



SEEDS  
OF PINE

JANEY CANUCK

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*Title:* Seeds of Pine

*Author:* Murphy, Emily F.

*Date of first publication:* 1922

*Date first posted:* May 18, 2010

*Date last updated:* October 29, 2020

Faded Page ebook#20201062

Produced by Al Haines

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# SEEDS OF PINE

*By*

JANEY CANUCK

Author of  
"Open Trails", etc.

*"A handful of pine-seeds will cover  
mountains with the green majesty of the  
forest, and I, too, will set my face to the  
wind and throw my handful of seed on  
high."*

—*Fiona Macleod*

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**THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY LIMITED**

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**TORONTO**

*Affectionately dedicated to  
my four brothers;*

*Thomas R. Ferguson, K.C.  
Gowan Ferguson, M.D.  
Harcourt Ferguson, K.C.  
Honourable Mr. Justice W. N. Ferguson*

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# SEEDS OF PINE

## CHAPTER I

### WESTWARD WITH THE GRAND TRUNK PACIFIC

"What went ye out into the wilderness to see?' They answered thus, 'So that we might not see the city.'"—SIR WILLIAM BUTLER.

The new steel trail the railway men are laying from Edmonton leads away and away, I cannot say whither. For these many days I have had an anxious desire to follow it and the glories thereof. I am tired of this town and of the electrical devices that appear and re-appear in the darkness like eyes that open and shut—wicked eyes that burn their commercial message into my very soul. I am sick of these saucy, swaggering streets and of sundry of the townspeople. Come you with me and let us travel down the ways through the heart of the summer! We shall have breeze and sun in our eyes, and breeze and sun in our hearts. If you like not the prospect, pray, come no further, for we be contrary the one to the other and no way-fellows.

As we climb on the train this morning, it seems as though our quest for quiet is to be cheated by the wallowing wave of humanity that threatens to submerge us. Who are these close-nudged folk and whither away?

She who runs may read them for hard-headed, white-handed men in search of "prospects"; brown-throated homesteaders; real-estate agents out for talking points and for snap fortunes; mining engineers with dunnage bags—young fellows all in the full force of life—these, and "the gang," who are ill-looking men and rather dirty. The gang fare forth to work on the railway grades. They are always ganging—that is

going—for the words are strictly synonymous. The gang going to the city meet the gang coming out. And so in everything they are retroactive, and fight much, and swear, to give weight to their differences of opinion. In one thing only is the gang agreed, no navy has yet been found who disputed the axiom that the Boss is a yellow canine.

There is a sprinkling of women, too, and we talk to each other in the friendly manner of the country. A couple of them are half-breed girls, with drooping feathers and skirts that have a hiss. Surely their men are industrious Indians. Both are cinched into their clothes like a cayuse into its pack-saddle. Both have skin the colour of brown coffee into which milk has been poured, and always they are fussing with their pinned-on curls. "The judicious Hooker" once watched some women doing this, and he said they were "a-dilling and burling their hair." No one may ever hope to strike out a more apt expression. The younger of the girls has an indiscreet mouth and desirous eyes. I should not be surprised, if one of these times our little brown woman found these to be a mortgage on her soul somewhat difficult of discharge. And the usury, little woman, it troubles me, the usury!

The farmer's wife who shares my seat came to this province ten years ago from the United States. Her husband made entry for a homestead and she built the house, outbuildings, and fences on it, and bought the implements with money she had saved from school-teaching. The first year, their crop was frozen; the second, it was hailed out; and the third, a spark from the threshing-machine burned their wheat stacks. Their horses died and they had to incur debt for others. All this time, the woman supported the household with the returns from her poultry yard and dairy. These last years have been fat ones, thus enabling them to save sufficient money to send two of their sons to the business college in Town. The eldest girl is walking with the young man on the adjoining farm and a wedding is brewing.

To my thinking, this homely, ill-accoutred woman is something like a heroine, and it is a pity the end of her troubles is not yet. Her husband, who appears to be a flabby-spirited fellow, has always

wanted to, and has finally decided that he will sell the farm and go to the town to keep a boarding-house. She is opposed to the move and has been in the town endeavouring to protect her interests in the property, but finds she is unable so to do. Because of this she has decided to buy the farm from him and has the agreement ready for his signature. I am astounded by her hardihood. She has the soul of a warrior. If the recalcitrant spouse refuses to sell—no, I won't tell what she intends doing, for I am willing to wager you, even to the half of my kingdom, that he sells.

The woman is proud, I can see, and accordingly careful to enlarge on her man's good qualities, but it takes no acuteness to read through her assurances that he is a pessimist and one who always draws tails in the toss of life.

The readers who have come with me thus far may here swing off key, but, People Dear, you would be wrong; she is not chastising him; she is mothering him. It is a remarkable trait in the make-up of a good woman that she can, in critical junctures, not only be her own mother but may also act in this capacity to the husband of her children. It is this same office the Holy Ghost performs in the Trinity.

The newsy is giving the last call to breakfast. He is a full-lifed young man, with a cock-o'-my-walk air. I would not be surprised if he were hatched out of the egg of a pouter-pigeon. He serves meals as far as Edson, from whence we will be transferred to a construction train and trust to manna being rained down from heaven. His tables are crowded with guests, and we sit close like kernels on an ear of corn. For breakfast, there is tea; there is coffee; there are pork chops, and other fat foods which are made palatable by the sprightly addition of sour pickles. Indeed, you may credit me, this breakfast is not one to be sniffed at. I drink pannikins of tea that is very strong and green, and fearlessly ask for more. If there is a happier woman in the North than myself, I have never heard of her. I quite agree with you; our pouter-pigeon serves the public far more effectually than do the cabinetees, or even the bishops.

We are yet in the wheat belt and the wheat is at flood-tide. When I see a large stand of grain that is breast-high I say, "Well done, Good Fellows!" and "Haste to the in-gathering!" The field hears my salutation to the sowers and bows a million heads to me. And it says, *shibboleth! shibboleth!* (If you would pick up the talk of the fields you must be still and listen.)

The Hebrews, with ears a-tilt, caught this whisper, and so their word for an ear of wheat was "shibboleth." It was this word the Ephraimites lisped and so betrayed themselves to Jephthah. The difference was only one of an aspirate. What they said was sibboleth.

Now, while one can tell the sound of ripe wheat, no word is exactly descriptive of the odour thereof. When I am not tired my pen almost catches it. The odour is an intangible something between dryness and colour, and the sign that expresses it can only be revealed.

It is the mental habit of people to think of wheat as only so many bushels of inert matter that is bought and sold on margins by half-mad men, whereas, in all the world, wheat is the thing most richly alive. It won't die, not for thousands of years. We would put jars of wheat in the corner-stones of our state buildings, even as the Egyptians buried it in tombs of rock. It is the only food we could pass down the centuries to posterity, and apart from its scientific value, there is little doubt posterity would appreciate the gift infinitely more than those stupid name-lists of still stupider people. The grain should be of the highest grade, with the name of the grower and the exact location of his farm added thereto.

Yes! let us tuck away these northern wheat grains till England becomes a republic; the United States a kingdom; and until the yellow peril has turned white. Let us lay them safely aside for that day when labour and capital have become one, or till a still later epoch when instead of sex in soul, there shall be soul in sex. Then take them out, Posterity, and crush them into a sacramental wafer that all the world may eat of it as a loving pledge from the twentieth century.

If you think this too long to wait, perhaps you will recall that while the seven sleepers slept, Cæsar was superseded by Christ. Now, the time they slept was for the lives of three men.

In handling wheat, you have doubtless noticed that it is not only alive but possesses a markedly developed will-power. It is ever resisting conquest. They tell me that in the part of the exchange called the pit, you cannot beat back wheat. Some men have succeeded for a while, but always it has rolled in and smothered its erstwhile victors. Try to hold a handful and the task is well-nigh impossible. It slides through your fingers and causes your palm to open involuntarily. It wearies a man to hold wheat tightly for long. Oats may be held and other cereals, but not wheat. Its tendency is to fall to the ground and reproduce. Thus, it is age-old but still eternally young. It is the true Isis and no one has lifted its veil. I tell you men, there is something uncanny and almost wicked about a thing that refuses to die, and it so small as a grain of wheat.

As a whole, this country is not beautiful, but now and then, there come striking pictures. Here are pleasing lakelets a-flush with ducks; tall cotton-woods which I name the maidens because of their fluffy hair—these, and lush meadows, over which range regiments of asters, sunflowers, and yarrow. It is a magic lantern fantasia with an occasional muskeg to represent the waits between views. On the muskegs the trees are so thin and straight they fairly scratch your eyes.

Oh! but it is hot this day, and every leaf seems a green tongue thrust out with thirst. The sun is making amends for his insulting reticence of last winter. The Indians call him Great Grandfather Sun, but why, I do not know.

The houses of the homesteaders are built of poplar lumber, weather-stained and ugly. Others are of logs chinsed with mud and moss. All are small and favourable neither for hospitality nor reproduction. Some day, when a large acreage is under crop, pretty bungalows with brave red paint, will edit the scene as in the older and more settled districts of the north.

At every station, land seekers get out and disappear into the trees as if the country ate them up, and, indeed, I am not so sure but it does.

A baby gets off too—a new baby that has come from the city hospital is being brought home. You would fancy a baby was a miracle the way the men look at it and ask questions. Her name is Annette. She was born on duck-day. Her father works in a saw-mill. We crowd to the window to watch him meet Annette, for we would see the gladness on his face. He is an admirably strong man, with the hard sinews of a wolf. He has surely gone through the mill to some effect. I think he likes Annette, but he looks most at the small mother and he has the mate tone in his voice.

The women ask me concerning my husband, and I say, "Oh yes! I have a husband up here, somewhere—a big, fair man—I wonder if you have seen him."

They are discreetly silent, but I can see they are hoping I'll catch him. This is not a case of duplicity on my part but rather of kindness. It is one's stoutest duty to convey colour and snippets of gossip of women, who, for the long winter months to come, are to remain in these wilds. You must understand that gossip is not wicked up North. Besides, this word actually means a sponsor at baptism—an office recognized by all the world as one of unimpeachable respectability.

At Wabamun there is a great sweep of forest, but, a year ago, a great fire raged here and large patches of burnt trees assault the eyes. Hitherto, the homesteaders have had a two-handed harvest, one from their lovely lake and the other from the land, but, nowadays, their richest harvest comes from the summer tourists, who are building up a popular resort at this point. Summer girls are trespassing on the berry-patches, once the sole preserve of Indian maidens, and Ole Larsen's fishing grounds are full open to sailing yachts and electric launches. Such fish as Ole could catch, and such fish as his Frau could cook! Always, I bowed my head over my plate and said the Indian grace, "Spirit, partake." Ole can tell where the fish are to be found in certain seasons by the movements of the birds. The fish feed on flies and rise to the surface for them, whereupon a t gull or duck will fall with

plummet-like pounce. White-fish bite in the autumn. "Yumping yiminy, dey yust do."

The remains of the railway construction camps have almost disappeared, and only the bleached bones of horses mark out the long trail of the grading gangs.

Here are the grades I descended a couple of years ago while prospecting over this ground. What slopes these are to put a horse down. They are like those described at St. Helena, upon which you might break your heart going up or your neck coming down, with the additional risk of being arrested as a trespasser. On this place where we once ranged for coal-rights, the real-estate agents have sub-divided the surface into desirable building lots, that sell from three to five hundred dollars the lot.

One day, this lake shore will be a hive of industry, for deep in her loins Mother Earth had hatched her riches of coal and fire-clay, and, mayhap, more minerals that are precious. Once, in drilling here, our men came upon black sand with a showing of gold, but it petered out, after a couple of inches. It was with great difficulty they were persuaded to go on with the drilling instead of going to town to file on claims.

Already there are several towns along this lakefront—that is to say, towns consisting of three or four tents or houses. In the earlier days of the North each settlement was commenced with a fort, now it is begun with a railway station. The next building to be erected is the station agent's house, which is quickly followed by a restaurant, and a general store with a post-office. This is the axis from which the homesteaders radiate into the surrounding country, and, presto! before you know it, there is a bank, an implement shop, a church, a hotel, and the other conveniences of modern civilization including mortgages.

Already you may see trails like long black welts across the land—trails that appear to fare forth without any preconceived plan and to hold a lure in their far reaches for happy-go-idlers like you and me. There is no telling what we might find on them a goodish way off. The

only straight trails made in this North land are made by the engineers, and as you look down the lines you may readily see that they lead into the sky. I like greatly the unthanked, unknown engineers who beat out these paths for the people who are to come after. No trumpets herald their coming, or announce the leagues they have herded behind, but I tell you these fellows are a commonwealth of kings, and we may as well stop here for a moment and stand at salute.

And after the engineers came the builders with their sinews of steel to bind the trail. It is this steel strength that makes the land to bud and blossom. It is creative. Well and truly has a builder said that the land without population is a wilderness, and the population without land is a mob. Yes! it is a steel idol we worship in this country and not one of gold, and we do refuse to grind it to powder and drink thereof, no matter what any Moses or Aaron may say.

This last hour I have been in mind-to-mind talk with a young Englishman who does not think much of Canada. He speaks of our dismal respectability, our tombstone virtues, and our provincial small-mindedness. We call our gardens yards, and have no manners to speak of. Indeed, nothing but a major operation could remedy our boorishness.

Now, all he says is quite true *but I don't believe it*; besides, his English-sure way of summing us up is irritating to my sense of patriotism.

In some places up here he has had to sleep in puppy's parlours, which means with his clothes on. This must have been uncomfortable in that he still wears leather puttees which are the true hall-mark of men from the British Isles. He talked about our cold winters and how unbearable they were, just as if the cold were not the sepia the North shoots forth to protect herself from joyous loafers. I did not say this, for one cannot be polite and patriotic at the same time, and it is well to be polite ... only I remarked that one of these cold days we will shut off the Gulf Stream instead of sending it out to heat up England.

I have no doubt he has private means, for he has travelled widely and is a well-educated man. He came here to have a go at homesteading. "Have you succeeded?" I ask. He does not reply except to ejaculate, "Farming—my hat!" whereupon we both laugh, he at the Canadians and I at the English.

The average youth from England finds it trying to be stripped of precedent, and there is nothing approximating Canadian homestead life in London. We too often forget this and so fail to make allowances for his prejudices and lack of adaptability. Our government mounts him and puts his foot in the saddle, but he must set the pace himself. One can hardly expect the government to do more, but yet, it seems a pity so much excellent material is annually lost to the Dominion because we have not the time or means to work it up. It will take some years to manipulate the crude European immigrants into the mental and physical trim of this Britisher and to inculcate them with equally high political standards. We do not recognize this, or maintain an easy passivity to it, until at some election crises our hearts fail us for fear because of the preponderance of the foreign vote in educational and moral matters.

And the Englishman and I speak of subjects of grave import, and of how it is not seemly that we trade too freely with foreign peoples (especially with the States of the American Union), neither is it loyal to our most Christian King, George V. "Wealth at the expense of loyalty is not a thing to be desired," says the Englishman, "and Colonials do well to preserve the integrity of the Empire," to which dictum I make no reply, not being able to gainsay him. I could wish though that he tell me how we are to avoid so doing.

This dear lad would go into literary work if we read anything in Canada besides statistics, sporting news, and crop forecasts. In the contemplation of our sordid practicability, he is lost in astonishment. "No, madam, I shall not do it, and I shall tell you my reason," says he. "If you write with a sense of life or colour along will come some weighty, grim fellows whose business it is to write stock quotations—leaden creatures, believe me—and they will distinctly sniff and sneeze

out the word 'impressionistic,' by which they mean fanciful. Sons of bats! If once they tried to frame an impression in black and white they might have some proper comprehension of the word. Any uncouth man can state facts, but it is the telling what the facts stand for that hurts. A coarse man cannot take impressions except from a closed fist, which impression he would probably describe as a 'dint in the pro-file.' Such an one hears no farther than his ears, although, in not a few cases, this might be no inconsiderable distance."

"No, I will not become the local *littérateur*," continues the lad, "to be received by the community with a mingling of pride and sarcasm. I tell you what I will do: it is better to be a real-estate broker, in that all conditions tend to what you Colonials call 'a dead sure thing.' It is the only business in which a man reaps where he does not sow. I will surely be a real-estate man. This I will be."

We are come to Edson now—the terminus of the passenger route—but I am going to describe it in another chapter, for it would be ungrateful to bulk it with other events because of the sense of adventure I enjoyed from my visit thereto.

## CHAPTER II

### A FRONTIER POST.

The new world which is the old.—TENNYSON.

Have I told you about Edson and its prospects? No! ah, well, never mind, I shall do so by and by, when I have talked to the citizens.

While biding my time for a seat at the lunch-counter, I will walk up and down the station platform. Every minute men are arriving to await the out-going train to the city. They come and come, apparently from nowhere, till there are quite a hundred of them. Of course, they really come from up the street (I should have said from the streets, for there are two, or, perhaps, three streets), having recently arrived from the grading camps somewhere up in the mountains. We are going there tomorrow, or maybe the next day, and then we shall see the habitat of these battling, brown-throated fellows who nose the stream of flesh-pots and feed on hunks of brawn.

The men philander about, or sit on the platform planks, and loll lazily against the sun-warmed wall. They count their money, smoke, and talk, but on the whole they are quiet. Also they stare at me like they were gargoyles and whisper the one to the other. This is not because of rudeness—not at all! Even the white armoured Sir Galahad would find it difficult to be knightly in the circumstances. For months they have done naught save stake out and measure up, shovel gravel, dig ditches, set transits, sweat and swear, for a railway, you may have heard, is built with heavier implements than batons, pens, or golfsticks. No woman has come near them except certain will-o'-the-wisps whom the Mounted Police did straightway turn back to town. Their lives have been filled full of contest, hardship, and loneliness, so that every mother's son desires, above all else, that some woman (she may be either saint or sinner) put her hands upon him and tell him he is a truly fine fellow and worthy to be greatly loved. This is why they will give her all their money and not because they are of the earth very earthy.

Do you waggle your head at me! Do you? Then I care not a straw. It only means you do not comprehend the ways of men at our frontier posts.

Some men are here preparing to take the wagon trail to Grand Prairie in the Peace River District. This trail, they tell me, is one hundred and fifty miles long, and may be traversed in six days, a journey which from other points formerly took as many weeks. Hitherto, it has seemed the faraway edge of the world, a place for none save the adventurous blooded and sturdy, but in this day it seems to lie at our very door, for, in the North, one hundred and fifty miles is merely a stone's cast. In the spring, fifteen thousand homesteads will be thrown open for entry, so that presently it will seem that all creation is trekking this way.

