

Wm. J. Walker

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### RACY STORY.

THE WAGER, OR THE TRAPPER'S DAUGHTER.

In a mountain valley, snugly sheltered from northern winds, stood the little cottage of Gabriel Heath. Its occupant an old bear hunter—had been a wanderer among the Ottawas. Without society, except their occasional companionship, and wholly wedded to a wild life, yet as age came upon him, he pined to return to his kind and wear social fetters.

Helen Heath inherited from her mother—the daughter of a Canadian hunter—both her name and the roaming spirit of her race. From the days of earliest recollection she had been at her father's side on the wild prairie, or ranging over the mountains.

The old hunter delighted in nothing more than predatory skirmishes with the Indians, who were wont to acknowledge the debt with interest. Once, with only two comrades, he was surrounded in his trapping lodge, and forced to stand a week's siege. Then the fearless conduct of his daughter, child as she was, won from him a hunter's praise and fatherly pride.

It was singular training that she received; wandering over an uninhabited country with a rude hunter, shut out from education, and only taught to read and write by an accidental visit for a few weeks at a missionary station—without means of refinement, and having for the language of her mind only what could be learned from the voice of nature in her deepest seclusion. She loved the green woods, the mighty forest, for there her soul could live beyond the rough influence of the only life she had ever known.

Such was the character of our heroine, when old Gabriel Heath exchanged his wandering life for a residence in the little cottage on the hill. Here a few acres supplied him with many of the necessities of life, and he had an opportunity to follow at his pleasure, the business of his youth; and as he seemed to circle round the cottage home, whose exterior was rendered somewhat picturesque by the natural taste of the daughter.

In fine days, old Heath killed his ground, or hunted among the neighboring hills and by the side of the streams; and in unpleasant weather he sat by the fireside, smoked his pipe and told huge stories of old adventures.

A thriving village lay just behind the range of hills among which the cottage was nestled, though the cottagers formed but little society with its inhabitants.

Long exposure to the sun had veiled but not hidden Helen Heath's fair complexion with a rich olive, and added to her charms. Constant exposure had given firmness and elasticity to her limbs. No wonder, then, that though very seldom seen, and still more rarely addressed, she was deemed the belle of the surrounding country. Ramblers among the hills had noticed the fair cottager, and become infatuated with her beauty and naivete, and even become suitors for her hand; but they had all been repulsed. The bold and adventurous she instinctively disliked for the coarseness which generally characterized them. The few of a different character who occasionally visited her, she did not trouble herself to notice. Of this latter number the most prominent was Thomas Gifford, a young lawyer, who had opened his office in the village. Educated at an Eastern University, and naturally of a retired cast of mind, Gifford had always avoided the world, and lived only with his books; and, consequently, but a part of his character had as yet been developed. In his eyes, the beautiful young cottager was the type of what philosophers had long sought to find, and he determined to obtain the reality of the child's freshness, while they could only conceive the ideal. He therefore resolved to amend his deficiencies in her eyes, and his sanguine nature hoped the rest.

Old Heath looked upon marriage as a necessary evil, which all ought to endure sometime, and he was determined that none but a man after his own heart should possess his daughter, and the qualifications necessary in view, were strength and agility in manly sports. He took no pains to conceal his determination, and it was surprising how suddenly such games rose in favor with the young villagers.

Time passed, and among these who had gained the applause of the old hunter, was a sturdy pioneer named Alexander Wilson, though as yet he had never shown any preference for the young forester. And time had brought the heart of the lawyer to the feet of the beautiful young cottager girl, while to her his breathing of heart attachment had become an episode well cherished!

We have forgotten to mention that over the range of hills that formed the picturesque landscape about the mountain home, a noble river spread its liquid waters. Gifford had always enjoyed all the sports that can be gathered from a life of rural freedom.

Strong at the oar, unerring in the aim at the target-shot, and sinewy in the leaping wader, he had become quite a favorite, as well as the envy of his contemporaries.

In all of his manly feats, Helen Heath was the first to praise; and while her pride of his masculine acquirements was increasing, she could not but also feel admiration, for his mental attainments, which, after all found a something kindred and congenial within her own bosom.

One afternoon, as young Gifford was strolling along the shores of the stream above mentioned, he saw the favorite of old Heath, the trapper Wilson, put off in a skiff. Having frequently been brought in contact with him, while pursuing their favorite feats of strength, Gifford out of friendship, walked to the water's edge, and wished him a pleasant voyage.

