

SERIAL STORY

The Girl from Tim's Place

By CHARLES CLARK MUNN

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SYNOPSIS.

Chip McGuire, a 16-year-old girl living at Tim's place in the Maine woods is sold by her father to Pete Bolduc, half-breed. She runs away and reaches the camp of Martin Frisbie, occupied by Martin, his wife, nephew, Raymond Stetson, and guides. She tells her story and is cared for by Mrs. Frisbie. Journey of Frisbie's party into woods to visit father of Mrs. Frisbie, an old hermit, who has resided in the wilderness for many years. When camp is broken Chip and Ray occupy same canoe. The party reach camp of Mrs. Frisbie's father and are welcomed by him and by Walker, an old friend and former townsman of the hermit. They settle down for summer's stay. Chip and Ray are in love, but no one realizes this but Cy Walker. Strange canoe marks found on lake shore in front of their cabin. Strange smoke is seen across the lake. Martin and Levi leave for settlement to get officers to arrest McGuire, who is known as outlaw friend. Tomah, an Indian, visits camp. Ray believes he sees a bear on the ridge. Chip is stolen by Pete Bolduc who escapes with her in a canoe. Chip is rescued by Martin and Levi as they are returning from the settlement. Bolduc escapes. Old Cy proposes to Ray that he remain in the woods with himself and Anzi and trap during the winter, and he concludes to do so. Others of the party return to Greenville, taking Chip with them. Chip starts to school in Greenville, and finds life unpleasant at Aunt Comfort's, made so especially by Hannah. Old Cy and Ray discover strange tracks in the wilderness. They penetrate further into the wilderness and discover the hiding place of the man who had been sneaking about their cabin. They investigate the cave home of McGuire during his absence. Bolduc finds McGuire and the two fight to the death, Ray finding a watery grave together. Ray returns to Greenville and finds Chip waiting for him.

CHAPTER XVIII.—Continued.

For a long hour she sat there while the tide of feeling ebbed and tears came unchecked, and then the reaction came. With it, also, came something of the old courage and defiance that had once led her to face night, danger, and 60 miles of wilderness alone.

"I have made a mistake," she said, sitting up, "and Hannah was right. I am a nobody here, and Ray has been told so and has kept away."

And now with returning calm, and soothed, maybe, by the still, ethereal night, she saw herself, her past and present, as it all was. Back in an instant she sped in thought to the moment when, kneeling to these people, she begged for food; back to that first prayer she ever heard in the tent, and the offer of rescue that followed.

And then her life here, with all its hopes and humiliation, rose before her.

"It was all wrong, my coming here," she said, looking away to the village where lights twinkled; "I am not their sort, nor they mine. I'd better go away."

Then, lifted a wee bit by this new resolve, she rose and returned to the house.

The tall clock in the sitting-room was just chiming ten when she entered, and Aunt Comfort was there alone.

"Raymond was here this evening," she said kindly, "and waited quite a spell. Where have you been?"

"Oh, nowhere," answered Chip, pleasantly, "only I was lonesome and went out for a walk."

Little did good Aunt Comfort realize what a volcano of hope, despair, shame and tender love was concealed beneath that calm answer, or the new resolve budding in Chip's heart.

No more did Ray suspect it when he met her coming home from school the next afternoon.

For during those two wretched hours when she was alone on the worn schoolhouse step, poor Chip McGuire, the low-born, pitiful waif, had become a woman and put away girlish impulses.

"I couldn't come to see you that first evening," he said at once, "for uncle and aunty kept me talking till bedtime. Where were you last night?"

"Oh, I didn't much think you would come," answered Chip, calmly, smiling at him in a far-off way. "I am a nobody here, as you will soon find out, and I don't expect—anything. I got lonesome last night and went off for a walk."

Ray looked at her in wide-eyed astonishment. And well he might, for only two short days since she had met him, an eager, simple girl, and

now she spoke like a woman. No word, no hint of his neglect, escaped her; but a cool indifference was apparent.

"Tell me about the woods and Old Cy," she said, not waiting for him to speak again, "and how is the hermit? I want to know all about them."

"Oh, I left 'em all right," answered Ray, sullenly, for like a boy he wanted to be coaxed. And then, urged a little by Chip, he told his winter's experience.

One episode interested her most of all—the strange trapper's doings, his theft of their game, their pursuit of him and discovery of his hiding spot.

"I know who that was," she said, when it was all described. "It was my father, and if he had caught you spying upon him, I guess he'd shot you both. He always used to go somewhere trapping every fall; but nobody could ever find where."

This return to the memories of the wilderness wore away something of Chip's cool reserve, and when the house was reached her eyes had grown tender.

"I shall be glad to see you often—as your folks will let you come," she said, somewhat timidly when they parted; and scarce understanding this speech, Ray left her.

"Chip has changed a whole lot," he said to his aunt a little later, "and I wish she hadn't; she don't seem the same any more."