And why not? It requires no fore-vision to know that the land has a future above anxiety. Up this trail there is a new world to be possessed, an unequalled empire, in which men may go hither and yon as they please. It gives my feet a staccato movement to think of it. Some city folk there are who might fear the trail, but this were foolish. It is good to ride on a long trail and laugh out loud for sheer joy. On the trail, the ear of Society is closed and there are smoked goggles on her eyes.

I have been talking to a stripling from Nova Scotia, who has been here these four months. When first he came, there were but three girls in the village; now, there are eighteen. As a result of this increased immigration, the weekly dance is better attended and is more amicable.

Besides his outfit, this Nova Scotian is taking in a year's provision to his homestead, and so has been working to secure a sufficiency of money. He hopes to get a steading that will one day become a town site. This is the dream of every northern farmer: it is the gold at the foot of the rainbow. Perhaps, my Boy o' Dreams may find it. Who can say? Providence keeps a closer eye on farmers than we imagine. As yet, the boy has not persuaded any girl to accompany him to Grand Prairie. I would go myself only (I had the reason a minute ago but it has escaped me); what was it? Oh yes! I remember now, I am already married. The Land of Cockaigne could not have been situate in the

North, for in that most blessed land every Jack has his Jill and found no difficulty in keeping her. No! it was never in this latitude.

I went to two hotels before I could find a room. I should have registered at once instead of loitering at the station. In the first hotel they could eat me, but to sleep me was out of the question. In the second, a stout well-looking German—or, as I prefer to call him, a coming Canadian—took possession of me, remarking in one breath, but with an air of great punctilio, "You would in my house put up? Der conductor-man he so told me you to me might come. This my wife is. You should become to each other known. She a bed for you will get—water!—towels!—whatsoever Madam she may desire."

"Urbanity" is the one word that fits the German, my host. His Frau, who is of the pure Teutonic type, has a heart of great goodness, with emotions that lie close under the exterior.

All might have been well with me at this hotel, but, unfortunately, in descending the closed-in stairway, I stepped on a sleeping cat and plunged headforemost to the bottom.... "Der drouble mit you," says my host, "a crick in der back is." The cat's "drouble" seems to be paralysis.

Some one has said that reserve is a sign of great things behind. Sweet Christians! this is entirely true; I realized it to the full while holding back the tears and assuring the assembled household I was not even jarred. I am proud of the way I behaved, and sorry my own folk were not there to see. Now, they will never believe it.

One of the maids brought me brandy which I did not drink, but after awhile, my hostess fed it to me in what she called canards. You dip a lump of sugar into the cognac and transfer the lump to your mouth—that is all. You could never believe how nice they taste, or how curative they are for "crick" in the back.

Before long I am able to limp down the street and call on the doctor. I used to know him in days when we both lived farther south. But any way, a previous acquaintanceship would have made no difference. We do not need introductions at a frontier post like this, for there is an

undercurrent of good fellowship which understands that the stranger who talks to you is not necessarily a scalawag, with subtle designs on your purse or your person. Any one who fails to grasp this plainly obvious fact is either a newcomer or a solemn humbug.

This doctor has charge of the hospital car that lies in the station yard, and most of his time is spent travelling from camp to camp down the line of construction. I saw the car to-day, or rather I nosed it, for the smell of iodoform came siftingly through like dry cold. It is owned and operated by the railway company for the benefit of their employees. At certain stations along the line, the company have placed cottage hospitals where emergency cases are treated. Those who have fevers or require major operations, are usually taken to the city.

Long ago, when the earlier railroads were being constructed it was not possible to supply such life-saving appurtenances, so that nothing remained for the wretched fellows but to drag themselves away and die like hurt dogs. There is a current aberration that the golden age was "once upon a time," but, in my opinion, it is here and now, or at least it will be when every municipality has instituted classes to teach policemen the difference between drunkenness and a fit. I will say a prayer about this some of these days. One must be business-like.

As he builds up and smokes a cigarette, the doctor tells me that the navvies and teamsters have a singularly critical taste in the matter of medicine. They do not like tablets or medicine with an innocent flavour. Unless it be distinctly pungent, they feel cheated.

"Do you accede to their demand?" ask I.

"I do, Good Lady," says he. "It is modesty that prevents my describing to you the excellency of my flavours" (and here he assumed a truly sagacious air): "my medicines have 'nip' to them and a body that is really desirable. They are indescribable, but most they approach the little girl's definition of salt—'that which makes potatoes taste bad when you do not eat it with.'

"I see, Dear Lady, you are still of inquisitive mind," says this Man of Medicine. "Yes! I can see that and I dare say you will put me in a book, so I shall not rise to your questions—not I! Let us prefer to talk of how we shall invest our money when we sell our lots, and things like that."

"Real-estate is a valuable asset in this place," continues he, "if you buy it 'near in' on the original town site, but three miles out of the subdivisions, it is equal in value to a pop-corn prize. And yet who can say? Who knows? In these new places, the bread we cast on the subdivisions has a way of returning to us in meat and pie and cake. It is often the height of wisdom to be foolish. That singularly unattractive person on the doorstep across the way—the shrunken, hollow-stomached one—has made much money in buying and selling."

"Do you believe me?" he asks with some trace of heat; "then pray heaven speak!" For I have fallen into silence. But I will not speak—not one word—but only smile in an enigmatical way, for the stop I am pulling out is one of intended indifference. It is about the navvies and teamsters I would talk and not of hollow-stomached men who gather much money.

The doctor rolls up two cigarettes and offers me one.

"You will smoke?" asks he.

"No!" says I, "not till I am sixty."

"Let me see your palm and your nails. Humph! Lady, you had better start now as a mere matter of expediency. Why not try this one? Where's the use of a mouth and an index finger if you do not smoke?"

Now, I cannot say why I do not smoke, except that there are so many reasons why I should, and so I return to our first topic and ask, "Does your medicine make the men well again?"

"No, no, decidedly no!" he replies—"they allow me to hold no such illusion. The talismans they carry, work the cure—a bear's tooth, a

lucky penny, or the image of a calendar saint. A snake's rattle is a panacea for anything but a broken heart. Time was when men only choked on grape seeds as did the old poet chap, Anacreon, but in these days, the navvies get appendicitis from them. It would be offensive to suggest other causes, in spite of the fact that most of them never taste grapes. No! it would not be right for me to put my patients in the wrong and shockingly poor policy."

"Have you much trouble with drunkenness?" I query.

"Not a great deal!" he makes answer, "for the Mounted Police have a disconcerting habit of probing into bales of hay and of finding false floors in wagons. They have fifty-fox power, these police fellows, although I have heard tell that a gallon or more of whisky has been within roping distance of them and escaped. A bottle that gets by them is worth ten dollars, but the navvies declare whatever it costs it is worth it. But, dear me, there are other liquids for inordinate and uncritical thirsts, such as——"

"Your medicine?" I suggest, whereupon our conversation abruptly ends, for he will be no longer beset by me; and he will not give me a bottle of liniment for "crick" in the back; no, not if I die in Edson, without even a graveyard started wherein to bury me. He supposes Providence knows his business, but how ever woman came to be made is a mystery far beyond his wit's end.

Huh! Huh! I am tingling to scratch this man's eyes out, but I only call him a brown pirate.

Do you think I care so much as a snap of the fingers for the medicine of this spiteful doctor of the countryside? Not a bit of it! One of the navvies will give me a talisman if I cannot find the cordial tree for which I search. It grows in the North, and the fruit gives life to strong people and faintness to the weak. It was Théophile Tremblay who told me about it. He lives always in the woods. Once, he found the tree but he was afraid to eat of it, for how could he know whether he was strong or weak? He has heard tell that, in the tree, there is a

wood's-woman and that sometimes she laughs aloud, but he thinks it may be a soul or something like that.

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The only drawback to happiness is the peculiar impermanence of its character. Happiness is a large, comely person, but, withal, as elusive as the smallest sprite. Such hours of pain as I spent last night on this wretched sagging bed—I who was so happy only yesterday—with nothing to look at save a little lamp with a flame like a bleary red eye. Truth to tell, it was the eye that looked at me. It stared till I became hypnotized, when by the blessing of God, I fell asleep.

This morning, I am consumed between a desire to get up and one to lie still. In all such crises of the will, it is better to follow the line of least resistance, and so I lie in bed. My hostess brings me an amazingly pungent liniment which she calls "Herr the Doctor's medisome." It came last night, but Daisy, who is a waitress, neglected to deliver it. Perhaps the sarcastic advice which the doctor set down for me under the word "Poison," may have frightened Daisy.

"She a lump is, that Daisy!" says the Frau. "Believe me, Madam, for I know. I tell her a thing to do and she doing it keeps on, till I to stop tell her. Then I to her explain that she is not for ever to stop, nor for ever on to go, and all the time, about everything, I have her so to tell."

The Frau pours on the liniment with generous measure and rubs me till I prickle with it, and feel for all the world like a wet newspaper caught in a wire fence. She rubs me with a used-to-things way until I beg her to desist. I should not be surprised if Herr the Doctor took this means of venting his spitefulness on me.

The Frau tells me she had a vision once. I wish to experience a vision, or a miracle, but nothing comes to me save presentments which have their terrible plain origin on the basis of cause and effect. Her vision was about heaven. She saw heaven quite distinctly and the streets were really made of gold. There were no children there, but only men and women, so that there must be a special Paradise for boys and girls. The Frau believes heaven will be a failure because there is

no division of the sexes provided for. How, she would like to know, could a woman enjoy heaven with men there all the time looking at everything she does. It would be an impossible situation.

After awhile, Daisy brings me a meal. There is a tremendous finality about the way she sets down a tray. Daisy, in spite of her name, is not so much a housemaid as what they used to call a stout serving wench. She is courtly neither in figure nor manners. Her hair is puffed out over her ears and drawn down low, till her head looks like the husk of a hazel nut. But what odds? Daisy is splendidly plebeian and really of more value to the community than a writing person who falls downstairs. She cannot see for the life of her how I happened to come out here, and so I am apologetic and find it necessary to explain. She asks permission to try on my hat and tells me she has ordered a new one from Edmonton. It is to have three "ostridge" feathers.

To assure me that the cat I stepped upon is not dead, she descends to the kitchen and returns with it. The cat seems all right except that it sags in the middle, but Daisy says this is because it has just been fed. I am glad I did not kill it, in that I always associate a cat with Diana Bubastis, the Egyptian goddess who presided over childbirth, and who was represented with a feline head. Indeed, Bubastis is said to have transformed herself into a cat when the gods fled from Egypt—a play of gods and women and cats that has continued even to this very day.

After dinner, I am able to go down to the sidewalk where I fribble away the hours agreeably enough. It is a sun-shot afternoon, but the air is cool to one's skin, and grateful after the scorching heat of yesterday.

Some civil engineers who came in on the train with me are playing baseball on the road. These are no æsthetic feeblings, these merry gentlemen, but a sturdy breed, upstanding and handsome, with skin like the colour of well-seasoned saddles and a smell of burnt poplar in their hair. I think the rough clothes they wear throw their good looks into relief. Or it may be that the people *are* better looking in the North and have better physiques. It must be so, for the South has in all ages drawn upon the northern blood for rejuvenation just as, in these days, they need hard wheat to tone up their softer varieties.

I write of them as merry gentlemen because this fortnight ago I had been watching them make ducks and drakes of their savings. When they come to Town, which they do once or twice a year, they cannot be accused of nearness. Each mother's son holds to the amended maxim of this country, "Hard come, easy go." "Jack ashore," I called one the other day. "Possibly so! Possibly," answered the delicious boy, "but I prefer to think of myself as March—in like a lion and out like a lamb."

The whole Town is a foraging pasture for the engineers on vacation. They buy everything they do not need, from gramophone records and swearing parrots to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. They yell into the telephones as if it were a lung tester, and it makes their hearts dance like daffodils to hire taxicabs for the day, boxes at the theatre, and to give suppers and dances to all and sundry of their acquaintances. Neither are they laggards in love. They are vastly appreciative of the girls, and I am told go sweethearting with a directness there is no possibility of misunderstanding. It is well the girls do not take them too seriously, for they are roving bachelors all, and would seem to be as faithful as the poet who vows his love for Kate, and Margaret and Betty and Sweet Marie.

Yet, once in a blue moon, an engineer and a girl make decision "to be man and wife together," and to live in a shack on the Residency, much to the annoyance of the townsmen, who dislike the engineers, being inordinately jealous of them.

The game of baseball which the engineers carry forward on the highway is strenuous rather than scientific. Things that are considered important in the league matches have no significance here. As I watch the pitch and toss of the ball, it occurs to me that this game has filtered down the ages from the primeval woods where orang-outangs threw nuts from tree to tree. They pitch them that the young lady 'rangs might admire their cleverness and good form. You may credit me this was the way of it.

A Chinaman and some Indians are also watching the game. The Indians think it fine fun, and fetch and carry the lost balls like spaniels

retrieving sticks. I like the Indian men for several reasons, but chiefly because they are shrewd riders; have a sovereign indifference to appearance, and never quarrel over theology.

The game of ball was not completed, the interest of the players being diverted by a blindly vindictive fight between a staghound and a bulldog. I did not see the conclusion of the fight, but the honours lay with the bulldog. "For you must know, Dear Lady," explains one of the engineers, "that all things considered, the grip on the throat is an eminently practical one."

## CHAPTER III

### TO THE BUILDERS

To the builders of the highway, that skirt the canyon's brink,  
To the men that bind the roadbed fast,  
To the high, the low, the first and last,  
I raise my glass and drink!—EVELYN GUNNE.

As yet, there is no passenger service from Edson to the End of Steel. Several day coaches are run, but they are chiefly for the use of the engineers and workmen. This is how I happen to be the only woman aboard pulling out for the mountains across this newly-made trail.

Do not misunderstand me; it is the railroad that is new. The trail that runs by its side was an old one when Columbus discovered America, and beaten deep with feet, and also it is a long trail, for it leads through to the Pacific Ocean. For centuries, it was the only mark of human interference in this waste that is world-old. It is a trail of lean hunger and bleeding feet, one that has ever been prodigal of promise, but wary of accomplishment. Surely this is so, for once over it stumbled and swore those half-mad men known as the Caribou Stampeder—these, and other unwept, unhonoured fellows who fared into the wilderness for what reasons even the wise Lord knoweth not. If the bones of the red and white folk who have travelled this long, long street were stood upright, I doubt not they would make a fence of pickets for us all the way.

I have no sooner thought this thing than it happens there is a dry stirring and, in an eye-wink of time, the dead men have taken on flesh and colour. They must have been keenly near. Grim, plainish fellows are they, not unlike the gang around me, but rougher-clad and more hairy. They are powerful and full-lifed men, I can see that, and the rough-necked one with the trail stride and mop of curly hair is Alexander MacKenzie, a Scotchman from Inverness, but late of

Messrs. Gregory & Co.'s counting-house. He is "down North" endeavouring to open out a trade with the Indians, obtaining a foothold they doubtless call it; his masters, the Nor'-West Fur Company—for monopolists are always sensitive to terms. His is a continental errand (mark this well), for he is the first white man to cross the Rockies, and to tell us what lies over and beyond the hills where the sun goes down. Honour to Alexander MacKenzie, Esq., of Inverness, say I! Some day, when Messrs. the Publishers give me fuller royalties, I shall surely build a cairn to him on the height of land e'er it falls away to the Western Sea.

This man lived more than a century ago, and yet, as his figure fades back into nothingness, we see this other figure close by. It is David Thompson, the Welshman, who has recently discovered a river, and has called it by his own name. Also, he has captured the Astoria fur-trade, and has established a trading post, which future generations will know as Kamloops.

And here is Sir George Simpson, Resident Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. He likes to travel with pipers who go before him, piping as he enters a fort in order that Lo, the Red Man, may be properly impressed.

The ugly person with the harshly aggressive features is Sir James Douglas. He looks as fully open to conviction as a stone pavement. This spalpeen near by is none other than young Lieutenant Butler of Ireland. He is gathering material for a volume he proposes to call *The Great Lone Land*. I like the way he carries his head. Who runs may read him for a fighter with a fighter's build.

But on they go, and on, this long procession of pioneers, till we can only call out their names as they file by—Dr. Hector, Daniel Harmon, Viscount Milton, Alexander Henry, Dr. Cheadle, and other lean, laborious fellows, long since passed into the shadows. Dead men do tell tales. You may hear if you care to listen.

And what a strange thing has come to pass in these latter months! The tenuous, twisting trail—that very old trail—has been superseded

by a clean white road that is like to a long bowstring. Its impotent, creeping life has given way before the gallant onslaught of pick and spade, chain and transit, and before monstrous lifting machines which have other names, but which are really leviathans.

Hitherto, it may be said of this land what was once said of Rome, that the memory sees more than the eye. This is no longer true. Before we realize it, Baedeker will be setting down a star opposite the name of a fashionable hotel in the Athabaska Valley, and the whole of this morning world, from end to end, will be spotted with a black canker of towns. Right glad am I to go through it this day with a construction party, and for my own satisfaction to mentally tie together the threads of the Past and Present. And who knows but in a century from now some curious boy in one of these towns may find this record in an attic rubbish-heap, and may rejoice with me over the knotted threads. (I love you, boy! you must know this.)

My fellows of the Way, who are young engineers, tell me the peculiarity of each cut and grade and the difficulties they encountered. They do not speak of stations but of "Mile 48" or "Mile 60," by which they mean 48 miles from Wolf Creek. The railway, when completed, will measure 3,556 miles. They talked of other matters mathematical, much to my bewilderment, but from which I, for myself, ultimately deducted that while the genie who built Aladdin's palace in a night was the champion contractor of fairy-tale countries, he is not to be mentioned in the same breath as these master-men who blaze out this metal highway towards the sea.

Each engineer lives on a residency which is twelve miles long, and it is his duty to supervise the work of grading in his division. This duty occupies about eighteen months, when he is moved on to another residency.

The men placed in a residency camp are an engineer, an instrument man, a rod man, two chain men and a cook. Over these camps, there are placed the chief engineer at Winnipeg; the divisional engineer at the End of Steel; and assistant divisional engineers, who may locate at different points from fifty or sixty miles apart.

The grading itself is built by contractors, and sub-contractors, down to station men, who with the aid of spades, picks and wheelbarrows, built a hundred feet. All these are paid by the yard and according to the nature of the soil or rock. The station men work from five in the morning until nine or ten at night, and make from five to ten dollars a day each. The blasters are known by the uneuphemistic title of "rock-hogs."

