SARA WARE BASSETT

THE STORY OF LUMBER

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by

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PLEASE NOTE

These books were written about 100 years ago and show the way people talked, thought, and acted back then. They tell the story of how resources like cotton, lumber, leather, and gold were developed—a process that depended on the hard work of many people. Sometimes the work was done by those who made the profits, and other times it was done by people who were not free, including enslaved individuals.

We know that some parts of these stories include ideas that we now understand to be hurtful and unfair. Our aim in republishing these books is not to support those old views but to share our history so we can all learn from it. By looking at the past, including its mistakes, we hope to learn important lessons that will help us create a kinder and fairer future.

We invite you to read these stories with an awareness of their time and to think about how far we have come—and how much work there is still to do.

Contents

To

DALLAS LORE SHARP

a lover of the woods,

this book is gratefully dedicated.

It gives me pleasure to acknowledge the kindness of the Hon. Gifford Pinchot who, because of his friendship both for the American Forest and for the American Boy, has generously placed at my disposal his "Primer of Forestry."

I am also very grateful to Mr. Fred H. Thompson, a member of the staff of the *Boston Post*, who had the good fortune to go down the Connecticut with the "Big 1911 Drive," and who has permitted me to make use of his experience.

S. W. B.

CHAPTER I

THE CLOUD AND ITS SILVER LINING

THE alert specialist looked critically at the boy before him, and shook his head.

"There will be no more books for you this year, young man!" he declared, smiling kindly. "You've been overdoing it, I'm afraid."

The boy closed his lips tightly, but disappointment and consternation were so evident in his face that the physician placed a hand upon his shoulder, saying cheerily:

"Why, my lad, most boys of your age would be but too glad to be cut loose from lessons. It is not as if you were to be on the shelf all your life. You'll take a year's rest and come back to study with those eyes of yours keener than ever."

Dick Sherman tried to smile.

"Eyes are not made of iron, boy. I'll be bound you've been working at mechanical drawing. Yes? I knew it! And the Greek alphabet? Yes. And mathematics? Yes—yes—yes. And your eyes, left weak from the measles you had recently, just

kicked up and fussed at being overworked. Now you simply must give them a rest if you want them ever to do anything more for you. But remember, all the learning does not come from books; and your brain need not go to sleep while your eyes are on a vacation. You'll have to exercise them, and I'm going to get your father to send you off to some place where there are things worth learning, if they are not in books."

"But my class will go on without me," stammered Dick, wretchedly.

"I'm afraid so, sonny."

"And the fellows will make up the sophomore ball team, and I can't be on it."

"I suppose not."

"And I'll have to drop a year behind all my friends."

"Yes."

"And the school paper; and the basketball; and the hockey team—" Dick choked a little.

"Yes, I know just how hard it is."

"And the class will enter college without me—I'll never be able to catch up with them."

He turned away toward the window.

"It is hard luck," put in the older man, "but wouldn't you rather be a year late and take two good eyes with you to college than to go through life with no eyes at all?"

"Is it as bad as that?" Dick asked, soberly.

"That's about what it is. I know just how cut up you feel," said the doctor, warmly, "but I know, too, that you are enough of a man to buck up and make the best of it. You are not the only one disappointed. Your father and mother will be as sorry as you are. You can help make it easy for them by being

brave yourself. This is the first big thing you've ever had to face, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, now's your chance to show what you're made of, and prove to your parents that you are worth all they have done for you."

Dick squared his shoulders.

"I'll try, sir."

"How old are you?"

"Fifteen."

"And here you are with a disappointment big enough for a full-grown man—that's a great compliment, Dick!"

The boy swallowed hard.

"You know it is no sort of a ship that can sail only in fair weather."

A faint smile crept over the averted face. Sailing was Dick's favorite sport. He held out his hand to the doctor and turning, faced him fairly.

"I'll do the best I can, sir," he answered, modestly.

As he walked out of the physician's office and started home, this resolve strengthened with every step. But that the disappointment was a crushing one, there was no denying. All through his freshman year in high school his eyes had bothered him, but he had fought along—foolishly, he now confessed—thinking they would soon be better. He had been trying to make the baseball team, and had worked hard to keep his place on the school paper. Then had come the hockey matches and skating. Study had, of necessity, been pushed to evening, or early morning, in a faint light where letters and figures were blurred and uncertain. Long ago he might have

told his parents that his eyes ached, but he feared athletics would be cut off if he did so, or that he should be put into glasses—an annoyance which he did not feel he could bear.

