



Hannah had gathered an armful of dry wood and was just starting back to Rebecca when a little, frightened cry made her stop suddenly and look quickly around. In a moment the noise was repeated, and she realized that it came from a pile of logs near the riverbank. Hannah put down the wood and tiptoed carefully in the direction of the sound.

As she came near the logs, she could see a little gray creature struggling to get loose from a coil of string in which its hind legs were entangled.

"Oh! A rabbit!" Hannah exclaimed. "Perhaps it's Trit!"

She ran quickly forward. But the little creature was evidently more alarmed at her approach than at the trap that held her, and with one frantic leap, she was off, the string trailing behind her. Her hind feet were still hampered by the twisting string, however, so she came to a sudden halt.

"Poor Trit! Poor Trit!" called the little girl pityingly as she ran after her. Just as she was near enough to touch her, another bound carried the rabbit beyond her reach. On leaped the nervous creature, and on followed Hannah until they were some distance below the mill and near the river's sloping bank, over which the rabbit plunged with Hannah following hurriedly after. A small boat lay close to the shore, and the harried rabbit jumped in and dove for cover under the seat, where, twisted in the string, she lay cowering and helpless.

Hannah climbed into the boat and gathered up Trit (as she called her) and patiently and tenderly untied the string from the frightened, panting little captive, talking gently as she did so until she finally lay quiet in her hands.

The little girl was so wholly absorbed in her task that she did not notice that the boat was not fastened or that her spring into it had jolted it from the shore. Not until Trit was

free from the string did she look around, and by then the little boat was several feet from the shore and beginning to move rapidly downstream.

If Hannah had just stepped overboard, then she could easily have waded ashore and made her way back to the mill; but she was so surprised to find herself adrift that no such thought occurred to her. And in a few moments, the boat was in deep water and being pulled along with the current, heading swiftly downstream.

On each side of the river, the woods grew down to the shore, and now and then the wide branches of overhanging trees stretched for some distance over the water. A blue heron rose from the river, making its loud call that masked Hannah's voice as she cried, "Father! Father!"

But even if Mr. Weston had been near at hand, he could hardly have distinguished Hannah's voice over the rushing of the waters. And now Hannah was too far downstream for any call to reach her father or Rebecca and Paul, who were all anxiously searching for her.

At first the little girl was not terribly frightened. The river ran to Machias, and had it not been that she was sure her father and sister would be worried by her disappearance, Hannah would have thought it a fine adventure to go sailing down the stream with her captured rabbit. Even as it was, she had the gleeful thought of Luretta's surprise and Melvina's admiration when she should tell them the story.

However, she soon discovered that the boat leaked, and this made the matter considerably more serious. Holding the rabbit tightly in one hand, she took off her fur cap and began hastily to bail out the water, which had now risen to her ankles. Very soon the little cap was soggy and dripping, and Hannah began to wonder how long such a leaky craft could keep afloat.

Both Hannah and Rebecca could swim; their father had

taught them when they were very little girls. Hannah knew that if she left the rabbit behind, she could reach the shore safely; but she resolved to find a way to save them both if possible. She decided at last to clutch at the first branch within reach, hoping in that way to scramble to safety with Trit. But the boat was being carried steadily along by the current, and she was unable to get a hold on anything to slow her down even as the water came in constantly about her feet.

"I mustn't get frightened," Hannah said aloud, remembering how often her father had told her that to be afraid was to lose the battle.

The boat swayed a little, and Hannah, who had been standing, hit her knees against the board seat. In this way she discovered that it was wobbly.

"I never thought of the seat," she said, slipping down to her knees and pulling the seat loose from the support on which it rested. It was hard work to use the board as a paddle with only one hand, so she lodged the rabbit firmly between her feet lest it think of springing to freedom only to find itself suddenly in the river. Hannah was strong and resolute and managed to swing the boat a little toward the shore, so when a turn of the river came (bringing the boat closer toward a little point of land), she realized at once that this was her opportunity. Scooping up Trit and holding her close, she sprang into the shallow water and in moments was safe on the shore.

The dinghy, now half filled with water, moved slowly on; and Hannah knew that it would not be long afloat. She looked about her landing place with wondering eyes. Behind the little grassy point where she stood, the forest stretched far and dark; the curve of the river shut away any view of the course by which she had come, but she could look down the smooth-flowing current or toward the

wooded shores opposite.

