

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, a 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 Cy Walker, an old friend and former townsman of the hermit. They settle down for summer's stay. Chip and Ray are in love, but 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 and escaped murderer. Chip's one woods 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 Amzi 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 speaking about their cabin. They investigate the cave home of McGuire during his absence. Bolduc finds McGuire and the two fight to the death, finding a watery grave together. Ray returns to Greenville and finds Chip waiting for him. Ray wants Chip to return to the woods with them, but she, feeling that the old comradeship with Ray has been broken refuses. When they part, however, it is as lovers. Chip runs away from Aunt Comfort's and finds another home with Judson Walker. She gives her name as Vera Raymond. Aunt Abby, Aunt Mandy Walker's sister, visits them, and takes Chip home with her to Christmas Cove. Chip goes to school at Christmas Cove. She tells Aunt Abby the story of her life. Aunt Abby tells her of their family, and she discovers that Cy Walker is a long-lost brother of Judson Walker, but fear of betraying her hiding place prevents her telling of Cy. Old Cy investigates McGuire's cave in the wilderness and finds a fortune that belongs to Chip. Old Cy returns to the wilderness camp with the news that Chip had disappeared and proposes to start out to find her. He turns over to Martin a bank book showing a deposit of \$50,000 in Chip's name. Chip returns to the home of Judson Walker at Peaceful Valley for a summer vacation.

CHAPTER XXVII—(Continued).

Martin had expected this news to be overpowering, and a "Good God!" from Uncle Jud, and a gasping "Land sakes!" from Aunt Mandy proved that it was. Chip's face, however, was a study. First she grew pale, then flashed a scared glance from one to another of the three who watched her, and then almost did her shame and hatred of this vile parent find expression. "I'm glad he—no, I won't say so, for he was my father," she exclaimed; "but I want Old Cy to have some of the money, and Uncle Jud here, and you folks, all. I was a pauper long enough," and then, true to her instinct of how to escape from trouble, she ran out of the room. "She's a curis gal," asserted Uncle Jud, looking after her as if feeling that she needed explanation. "the most curis gal I ever saw. But we can't let her go, money or no money, Mr. Frisbie. I found her one night upon top o' Bangall hill. She was so starved an' beat out from trampin' she couldn't hardly crawl up on to the wagon, 'n' yet she said she wouldn't be helped 'thout she could arn it. I think she's like folks we read about, who starve ruther'n beg. But she kin have all we've got some day, an' we jest can't let her go." And Martin, realizing its futility, made no further protest. Something of chagrin also came to him, for, broad-minded as he was, he realized how partial neglect, the narrow religious prejudice of Greenville, and unwise notice of her childish ideas about spites and Old Tomah's superstitions had all conspired to drive her away. She was honest and self-respecting, "true blue," as Old Cy had said, grateful as a fawning dog for all that had been done for her, and in spite of her origin, a circumstance that carried no weight with Martin, she was one, he believed, who would develop into splendid womanhood. That she was well on her way toward

that goal, her improved speech and devotion to these new friends gave ample evidence.

And now Ray's position in this complex situation occurred to Martin; for this young man's interest in Chip and almost heart-broken grief over her disappearance had long since betrayed his attachment.

"I suppose you may have guessed that there was a love affair mixed up with this episode," he said to the two somewhat dazed people.

"I called that was, that fust night," Uncle Jud responded, his eyes twinkling again, "an' told Mandy so. 'Twas that more'n anything else kept us from quizzin' the gal. I knowed by her face she had heart trouble, 'n' I've seen the cause on't."

"You have," exclaimed Martin, astonished in turn, "for heaven's sake, where?"

"Oh, down to the Corners, 'most a year ago, 'n' a likely boy he was, too."

"And never told her?"

"No, why should I, thinkin' she'd run away from him. We didn't want to spile her plans. We found out, though, her name was McGuire, but never let on till she told us a spell ago."

And then Uncle Jud told the story of Ray's arrival in Riggsville in search of Chip. "That fellow is my nephew, Raymond Stetson," rejoined Martin with pride, "he also is an orphan, and I have adopted him. Chip has no cause to be ashamed of his attachment."

"I don't callate she is," replied Uncle Jud. "Tain't that that jinerally makes a gal kick over the traces, Mebbe 'twas suthin some o' you folks said." And then a new light came to Martin.

"Mr. Walker," he answered impressively; "in every village there is always a meddlesome old maid who in-

variably says things she'd better not, and ours is no exception. In this case it was a dependent of our family who took a dislike to Chip, it seems, and her escapade was its outcome."