But wearing glasses, and even the loss of all the ball teams in the world could not equal the calamity which had now fallen. Dick was man enough to argue that he had no one but himself to blame for this unlucky plight, and he therefore determined to bear it as bravely as he could.

So busy had he been with these arguments that he was surprised to find that, as he reached his conclusion, he was turning into his own front gate. He walked firmly up the steps and inserted his key in the lock of the front door, but before he could turn the latch the door swung open, and his mother met him.

Mrs. Sherman was a short, plump little woman, with a smile that smiled itself until you had to smile in return—at least Dick always did.

"Well, what did Dr. Haughton say, Dick? I suppose it is spectacles. Never mind, dear. They are not so much trouble as you think, after you get used to them. Besides, if you wear them all the time, you will always know where they are. Mislaying spectacles is the worst part of being tied to them."

While speaking she bustled about, helping the boy off with his coat, and glancing sharply into his face as he followed her into the sitting-room.

Mr. Sherman put down the paper as his son entered.

"What did Haughton say, Dick?" he asked, stooping to stir up the fire. "More spectacles in the family, I suppose."

"It is worse than that, father."

Struggle as he would, a tremor crept into Dick's voice.

"It is no books at all for a year, at least," he continued, more firmly. "You will have to turn me out to pasture, I think. Dr. Haughton says some way-up nerve has gone on a strike—he is going to telephone you about it—and he says that I've just got to stop everything until it is ready to come back to work."

In spite of the boy's attempt at control, his chin quivered.

Instantly both parents understood.

"Well, well, lad, it might have been much worse—try and think of that. Let us be thankful that a year can repair it all. Now we will think of something for you to do in the time; something you will enjoy, and that will keep you out of mischief."

Mr. Sherman rose and came toward Dick.

"Don't worry about it, my boy. We'll make some plans together, and perhaps it will come out better than you think."

"Dr. Haughton said," persisted Dick, honestly, "that if I had told you about my eyes last fall, or given up studying evenings—"

"Well, we are not all sages at fifteen," interrupted Mr. Sherman. "If you see you were foolish, remember the lesson and do differently next time."

"It is mighty good of you, father, not to rub it in," murmured Dick, gratefully. "You see, I was trying for the ball team; and there was basketball, hockey, and the school paper. I hated the thought of glasses—they are such a nuisance, and the fellows would guy so, and call me 'Professor.'"

"I understand, lad. It isn't all your fault, either. Your mother and I ought to have seen it ourselves."

During dinner nothing more was said about the matter, as it had always been a rule of the Sherman household that

unpleasant subjects should not be touched upon at table. But when the three were once more in the library, and a blazing fire softened the chill of the April evening, the question was once more taken up.

The first suggestion was Mr. Sherman's office, but there was nothing Dick could do there which did not require the use of his eyes. Plan after plan was built up, only to be overthrown. Dick was becoming discouraged.

Two hours passed in fruitless debate, then suddenly Mrs. Sherman cried:

"I have the very thing for you, Dick! Why didn't I think of it before? How would you like to join Uncle Alf in the Canadian woods?"

Mr. Alfred Houston was a member of the Forest Commission having in its charge the inspection of vast tracts of timber land which stretched thousands of miles over the densely wooded portion of New Brunswick.

The instant Mrs. Sherman suggested the idea Dick's eyes brightened, and he started up eagerly.

"That would be the very thing, mother. I'd like it above everything else. May I go? Would Uncle Alf let me come?"

"A letter or two will settle that," Mr. Sherman answered, smiling at the boy's earnestness. "It certainly is a fine plan, if it can be carried out. You could learn a great deal about trees and lumbering, and you would be having a jolly good time, too. Only, if you go, Uncle Alf must give you some work, for you do not want to be an idler. There are many things you can do, or learn to do, which will help him. And you must promise, before you start, not to go into foolhardy adventures which will make you a care to him, as well as a worry to us."

"I'll give you my promise now, father," cried Dick.

Mrs. Sherman laughed.

"I think there will be time enough for that when the matter is settled," she said.

