CLASSICS TO GO

LISTER'S GREAT ADVENTURE

HAROLD BINDLOSS

Lister's Great Adventure

Harold Bindloss

PART I—BARBARA'S REBELLION

CHAPTER I

CARTWRIGHT MEDDLES

Dinner was over, and Cartwright occupied a chair on the lawn in front of the Canadian summer hotel. Automatic sprinklers threw sparkling showers across the rough, parched grass, the lake shimmered, smooth as oil, in the sunset, and a sweet, resinous smell drifted from the pines that rolled down to the water's edge. The straight trunks stood out against a background of luminous red and green, and here and there a slanting beam touched a branch with fire.

Natural beauty had not much charm for Cartwright, who was satisfied to loaf and enjoy the cool of the evening. He had, as usual, dined well, his cigar was good, and he meant to give Mrs. Cartwright half an hour. Clara expected this, and, although he was sometimes bored, he indulged her when he could. Besides, it was too soon for cards. The lights had not begun to spring up in the wooden hotel, and for the most part the guests were boating on the lake. When he had finished his cigar it would be time to join the party in the smoking-room. Cartwright was something of a gambler and liked the American games. They gave one scope for bluffing, and although his antagonists declared his luck was good, he knew his nerve was better. In fact, since he lost his money by a reckless plunge, he had to some extent lived by bluff. Yet some people trusted Tom Cartwright.

Mrs. Cartwright did so. She was a large, dull woman, but had kept a touch of the beauty that had marked her when she was young. She was kind, conventional, and generally

anxious to take the proper line. Cartwright was twelve years older, and since she was a widow and had three children when she married him, her friends declared her money accounted for much, and a lawyer relation carefully guarded, against Cartwright's using her fortune.

Yet, in a sense, Cartwright was not an adventurer, although his ventures in finance and shipping were numerous. He sprang from an old Liverpool family whose prosperity diminished when steamers replaced sailing ships. His father had waited long before he resigned himself to the change, but was not altogether too late, and Cartwright was now managing owner of the Independent Freighters Line. The company's business had brought him to Montreal, and when it was transacted he had taken Mrs. Cartwright and her family to the hotel by the Ontario lake.

Cartwright's hair and mustache were white; his face was fleshy and red. He was fastidious about his clothes, and his tailor cleverly hid the bulkiness of his figure. As a rule, his look was fierce and commanding, but now and then his small keen eyes twinkled. Although Cartwright was clever, he was, in some respects, primitive. He had long indulged his appetites, and wore the stamp of what is sometimes called good living.

The managing owner of the Independent Freighters needed cleverness, since the company was small and often embarrassed for money. For the most part, it ran its ships in opposition to the regular liners. When the *Conference* forced up freights Cartwright quietly canvassed the merchants and offered to carry their goods at something under the standard rate, if the shippers would engage to fill up his boat. As a rule, secrecy was important, but sometimes, when cargo was scarce, Cartwright let his plans be known and allowed the *Conference* to buy him off. Although his skill

in the delicate negotiations was marked, the company paid small dividends and he had enemies among the shareholders. Now, however, he was satisfied. *Oreana* had sailed for Montreal, loaded to the limit the law allowed, and he had booked her return cargo before the *Conference* knew he was cutting rates.

Mrs. Cartwright talked, but she talked much and Cartwright hardly listened, and looked across the lake. A canoe drifted out from behind a neighboring point, and its varnished side shone in the fading light. Then a man dipped the paddle, and the ripple at the bow got longer and broke the reflections of the pines. A girl, sitting at the stern, put her hands in the water, and when she flung the sparkling drops at her companion her laugh came across the lake. Cartwright's look got keen and he began to note his wife's remarks.

"Do you imply Barbara's getting fond of the fellow?" he asked.

"I am afraid of something like that," Mrs. Cartwright admitted. "In a way, one hesitates to meddle; sometimes meddling does harm, and, of course, if Barbara really loved the young man—" She paused and gave Cartwright a sentimental smile. "After all, I married for love, and a number of my friends did not approve."

Cartwright grunted. He had married Clara because she was rich, but it was something to his credit that she had not suspected this. Clara was dull, and her dullness often amused him.

