



JEANIE McLEAN.

BY. W. D. HULBERT.

I WISH you could have seen her as I saw her that early winter afternoon, coming through the cedar swamp, with a shotgun over her shoulder and half a dozen partridges hanging from a cord tied round her waist. She was tall and straight and splendidly built, and she walked the rough, frozen floor of the forest with an ease and grace such as you never or seldom see in a ball-room. And her eyes were bright, her lips were red, and there was magnificent health and strength and freedom in every look and motion. She must have been twenty-three or four years of age, and I should think that she stood nearly five feet ten in her moccasins. She wore a rough, heavy jacket, and a skirt that hung six inches from the ground; and on her head was an otter-skin cap, skilfully made and wonderfully becoming. Her black hair and eyes, dark skin, and high cheek-bones told of Indian blood, but there was something else in her face, something that seemed to challenge one's respect as well as his admiration. When I heard her name, I decided that it was Scotch. She had the air of a Scotch lassie, top, and but for her distinctly characteristic Northwestern 'Woods attire, she might have passed for one of the heroines of the Western Isles of Scotland whom Black has immortalized. She was a veritable Princess of Thule of the Michigan woods.

The meeting was decidedly unex-

pected, out there in the woods of the Great Tahqnamenon Swamp, and I suppose that my mouth was open as well as my eyes and that I looked like a fool, for she smiled in an exceedingly amused yet altogether pleasant way, as if to help me out of my embarrassment. Fortunately, just at the opportune moment Charley Johnson came up behind me, and I was spared the trouble of speaking.

"Hello, Jeanie," said he.

"Hello, Charley," she replied, and they looked each other in the eyes with a frank pleasure that was a delight to see.

Charley and I were looking lands. My firm had sent me up to Northern Michigan to inspect their timber holdings, and as it was new work to me and Charley was recommended as an expert, I had hired him to go with me. We had just finished our first day of running lines and counting trees, and were about to start for McLean's homestead, somewhere along the bank of the Tahquamenon River, where Charley said that we could stay overnight. He had been in very high spirits for the last hour or two, and I had begun to suspect that he was looking forward to something more than a good supper and a night's lodging. Possibly Mr. McLean had a family, and it was evident from the frankness and warmth of his greeting Jeanie McLean that Charley was by no means a stranger in that family circle. I had never heard him give the slightest hint to that effect, but then in affairs of the

heart, if such there were, men of Charley's mental composition are reticent to the verge of sensitiveness.

Charley, by the way, was a six-footer and an ideal woodsman, erect, broad-shouldered, and strong as a moose. He was thirty years old, and for half his life he had followed the woods as a seaman follows the sea. His father and mother had come from the northern shores of the Baltic, and Charley's hair was yellow and wavy, his mustache was fairly golden, and his eyes were as blue as a Viking's.

"Jeanie," said he, this is Mr. Raymond. Mr. Raymond, Miss Jeanie McLean."

We shook hands, and I discovered that Jeanie had a grip of which the stroke-oar in our college boat-crew might have been proud.

Charley took the shotgun and slanted it over his own shoulder, and we set out for the homestead.

"How's the old man?" he asked.

"Dad's sick with a fever," said Jeanie. "That's why I'm out hunting this afternoon."

Charley laughed.

"Just as if you weren't out hunting most of the time," said he, and then I dropped behind and left them to themselves. All the way home I heard their voices just ahead of me, and now and then a peal of laughter rang out through the quiet woods. The Great Tahquamenon Swamp is not exactly the Garden of Eden, and the difference is particularly noticeable in a November twilight at the end of a hard day's work; but I think it answered the purpose for my yellow-haired Scandinavian land-looker and the half-breed girl, tramping over the frozen moss, with the stars peeping through the cedars and the keen, cold breath' of the north setting the blood a-dancing.

For my part, I was very glad to reach the clearing, and to see the lamp-light shining from the windows of the log house that stood on the river bank. I wasn't used to the swamp and the pine ridges. McLean was in bed, but his Indian wife was bustling about, and had a big kettle of venison stew on the stove. After supper Charley and Jeanie played checkers for an hour or two, while I sat by the stove and speculated and built castles in the air till I found myself dozing off into dreamland.