"It cannot but be pleasant such a day as this. Come, try, a hand with us at an oar this splendid weather," returned Wilson.

The temptation was too great to be withstood, and Gifford stepped into the boat, which in a moment shot out upon the water, rising and falling with the waves, and yielding to the pressure of the sturdy oars. For a long time the skiff continued to move out upon the stream; at last the breeze stiffened, and the two companions rested upon their oars, to enjoy the movement of the boat, as it tossed to and fro. The sun was sinking slowly in the west, and darting his horizontal rays across the troubled waters. At last, Wilson said, with a smile:

"It is now sunset and even tide. I have an engagement—let us return to land."

"Certainly," replied his friend, "especially if your rendezvous be of an interesting nature; perchance with a lady-love."

"You are good at guessing," was the reply.

"You have then, an evening tryst?"

"Yes, with the prettiest girl in the country."

Gifford thought of his beautiful Helen, and wished only that his friend possessed one as fair and true. For a few moments both were silent, and then, as they approached the land, again commenced the conversation.

"My fair one is very fair. Though I am but a hardy pioneer, I know how to value qualifications like hers."

"Ah," replied his companion, "you are happy then; but tell me who this fair one is."

"It is a secret; none but you have been allowed even the whispering of such a revelation," said Wilson.

"A secret sweet and precious," replied Gifford, laughing. "But I, too, have a heart-friend—one who is very kind—and pure as the Virgin Mary—and I dare speak her name. Now for a mutual exchange of secrets; confess your lady-love and you shall know my own."

"You would force a confession," remarked Wilson. "Very well; but as I have sworn not to utter her name, had I scrap of paper I would write it, and then we would exchange."

Gifford produced a blank leaf from his memorandum, drew his pencil, and wrote the magic word. Wilson did likewise, and then they exchanged papers. Wilson read on his Helena Heath; Gifford the same on his Helena Heath. Their eyes met; Wilson was embarrassed, Gifford pale with agitation and anger.

"Very well," Wilson at length said, "it seems that our mistresses are one and the same."

"Impossible! I know Helena Heath too well," returned Gifford. "All you have said of her is false."

Wilson had the subdued spirit of the restful adventurer. His embarrassment vanished, and he became furious. "False?" he echoed fiercely.

"Yes—an infamous lie!" responded Gifford.

Stung to the quick Wilson grasped an oar with both hands, and leveled a blow at his companion's head. Gifford evaded the blow and sprang upon his enemy like a tiger. Wilson dropped the weapon, and the two were clasped in a furious embrace. They struggled, rose to their feet, and falling, were plunged headlong into the stream. The waves closed over them, and the skiff, half filled with water slowly drifted out to sea. In a moment, both arose to the surface, still clasped in a fierce embrace. The shades of night were closing around them, but yet

there was light enough left for them to glance at each other, and gathered fresh courage at the sight. Wilson loosed his hold of his antagonist to level a blow at his head, but Gifford parried it, and grasped him by the throat, and once more both disappeared beneath the surface of the water. Gifford's energy seemed the most powerful, and the pioneer, lashed to fury, seized the jack-knife that his hand purloined from the pocket of his enemy, opened it with his teeth, and plunged it into the bosom of the young lawyer, who, with a bubbling cry, released his hold.

Night set in and the dark waves rolled heavily. As he paused to regain his strength he saw the form of his inanimate companion tossed about on the stream. It would be impossible to portray the thoughts that rushed through his mind. Oh, how bitterly did he regret having been so rash. Having recovered his strength, the young man began to make for the shore, which he gained.

Two days after the following announcement appeared in the village gazette:

"A most lamentable occurrence took place on evening. A young law student, named Gifford, well known in this vicinity, accompanied a young man named Wilson in a boat ride up the river. A sudden gust upset the boat, and both were plunged into the water. Wilson made his escape by swimming, but his companion found a watery grave."

The dream of happiness of Helena was now at an end. With all the poignant grief that the susceptible heart can feel, she lamented the sad fate of her lover, while she could not repress the chagrin she felt at the idea that some adventurous favorite of her father would usurp the pre-eminence that she had given him.

Nearly two years passed, and Helena Heath still remained unmarried. Old Heath had selected young Wilson for his future son-in-law, and he sought to commend him to his daughter, but meeting with indifference and denial, he resolved to select from among the large circle of the hardy and athletic young men the one whose feats were the greatest, and compel her to receive him as her lord.