The first engineers who scouted had a hard time in their unsplendid isolation, but now that the rails are catching up, life on the residencies is more pleasant than one might imagine. The shack is fairly warm and comfortable and the Powers that Be supply to the men an abundance of the best food procurable, with a reasonable portion of dainties. The Powers doubtless recognize the distant advisability of keeping the engineers and their assistants in health and temper, for after all, nothing is so expensive as sickness. Still, the men are by no means petted. It is true that one engineer has a pair of sheets, but these are the talk, and possibly the envy, of all the residence's on the line. When visitors come to his residency they sleep between the sheets, while their chivalric host betakes himself to the long desk that is built for map work.

Each residency has a gramophone, and some of them have small menageries, including pet bears. In the summer, after hours, the men have outdoor games such as baseball and tennis. They have been able on several occasions to secure a sufficiently large attendance of women to have a dance. It may happen that the engineer is married and that his wife has girl-visitors, which party may be augmented by a visiting contingency from the residency twelve miles further down the grade, or some such fortunate happening as this. It is a heyday, I can tell you, when this happens.

They do not quarrel in the residencies as missionaries do at their posts, although a man sometimes gets moody. All through the winter they talk over everything they did when last in town, and what every one else did. Between times, they can watch the married engineers and declare how much better the bachelors are situated. Purple grapes were

ever sour. They told me about other things, but I forget them; besides, they are secrets.

One of the engineers gathers me some flowers at a wayside station, concerning which the others, with full-throated laughter, propounded riddles.

"When did he ast-er?" "How much did the rose raise?" "Who gave Susan her black eye?" These, and other problems of peculiar interest to young bloods, the solution of which we shall never know till flowers learn to speak plainer.

The riddle, "Why does the willow weep?" elicits a discussion on music, and on the sound of the wind in the pines. One man says he has read somewhere that violin makers construct their instruments out of the north sides of trees. He does not know if this be true, but I think it must be, for the urging of the north wind in the trees and the soft calling of the violin, are one and the same. They both allure to a land where no one lives. You must have observed this yourself.

One rueful rascal with no civic conscience, and an overweening appreciation of his sex, gives it as his opinion that this is an ill-reasoned theory. He declares the sound to be a screeching crescendo that has its origin in an implacable quarrel between the wind and the pines. The wind is a suffragette, a woman of determined grievance, who would be better of bit and bridle and possibly of gag. She makes the pine a butt for her insult and ridicule and a target against which she lashes the hail and drives her shrewish snow. When not grappling his throat with her plaguing, pestilent fingers, it is only because she is recoiling to strike again. She calls this "a spell o' weather."

It is a bitter monologue this leather-fleshed, lathy-framed fellow gives me, and I takes it as a body blow, but I answer not a word, for I have heard it said, or perhaps I have read it, that the meek will own the earth; besides—you can try it yourself—nothing so puzzles the understanding of mortal man as a woman who refuses to go on defence. Her silence fills him with a gnawing uneasiness similar to that one feels when he has swallowed a tack.

And yet I would like to tell him he has overstated his case; to point out that the trees are cross-grained to the wind; that their green spectacles prevent their seeing things in proper perspective, and that they are deep-rooted in obsolete prejudices. Sir Pine cannot escape being an intractable old person, seeing that woman's suffrage was not the rule seventy-five years ago, or more, when he was born. Yes! I should have liked to say this, but it is almost as equal satisfaction to score a verbal chicane.

I think, perhaps, the men felt my silence more than I intended, for they argue the anti-suffragist out of countenance, although I have no doubt they secretly and sincerely agree with him. To change the subject, one of them brings me a caged squirrel he is taking to his residency. Punch is a well-groomed squirrel and has an immoderate tongue. His owner says that in the mountains these red squirrels collect and dry mushrooms. They group them on a rock, or fix them in the forks of young trees, ultimately banking them in hollow logs. He is trying to tame Punch, but then we have all heard of the American who tried to tame an oyster.

Punchinello is as active as pop-corn in a pan. He is a squirrel with a job, and not nearly so light-minded as he looks. His job is to go round and round on a wheel but never to make progress, for the wheel is so swung that it revolves with him. I am appalled by the absolute inutility of it. What a life! What a life! Wearing out a wheel and himself at one and the same time. "Let him go when you get to the woods," say I, "it will be kinder. You have heard of those Eastern folk, who, when they wish to praise Allah, buy birds and set them free."

"No! I have not heard," he replies; "tell me about them."

"There is no more to the story, that is all."

"But I don't see the application when a fellow does not want to render praises. I invested part of my savings at the races and the tenor of my success was markedly uneven. I bought town lots, hoping to sell before the second payment—'Stung'—Yes! it's as good a word as any. The father of my best girl has cursed me to the tenth generation."

"For what?"

"Oh! for a newspaper item which concerned me. I will allow it would have been just as well had it not appeared, but there it was! There it was! No! I cannot see any special reason why I should set the squirrel free. Besides" (and here he speaks softly and with a kindly persuasiveness, as if he had butter in his mouth), "this Punchinello is a sweet-toothed fellow, and the cook will feed him daintily; he has no store set by for the winter; no drey, no mate; he is not properly furred for exposure, and he would not know how to protect himself against the hawks and stoats. Surely, you would not have him go free? I tell you the thing would be cruelty itself, and I will not do it."

You see, he does not know this matter is a personal one with me, I mean the wheel that goes round and never gets anywhere. If he did it would probably make no difference, for the peculiarity about his arguments are their sincerity and wisdom. I always did suspect that Providence was a large serene young man with a strain of steel in him.

At Bickerdike, all the engineers I knew got out. Some are stationed here; some await orders, but most of them go down the branch line that is under construction from this point. Bickerdike is largely a tent town, although, as yet, it is the metropolis of the Grade. I heard one man on the train tell another it was "one of these here high-society places where folks dance on a plank floor and don't call off the figures." I promise to visit at Bickerdike on my return trip with some friends I have not seen for years. No matter where you come from, it would be almost impossible to drop off at any of these little frontier posts without meeting some one you knew elsewhere, so representative is the population of this Northern country.

At each post the same question is asked the newly-arrived passenger. "Well, what's the news along the road?" To-day the news concerns a wash-out near the End of Steel, and doubts are expressed as to the possibility of our getting through.

At Marlboro, the people are talking of their cement industry, and at the next station lumber is the topic. They are making the lumber out of

spruce. The small logs have been converted into railway ties. Some of them are crossed. If ever you have "taken out" ties you know what this means. As you likely haven't, I'll tell you. The railroad contractor, when he rejects a tie, crosses the end of it with a blue or red pencil. Once an acquaintance of mine, by name Jerry Dalton, took out a cut of ties in the Province of Saskatchewan. One day Jerry—an accurate man rather than a placid one—was stamping about somewhat more rampageous than a baited bull.

"What is the matter now, Man Jerry!" I asked; "you are always having a big sorrow."

"Sorrow ith it?" lisped Jerry at the top of his tall voice. "Look at them d—— ties (begging your pardon, ma'am). Look at them ties! Does that turkey-faced, muddle-headed idjit of a contractor think I'm running a Catholic themetry? Crosses ith it? It's crosses he's after giving Jerry! Troth! an' it's a crown I'll be puttin' on him." ...

And so as I look at this pile of crossed logs by the wayside, I am wondering who is the rascal responsible for the Catholic themetry.

These mills belong to a Northern timber chief whose large holdings have made them turbulent. They have called him a timber-wolf, and other names that are smart rather than polite. As a matter of fact, any man who pays the government dues and converts the trees into lumber for the use of the settlers, deserves all the emoluments that can possibly accrue. On account of floods and fires, lumbering is a precarious industry, and the majority of operators fail thereat or carry a nerve-grinding overdraft at the bank.

And did you ever stand on the heights and watch a rising, ripping flood bear out your booms and incidentally the year's logs? If you have, my good little man, you'll be sensible to something closely approximating a tender regard for the timber-wolves. This play of lamb and wolf is frequently disastrous to the wolf.

I would like to rest off here to see the whip-saw bite into the logs; to watch the long white boards as they fall from the carriage, and to drink

in their refreshing odour, for the whole essence of the North is concentrated in the odour of the spruce.

Big Eddy takes its name from the whirlpool formed by the confluence of the McLeod River and the Sun Dance Creek. The creek is an impetuous, capering stream that leaps to the McLeod as a little laughing girl would throw herself into the arms of her father. This is the fairest tarrying place I have seen this way, and fit for a ball-room of the dryads. Down in the valley beside the great bridge, the divisional engineer has built him a wide house of logs, with hospitable porches and chimneys that suggest generous fireplaces. I covet his right, title and ownership thereto. They say this engineer is seventy-eight years old, but I don't believe it.

"Beyond all doubt he is," says one of the train officials; "believe me, he has eaten up his teeth at the work of building roads, and he has a heart of great goodness."

"A strong man, is he?" I ask.

"Why, I cannot say, only that he sticks to his work and takes the trail with the best of them. The men say he is 'sun-ripened,' which I am convinced means something praiseworthy, for every man is his friend."

The Canadian Northern Railway Company is running a line immediately parallel to this of the Grand Trunk Pacific, and as I look out of my window I can see the men at work on the rival road. They are the primal ploughers of the land, these railway fellows, and can cut a valley out of a hill, like it were the rip of a brutal blade. To my thinking, this is an enterprise of high heart and bravery..... And yet, as I watch them at work, heaping up a grade, they seem small to me, and paltry, like dirty boys intent on nothing more serious than mud-pies. In some places, they build through marshy dunes that are coppery-brown and tawny-red. Walking in these places is like walking upstairs all the way, or like treading in deep straw, forms of exercise most certainly concomitant with heart disease and a hackney gait. Westward they go and Westward, these uncouth moving pictures of the landscape, that change well-nigh as quick as those on a canvas, but always it is a

picture of a grade, a new cut, a gridiron of ties, and long, long trails of steel. I tell you, these trails are the heartstrings of the North.

But you must not think that the only builders are the men. The horses, mules and oxen help. Some folk there are who dislike the oxen, but these are foolishly prejudiced and ill-informed. The ox, it is true, has a tiresome straddling gait, and his brain is small in comparison with the bulk of his head, but contrariwise he retains a stolid reliability that keeps him at his job. Once inspanned, he has no desire to kick over the traces or to explore foreign parts; he doesn't bite his trace-mate, or engage in any of those little playful jinks so strangely peculiar to northern horses and northern men, not he ... the ox is a good sort, and one who strictly attends to business. He is an animal that walks in the light. There are northern men who will doubtless resent these remarks, so I may as well explain that my comparisons have been prompted by the conduct of "the gang" which offends my sense of decency.

The "happy low lie down" all over the car in various stages of intoxication. How hideous they are with their unshaven faces, open mouths and yellow teeth! Abroad they are silly; at home they are heart-scalds. As they sprawl over the floor like huge primeval toads, I am consumed by a desire to kick them with my boots. Drunkenness is a disgusting, unfleshed sin.

And yet, these prostrate fellows are hardly more offensive than those still able to sit up and debate about nothing. As controversialists they remind me of the characters in *Alice through the Looking-Glass*, who want "to deny something and don't know what it is." When any over-wise babbler feels himself worsted in an argument, he says to his opponent, "You are a liar." While fairly popular, this argument can hardly be considered a logical one. It can be claimed, however, to cover the whole ground, and to be a masterpiece of brevity.

One fellow, who reeled through the car in a molluscous invertebrate condition, stopped by my seat to tell me he was my friend for life. He was old enough to have known better, and I was glad when a glorious,

tall stranger collared the fellow and hurtled him down the aisle like a hockey-player would hurtle the puck.

Soon afterwards the train's agent, a civil-spoken young man, came into the car and took me into his caboose. I knew something fortunate would happen on this journey.... And to think it came just as my nomad spirit had failed me, and I was utterly crumpled with weariness and hunger.

I would here desire to reiterate my belief that Providence is a large, serene young man, with a strain of steel in him.

## CHAPTER IV

### BEHIND THE HILLS.

"Behind the hills, that's where the fairies are,  
Behind the hills, that's where the sun goes down."

I fell asleep in the cupola of the caboose and dreamed that my head was a rubber band holding too many notes, and that it was going to snap any second. "Hit's the bloomin' haltitude in your 'ead, Ma'am," explained a Cockney later, and I expect he was right, for we have made an ascent of over one thousand feet since leaving Edmonton.

When I awake the train is standing stock-still. Here is the trouble! the heavy rains have been playing havoc with the newly-made grades that have hardly been shaken down to stay, and progress is necessarily slow till the proper ballast has been laid on. Outside, on the grade, the fireman is swearing with remarkable precision. His language is not exactly that described by the Prayer-book as "comfortable words," but then, a man who fires up with slack coal when the thermometer is sometimes thirty degrees below zero naturally becomes proficient in the use of secular expletives.

I open my window above him and say very distinctly, "Wicked man! swear not by the Lord Christ." Then I lean back so that he may not see me. It must have surprised him to hear such a reproof in this no-woman's land. Out he goes and looks up and around, and up again, but I keep well hidden. That writer who conceived the horror of *The Wandering Voice* was no nid-noddy fellow, I can tell you.

As I was thinking this very thing, a voice close behind said to me, "Wicked woman! play not the oracles," and almost I fell out of the cupola with fright. It was the glorious tall stranger, and he was laughing mightily. I almost hated him. Indeed, I quite hated till I saw the joke and laughed too.

He had been reading in the opposite bunk and, incidentally, watching so that I might not roll out, for it is a high climb to the cupola bunk, and there are no sides to it. He says that he is an engineer and that the boys who left the train at Bickerdike gave him instructions to see that I got through all right. Did I say mean things awhile ago about certain northern men? Did I? Well then, I am a spiteful jade and my tongue should be split.

He has yellow fruit for me, and cherries, but hands them out carefully, for the smell of steam from the stove shows that dinner is deliciously imminent. The cook is turning cakes on a pan with a spat like the sound of clog-dancers on the stage. He turns them with a grace and intelligence which I may never hope to equal. I have an idea his elbow and wrist work on ball-bearings.

The glorious tall stranger whose name is *not* Burney (but it will do as well as any other) tells me he was reared down by the Miramichi River. He went back East to see his mother last Christmas, but it took her some days to get used to the grown man who had left home a lad. I can see this thing in my mind's eye. His mother is very clever and has a beautiful face. He need not have told me this. It is true of every man's mother "back home."

Burney was among the first men who scouted for the railway to the West and helped run the try-lines. Falling into the pose of the raconteur—one very natural to the northman—he tells me tragic things, and some that are both tragic and humorous.

One of these was about a Mounted Policeman who was sent out from his post to bring in a murderer. It was terribly cold weather, the mercury almost falling out of the tube. Now, the wanted murderer is the wariest game in the world, and to take him in those mountains one needs boldness and caution in the right proportions—that is to say ninety-nine per cent. of the former, and one per cent. of the latter. The policeman who was sent out was only a stripling, but there was no yellow in him save the streak on his trouser-legs. The round journey was one hundred and twenty miles, but, alone and unaided, he brought in his man, not even waiting to sleep. Almost immediately on a fresh

mount, he again started out from the post, but this time to bring in the corpse. The second hundred and twenty miles were terribly long and arduous ones, and the cold cut like a blade. By shutting your eyes you can see and feel this thing: the two frost-covered horses plodding through the bleak and sterile mountains that are grim as eternity—no sound save the cry of starveling wolves, or the white whine of the sleepless wind, these and the sharp-drawn breath of the men. No! we must be mistaken. Only one man breathes, the other seems strangely still, and his lips are tight shut. There is something peculiarly defective in his stony eyes and stony face. If you look closer you can see he is roped close to the horse, and that he doesn't give to the lope.... God of men and beasts! that is a dead man that rides through the snow, and he rides to confront his slayer.... And when the two reached the police post, the live dare-doing man was found to be terribly exhausted from hunger, lack of sleep, and the long, long ride, so that his brittle nerves were like to snap in two. This was how they came to give him the stimulants which in some way (it is not for a tattling civilian to say the way) had not entirely worn off when he was summoned to give evidence at the inquest.

The auditory consisted of engineers, and chainmen from the residencies who resented this grim sitting with a murderer, a judge and accuser, and the white, stark man on the table, whom presently they would put to bed with a spade. They were sitting austerely upright with grave faces as became the occasion, when it came upon them suddenly that the police stripling was intoxicated. It is true he faced the judge with an uncompromising attitude and stood erect, and "at attention" as if a perpendicular rod braced his body from his crown to his heels, but when the judge's glance wandered for the fraction of a moment, the stripling would wink prodigiously at the engineers, and in an unholy manner that threw them into suppressed convulsions. The thing was grievously grotesque. It was as though a stone altar-saint had suddenly awaked and had put his fingers to his nose in a way that was sinister. Comedy with her wry face was peeping through a tragic mask. It is a way of hers.

It was not until the judge observed the policeman constantly dropping his papers and picking them up in a stiff unjointed way, that the reason of the court's commotion became apparent to him.

"What is the rest of the story?" you ask. I do not know. I am a reviewer of books and never go so far as the end.

Sirs and Mesdames, but it is an athletic feat climbing out of the cupola of a caboose. I stepped on the shoulder of Burney, who is admirably strong, and then down to a chair. The brakemen enter the cupola off the roof and have a way of sliding to the floor backward. It looks easy, and if I were alone, I would surely try it.

There were four of us for dinner, and we had pork and beans, beefsteak, potato-cakes, rolls, peaches and coffee. The butter was tinned, but withal toothsome, and so was the milk. The butter is shipped here from Nova Scotia, and is supplied to all the camps on the road. I help the cook clear away the dishes, but he thinks me rather unhandy, for I upset both the sugar and salt. He comes from Kilmarnock in Scotland, and is a nice lad, I can see that. He has a thicket of hair that stands erect from his head like a growth of young spruce, and he always looks as if he had just heard some good idea. His latest idea, he confides, is a job with the purveyors who contract for the supplies for all the grading camps on the line.

Hitherto, I have always looked upon a caboose as something commonplace, but now, I know it may be truly a Castle of Indolence. I have a sweet tooth for this kind of life, and have no objection to continuing it for a month. Journalists, and important people with stamped passes, go on private cars, but the advantage of mediocrity is that you can travel in a caboose and need not view the scenery as a commercial commodity. When I can think of what to say, I will write a story called "The Romance of a Railway Van." Its setting will be in the hills. The heroine will be a southern girl of probably twenty summers (with a corresponding number of winters). She shall be no fine die-away lady, but middling strong and built to go out in all weather. Each move of the romance will be made by invisible kelpies, ogres and dryads, who will say "Ha! Ha!" and "Ho! Ho!" and who will clap their

hands when the wicked flourish, or valour wins against the odds. But I never could think this story out, so I pass it on to you.