Two tiny bedrooms were partitioned off at the end of the house, one for McLean and his wife and one for his daughter. There was a bunk for Charley and me in one corner of the living-room, and before nine o'clock we, took off our coats and our rubbers and German socks, pulled the blankets over our heads and went to sleep. I was wakened by the rattle of the stove-lids. The women were getting breakfast, and Charley was sitting on the edge of the bunk, buckling his rubbers. He was entertaining Jeanie with a very lively account of my exploits as a land-looker, which had already brought down on my head a good deal of good-natured ridicule, and was begging her to take my place that day and help him run lines.

Her mother interrupted him with, "Run down to the river, Jeanie, and get some fresh water for breakfast."

Charley was on his feet in an instant, and they went out together. They were gone long enough to make several trips to the river, and to do a good deal of talking between times; but neither of them looked very happy when they came back, and I concluded that true love had struck a snag.

Breakfast consisted of Jeanie's partridges, fried potatoes, coffee, and a small mountain of buckwheat cakes, each one as large as a dinner-plate and of a somewhat greenish complexion. As soon as it was over, Charley and I started out again. But I was not to do any land-looking that day, nor for many a long day to come. Three or four inches of snow had fallen during the night, just enough to cover the ground so that one could not see what he was stepping on, and we had hardly left the clearing when I put my foot into a hole between a couple of roots and sprained my ankle. Charley helped me back to the house, and he and Mrs. McLean fixed me up as well as they could.

"I'll go out alone," said he, when it became evident that I could do no more walking. "You aren't much use, anyhow," he added, with a grin.

I objected, and so did Mrs. McLean. I was a greenhorn in the woods, but I knew enough to be certain that a man who went land-looking alone was risking his life.

"I've looked lands by myself hundreds of times," said he.

"Yes," said Mrs. McLean, "and you'll try it once too often."

He would have stayed if Jeanie had asked him, but she had nothing to say, and would not even look at him.

"I'm going," said he, in a tone that said plainly enough that there was no use in talking about it any longer.

"Have you a revolver?" I asked.

"No," said Charley, contemptuously; "a revolver's no good in the woods."

"Take one of our guns," said Mrs. McLean; but he declared that there was not an animal in the Tahquamenon Swamp that would dare to touch him, and what was the use of lugging a gun around all day? And so he went off without a companion, without a weapon of any kind, and, as we found out later, without even a jack-knife in his pocket.

The morning passed more quickly than I had feared. Mrs. McLean was talkative and—for a while—entertaining. Then she helped me into the other room for a visit with her husband, who was still confined to his bed. The old Scotchman had been a sailor before he took to the woods, and had traveled all over the world: so we swapped stories for several hours.

Jeanie was very quiet. About the middle of the forenoon she brought me a large, heavy jack-knife.

"Is this yours, Mr. Raymond?" she asked. "I found it under the bunk when I was sweeping."

"It's Charley's," said I. "It must have slipped out of his pocket when he was asleep."

She said nothing, but she looked decidedly sober, and I noticed that she put the knife away very carefully.

In the afternoon she went out hunting again, and just after dark she came back with three more partridges. Her cap and jacket were sprinkled with snow, and her cheeks were glowing, in spite of her Indian blood. She had recovered her spirits and was more radiant than ever, but a disappointed look came into her face when she glanced around the room. Charley had not come.

And Charley did not come. We sat up for him until far into the night, but no matter how often Jeanie and Mrs. McLean went to the door and looked out across the clearing, there was nothing to greet them but the wind and the falling snow. So at last we put a light in the window and went to bed. There

would be work to do on the morrow.