The rabbit moved uneasily in her hands, and the little girl smoothed her fur tenderly.

"I don't know who will ever find me here—unless it should be Indians," she said aloud, remembering the canoe that she and Rebecca had noticed as they sat on the big rock.

Hannah felt a tightening feeling in her throat at the remembrance. It seemed so long since she had seen her sister and her father.

"And it's all your fault, Trit," she told the rabbit. "But you could not help it, I know," she added quickly. Suddenly she remembered that the rabbit must be hungry and thirsty too, and for a little while, she busied herself in finding tender leaves and buds for Trit to eat and in holding her close to the water's edge so that she could drink. Then she wandered about the little clearing and up to the edge of the shadowy forest. She began to feel hungry, and she knew by the sun that it was well past noon.

Oh! If only that Indian we saw in the canoe would venture downstream, she thought longingly. For Hannah well knew that when night came, she would be in danger from the wild beasts but that if she were found by a friendly Indian (as she believed many of the Indians who hunted and fished in that region to be), he would surely guide her safely back to her home.

An hour or two dragged slowly by. Hannah was very tired. She held Trit close and sat down not far from the river's edge.

"Father will find me some way," she said to herself over and over. She tried not to let thoughts of fear and loneliness find a place in her mind. The little wild rabbit was no longer afraid of its captor, and Hannah was sure that she was sorry now for leading them into such trouble. Brave though Hannah tried to be, it must be admitted that now and again

as she sat at the river's edge, waiting, tears came to the little girl's eyes when she wondered if she would have to spend the night alone after all.

Then abruptly Hannah heard a voice from beyond the curve in the river, singing a familiar air:

*Success to fair America,
To courage to be free,
Success to fair America,
Success to Liberty!*

"Oh! That is Paul! That is Paul!" cried Hannah, jumping up and down for joy. And the next moment a canoe swung round the curve, paddled by a tall boy with a cap ornamented with an assortment of impressive feathers.

Paul nearly dropped his paddle when he saw Hannah at the river's edge.

"However did you get here?" he exclaimed.

And with one swift stroke of his paddle, he brought his canoe to shore.

Hannah briefly recounted the capture of Trit, the leaking boat, and her jump to safety while Paul listened with astonished eyes. He, in his turn, told of the discovery of the honey tree and of the ensuing search when she did not return.

"Your father and sister are badly frightened," he concluded. "They are well on the way home now, thinking that you might have followed the path back. Hurry, get in the canoe, and I'll try my best to get you home by the time they reach the settlement."

Hannah sat down in the bottom of the canoe, holding Trit tightly, and Paul skillfully wielded the paddle, guiding the little craft swiftly down the river.

"That bucket is full of honey," he said, nodding toward

the bow of the canoe. But Hannah was not greatly interested in the honey; she had forgotten even that she was hungry and thirsty. She could think only of her father and sister and how they must be searching all along the path for some trace of her.

It was late in the afternoon when the canoe swept across the river to the same landing where Paul had fastened the liberty tree earlier in the month. Moments later Hannah had scrambled from the canoe and was running up the path toward home, followed by Paul, who was carrying a bucket of honey in one hand and using his other arm and hand to keep Trit from escaping.

"Why, child! Where are your father and Rebecca? And where is your cap?" questioned Mrs. Weston.

"Oh, Mother!" began Hannah, but now the tears could not be kept back. Held close in her mother's arms, she sobbed out the story of the capture of Trit and all that had followed. Then Paul began the story of the honey tree, but his story was not yet finished when Hannah exclaimed, "Father! Rebbly!" and ran toward the door.

How Mr. Weston's face brightened when he saw his little Hannah safe and sound, and how closely Rebecca held her younger sister as Hannah told the story of her journey down the river for the third time that afternoon.

When Paul started for home, Mrs. Weston insisted that a generous portion of the bucket of honey should go with him. Trit, safely fastened in a small basket, also went home with Paul as a gift to Luretta from Hannah. Paul promised to be ready the next morning to return to the falls with Mr. Weston in the canoe and bring home the remainder of the store of honey.

As the Westons gathered about the table for their evening meal, they looked at each other with joyous faces.

"I couldn't feel much happier if the *Polly* were in port,

and America triumphant over her enemies," declared Mr. Weston as he helped Rebecca and then Hannah to a liberal portion of honey.