would have. But he is different from most men." She threw up her head proudly at the comparison. "He has big things to think of; big things to do. He is strong and brave." Her eyes shone with the splendor of her idea. She was seeing far into the land of mystery and light and romance. Then the exaltation died. "No," she confessed humbly, "he would not think of me. I am not worth his thoughts. I am silly, and a little fool. Oh, I *am* a little fool. I am ashamed of myself."

The summer day had already begun to lay its silence on the morning. A wild bee hummed musingly over a flower. Far in the woods, clear as a cameo, the crash of a breaking limb sounded. The porcupine, who had just turned over the parasol with his nose, cocked



"I have much to forgive"

his head inquiringly. From time to time he glanced uneasily back, as other sounds engraved the stillness.

Barbara gazed at nothing with sad eyes. "I wish I had died in the woods," she said slowly. "I wouldn't despise myself so."

The porcupine had found the varnish good, and had commenced to gnaw with his sharp front teeth, but uneasily, as one not sure of uninterrupted leisure. The sounds from the forest were stringing themselves rapidly on a single thread of approach, and the thread seemed to be unrolling in his direction. This was annoying to the porcupine.

"I must have looked perfectly horrid with my gown all torn," contemplated Barbara. The round tears trembled on her lashes, and finally splashed to the ground. "I shall never see him again," she ended brokenly. "Never! Oh, I can't help it. I *want* to see him again! I *want* to! I *want* to!"

The tears flowed unrestrained now. Poor dear little child Barbara, with her tender heart, and her quaint, tantalizing, small face, and her eighteen years, was suddenly face to face with the great terrible Life which men and women live. And Life was being very harsh with her.

She covered her face and gave herself frankly to her misery. She cared. Nothing else mattered. But the porcupine, crafty and wary animal, long since beyond mere emotion, ceased gnawing the altogether delightful varnish, and prepared to roll into an unassailable ball. He was rather a stupid porcupine, as porcupines run, but he knew better than to omit the ordinary precautions when something reckless and hasty was tearing through the forest, exactly in his direction. In a moment he did coil, congratulating himself on his chances for a green old age. The dim, mystic symbolism of approach through the invisibility of the forest had suddenly materialized. Barbara did not know it; grief is even stupider than porcupines.

Then suddenly, subtly, she knew. Life, great and mysterious, had relented. She threw her

arms out to him, her face transfigured, her eyes streaming. What did she care for torn chiffons and blurred vision, for the gossamer web of convention? Life had turned kind. She, dear little Barbara, whose tender heart was never meant to be denied, knew now that the sun of happiness had not been really blotted out from the heavens; that the cloud had passed.

"Oh!" she cried; "Oh! Oh!"

He dropped beside her on the grass and took her hands. His impassive bronze face had become boyish in its joy and relief. "I could not go!" he kept repeating. "I could not! I could not! I tried! I got as far as the Crossing. But I had to come back to you. I thought I was strong. It was stronger than I. Dear little girl, look up at me. Let me see you. Let me be sure it is you. Oh, it can't be true! Dear little girl; dear little Barbara! All the way to the Crossing I saw you sitting there on the log in the firelight. I could not go. I love you! I love you! I have always loved you. I have always known that you must be. I have always felt that some day I should see you, that I should see your eyes, and your hair, and your red lips, and your dear pointed chin — always, always, since I began to dream!"

The porcupine cast one beady eye on his two neighbors, and promptly uncoiled. He was a stupid porcupine, as porcupines run; but he was not so stupid as all that.

They talked, perhaps; perhaps not. They could not have told. Life moved on in cadences. The great life of the winds of heaven had commanded her children; and unthinking, like children, they had obeyed her. That was all.

So the porcupine leisurely ate his unnoticed way from one end of the parasol to the other.





Drawn by Orson Lowell

“I wonder if he really cared to see me again”

CAP'N BOB OF THE "SCREAMER"

BY F. HOPKINSON SMITH

Illustrated by Thomas Fogarty



CAPTAIN BOB BRANDT

CAPTAIN Bob Brandt dropped in to-day, looking brown and ruddy, and filling my office with a breeze and freshness that seemed to have followed him all the way in from the sea.

"Just in, Captain?" I cried, springing to my feet, my fingers closing around his—no more welcome visitor than Captain Bob ever pushes open my office door.

"Yes—'Teutonic.'"

"Where did you pick her up—Fire Island?"

"No; 'bout hundred miles off Montauk."

Captain Bob has been a Sandy Hook pilot for some years back.

"How was the weather?" I had a chair ready for him now and was lifting the lid of my desk in search of a box of cigars.

"Pretty dirty. Nasty swell on, and so thick you could hack holes in it. Come pretty nigh missin' her"—and the Captain opened his big storm-coat, hooked his cloth cap with its ear-tab on one prong of the back of one office chair, stretched his length in another, and, bending forward, reached out his long, brawny arm for the cigar I was extending toward him.

I have described this sea-dog before—as a younger sea-dog—twenty years younger, in fact. He was in my employ then—he and his

sloop "Screamer." Every big foundation stone in Shark Ledge Light—the one off Key-port harbor—can tell you about them both.

In those lighthouse days this Captain Bob was "a tall, straight, blue-eyed young fellow of twenty-two, with a face like an open book—one of those perfectly simple, absolutely fearless, alert men found so often on the New England coast, with legs and arms of steel, body of hickory, and hands of whalebone: cabin boy at twelve, common sailor at sixteen, first mate at twenty, and full captain the year he voted."

He is precisely the same kind of man to-day, plus twenty years of experience. The figure is still the figure of his youth, the hickory a little better seasoned, perhaps, and the steel and whalebone a little harder, but they have lost none of their spring and vitality. The ratio of promotion has also been kept up. That he should now rank as the most expert pilot on the station was quite to be expected. He could have filled as well a commander's place on the bridge, had he chosen to work along those lines.

And the modesty of the man!

Nothing that he has done, or can still do, has ever stretched his hat measure or swelled any part of his thinking apparatus. The old