For a week Dick was all impatience, while letters sped between his home and the distant province. Surely there never was such a long week!

Then came a telegram, characteristic of Uncle Alf:

Will meet Dick at St. John station April twentieth and purchase his kit there.

Signed: ALF.

Dick threw his cap high into the air after reading the message. It seemed too good to be true! Greek alphabets, mathematics, the school paper, even the ball team, faded into nothingness in the face of this greater glory. Dick was surprised to find, in the two weeks preceding his journey, that many an envious lad of his acquaintance would gladly have cast books and bat to the burning to have been allowed to join the expedition. Only those who knew Dick best realized that his high spirits concealed a disappointment far more bitter than he permitted himself to confess.

"It is easily seen, Dick," observed Dr. Haughton, the oculist, jokingly, "that the trouble with your eyes was all a bluff. What you really wanted was to go off for a good time—and you are going to have it, too!"

Dick threw back his head, smiling a little gravely.

"It is not every foolish boy who finds such a pleasant punishment waiting for him, Doctor. I do not deserve it."

"You deserve it for being so plucky, and making the best of things," returned the big man, putting out his hand.

And then Dick knew that the sympathetic old physician understood.

CHAPTER II

INTO THE WOODS

R. ALFRED HOUSTON proved he was no novice in purchasing the forest outfit necessary for a boy. When he and Dick embarked on the narrow branch railroad which was the nearest means of reaching the carry to McGregor Lake, a box of khaki suits, corduroys, flannel shirts, woolen stockings, heavy underwear, and low-heeled, water-proof boots accompanied them. These trappings did not interest Dick nearly as much as a pair of real moccasins made by Micmac Indians, or a short hunting knife, both of which his uncle had added to the equipment. The moccasins had gaudily beaded toes, and stout thongs for fastening; and the knife was in a case of deerskin, with a handle of roughly notched ebony. Dick had suggested a handle smoother in design, but Uncle Alf answered:

"The only way to choose a hunting knife is to consider the steel, and the grip you can get on the handle. Now try it for yourself."

Dick took up the one of smoother design, but clutch it as tightly as he would, the blade turned in his hand.

Then he tried the other.

Instantly he saw the advantage of the crisscross markings.

Besides the moccasins and knife, Dick had two other treasures presented to him by his father before leaving home— a fly-rod of split bamboo, and a light rifle.

What boy could have asked more?

And now as the train rattled, bumped and swayed, Mr. Houston talked of the woods, and his work there. Dick had an indistinct idea that his uncle's business was to "save the trees," but just why he should be traveling to a large lumber camp where he acknowledged they were to see them *cut*, Dick could not fathom. However, he listened, confident that his questions could wait.

They had ridden nearly two hours before the train stopped with an extra big bump and fish-rods, rifles, sweaters, and satchels were bundled out upon the platform of the very smallest station Dick ever had seen.

"Is this a place—a town?" he asked doubtfully.

"I don't wonder you asked, Dick," laughed his uncle. "Yes, this is Raven Brook, and here is Jake waiting for us. How are you, Jake?" to a bronzed woodsman before them. "This is my nephew, Dick Sherman. Just now he knows more about books than he does about trees, but we're going to change all that. I'll have you know, Dick, that Jake will be the best professor you can find. What he doesn't know about the woods isn't worth knowing. You've lived in the woods all your life, haven't you, Jake?"

The big fellow laughed with pleasure, holding out his hand to Dick.

"'Spect I was born in the crotch of a tree," he drawled.

He swung up the satchels in his hand, and led the way to the rear of the platform.

Here was another novelty for Dick!

The wagon awaiting them was in reality merely two oil-cloth-covered seats lashed upon a mud-caked running gear, with wheels very far apart. It did not look as if it could hold together, and Dick pictured with amusement the wheels journeying off, leaving the seats somewhere by the roadside. But he climbed in after his uncle, only to encounter another surprise.

After Jake had tied the luggage firmly to the back of the strange vehicle, he began winding the cords about Mr. Houston and the boy himself, fastening them securely to the back of the seat.

"Feel like a baby in a baby-carriage, I'll bet, Dick!" he chuckled. "Don't they ever tie folks where you come from?"

"Not when they are over four years old," answered Dick, laughing.

"Well, you'll be mighty glad of that rope later, I can tell you!"