At last the day came for the allotted trial, and to the spot marked out for rendezvous many an eager aspirant came. Among these was the newly arrived settler, who had often made the sinewy and bold look palid with envy at his success.

The first trial was that of leaping. One by one the competitors joined in, until a perfect Ajax in limb reached seventeen feet. This settled the question; still, notwithstanding this proof of his prowess, the old hunter seemed dissatisfied at the idea of marrying his daughter to such a stranger. He resolved to become better acquainted with his strength and skill, and suddenly turning to his rivals, he said:

"Come boys, let's have a little rifle practice—only two shots apiece, remember."

A painted nail was partly driven into a tree. The heroes of the other exercises made trials, but were wide apart from the nail's head. The stranger rubbed his hands, seized a rifle and took rapid aim. The nail was driven into the tree.

The unknown marksman once more fired; the nail's head was bent double. This was more than the rival, who was no other than young Wilson, could bear, and he walked off.

All congratulations were offered the lucky victor. Old Gabriel Heath placed the hand of the reluctant Helena in his; but she still treasuring the memory of him whom she had so admired, and who had opened her mind to the world of intellectual beauty, remonstrated against her father's choice to no purpose.

For some time the victor visited the abode of the hunter, chatted with him and walked with his daughter. They talked long and fervently together, and he spoke in glowing terms of his love for her. She started at this for the image of her lost lover seemed to rise and rebuke her.

"You love another, then," he said. Remember that I won you by my prowess."

These words, in some tones, might have made her indignant, but now they only tended to dissipate her reserve, as she replied:

"What you have said is true; I owe the richest and deepest debt to another, who translated to me the mysterious teachings of nature. I ought to love him and though he is forever lost to me, yet while I exist I will live for no other but him."

While she was thus speaking, the hunter was regarding her with the same curious expression, which hardly became a rejected lover. She was turning to him, when he detained her and said:

"This was the young lawyer, Gifford, was it not?"

"It was," she replied, looking into his face where the smile had settled into anxiety.

"Blessings on you for that word!" he cried. "I am the lost one—the rescued and the redeemed!"

It was indeed young Gifford, who, through an unseen and mysterious Providence, had

not been drowned, but was saved from a watery grave by a fisherman, whose kind care had restored him to life and strength.

He told her how he had returned to the village just in time to bear off the wagers of prowess for her hand; and, confident that he should be brought to her again, he dissembled himself and gained the victory.

It is needless to say that the joy of meeting him of whom he supposed himself the murderer, was so great that Wilson thought but little of the refusal that he ultimately received from Helena. He could hardly believe his eyes, until the generous Gifford took his hand and faithfully promised never to reveal the circumstances of the boat ride, and to forgive him for his rashness.

The two rivals were rivals no longer, and Gifford lived with the lovely daughter of old Gabriel Heath many years of happiness, and successful in business and generous in thought, he was the pride of the village.

Age tempered the rashness of Wilson, who after the decease of old Gabriel Heath, was the quotation of his pioneer friends. But Thomas Gifford never revealed the secret till his dying day.

### JANE'S VALENTINE.

BY MRS. H. M. LADD WARNER.

What a singular tableau! Three beautiful girls convulsed with laughter, and one plain-faced maiden bathed in tears. It was St. Valentine's Eve. Missive after missive had been brought into the back parlor at Judge Milford's by the obsequious waiter.—Some of these offerings were large and expensive; some tiny and delicate; some replete with flattery; some redolent with perfume; all eminently silly.

But none of these had occasioned the mirth of the trio, or the grief of the one.—Some vulgar person had sent a vile caricature so the plain sister, accompanied by an exaggerated description of her ugliness in verse.

It was quite painful enough to know that she possessed no claim to personal beauty. Could she have lost sight of that fact she would have appeared very differently at times. But her sisters always managed to bring their own prettiness into such forcible contrast with her plainness, that she was rarely free from a nervous sort of consciousness of her personal defects.

But she had good sense and a patient spirit, which they had not. Still, when they grew so merry over her solitary Valentine, she finally burst into tears, in spite of all her efforts to the contrary; for Jane was in the habit of controlling her emotions, when wounded and heart-sore, until safely concealed in her own room.

"Look!" exclaimed Isabel, opening her large black eyes to their utmost capacity, "she is really weeping. Why, Jane! you are more like the picture than ever. You would never do for a heroine in a novel, for they are always represented as irresistible in tears."