"Wal, ye've got 'evey charity for 'em," replied Uncle Jud, with a broad smile. "Never havin' suffered the joys 'n' sorrows o' love, they look at it sorter criss-cross, an' mebbe this 'un did. Old maids are a good deal like cider—nat'rally turn to vinegar. What wimmin need more'n all the rest is bein' loved, 'n' if they don't get it, they sour up in time an' ain't no comfort to themselves nor nobody else. Then ag'in, not havin' no man nor no babies to look arter, they take to coddlin' cats 'n' dogs 'n' parrots, which ain't nat'ral."

"I think," continued Uncle Jud, "now that we've turned another furrow, you'd best stop a day or two with us, 'n' sorter git' quainted. We'll be mighty glad to hev ye, me an' Mandy, an' then ag'in thar's a lot o' good trout holes up the brook. We hev plenty to eat, 'n' mebbe a few days here in Peaceful Valley'll sorter reconcile ye to leavin' the gal with us." And nothing loath, Martin accepted.

Aunt Mandy and Chip now bestirred themselves as never before. The dressmaker was left to her own resources, Martin and Uncle Jud rigged fishpoles and started for the brook. Chip, with pail in hand, hurried away to the fields, and when tea-time arrived, the big platter of crisp fried trout, saucers filled with luscious blackberries, and ample shortcake of the same with cream that poured in clots, assured Martin that these people did indeed have plenty to eat.

"How did this come to be named Peaceful Valley?" he queried, when they had gathered around the table. "It's very appropriate."

"Wal," answered Uncle Jud, "we got it from a feller that come up here paintin' pictures one summer, an'," chuckling, "'twas all we got for a month's board, at that. He was a short o' skimpy critter, with long hair, kinder pale, and chawed tobacco stiddy. He 'lowed his name was Grahame, that he was in the show business 'n' gittin' backgrounds, as he called 'em, fer show pictures. He roved up 'n' down the brook, puttin' rocks 'n' trees

'n' waterfalls on paper, allus gittin' 'round reg'lar 'bout meal time—must 'a' gained 20 pounds while here. An' then one mornin' he was missin', 'n' so was Aunt Mandy's gold thimble 'n' all her silver spoons. She'd sorter took to him, too, he was that palaverin' in his way."

There now ensued a series of questions from Uncle Jud in regard to Old Cy—how long Martin had known him, and all that pertained to his history.

It was gladly recited by Martin, together with all the strange happenings in the wilderness, the finding of Chip, the half-breed's pursuit and abduction of her, and much else that has been told. It was almost midnight ere Martin was shown to the best front chamber, and even then he lay awake an hour, listening to the steady prattle of a near-by brook and thinking of all that had happened.

A tone of regret crept into his voice, however, when, after thanking Uncle Jud and Aunt Mandy, and bidding them good-by, he addressed Chip.

"I wish I could take you back with me," he said; "your return would be such a blessing to Aunt Comfort and my wife. You may not believe it, but you are dear to them both. I must insist that you at least pay us a visit soon. Here is your bank book," he added, presenting it. "You are rich now, or at least need never want, for which we are all grateful. And what about Ray?" he added, pausing to watch her. "What shall I say to him? Shall I tell him to come and see you?"

Chip shook her head firmly. "No, no," she answered, "please don't do that. Some day I may feel different, but not now."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Sad news arrived in Peaceful Valley a week later, for Captain Bemis had passed on, Aunt Abby was in lonely sorrow, and wrote for Chip to come at once.

Her fate was now linked with these people. Aunt Abby had been kind and helpful, and Chip, more than glad to return a little of the obligation, hurried to Christmas Cove.

It was a solemn and silent house she now entered. Aunt Abby, despite the fact that it was not a love match, mourned her departed companion. The mill's pertinent silence added gloom, and Chip's smiling face and affectionate interest was more than welcome to Aunt Abby.

And now that concealment was no longer needed, Chip hastened to tell her story in full.

How utterly Aunt Abby was astonished, how breathlessly she listened to Chip's recital, and how, when the climax came and Chip assured her that good Old Cy Walker was still alive, Aunt Abby collapsed entirely, sobbing and thanking God all at once, is but a sidelight on this tale.

"I couldn't tell you before," Chip assured her, while her own tears still flowed. "I was so ashamed and guilty all in one, I couldn't bear to. I never did so mean a thing in all my life, and never will again. But when Uncle Jud told me what you didn't, and how much he cared for me, and how you once cared for Uncle Cy, I went all to pieces and told the whole story and sent word to Uncle Cy that day. I feel so guilty now, and so mean, I don't see how you can forgive me."

But Aunt Abby's forgiveness was not slow in coming. The past ten days of sorrow had left her heart very tender. In spite of being "book-larned," she was very humane. Chip's sad life and misfortunes appealed to her, as they had to Uncle Jud, and true Christian woman that she was, her heart opened to Chip.

"I hope we shall never be parted while I live," she said, as the tears came again. "I have no children, and no one to live for but my sister. I am so wanted to Christmas Cove, I could not feel at home anywhere else. If Uncle Jud will consent, I will adopt you legly, and when I am laid away all I have shall be yours."