"If you think it necessary, I won't hesitate about meddling," he remarked. "Shillito's a beggarly sawmill clerk."

"He said he was *treasurer* for an important lumber company. Barbara's very young and romantic, and although she has not known him long—"

"She has known him for about two weeks," Cartwright rejoined. "Perhaps it's long enough. Shillito's what Canadians call a looker and Barbara's a romantic fool. I've no doubt he's found out she'll inherit some money; it's possible she's told him. Now I come to think about it, she was off somewhere all the afternoon, and it looks as if she had promised the fellow the evening."

He indicated the canoe and was satisfied when Mrs. Cartwright agreed, since he refused to wear spectacles and own his sight was going. Although Clara was generous, he could not use her money, and, indeed, did not mean to do so, but he was extravagant and his managing owner's post was not secure. When one had powerful antagonists, one did not admit that one was getting old.

"I doubt if Shillito's character is all one could wish,'" Mrs. Cartwright resumed. "Character's very important, don't you think? Mrs. Grant—the woman with the big hat—knows something about him and she said he was *fierce*. I think she meant he was wild. Then she hinted he spent money he ought not to spend. But isn't a treasurer's pay good?"

Cartwright smiled, for he was patient to his wife. "It depends upon the company. A treasurer is sometimes a book-keeping clerk. However, the trouble is, Barbara's as wild as a hawk, though I don't know where she got her wildness. Her brother and sister are tame enough."

"Sometimes I'm bothered about Barbara," Mrs. Cartwright agreed. "She's rash and obstinate; not like the others. I

don't know if they're tame, but they had never given me much anxiety. One can trust them to do all they ought."

Cartwright said nothing. As a rule, Clara's son and elder daughter annoyed him. Mortimer Hyslop was a calculating prig; Grace was finicking and bound by ridiculous rules. She was pale and inanimate; there was no blood in her. But Cartwright was fond of the younger girl. Barbara was frankly flesh and blood; he liked her flashes of temper and her pluck.

When the canoe came to the landing he got up. "Leave the thing to me," he said. "I'll talk to Shillito."

He went off, but when he reached the steps to the veranda in front of the hotel he stopped. His gout bothered him. At the top Mortimer Hyslop was smoking a cigarette. The young man was thin and looked bored; his summer clothes were a study in harmonious colors, and he had delicate hands like a woman's. When he saw Cartwright stop he asked: "Can I help you up, sir?"

Cartwright's face got red. He hated an offer of help that drew attention to his infirmity, and thought Mortimer knew.

"No, thanks! I'm not a cripple yet. Have you seen Shillito?"

"You'll probably find him in the smoking room. The card party has gone in and he's a gambler."

"So am I!"

Mortimer shrugged, and Cartwright wondered whether the fellow meant to imply that his gambling was not important since he had married a rich wife. The young man, however, hesitated and looked thoughtful.

"I don't know your object for wanting Shillito, but if my supposition's near the mark, might I state that I approve? In fact, I'd begun to wonder whether something ought not to be done. The fellow's plausible. Not our sort, of course; but when a girl's romantic and obstinate—"

Cartwright stopped him. "Exactly! Well, I'm the head of the house and imagine you can leave the thing to me. Perhaps it doesn't matter if your sister is obstinate. I'm going to talk to Shillito."

He crossed the veranda, and Mortimer returned to his chair and cigarette. He did not approve his step-father, but admitted that Cartwright could be trusted to handle a matter like this. Mortimer's fastidiousness was sometimes a handicap, but Cartwright had none.

Cartwright entered the smoking-room and crossed the floor to a table, at which two or three men stood as if waiting for somebody. One was young and tall. His thin face was finely molded, his eyes and hair were very black, and his figure was marked by an agile grace.

He looked up sharply as Cartwright advanced.

"I want you for a few minutes," Cartwright said roughly, as if he gave an order.

Shillito frowned, but went with him to the back veranda. Although the night was warm and an electric light burned under the roof, nobody was about. Cartwright signed the other to sit down.

"I expect your holiday's nearly up, and the hotel car meets the train in the morning," he remarked.

"What about it?" Shillito asked. "I'm not going yet."

