

# The Raftsmen

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## MARTHA WARREN.

"Good-bye, Martha. God help you! I shall be back in three days at the farthest." The hardy White Mountain pioneer, Mark Warren, kissed his young wife, held his two years old boy to his breast for a moment, and then shouldering the sack of corn which was to be converted into meal at the rude mill, forty miles away, trudged on through the wilderness.

Martha Warren stood at the door of the log cottage, gazing out after the retreating form of her husband. An angle of the dense shrubbery hid him from her view, but still she did not return to the solitary kitchen; it looked so dark and lonesome there, she shrank from entering, or perhaps the grand sublimity of the view spread out before her attracted her attention and thrilled her soul with that nameless, unexpected something that we all see when standing thus face to face with the works of His fingers.

The finest and most satisfactory view of the White Mountains is that which presents itself from what is now the town of Bethlehem, on the road to Littleton and Franconia. Mt. Washington, the king among peaks, is there seen in its proper place—the centre of the "rock-ribbed" range—towering, bald, blue and unapproachable.

Far up in a wild clearing, close by the turbid waters of the Ammonoosuc, was the cottage situated—a place wild and eerie enough for the nest of an eagle, but near to the heart of Martha Warren as the home where she had spent the happy days of her young widowhood. When she had turned from many a patriotic sutor, in the fair old town of Portsmouth, to join her fortunes with the full and perfect understanding of the trials that lay before her. She would walk in no path of roses for years to come; much of life must be spent in the eternal solitudes, where silence was broken only by the wild winds of the forest, the shriek of the river, the sharp rocks, or the dismal howl of the red mouthed wolf afar in the wilderness.

The necessary absence of her husband she dreaded most. It was so very gloomy to close up her lonely fireside, with the consciousness that there was no human being nearer to her than the settlement of Lord's Hill, ten miles away through the pathless woods.

There was little to fear from the Indians, although a few of the scattered tribes yet roamed over these primeval hunting grounds. They were mostly disposed to be friendly, and Mrs. Warren's kind heart naturally prompted her to many acts of friendship towards them, and an Indian never forgets a benefit.

A new fear rose in the heart of Martha Warren. This turbulent stream must have swept away the bridge over which her husband would cross on his return, and he would be detained—for days, maybe for weeks.

She gave up all for lost. Strongly and fearfully was she tempted to fold her child in her arms and plunge into the cauldron beneath, and thus end her fear and doubt! It would be painless she thought than to suffer that slow, painful death of starvation! But something held her back—God's curse was upon those who do self murder.

Towards night, a lost robin, beaten about by the storm, stopped to rest a moment on the rock; Martha seized upon and reut him in twain, with almost savage glee, for her child to devour raw—she, who two days before would have wept at the sight of the wounded sparrow.

Another night and day, like the other, only more intensely agonizing. Martha was sullenly indifferent now; suffering had pallied every noble feeling, Charlie moaned for supper—too weak and spent to sit up, he was lying on the rock, his head in her lap, his great eyes fixed on her face. She tore open a vein on her arm with her scissors, and made him drink the blood! Anything, she said to herself, to calm the wild, wild yearnings of his eyes. The boy rose—he sat up and peered through the darkness.

"Mamma," he said, "papa is coming. I felt him touch me."

She wept at the mockery, and drew the child frantically to her bosom.

The night was fair, lit up by a new moon. Overcome by a deadly exhaustion, against which she could make no resistance, Martha fell into an uneasy slumber, which towards midnight was broken by a startling cry. She sprang to her feet and gazed around her.

No! her eyes did not deceive her—there on the shore stood the stalwart form of her husband, and he was calling her name with the energy of despair. She could only cry out, "O, Mark, Mark!" and fell senseless to the earth. When she awoke to consciousness, she was lying on her bed in the cottage, supported by her husband's arms. It was no dream. She and her darling boy were not dead. Many weeks passed before she grew strong again, but Mark tended her as a mother would an infant, and by the time the autumn frosts fell, she was the blithe Martha Warren of old.