At the McLeod River the grades begin to spy into the mountains. These mountains have all the bewilderment of an elusive dream, and in the thin northern air seem nearer than they really are. There is a come-hither look about them. It is well, at first, to thus see from a distance, for to stand against a mountain is to lose one's sense of proportion and symmetry.

At Prairie Creek the road runs high up on a ridge to the south of the Athabaska Valley, so that it looks like a ribbon of steel basted on to the hills. The Athabaska River is wide and swift here, and has what the Japanese call the language of line. The Cree Indians call it the *Mistahay Shakow Seepee*, meaning thereby the great river of the woods. A semi-spectral mist rises off its waters, as if it were an incense to the mighty spirit, Manitou.

It would be well if I, one of the first of the tourists who, world without end, will travel through these hills, could tell how they impress me, but I am crushed into a wordless incompetency. I cannot speak the language of this land nor interpret its spirit. These hills of White Alberta have something to say, but they will not say it. It must be true what the essayist wrote, that you cannot domesticate mountains.

There appears to be no life here, nor any form of sentience, but when it is dark, the grizzly bear, the lynx, the moose, and other night-things, will move out for purposes of life or death.

Alexander Mackenzie, who entered these defiles one hundred and twenty-five years ago, wrote down that the Atnah Indians believed all this land was made by a mighty bird whose eyes were fire, the noise of his wings thunder, and the glances of his eyes lightning. This bird created all things from the earth except the Chipewyans, who were made from dogs. Now the Chipewyans and the Atnahs were not on borrowing terms.

These were the times when the Indians were as plentiful in the Athabaska Valley as dandelions in a meadow, and they told this Mackenzie of Inverness how, in the good old days, their ancestors lived till their throats were worn out with eating and their feet with walking.

The Athabaska Valley is enclosed by a circle of the hills, the two most prominent of these being Roche Perdrix, or Folding Mountain, and Roche Miette. The latter peak takes its name from the French word *roche*, meaning "rock," and *miette* which is the Cree for sheep, this because of the mountain-sheep which make it their home. It is 8,000 feet high (I give you the height because it is not legal to go down the line without so doing). Somewhere, near here, at Fiddle Creek, at a height of 1,200 feet above the railway, there are wonderful hot springs concerning which Burney talks learnedly. I pretend to understand all about sulphuric anhydride, and carbon dioxide, and 127 degrees Fahrenheit, but do not really know if there are things which should be remembered or forgotten.

Other of the peaks which enclose the Valley are Roche Ronde, Roche Jacques, Bullrush and Roche Suette. Off to the west, the range of hills silhouetted against the sky is known as the Fiddle Back Range. These are crowned with snow, but as the sky changes, take to themselves its moods—coral-red, opal, stone-blue and a mellow, purple glow, which blend and shift like the weird fantasy of the auroral lights.

It is an idea of mine that these hills are the lair of the running winds which for past eons have swept in bitter streaks across the prairies, winnowing them like a thresher would winnow grain. Seven-leagued boots have they and no man has tracked them down. How could a man when they fling dust in his eyes? They are the bitter scouts of the North who fight as they go. I have no doubt their home is hereabout. It might be found if we had time to stay, but this would take too long, for you must surely understand these winds are non-resident to a degree that is nothing short of scandalous.

At this point, we ought in all propriety to talk about Brule Lake, which is not a lake at all, but an enlargement of the river. We should nudge each other and remark that this is Jasper Park; that it consists of 5,450 square miles, and that it is held in perpetuity for the nation. I should ask, "Why do they call it Jasper Park?" and you, my fine fellow-farer, should tell me how old Jasper Hawes was one of "the gentlemen adventurers" of the Hudson's Bay Company, and doubtless a purposeful man and clever. "But why do they call this defile 'the Yellow Head Pass?'" I should further query, whereupon you ought to reply, "I perceive you are an untaught person else you had heard how this Jasper Hawes had hair the colour of September wheat in the sheaf, so that the Indians called him 'Tete Jaune' or 'Yellow Head,' much after our mischievous manner of turning about on the street to look after a lady who is flaxen."

Yes! we should say all this, and more, but it might sound like the private car "write-up," so we had better not. Besides, our engine has come to a sit-still and will not go a step farther. The gossip we heard at Bickerdike about the wash-out has been verified. The officials in the private car are in no very graceful temper over this landslide, and some of the men on the firing-line who dug and blasted and built the grade, are going to have their hearts cut out because of it.

The trouble is that these vastly particular officials conceive of the mountain into whose body they have slashed as a dead thing—dead as pickled pork—whereas it is splendidly alive. Because of the malapert efforts of the builders, the mountain has shaken its monstrous sides with laughter till the tears ran adown its face and washed out their puny sticks and stones. One might hint this to the officials, but one is scared to. They belong to the unamiable sex and are showing an anger highly disproportioned to the cause. Indeed, I saw a very special official put the hot end of his cigar in his mouth. Sometime to-night, a few flat cars will come from the End of Steel to convey the gang thither. The gang will climb up one side of the wash-out and down the other, and I will too, if the train's agent will let me, but from his hard-baked, non-committal manner, I glean he is predetermined to take me back to Edson in the caboose.

The men have lighted a fire in the hills, and this fire seems to be the kernel of the land. Strange elemental figures appear and disappear in the darkness as though they were performing unnamed, unholy rites. They seem human but, perhaps, they are spirits, for I have some splendid clues that these mountains are the haunted house of the world.

Here, there are eyes that watch you all the time, but they are hidden; and if you have a listening ear you may hear voices that call. The gods come close in the hills. They go whispering about in the night and calling your name.

Foolish folk there are who say that the world is old, and that all its songs are sung. There is a new song that can never be told, else I would tell it to you. Only it may be heard.

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A man whose face is covered by the dark is spinning a yarn about an engineer lad on this grade who truly loved an Indian girl. This is what he says—

"She died a week ago, and the lad was with her. It is a beautiful story, but I know another like hers. It is about a butterfly that had specks of gold on its wings."

I did not see the gang climb down the crevasse and up the other side, but I heard the low lorn echo from the train roll up along the crags and die away in the snows. The train's agent said I could go to the End of Steel if I insisted, but I was not to insist. This is why I am travelling back to Edson. Only I am disappointed much, but he says I may come again soon, when no one shall disallow me. It would have been all right for me to go with the gang, and I could have taken care of myself: any woman could who has been years and years "in society."

The agent and the Scotch boy have made a bed for me on a wide bench with my blankets and cushions. If little private, the bed looks wholly comfortable.

"You'll be after loosenin' your collar," says the young person from Kilmarnock as he fluffs up another cushion, "an' ye 'ull be takin' off baith your shoes an' your stockin's. I'll be keepin' the daftie loons out o' the car till ye get a bit o' sleep."

For the benefit of the nervous readers I may add he does not say, "ye'll be layin' off your bloose," but these are such nice lads I could do so with absolute propriety.

And they turn the lamp low and shade it with paper while I am asking my prayer. And I pray, "Spirits of the Mountains and Rivers, be not angry with me for talking in the hills. Gods of the North, strong Gods who watch over little children and us older ones, let me sleep in quietness this night, and at last bring me home in safety where all the lights be white ones."

And I press my lips to the palm of my heart-hand to say "Amen," and to let the gods know I love them. To let them know I love them!

## CHAPTER V

### THE END OF STEEL.

I love the hills and the hills love me  
As mates love one another.—MACCATHMHAOIL.

It is over a year since, in the last chapter, I was turned back from the End of Steel because of a wash-out on construction, and now I am come back, but this time, through the kindness of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, on a through service, electric-lighted, fast-scheduled, no-fare excursion. And on this occasion, I am not the only woman on the train but merely one among a hundred, for this, you must know, is the triennial excursion of the women journalists and authors of Canada. The men present may be counted on one hand. The engineers who travelled with me last time have gone on further to new outposts.

"What are they doing?" you ask. I'll tell you.

"They are busy building railways on  
The map's deserted spot,  
Or staking out an empire in  
The land that God forgot."

Doers of deeds are these men and the world has salted them with curious and stern experiences. To my way of thinking, Dinny Hogan, boss contractor, with his blue eyes that are the blue of steel, is a bigger man than the First Lord of the Admiralty and his work is of more permanent value to the Empire. It was only the other day that Dinny made an arch of "coyotes"—that is to say, of round holes—in one of the mountains, and into them he packed fifty carloads of gunpowder. The reader may find it difficult to follow this idea, but no doubt he could if he saw where Dinny removed the mountain in one shot. This would seem to be a kind of big game shooting which has all others vanquished into nothingness. This is a wonderful trail through the

mountains—the pass called the Yellowhead—a level ribbon of land along which the steels are laid for most of the way. But in some places, a road has been blasted out just to show how the mountains can be beaten. These lords of earth and sky, when called upon, must bow their unwilling necks to the yoke of steel. And no proper-spirited person can stand in this pass without feeling the challenge of the hills and without an immutable desire to conquer them. This I take it is the spirit of the buccaneer.

The highest mountain in these Rockies is Robson, called *Yu-hai-has-kun* by the Indians, meaning thereby a high, winding road. The Alpine Club of Canada intend, one of these times, to erect a *châlet* at Mount Robson so that they may attempt to scale it often. Three men succeeded in making the ascent this very summer. They were roped together for thirty hours, and when they had come down again, their faces were seen to be cut and greatly marred. These men spoke fine and glorious things concerning the hilltop, and of how they looked down upon five hundred other peaks, but, in strait and narrow minds like ours, these climbs may be accounted only as strange follies. I have talked to Clausen Otto about these things, for he has been a guide hereabout these ten years or more, and is a notable man of affairs. He said I was only a terribly lame dog in front of a terribly high stile, and then, fearing that his comment was truthful rather than polite, Otto proceeded to salve my feelings by explaining how the desire to climb glaciers was an ill-regulated one, and that what the Bible said about sucking honey out of a rock was "plumb foolishness."

Once, he was climbing with a hunter of goats when a bear came swiftly over the glacier-clad peak of the mountain. They were greatly puzzled to know why the bear had climbed so high, and why it dashed across the summit. Surely there was something remarkable on the other side of the peak. After climbing several hours they made the ascent and looked over. "What do you think we saw?" asked Otto.

"Give it up," said I.

"I wish we had too," said Otto; "there was nothing on the far side but another glacier."

Perhaps, the literary critics will help me decide if Otto meant this for the parable of the climber or whether he was only singularly adept in the art of suggestion.

You do not see Mount Robson till you have passed by. Our train stops to let us look aright, but cloud curtains obscure the turrets of this great temple of stone. Like a sorrowful Caryatid it stands erect under the burden of the sky. But, after awhile, the veil is rent asunder and a tingling flood of light spills itself on the snow in blurs of garnet and blue and gold which scintillate and blend like the colours of a shell: Of a surety, the North has the alchemy that transmutes base metals into gold.

What else may one see at Robson in this dream of summer Canada? Come near till I whisper! You may see white horses—and roan—and chariots of fire, but not every one can. This is one of the mountain's secrets.

And if you listen you may hear what the hills talk about, but you must listen. One mountain who is not so solemn as you might imagine wishes to deny that he is of the earth, earthy.

"Bosh!" he said, and "Stuff! Any one who hasn't moss on his eyes can see I am of the rocks, rocky!"

"Mark me and be astonished!" boasts a stupendous fellow near by whose face is furrowed by snow-slides. "I am a western mountain. Beat me if you can!"

"I used to be a fish plantation," remarks a chalky-looking individual. "It was in the cretaceous period and I lay underneath the sea."

"Lobster plantation?" queries the western one.

"No, you froward ignoramus," replies the fossiliferous fellow, "I consist of *Inoceramus problematicus*, *Faseiolaria buccinoides*, and other aristocratic mollusks of the which you have never even heard."

... Overhead, an aweless eagle, rising wing above wing says to his sweetheart, "It is my opinion God made these mountains for no other reason than that you and I might build our nest in them....."

There is, in this region, a body of water called Maligne Lake, and Jules DuBois, a trapper, whose son is married to 'Toinette, the niece of the second cousin of Pierre, whose mother-in-law was the third wife of Black Moccasin, the chieftain, once told me that this lake is dreaded by the Indians because there are no fish in it. This is why it is called "maligne." It frets Jules at the heart to go near it, for he has heard how the fish have been frightened away by a dead man who lives there. This man can see without eyes and his face is like a fungus with white teeth. When he laughs there is a noise in his throat like the crackle of tamarack twigs, freshly lighted.

Because of the glaciers on these hills and the warmth of the summer in the valleys, this atmosphere seems like that of an eternal spring. Just to breathe it is a delight. Here the air strokes you into quietness till you forget the tearing hurry of life; the fretting uneasiness that rasps, and the hurt that comes of the fight. This is a satiating of one's desire for the spiritual. And should you wish for a token you may stay awhile and drink of the water that cascades over the rocks. This is living water. This is the good wine of the hills. You may drink it in remembrance.

I am very sorry I must die some day and miss these wilding joys and the odour of the trees and flowers, but it is my comfortable hope that when I return to Claeg, the Round One, who is called the earth, I shall be evolved into a pine-tree and grow happily in this mountain pass. Then will other people come to, even as I come to these trees, and say, "Good morning, my friend! I have been lonely for you."

The pines are our fellow-creatures and more closely related to us than anything that has roots in the earth. They speak to our inmost being. A group of pines will restore sanity to the disdistracted and sorrowful mind, for they are cordial trees, and in quietness and confidence is their strength. The pines are never tremulous or trivial, neither do they fade or die. Other trees are green for awhile, but these all the while.

... Pippa, the little maid who sang for the world's hurt, came out of the woods, as likewise the Nazarene who died for it.

Upland growths are the pines as befitteth the gods of the arboreal world. They are northern trees, "the chief things of the ancient mountains, the precious things of the lasting hills." Their history is writ far back in the black strata of the carboniferous age, and that they will be the last trees to disappear off the earth, who can gainsay? As for me I shall not be persuaded otherwise though a man rise from the dead to tell me.

And now we have come to Jasper, where we have two hours to rest off and talk to the men of a construction camp who have struck work for the day in order to see the train come in. Of course, it does not take all their day for this, but there were the preliminary toilet preparations to make and the walk in and out. Such newly shaven chins; such freshly brushed clothes; such irreproachable boots! Who could have expected it!

Like the ascetics who of old-time went into the wilderness and found themselves dreaming of scarlet lips and white arms, so these fine fellows are ever fancying a comely woman gliding across their trail; a distressed damsel who needs to be fed and carried for long, long distances and sheltered in a low-built house of logs that is well-warmed and well-provisioned, with no other bachelor nearer than a hundred miles.

The bachelors will doubtless deny this sweet dalliance with a vehement fervour, but it has the matter of fact virtue of being true, and is no whimsey of mine. A year ago it was, in a prize competition, I was called upon to read over a hundred short stories, or more properly speaking, human nature studies. An amazingly large proportion of these came from northern camps, and in nearly every case the aforementioned situation was the theme. The variation from this concerned a young Englishman of education who is notified that he has inherited wealth at home but prefers to stay with his woodland wife—a beautiful Indian girl—rather than return to the granitic conventions of the old world, and to the busy idleness that goes by the name of society.

And why deny that their hearts are a-brim with dreams, for these are beautiful reveries and worthy the most chivalrous of knights. Since it was given me to look into the recesses of their minds I have liked them better than ever and am many times heartily glad. Any woman who is a gentleman would.

And here Opportunity has spilled a whole trainload of women before them—old and young, wise and otherwise. It would be tempting the patience of Providence if they didn't meet the train, these bachelors who would gladly lose a rib.

"Such a waste of excellent material," says a poetess who looks over the bachelors with an appraising eye. "How big they are! Someway or other, they make me think of steel girders."

"Ragingly handsome, I call them," says a petite miss who edits a page on a big eastern daily. "Do you think it possible, Lady Jane, that they—could—have—holes—in—their—socks?"

"Not only possible, My Dear, but highly probable," I reply.

"What odds?" asks Cy Warman, the poet. "It is recorded that President Taft was noticed to have a hole in his sock when he took off his boots in a Tokyo tea-room."

"I am persuaded," remarks an historian who has been listening, "that it is the duty of the Prime Minister of Canada to import wives for the bachelors who live on the frontiers. He has most excellent precedent in the case of Talon, the Intendant, who in 1670, because of the disparity of the sexes in this country, imported one hundred and sixty-five young women. Moreover, Talon specified that in sending out these girls from France, the King should see that they had good looks and were strong and healthy."

"My fellow-women!" interrupts a society reporter, who is an incarnation of frankness, "lend me your ears; I won't need your money. I intend coming here to live. No longer will I remain a martyr to good form. I am weary to death of musicales and other entertainments of an

objectionable character. I intend to quit the 'best circles,' the 'local coteries,' and the '*haut noblesse* in favour of a man with a bungalow at Jasper, and for these delectable mountains with the glories thereof. Now, what do you say to that?"

"Taken," replies a distinctly masculine voice in the rear—a voice that might come from a steel girder—whereupon the rest of us discreetly retire to allow for the arrangement of preliminaries. Love is born through effrontery more often than we think.

When we have achieved the sights of Jasper we entrain for Tete Jaune Cache, a beautiful moping place on the Fraser River. All the way along we pass through the fastnesses of the hills, places of glamour and mystery, and perhaps of fear. Here our eyes are pleased with an illusive perspective or an uncertain silhouette; a fantastic rock-form cut out by the cruel chisels of the ice; a precipitous gorge up which the adventurous trees have stormed in darkened files; a welt of green where the moss has healed the hurt of the avalanche; a snow-born river with its white-toothed angry waters, a splash of ice called a glacier—a steady, long-living splash obedient only to the sun.

The artists with us talk of values, vistas, truth of space, chiaroscuro, mellowness of effect, and transparency of air. Perhaps they are right, but it seems to me that when Nature stretched her stone canvas in the Rockies she did not trouble with the trivialities of pleasing prettiness or technical nicety. She brushed in her colours with a boldness of mass and outline, with an energy and expression that stagger. There is no ambiguity about them. She used primary colours and never hesitated. Royal purple, the orange light of fire, and the sickening red in which Tintoretto has painted the wounds of his martyrs, she here emphasized by the "cold virgin snow" on the peaks.

For uncounted centuries, silence has brooded over the beauty of these imperturbable hills and over their unpathed, desolate places which only the eyes of the gods have seen. It is well with me this day that I journey through them, for here, as in Eden, the terrestrial and celestial may be one. It is well, too, that in passing I may shut my eyes

and mentally sing the song of the land as it came hot from the heart of a poet in his home at the foot of these hills—

"Oh, could ye see, and could ye see  
The great gold skies so clear,  
The rivers that race the pine shade dark,  
The mountainous snows that take no mark,  
Sunlit and high on the Rockies stark  
So far they seem as near.