"You're going to-morrow," said Cartwright grimly.

Shillito smiled and gave him an insolent look, but his smile vanished. Cartwright's white mustache bristled, his face was red, and his eyes were very steady. It was not for nothing the old ship-owner had fronted disappointed investors and forced his will on shareholders' meetings. Shillito saw the fellow was dangerous.

"I'll call you," he said, using a gambler's phrase.

"Very well," said Cartwright. "I think my cards are good, and if I can't win on one suit, I'll try another. To begin with, the hotel proprietor sent for me. He stated the house was new and beginning to pay, and he was anxious about its character. People must be amused, but he was running a summer hotel, not a gambling den. The play was too high, and young fools got into trouble; two or three days since one got broke. Well, he wanted me to use my influence, and I said I would."

"He asked you to keep the stakes in bounds? It's a good joke!"

"Not at all," said Cartwright dryly. "I like an exciting game, so long as it is straight, and when I lose I pay. I do lose, and if I come out fifty dollars ahead when I leave, I'll be satisfied. How much have you cleared?"

Shillito said nothing, and Cartwright went on: "My antagonists are old card-players who know the game; but when you broke Forman he was drunk and the other two were not quite sober. You play against young fools and *your luck's too good*. If you force me to tell all I think and something that I know. I imagine you'll get a straight hint to quit."

"You talked about another plan," Shillito remarked.

"On the whole, I think the plan I've indicated will work. If it does not and you speak to any member of Mrs. Cartwright's family, I'll thrash you on the veranda when people are about. I won't state my grounds for doing so; they ought to be obvious."

Shillito looked at the other hand. Cartwright's eyes were bloodshot, his face was going purple, and he thrust out his heavy chin. Shillito thought he meant all he said, and his threat carried weight. The old fellow was, of course, not a match for the vigorous young man, but Shillito saw he had the power to do him an injury that was not altogether physical. He pondered for a few moments, and then got up.

"I'll pull out," he said with a coolness that cost him much.

Cartwright nodded. "There's another thing. If you write to Miss Hyslop, your letters will be burned."

He went back to the smoking-room, and playing with his usual boldness, won twenty dollars. Then he joined Mrs. Cartwright on the front veranda and remarked: "Shillito won't bother us. He goes in the morning."

Mrs. Cartwright gave him a grateful smile. She had long known that when she asked her husband's help difficulties were removed. Now he had removed Shillito, and she was satisfied but imagined he was not. Cartwright knitted his white brows and drew hard at his cigar.

"You had better watch Barbara until the fellow starts," he resumed. "Then I think you and the girls might join the Vernons at their fishing camp. Vernon would like it, and he's a useful friend; besides, it's possible Shillito's obstinate. Your letters needn't follow you; have them sent to me at

Montreal, which will cover your tracks. I must go back in a few days."

Mrs. Cartwright weighed the suggestion. Vernon was a Winnipeg merchant, and his wife had urged her to join the party at the fishing camp in the woods. The journey was long, but Mrs. Cartwright rather liked the plan. Shillito would not find them, and Mrs. Vernon had two sons.

"Can't you come with us?" she asked. "Mortimer is going to Detroit."

"Sorry I can't," said Cartwright firmly. "I don't want to leave you, but business calls."

He was relieved when Mrs. Cartwright let it go. Clara was a good sort and seldom argued. He had loafed about with her family for two weeks and had had enough. Moreover, business did call. If the *Conference* found out before his boat arrived that he had engaged *Oreana's* return load, they might see the shippers and make trouble. Anyhow, they would use some effort to get the cargo for their boats. Sometimes one promised regular customers a drawback on standard rates.

"I'll write to Mrs. Vernon in the morning," Mrs. Cartwright remarked.

"Telegraph" said Cartwright, who did not lose time when he had made a plan. "When the lines are not engaged after business hours, you can send a night-letter; a long message at less than the proper charge."

Mrs. Cartwright looked pleased. Although she was rich and sometimes generous, she liked small economies.

"After all, writing a letter's tiresome," she said. "Telegrams are easy. Will you get me a form?"

