

An Adirondack Rivalry

by Charles Chapin Sargent, Jr.

A story of the North Woods in which a breaker of the game laws and a constable strive for the love of old Bob White's daughter—The heritage of a city bred mother and how it nearly betrayed a girl's sweetheart.

“HEARD the latest news down to Bishop's?”

“Hi” Chester jumped as if a rifle had gone off in his face. He hastily kicked a few more boughs over the buck he had half buried on Fred's upper island, looking up to see who the speaker was, as he completed the hiding of his game. He smiled nervously as he replied:

“Oh, it's you, is it, Rannie? No, I've been up the inlet for a couple of days. What's happened now?”

Randolph Bancroft's grave face did not show that he knew Chester had just taken a deer out of season, nor did he anticipate “Hi's” astonishment which would result from the words:

“Tom Jameson's just come in from the Falls, and he's been made this year's game constable.”

Hi Chester may have enjoyed the reputation of being the most inveterate breaker of game laws on Cranberry Lake, but no one ever heard him swear, so he only blew a long whistle and glanced furtively down to where the channel made through the deadwood above Kimball's Island.

“Is he coming up the lake today, Rannie?”

“I don't think so. Father was down home this morning, and Tom came over to our house to find out if Fred Howlett was in camp. When father said he was, Tom told him he'd

come up on the steamer to Tramp's Retreat tonight, as he wanted to see Fred.”

Hi took a long breath.

“Randolph,” said he, “that news has taken the tuck clean out of me. Say, help me bury this buck better, will yer? I shot him on the way back from Sternberg's, and thought I'd best not bring him down today. I knew it was about time for a constable to come in, but, gee whizz! I didn't think it would be Tom Jameson. You know how we hate each other, Rannie, and I've got to watch out now.”

The two guides had completely covered up all tracks of their landing, and of the burying of the deer on the island. Then they made their way back to their boats.

“When he came into Bishop's and told the fellers that he had been made constable, Ab Thompson up and said: ‘Hum, I know why you wanted to be appointed. You want to land Hi Chester in jail, so you can have a clear field with old Bob White's daughter, Carrie.’ Then Ab gave me the wink, and knowing that you might stumble over a deer on the Sternberg trail, I thought I'd row up and tell you the news.”

The older man had pushed off his boat, but he shoved it close up to Bancroft's and put out his hand.

“Thanks, Rannie, you done me a good turn. I won't forget it.” Then he pushed off again and rowed up the lake.

“So that's what Tom's gone and done,

is it?" Hi said to himself, as he plied his oars. "He went and got made constable, just to get me out of the way. Well, I'll fool the slick coon. I won't give up hunting, not by a darn sight. But if he comes monkeying with me I'll take him for a deer some day when the season's on, and the courts 'll think it was an accident."

Now, in reality, Hi Chester was not of a murderous disposition, and he didn't mean all he told himself as he pulled up towards Umstead Landing. The thought was only prompted by the happenings of the past few months, culminating, as they did, with Tom Jameson's appointment to a game constablenesship.

For two whole years Hiram Chester had been making the trip up the lake to a little log camp that stood back a little way from the beginning of the trail to Umstead Mountain, near the Landing. Old man White lived there with his daughter, Carrie. Hiram's visits to the little house had been out of sympathy at first; for since Mrs. White had died old Bob had grown kind of queer and kept his daughter with him constantly, winter and summer.

Hi Chester had felt sorry for this poor girl, shut off from the life of the few settlers about Bishop's. She was never allowed to go down there to any of the parties or entertainments; so open hearted, good natured Hiram began to stop in at the Whites' on his hunting and fishing trips up Dead Creek and the inlet. Soon these occasional visits became frequent and regular, and then the gossips of Harewood began to tell of "Hi Chester's courtin' of old Bob White's darter, Carrie."

Finally Hiram had proposed to Carrie White. She loved this man for all the qualities which go to make up a likely helpmate through life in the North Woods. Carrie realized that Hi was honest and temperate, one of the best guides in the region, and a good shot, and that he was steady working, logging in the winter, and a well paid guide during the

summer; but—ah, there is always a but to a maiden's affections—Carrie White's mother had not been born in that sphere where she had spent twenty five years of her life. The old women of Harewood could tell of the romance of Bob White and his city bred bride.

