

**THE LAKE OF THE
WOODS, A STORY OF
THE BACKWOODS**

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The lake of the woods, a story of the backwoods by Charlotte Maria Tucker

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CHARLOTTE MARIA TUCKER

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THE
LAKE OF THE WOODS

A Story of the Backwoods.

BY

A. L. O. E.

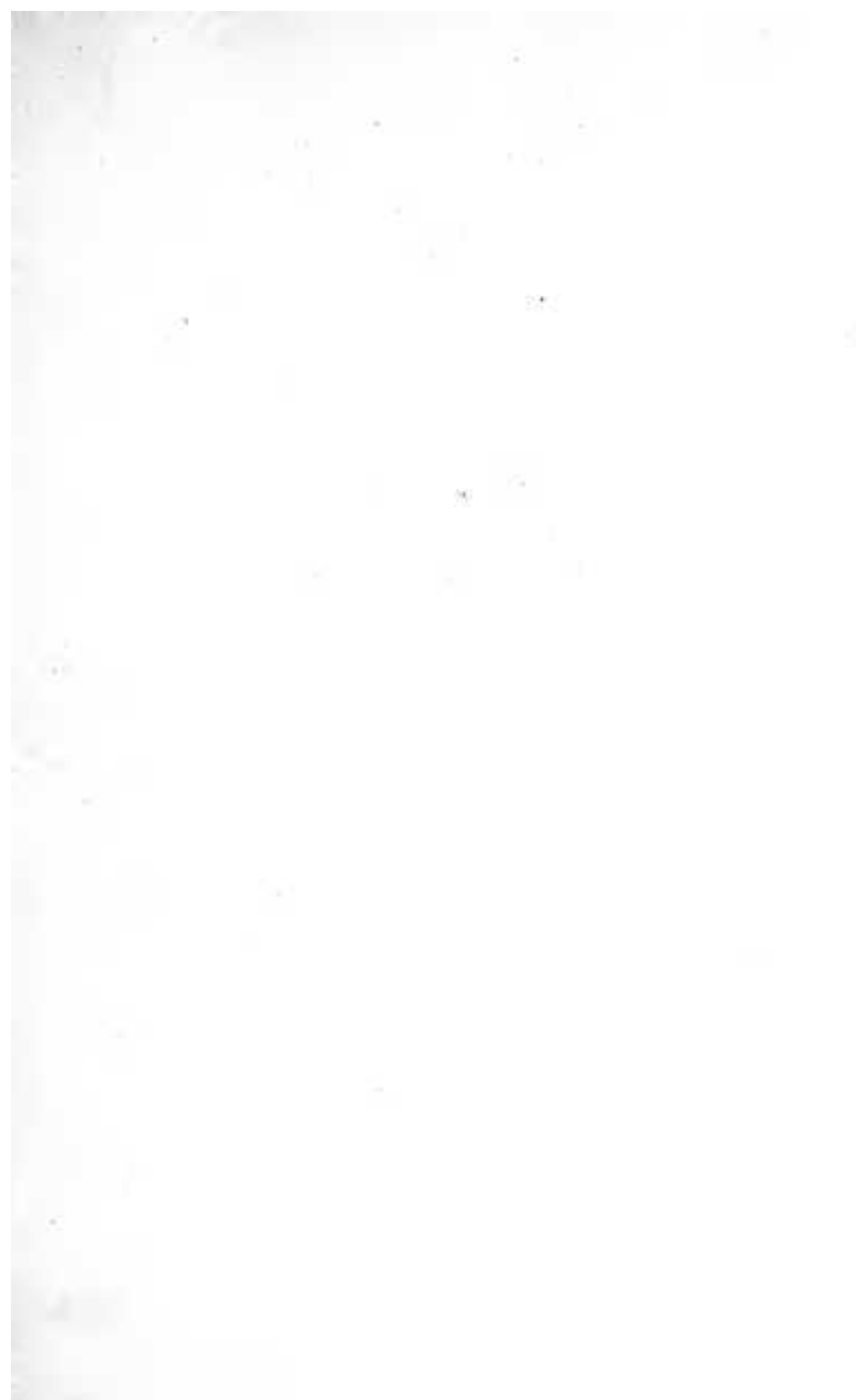
AUTHRESS OF "THE WHITE BEAN'S DEN," "SHEER OFF,"
"THE HARTLEY BROTHERS," ETC.



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THE LAKE OF THE WOODS.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOG-HUT.

"HE does not come back!" mournfully exclaimed Amy Gaveston, turning from the low door-way from which she had anxiously gazed forth into the deepening twilight.

