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The Canadian Post.

LINDSAY, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1894.

BREXAM.

CHAPTER I.

Placid, spring-fed Lake Archer with its fair coves and laurel-crowned islands had first been brought to the notice of the traveling public by Ross Barron. He had run across it on one of his solitary sketching-tours through northern New England, and had straightway pitched his tent. The air was cool and delicious, fish and game abundant, charming bits of wild scenery on every side. So day after day was spent along the shores sketching, fishing, or idly gazing at the gorgeous landscape dropping away from the ridges in long, sinking waves until in the distance it smoothed out into a hazy sea of indistinctness. For Lake Archer, disdaining a home at the foot of the mountain, had perched itself on the very summit, and clothed itself round about with soft-tinted forests edged with laurel and holly.

A stranger would scarcely have suspected the existence of a lake until he paused delighted upon its shore. And yet as he grew more familiar with the surroundings he would often be surprised by the magnificent views which certain parts of the lake afforded of the environing country.

The second summer young Barron reappeared with a party of friends, and a club-house was erected. All were delighted with the wild beauty of the place, while their sporting instincts were gratified by the abundance of fish and game.

By and by others became aware of the attractions, and one by one summer cottages sprang up along the shores of the lake.

There were few neighbors. Brexam, fifteen miles away, was the nearest town, but it was almost as isolated and silent as Lake Archer itself. It had no railroad, and the dingy mail-coach came lumbering up to the post-office but once a week. Even its one editor had to alternate office duties with work on his farm in order to keep the pot boiling.

It had not always been so. In war times Brexam had been a thriving town, and although two sets of hands had kept the pulse of the great factory throbbing day and night, out a fraction of the orders could be filled. Ordinarily the cost of transportation to the distant railroad would have been a serious item, but war prices dove ed that and a multitude of other expenses, and still left Reginald Bream ample funds to carry on his plans of improvement. A church and school house were built; improved machinery introduced into the factory; new streets opened, and long rows of tenement houses extended far up the hillside. Work was plenty, wages good, and gradually Main-st. was given over almost exclusively to small tradesmen and shop keepers.

Everything seemed exceedingly prosperous when one day the great head and brain of all was called away. When the body was laid to rest and the will read it was found that his sole legatee was the queer, gray-haired sister who had kept house for him so many years.

She made no friends among the villagers, and the few who had ventured to address her on chance meetings had met with such scant courtesy that they were glad to avoid her in future.

With such a head to the business what could they expect? And during the week the factory remained silent, they gathered about the street corners in earnest consultation.

But one day a strange man took his place in the office as agent, and the bell sent out its summons for the help to resume work. Its cheerful clang brought smiles to many gloomy faces. Their fears had been groundless after all. Still, it was many weeks before they regained even a measure of their old confidence in the future of Brexam.

Several years passed without any noticeable change. Wages were cut down occasionally and the number of hands reduced, but business was dull everywhere, and they had no special reason for complaint. Other factory villages were just the same.

But one day the announcement of the agent that the factory would shut down three days in the week, and if business continued dull, would close altogether, caused them to change their minds. The better class of workmen promptly sought employment elsewhere, and most of the shop-keepers put up their shutters and failed to take them down next morning. Soon the town began to assume a deserted appearance, and whole rows of tenements started drearily into the streets with curtainless windows.

For another year the mill struggled on by fits and starts and then the great panic gave its final death-blow. Rumor said that Miss Brexam had used her private fortune and sold all the family-plate and jewels to pay the last claims.

But one thing was evident—the factory was closed and would probably remain so. Few manufacturers would be venture-some enough to start a business so far from market and without transportation facilities. So the rest of the workmen who cared for work moved away, and Brexam was left to such shiftless persons as preferred to make a scanty living from their gardens, and those who had a little money to live on and were willing to wait for a possible resuscitation of the village.

Now and then advertisements appeared in the city papers offering the property for sale or rent. But no one appeared. There were many mill properties for sale or rent much better situated. So Brexam sank out of the financial world and was apparently forgotten. And finally it had reached the ignominy of a weekly mail.

