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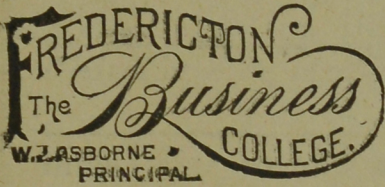
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"Fly Upward"

Illustrations by Elsworth Young

"You are going to give them to me?"

"I am," said Kirkby.

"But why?"

"I want you to know the hull story."

"But why, again?"

"I rather guess them letters'll tell," answered the old man evasively, "and I like you, and I don't want to see you throwed away."

"What do you mean?" asked the girl curiously, thrilling to the solemnity of the moment, the seriousness, the kind affection of the old frontiersman, the weird scene, the fire light, the tents gleaming ghostlike, the black wall of the canon and the tops of the mountain range broadening out beneath the stars in the clear sky where they twinkled above her head, the strange and terrible story, and now the letters in her hand, which somehow seemed to be imbued with human feeling. Kirkby patted her on the shoulder.

"Read the letters," he said; "they'll tell the story. Good night."

CHAPTER IV.

The Pool and the Water Sprites.

Long after the others in the camp had sunk into the profound slumber of weary bodies and good consciences, a solitary candle in the small tent occupied by Enid Maitland alone gave evidence that she was busy over the letters which Kirkby had handed to her.

It was a very thoughtful girl indeed who confronted the old frontiersman the next morning. At the first convenient opportunity when they were alone together she handed him the packet of letters.

"Have you read 'em?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Wall, you keep 'em," said the old man gravely. "Mebbe you'll want to read 'em agin."

"But I don't understand why you want me to have them."

"Wall, I'm not quite sure myself why, but leastways I do an'—"

"I shall be very glad to keep them," said the girl still more gravely, slipping them into one of the pockets of her hunting shirt as she spoke.

The packet was not bulky, the letters were not many nor were they of any great length. She could easily carry them on her person and in some strange and unexplainable way she was rather glad to have them.

She could not, as she had said, see any personal application to herself in them, and yet in some way she did feel that the solution of the mystery would be hers some day. Especially did she think this on account of the strange but quiet open emphasis of the old hunter.

There was much to do about the camp in the morning. Horses and burros to be looked after, fire wood to be cut, plans for the day arranged, excursions laid out, mountain climbs projected. Later on unwonted hands must be taught to cast the fly for the mountain trout which filled the brook and pool, and all the varied duties, details and fascinating possibilities of camp life must be explained to the newcomers.

The first few days were days of learning and preparation, days of mishap and misadventure, of joyous laughter over blunders in getting settled, or learning the mysteries of rod and line, or becoming hardened and acclimated. The weather proved perfect; it was late October and the nights were very cold, but there was no rain and the bright sunny days were invigorating and exhilarating to the last degree. They had huge fires and plenty of blankets and the colder it was in the night the better they slept.

It was an intensely new experience for the girl from Philadelphia, but she showed a marked interest and adaptability, and entered with the keenest zest into all the opportunities of the charming days. She was a good sports-woman and she soon learned to throw a fly with the best of them. Old Kirkby took her under his especial protection and as he was one of the best rods in the mountains, she had every advantage.

She had always lived in the midst of life. Except in the privacy of her own chamber she had rarely ever been alone before—not twenty feet from a man, she thought whimsically, but here the charm of solitude attracted her, she liked to take her rod and wander off alone. She actually enjoyed it.

The main stream that flowed down the canon was fed by many affluents from the mountain sides, and in each of them voracious trout appeared. She explored them as she had opportunity, sometimes with the others, but more often by herself. She discovered charming and exquisite nooks, little stretches of grass, the size perhaps of a small room, flower decked, ferny bordered, overshadowed by tall giant pine trees, the sunlight filtering through their thin foliage, checking the verdant carpet beneath. Huge moss covered boulders, wet with the everdashing spray of the roaring brooks, lay in midstream and with

other natural stepping stones hardly invited her to cross to either shore. Waterfalls laughed musically in her ears, deep still pools tempted her skill and address.

Sometimes leaving rod and basket by the waterside, she climbed some particularly steep acclivity of the canon wall and stood poised, wind blown, a nymph of the woods, upon some pinnacle of rock rising needle-like at the canon's edge above the sea of verdure which the wind waved to and fro beneath her feet. There in the bright light, with the breeze blowing her golden hair, she looked like some Norse goddess, blue eyed, exhilarated, triumphant.

She was a perfectly formed woman on the ancient noble lines of Milo rather than the degenerate softness of Medici. She grew stronger of limb and fuller of breath, quicker and steadier of eye and hand, cooler of nerve, in these demanding, compelling adventures among the rocks in this mountain air. She was not a tall woman, indeed slightly under rather than over the medium size, but she was so perfectly proportioned, she carried herself with the fearlessness of a young chamois, that she looked taller than she was. There was not an ounce of superfluous flesh upon her, yet she had the grace of Hebe, the strength of Pallas Athene, and the swiftness of motion of Atalanta. Had she but carried bow and spear, had she worn tunic and sandals, she might have stood for Diana and she would have had no cause to blush by comparison with the finest model of Praxiteles' chisel or the most splendid and glowing example of Apelles' brush.

Uncle Robert was delighted with her; his contribution to her western outfit was a small Winchester. She displayed astonishing aptitude under his instructions and soon became wonderfully proficient with that deadly weapon and with a revolver also. There was little danger to be apprehended in the daytime among the mountains, the more experienced men thought, still it was wise for the girl always to have a weapon in readiness, so in her journeyings, either the Winchester was slung from her shoulder or carried in her hand, or else the Colt dangled at her hip. At first she took both, but finally it was with reluctance that she could be persuaded to take either. Nothing had ever happened. Save for a few birds now and then she had seemed the only tenant of the wilderness of her choice.

One night after a camping experience of nearly two weeks in the mountains and just before the time for breaking up and going back to civilization, she announced that early the next morning she was going down the canon for a day's fishing excursion.

None of the party had ever followed the little river very far, but it was known that some ten miles below the stream merged in a lovely gem-like lake in a sort of crater in the mountains. From thence by a series of water falls it descended through the foothills to the distant plains beyond. The others had arranged to climb one especially dangerous and ambitious provoking peak which towered above them and which had never before been surmounted so far as they knew. Enid enjoyed mountain climbing. She liked the uplift in feeling that came from going higher and higher till some crest was gained, but on this occasion they urged her to accompany them in vain.

When the fixity of her decision was established she had a number of offers to accompany her, but declined them all, bidding the others go their way. Mrs. Maitland, who was not feeling very well, old Kirkby, who had climbed too many mountains to feel much interest in that game, and Pete the horse wrangler, who had to look after the stock, remained in camp; the others with the exception of Enid started at daybreak for their long ascent. She waited until the sun was about an hour high and then bade good-bye to the three and began the descent of the canon. Traveling light, for she was going far—farther, indeed, than she knew—she left her Winchester at home, but carried her revolver with the fishing tackle and substantial luncheon.

Now the river—a river by courtesy only—and the canon turned sharply back on themselves just beyond the little meadow where the camp was pitched. Past the tents that had been their home for this joyous period the river ran due east for a few hundred feet, after which it curved sharply, doubled back and flowed westward for several miles before it gradually swung around to the east on its proper course again.

It had been Enid's purpose to cut across the hills and strike the river where it turned eastward once more, avoiding the long detour back. In fact, she had declared her intention of doing that to Kirkby and he had given her careful directions so that she should not get lost in the mountain

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