"How is the carry after the storm?" asked Mr. Houston. "Pretty bad?"

"Washed out in places, sir. We'll have to fill in with boughs below the second bend. But it's a park compared with last year."

Jumping in, he gathered the lines into his hand and started.

"The men were out to Raven yesterday, sir, so we won't have to stop for provisions."

As the wagon made its way through the scattered settle-

ment, Dick noticed that everyone they passed hailed his uncle with some word of greeting, and that Mr. Houston had a pleasant word for each. The town itself was the most dilapidated one the boy had ever seen. In fact, there was nothing to it but a few roughly boarded houses, a tiny church, and group after group of sawmills along the bank of the river.

As for being roped into the wagon—Dick could see no use in that, at all!

But after they had creaked for some time along the red clay of the level roads, they suddenly turned into a narrow, grass-ribboned path, and Jake shouted:

"Now, Mr. Dick Sherman, we are off for the woods!"

And they were off, as Dick soon found, on a roadway differing widely from the New York boulevards.

First, there was the mud! The heavy wagon wallowed along, splashing the ferns and brush beside the path. Mud caked on wheels, harness, and horse. Only the burlap and coarse blankets which covered the travelers and their luggage saved them from becoming unrecognizable.

Then came huge rocks which jutted into the road, and over which one wheel heaved, only to drop afterward into the mud with a tremendous "splosh." Dick and Uncle Alf shot from one end of the seat to the other, and Jake called:

"How 'bout that rope now, my lad?"

"It's all—right! I—never—could—stick—in—without—it!" panted Dick.

"Rough, crossing the Channel to-day, isn't it?" exclaimed Mr. Houston.

"If you call this like a park, I'm glad I did not come last year," cried Dick, as he and his uncle were crowded for an instant to

one end of the seat, only to be jostled, the following second, to the other end.

Then came more splash, splash, splash, as the brown mud creamed about the wheels!

After this followed a new sensation.

They were out of the mud and bump, bump, bump, they went over a stretch of road made by placing even-sized tree trunks close together, from left to right across their path. This motion was far worse than the others.

"What do you call this?" gasped Dick, his voice being shaken out of him by the jar of the wagon.

"This is a corduroy road, my son," answered Jake, enjoying his distress. "Have these in New York State?"

"I—hope—n—n—n—o—t!"

It seemed as if that corduroy road had no end, but finally, it sloped gently downward, and the next Dick knew they were splashing through a brook, the clear water of which was almost level with the hubs of the wheels, and from which the wagon emerged "fresh as from the laundry," Jake said. Then they were off again and away through more mud; over more rocks; and jiggling across more stretches of corduroy.

Would they ever reach McGregor Lake? Dick wondered.

It was getting late and he was hungry. Moreover, he felt lame and sore from the continual roughness through which, for hours, he had been riding. But he made no complaint.

Probably his uncle was tired too; Dick thought he must be. The older man, however, chatted as they drove along, calling attention to the gigantic pines—straight as arrows—which towered over their heads. Dick had never seen such trees!

"That is where we get our masts, Dick, and our telegraph

They Were Crossing A Stream

poles," Mr. Houston remarked proudly. "You have no handsomer trees than those—even in your state."

"No, sir. They are the biggest ones I ever saw."

"Those saplings must be thinned, Jake," continued Mr. Houston, pointing to a group of young spruces.

Again Dick wondered how Uncle Alf could be working to "protect the forest" if he thus proposed cutting and thinning the trees, and this time he was on the point of asking when *jar, jar, jar,* they went rumbling over more corduroy. This time it was even a worse rattle than they had met before, and, looking ahead, Dick saw they were crossing a stream by means of a log bridge. The trees of which this was made were but little longer than the wagon was wide, and every moment there seemed a good chance that a wheel might run off the edge.

"Nice bath we'd get if it did," he thought to himself, as he glanced down into the water.

"But it won't," Uncle Alf said aloud, "so don't worry."

Dick started.

"I don't see how you knew," he laughed, "but I *was* thinking that very thing. I should not mind the swim, but I do not like being tied in."

Mr. Houston, meantime, turned critically in his seat, examining the bridge.

"Who laid this roadway, Jake?" he demanded sharply. "The trees are undersized. This sort of thing won't do, you know."