It seems that years ago, long before Newton Falls became a settlement, a Mr. Carpenter of Rochester had discovered what a sportsman's paradise was Cranberry Lake, and had spent several summers there in camp with his family. Carrie Carpenter was a girl with just the amount of love of an outdoor life to become charmed with a camper's existence. Bob White was one of Mr. Carpenter's guides, a handsome chap, tall, straight as the pine of his native forests, and possessed of a wistful expression in his face which immediately interested the romantic Miss Carpenter.

The result may be imagined. This woman who had been reared in civilization, gave up everything to marry the guide, Robert White, and live in the woods all the rest of her life.

So that is why there was a "but in the affection of her daughter, Carrie White, for Hiram Chester. The child of this city bred woman, who had elected to forget her old existence and live the wild life of the forest, was situated in an exactly opposite position to that her mother had occupied. Carrie White had been born to the life her mother loved, and she longed for the life her mother had forsaken. Carrie had ambition. She wanted to break away from the narrow confines of being only a guide's daughter. She wanted to go into the civilization that her mother had hated.

That is why she hesitated when Hiram Chester had asked her to be his wife. She felt proud to have the love of the best man in the whole region, and she told Hi so. Hi couldn't see, then, why Carrie wouldn't marry him. She urged him to leave the woods, go out into the world and make a living and a home for her. Then she would consider.

But Hiram Chester was matter of fact. He had known too many of the young men of the lake who had become dissatisfied with the life of their fathers and grandfathers. They had gone into civilization, and the majority of them had confessed themselves failures in the big world, and had been only too glad to come home again to their mother forest.

"I'm not ashamed to be a guide, Carrie," Hi would say when they argued on the great obstacle to their marriage. "It's a natural life. Man wasn't born to live cooped up in cities and tear his life out in one long scramble to get ahead." (Hi had never been further toward the busy life than Carthage.) "What do city people come up here for? They want rest and big air. Why, Carrie, if you and I'd go to a city and live, we'd smother to death. No green trees, no water like that lake out yonder, no nothing, but noise and brick and stone."

Hiram's arguments were good, no doubt, but when a woman's mind is made up, and backed by a strong ambition, not even the persuasive reasonings of a Demosthenes or a Webster can avail aught against her own private opinion.

Thus was Hiram Chester held in suspense for a year and a half. He could do nothing but plead and wait during all that time. Then a new obstacle to the fulfillment of his hopes appeared in the person of Tom Jameson.

That individual was well known to the inhabitants about the foot of Cranberry Lake, who frequently made the trip over the road through the woods to Newton Falls. Tom had been in the paper mill there, and for a while had enjoyed the reputation of being one of the brightest hands employed by the company.

Then that quality of his make up, which has blighted the future of many a man in a higher position in this world's affairs, ambition, cropped out, and Jameson received his walking papers one morning for instigating

a strike among his fellow workers for higher wages.

Tom Jameson naturally drifted back to the home of his boyhood, Cranberry Lake. But he carried his boundless ambition with him.

He said he was only going to be a guide until he could get something better to do outside the woods; but it was not in Tom's nature to sit down and wait until that something turned up. His reputation as a master of wood craft grew, and the hunters that year found in him a capital guide.

Hi Chester up to that time had been considered by the people of Harewood and the settlement's sportsmen visitors to be the best man on the lake with whom to camp and hunt and fish; so when Tom Jameson put in his bid as the best guide, the rivalry between the two men commenced.

Then there was soon a second cause of rivalry between Hi and Tom.

When Tom was a little fellow he had been a great favorite of the late Mrs. White, and now that he had come back home again, old Bob liked to have Tom come to see him and talk of his dead wife.

But Tom soon found another interest at the log hut near Umstead Landing in that woodland beauty, Carrie White. When the girl had come to know Tom, she had straightway found that he possessed the same desire which was always uppermost in her mind, an ambition to be somebody besides a dweller in the wilderness.