It was at this time that Ross Barron and his companions first paid it a visit. They were on a hunting trip down the valley and thought it a good time to look over the sleepy town that was so plainly visible from their club room windows. Besides, Ross was curious to know why the tall chimney of the great factory had never shown signs of life. He had never seen even a suspicion of smoke above the dull red column.

An hour was spent in roaming about the well-nigh deserted streets and admiring the evident originality of the plans, and then he proposed a walk through the manufactory. Permission to enter was readily accorded by the watchman in charge, and as they went from one department to another, Ross saw with considerable surprise that the equipment was superior to the majority of city factories. Even his father's model establishment could boast little better.

"It is too bad that such machinery should be allowed to spoil for the want of use," he exclaimed, as they passed from the spinning room to the weaving department.

"Well, what better can you expect when a man buries his capital in an out-of-the-way wilderness like this? You are the only factory man among us, Ross; suppose you persuade the pater to invest some of his surplus in helping you rejuvenate 'Sleepy Hollow!'"

Ross shook his head.

"Joking aside," he said, slowly, "I rather like the old town. It has a magnificent water-power, and if some enterprising railroad would extend an arm up this way, I would ask no better place for making a start. The mountain air and landscape are enough in themselves to keep one from ever having the blues."

"The same lack of a railroad arm is just what has kept ninety-nine others from doing the same thing," returned the young man who had spoken before. "If it had not been lacking the old chimney would have been smoking the heavens for the past half-dozen years. But you need not worry, Ross. It is us poor devils who must take notice of forlorn chances. We have no rich father nor prospect of future partnership."

As they were passing up Main-st. half an hour later their attention was attracted by a wheezy rumbling from an open doorway.

"A printing office!" and they looked at each other in surprise. Where could the subscribers live? How had they been able to live in sight of the place all this time and had not become aware of its existence?

"The only reparation for our neglect is to put our names on the subscription list," said Ross, leading the way towards the office.

The old printer looked up from his desk in mild surprise as the six strangers entered. Strangers had not been very common in Brexam for a good many years. But when they placed bank notes upon the desk and asked him to enter their names in the subscription book, his surprise changed to something akin to wonder. Such things had happened in anti-panic days, but of late years his two hundred-odd subscribers had found it more convenient to pay in more bulky commodities. Wood and produce were the favorite mediums of exchange among the Brexam citizens.

So money had acquired a fictitious value from its novelty, and the old printer's fingers trembled a little as he counted out the change, and all the time the young men remained in the office they persisted in stroking each other softly.

"I am afraid the Brexam Chronicle is not a paying investment," said one of the young men as they passed out of hearing of the office; the editor seemed rather agitated when he counted our money."

That evening copies of the Chronicle were placed on file in the club reading-room and many critical comments passed on its literary efforts by sarcastic members.

When the party broke up in the fall some of the Chronicles found their way into Ross Barron's trunks as wrapping-paper, and before another season came round were able to repay his kindness to the old printer.

CHAPTER II.

One of the newly-fashioned buckboards was creeping down the mountain-side toward the close of a bright May afternoon. The two finely-matted horses were allowed to go at a slow walk while the occupants of the carriage watched the gorgeous landscape that was everwhere touched with the lovely colors of a spring sunset.

Every turn of the mountain road disclosed new beauties, and frequent stops had to be made to gather bunches of the nodding ferns and trailing arbuta that grew among the jutting rocks and shadows in great abundance. A clear brown stream, dropping into quick ripples on reaching a sharper grade, wound back and forth across the road and finally disappeared in a hollow under a thicket. The moss-covered banks and little glades were starred with wild crocus, violets, and anemones, and murmured with sweet springs and trickling rivulets. Now and then a rabbit or a squirrel flashed from one thicket to another, stopping for a second, perhaps, to gaze inquiringly at the buckboard and its occupants. Over and through all the soft, subtile breath of spring crept, making the pulse bound and the heart grow strong and glad for the future.