CHAPTER II

IN THE DARK

In the morning Cartwright told the porter to take his chair to the beach and sat down in a shady spot. He had not seen Barbara at breakfast and was rather sorry for her, but she had not known Shillito long, and although she might be angry for a time, her hurt could not be deep. Lighting his pipe, he watched the path that led between the pines to the water.

By and by a girl came out of the shadow, and going to the small landing-stage, looked at her wrist-watch. Cartwright imagined she did not see him and studied her with some amusement. Barbara looked impatient. People did not often keep her waiting, and she had not inherited her mother's placidity. She had a touch of youthful beauty, and although she was impulsive and rather raw, Cartwright thought her charm would be marked when she met the proper people and, so to speak, got toned down.

Cartwright meant her to meet the proper people, because he was fond of Barbara. She had grace, and although her figure was slender and girlish, she carried herself well. Her brown eyes were steady, her small mouth was firm, and as a rule her color was delicate white and pink. Now it was high, and Cartwright knew she was angry. She wore boating clothes and had obviously meant to go on the lake. The trouble was, her companion had not arrived.

"Hallo!" said Cartwright. "Are you waiting for somebody?"

Barbara advanced and sat down on a rocky ledge.

"No," she said, "I'm not waiting *now*."

Cartwright smiled. He knew Barbara's temper, and his line was to keep her resentment warm.

"You mean, you have given him up and won't go if he does arrive? Well, when a young man doesn't keep his appointment, it's the proper plan."

She blushed, but tried to smile. "I don't know if you're clever or not just now, although you sometimes do see things the others miss. I really was a little annoyed."

"I've lived a long time," said Cartwright. "However, perhaps it's important I haven't forgotten I was young. I think your brother and sister never were very young. They were soberer than me when I knew them first."

"Mortimer *is* a stick," Barbara agreed. "He and Grace have a calm superiority that makes one savage now and then. I like human people, who sometimes let themselves go—"

She stopped, and Cartwright noted her wandering glance that searched the beach and the path to the hotel. He knew whom she expected, and thought it would give her some satisfaction to quarrel with the fellow. Cartwright did not mean to soothe her.

"Mr. Shillito ought to have sent his apologies when he found he could not come," he said.

Barbara's glance got fixed, and Cartwright knew he had blundered.

"Oh!" she said, "now I begin to see! Mother kept me by her all the evening; but mother's not very clever and Mortimer's too fastidious to meddle, unless he gets a dignified part. Of course, the plot was yours!"

Cartwright nodded. Sometimes he used tact, but he was sometimes brutally frank.

"You had better try to console yourself with the Wheeler boys; they're straight young fellows. Shillito is gone. He went by the car this morning and it's unlikely he'll come back."

"You sent him off?" said Barbara, and her eyes sparkled. "Well, I'm not a child and you're not my father really. Why did you meddle?"

"For one thing, he's not your sort. Then I'm a meddlesome old fellow and rather fond of you. To see you entangled by a man like Shillito would hurt. Let him go. If you want to try your powers, you'll find a number of honest young fellows on whom you can experiment. The boys one meets in this country are a pretty good sample."

"There's a rude vein in you," Barbara declared. "One sees it sometimes, although you're sometimes kind. Anyhow, I won't be bullied and controlled; I'm not a shareholder in the Cartwright line. I don't know if it's important, but why don't you like Mr. Shillito?"

Cartwright's eyes twinkled. In a sense, he could justify his getting rid of Shillito, but he knew Barbara and doubted if she could be persuaded. Still she was not a fool, and he would give her something to think about.

"It's possible my views are not important," he agreed. "All the same, when I told the man he had better go he saw the

force of my arguments. He went, and I think his going is significant. Since I'd sooner not quarrel, I'll leave you to weigh this."

He went off, but Barbara stopped and brooded. She was angry and humiliated, but perhaps the worst was she had a vague notion Cartwright might be justified. It was very strange Shillito had gone. All the same, she did not mean to submit. Her mother's placid conventionality had long irritated her; one got tired of galling rules and criticism. She was not going to be molded into a calculating prude like Grace, or a prig like Mortimer. They did not know the ridiculous good-form they cultivated was out of date. In fact, she had had enough and meant to rebel.