But could ye know, and forever know  
The word of the young Northwest;  
A word she breathes to the true and bold,  
A word misknown to the false and cold,  
A word that never was broken or sold,  
But the one who knows is best."

At Tete Jaune Cache, they are preparing to "strike camp" and move on to Mile 149. This has been the supply station for all the outposts, which means more than you may think, for the Railway Company furnishes an amazingly generous and varied bill-of-fare to its employees.

Don't ask me what you can get here, for I won't tell lest the urban epicures whose jaded palates need tickling should start out in a body for this lodge at Tete Jaune.

And the leading man in the kitchen has the most substantial merit and can roast a sirloin of beef or bake a cake of prodigious bigness for the men's supper just as he can cunningly and designedly contrive a pimento bisque, an omelette espanol, or shrimps à la créole for the boss and his company. I'll not tell another word about the fare, but, believe me it is "with such cookery a monkey might eat his own father."

Te' Jaune, as it is familiarly called in the North, is situated on the Fraser River. Because of the snow melting on the mountains, the Fraser is swollen as if the waters surged from underneath. While we wait, swart, husky-looking men are putting off to Fort George in primitive craft built of squared logs. These boats are called scows.

They are carried along by the current which is from six to eight miles an hour, and are guided by means of a paddle with a vast yellow blade.

As the men pass on and wave their hands to us, a fret falls on me to go with them along this river-road to its very end, and if you are of my kin you would want it too. We would live sturdily; we would be sopped in sunshine, and God would give us joy.

At Te' Jaune there are many tongues spoken, for the workmen hail from all over the universe. Of late, we have heard much about these foreigners and of "those nations which we, so full-mouthed, call barbarous." Certain Canadians are enraptured and utterly discomfited because of them. It is their desire to tidy up the country by sending the "alien offscourings" to where they belong. They tell us that our manners will become corrupted and our institutions imperilled by them.

This fear of strangers is not peculiar to our country and age. Strangers have, in all lands, been looked upon as enemies to the commonwealth, and consequently to be avoided or extinguished. According to Flavius Josephus, when Moses came to die he said, "Oh you Israelites and fellow-soldiers.... I would advise you to preserve these laws to leave none of your enemies alive when you have conquered them, but to look upon it as for your advantage to destroy them all, lest if you permit them to live, you taste of their manners and thereby corrupt your own proper institutions. I do farther exhort you to overthrow their altars and their groves and whatsoever temples they have among them, and burn all such, their nation and their very memory with fire; for by this means alone the safety of your own happy constitution can be secured to you."

The Jewish constitution was not worth the price asked; neither is ours. This should be far from the spirit of Canada—"the manless land that is crying out for the landless man." Canada is the child of the nations and our husky provinces have need of these husky peoples. Not only must we open wide our doors and bid them a good welcome, but having entered, it must be our endeavour to weld them into a seemly and coherent whole.

This is a task which is half accomplished e'er it is begun, for the Russian, the Italian, the Scandinavian and all our immigrants are eager to be like the Canadians, to speak our language, to wear our clothes, and to think, talk and walk like us. Their differentiation is a burden to them and they desire to drop it as quickly as possible.

These Coming Canadians from Europe are of a fine advantage to this country where thousands of miles of roads and railways are to be built, in that they perform the more onerous tasks of digging and drainage which the Canadian, British, and American turns from a menial and unworthy. It would be a wide mistake for us to turn back from our sea-ports these unlearned and common peoples who seek entrance—as foolish as the farmer who would fear a large yield of wheat lest he could not thresh it, or a banker who dreaded an inrush of gold lest he could not count it.

It was Michael Gowda, a Ruthenian living at Edmonton, who expressed for his people their feelings of loyalty towards the land of their adoption in a poem entitled "O Free and Fresh-home Canada"—

"And are you not, O Canada, our own?  
Nay, we are still but holders of thy soil,—  
We have not earned by sacrifice and groan  
The right to boast the country where we toil.

But, Canada, our hearts are thine till death,  
Our children shall be free to call thee theirs,  
Their own dear land where, gladly drawing breath,  
Their parents found safe homes, and left strong heirs.

Of homes, and native freedom, and the heart  
To live and strive and die, if need be,  
In standing manfully by honour's part  
To guard the country that has made us free."

## CHAPTER VI

### BITTER WATERS

#### I

They could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter.—*The Pentateuch.*

"Tweet, my little plover! Thy lips are like unto the bleeding strawberry."

Wasi, the father, smiled indulgently on this child-play, cooing chatter, and sweet-flavoured words of his girl-wife as she fondled their wonder-eyed baby.

And in truth, it was a round dimpled baby—a cunning, cuddling papoose that looked for all the world like a live bronze. Wasi did well to smile.

The older Braves had sneered at Wasi, "the Yellow Pine," for had he not, they asked, breathed the breath of his squaw till his heart was even as faint and soft as a squaw's heart. But Wasi of the swart face heeded not their gibes for he loved Ermi with the flaming love known only to men of hot heart and greedy senses.

"Lazy one, to sleep till sun is high," merrily chided Ermi. "Little Ninon has been awake since the dawn raised the meadow-larks."

Wasi rose hastily, for he would take the trail early to the sun-dance, and it was four suns' journey to the North.

Once, Ermi had gone when she was ten spring-tides old, but the cruelties of the scene with its shrill jublations, had bitten themselves into her memory. Her brother had been one of the candidates for the coveted title of "Brave," and she had seen the wooden skewers thrust

through the muscles of his chest by which he was suspended to a tree and from which he only freed himself by tearing away the flesh. Since then, she had been to the mission school at St. Albert, and the nuns had taught her that the body was holy, "a temple," they called it, and that the sun-dance was sinful exceedingly.

Father Lament at the cathedral had christened her Agatha, for she had come to them in February on the day of the virgin-martyr of Sicily. But Wasi was a Pagan, and called her Ermi.

Ermi busied herself laying out Wasi's beaded moccasins, his bow of cherry-wood with its leathern thong, and his arrows of Albertan willows, that were winged with eagle feathers and tipped with iron.

All the while she sang a quaint song about love.

"Why singest thou thus!" asked Wasi. "'Tis the foolish song of the hunters from the south-land."

But Ermi laughed as she sang—

"'Twas odour fled  
As soon as shed,  
'Twas morning's winged dream;  
'Twas a light that ne'er can shine again  
On life's dull stream."

Then, as Wasi held his pony, Ermi kissed her brave and rested her slight little body against him with love speaking in every line of its limp abandon.

## II

Outside, the smouldering sun sank earthward in a drapery of blood-red. In the tepee, the fierce dryness of the hot winds breathed on the

baby that lay dying by the open door.

The Indian women feared the measles more than any other plague, and so Ermi had been alone all the days, save only for the medicine-man who had come to her thrice. He would drive out the evil spirits who had caused the sickness, but Ermi only shook her head and held little Ninon the closer. Once, she had seen him sear the flesh of Cheneka with a burning piece of touchwood, and he had sucked the blood from the breast of Kon. Besides, Ermi was a Christian and worshipped always at the shrine of the great white virgin.

The hours passed, horrible hours, and still in her loneliness and parching anxiety she cried for the life of her baby, cried the prayers of impotence to omnipotence. Already the baby-face was old and tired, but the mother crooned and rocked her all through the night till, at dawn, the wearied eyelids drooped over the darkened eyes for the last time. The dove had found no rest for the sole of her foot.

Ermi knew where there lay a great stone in the coulee off by the river bank. She would carry her baby thence and bury it under the stone, safe from the grovelling of wolves.

Then she washed the tiny form and combed the tangles from the soft hair, looping it back from the face with a band of scarlet. "After all," she mused, "life has no beauty so wonderful as death."

And because it was the tribal belief that if a corpse were carried through a door, the next person following would shortly die, Ermi put Ninon through the window, for Wasi would come home soon and the dread fate might fall on him.

Gathering the little clod of flesh in her arms and pressing it closely, the dry-eyed mother set out on her journey across the wide-lying plains. On and on she walked, trudge, trudge, trudge, under a brazen sky that looked down pitiless and tearless.

"Oh! If Wasi were here," she thought. "He would carry the spade and I would hold little Ninon only. If Wasi were here!"

The ground reflected heat to her weary soul and body, and the weight of the world seemed to crush her frail being.

"Oh, Mother of God! Sweet Mother of God!" she moaned. "How the sun burns, and I am very tired."

But the women of the Braves are in pain and weariness often, so Ermi staggered on till she reached the coulee, with its boulder that had been carried hither by the river when it overflowed its banks at the last springtide.

Laying her burden in the shadow of the rock, Ermi hollowed out an earthen cradle for the baby. She lined it with green, too, just as they had done at school when any one died, and then passionately kissing Ninon, she wrapped a bit of blanket about her, for the living would have the dead sleep soft and warm.

Ermi tried to think a prayer, but she had forgotten them all since the nights when Ninon was sick. She could not think of even one. She only noticed that the white butterflies swam lazily to and fro like floating blossoms, and that the sunflowers were wondrously beautiful as they punctuated the rank, shaggy grass with gold. Lissome lilies swayed gently in the hot breeze and made blotches on the earth like spilled wine.

At midday, the lilt of a lark stabbed the air, and the sound roused Ermi, for she rose sharply to her feet and sang with hoarse voice and stiff lips—

"'Twas odour fled  
As soon as shed;  
'Twas morning's winged dream;  
'Twas a light that ne'er can shine again  
On life's dull stream."

The startled gophers darted into their cover and waited. When they looked again, the mother had packed the little form in clay, had rolled to the stone and lay face down wards on the earth. It was early dawn when she rose from her vigil.

### III

As Ermi neared the house, she saw that Wasi had returned, and with bursting heart she ran to tell him of their sorrow. His face grew sad and stern as he listened, but again, it lit up as he took her by the hand and led her to see Asa, the woman he had brought as a wife to his hut. Asa, who would be to her as a sister, one whom she would love in the place of Ninon, the child.

There are half-hours that dilate to years, and Ermi seemed to have suddenly grown cold. It was as though the vampire vixen who haunts the muskeg swamp had suddenly sapped her youth. Ermi spoke nought, only she laughed like Kayosk, the sea-gull, as he flies across Lac Wabamun, a loud laugh and bitter, like the taste of sleugh salt in summer.

She knew the unwritten laws of their tribe permitted polygamy, but she knew not that, even in his best love, a man's heart is never entirely absorbed, that no Wasi ever belongs wholly to any Ermi, knew not that this is the tree of woman's crucifixion.

And Wasi endeavoured to comfort her, but she was only silent and motionless. He told her of the great sun-dance, and of the feasting, and of how the sisters of the youths had cut little pieces of flesh from them, but the youths cried not, for they were no weak women.

Then Ermi moved around gently and prepared food for Asa, who wore a wreath of yellow blossoms wherewith Wasi had crowned her.

Sometimes, as she moved to and fro, she stopped as in a dream to look at the glowing and beautiful body of her rival. The woman was lithe as a sapling, her cheeks were like wild red roses, and her mouth was like to a bow and arrow when it is set. Asa's hair was blue-black, but her skin was almost white, for her father had been a pale face, one of the Company's men at Fort Edmonton.

But Ermi neither spoke nor complained, even when she read in Wasi's eyes strange depths of passion as he looked on the lovely stranger. A few days ago, she would have torn this woman to pieces, but there was no rage in her heart now. The world had hardened around her, and she could not cut through.

And so four moons filled and waned, and darkness and sun passed unheeded to the stricken Ermi, for the light had gone out of her life, and from the heavens too.

The women who loved her, and even Asa, tried to break her apathy, but guessed not that her wound was past all surgery—that her life was a bitter marah into which no tree of healing could fall.

Some said the sun had kissed her when she carried little Ninon to the coulee, and others said it was the touch of God, for the world has always a name for a broken heart.

Once the wife of Tusda told her that Ninon was better off and not needing her in the least, but this only made Ermi's heart the more dull and leaden. Wazakoo thought that Ninon might have grown into such a wicked woman as the bold Asa, but the words were an insult to the innocent eyes, the little unsullied feet, the lips pure as thought of God, which the mother's eyes called up.

"Very soon, you will go also," added Taopi, but it bewildered Ermi the more to know that the little piece of ground on which she stood was crumbling too.

Another moon waned and yet she served the household. In her brain the fire still burned on. Without, on the plains, the wind made a black discord like the sobbing cry of a starved wolf, and, sometimes, it was most like the whine of a whip-thong. Manitou walked about the earth and the leaves faded and fell from the trees. Manitou blew with his breath, and the river became like flint. At the wave of his arms the animals hid away in the ground and the birds forsook their nests in the wild rice and flew far off to the south-land.

But all the days the baby called to Ermi, and often it wailed. One day the voice wooed her unto the snow, out into the sheeted storm that turned the air into a white darkness. Streaks of bitter wind screamed across the prairie. The snow cut her face with stinging lash and the cowering cold cut into her very bones. But still, without ceasing, the baby called to her. Now and then, she almost clasped it, and her soul swooned, but something intangible, impalpable ever waved her back.

And then Ermi understood that the night was closing in and that she had come a long, long way. She would go back to Wasi, for she had forgotten about the other woman. The fire would be low, he would need her and she must find him, however weary the trail.

But even as she resolved, the woman sank limply to where one finds dreams and soft reveries and where church bells toll the vesper hour. Her hands clasped her rosary, but she did not pray. She only maundered softly the foolish song of the hunters from the southland—

"'Twas odour fled  
As soon as shed;  
'Twas morning's winged dream;  
'Twas a light——"

Once at school, she could not solve a problem and so she broke the slate. She remembered it quite well; it was a question in the rule of three. "How foolish!" she mused, and Ermi smiled as she remembered.

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The morning dawned brightly in the coulee where a stone covered a little grave. There was nothing to be seen, nor anything to suggest that it was here Ermi had lain down to dreams. The snow had hidden her well in its white bosom, but somewhere, somehow, Ermi, the Indian woman, was working out the pitiful problem of life on another slate.

## CHAPTER VII

### MOTORING TO ATHABASCA LANDING

"I'll tell the tale of a northern trail,  
And so help me God, it's true."

I dreamed three times that I was taking this trip, and here it has come to pass.

Our party consists of an editor from Vancouver; an editor from Edmonton; a Member of Parliament, a chauffeur, and myself. I feel guiltily feminine.

The road is one hundred miles long and connects Edmonton with the North. Over it are hauled all the supplies for the settlements and trading posts clear down to the Arctic. Once arrived at Athabasca Landing, the supplies are loaded on to scows or, in the winter, to sleighs, and from thence carried to their destination. I secretly call this the Trail of Sighs, for to the freighter it is a long and weary way, especially in these later days when editors, M.P.'s and graceless witty bodies whirl past him at forty miles the hour in motors that are quite mad. Some day a teamster will kill a chauffeur for sheer spite. Even now the fuse is fizzing round the magazine, or whatever you call the gasoline receptacle under the seat.

It would be hard to declare how long this trail has been used, but I would say for a century at least. From Edmonton for a few miles out, it is called the Fort Trail because—allowing for a slight divergence—it goes to Fort Saskatchewan, the head-quarters of the Mounted Police in this district. From thence, it is called the Landing Trail.

But soon this whole country will be shod with steel, for, even now, you may see navvies building grades as you pass along the trail, and next week the first railway to the Landing will be opened for traffic. I tell you, these railways are creating a new heavens and a new earth

however much the freighters may object. It is true, the trail will lose in interest once the lumbering stage coaches and heavily laden "tote" wagons have disappeared. When there are no long whips that crack like pistol shots; no night encampments around blazing fires, and no browsing cattle with tinkling bells, much of its picturesqueness will have been surrendered to the implacable cause of civilization.

From this time forth, the men who travel the trail will work for a wage. They will forget the feel of frozen bread in the teeth; the hard earth underneath them and the rough blanket against their chins. Yes! and they will also forget the fine elemental thrill that comes from hitting a running moose at long range, or a slithering wolf that lurks privily in a covert of kinikinnic. The pity of it!

No longer will our trail know the tired huskies, and still more tired runners, who each year, come February, make this homestretch to the old fur-market. The enormous bundles of fur that each spring sell for a million dollars to the bidders from Vienna, St. Petersburg, London and Chicago, will, for the future, figure as only so many untanned hides, as per bill of lading, instead of precious peltry or—supposing you to have sight and insight—"the lives o' men."

Our first stopping place is Battenberg, by the Sturgeon River. The place is not named for the lace as you might conjecture, but in honour of the son-in-law of her late Majesty, Queen Victoria. It is here the rural telephone wire comes to an end but if you are inclined to be finicky, it is not well to telephone. I tried it and had a conversation with Central in the which she expressed her opinion of me. I cannot complain that it was not informing.

The motor in which we travel has a record, not for speed, but as having made the farthest north trip on its own power. Last winter, Jack Kydd, our chauffeur, took it down the Athabasca River, on the ice, as far as the Pelican Rapids—that is to say, 225 miles north of Edmonton. "The make of the car?" you ask. I would tell you straight off and, later on, would endeavour to collect a bonus from the manufacturers were it not for the uncompromising prejudice of the publishers and their editors. Men are like that.

But I was telling you about Jack Kydd! His talent as a chauffeur is one that trails no feathers and he is a fine, likely looking lad. This day, I saw him pull the remains of a stump out of the road without breaking the axle. Such a performance should be rated as a religious act like the planting of the pipal tree in India.

All the way along, our road is contested by farmers' dogs who surge out from the shacks in a vain endeavour to regulate our speed. The dog is an incurable motophobe who says everything profane about motors that can be said.

Here is a morose young bull contesting the high way with us, refusing to budge an inch, and facing the motor with a menace. He is a grim-visaged brute and built for battle like an ironclad. His challenge to combat is a very dagger stroke of sound. Although the M.P. wagers fifty dollars on the motor, we do not try conclusions, but discreetly take to the side of the road at an angle that is truly appalling.

Even the calves are not afraid of the car and make their perilous bed in the middle of the road, thus causing us to reduce our pace to a legal one. Indeed, the only animals frightened of it are the horses. Its huge black snout and great goggle-eyes must make it seem to them like some monstrous, unthinkable brute. And, all considered, the horses are the wisest of the animals—wiser even than men—for the yellow peril—is as nothing to the black one.