At first, the man charmed the girl with tales of the life in the world without. He told her of what he wanted to be, how he was going to leave the lake as soon as a certain city sportsman, whom he had guided that spring, found a position for him in his works at Syracuse. And finally he had asked Carrie to quit her old home and marry him and go out into real life and live.

Carrie White would undoubtedly have complied with the wishes of her new lover if it

had not been for the old affection she still had in her heart for Hiram Chester. She confessed to herself very often that she knew that Hiram was the better man of the two. He was fair and honest, whereas Tom was getting the reputation down at Bishop's of being a little too sharp in his transactions.

So the girl was in a quandary. Her heart declared for her old flame, but her ambition tried to convince her that her life's desire would be satisfied by marrying Tom Jameson and going to live in a city.

When Tom came up the lake, then, the morning after Randolph Bancroft had told the news to Hiram Chester, and announced that he had been appointed a game constable, the old feeling towards Hi was forgotten, and then and there she pledged her heart to Tom Jameson.

As soon as they could, the two planned, they would get married and leave the hated woods for ever.

Hi came up to the Landing that afternoon, and stopped in at old Bob's home. When Carrie asked him if he had heard the news, he colored up and expressed the same opinion as Ab Thompson, that "Tom had only been made constable so that he could catch Hi for killing deer out of season and land him in jail."

The girl naturally defended the man to whom she had so lately plighted her troth, and said further:

"Hi, if you'd only brace up and be somebody like Tom, you'd please every one who cares for you a great deal more than doing as you do, just taking life easy."

"But, Carrie, I work hard winter and summer."

"Yes, but why weren't you made constable?" returned the girl.

"Because I kill deer out of season, that's why." Hi looked down at the girl beside him with just a bit of the outlaw's bravado in the expression of his face. "You don't like me

no less for that, do you, Carrie?"

She couldn't help smiling at the honest look of trust, for the thought passed through her mind that this law breaker was confessing his misdeeds to the promised wife of a game constable.

Hiram mistook the smile for one of encouragement in his lawless shooting and went on:

"What would Tom say if he knew what I'm going to do tonight. I've made a salt lick back near Toad Pond. Making licks is against the law, you know. Then I'm going to watch there tonight with a jacklight. That's also against the law. Thirdly, as the judge would say, if I was caught, which I won't do, I'll be shooting out of season, and, lastly, I'm going to use buckshot. Now, how's that for a combination of busting the shooting laws?" and Hiram threw back his head and laughed in his hearty, whole souled way.

Carrie didn't laugh. She sat still looking out up the lake, thinking the only evil thought that ever came into the girl's mind.

She tried to make it her duty to tell Tom of what Hi was going to do that night, but she knew perfectly, the word duty only concealed the idea that if Tom caught Hiram, the latter could not come into her life with that true blue nature of his that she couldn't help loving, until she was married and had closed her heart to the old love forever.

"What the matter, Carrie? You look as if I'd been caught and was being locked up for a year. Don't you want me to do it?"

In her soul the girl wanted to warn the lad against the risk he was going to take that night, but she crushed her natural impulse with the words:

"Yes, I do," "for then Tom'll catch you," she said to herself. Then aloud again: "But what do you want to take all that trouble for? Don't you kill enough in the daytime?"

"Yes, but I've been seeing big bucks' tracks up near Toad. Then, since Tom's a

constable, it'll be better not to hunt in the daytime with the chances of meeting him and accidentally mistaking him for a deer, you know," and a knowing look came into Hiram's eyes.

"What! Hi Chester, do you mean that you'd be a murderer, besides the worst breaker of the law on the lake? Then you call yourself a fair man, and come a courtin' of a girl with threats like this." Carrie White's eyes flashed scornfully.

"Sho, you needn't get so het up about what I said, girl. I was only a little riled about Tom's coming up here so much and trying to win you from me."

The woman stood up and faced her old love.

"Hiram Chester," she said, "Tom Jameson don't have to come courting me any more; for I've promised to be his wife, and we're going to get married just as quick as we can."