"I'm glad of it if she has," answered Angie, smiling at him. "There was need enough of it."

CHAPTER XIX.

Old Cy had builded wiser than he realized when he coaxed Ray to spend a winter in the woods.

The long tramps through the vast wilderness; the keen hunt for signs of mink, fisher, otter, and wildcat, with constant guard against danger; the unremitting though zestful labor of gum-gathering; the far-sighted need for winter preparation; and last but not least Old Cy's cheerful philosophy, had broadened the lad and developed both muscle and mind.

His success, too, had encouraged him. He was eager to try another season there, and planned for hiring men to gather gum, and saw in this vocation possible future.

But the change in Chip puzzled him. He had returned, expecting to find her the same timid, yet courageous little girl, ready to be his companion at all



"I Wish You Were Going Back with Us."



"I Wish You Were Going Back with Us."

times and to kiss him when he chose—a somewhat better-educated girl, of course, using more refined language, but otherwise the same confiding child, as it were.

She was all this the day of his return; and then, presto! like a sudden blast of cold air came a change. Too loyal to her to question any one, he could only wonder why this change.

He called again soon after that first, unsatisfying walk home with her, to find her the same cool, collected young lady. She was nice to him, induced him to talk of the woods once more and his own plans; but it was not the Chip of old who listened, but quite another person.

"I am going back to the lake with uncle and aunt," he said at last, "and I mean to coax them to take you along. You have been shut up in school so long, it will do you good."

"Please don't say a word to them about it," she urged, in hurt tone, "for it will do no good. I wouldn't go, anyway."

"Not go to the woods if you could," he exclaimed in astonishment; "why, what do you mean?"

"Just what I say," she returned firmly, and then added wistfully, "I'd fly there, if I had wings. I'd give my life, almost, for one more summer like the last. But I shall not go again now, and maybe never."

It was unaccountable and quite beyond Ray's ken—this strange decision of hers—and her "Please don't say any more about it" closed the subject.

Another and even greater shock came to Ray when late that evening,

on the porch, he essayed to kiss her. "No, no; please don't," she said with almost a sob, pushing him away. "It's silly now, and—and—you mustn't."

A week later school closed, and Chip's conduct was then also a puzzle to Miss Phinney. As usual on these occasions, when the hour came, each pupil, young and old, filed past the teacher at her desk, the boys to shake hands, the girls to be kissed, and all bade good-by, after which they trooped away, glad to escape.

This ceremony now took place as usual. All departed except Chip, and she remained at her desk. Some intuition of pity or sympathy drew Miss Phinney to her at once; and then, at the first word from her, Chip gave way to tears—not light ones, but sobs that shook her as a great grief. Vainly Miss Phinney tried to cheer and console her, stroking the bowed head until her own eyes grew misty.

"I didn't mean to give way," Chip said at last, looking up and brushing away the tears, "but you've been so good and patient with me, I couldn't help it. I hadn't many friends here, I guess, and—" choking back another sob—"I shall be more lonesome'n ever."

It was true enough, as Miss Phinney well understood, and somehow her heart went out to this unfortunate girl now, as never before.

"You mustn't think about that," she said at last, in her most soothing voice, "but come and see me as often as you can—every day, if you like, for I shall always be glad to have you. I'd keep on studying, if I were you," she added, as Chip brightened, "it will help you on, and I will gladly hear you recite every day."

Then hand in hand, like two sisters, they left the dear old schoolhouse. Little did Miss Phinney, good soul that she was, realize how recently poor Chip had cried her heart almost out on its well worn sill, or that never again would this strange, winsome woman-grown pupil enter that temple.

At the parting of their ways the two embraced, kissed, and with tear-dimmed eyes separated.

"I can't account for it," Miss Phinney said to herself when well away. It may be a love affair with young Stetson, or it may be something worse."

That evening she called on Angie. The result was fruitless, so far as obtaining any light upon this puzzling matter was concerned, for Angie was either blind to the situation, or feigned ignorance.

"They were together all last summer, of course," she said, "in fact, they were forced to be like two children, you know. I was glad to have it so, feeling it would benefit the girl. If any love flame was started then, it has had ample time to die out since."

"There is something else the matter with Chip, then," Miss Phinney rejoined, "she has been moody and quite upset at times for the past few weeks, and to-day when school closed, she sobbed like a broken-hearted woman. It was quite pathetic, and I had to cry myself."

That night Angie took counsel of her husband.

"Well, what if it is so," he responded to her suggestion that a love affair might have started between them. "It won't harm either. So far as I've observed, the girl couldn't have been better behaved since she came here. She has never missed an hour at school all winter, no matter how cold it has been. Her teacher says she has made wonderful progress. She has attended church with you every Sunday, and as for Ray—well, if I were in his shoes I'd be in love with her myself."

It was clear enough that Angie's fears were not shared by Martin.

"But think of her origin and parentage," answered Angie, "and that outlaw father who might appear at any time! The very idea of Ray marrying her is preposterous. It would wreck his life."