Then she began to think about Shillito. His carelessness was strangely intriguing; he stood for adventure and all the romance she had known. Besides, he was a handsome fellow; she liked his reckless twinkle and his coolness where coolness was needed. For all that, she would not acknowledge him her lover; Barbara did not know if she really wanted a lover yet. She imagined Cartwright had got near the mark when he said she wanted to try her power. Cartwright was keen, although Barbara sensed something in him that was fierce and primitive.

Perhaps nobody else could have bullied Shillito; Mortimer certainly could not, but Barbara refused to speculate about the means Cartwright had used.

Shillito ought not to have gone without seeing her; this was where it hurt. She was entitled to be angry—and then she started, for a page boy came quietly out of the shade.

"A note, miss," he said with a grin. "I was to give it you when nobody was around."

Barbara's heart beat, but she gave the boy a quarter and opened the envelope. The note was short and not romantic. Shillito stated he had grounds for imagining it might not reach her, but if it did, he begged she would give him her address when she left the hotel. He told her where to write, and added if she could find a way to get his letters he had much to say.

His coolness annoyed Barbara, but he had excited her curiosity and she was intrigued. Moreover, Cartwright had tried to meddle and she wanted to feel she was cleverer than he. Then Shillito was entitled to defend himself, and to find the way he talked about would not be difficult. Barbara knitted her brows and began to think.

At lunch Mrs. Cartwright told her they were going to join the Vernons in the woods and she acquiesced. Two or three days afterwards they started, and at the station she gave Cartwright her hand with a smiling glance, but Cartwright knew his step-daughter and was not altogether satisfied. Barbara did not sulk; when one tried to baffle her she fought.

The Vernons' camp was like others Winnipeg people pitch in the lonely woods that roll west from Fort William to the plains. It is a rugged country pierced by angry rivers and dotted by lakes, but a gasolene launch brought up supplies, the tents were large and double-roofed, and for a few weeks one could play at pioneering without its hardships. The Vernons were hospitable, the young men and women given to healthy sport, and Mrs. Cartwright, watching Barbara fish and paddle on the lake, banished her doubts. For herself she did not miss much; the people were nice, and the cooking was really good.

When two weeks had gone, Grace and Barbara sat one evening among the stones by a lake. The evening was calm, the sun was setting, and the shadow of the pines stretched across the tranquil water. Now and then the reflections trembled and a languid ripple broke against the driftwood on the beach. In the distance a loon called, but when its wild cry died away all was very quiet.

Grace looked across the lake and frowned. She was a tall girl, and although she had walked for some distance in the woods, her clothes were hardly crumpled. Her face was finely molded, but rather colorless; her hands were very white, while Barbara's were brown. Her dress and voice indicated cultivated taste; but the taste was negative, as if Grace had banished carefully all that jarred and then had stopped. It was characteristic that she was tranquil, although she had grounds for disturbance. They were some distance from camp and it would soon be dark, but nothing broke the gleaming surface of the lake. The boat that ought to have met them had not arrived.

"I suppose this is the spot where Harry Vernon agreed to land and take us on board?" she said.

"It's like the spot. I understand we must watch out for a point opposite an island with big trees."

"Watch out?" Grace remarked.

"Watch out is good Canadian," Barbara rejoined. "I'm studying the language and find it expressive and plain. When our new friends talk you know what they mean. Besides, I'd better learn their idioms, because I might stop in Canada if somebody urged me."

Grace gave her a quiet look. Barbara meant to annoy her, or perhaps did not want to admit she had mistaken the spot.

Now Grace came to think about it, the plan that the young men should meet them and paddle them down the lake was Barbara's.

"I don't see why we didn't go with Harry and the other, as he suggested," she said.

"Then, you're rather dull. They didn't really want us; they wanted to fish. To know when people might be bored is useful."

"But there are a number of bays and islands. They may go somewhere else," Grace insisted.

"Oh well, it ought to amuse Harry and Winter to look for us, and if they're annoyed, they deserve some punishment. If they had urged us very much to go, I would have gone. Anyhow, you needn't bother. There's a short way back to camp by the old loggers' trail."