"Peter's gang cut the spruces, sir."

"Well, Peter's gang will have to stop slashing into saplings, or there will be trouble. You see, Dick, they have cut small, straight trees that should have been left to grow into big

fellows, like those we saw just now. You know what it is to have ripe fruit?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, trees are ripe for gathering, as fruit is. When they get their growth they should be cut, to make room for younger trees. But what will happen if you cut them before they are ripe?"

"You won't get such big trees," answered Dick, promptly.

"And will you get so much money for smaller trees?"

"I suppose not, sir."

"And by and by, when you have cut all these small trees and want big ones, where will you be?"

"Why, there won't be any big ones."

His face brightened, for he began to see what "protecting the forest" meant.

"And suppose," went on his uncle, "that you cut all the little and big trees at once, will you have any to cut next year, or the year after?"

"No, sir. But I never thought of it before."

"Jake and I have thought of it, though, eh, Jake?" queried Mr. Houston. "And that, Dick, is what we are doing at McGregor Lake. We are not cutting the trees ourselves, but we are trying to show these short-sighted woodsmen what to cut."

"I see, sir. And then they cut the trees you tell them."

"That's just the rub, my boy. Some of them do not want to cut the trees we tell them. They do not know enough to see it is the best way in the end. So Jake and some of the others are trying to help me teach them. I shall expect you to do some teaching, too."

"But I don't know anything about it—I'd help you, if I did."

"Jake and I mean you shall know."

"And these are some of the lessons that are not in books," thought Dick. "Well, I have learned something already."

They had now jogged far into the forest, churning through more mud and over more boulders. Dusk was gathering and it was very still. From out of the wood came the chill breath of the pines, prompting Dick to wriggle into his sweater. Then he listened. Far off he could hear voices and snatches of song, while the faint odor of a fire drifted toward them.

"It's the camp, Dick," Mr. Houston said. "I am sure you are glad. I am! Do you suppose you are good for a potato and a bit of bacon?"

"Two potatoes, sir, I think," returned the boy.

"On a pinch, they might find two for you," chuckled Jake.

Meanwhile the voices came nearer, and in a moment the horse plunged through brakes and brush, and stood beside a group of rough pine shanties, on the shore of a large lake. Many men hurried hither and thither, greeting Mr. Houston; nodding to Dick; untying the travelers and their luggage; and unharnessing the horse. Then Dick followed his uncle into a small lean-to.

At one end of the little cabin was a platform slanting toward the center of the room, and covered thickly with fresh pine boughs.

"That's our bunk, lad."

Dick nodded.

Had his uncle proclaimed that they were to sleep standing upright, he believed he could have done it.

This certainly was real camping! Already he was anxious to be free of his city suit and inside some of the rougher clothes

crowding the corded box in the corner. But his uncle left him only time enough to drop the luggage, hurrying him off to the cook-house. Here on a long wooden table built crudely of timber and surrounded by long benches, Dick found a tin plate, flanked by fork, dipper, and spoon of like metal. And by the light of a lantern he ate two large potatoes, heaped about with slices of sizzling bacon.

Then he remembered vaguely dipping water from a bucket into a tin basin on a shelf outside the cabin door; bathing sleepily; tumbling into woolen pajamas; and then rolling himself in the coarse blankets upon the pine boughs. From somewhere came dancing firelight and the crackling of logs. Then, amid the great silence of the forest, he heard only the borers, working ceaselessly in the rotting timber of the lean-to. Afterward even this ceased, and Dick Sherman slept.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST SHOT

WHEN Dick opened his eyes amid his new surroundings the next morning, it took him a moment to remember where he was. Then the chilly spring breeze, blowing stiffly from the lake, brought him to his senses. His uncle was already gone, only a hollow in the pine boughs beside the boy marking the spot where he had slept.

Dick sprang up. He found the tin basin and bucket inside the cabin door, and after a dash of cold water, he hurried into a flannel shirt and corduroys. Round his neck he knotted a scarlet handkerchief, as he had seen Jake do, and running his leather belt through the case of his hunting knife, he pulled his sweater over his head, and started for the cook-house.

Although it was scarcely light, the camp was already astir, and as the boy dropped down on the bench beside his uncle, he was not a little mortified to find that most of the lumbermen had already gone, and that he himself was the latest