Still, we are having a mighty good time. When the road is clear, the car spreads her wings and flies. Her gentle pliancy seems incompatible with her hurtling force. Each moment, she accumulates momentum so that we feel a sensation of tremendous power without pity. For the nonce, we are potential murderers and pigmy men had better have a care how they lounge across our paths. This mad car doesn't know a hill when she comes to it and even sings a long-metre song on the ascent. She might fairly be considered to have conquered gravitation. On! On! with bird-like swoop she goes, fairly skimming the ground and taking the corners just as if she knew what was there.

You can never believe how stretched out the world is till you motor this way north and see the long ribbons of road that unfold at every turn, the silver illimitable distances that suggest both a mystery and an invitation. I love these open trails, and to be of the earth earthy is not so wicked after all.

Gur—r—r—umph! Our 50 H.P. had dwindled to less than one-pony power and we haven't a leg to stand on. I will never say we burst a tyre: we cast a shoe.

"It is neither, Madam," said the Vancouver editor who was helping to prise up the wheel. "It is a valvular disease. Our viary accident is the result of a vicious valve that, of its own volition, has put a veto on our volacious voyage."

"Avant!" retorts the editor from Edmonton. "I will vouch that the accident to the vitals of our vehicle was a voidable one and arose from violent vibrations and vulgar velocity."

"Your verbose verdicts will never make the vamp or fill the vacuum," says the more practical M.P. "Bring me the vade-mecum this instant, you vacillating vagabonds."

I cannot think of any assonant words so I am content with fining each man a "V" or "vifty" days. I told you I was guiltily feminine.

Sitting at the side of a road, waiting for a plaster to dry on a valve, is about as exciting an occupation as knitting. Men should see to it that women learn to smoke if only that the women may take breakdowns more placidly. I can understand smoking becoming a means of grace. Besides, the sun is very hot this day and burns my face and neck to a vivid scarlet. Each man in the party produces a talcum tin for my alleviation. "Sunny *Alberta!*" snorts the British Columbian, "*Sunny Alberta!* a place of sun, believe me, for people who would prefer shade."

This newly acquired habit of the modern man in carrying a talcum tin is one that, hitherto, has escaped print. I here set it down for your

consideration.

While we are at work, three handsome boys drive up and stop to talk with us. I take their photograph while they pose for me on a stump. They are real-estate fans, so that their heads are full of "propositions," their pockets full of maps. They have imagination, unflagging industry, facility of expression, and love of country—qualities which are sure to bring them to the front in their gainful pursuit.

The illustrious financiers who come yearly to this province to deliver much kind advice and sage instruction, warn us to beware of these boys whom they are pleased to call "wildcatters," just as if we were the first to spend our money on the evidence of things hoped for, the substance of things not seen. The trouble which follows from over-investment in real-estate futures is attributable, not so much to the wildcatters, as to the unknown author of the multiplication table. Multiplying is our favourite occupation in Alberta even as it is in some other provinces I know of. Up here, every one who has a tongue talks about his "turn-over"; his "c'mission"; his "stake." Those who haven't tongues are the listeners. And it is a good thing to have a stake in this North-West Canada—very good. I have never yet met a person who regretted having one, but there are many regret they have not. I could tell you more about the real-estate situation only Jane Austen says if a woman knows anything she should strive superlatively to conceal it.

Fifty miles from Edmonton, we cross the Arctic watershed, so that from this point it is strictly proper to say down North, although the fall is only two feet to the mile. It is at this height of land that we look around and mentally spy out the country. We talk about the incomparable wheat fields of Grande Prairie; the water-powers of the Peace River; the oil-fields at Fort McMurray; the natural gas at Pelican Rapids; the timber berths and asphaltum of the Athabasca; of the coal, salt, fisheries, furs, and minerals spread all over and under this new and unrivalled Northland. And all this riches lies at our very feet—*ours for the taking*. "Hungry and I feed them," says the North. "Naked and I clothe them; thirsty and I give them——"

"No, it doesn't," says our chauffeur. "You can't get anything to drink beyond the Landing. The North is strictly a prohibition country."

"Dear me!" whines a person in the back seat, "and we are dreadfully out of tea."

At five o'clock, we stop at Eggie's for supper. Eggie broke land here fourteen years ago, and ever since has kept a stopping place for travellers. There is no need of his transporting eggs, butter, meat, grain, and vegetables to market, for the market comes to him. He makes hay when the sun shines, and also in the dark. As a result, he has accumulated sixty thousand dollars in money and gear. So far as I know, there is no eating-house with a record in any way comparable.

Eggie Jr. is a telegraph operator. His instrument is back of the cook stove over against a window. When he is away from home his young sister works the code. She picked it up while tending the stove. You can never tell what is up the sleeve of these pioneering women. I told her she was the sixth wise virgin. "The other five?" she queried with a glint of laughter in her eyes. There are other folk having supper at Eggie's. The man with the long slouchy stride is a land surveyor. They grow on every bush here.

That crisp-mannered youth with the honey-coloured hair is going down north to cap a gas well. In what better task can a youth engage than to conserve power, heat, and light for humanity? Dear young man!

Their driver quotes Cicero, and swears in Cree. He is a living example of what whisky can do for a Bachelor of Arts who entirely devotes himself to it.

By six o'clock we are again on the road, and passing through a rolling park-like country dotted with clumps of cottonwood, birch, poplar, and spruce. Sometimes, we pass lush meadow upon which graze full-fleshed cattle and comfortably rotund sheep. On one farm, a man is burning dead brushwood. There is no keener pleasure than, here and there, to thrust a core of fire into long grass or brushwood, and to

watch the red tongues of flame as they greedily lap it up. As yet, no farmer has written about it, but this is only because farmers are afraid of literary critics. It is a pity the workers are so frequently inarticulate, thus leaving their joys and sorrows to be imperfectly sensed by onlookers. But, Hear, Oh Men! and rejoice with me for at this game I am not a mere onlooker, having once burnt over twenty-eight acres. In making these fires, there is a kind of madness that takes possession of you so that you pay no heed to the shrivelling of your shoes; to the scalding cinders on your hands; or the inky blackness of your face and clothes. Indeed, it would not be surprising to ultimately learn that the direful task assigned to Lucifer is not wholly without its compensations.

At long intervals, we pass fat little shacks that spread over the land instead of stretching up. At one of these, we stop to get cold water in the engine.

"Any news moving?" asks the bachelor who is overlord to the shack.

He does not wait for an answer, but proceeds to inform us that the prime knowledge a man needs for homesteading is the art of cooking in a frying pan.

His homestead is a ranch; not a rawnch. The difference, he explains, is that the former pays sometimes; the latter never.

He very kindly invites me to see his swineyard, the special pride of which is a heavy thoroughbred called "Artful Belle" ... O la! la! la!

As he upholsters his pipe with a stuffing of cut-plug, her master would have me observe that Belle's face is "dished" and that her eyes are free from wrinkles of surrounding fat. Indeed Belle is no waddling, commonplace sow; no mere animated lard keg, for she has been bred to the purple with great care.

"A bacon hog?" I ask.

"Yes, madam," he replies, "but in order that her bacon may be of the desired streakiness I feed and starve her alternately."

It makes a vast difference to a sow whether her ears stand up or lie down. Belle's ears are 'pliable' and 'silky.' Her hair doesn't comb straight either, but tends to swirls and cowlicks which are proof-positive of her blue blood in the same way that a cold nose is in a woman.

I made a grave error, too, in speaking of Belle as red. Every swine husbandman knows the technical word for her particular colour is "mahogany." She has already farrowed two litters of six, the members of which inherit their mother's fatal beauty. He tells me other things but I forget them, except that pigs can see the wind, and that they are older than history.

We take a photograph of this bachelor homesteader and promise to print it in a city paper under the caption, 'Wife Wanted.' In the North, we call a bachelor, 'an anxious one.'

The last miles of our journey are heavy going because of the hills and stones, and our motor makes a lugubrious noise internally that is wholly at variance with her velvet wheels, well lubricated machinery, and the comfortable roundness of the corner seats, as if a plump and smiling matron had suddenly started to swear.

We reach Athabasca Landing at half-past ten while daylight still lingers. Our complexions are somewhat impaired, but the man who settles the bill for the steaks and coffee says there is nothing wrong with our appetites.

## CHAPTER VIII

### COUNTRY DELIGHTS

Sometimes, I go a-fishing and shooting, and even then I carry a notebook, that if I lose game, I may at least bring home my pleasant thoughts!  
—PLINY.

I am fishing for graylings, but so far have caught none, my case being similar to that of one Chang Chi-Ho, who in the eighth century, "spent his time angling but used no bait, his object not being to catch fish."

And truth to tell, I have not even the grace of an object, unless it be to talk to the men folk who are lading the big flat scows called "Sturgeon-Heads," for the trip down the river.

By these right pleasant waters of the Athabasca, you are no longer guided by duty but throw a rein on the senses. You do things because you want to do them, and not because you ought to. This is owing to the fact that the time-table loses its thrall north of 55°. I intend stopping here a long while.

It is a sun-steeped day, and the river looks like a bed of sequins. The sun, although it is strong in Alberta, doesn't seem to ripen people like it does farther south. I can see this from the way people give me greeting and from how they tell me all that is in their hearts.

Antoine hears that far off in that place called Montreal they dig worms out of the clay for bait, and that these worms have neither shells nor fur. This must be "wan beeg lie," for how could the worms keep from freezing? It is not according to reason. These white men with trails in the middle of their hair say these things so that the Crees, who are very shrewd rivermen, will go to live in Montreal.

I heartily concur with Antoine. I have been to Montreal myself and have never seen so much as the sign of an earth-worm. They tell queer yarns, those Eastern fellows who come from down North to write books and buy land, but Antoine and I won't be fooled by them. Indeed, we won't.

Antoine caught a pike the other day without a line, but he lost it again. It was the biggest fish he ever caught, but this is only natural, and is no new thing, for ever since the first slippery fish slithered through the hands of primeval man, it has always been the biggest one that got away. Where these biggest fish foregather ultimately has always been a mystery to me. Some day, we shall discover a piscatorial paradise with millions of them in it.

Antoine presents me to Captain Shot, an Indian who has been on this river for forty-eight years. The Captain is seventy-three, and his name is really Fausennent. He is called "Shot" because he was the first man to shoot the rapids of the Athabasca. I say that Antoine "presents me" but I say it advisedly, for the North levels people, by which is meant the primitive north where they live with nature. In this environment, the man who builds boats and supplies food or fuel, is the superior of the man or woman who writes, or pronounces theories. I may be able to hoodwink the people up south as to my importance in our community, but it is different here. And this is as it should be.

Captain Shot is engaged in building a boat for the Honourable the Hudson's Bay Company, and there is even a smoking-room in it. But, Blessed Mother! it is no trouble to build a boat now—none at all, for presently the railway will be completed and the boilers and metal fixings will come in over it, but in the old days—that is to say up till now—it was different. When the Northern Navigation Co. brought in the boilers for their boats, they hauled them a hundred miles over the trail from Edmonton, and it took seventy-two horses on each boiler.

"Didn't the government help any?" I ask.

Oh yes! the late government at Ottawa tried to help transportation by sending in fifty reindeer; but the Captain has heard tell that some

men swore terrible oaths at the government, and set their dogs about eating up the deer, for these men hold a kind of an idea it is railways the country hereabouts needs, but he is not quite sure as to the rights of the story.

There are four hundred men employed here at the Landing in building scows and transshipping. Only a few of the scows are brought back, for they have to be tracked up by power of man. For this reason, a new flotilla is built each year.

Captain Shot has many estimable sons, all of whom are rivermen and shipbuilders. They could hardly be expected to disgrace their name by becoming mere farmers or teamsters after the unwisdom of the white man's way. Ho! Ho! the idea of any one wishing to become a farmer.

But I was telling you about the scows. Unless you sat here catching fish, you could never believe how much stuff can be packed into a scow. As I watch the men at work, I think of Mark Twain's ambitious blue-jay who tried to fill a house with acorns. Still the men do not seem lacking in confidence, and keep wading backward and forward through the water with sacks of flour, slabs of bacon, chests of tea, crates of hardware, tins of stuff, and treasures in boxes that can only be guessed at. I am hoping the biggest box contains dolls, ribbons, work-bags, picture books, peppermint bull's eyes, and things like that, for a mission school Christmas-tree somewhere down near the Arctic. I am almost praying that it does.

The smaller boxes are called permits, and each contain six bottles of whisky. These are for the pioneering gentlemen at the different posts who are delicate, and who honestly desire to get strong.

Each permit is signed by a doctor so that the liquor must be considered strictly as medicine. Irritating people who fail to understand that there are only two licensed hotels between Edmonton and the North Pole, sneer about there being a thousand delicate men on the rivers; but, for my part, I am inclined to stand by the doctors,

although I have always held the clinical thermometer to be the only thing about the medical profession with an integrity beyond question.

If any one should glean from reading these lines that all there is to loading a scow is to load it, he or she is a much misled person. The last bale is hardly stowed away till two of the men have disappeared. No one saw them go, least of all the Boss, but any one can see they are not here now. The Boss is a creature of steel who seems to forget there is much to be done in the last hour or two before a boatman leaves the Landing for the stretched out journey beyond. Various purchases are to be made; people are to be seen; drinks are to be had against a long, long thirst, to mention nothing of new vows to Marie, Babette, and Josephine.

After awhile, the voyageurs are all rounded up with the exception of Luke. The best the Boss can say for Luke is that he has been given a Christian name. Jake is sent to fetch him. Luke turns up, but Scotty must find Jake. Luke isn't drunk either—not he. It's the scow that's drunk. Who said Luke was "fuller'n a goat," I'd like to know. Ultimately, the Boss starts off to get Scotty and Jake. He gets them, and he sits them down in a highly decisive manner, only to find that Bill, and Jean Baptiste, and One-eyed Pete have gone up town for a dunnage bag they left at the Grand Union Hotel.... The Boss looks eight feet tall when he is angry, but, otherwise, to the unseeing eye, he is only a young factor, or maybe an independent trader, intent on his work like scores of other ordinary, unaccounted workmen. Contrawise, the eye of imagination may see in him an adventuring gentleman launching a craft that is to traverse for hundreds of miles through many and diverse waterways, carrying with it a veritable cargo of blessings to the far and lonely outposts of the North which, as yet, are little else than names.

The rivermen push off from shore with their oars till, in the centre of the stream, the current catches them and carries them along. This is their only method of locomotion, to float and float with the stream. They have a steering-pole in the scow similar to that which may be seen in pictures of old Roman galleys, and when, because of darkness,

the voyageurs wish to stay their course, they make to shore by its aid, even as the Romans did more than two thousand years ago. To make the simile complete, I stand on the bank and repeat the invocation of the Roman poet: "Oh ship that conveyest Virgil to Greece, duly deliver up the precious life entrusted to thy care."...

If I hadn't jerked the crown of an old hat out of the river under the impression that it was a fish, Justine would not have laughed out loud and I would not have had an excuse to get acquainted with her. She has been sitting nearby this half-hour. Her name isn't really Justine and I forget what it is. She is the prettiest breed-girl in the country and, by the same token, the frailest. "Believe me, Madam," explained an old officer of the Mounted Police, the other day, "those eyes were never given her for the good of her soul. She is a little worth-nothing person like all the other breed-girls."

This man despises breed-women and he has made a sufficiently intimate study of them to form an opinion. He wishes they were all dead. "For an absolute truth, Madam, listen to me. For years, these women have paddled their canoes up this river with kegs of contraband liquor a-swing from ropes beneath and none of the force ever suspected. They were so monstrously civil, they would even give us 'a lift' if we desired it. I was highly surprised when we found them out, and so disgusted with myself that, for a time, I thought of becoming a type-setter. By Jove! you know; a fellow doesn't expect to find a keg outside a canoe. Now does he?"

But I am not one of those who believe there are good women and bad women. Some are elemental and others are not; that is the only difference. I will maintain this to the very day my tongue wears out.

Justine's white father must have had a head and shoulders of the most perfect classical type. As she sits on the beach with a light shawl drawn down over her head, this girl resembles greatly the Madonna of Bouguereau. I tell her this, and we talk for a long while. She thinks my suggestion that she marry a riverman, or a trapper, and have quite a large family, a wholly foolish suggestion. It causes her to think little of both my discernment and my knowledge of men. Rivermen, she would

have me understand, hardly ever come home, and when they do, only to get drunk and beat their wives. A white man won't marry a breed girl, nowadays, and if he should give her his heart, he expects it to be returned sometime. Still, Justine considers his transient affections to be preferable to those of the breed's, in that a white man seldom strikes his girl. Justine gives me a short lesson in Cree, and, among other words, I learn that *saky hagen* is the equivalent of "one I love," and that *nichimoos* means "sweetheart." The former is usually applied to a child, the latter to an adult.

When I ask Justine to tell me a story about the North, she complies because she has been educated in a mission school and speaks English well. And then she is not in the least afraid of me since I showed so lamentable a lack of insight about marriage. Now listen to the story.

Once a mallard who was sick of love asked a blackbird to marry him. "Marry me," he said, "and I will give you fish to eat and wild rice. And when the sun is hot, I will hide you in the rushes and keep you under my wings."

And so they lived together as man and wife and the blackbird bore her husband three sons, but soon he tired of her and made believe he was dead so that she went away and left him in peace.

And then the mallard went in search of another wife.... It was a story I craved of Justine, and lo! she has told me a parable.

## CHAPTER IX

### AT THE LANDING.

A city founded is no city built  
Till faith becomes prolific by the fathering tale  
Of good report and all-availing effort.—J. M. HARPER.

The sweet of life is something small,  
A resting by a wayside wall  
With God's good sunshine over all.—R. W. GILBERT.

This is the rainy season at Athabasca Landing, so that the streets are very muddy. Long ago, it was like this in Edmonton, my continuing city, but when we were come to a very considerable puddle our escorts carried us. This is why big, fine-looking men were in high demand.

But, this day, by some strange providence, the glut of rain has abated and the clemency of the sky fills me with an importunate inclination to gad about and use my eyes. There are no moments to be lost, to-morrow it is sure to be raining again. Never was land more golden; never one more grey.

Here at the Landing, it makes no difference where one goes in search of diversion, for it is to be found in all directions and every foot of the way. This morning I preferably take to the hill back of the town, for the water has drained off it to the river and the footing is good.

The hill is held by the Honourable the Hudson's Bay Company, who have owned it time out of mind. It hurts the Company to sell land, for they are the true lineal descendants of that classical tree which groaned with torture when a limb was dissevered from its trunk. This being the case, they may be expected to hold the hill until the municipality taxes it away from them.

Ignorant people like the wheat-sellers of Winnipeg, speak of this settlement as a new place, a mushroomic upstart of yesterday, whereas

it was an old post before Winnipeg was thought of. North of the Landing, there are thirty thousand people who depend on the local rivermen to bring down their year's supplies, so that this is a place of no small concernment and it has seven streets, you might say. As yet, its houses and public buildings do not run to paint or useless ornamentations, and there is a stolid practicability about its front doors.

