

# FOREST FABLES

## IV—THE STORY OF THE GRAPE-VINE

By ALOYSIUS COLL

MANY years ago, before the jungles hung heavy with the tangle of the vines, and before the high trees groaned under the veil of ivy leaves, there grew on a little hillock a tender grape-vine. Only a tiny seedling it was. A blushing pink neck showed between two leaves, that stood out like the frills on a little girl's frock, or the wings on a butterfly. Down in the moist soil its slender toes dug into the roots of big trees that stood over it, and so held itself from mounting upward to the sky on the breath of summer winds.

Sometimes it longed to let go, but nature did not wish it to turn into a butterfly. The great world had many of these, which fluttered over copse and dell, and settled here for honey and there for a bath in the dancing sun. No great voice spake out to the little vine, to tell it of the high mission it had. No mighty thunder whispered low promises in its ear. No man passed to say to it that the world needed it. No man showed it the slopes covered with vineyards, where women plucked the clusters of purple fruit. In the visions of the world there was shut out from it the scene of glad carnivals, where fine men and beautiful women pledged their love, one to another, over the rim of the crimson bowl.

And so the vine, which knew nothing of the world beyond the one little valley by the side of which it was born, could not be comforted. Besides, it grew lonely, and longed to ask the trees and the grasses and the hard rocks what they did in the world.

One day the vine crept out a little, and moistening its length from the dews and the summer rain, stretched and stretched, and crept out a little farther. By and by, it could look over the edge of a jutting rock. Below was a sapling, young like itself.

The vine's head grew heavy watching, and nodded far over the jutting rock now. Here was a companion! thought the lonely vine.

"How do you do?" began the little vine, very ceremoniously.

"Good morning," answered the sapling.

"I should think you would come up a little higher," said the vine. "Aren't you very lonesome down in the valley? If you had any ambition, you would like to have your tops waving up in the sky, like your big brothers."

"My brothers were once low shrubs down in the valley, too, and I judge didn't have any meddlesome vines roaming about to offer suggestions about lofty ideals. I can't see that you have gotten up very high in the world. Everybody knows, too, that when you do make any effort to get up you only fall over and cringe about in the leaves, like that snake which coiled himself at my roots an hour ago. So don't preach."

"I'm not preaching," retorted the vine, "and I don't feel any lower because you have attempted to put yourself so far above me. Just yet, with all your talk, you are four lengths below me. Why, a chipmunk this very morning leaped off this rock where I cling, and sailed straight over, your head without so much as rumpling your hair."

And so they fought and had wordy wars in the forest—the grape-vine and the oak sapling. And as the days passed, the sapling grew nearer and nearer the rock where tumbled helplessly about the grape. And farther up the hillside there were other grape-vines—fathers and mothers of the little, vine by the hanging stone. And they too rolled helplessly about on the ground, for at this time, it must be remembered—long, long years ago—the grape-vines were only shrubby stocks, which had not learned to climb.

One morning, when the little vine first saw the sun come up the valley, there was a faint shadow fell upon its face, and looking, lo! there was the sapling's head, close up to it, and a little towering above it. At last! the sapling could laugh.

And laugh it did. "Now, poor deluded child of the forest," roared the green

sapling, "are you still so noisy over high ideals, and still so proud of your elevation? You know it doesn't pay to lie on one's stomach and preach so much philosophy to another upon his feet. And, by the way, remember the farther you creep the lower you go, for I see that you cannot help falling over that rock, and tumbling down to the gulch. Shame on you! little vine, to hang your head so."

And indeed the poor little vine did hang its head, and true it was that every inch that it grew added only that much humiliation to it, for it could not lift its head, and blundered on and on, over and down the jutting rock, hearing daily the titter of derision from the green sapling, and the echoes of laughter from all the other trees in the mighty forest.

But one day a reverse wind blew up the valley. All the tall trees bent before it. The ferns leaned over to the grass, and the grass knelt down and kissed the pebbly soil. And now the wind struck the green sapling!

Proudly it tried to buffet back the wind. It tossed about, and struggled to get free from the strong arms of the breeze, which little by little bent it down and over to the, jutting rock.

"Oh, please don't humble me to the miserable little vine," groaned the green sapling. "Please do blow down the valley and I'll willingly bend to the very feet of

my brother trees; yes, into the very dust that you are stirring up, and the sands that are sifting through your fingers."

But the great wind said no word. He only blew and puffed, and whistled a tune while all things bowed to him.

Not all things! for the little vine had never lifted its head high from the turf, and the great wind only stirred it a little, and lifted it higher from its humble place over the rock.

And lo! the humble vine was lifted high enough to hook one slender finger upon a branch of the green sapling.

"Now I go with you to the clouds," cried the little vine, clinging tighter and tighter, and curling around the twigs and the branches more fingers. Try as the tree did, it could not shake off the vine, Summer after summer it grew and grew, but the grape-vine hung close, and stretched and stretched, till now deep down the valley there is a giant oak, and clinging to the topmost bough is a mighty grape-vine, trembling and hanging to the ground.

And all over the world the grape-vines heard of the wonderful feat of their wise sister, and reached out and clung to green saplings, till now the forest is strung with millions of the graceful vines and the jungles are tangled with them, stretching, even as the proud trees stretch, to the sky.

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## THE TRAGIC TALE OF TWO GOATS

By WILLIAM E. CARLIN

IT was a day in late October. The haze of an Indian summer softened the rugged outlines of the mighty Cañon of Bear Creek, blending in a dreamy harmony of color the sombre firs, the gray, purplish granite, the vivid patches of red and yellow.

A peaceful quiet pervaded all nature, disturbed only by the ripple of the creek below us, and by the occasional mellow note of the leader's bell, as our pack train swung slowly along the trail, which led over the main divide of the Bitter Roots.

From my horse's back, idly viewing the beauties of the scene about me, half dreaming, half awake, I was suddenly roused from my reverie by the halting of the horse in front of me; upon looking ahead, I saw Wright beckoning me to come. There was something in his manner which led me to dismount quickly, and to draw my rifle from its boot. As I reached his side, he pointed to a cliff above us on our left; there, on a wet, mossy ledge, stood four mountain-goats, their white forms standing out against the dark rocks, their