Grace said nothing. She thought Barbara's carelessness was forced; Barbara was sometimes moody. Perhaps she felt Shillito's going more than she was willing to own. For all that, the fellow was gone, and Barbara would, no doubt, presently be consoled.

"If mother could see things!" Barbara resumed. "Sometimes one feels one wants a guide, but all one gets is a ridiculous platitude from her old-fashioned code. One has puzzles one can't solve by out-of-date rules. However, since she doesn't see, there's no use in bothering."

"I'm your elder sister, but you don't give me your confidence."

Barbara's mood changed and her laugh was touched by scorn. "You are worse than mother. She's kind, but can't see;

you don't want to see. I'd sooner trust my step-father. He's a very human old ruffian. I wish I had a real girl friend, but you tactfully freeze off all the girls I like. It's strange how many people there are whom virtuous folks don't approve."

Grace missed the note of appeal in her sister's bitterness. She did not see the girl as disturbed by doubts and looked in perplexity for a guiding light. Afterwards, when understanding was too late, Grace partly understood.

"Mr. Cartwright is not a ruffian." she said coldly.

"I suppose you're taking the proper line, and you'd be rather noble, only you're not sincere. You don't like Cartwright and know he doesn't like you. All the same, it's not important. We were talking about getting home, and since the boys have not come for us we had better start."

The loon had flown away and nothing broke the surface of the lake; the shadows had got longer and driven back the light. Thin mist drifted about the islands, the green glow behind the trunks was fading, and it would soon be dark.

"In winter, the big timber wolves prowl about the woods," Barbara remarked. "Horrible, savage brutes! I expect you saw the heads at the packer's house. Still, one understands they stay North until the frost begins."

She got up, and when they set off Grace looked regretfully across the lake, for she would sooner have gone home on board the fishing bateau. She was puzzled. The bays on the lake were numerous, and islands dotted the winding reaches, but it was strange the young men had gone to the wrong spot. They knew the lake and had told Barbara where to meet them. In the meantime, however, the important thing was to get home.

Darkness crept across the woods, and as she stumbled along the uneven trail Grace got disturbed. She felt the daunting loneliness, the quiet jarred her nerve. The pines looked ghostly in the gloom. They were ragged and strangely stiff, it looked as if their branches never moved, and the dark gaps between the trunks were somehow forbidding.

Grace did not like Canada. Her cultivation was artificial, but Canada was primitive and stern. In the towns, one found inventions that lightened labor, and brought to the reach of all a physical comfort that in England only the rich enjoyed, but the contrasts were sharp. One left one's hotel, with its very modern furniture, noisy elevators and telephones, and plunged into the wilderness where all was as it had been from the beginning. Grace shrank from primitive rudeness and hated adventure. Living by rule she distrusted all she did not know. She thought it strange that Barbara, who feared nothing, let her go in front.

They came to a pool. All round, the black tops of the pines cut the sky; the water was dark and sullen in the gloom. The trail followed its edge and when a loon's wild cry rang across the woods Grace stopped. She knew the cry of the lonely bird that haunts the Canadian wilds, but it had a strange note, like mocking laughter. Grace disliked the loon when its voice first disturbed her sleep at the fishing camp; she hated it afterwards.

"Go on!" said Barbara sharply.

For a moment or two Grace stood still. She did not want to stop, but something in Barbara's voice indicated strain. If Barbara were startled, it was strange. Then, not far off, a branch cracked and the pine-spray rustled as if they were gently pushed aside.

"Oh!" Grace cried, "something is creeping through the bush!"

"Then don't stop," said Barbara. "Perhaps it's a wolf!"

Grace clutched her dress and ran. At first, she thought she heard Barbara behind, but she owned she had not her sister's pluck and fear gave her speed. She must get as far as possible from the pool before she stopped. Besides, she imagined something broke through the undergrowth near the trail, but her heart beat and she could not hear properly.

At length her breath got labored and she was forced to stop. All was quiet and the quiet was daunting. Barbara was not about and when Grace called did not reply. Grace tried to brace herself. Perhaps she ought to go back, but she could not; she shrank from the terror that haunted the dark. Then she began to argue that to go back was illogical. If Barbara had lost her way, she could not help. It was better to push on to the camp and send men who knew the woods to look for her sister. She set off, and presently saw with keen relief the light of a fire reflected on calm water.