At the time of the freshest, the bridge over the Ammonoosuc had indeed been swept away, but Mark, impelled by an uncontrollable fear—almost a presentiment—had crossed the river, at the risk of his life, on a rude log raft, and reached home only to find it vacant.

The descendants of Mark Warren and his wife still dwell in the fertile valleys of the Ammonoosuc, and the old men still tell to their grandchildren the story of Martha Warren and her child.

A dissipated and unmannerly nobleman, presuming upon his "nobility" once asked Sir Walter Scott, who sat opposite to him at a dinner, what the difference was between Scott and you? "Just the breadth of the table," retorted Sir Walter.

## A WHOESOME LESSON.

"Charles how would you like to go to Allston?" asked Mr. Lyons one morning. "As it is your vacation, and there are some little matters which you might be able to attend to, it would make you a pleasant trip. I met Governor Dunlap the other day. He is an old school friend of mine, and he told me that it would give him great pleasure to entertain you at his house."

"I should like it of all things," said Charles, with difficulty keeping down the delight which threatened to send the blood in torrents to his cheeks, for Charles Lyons prided himself upon his coolness. "A gentleman should never show that he is surprised," was his maxim, and above all things he wished to be quoted as a gentleman. To be sure he was only seventeen, but he had put off boyish sports and manners long ago; studied deeply upon the shade of the newest colors in gloves, or the most elegant style of cravats; was extremely particular about the cut of his coat, and would not have worn an unfastidious hat for all the wealth of the universe. I am afraid Charles stood on the extreme verge of dandyism, and that he was in danger of losing whatever of manliness nature had originally imparted to him from the moment he began coaxing the shade of a handsome pair of whiskers, which made him in appearance years older than he really was.

"Mr. Dunlap is Governor of the State now, is he not, father?" asked Charles, placing his cup of coffee carefully back, for his hand trembled with the excitement which the offer had given him.

"Yes, one of the best men living. I never met his equal for simple, earnest, high-minded manhood. He is nearly worshipped by the people where he lives, and might, I suppose, keep his office for life if he should choose." But it was in a manner forced upon him. I think he cares very little about it.

"I'll have those fine shirts done just in time, then," said Anna Lyons, who was very proud of her brother. "I don't believe you'll see any as handsome in Allston, or any other place. It has taken a month's hard work just to embroidered the bosoms, and there are only two. I'm so glad they're all but finished. How nice you will look in your new suit!"

"I shall try to do the family credit," said Charles, smiling with pride, as he rose from the table. He did not say that he conferred an honor on his father in accepting the opportunity, but undoubtedly he felt he did.

It took several days to get ready, and meantime he made the announcement among his friends that he was going to stop at Governor Dunlap's as if it were only an every day occurrence.

"Didn't know you were acquainted out there," said one of his friends.

"O yes; the Governor's an old chum of father's; know him very well, or rather feel as if I did, he being a particular friend of the family. I expect to make some jolly new acquaintances out in Allston, and I understand the Governor has some pretty daughters. I shan't be slow in getting interested there you may be sure."

And Charles felt that he was irresistible, as he stood before the mirror, critically examining the effect of his new embroidered shirt front, in which he determined to make his debut. He was handsome there was no denying that, though his beauty was rather effeminate than masculine.

His figure was good and his clothes fitted him faultlessly. With his new and elegant portmanteau strapped upon his shoulders, his new and jaunty traveling suit, he felt that he could defy and conquer the world.

Behold him, then, on his journey, the most particular and punctilious of travelers, looking about him with an air of kingly condescension, as if he would say, "Pray notice me. I am an altogether unique specimen, perfectly exceptional as to style, dress and address. My destination is the mansion of the chief executive of the State of—"

Ordinary people had better not speak to me unless they wish to be snubbed. Take notice all."