Slowly the carriage moved on until the lengthening shadows and a premonitory chill warned them that night was fast approaching. But twenty minutes more would bring them to Brexam, and the young man drew the wraps more closely about his companion and touched the horse slightly with his whip. They responded as though glad to be released from restraint, and the carriage went rapidly on its way.

"Are you cold, Edith?" he asked, as soon as they had settled down to a steady pace.

"No, indeed, Ross! But everything is so beautiful and grand, I could not help being silent. I am afraid I even forgot your existence for the moment," and she smiled a little as she looked at him.

"The cause justifies the effect," he answered, smiling back. "But, seriously, little wife, I think it is fitting welcome to your new home. Nature has put on her gala dress to show her approval of you."

A little smile was her only answer. Then, after a short silence:

"We ought to be very happy, Ross, in such a place. Surely heaven must be very near to the mountains. If only—you—were all right with your father," she hesitated a little and a troubled look crept into her eyes. "It almost seems wrong that the disappointment of your father should be our happiness."

The young man was silent for some time.

"I do not think my father acted justly by me," he said, at length; "he still regards me as a boy to be directed and looked after, and seems to forget that I am twenty-five and have hopes of my own. He knew of my love for you and still seemed to think he had only to command me to marry some one else to be obeyed."

"Miss Raymond is very beautiful?" questioningly.

"More than that. She is one of the most noble women I ever met. But I do not love her. If I had never met you I should not have married Miss Raymond." He touched the horses more sharply as he spoke, and the carriage whirled out on a more level grade, and before them was Brexam.

A few minutes and they drew up before a small, but rather pretty cottage, surrounded by lilacs and altheas. It had been built for one of the superintendents, and as a family has occupied it most of the time, was in a tolerable state of preservation. Ross had had it painted and furnished, and sent a woman in advance to have everything ready for their arrival. She was to act as housekeeper and maid-of-all-work.

A cozy supper had been prepared in the little sitting-room, and after they had taken off their wraps and stood for a moment before the fire-place to remove the chill, they sat down to their first meal in the new home.

It seemed almost like camping out, or a pic-nic—the absence of ceremony and black-coated waiters—just they two by themselves. The fire snapped cheerily, and in spite of closed doors the scent of pine and lilac pervaded the room. Edith glanced across the table with a light in her eyes that brought a quick answer from the brown ones opposite.

She was not beautiful, but there was something in the fair, sweet face and clear eyes that gave one an impression of depths unsounded. One felt that what her lips uttered would need no qualification nor amendment.

To-night she felt very happy—more happy than she would have thought possible a few weeks ago. Her father had died suddenly, and before she recovered from the shock the involved business had swept away everything—even to the furniture and plate. Then it was that impetuous, strong-hearted Ross that had insisted on their indefinite engagement becoming an immediate marriage. And stricken and heartsore, not knowing where to turn, she had yielded.

A week had been spent in Boston and then, for want of something better, Ross had gathered together all his belongings and come to deserted, out-of-the-way Brexam. An odd number of the Chronicle, containing a notice of the mill property, had first given him the idea. But once entertained it grew more attractive day by day. Thrown on his own resources, without hope of aid from his father, and little saved from his allowance, Brexam offered a temporary asylum. Living would be cheap and, possibly, he might be able to do something with the mill property. At least it would be worth the trial—and nothing else seemed to offer.

The Lake Archer property would easily bring five thousand dollars, and this, with the few thousands he had in ready money, would be sufficient to test the scheme.

The next morning, in company with his wife and lawyer who had charge of the place, he made a thorough examination of the property. Most of the machinery seemed to need but slight repair; while the belting, windows, and parts of the water-wheel would need to be almost wholly replaced. Innumerable small repairs would also be necessary throughout all the departments. With the aid of the lawyer a rough estimate was made of the probable cost, and Ross saw, with some dismay, that it would swallow nearly half of his available assets. But it must be done before work could commence.

After completing the rounds they went to the office to arrange terms and draw up necessary papers. The terms were rather better than Ross had expected and, half an hour later, he found himself possessor of the entire property for ten years. He was to do all necessary repairs for the first two years' rent, and, after that was to pay five thousand dollars each year for the use of the property.