And so Chip McGuire, waif of the wilderness, child of an outlaw, once sold to a human brute, yet fighting her way upward and onward to a better life, despite every drawback, now found a home and mother.

No light of education had illumined her pathway, no Christian teaching and no home example, only the inborn and God-given impulse of purity, self-respect and gratitude; and yet, like a bud forcing its way up out of a muck heap and into the sunshine, so Chip emerged to win respect and love.

But all her history is not told yet. She still lacked even a common education. There was still an old man seeking to find her, who was yet wandering afar. A homeless, almost friendless old man was he, whose life had gone amiss, and whose sole ambition was to do for her and find content in her happiness. A wanderer and recluse for many years, he was still more so now, and out of place as well among the busy haunts of men. More than that, he was an object of curiosity to all grown people and the jest of the young, as he tramped up and down the land in search of Chip.

And what a pitiful quest it was—this asking the same question thousands of times, this lingering in towns to watch mill operatives file out, this peering into stores and marts, to go

on again, and repeat it for months and months.

There was still another link in this chain—a boy, so far as experience goes, who was only deterred from unwise haste by a cool-headed man.

"You had better not go to Chip now," Martin said to him on his return from Peaceful Valley. "She is an odd child of nature, and you won't lose by waiting. My advice to you is to forget her for the present, find some profitable occupation, and then, when you have made a little advancement in life, go and woo her if you can. To try it now is foolish."

It was cold comfort for Ray.

One of Chip's first acts of emancipation was to write to Aunt Comfort and Angie, assuring both of her love and best wishes, and thanking them for all they had done. Both letters were cramped in chirography, but correct in spelling, and in Angie's was a note for Martin, asking that he draw \$100 of her money and send it to her, and as much more to pay some one to follow Old Cy. The latter request Martin ignored, however, for he had already set the machinery of newspaperdom at work, and an advertisement for information of that wanderer was flying far and wide.

Of the money sent her, Chip made odd and quite characteristic uses, only one of which needs mention—the purchase of a banjo. Had Ray known this, and that the tender memory it invoked was the reason for this investment, he would have had less cause for grief. But Ray did not, which was all the better for him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Life, always colorless at Christmas Cove, except in midsummer, now became changed for Aunt Abby. For all the years since her one girlish romance had ended, she had been a patient helpmate to a man she merely respected. Religion had been her chief solace. The annual visit to her sister's gave the only relief to this motionless life, monotonous as the tides sweeping in and out of the cove; but now a counter-current slowly flowed into it.

Chip, of course, with her winsome eyes and grateful ways, was its main-spring, and so checked had been her career and so humiliating all her past experiences, that now, escaped from dependence and feeling herself a valued companion, she tasted a new and joyous life. So true was this, that hard lessons at school, the regularity of church-going, and the unvarying tenor of it all seemed less by comparison.

Another undercurrent, aside from Chip's devotion, also swept into Aunt Abby's feelings,—the strange emotions following the knowledge that her former lover was still alive. For many years she had waited and hoped for this sailor boy's return; then her heart had grown silent, as hope slowly ebbed, and then, almost forgetfulness—but not quite, however, for the long, lily-dotted mill-pond just above had now and then been visited by them. A certain curiously grown oak which was secluded near its upper end was once a trysting-place, and even the old mill with its splashing wheel held memories.

And now after 40 years, during which she had become gray-haired and slightly wrinkled, all these memories returned like ghosts of long ago. No word or hint of them fell from her lips, not even to Chip, who was now nearest to her; and yet had that girl been a mind-reader, she would have seen that Aunt Abby's persistent interest in all she had to tell about Old Cy meant something. Where he was now, how soon he would learn that his brother was still alive after all these years, was the one most pertinent subject oft discussed.

How Chip felt toward him, not alone for the heritage he had secured for her, but for other and more valued heart interests, need not be specified. He had seemed almost a father to her at the lake. He was the first of her new-found friends whose feelings had warmed toward her, and Chip was now mature enough to value these blessings at their true worth.

A certain mutual expectancy now entered the lives of Chip and Aunt Abby. Nothing could be done, however. Old Cy had gone out into the wide, wide world, as it were, searching for the little girl he loved. No manner of reaching him seemed possible; and yet, some day, he must learn what would bring him to them as fast as steam could fetch him.

"I know that he loved me as his own child there at the lake," Chip said once in an exultant tone. "His going after me proves it; and once he hears where I am, he will hurry here, I know."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Interesting Circumstance.

Excavations in Rome being conducted on the Palatine hill have shown a curious and interesting circumstance. The Necropolis has been found to contain remains of the ninth, eighth, sixth and fourth centuries before Christ. All fragments of the seventh and fifth centuries are lacking and archaeologists are engaged in a close study of the field in order to find the reason.

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