The journey was nearly ended—the cars were within two score miles of their destination when they stopped at a thriving town, where the many empty seats were soon taken up. Our hero had passed an uncomfortable night, on account of the crowded state of the cars. He had just taken down his stylish portmanteau and placed it on the seat beside him that he might avail himself if possible of more space. One and another speedily seated themselves in the vacant places.

"Is this seat engaged?" asked a voice.

Charles looked up. A young man, in a rough coat a little worse for wear, a common woolen comforter about his neck, a shaggy and well worn cap on his head, stood with one hand on the back of the seat specified. "Decidedly some low fellow," thought Charles, "going up for work; he looks exactly like a hand out of employment."

"Yes it is," was the quick reply. "You had better pass into the next car; there are plenty of seats there—for such as you," was the disdainful addition, conveyed by look rather than speech.

Presently the cars moved on. The young fellow stationed himself against a projection in the partition, and stood there patiently for some time. Then he returned to the charge.

"Does this carpet bag belong to you?" he asked, fixing a clear, cool, blue eye upon our exquisite.

"That's none of your business," retorted Charles.

"Which means no," was the cool rejoinder; and lifting the handsome article, he swung it in place on the rack, and before the astonished Charles could find his tongue he seated himself by his side.

"That was an impertinent trick of yours," said Charles, hotly.

"Paid my fair young man, and an apology to have a seat," was the laughing reply.

"I'm not used to setting with greasy mechanics," was the low retort, not so low, however, but what it was heard by the other, whose eye flashed angrily for the moment. Presently, however, the ludicrous side of the affair seemed to strike him; his honest blue eyes twinkled. He lifted up his worn gloves and counted the holes in them; he cast a glance over the somewhat threadbare coat, and another at the rich clothing of his companion.

"O, we're not so much at odds as might be, if you're a tailor—as I take you to be; and I'm carpenter," he said, laughing.

"You are impertinent, sir," was the only reply vouchsafed by the indignant young man.

"You told me that once before; it strikes me you are not conversant with the rules of polite society. It is not good breeding to tell a man even a disagreeable truth."

Charles gathered himself up in wrathful dignity, and looked from the window. He was angry that a man who appeared as if he were devoted to some menial calling, had the capacity and the audacity to answer him as if he considered himself his equal.

Traveling far west, queried he of the honest blue eyes, in a quiet voice, as if nothing had happened, and he would fain make up and be friendly.

Charles decided not to answer him. Then it occurred to him that he would put down this impulsive intruder once for all, and in the loftiest manner he answered.

"I am going to make a visit to Gov. Dunlap; do you happen to be acquainted with him?" he added, ironically.

"O yes, very well; in fact, I have done several little jobs for him," was the answer, the blue eyes twinkled faster than ever. "Are you sent by any particular firm?"

"I go as his guest, sir," said Charles, haughtily, with a withering glance.

"You'll find the old gentleman a little peculiar," said the young man, assuming a manner of marked familiarity.

"He hates snobs, won't wear gloves and does his own marketing. I thought it would be no harm to put you on your guard."

"Thank you for nothing," was the insolent reply. "I've no doubt I shall find Gov. Dunlap a gentleman."

"Ah! there you are right," said the plain young man with the honest blue eyes, not a whit abashed at the retort.

"He is a gentleman. I happened to know that. No poor man comes to him and is turned away. He never judges a man by the cut of his clothes or the quality of his garments. Yes, we are all proud of our Governor, because he is a gentleman."

This retort made the young exquisite feel unpleasantly warm, but he determined to keep up the appearance of extreme annoyance and did so till the cars stopped at the very city in which he was to stop.

"John," cried the rough acquaintance, beckoning to a man who stood beside a plain, handsome carriage. "This gentleman is going to Gov. Dunlap's; then adding a few words aside he turned to go in another direction. John looking like a man who was forcing himself to wear a serious face, put Charles into the handsome carriage, and our hero had time only to ask the coachman what that fellow was that spoke to him.

"A young man as does odd jobs for the Governor," was the grinning reply; and Charles, quite satisfied that he was right, enjoyed the admiring glances of the crowd and was driven off.

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