But about the hill: Terry, who is in "the Mounted," tells me it is a walk of three cigarettes to the top of it, but two if you step lively. This Terry has a bold and busy fancy, and if he cared to write, he would, like Xenophon, be "an author of wonderful consequence." Once, he tried to set down a story, but it was like trying to make a fire with a wet match.

Aha! Terry, Aha! you have said it exactly—defined it to a hair's-breadth—the plight of the authors who would rise up on wings as eagles but only they faint and are weary. A wet match! What greater or more invincible deterrent could exist to the kindling of a fire? If Terry's manners were less adroit and his hair less curly, I could almost love him. I am half-purposed to anyway.

And now that we are on matters literary I wish to announce that some day, when my thoughts have come to issue, I intend writing an article on the evil taste of pen-handles. There are several million dollars in store for the man who will manufacture handles that are toothsome—say of licorice, cinnamon, or sassafras wood, or of some composition agreeable to the palate. The connection between the tongue and the pen is a much closer one than generally recognized.

We might even have pleasantly medicated pen-handles guaranteed to stimulate our addled heads, or—Heigh, my hearts of the fourth estate!—to fill us with an irresistible desire to work when there is music and laughter downstairs, or a horse and sunshine out of doors. The invention of such a pen could not fail to be imparted as righteousness.... The roses are in full blast, and all the way along I walk the earth in a fine rapture. On the hill-top, there is a spread of blue hyacinths like a torn veil that has been thrown to the earth. Here,

in bewildering array, grow wild parsnips, feverfew, painter's brush, mint-flowers, and lilies that flame riotously across the sheens and greens of the open ways. I love the crimson glories of these lilies; they seem to bring grist to life. Indeed, there is no question but they do.

The poplars and cottonwoods are hanging out long tassels of woolly silver. It is a pity these do not pledge fruit like the tassels of the Indian corn. Mayhap, some day, a scientist will cause the black poplar to produce something for the sustenance of the North. Even the honey which the bees store in its cavities becomes bitter and acrid to the taste. Or it may happen we shall discover a cordial substance which will transmute the tassels of the poplar into something else—say into mulberries. Long ago, the English orchardists believed such things to be possible, for, in the fourteenth century, one wrote down that "a peach-tree shall bring forth pomegranates if it be sprinkled with goat's milk three days when it beginneth to flower."

It is good to be here this day enjoying the pleasant amity of the earth and sky. One may draw physical and spiritual renovation from both. It is very good to feel on one's face the soft-handed wind that is seldom still. This is the kindly unrestricted breeze which brings gifts to the North and West. It blesses the grain by swaying it to and fro, for the word "bless" means literally to fructify. On some such day as this I will come back here from the dead.

On this hill, the Hudson's Bay Company, the world's oldest trust, have erected their storehouse and factor's residence. These are log buildings, austere square and ugly in the extreme. In the factor's garden is an old sundial which adds the needed touch of romance to the place; also, it connotes a fine leisureliness.

The erstwhile typical régime of a Hudson's Bay fort is a phase of existence which shortly will be sponged off human memory. It has never been as fully explained to me as I could desire, but as nearly as I can make out, the staff of a well-manned post consisted of the factor and chief factor, the trader and chief trader, an accountant, a postmaster, two or more clerks, a cooper, a carpenter, a blacksmith, and labourers, the work of the last mentioned being to haul water, cut

wood, and secure meat. There were also as many cooks as required. Food was sometimes scarce, so that the men were required to lick their platters clean. Contrariwise, they drank not a little of heady beverages which they are said to have "carried well."

The Indian's idea of a house is a different one to the trader's. It is not a place to be lived in, but exists merely as a shield from the weather. Accompanied by Goodfellow, a frowsy, stump-tailed dog from the hotel, I visited the Indian houses hereabout. Goodfellow came with me, not as a protector, but because he wouldn't be driven back. He is a reprobate cur, forever spoiling for a fight; a natural born feudist who lives in a state of violent excitement. Terry says he is "no bloomin' lap-dog," but a four-legged incarnation of the devil himself. Sometime soon, this dog's day will be over, for he is surely going to die of lead poisoning.

All the way to the Indians, with a stupid malignity, and in defiance of the plainest laws of fence, Goodfellow gave chase to every cat and rabbit and bit every cow. It is not open for me to say what I thought of him, except that his conduct was solidly wrong. It was, accordingly, of high gratification to the rancour I hid in my heart when the Indians' huskies made short shrift of him. Like Humpty Dumpty, it will be hard to put him together again. They are no dealers in sophistries, these wide-mouthed wolf-dogs, with their wicked teeth, and would fight against the stars in their courses.

When the women have beaten them off and learn I am not offended concerning Goodfellow's drubbing, they are pleasant to me. A thin, pock-marked squaw invites me into a shack or, more properly speaking, into a baby-warren which fairly bristles with a flock of semi-wild children, for, as yet, the squaws have not deliberately ceased from having children.

What I said awhile ago about the Indian's house applies equally to his children's wearing apparel. It shelters rather than ornaments. Their clothes seem to have no visible supports, but are held to their small fat bodies by some inexplicable attraction. One may see the same phenomenon on the apostolic figures on stained glass windows.

A chocolate-coloured baby with blackberry eyes is propped against the wall in a moss bag, and looks for all the world like a cocoon that might any moment push off its sheath and take to wings.

An unsavoury mess of entrails is stewing in a black pot and filling the house with an unpleasant odour. I try not to show my repugnance lest my hostesses consider the white woman to be proud-stomached with no proper appetite for lowly faring. I tell them as I take down the blanket from the door—not untruthfully you understand, but as a small matter of immediate expediency—how it is light one desires rather than fresh air, and that it is hard to see aright when one has been walking in the sunlight.

This Hudson's Bay blanket is, next to *uskik*, the kettle, the one indispensable thing in an Indian household. It serves as a door, a coat, a carpet, a bed, and for other things which it boots not to mention. It is, therefore, well to be explanatory when one removes it from its place, just as it is wise to apologize when one pokes an Englishman's fire of coals.

Mrs. Lo tells me the old woman who is making moccasins is *Naka*, which word, she explains for my better understanding, is the Cree for "My Mother." *Naka* is a very old woman and "can no English say." Neither can she be considered as typical of Whistler's mother.

There are amusing things to be done in this shack. For instance, you may by signs and smiles make *Naka*, my mother, to understand how you greatly desire to sew upon the moccasins she holds, and *Naka* may, in the amiability of her disposition, accede to your importunity.

As thread, deer sinew is not so easily manipulated as you might imagine; indeed, I should say it is distinctly uncontrollable. The audience, in spite of its manifest efforts at politeness, is nevertheless widely diverted. Who would have thought a white woman could be so droll in the woods, and so very stupid?

Huh! Huh! she may be so stupid that even old *Naka*, who is a proper woman with her needle, has to scrub the air with her arms and

show her yellow gums in laughter.

Their always wakeful curiosity leads the maidens to enquire as to what might be inside a white woman's hand-bag, and that they may sufficiently know about this matter, the white woman empties it upon her knees. Immediately, the articles are passed around for appraisal and approval. Bank cheques! ... *Oui! Oui!* The men who work on the boats get these. The girls know how it is talking [Transcriber's note: taking?] paper to get money.

My penknife, pencil, note-book, purse, and handkerchief are duly examined and quietly commented upon, but a package of tablets packed in a silver paper, and small tube of cold cream, cause no small flutter in our circle. When I am through demonstrating their use, every one's breath is laden with the odour of mint, and their hands with that of roses. Um—m—m—mh!

The women feel my arms, try on my bracelet and rings, and ask me to take off my hat that they may see my hair, which, alas! is devoid of all waywardness and coquetry. I can see they are disappointed in this and think me what Artemus Ward calls "a he-looking female."

In one shack to which the girls accompany me, an emaciated, coughing boy is bed-ridden and near to death. Lili Abi has him in her arms, and he may not go free.

Who this Lili Abi, or Lilith, is does not certainly appear, but, according to the Rabbis who wrote of old time, she is the first wife of Adam and queen of the succubi. Some there are who declare this to be an ill-framed story, and a conceit of the fancy, but others hold it as a creed that she lives by sucking the blood of children till they fade away and die. It is from Lili Abi that we get our word lullaby. The malific lullaby she sings has come nigh to breaking the heart of humanity, but, one day, it shall happen that a sure and strong-handed scientist will get a strangle hold on Lili Abi and pierce her to death with his slender but omnipotent needle.

Amil, who is the lad's father, says, "I am mooch scare' 'bout leetle boy, for sure. I ees pray all tam to de holy mother. Mabbe he ees get well... la bonne chance ... mabbe non! Leetle boy sing all de tam when he ees well."

Amil has never been to the south, or over the mountains, but he has heard much about these countries. He has been told how, in the United States, they do not believe in the pope and get married many times. He has also heard that the Yankees mean to conquer Canada and pull down the tricolor.

Michele Daubeny, who once went across the mountains to where the fish-eaters are, told him that the ocean never freezes. But this Michele has a tongue which is not straight, also he has been known to steal fur out of the traps, so that Amil does not know what to believe.

"I have mak rip'ly," says Amil, "dat mabbe by'me by, I ees tak de trail dem queeck an' see *kickekume*, de great sea water, to myse'f."

And when I leave the shacks and go back towards the village, I fall in with some swart broodlings, who are shooting with arrows. At first, they will have none of me until I make the mortifying confession and concession that I cannot shoot and desire greatly to be taught. After this, nothing could exceed their pedagogic enthusiasm. Apollo, prince of archers, could do no better.

In the pale face, the hunting instinct, while never entirely lost, is still greatly modified. In the red man it is a passion. Watch this little lean-bellied Indian as he stalks his game. The bird rises and settles again a few yards away. The boy trails it up closer and closer with a feline softness of tread, a queer slurring movement that belongs only to animals of prey, and then, standing taut and tense as a finely-bred setter making game, he concentrates the whole energy of his body on one piercing point and sends his arrow home.

The bow-and-arrow stage through which these Indian lads are passing corresponds in the white boy to that inevitable condition of development known as gun fever. In our city, at a highly immoral

price, we dress up in khaki the boys of the lower classes, give them guns, and call them scouts. I like the Indian way better. Of course, there is this to be said for our method, that it instils a martial spirit into the youngsters so that when they are grown larger we shall have no lack of soldiers. This is a statement so obvious and axiomatic that it hardly needs writing down.

Well, so be it! How else are our bonds to be protected? And may not the lower classes be relied upon to constantly produce batches of boys to step into the ranks? Yes! I believe in Boys' Brigades and in war. I have some bonds myself.

In the village, several homesteaders who are trending northward to the Peace River country, have drawn up to the hotel. Their wagons are piled high with farm implements and household stuff which they purchased at Edmonton.

All of these people are topful of enthusiasm, being of wise and gallant mind. Indeed, the whole country seems surcharged with it and even the poplars clap their hands. The settlers will tell you the only knocker here is Opportunity. There is always a mirage in the pioneer's sky which, God be praised, he manages to haul down bit by bit and pin to the solid earth. "The pins!" you ask. Ah yes! I may as well tell you; they are surveyors' stakes and tamarack fence-poles.

I have some little talk with a woman who is resting on the balcony while her horses are being fed. She comes from the United States and, until her marriage three months ago, practised her profession as a trained nurse. Her husband is going to make entry for a homestead, and when, in three years, he has "proven up," they will open a store in one of the villages. By that time, the railway will have reached their district. Here is a woman of varied interests and many pursuits; one with more than an arm up her sleeve. I am doubly sure of her practicability now that she has told me of the stuff she has packed in the corners of the wagon, and in the narrow spaces between the household utensils. She has seeds for her kitchen garden, also sweet peas, mignonette, sunflowers, hollyhocks, and pansies. The firebox of her stove contains a hand sewing-machine, while the oven is the

receptacle for a guitar, some music a surgical case, a box of medicines, a small looking-glass, two metal candlesticks, a roll of coloured pictures for her walls, a few thin paper classics, stationery, fishing-tackle, and a well-stored work-bag. The matches she carries in a case with a close top, while the groceries are packed in tin bread boxes which will serve the same end in her new home. Besides their cooking utensils, toilet articles, clothing, blankets, and tent, this couple carry a rifle, a shot-gun, ammunition, and other small but useful things like a map, a compass, and an almanac. The wagon has a canvas top.

One man who is also heading for the far north tells me he has sold everything from painkiller to mining stock. Of late, he has been selling real-estate, but the bottom has dropped out of this business. For the future, he intends raising potatoes on the land instead of prices. He has "cleaned up" eight thousand dollars in real-estate, but he wishes me to understand he made this honestly by taking options on property and selling before the options came due.

With remarkable precision of language, he explains how the slump in real-estate is chiefly due to those large, didactic gentlemen of slow conscience and insulting superior manner who come here by the trainload and tell the North she is still a flapper, and that it is unbecoming of her to do up her hair and lengthen her skirts, after which cheap and unsolicited advice, they take themselves and their pestiferous money homewards.

Their opinions are quoted from the Atlantic to the Pacific, which I must know takes in Spruceville, till the bankers are seized with the complaint known as cold feet—pest take them!—and "get orders from headquarters" to close up all outstanding accounts. These banker fellows, my informant says, lose their beauty sleep, but as far as he can see, lose nothing else. A business man may be potentially rich and yet be put into bankruptcy by a corporation, the spoils going to the corporation, or its manager. There should be a law against elderly wide-jawed financiers who prophesy hard times because, with them, the wish is father to the thought. There is nothing in all the world they desire so much in order that they may, by their phenomenal rates of

interest, pillage the country to their heart's satisfaction. So gainful is their pursuit, my friend will not be at all surprised if, at the last day, it is found that these tongue-lolling financiers have a lien on heaven; indeed, he believes this to be inevitable. Owing to the fact that we are unaccustomed to it, the process of thinking is a somewhat painful one to us of Alberta, but it is wonderful what flashes of illumination come to us sometimes.

To-day, the first train of cars has entered this place. It belongs to the Canadian Northern Railway Company. For many years Edmonton was known as the last house in the world. This, of course, was not literally true, and it would be hard to state where or which is the ultimate hearth-stone in this very good land of Canada, but assuredly Edmonton was the last post-office and, until this year, the End of Steel. To-day, this road is born. When will it die? We fall into a way of thinking it is here for eternity, but railways vanish like everything else. Even the great Appian Way, which lasted for over two thousand years, has, in these last centuries, become little more than a name.

To build even one of our railways, a hundred forests are sacrificed, and, in the uncanny gloom of the dead country which lies in the heart of the earth, thousands of bowed, grim workers toil, Vulcan-like, for the iron to make its spikes and nails.

The railroad seems like a huge centipede with rails for the body, ties for the limbs and smoke for the breath. The men who stand by her side are the waiters who feed her with coal and slake her thirst with water. Sometimes, when she is weary of the freighting these men lay upon her, she rises and crushes it to atoms. Men call this happening "a broken rail" or "an open switch," but we know better.

Or we may think of the railroad as a streak of light through desolate places telling the pioneer to be strong and of good courage with the hope of better days.

Or, again, it is a belt which binds the lustrous provinces of the East and West into the eager land of Canada. What odds that the belt,

partaking of its environment, is rocky here or sandy there, so long as it be really a belt?

No one can truly say when this road will die. It may be—if one may hazard so saucy a suggestion—that the airships will kill her by taking her traffic in men and merchandise. And maybe the great-grandchildren of the "Coming Canadians" who arrived this year from Scandinavia or Austria, will plough long furrows on her right-of-way and haul off her bridge timbers for firewood. Guesswork all!

I might have gone on musing about this railway until now, and computing what its advent means to the North, the country which has hitherto been the land of the dog and the canoe, had not a commanding voice bade me come and "drape" myself with the crowd beside the first train in order to have my picture taken.

"I won't go! not a toe," said I, but I went, for no woman who is even fairly normal can successfully resist having her photograph taken. She always hopes it will turn out better than the last one, and I hoped so too.

## CHAPTER X

### ON THE ATHABASCA RIVER

I am but mad north-northwest: when the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw.—*Hamlet*.

All the world is a deluge of rain when we leave Athabasca Landing, and we wait at the hotel till the last minute, hoping the storm may abate in order that we may reach our steamer without losing too much starch. But the horn is making the asthmatic lamentations, meaning thereby that everybody should be aboard, so we say good-bye to all at the hotel; promise to be good; to take care of ourselves; and to come back soon. I say "we" because it is journalistic etiquette to be impersonal, but actually there is only myself, the other passengers having gone down to the river over an hour ago.

It is a troublous jaunt which I make, for a streak of wind turns my umbrella into a cornucopia; the fat drops of rain splash into my eyes; I take the wrong turn, get mired and lose my rubber shoes. When the river is reached, I find the descent to the steamer is buttered with mud and so steep that sliding is the only method of locomotion possible.

A vastly tall man stands on the gangway at the foot of the hill; holds out a pair of arms that must measure ten feet from tip to tip and says, "Come on, lady." The lady comes, but with such impact that we nearly go through to the opposite side of the steamer. Our final resting place is on a banana crate, which, in all conscience, is yielding enough, the fruit proving to be over-ripe. The passengers are distinctly amused, but the freight master is in no gallant temper over it and disapproves of the whole affair. I could tell you what he said to the vastly tall man, but you would have to come very close to hear me.

After supper, which consists of beef with stuffing, macaroni with cheese, pork with beans, white fish, stewed tomatoes, escalloped corn, boiled potatoes, walnut pickles, catsup, soda biscuits, pumpkin-pie,

apple-pie, currant buns, cocoanut cake, cheese, coffee, stewed figs, tooth-picks and other things which I cannot remember, I crawl to the deck to find out where Grouard is, and how we are to get there.

Although thither bound, my knowledge of its location is shamefully vague. Here is what I learn. We sail north and west on the Athabasca River till we come to Mirror Landing, at the confluence of the Athabasca and Lesser Slave River, at which point we leave the steamer and make a portage of fourteen miles to Soto Landing. This portage is to avoid the government dams which have been built to make the Lesser Slave River navigable. At Soto Landing we embark on the *Midnight Sun*, another steamer of the Northern Navigation Company, and travel on till we enter Lesser Slave Lake, down which we journey to its extreme western end, where Grouard sits on a hill overlooking a bit of the lake called Buffalo Bay. Without mishaps, we ought to reach Grouard in four or five days, but no one will cut off our heads if we loiter a bit on the way.