During the afternoon he and Edith made an examination of some of the tenements and arranged with a contractor to make the needed repairs.

The next day he went to New York to negotiate the sale of the Lake Archer property, and to purchase cotton and whatever was needed for the factory. When he returned he brought with him an engineer, foreman, and several families of skilled operatives. The rest of the help he thought could be obtained in the village. For the first year it would be prudent to keep the force on the pay-roll as small as possible.

"I shall be my own book-keeper, superintendent, and general manager," he said to Edith, with a smile. "I am profoundly grateful now that father made me stick to the business until I had mastered every department, though, at the time, I remember, I was anything but grateful. I preferred capping out.

"Do you not think, Ross," Edith asked, "that you can make it up with your father—I mean after his anger has had to cool.

Ross shook his head.

"You do not know my father. I haven't the slightest hope of making it up with him—at least for a long time to come."

During the next four weeks the repairs went briskly on, and at last everything was ready for starting. The whole village was interested, and when the bell broke the stillness of the early morning for the first time in so many years all turned out, old and young, and even the minister's rheumatic old dog hobbled painfully down to the gate and gazed inquiringly at the crowd.

Edith and Ross were there with the intention of spending the day in the factory. She was almost as keenly interested as her husband in everything pertaining to the new enterprise, and ardently wished she could do something to help it along. Nearly all the help were by this time personally known to her, and she spent the forenoon in wandering through the different departments, talking to this one and that, and helping a little whenever she found the chance. Possibly her work, in itself, did not amount to much, but she invariably left behind her laughter and good nature, and a desire to stand well in Miss Edith's opinion. The weave-shop and some other departments were silent save for the click, click of the workmen's tools making ready for the time when the fleecy cotton should have passed through the other rooms and come to them, strong and white, for another transformation. Most of the hands were in, however. The spinners were testing old bands and adjusting new ones; the weavers cleaning, oiling, and polishing; the spoolers, drawers-in, and mule tenders looking over their machines, and all waiting and making ready for the cotton which, in its various forms, would presently make an appearance.

Edith saw little of Ross. He was under the frames helping the spinners with their bands; down below, inspecting the water-wheel: working with the carders behind their machines; everywhere; pounding, pulling, laughing, and inspiring the workmen with a portion of his own exuberant spirits.

When the bell rang for dinner Edith was in the engine-room grasping a little wheel and watching the clock, with flushed face and half-parted lips. The engineer stood just behind her with a broad grin on his face. As the long hand gave a quick turn to the wheel and the ponderous machine came to a slow stop.

"There," she said, with a bright nod, "wasn't that done artistically? Now, remember, I shall be here at one, sharp, to start up. Don't you dare to forestall me," shaking a finger at him. "Perhaps I shall apply for the position myself and have you retired on a pension."

The old engineer, with a grin still broadening his face, joined a group on the way to the gate.

"She's a rare 'un," he said, jerking his thumb toward where Edith was stancing by the carding-room door, waiting her husband's appearance.

"There's two on 'em," was the quick answer of the round, red-faced carpenter. "Ther young man kin talk like a win'-mill, 'n' I 'low seems to know what's what. He actoolly took the tools outen my han's 'n' showed me how ter fix the pulley."

During the afternoon Edith and Ross made an examination of the office. It was small and unpretentious. A few desks and broken chairs comprised the furniture, while a stove, long rusted past usefulness, leaned heavily in one corner. Most of the available floor-space was occupied with gears, pulleys, bolts, and miscellaneous rubbish accumulated from mill repairs and changes. A small back room was literally overflowing with similar accumulations.

Ross put several boys to work clearing out the place. Everything past usefulness was thrown outside, to be sold as old iron, while such things as might be of future service were placed by themselves in the inner office.

"We will use that room for the mill supplies," said Ross.

Before night the office had assumed quite a respectable appearance, and Edith declared she would have it papered on the morrow.

"I have been thinking, Ross," she said, seriously, as they were eating supper that night, "that I would like to take your place in the office."

(To be continued.)

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LINDSAY, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1894.