When I got up next morning my ankle was better and I thought that I could travel, but in a few minutes it began to swell again. As I stepped across the floor from the bunk to the breakfast table I turned my foot a trifle, and that finished me. I might as well have tried to fly as to take a tramp through the woods. Then McLean got out of bed and dressed, but he was too weak to do anything, and he soon had to lie down again. Jeanie was the only one who was fit for duty. I gave her the descriptions of the lands that Charley had intended to visit first, and she was off before daylight, confident that she would find him.

"Oh," she cried, as she picked up her shotgun and went out, "I'm glad I'm so strong!"

But when she came back at nightfall she, looked as if nothing would ever make her glad again. She had not found Charley, nor seen any trace of him. The snow had covered his tracks completely, and all that she had been able to do was to keep as near as possible to the course that he had intended to take, calling at the top of her voice, and occasionally firing her gun. If he was alive and within hearing he would answer. But he had not answered, or, if he had, she had not heard him. She had been all over the lands, the descriptions of which I had given her, and she was ready to give up in despair.

"I heard a wolf howling, too," said she, as she finished her story; and then, young giantess though she was, she dropped down on her knees, put her face in her mother's lap, and cried. After supper she walked restlessly up and down the room for a while, then went and stood beside her father's bed.

"Dad," said she, "I'm going out again. 'Maybe he's dying this minute.'"

"Jeanie, my girl," he replied, "you must rest to-night. Some one will have to go to McAndrew's camp to-morrow for help, and there's nobody to do it but you."

"I'll go now," she cried, "why didn't we think of it before?"

But her father caught her hands and held her.

"Not to-night," said he. "You never could make it in the dark. Wait till morning, and then you can take the

canoe and go down the river. McAndrew's boys will find him. Don't you be afraid."

The old man was lying, for he believed in his heart that Charley was dead. Any one of a hundred accidents might have befallen him, and McLean knew that if the snow kept on falling there could be small chance of finding even his body. But Jeanie was a little comforted, and presently she went to bed.

Two hours before sunrise she was up and ready to start for the lumber-camp, ten miles away by the windings of the river, but at the door she stopped, hesitated a moment, and went back to her father.

"Dad," said she, with a little quaver in her voice, "where are the bear-traps set?"

One was up the river and another down, and a third was two miles away to the southeast, in the edge of a burning.

"And where's the other one?" she demanded.

McLean glanced at me anxiously, and said that it was set on the quarter-line near the east side of section seven. Jeanie looked relieved.

"That wasn't in the descriptions you gave me yesterday," she said, turning to me.

"No," said I, "but we have a forty up there. It's the southeast of northeast. Charley was going to look the others first, but he may have changed his mind."

A look of dread, almost of horror, came into McLean's face. Jeanie turned white, but she said not a word, and after a moment she took a small three-cornered file from a cupboard and went out. I watched her from the window, and instead of going down the river, she crossed the clearing and struck into the woods towards the northwest, a bee-line for section seven. I have often wondered whether she let herself think of what might be waiting for her at the end of her five-mile tramp. I have heard stories of a human skeleton found in the woods of the Tahquamenon Swamp, with a huge steel trap fast to the leg-bone. About ten o'clock, as I still sat by the window and watched for her, I heard a noise in the direction of the river, and there she was, just stepping into a dugout canoe. I called Mrs. McLean, but before she could reach the landing-place Jeanie had shoved off and

was paddling down-stream with all her might.

* * *

When Charley left the house he started for the nearest of our lands, just as I had supposed that he would, but before he had fairly got to work he changed his mind. There were a few scattered forties up in sections six and seven, lying at some distance from the rest, and without very much pine on them; and he decided to look at them first and leave the bulk of the timber till the next day, in the hope that I would be able to go with him to examine it.

He had not been out more than two hours when he stepped into old man McLean's bear-trap, where it lay on the quarter-line, almost hidden by the newly fallen snow; the steel jaws flew up and caught him around the ankle, and he was securely chained to a large, heavy log.

For a few minutes he did not realize that it probably meant death, a lingering, solitary death of hunger and cold. The trap did not even hurt him very much through his thick woolen clothing, and there must surely be a way of getting out of it. He tried to force the springs down and let the jaws fall apart, but they were too stiff for that, and he had not really expected to succeed.

