

**FOREST LIFE. IN
TWO
VOLUMES. VOL. II**

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Forest Life. In Two Volumes. Vol. II by Caroline Matilda Kirkland

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FOREST LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A NEW HOME."

"Where are the advantages, beyond the means, first, of mere subsistence, secondly, of information, which ought not to be indifferent to true philosophers? And yet, where exists the true philosopher who has been able, effectually, to detach himself from the common mode of thinking on such subjects?"

ERRATA. W. SCOTT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.



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FOREST LIFE.

CHAPTER XXXII.

At his outset he was not what he became. * * * It is true there was always a large stock of Individuality — but how many ideas, how many sentiments, how many inclinations are changed in him!

GUIZOT.

A YEAR and a half had elapsed since the abstraction of the grapes, and the skin had grown over Seymour's knuckles, and also the bark over certain letters which he had carved in very high places on some of Mr. Hay's forest-trees; and, sympathetically perhaps, a suitable covering over the wounds made in his heart by the scornful eyes of the unconscious Caroline. His figure had changed its proportions, as if by a wire-drawing process, since what it had gained in length was evidently subtracted from its breadth. The potato redness of his cheeks had subsided into a more presentable complexion, and his teeth were whiter than ever, while the yawns which used to exhibit them unseasonably had given place to a tolerable flow of conversation, scarcely tintured by *mauvaise honte*.

In short, considering that he was endowed with a good share of common sense, he was really a handsome young man. Not but some moss was still discoverable. It takes a good while to rub off inborn rusticity, especially when there is much force of character. The soft are more easily moulded.

Seymour had spent this interval in the most sedulous application ;— such application as few young men exhibit, except those who have been denied the opportunity of acquiring knowledge until they have learned to feel keenly their own deficiencies.

It was by such effort that he had managed to make one year's time, under the best instruction in one of our Western cities, do the work of three at least ; and the result was, that on his return home, his father, a sturdy stickler for republican simplicity, and one of that numerous class who think republicans ought to be rough and coarse, thought Seymour " a leetle too slick " for his liking. Not that our young friend was the least of a dandy. What he had seen of that sort during his city campaign had but served to deepen that contempt for effeminacy which is the heritage of every true son of the forest. But his manners were extremely quiet ;— he no longer gave a certain twang to his parts of speech, without which no language is considered strictly classical among us ; and he had learned to require conveniences for washing and dressing in his own room instead of sharing the family basin

and comb in the kitchen. Besides all this he dressed with a strict neatness which was supposed to indicate an incipient inclination to "stick up;" and he evinced decided objections to taking his turn at milking the twenty cows that came lowing into his father's barn-yard at sunset. These were bad signs.

However, when the old man found that in more important business Seymour was far more competent than before, and especially when he observed the clerky skill and neatness with which he could use the pen, (an accomplishment but too rare in the neighborhood,) his respect for his son increased very rapidly, and he began to think it quite time "to set him off a farm of his own, and try if he could put so much larnin' to any real use."

These eighteen months, so important to Seymour, his scarce-remembered flame, Caroline Hay, had spent in New York, perhaps less profitably. She had gone to the city by invitation of a dear aunt, her father's sister, a member of the society of Friends;—childless, and longing for the cheering companionship of the young. Mr. Hay was scarcely willing to see his daughter depart for the gay city, even under such guardianship as that of his meek and pious sister. He feared that the fascinations of polished life—the very comforts and conveniences of the domestic arrangements she would enjoy—would cause her to look with cold eyes on her Western home, rude and laborious as that must

ever be by comparison. Still, the pleadings of Mrs. Tennett, of Mrs. Hay, and, above all, of Caroline herself, overcame his better judgment, and he gave his reluctant consent to the visit.

For some time Mrs. Tennett's letters were full of her niece's improvement, both in point of health and of the various studies to which she had directed her attention. She could not say enough of her unvarying sweetness of temper, — of her docility, — of her willingness to abide by the plain and quiet style of her aunt's house and company.

"Caroline," she would say, "is so lovable, — so exactly what I could wish for a daughter, that I could almost be selfish enough, my dear brother, to ask her of thee for a life-long comfort. With four sweet girls left, would it be too much?"

But gradually, and by degrees almost imperceptible to any but a parent's watchful heart, the good aunt's letters had assumed a different tone. Caroline had become very healthy and blooming, and went out a good deal. She had become acquainted with "a number of world's people," so wrote her kind and scrupulous guardian; and her father was given to know that dress was much more in requisition than formerly by frequent requests for money from Caroline herself.

Then Mrs. Tennett felt obliged to mention that her niece was receiving the attentions of a young man whose gay exterior and plausible address seemed to please her more than her aunt could

think safe, since the gentleman, though only an *employé* in a public office, yet carried the air and indulged in the expenses of a man of fortune. After this followed a silence of unusual length.

Come we now to a cold evening in May, the west yet red with the last sun-gleam, while the north and east were heavy with clouds driven on by a bleak and damp wind. A storm was evidently in prospect, yet Mr. Hay, well wrapped, mounted Hourglass for a ride to the post-office, three miles distant. Many times had he done the same, hoping for a letter from Caroline, now the theme of many an anxious thought, and as he went, he resolved, should he be as unsuccessful now as before, he would write requesting her immediate return, so strong a hold had the idea of impending ill taken of his mind.

But this evening, so soon as he could succeed in approaching the counter at the post-office, a counter that served as well for the dispensation of "bitters" and tobacco as of letters, he received a letter in the hand-writing of his sister. It was closely written and carefully crossed, yet there stood Mr. Hay, — elbowed and shoved, — amid all the din of spelling out newspapers, higgling about postage, and anxious but ineffectual efforts to get letters without paying for them — until he had read it quite through, by the dim rays of the one greasy lamp which shed its oil and a modicum of light from a beam over his head.