CHAPTER III

BARBARA VANISHES

Grace's arrival was greeted by a shout, and when she stopped in front of the dining-tent a group of curious people surrounded her. The double roof of the big tent was extended horizontally, and a lamp hanging from a pole gave a brilliant light. Grace would sooner the light had been dim, for she was hot and her clothes were torn and wet with dew. Besides, she must tell her tale and admit that she had not played a heroic part.

"Where's Barbara?" Mrs. Cartwright asked.

"I don't know. Harry Vernon did not meet us and we started home by the loggers' trail. I lost Barbara by the pool. Something in the bush tried to creep up to us; a wolf, I think —"

"Oh, shucks!" remarked a frank Winnipeg girl who did not like Miss Hyslop. "In summer, you can't find a wolf south of Broken Range. Looks as if you were scared for nothing, but I can't see why Barbara didn't beat you at hitting up the pace."

Others asked questions, and when Grace got breath she tried to satisfy their curiosity. Some of the group looked thoughtful and Mrs. Vernon said:

"Nothing can have hurt Barbara, and if she has lost her way, she cannot wander far, because she must be in the loop between the river and the lake. But Harry did go to meet

you, and when he found you had not come back went off again with Bob. I expect they'll soon arrive with Barbara."

They waited for half-an-hour, and then, when the splash of paddles stole out of the dark, ran down to the beach. Presently a double-ended bateau crossed the beam of light and grounded. A young man helped Barbara out and gave her his arm.

"You mustn't bother, Harry. I can walk all right," she said.

"Get hold," said Vernon. "You're not going to walk. If you're obstinate, I'll carry you."

Barbara leaned upon his arm, but her color was high and her look strained when he helped her across the stones. Harry Vernon was a tall, thin, wiry Canadian, with a quiet face. When he got to the tent he opened the curtain, and beckoning Mrs. Cartwright, pushed Barbara inside.

"You'll give her some supper, ma'am, and I'll chase the others off," he said. "The little girl's tired and mustn't be disturbed."

Barbara gave him a grateful look and the blood came to his sunburned skin.

"I am a little tired," she declared, and added, too quietly for Mrs. Cartwright to hear: "You're a white man."

Vernon pulled the curtain across, and joining the others, lighted a cigarette.

"The girls stopped at False Point, two miles short of the spot we fixed," he said. "I reckon Bob's directions were not plain enough. Since we didn't come along, they started back by the loggers' trail, while we went to look for them by the

other track. At the pool, they thought they heard a wolf. That's so, Miss Hyslop?"

"Yes," said Grace. "I ran away and thought I heard Barbara following. But what happened afterwards?"

"She fell. Hurt her foot, had to stop, and then couldn't make good time. We found her limping along, and shoved through the bush for the river, so she needn't walk. Well, I think that's all."

It was plausible, but Grace was not altogether satisfied. Moreover, she imagined Vernon was not, and noted that Mrs. Vernon gave him a thoughtful glance. All the same, there was nothing to be said, and she went to her tent.

At daybreak Vernon left the camp, and when he reached the pool walked round its edge and then sat down and lighted his pipe. A few yards in front, a number of faint marks were printed on a belt of sand. By and by he heard steps, and frowned when Winter came out from an opening in the row of trunks. They were friends, and Bob was a very good sort, but Vernon would sooner he had stopped away.

"Hallo!" he said. "Why have you come along?"

"I lost my hunting-knife," Winter replied. "It was hooked to my belt and I thought the clip let go when we helped Miss Hyslop over the big log. A bully knife; I wanted to find the thing." He paused and smiled when he resumed: "I reckon you pulled out of camp to meditate?"

Vernon hesitated. Had Winter stopped a few yards off, he would have begun some banter and drawn him away from the pool. Bob was a woodsman and his eyes were keen. The sun was, however, rising behind the pines and a beam of

light touched the sand. There was no use in trying to hide the marks. In fact, Vernon imagined Bob had seen them.

"No," he said. "I thought I'd try to trail the wolf Miss Hyslop talked about."