McLean must have set the trap with a lever, and Charley looked around to see if he had left it within reach. It was leaning against a tree only a rod away, but it might as well have been a mile, and he was not sure that it would have helped him if he had had it. Next he unbuckled his rubber, loosened his socks, and tried to work his foot out of them, but with no better success. The ankle-bones were too large, and the jaws were pinching harder all the time.

He decided that he would have to pull the staple and walk home with the trap on his foot, and, lying down on his back, he braced his feet against the log, grasped the chain with both hands, and heaved on it till his muscles cracked. He might as well have attempted to tear up a big tree by the roots. McLean had made ready for a bear, and there was no use in a man's trying to pull himself loose. Even this did not frighten Charley very much, for he thought that he could at least dig the staple out with his knife, but when he put his hand in



Painted for *Outing* by Jas. L. Weston.

"THE MEETING WAS DECIDEDLY UNEXPECTED." (p. 38r.)

his pocket the knife was gone. For the first time he realized what had happened, and the cold sweat came out on his forehead and he fell to trembling. He sat down on the log, and for a few minutes he lost his nerve completely.

But by and by he braced up again. He could keep himself alive for a day or two at least, perhaps for several days, and help might possibly come. He thought that Jeanie might look for him, even if no one else did. The worst of it was that she would probably go to the other lands first. Mrs. McLean had given him some bread and meat for his lunch, and he determined to make it last as long as possible, but he knew that there was more danger of freezing than of starving to death. If it had been a month later in the season the first night might have finished him.

All that day and the next Charley sat still on his log and waited, shouting every few minutes at the top of his voice. It was tough, even in the daytime, but the night that came between was far worse. Before it was over, he made up his mind that the earth had stopped revolving, and that the sun was never coming back again to the Great Tahquamenon Swamp. He was damp as well as cold, for the heat of his body melted the snow that fell upon his back and shoulders, and the moisture gradually struck through his clothing. Toward morning he slept a little while and woke up thoroughly chilled, colder than he had ever been before in all his life. He rose and tried to warm himself by exercise, but there was not much that he could do with the trap fast to his foot, and every movement hurt his leg cruelly. He ate some of his food and felt a little better for it, but the second day was far harder and longer than the first had been.

Several times during the morning he heard Jeanie's shotgun. He was sure that it was hers and that she was searching for him, for anyone who was merely hunting would not have fired at such regular intervals. Besides, he had heard that gun often enough to recognize its voice. Once he fancied that he could hear her calling, faint and far away, and he stood up and let out a whoop that would have been a credit to a Comanche. He shouted and yelled and fairly screamed, but she never heard him. The wind was blow-

ing from her to him, and must have carried the sound the wrong way. That was the nearest she came, and the next shots were farther off. Charley was almost beside himself for a while as he heard the firing die away in the distance, but before long he pulled himself together again. It was a comfort to know that Jeanie was looking for him, and perhaps next day she would come within reach of his voice. He thought he could hold out a day or two longer, unless the weather turned a good deal colder. Meanwhile there was just a chance that some stray trapper or land-looker might pass that way, and he kept on shouting till his throat was nearly worn out.

A little before sunset he heard something that silenced him, not a girl's voice this time, nor a man's, but a wolf's. For an hour or two he sat quietly on his log and listened. A single wolf was not likely to attack him, and there had not been a full pack in the Tahquamenon Swamp for many years. Still, it was just as well not to attract his attention. The woods were perfectly silent, save for that occasional long-drawn howl. They were awfully, fearfully silent, and the stillness seemed pressing all the life and courage out of him. It was growing dark and getting colder; he was weak with hunger, and his leg pained him fearfully. By and by the north wind began to blow, and he could feel the strength oozing out of him as it struck through his clothing and rubbed its icy hands over his body. He was not so sure whether he could live through another night or not.