"Mercy! how red your eyes are," ejaculated azure orb'd Clara. "You do look frightful!"

"The poor child can't help being ugly!" interposed Fanny, gazing complacently into the mirror opposite, where her red lips and Auburn ringlets were advantageously reflected.

"That is just what pains me," sobbed Jane. "Because God saw fit to create me plain, I do not see why I should be made the butt of every coarse jest. I suppose I have feelings like other people. Should my faults of temper or omissions of duty be chosen as subjects of ridicule, I am sure I would not complain; but to ridicule my appearance, I think, savors of coarseness and ignorance."

"Isabel's black eyes flashed. Jane, the youngest of them all, always so submissive, always so humble, to burst out so suddenly, with so pointed a declaration!"

"Mr. Lee, in the drawing-room, wishes to see Miss Jane," announced the servant at this juncture.

"Are you certain he said, Jane?" demanded Clara.

"Yes, mem," replied the waiter.

"Lottie is ill again, no doubt," suggested Fanny. "Jane is such an excellent nurse; and Isabel added, 'I wish cousin Charles had come in to spend the evening in a sociable way.'"

It would certainly have been very agreeable, for Charles Lee was rich, fine-looking, and intelligent; a widower and remotely related to the Milfords. No wonder that the three graces at Milford Hall found cousin Charles an interesting gentleman, his little daughter Lottie a perfect angel, and his country seat a terrestrial Paradise.

Jane loitered on the way to the drawing-room, striving to efface all traces of her recent grief. "Is Lottie ill?" interrogated she, as Mr. Lee approached her.

"No, Jane," he replied, "Lottie is well, but in want."

"In want?" Jane repeated.

"Yes, in want of a mother, and I of a wife and I have come here to-night to offer myself to little Jane Milford as her Valentine for life, if she will accept a man old enough to be her father."

"Why, I am very plain," she faltered forth, "I have just received the most horrid caricature you ever saw, in consideration of my claims to extraordinary ugliness."

"I recollect thinking you a plain when I first saw you," he replied; "but now in my eyes, you are the prettiest of the four. Besides, I do not base my preferences on personal beauty. You are good, gentle and sweet-toned; and I love you. But about the Valentine, do you consider me particularly ill-looking?"

"You, Mr. Lee?" said Jane, innocently; "why, you are handsome."

"Why, I received a Valentine to-day quite as grotesque as your own, I'll be bound," and he unfolded a sheet, revealing a lone widower shivering over a miserable fire.—"But this awakened me to a sense of my desolate condition, and I determined to appeal to you, notwithstanding my fear of your reply, when I considered my thirty-six and your eighteen years. Is that a barrier, dear Jane?"

Dear Jane! What a charm lingered all around those two little words! Who had over pronounced them so softly and tenderly before? No one, she was positive; and she naively replied.

"Oh! I should never think of that."

"What can keep Jane so long?" said Clara restlessly, "I can't think for my life what cousin Charles could want."

Jane entered the room just as she had spoken these words.

"Where is cousin Charles?" queried Fanny.

"In the study with papa," was the answer, and, taking a light, Jane glided from the room to be alone with her new happiness.

The next morning, wonder, chagrin, and disappointment could be discovered in the faces of the three sisters, on hearing their father congratulate Jane on the very eligible match she had made. "For," said he, "I have always hoped to see Charles Lee my son-in-law, and though you are no beauty, I think he has manifested good sense in his selection."

Jane keeps her caricature. She says she looks at it occasionally, for fear her other Valentine (Charles) should succeed in making her believe herself pretty.—[Peterson's Magazine.]

### MAKING TRACKS.

A light snow had fallen, and the boys desired to know the most of it. It was too dry for snow-balling, and not deep enough for coasting. It did very well to make tracks in.

There was a large meadow near the place where they were assembled. It was proposed that they should go to a tree near the center of the meadow, and that each one should start from the tree, and see who could make the straightest track—that is to go from the tree in the nearest approach to a straight line. The proposition was assented to, and they were seen at the tree.—They ranged themselves around it with their backs toward the trunk. They were equally distant from each other. If each had gone forward in the right line, the paths they would have made would have been like the spokes of a wheel—the tree representing the hub. They were to go till they reached the boundaries of the meadow, when they were to retrace their steps to the tree.

They did so. I wish I could give a map of their tracks. Such a map would not present much resemblance to the spokes of a wheel.

"Whose is the straightest?" said James Alison to Thomas Sanders, who was at the tree first.