"Looks as if you'd found some tracks," Winter remarked. "Well, they're not a wolf's." He sat down opposite Vernon. "A man's! I saw another at a soft spot. He followed the girls from the lake and stopped for some time. I allow I reckoned on something like that."

Vernon made an experiment. "Might have been a packer going to a logging camp, or perhaps an Indian."

"Shucks!" said Winter, although he gave Vernon a sympathetic smile. "There are no Indians about the lake and packers' boots don't make marks like those. A city boot and a city man! A fellow who's wise to the bush lifts his feet. Anyhow, I reckon he doesn't belong to your crowd."

"A sure thing!" Vernon agreed. "I can fix where all the boys were. Besides, if somebody in our lot had wanted to talk to Miss Hyslop, he wouldn't have hung around in the woods. My mother's pretty fastidious about her guests. Well, I'll own up the thing bothers me."

Winter nodded. Harry was frank and honest, and Bob imagined he had felt Barbara Hyslop's charm. He was sorry for Harry. The thing was awkward.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked.

"To begin with, I'm going to hide these tracks. After all, I don't see much light. I suppose I ought to tell my mother and put Mrs. Cartwright wise; but I won't. Spying on a girl and telling is mean. All the same, I'm surely bothered. In a

sense, my mother's accountable for her guests and the girl's nice. I'd like it if I could talk to the man."

"Nothing doing there; he'll watch out. Well, we'll hide up his tracks and look for my knife. D'you think Grace Hyslop knew the job was put up?"

"I don't," said Vernon dryly. "I reckon she was puzzled, but that's all. You couldn't persuade Miss Hyslop her sister liked adventures in the dark. Anyhow, the thing's done with. We have got to let it go."

They went off and Winter pondered. Harry had got something of a knock. Perhaps he was taking the proper line; anyhow, it was the line Harry would take, but Bob doubted. The girl was very young and the man who met her in the dark was obviously a wastrel.

When they returned for breakfast Barbara had joined the others and wore soft Indian moccasins. Bob looked at Harry and understood his frown. Harry had played up when he helped her home, but he, no doubt, thought the game ought to stop. Bob wondered whether Barbara knew, because she turned her head when Harry advanced.

After breakfast, Mrs. Vernon, carrying a small bottle, joined Mrs. Cartwright's party under the pines outside the tent. The dew was drying and the water shone like a mirror, but it was cool in the shade. Barbara occupied a camp-chair and rested her foot on a stone, Mrs. Cartwright knitted, and Grace studied a philosophical book. Her rule was to cultivate her mind for a fixed time every day. Harry Vernon strolled up to the group and Mrs. Cartwright put down her knitting.

"You're kind, but the child's obstinate and won't let me see her foot," she said to Mrs. Vernon.

"It's comfortable now," Barbara remarked. "When something that hurt you stops hurting I think it's better to leave it alone. Besides, one doesn't want to bother people."

"You won't bother me, and I'll fix your foot in two or three minutes so it won't hurt again," Mrs. Vernon declared. "The elixir's famous and I haven't known it to miss. I always carry some when we camp in the woods." She turned to her son. "Tell Barbara how soon I cured you when you hurt your arm."

"You want to burn Miss Hyslop with the elixir?"

"It doesn't burn much. You said you hardly felt it, and soon after I rubbed your arm the pain was gone."

Harry glanced at Barbara and saw she was embarrassed, although her mouth was firm. Since she did not mean to let Mrs. Vernon examine her supposititious injury, his business was to help, and he laughed.

"Miss Hyslop's skin is not like my tough hide. You certainly fixed my arm, but it was a drastic cure, and I think Miss Hyslop ought to refuse. I try to indulge you, like a dutiful son, but you are not her mother."

"I am her mother and she will not indulge me," Mrs. Cartwright remarked with languid grievance, and Barbara gave Harry a quick, searching glance. His face was inscrutable, but she wondered how much he knew. She felt shabby and ashamed.

When Mrs. Vernon went off with the elixir, Harry sat down.

"If you could bring Mr. Cartwright out, I might persuade my father to come along," he said. "The old man likes Cartwright; declares he's a sport."