She expected this announcement would open the flood gates of Hiram's long pent up feelings against his rival; but the girl was disappointed. She didn't know how deeply the man cared for her. The real meaning of her words had not yet penetrated to his innermost feeling.

All that he did was to get up slowly. He put out his hand to Carrie and said "Good by" in a low voice. Then he walked across the clearing before the little log house, and as he disappeared down the trail in the direction of his boat the girl noticed that he dragged his feet as if he were wearied by a long journey.

Carrie White didn't have a chance to think of what had happened. The bushes at the other side of the clearing parted, and Tom Jameson stepped out.

The idea flashed through her mind that it was mean of Tom to hide himself and overhear what had taken place between the old lovers. It seemed to her that Tom did not trust her as a true man should trust the woman who

was to be his wife.

"So you told him, did you? I guess he'll steer clear of this place for a while. He won't get the chance any way. I heard what he's going to do tonight, and he'll be sent up for some time when I catch him." Tom came and took the seat outside the cottage door that Hi had just left.

Carrie somehow felt relieved that she did not have to perform what she thought was her duty by telling her constable lover of what Hiram was going to do that night.

"And he threatens to mistake me for a deer, does he?" Tom went on. "He's a nice one to come making love to a decent girl, he is. I'll land him where he ought to be."

Carrie agreed with Tom. He was the hand of the law now, and she was glad that the lawbreaker, Hiram Chester, was gone. Right was on their side, and she could marry this man without her conscience pricking her.

But somehow that evening after supper, when her father had lighted his pipe and sat up before the open fire, Carrie was very restless. She could not sit down and sew. She found no interest in the papers that Tom had brought in from the Falls for her to read.

Perhaps it was the storm clouds that were piling themselves up over the top of Bear Mountain which made her go to the window so often and peer out into the coming darkness. Perhaps, too, it was the thought that two men were out there in the forest, armed, and with hate in their hearts for each other.

Her father noticed her uneasiness and asked the girl what ailed her. Only then did she take up the paper and read the old man to sleep.

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Hi Chester arrived at the lick he had made about five o'clock in the evening. He swung his pack from his back and took from it a couple of blankets and laid them on the ground. Then he trimmed the light of his jack and tried the leather cap on his head to see if it

fitted properly. Afterwards he ate his cold supper.

Finally he slipped a couple of shells into his gun and lay down to wait until it was dark.

Only then did he hear the rumblings of the storm.

“No buck for me tonight,” he said to himself, “but perhaps the rain’ll keep off and go to the north.” So he decided to stay.

It was the first time since he had left Carrie that he had had a chance to think of what had taken place. Now, while he lay there in the deepening shadows of the woods, he realized the true significance of his loss. Everything he had done for the last two years had for its motive the pleasing of Carrie. What if his word was as good as an oath on the Bible, what if he hadn’t been foul mouthed and bad as some fellows he knew, what if he had saved as much as he had been able and had it salted away in the bank at the Falls?

There was nothing in life for him now. Never before had he felt lonely in the woods, but now the silence that stole down with the dark seemed to him the silence of eternity, and his heart beat with a fright that he had not known since he was only a little chap, and was lost in the woods.

A branch cracked near by, and he looked up and held his breath for fear it would be heard. The buck was coming in. He cocked his gun noiselessly and looked around. There was light enough yet for him to see a mark as near as the lick, and he raised his piece to his shoulder.

“Queer,” he murmured. “Something moved then. Perhaps it was only a hedgehog,” and he sank back quietly and lit his jack. He put it on his head and waited again.

It grew pitch dark. Still Chester sat there, his thoughts occupied completely with the news that Carrie White had told him that day.

There was not a breath of air stirring,

and every woodsman’s sign portended the breaking of a storm. But the thunder had ceased over by Bear Mountain, and Hi could catch a glimpse of a bright star between the leaves of the trees overhead.

At last in the distance came the long expected sound. There was the noise of the crackling of twigs to the right. The buck was surely coming into the lick this time. The watcher put his hand carefully up to his jack to feel if it was burning properly, and loosened the blind so that it would come off easily.