"Henry Armstrong's is the only one that is straight at all."

"That's a fact," said James. "They look more like snake-tracks than straight lines."

"How could we all contrive to go so crookedly, when the ground is so smooth, and nothing to turn us out of the way?" said Jacob Small.

"How did you come to go so straight, Henry?" said Thomas.

"I fixed my eye on that tall pine-tree on the hill yonder, and never looked away from it till I reached the fence."

"I wrote as straight as I could, without looking at anything but the ground," said James.

"So did I," said another.

"So did I," said several others. It appeared that no one but Henry had aimed at a particular object.

They attempted to go straight without any definite aim. They failed. Men cannot succeed in anything good without a definite aim. In order to mental improvement, there must be a definite aim. In order to do good, there must be a definite aim. General purposes, general resolutions, will not avail. You must do as Henry did; fix up

on something distinct and definite as an object, and go steadily forward toward it.—Thus only can you succeed.

### A CIRCUMSTANTIAL STORY.

A New York paper printed in 1836, says there was living at that time at Hearlem an old man who relates the following remarkable story of himself. He was possessed of a pretty good farm with slaves and everything necessary for a farm at Hearlem and had but one child, a son, who marrying, it was agreed that the young couple should live in the house with him, as he was a widower. Things went exceedingly well for a time, when his son proposed to him, that he should make over to him his estate, promising to build a new house, and otherwise improve the farm. The father through persuasion gave him a deed or gift of it and everything belonging thereon.

After a few years, as his father grew old he grew a little fretful and dissatisfied;—while the son thinking he had nothing more to expect from him forgot his filial duty, and used him as bad as one of his servants.—The old man was no longer to eat his meals at the same table with him and his wife, but obliged to eat his meals in the chimney corner, and continually otherwise ill-used by them. The old man eat victuals daily from a wooden bowl his son had made for him; his grandson saw his father make this bowl and set about making just such another;—being asked by his father what he made it for, answered, 'for you to eat out of when you grow old as grandfather.' Although this ought to have turned his heart and made him reflect, that as he dealt by his father, he might expect to be dealt by his children when he grew old—it had no effect upon him and the ill usage to the old man was carried to such a height that he could no longer bear it, but left the house and went to a relation and neighbor of his, declaring that if his friend could not help him get his farm back again he should be obliged to come and live with him. His friend answered that he might come and live with him—and if he would follow his directions, he would help him to his estate again.

"Go and take this bag of dollars, carry it to your room at your son's, shut it up well in your chest, and about the time you expect they will call you down to dinner shut your door, and have all your dollars spread on a table in the middle of the room. When they call you make a noise with them by sweeping them off the table into the bag again."

The old man did as he was desired—his daughter-in-law came up to call him to dinner, and finding the door shut, she had the curiosity to peep through the key-hole, saw the bag of dollars, and the old man sweeping them off the table. Surprised at it she called her husband, but he would not believe it.

The next day the old man again counted his dollars over, and packed up something in paper like paper-money. His son went up to call him down, was surprised at what his wife had told him. They took no notice of it to the old man, but when he came down insisted on his sitting at the table with them, and behaved more than ordinary civil towards him. The old man related to his friend what he had done, who gave him directions what to do if his son asked him for the money.

After a few days the old man having been very busy in counting the money again, his son asked him what money that was he had been counting. "Only some money I received from the discharge of one of the bonds I had standing out. I expect more in a few days, and I fear I shall be obliged to take Mr. N——'s farm, upon which I have a mortgage, as he is not able to raise the money, and if the farm is sold it will not fetch as much as will discharge the mortgage."

After a few days, the son told the father that he intended to build a house on the farm, and he would be glad if his father would let him have that money. "Yes, child," all that I have is only coming to you—I intend giving you the bonds and mortgage I have—but then, I think it will best to have it all put together in a new deed of gift. I will get neighbor D—— to call here and draw a new one.

Accordingly his friend and cousin who had devised the measure, came to the house, and the son gave the father the deed that another might be drawn after it. When the old man got the instrument into his hands, in the presence of his friend, he broke off the seal and committed the writing to the fire, saying, "burn! cursed instrument of my folly and misery, and you, children, as this estate is all my own again, you must remove immediately, unless you will be content to be my tenants. I have now learned that it is best for a parent to hold the loaf under his own arm—and that one father can better maintain ten children, than ten children can one father."

Good order is bread—disorder starvation.