"Would that my boy had never gone! No doctor can help me now. The sands have well nigh run out, and no power of man can turn the glass." The voice which uttered those words, faint but clear, was that of a man in the last stage of mortal sickness, who, tenderly wrapt, and softly cushioned, lay stretched on a pallet in the corner of the log-hut. No stranger could have looked upon his countenance and have doubted that the stamp of death was upon those pale chiselled features, calm in suffering; the violet tint beneath the clear glassy eyes was as the mark left by death's touch.

"Oh! father, do not speak thus!" exclaimed Amy, sinking on her knees on the rudely planked floor by his side. "You will get better,—you have less pain."

"I shall soon have no pain, my child," said Captain Gaveston, with a faint smile. Then glancing anxiously towards the door, he added, "I wish that Alfred were back! It was against my will that he undertook a walk of twenty miles, with the certainty of not returning till night-fall."

"Had the walk been forty miles he would have gone for a doctor for our own precious father!" exclaimed Amy. "Alfred is strong and hardy, as strong at fifteen as many a man at thirty; you said so yourself when you saw him felling the trees."

"Alfred was made for something better than felling trees," said the captain, sadly. "Amy, when I find how your brother's mind is developing, what a grasp of thought he possesses, how he masters every difficulty before him, I sometimes bitterly regret that I ever brought my family to settle in Rupert's Land, to bury talents such as his in a wild unsettled country like this!"

"Alfred would make his way anywhere," said the sister.

"Had he been at a school he would have risen to be the head of it; were he to enter a profession, he would win his way to distinction. How well has Alfred availed himself of his few opportunities of gaining knowledge,—the slight instructions which I could give,—the contents of some half-a-dozen volumes! Yes, it was a fatal mistake to bury him here.

"Dear father, you acted for the best," said Amy softly, as she smoothed the sick man's pillow.

"I thought so, my child, at the time; I saw no other means of securing independence; I would not be a burden on my relations; better a life of honourable labour in a free country, than the vain

struggle to make my way in some over-crowded profession at home. But I sometimes think now that I acted hastily, and rather from my feelings than my judgment; I did not sufficiently seek guidance from Him who ordereth our goings. And now I am leaving you and your brother, friendless orphans in a desolate country, exposed to such hardships as you would never have had to endure in your native land!" The sick man turned his face towards the wall, and groaned.

Amy went again to the door, less this time to look out for her brother, than to hide the gushing tears which would course one another down her pale cheeks. The prospect without had been very beautiful in the glow of sunset, when the crimson reflection of the clouds had lain like a rosy flush on the Lake of the Woods, lighting up its foliage-clad islands, now decked in the many coloured tints of autumn. But the light had passed from the sky, and the glow from the waters, and dark and indistinct loomed the islands like shadows. The wild moan of the wind, as it swept the dead dry leaves from the branches, was the only sound that reached the girl's ears, and to her it seemed like a funeral wail. For Amy, hard as she had tried to shut her eyes to the truth, could not but know that her father's days were numbered, that his orphan twins might soon have to bear his dear remains to the little grassy mound beneath which, not six months before, the form of his wife had been laid. Amy and her brother would be left—she dared not think how lonely; she but felt that the light was fading from her sky, and that life, like that silent lake, lay cold and dark before her.

As the poor young girl stood mournfully listening

to the wind, she again heard the voice of her father.
"Can you see him, my child?"

"Not yet, it is growing so dark."

"And so cold," said the dying man.

Amy instantly re-entered the cottage, and closed the door; then went to the fire, which was burning low, and threw a pine-log upon it. A bright flame leapt up, with a cheerful crackling noise.

"It is so bright that I think that you could see to read to me by it, Amy. Take the Bible, my child, and let me hear some of its words of comfort."

Amy took the Bible from the bed-side, and kneeling by the fire, turned over some of the pages, seeking for some favourite passage, something to soothe a suffering spirit that might soon be taking flight, "something of heaven," she said, to herself. But then the thought arose, "I could not read such a passage aloud, I could not command my voice—I should break down—and my father must not see me in tears," and the daughter turned over leaf after leaf to hide her emotion, as one who is trying, but in vain, to find out some particular chapter or verse.

"Read where you are—you cannot go wrong," said Reginald Gaveston, observing his daughter's hesitation. "On what does your finger now rest?"

"On the twelfth chapter of Romans," replied Amy.

"That glorious chapter!" cried the sick man with more animation than could have been expected from one so wasted and worn. "When I was in the army, Amy, I used to look upon that chapter as containing the marching orders of the Christian, to direct his course through the enemy's country