"But what about Chip?" returned Martin, who had broader views of life. "You brought her here to Christianize and educate her; do you propose to turn her adrift because she has a pretty face and the boy sees it? She isn't to blame for her origin. As for Ray, if he shows that he is able to support a wife and wants her, I honor him for it, and I'll give him a house to start with."

At Aunt Comfort's, however, no signs of love troubles were visible; in fact, no signs of any sort, except the malicious "hanging around" interference of Hannah whenever Ray was there. She seemed to feel it her duty to remain on guard at such times, much to Ray's disgust. No annoyance at this was apparent in Chip. She helped at housework, studied at odd hours, and when Ray came she met and talked with him as if he were a brother.

The day he was to leave Greenville was close at hand, however, and the evening before he came early, bringing his banjo, and by tacit consent, perhaps to escape Hannah, they both left the house at once.

Just above the village there was a long, narrow pond, wooded upon one side and around its upper end, with partially cleared land and scattered trees along the opposite bank. One of these trees was a monster beech near

the water's edge, the trunk of which was scarred by many intertwined initials.

To this lovers' trysting tree now came Ray and Chip.

The evening was not new for romance, for no moon graced its only stars were reflected from the pond's motionless surface, while fireflies twinkled above it.

The shadow of the near parting also hovered over these two as, hand in hand, they picked their way up and along the bank; and once seated beneath the tree, it seemed to forbid speech.

"I wish you'd play some of the songs you used to," Chip said at last hurriedly; "I'd like to think I'm back at the lake again."

Glad to do so, Ray drew out his banjo and began to tune it. He started a song also—one of the "graveyard" ones which Old Cy had interdicted, but choked at once and stopped abruptly.

"I can't sing to-night," he said; "I'm too blue about going away."

There were two in this frame of mind, evidently, for Chip made no protest, and for another long interval they watched the fireflies and listened to the whippoorwills.

"I wish you were going back with us," Ray said at last. "It breaks my heart to go away so soon and leave you. Why won't you let me ask my uncle to take you? He might be glad to do it; just for me."

"No," answered Chip, firmly, "you mustn't. It would shame me so that I couldn't look them in the face." Then, as if this subject and their own feelings must be avoided, she added hurriedly, "Tell me what you will do when the folks come back—whether you will come with them or stay at the lake."

"Stay there, I suppose," answered Ray, somewhat doggedly, for money-making and love were in conflict. "Old Cy says we can make a lot of money if I will. I wish I were rich," he added with a sigh.

He was not the first young man to whom that wish had come at such a moment. But converse between them was at ebb tide just now, and the parting moment, ever creeping nearer, overshadowed all else. To Chip—known only to herself—it meant forever. To Ray, another long isolation from all the world and young associates, and all for a few hundred dollars sorely needed by him, yet seeming of scant value compared to the sweet companionship of this maid.

Then Chip's feelings and the reason for them were quite beyond him. He could not see why she was unwilling to ask to be taken to the woods again, nor why she held herself aloof from him. She had not done so at the lake, or when they met again, and why should she now?

Something of this might have been inferred by Chip, for she suddenly arose.

"I think we'd best go back," she said. "It's time and Hannah will be watching for me."

What Ray might have said had he been a worldly man, does not matter. What he did was to pick up his useless banjo, and clasping Chip's arm, led her along the winding walk.

Below the falls and near the house they paused, for now the last moment alone together had come, and with it the real parting.

"Tell Old Cy I—I haven't forgot him," whispered Chip, her voice quivering, "and—and—you won't forget me either, will you, Ray?"

That little sob in her speech was all that was needed to break away the barrier between them, for the next instant Ray's arms were about the girl.

No words of love, no protestations, no promises. Only one instant's meeting of soul and impulse, fierce as love of life, sacred as the hand of death.

Love consecrated it. The shadowing maples blessed it. The stars halloved it.

And yet it was a long, long parting. When Ray rode away next morning he watched for her at the first sharp hilltop.

It was in vain, for Chip's resolve had been taken, and he never saw the forlorn figure crouching behind that bush-topped wall, or knew that two wistful, misty eyes had seen him depart.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Irreverent Yankee.

Adam Engel, a few days before he closed his historic chop house in Herald square, lunched with a Denver correspondent. "The loss of this chop house will be a great loss to New York," said the correspondent. "It will be like," he went on eloquently, "the obliteration of some historic light." "I hope," said the modest Engel, "that it won't be so bad as that. Speaking of lights, by the way, I hope that my chop house's departure won't inflict any such loss as a certain Yankee, by an uncontrollable impulse, once inflicted on a Buddhist temple in Japan. They say, you know, that a priest, showing this Yankee over an ancient shrine, led the man reverently to a small silver lamp. 'This lamp, sir,' he said, 'has not been extinguished for seven centuries.' The Yankee puffed out his cheeks and blew. 'Well,' he said, 'I guess she's out now, anyway.'"

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