The noise grew louder and louder. Then it stopped for a minute, as did Hi’s heart. Old hunter as he was the excitement of jacking always made him tremble until the jack shone forth upon the game and his eye was along the barrel of his gun.

Had the buck smelled him? What air there was now was blowing from the deer. Hiram wondered if he dared risk a shot at that distance before the animal would blow and be off.

Once more the crackling began and came nearer. Now the buck was coming up to the lick. He’d be right in range by the time Hi could focus his light on him. The man’s hand went up carefully to the front of the jack, and a second later a broad beam shot through the darkness between him and the lick.

Chester’s finger was on the front trigger of his gun, and he was swinging both it and the light on the object when right across the hollow there appeared another light, and the voice of his enemy, Tom Jameson, yelled out:

“Hi Chester drop that gun. You’re my prisoner!”

Before Chester knew what had happened his light flashed on the object that had just come in view. Carrie White was standing beside the salted log. Her face was turned towards him, and her arms were outstretched.

“Hi, Hi; for the love of God, run. Tom

Jameson is here and he's come to arrest you!"

Then there were two flashes of fire and two reports from the other side of the lick. Hiram felt a burning pain in his shoulder, and then he fell down and lost consciousness.

When he awoke the wind was coming down through the hollow with frightful force. He tried to raise himself on his right hand, but he fell back, and there was no feeling in that arm at all.

Bright flashes of lightning illuminated the woods, and the hills trembled under the blows of the thunder. He tried to think where he was. He rubbed his face with his left hand and leaned against the rock back of him to collect his senses. Then, as an extra brilliant stroke of lightning impressed on his senses an instantaneous picture of the salted log, and the little hill on the other side, the whole truth came back to him.

Wounded as he was, with his shoulder paining him so that he groaned aloud, the man arose and lighted his jack again from a dry match that he found under a blanket. Then he made his way slowly down into the lick and looked around as if he was searching for something

"Not here. Not here!" He shook his head slowly. "And she came to tell me that Tom was watching for me. He has taken my Carrie and gone away. They've gone to be married, and I'm all alone."

The pain of the wound had driven the man out of his head, and he sobbed softly like a tired child as he mounted the other side of the hollow and found a blanket and a guide's pack. On the back of the wicker basket was painted two big black letters, T. J.

"Tom Jameson," the man repeated over and over again. He had still clung to his gun, and he fired both barrels at the pack. Then he turned, and using the gun as a support, he hunted around until he found the trail.

The storm was now fully upon Hiram

Chester as he made his way painfully towards the lake. The overloaded trees dripped streams of water upon him. The branches of the bushes cut him cruelly as the wind whipped them back and forth, and the whole woods vibrated with the din of thunder and falling trees.

The lightning made his path as light as day. Twice he had to leave the trail to avoid climbing over a tree that had been blown down.

How he ever reached the end of the Umstead trail Hi never knew. It seemed days ago since he left the lick, and the tragic happening that had occurred there that night seemed almost lost in the past. His only thought was to reach old man White's house and tell him that Tom Jameson had stolen away his Carrie. And when a light finally gleamed out of the darkness, Hiram broke into a trot, even though every step seemed to wrench his arm and shoulder from his body.

He passed the window and noticed that there was a lighted lamp on the sill. He fell heavily against the door and kicked, as he shouted:

"White, White; let me in; it's Hi."

The door was opened quickly. He staggered into the room and dropped on a bed of pine boughs.

"White," he gasped, "Tom Jameson has run off with Carrie. I went out to watch tonight for deer, and some scoundrel was false to me and told him that I was going to be there. Carrie found this out and came in the dark to warn me, at the risk of being shot. Tom shot me here—never mind it now. Wait until I finish telling you—and then I didn't know no more till just a while ago. Then I came down the trail to tell you."

A gentler hand than old man White's passed over the wounded man's face, and the voice he loved came to him just as he fainted:

"Tom Jameson didn't run off with me, Hi, dear, and I ain't going to marry him at all. Live here all my life with you is what I'm

going to do, for you're my own true Hiram." him, and his hand grasped hers.
The woman stooped over and kissed