Then he thought he heard a slight noise, as if someone was wading very slowly and cautiously through the light snow. He could see nothing, for the long winter twilight was deepening into night, but the sound kept coming nearer. Once or twice it stopped, and then came on again, more deliberately than ever. It was worse than ghostly, for it was real and yet unknown—something that might spring upon him the next moment and set its teeth in his throat, and tear out his eyes with its claws. Somehow, the wild animals of which he had spoken so contemptuously the day before seemed very different, now that he was chained down to a log in the darkness, without a weapon, and with even his strength going. As for a

revolver, he would have given his left hand for a six-shooter and plenty of cartridges. Perhaps the wolf had found two or three companions, and was stalking him. Or perhaps it was a bear, or a Canada lynx. A lynx would fight like a devil sometimes. He was all unstrung, and a fit of terror seized him. He could hardly keep from screaming. And the next moment he could hardly keep from laughing, for he had caught sight of the thing that had frightened him. It was a porcupine, nearly buried in the snow. But he did not laugh, and he did not stir, for a new idea had struck him. The porky was plowing its way straight toward him, and as likely as not it would be close upon him before its stupid little eyes discovered that he was a man and not a stump. Perhaps it would help to keep him alive till Jeanie came. He sat perfectly still, and the porcupine came on until it was almost within reach. Then it stopped, raised itself on its hind legs, stared at him for a minute, and very deliberately turned away. Charley forgot his chains and made a jump for it, fell forward on his face, just touched the porcupine's tail with one hand, and lost it. The jerk of the trap on his wounded foot was too much for him, and he fainted.

When Jeanie came down the quarter-line in the gray of the morning, following the blazes on the trees, she heard a man sobbing like a lost child. Charley never knew how long he lay unconscious in the snow, but when he came to himself it was dark, starry night, and very cold. His left hand was stuck full of porcupine quills, and the sharp pain of jerking them out helped to revive him. He ate the last of his food, and that strengthened him a little. In one of his pockets he found a few matches. There was nothing else within reach that would burn, but he struck them, one after another, holding them between his hands until the blaze died out, and they sent a momentary thrill of warmth through his chilled body. After that there was nothing to do but sit on the log, swing his arms, and try with might and main to keep from falling asleep.

It was like a long, long nightmare. At dawn he fell into a doze in spite of himself, and he dreamed that he was a small boy again, and had run away from his mother and got lost in the woods. Night came, it grew very cold

and dark, and something, he couldn't tell what, was hurting his foot. A wolf howled, and he began to cry. He saw the wolf coming through the trees; it leaped upon him and caught him by the shoulders, and he screamed. And just as it was about to devour him he woke, and there was Jeanie kneeling in the snow beside him. Her arms were around him, her tears were falling on his face, and—yes, she was kissing him. She gave him a swallow of brandy, cut the trap from his foot with her file and helped him up onto the log again. Then she gathered birch bark and wood and started a fire, while he munched cold venison and told her over and over how he had been dreaming, and that not even freezing to death in a bear-trap could make him cry as long as he was awake. Jeanie laughed and said she believed he was awake all the time, and was only trying to make excuses.

"And what were you doing about that time?" asked Charley.

But Jeanie was busy with the fire and she did not answer.

When he was partially thawed out they started for the river, half a mile away, Charley hobbling along on one leg, with one hand on Jeanie's shoulder and the other on a heavy stick. He was very weak, and by and by he struck his wounded foot against a hidden log and fainted again. She had to carry him the last twenty rods. How she ever managed it I don't know, for Charley weighs a hundred and sixty at the very least, but she did. She laid him on the bank and made him as comfortable as she could, and then she came back to the farm for a canoe, paddled down stream to where she had left him, and brought him home.

His strength came back in a day or two, but his foot was still in pretty bad shape and needed the attention of a surgeon. So one morning he and I paddled up the river to a railway station, where we took a train for Sault Ste. Marie. Charley whistled "The Girl I Left Behind Me" as we pushed off from the landing-place, and he told Jeanie he was coming back the next week. I found letters at the Soo calling me home to New York, and I never saw anything more either of him or of Miss Jeanie McLean, but I have no doubt that he kept his word—he was a fool if he didn't.