NEWS OF THE WEEK

HOME AND FOREIGN ITEMS OF INTEREST.

Gathered from the Telegraph and Exchanges.

—Four men near Gordon, Texas, Friday morning of last week, held up a train on the Texas Pacific railway and robbed the express car of between $4,000 and $5,000. They could not open the combination safe, which contained $30,000 belonging to the Coal Co.

About one o'clock Thursday morning of last week, John Askin, who is employed in the Windsor, Ont., post-office as a clerk, attempted to commit suicide by cutting his throat with a very sharp knife. His brother, who resides with him, was aroused by the cries of Mrs. John's wife, and he succeeded in taking the knife from him. Medical assistance was immediately called, and after an examination of the wounds it was stated that they would not be fatal. It is said he been drinking heavily lately and seems to be labouring under a delusion that his wife was seeking to get him into trouble with the post-office officials.

—Commercial advices from the United States can only be considered fairly satisfactory; about the best to hand is that business is not worse than it is. There is in some quarters a very decided progressive movement, but the movement does not keep pace with product-ion. Low prices, as a rule, prevail, but there are some features of encouragement in the situation, taken as a whole, but the general condition of trade is not up to the mark in many respects. The October average for the year so far has been just fifty cents below that was in October, 1891. The October average so far have been moderate in size and amounts. The failures for the week in the United States have been 214 as compared with 311 for the corresponding week of last year. The troubles at Fall River are reported settled and about half of the looms there have resumed work.

—On Thursday night of last week the young women employed at Eaton's, filled into the dressing room to get their bonnets and cloaks for home. Some of the first to enter at once saw a strange looking bundle lying on a chair and stepping over from out the folds of a pretty silk bonnet there peeped a pair of blue eyes of a 4-weeks-old baby. The stranger, apparently deserted by her mother, was attired in neat linen garments and showed every evidence of having been well cared for. When the young ladies of young maidens deferred their wraps for a time and crowded and jostled one another in their efforts to see the precious little tot with the bright eyes. The baby chuckled and smiled in most evident enjoyment of the whole scene. Mr. C. O'Brien was called in to take care of the babe the shop girls were loth to part with her.

—James Eakins, of Port Hope and Lindsay, who has for the last few years been the heaviest exporter of Canadian cattle to Britain, is reported to be financially embarrassed. A few years ago Mr. Eakins was worth about half a million dollars and even when he started to ship in the beginning of the present season his account was a fairly big one. During July and part of this month the markets have been disastrously low and in consequence every exporter has suffered. In one week lately Mr. Eakins is said to have dropped over $10,000 on his consignments. Every week's mail told the same story and Mr. Eakins was forced to drain his bank account to meet the losses on the other side. A few weeks ago he stopped shipping and in the meantime his consignments sold on the other side were sold on arrival. The local banks which had advanced money on them. Mr. Eakins has over 16,000 head of cattle and sheep since the opening of his farm, Port Hope, representing $100 to September 1st Mr. Eakins made money, but the sudden drop on the other side brought about his embarrassment. His friends, including the bankers interested, expect that Mr. Eakins will come through all right, and by next year be as active an exporter as ever.

—A girl named Jessie Keith, aged 14 years, daughter of Mr. Wm. Keith, a farmer about one and a half miles from Ayr, was foully and brutally murdered between 12 and 1 o'clock on Friday last. The unfortunate girl was met on the railroad track as she was returning from town, where she had been to the post-office, by a man who it is supposed, and outraged and murdered. The railroad sectionmen, returning down the track after dinner, saw the newspapers and spilled rice on the track. On further investigating they discovered evidences of foul play, went to Ayr, about half a mile distant, and returning and following the tracks across a ploughed field, and about 80 yards into a swamp, discovered the body of the unfortunate girl covered over with moss and brush, the clothing having been removed and taken away, the body bearing marks of the foulest of crimes. The face of the girl was grossly mutilated, and in this respect the victims of the fiendish Whitechapel murderers. The throat was cut from ear to ear, the abdomen from the waist down very deep, while all the organs were roughly torn out, the only thing on the body was a rope found round the neck. This seems