There are about thirty male passengers on board and seven women. This half-hour I have been talking to a plausible prolix villain whom it would be easy to like greatly. He is going to make three million dollars from his oil-wells on the Mackenzie River. He says so himself. He has been down north for several years and walks like one who has been used to the spring of a snowshoe beneath his foot. His clothes have the odour of the forest—that is to say of leaf mould, poplar smoke and spruce resin. He went to England two years ago to persuade Grandfather Bull to invest in oil and asphaltum, but was not as successful as he could desire. "I figure," he says, "it will take another century to convince Grandfather, and by that time the fourth generation of America 'Coal-oil Johnnies' will have squandered the dividends on actresses and aeroplanes. Pouf! these Americans have no idea the world belongs to the Lord."

It was well I agreed with him so civilly, for he said, "If you wish to invest in some oil-stocks, Madam—and no doubt you will after what I have told you—I will see to it that you get in on the ground-floor and no questions asked."

Now I did not like to inquire of him what is meant by the ground-floor, lest he should think me the veriest ignoramus, but I am persuaded it means something most excellent, for I have frequently heard promoters mention it to people like me, who have not much money to buy with.

This man originally hailed from New Zealand, but he tells me that country is no good; it is too far from Fort McMurray. At Fort McMurray life is one round of pleasurable anticipation and all the day seems morning. Who can tell at what moment a gusher may shoot into the clouds and blot out the sun itself? Then it's gorged with gold we should all be—those of us on the ground-floor—and are millionaires, with hundreds of universities and public libraries to give away. What would be the use of having oil and hiding it under bushels of rocks, we'd like to know.

At this point the purser explains that the steep ascent to our right is called Bald Hill. It can be seen from a long distance, and is one of the features of the landscape from which, in the winter, the freighters measure distances—a kind of millarium or central milestone. Surely this is a country of vast horizons, both mentally and visually.

About every twelve miles we pass a stopping place where the winter freighters and their teams are fed. These houses and stables are built of logs and are sheltered by the forest. I prefer to say they have a roof-tree, the words seeming to suggest a good deal more. In spite of their splendid isolation, these stopping places do an excellent business and, while warm and well-provisioned, are still somewhat in the rough. The purser says this roughness is not worth regarding, for while here is the country a fellow roughs it, in the city he "gets it rough."

"And that reminds me, ladies, of my errand to you," he continues; "you are probably aware there are only sixteen bunks on this boat and eight mattresses. You, of course, will use your own blankets and pillows, but I perceive you have not secured mattresses. It would be wonderfully easy if you were to carry off one, or even two, from the priests' state-rooms, for at this very minute the priests say prayers on the lower deck."

"And believe me," he concludes in a highly chivalrous manner, "you two ladies have an unquestionable right to the mattresses, so that I shall consider your act to be one of perfect propriety."

Thus encouraged by the pursuer I proceeded with my room-mate to seize our "unquestionable rights," but, approaching the priests' door, my heart failed me, and our undertaking seemed a plain and undeniable demonstration of wickedness like the robbing of a child's bank. They are such quiet, well-deserving men, these eight black-smocked Brothers who are going North to the jubilee of the great Bishop Grouard, the like of whom there never was. Also, they are very polite, and the one who is an astronomer and comes from Italy, picked out the tenderest cut of beef for me at supper.

"Pray don't be silly," snorted my room-mate, "the rules of their Order say distinctly they shall deny themselves and not sleep softly. Besides, when men take terrible vows that they will never get married, it is a woman's stoutest duty to steal their mattress whenever the opportunity serves."

She also told me with rapid brevity some names which Clement of Alexandria, a Father of the Church, applied to women in the early days of the Christian era. She had read about them in a history.....

In the falling of the night, at the mauve hour, our ship having been made fast, we go ashore and talk with the Indians who are camped here in a wigwam. One of the passengers, who has lived among the Crees for many years, tells me I express myself with redundancy in that the literal meaning of wigwam is camping-ground. She says the Indians have many grotesque folk tales, which are told by the men. Each story has a moral which they desire their wives to consider from an educative standpoint. Once there was a man whose *utim* (that is to say his dog) used to turn into an *iskwao*, or woman, when it became dark. She had yellow hair and her arms were white and soft like the breast feathers of a young bird. This happened long ago, before the Indians were baptized and when people were not so pious as they are now. Any man can do the same thing to this day if he happens to know the magic formula.

There is also a tale about a woman of the woods whom we, in our scientific conceit, call the echo. Once when her man was away for many moons on the great *sepe*, or river, the woman took another husband, so that when her man came back she flouted him and slapped his face. That night the moon changed her into a voice, and now she calls for her husband to come and love her, but he only mocks at her.

This habit of the husbands in telling tales with palpable deductions attached would seem to be common to other races than the Indians, for the Romans, likewise, had a story about the echo. It appears that Jupiter confided to Madam Echo the history of his amours, and when she told his secrets among her friends she was deprived of speech and could only repeat the questions which were asked of her. The Cree story is the better one. It has a fine human motive which the other lacks, and also it drops, a much-needed tribute on the worn altar of domesticity.

When a fire is lighted with birch bark and tamarack knots, we sit beside it and are more merry than you could believe.

The sweetheart of Jacques dances for us to the well-cadenced rhythm of a Tea Song. I cannot spell her Indian name, but it means "Fat of the Flowers," by which term they express our word "nectar." The Cree is a droll language.

"Ha! He! ne matatow,  
Ha! He! ne saghehow."

she chants and rechants as the fitful flames make sharp high-lights on her dark skin, causing her to appear as the flying figure of a bronze Daphne, and, in truth, the boughs of the trees lend likeness to my fancy, for as she dances into them, they seem to absorb her, even as the laurel absorbed the Grecian nymph of old time.

Translated literally, the words of the Tea Song read thus—

"Ha! He! I love him,  
Ha! He! I miss him."

This is a supremely cunning song, in that it utters in six words (if we exclude the interjections) the summary of all the love songs which have ever been written—"I love him: I miss him." I am glad it was framed in the unsophisticated North.

And Fat of the Flowers sings another song which is addressed to her lover. She is lonely for him, our interpreter explains, but drinks her tears in silence. Sometimes his presence comes to her in the hour of twilight, and she kneels to it as the poplar kneels to the wind. When he returns to the camp fire she will give to him a blanket made out of the claw skins of the lynx, and a white and scarlet belt from the young quills of the porcupine.

I can see that her honeyed words are agreeable to Jacques and give him fullness of pleasure, for there is a tell-tale joy in his face that refuses to be hid.

Jacques, who is a riverman, was educated at a mission school on the Mackenzie, and he tells me that Fat of the Flowers is nearly as "magneloquent" and clever as a man. He is almost sure there is a little white bird that sings in her heart.

After a time, our dusky friends steal away one by one to their rest, or two by two. The ship lolls lazily on the bank and there is no sound save the whimper of the fire and the deep breathing of some over-tired sleeper, but once a sleeper laughed aloud.

I step carefully between the recumbent forms on the deck lest I hurt them or disturb their quietude. I am sorry now that I stole the mattresses. Surely I am a bitter sinner and unlovely of heart.

In the morning, when I told the Brothers how I had privily taken the mattresses because I disapproved of their vows concerning marriage, and because of the unseemly remarks Clement of Alexandria had applied to women in the early days of the Christian era, they laughed again and again with much hilarity. Indeed, one of the Brothers said he

applauded my moderation and marvelled that I was good enough to leave their blankets and pillows. Another gave it as his opinion that Clement's pleasantry was a shabby-minded one and needlessly sarcastic, the result of an ill-governed disposition. But this Brother, like the others, took full care to evade the question I had raised as to celibacy....

What Clement of Alexandria said was that women, like Egyptian temples, were beautiful without, but when you entered and withdrew the veil, there was nothing behind it but a cat or a crocodile.

## CHAPTER XI

### SOME NORTHERN PIONEERS

Through these shores amid the shadows, with the apparitions pressing,  
Pioneers! O Pioneers!—WHITMAN.

In the morning, soon after sunup, we continue our joyous journey on the Athabasca, but the birds are out and about before us. An occasional duck rises off the water sharply with a whir of wet wings, but generally they are self-complacent and play at last across the road with the ship, just as if they sought trouble and despised it. The young ducklings, who have only taken to water these few days ago, form themselves into tiny rafts and one might almost expect to see a fairy step aboard them. The fish jump out of the water, praying to be caught. They look like strips of silver ribbon. Mr. Patrick O'Kelly, who is also watching their come and go, declares this to be a sign of rain. "When birds fly low, lady, and when fish swim near the surface, it is well to bring in the clothes off the line." He also says that the plover's cry indicates rain, even as does its name—the *pluvoir*, or rain-bird.

There are few birds to be seen, except an occasional hawk, who seems to have no other object than to curvet about and display his clipper-built wings for our admiration. Sometimes he soars into the skies in order to exercise a keen vision that covers half the province, or, again, he appears to hang in the air with an invisible string, so perfect is his poise. It is foolish to call hawks ravening birds and to impute evil motives to them. We only do this because they like chickens and other gallinaceous fowl whose end we should prefer to be pot-pie. This is not a reprobate taste on the hawk's part, for, of course, he has never read the game-laws, nor the Book of Leviticus, and cannot be expected to know that certain flesh, in certain localities, in certain seasons, is the particular appurtenance of the *genus homo*. In truth, we are so uninstructed in these laws ourselves that the government must, perforce, keep game-wardens and the churches must keep preachers to educate us more fully.

The Athabasca River, Mr. O'Kelly calculates, is about eight hundred feet wide and about twelve feet deep. Its current is about five or six miles an hour. The less said about its colour the better. At Athabasca Landing they use the water as a top-dressing for the land.

I get on well with Mr. O'Kelly because he does not mind answering questions, and I am rather stupid and do not understand irony, a fact now published for the first time.

Mr. Patrick O'Kelly started on "his own" thirty years ago in Manitoba. His name isn't really O'Kelly, but in this country a name is neither here nor there. He homesteaded one hundred and sixty statute acres, but to be a farmer one had to possess a capacity for waiting and he didn't possess it. After this, he became a prospector. Now, in prospecting, a man does not have to wait: his money is always discernible to the eye of faith. Mr. O'Kelly still holds his on this unnegotiable, spiritualistic plane. In the meanwhile he is boss of a big lumber camp over Prince Albert way. He used to be a captain on this river, but he doesn't captain any more. Some of these days he intends to take a wander back home. He hears that northern folk are foreigners in the South. This last remark is made with a rising inflection as if an answer were expected.

Who would have thought such a pathetic fear to be lurking under so confident and so square-shouldered an exterior? I can see now why Mr. O'Kelly finds it hard to get away. Without letting him know that his secret is suspected, I try to explain how it is the northerners who have changed. We pioneers talk of going home but we really never go back—that is the person who went away. This may be equally true of all migrants who go into a far country, whether it be Abraham who went into Ur of Chaldea, or Reginald of Oxford who goes into Saskatchewan.

There are several scribes on board, and one of them, "a editor in human form," gives us greeting and joins our company. He is a thin, straight young fellow with a likeable face, but his hair is shockingly awry.

"So you are an editor," says Mr. O'Kelly. "Your unpeaceable tribe has committed much damage in this country."

"What do you mean by calling us a tribe? I conceive that you are an old fool and perhaps a liberal in politics. Although I am an editor, and by no means proud, I consider myself to be much better than you."

"Young person! you mean you are no worse," answers Mr. O'Kelly, "but, in faith, I meant no offence and I am not a liberal."

Being thus reassured, the editor proceeds to discuss his difficulties with us. He has been treated with great unfairness in one of the northern towns. They gave him a fine mouthful of promises when he went there, but they gave him nothing else. They failed to pay their subscriptions and their advertisements, so that he had to leave the place naked and ashamed. Some day, he is going to write a story in an American magazine and describe this town as a real-estate office in a muskeg. It will be marrow to his bones, and he will let the magazine have the story for nothing.

Or, worse still, he will tell the truth about all the leading citizens; he will set it down without equivocation or shadow of turning.

"But you wouldn't do this latter," I argue; "only a man with ink for blood could do so terrible a thing."

"On the contrary, lady," snaps he, "I shall take blood for ink, that is what I will do."

"But," said I, "you must expect to be beat a few times in your life, little man, if you live such a life as a man ought to live, let you be as strong and healthy as you may." This was quite a clever answer, and I wish Charles Kingsley had not said it first, then it would have been original with me.

This young editor talks with so much vigor and so many gesticulations one might think he was acting a picture for a biograph machine. It is a pity his political heroes do not avail themselves of his

services. As a fighter, the dear lad would have a fine genius if properly incited; also, he has a marvellous vocabulary of flaming adjectives.

There is an Indian woman on the ship who is married to a white man, who seems most kind to her. The northern woman who interpreted the Toa Song for me, says this man believes the world well lost for love, his heart being very full and his head very empty. You will observe that this northern woman is a philosopher, probably owing to the fact that she has had little to read and plenty of time to think. She was born in this country over fifty years ago but was educated in the South. At the age of sixteen, she married a Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, and is now his widow. This year ago she has been in Europe, but has returned once more to her native North with its hidden wilds and yet unhappened things. I tell you that some secret presage lies upon this land, and one who has sensed it must come back again and again to its intangible allurements. It may be the strong, austere spirit of the land that holds one; or the vast voids of the sky, with their blue and gold, and blue and silver. Or it may be that Tornarsuk, the great devil of the Arctic, who rides on the wind, steals from their breasts the midget souls of humans so that they belong to him and must follow whither he wills. It is not for me to know the reason, or to tell it to you, for I am southron born and cannot construe aright.

Time was when this woman only tasted flour once a year. It was in New Year's Day, when her mother baked cakes for the gentlemen who came to pay their respects to her—the doctor, the missionary, the clerks at the post, or the visitors from other posts. On the first of these occasions her mother, with an ill-grounded confidence, passed the plate of cakes to the earliest visitors so that there were no cakes left for the callers who came afterwards.

When flour became more plentiful, it was her mother's custom to have cakes every Sunday evening. A cake was baked for each member of the family and one for the plate. No one dreamed of taking the last cake. It would have been accounted a gross breach of etiquette to have done so, and one not to be thought of.

"But what became of it?" I ask; "who ate it ultimately? Surely some one knew?"

Apparently no one did, for I am answered by a lift of one shoulder, suggestive of ignorance and possibly indifference—a little defensive shrug which precludes further intrusion into the subject. It is unkind of her to leave me with this worrying problem, for there are fifty-two cakes a year to be disposed of, and I may never hope to dispose of them alone.

The Indian woman who has the white husband gives me bon-bons from a box she purchased in Edmonton last week. Nothing so makes for confidence in women as to eat sweets together. Authors write much about breaking bread and the sacredness of salt, but, in actual life, nothing cements friendship like chocolate drops. This is why the woman opens her heart to me and says she desires to write a book—a great book about the white people of whom she knows many things. I have no doubt she does, and that if she put down all that is in her heart without one glance at the gallery and without trimming her language to the rules of syntax, her book would be the literary sensation of the year.

She wants to know if ever I wrote a book. Now, once I did, but it was a simple book, so that wise people did not care so much as one finger's fillip for it, but, sometime, I am going to put all their counsel together and compose a really great one. It will not be disjointed, but will flow along without a break in the smooth, natural way people talk when they are alone with their families. It shall concern psychic phenomena, yearnings, root-causes, the untrammelled life, strange decadencies, and things like that. It shall be paradoxical, epigrammatic, erudite, even vitriolic. I will pierce the self-conceit of these Canadians and tell them they have need to mend their manners; that they are primitive beasts—even *Diprotodons*.

Now the *Diprotodon* was a kind of ferocious kangaroo, carnivorous and predaceous, which lived in the Tertiary Period and had a skull three feet in length. Those who are not of this species, I shall designate as fanatics who cling to worn-out shibboleths over which they snarl

like pestilent dogs; or prigs who affect neurotic cults that are exceedingly false and not native to this country. I will be superior and insufferably arrogant so that they may be vastly annoyed with me and rage like the Psalmist's "heathen." I shall not be kindly to any, nor say them fair words, no matter how much I may desire to, nor how much it hurts me to tell lies.

Then will the wise people take their pens in hand to say that "This writer is possessed of the discriminating sense to an extraordinary degree. She has vision, luminosity, verve, technique, and artistic self-restraint—these, and other palpable qualities which bid us hope, in spite of all which has been said to the contrary, that the time is not so hopelessly remote when Canada may lay some small claim to having a literature of her own."

Oh Me! Oh Me! This is what they will say, and I will laugh in my throat and in my sleeves. I win not care the point of one pencil what they say, so long as they refrain from using the adjective breezy. When a northern woman goes visiting and the wise people wish to be kind, they all apply this word to her. When the dubious visitor looks into the dictionary for the exact meaning of breeze, she finds it stands for either an uproar or a gentle gale. People have been murdered for less obvious errors, so that all wise people will please to be forewarned.

If you were to ask here what the Indian woman wished to write in a book about the white people, I would not be able to tell you, for, at this juncture, we all forgot to talk and crowded to the prow of the vessel to see a moose that swam boldly ahead of us in the river. He kept far enough away to be out of range, so that no one shot him. I use the word shot in deference to the untaught urban folk into whose hands this book may pass. What the men really desired was to "trump" him.

We did not see him take to the bank, for we took to the bank ourselves in order to load wood for the engine. He is a worthy gentleman, the moose, and should be well esteemed. Dropped in a thicket, hunted by wolves, unprotected save by his sharp hoof, which, however, will rip anything softer than a steel plate, he ranges the forests till his antlers are full-branched, and then, at the age of three,

without costing the Province or the Indian a cent, he tips the scales at a thousand pounds of meat.

We are invited to the tent of Mrs. Jack Fish, who receives us seated. This is not owing to any lack of hospitality on her part, but because she is very old and quite blind. The Oblate Brothers say she is over a hundred years old, and truly she might pass for the honourable great-grandmother of all Canada. Her son, with whom she lives, minds a wood-pile on the Athabasca, but in the winter he has a house of logs at Tomato Creek to which he retires. All Indians live in tents from preference, and not from the sordid reason assigned them by the would-be poet who declares that "Itchie, Mitchie lives in a tent," for "He can't afford to pay the rent." There are no rented houses in this country, and no man has ever heard of a landlord. Every person holds his house, or his several houses, in fee simple. In Great Britain, these residences would be designated as "shooting boxes."

Neither would it be a sign of mental superiority on the part of the traveller to consider Jack Knife's job a menial one. Banking situations or provincial politics may have an importance in the fence country, but in boreal regions the prime test of intelligence is a knowledge of how to handle a boat or an axe.

Madam, our hostess, informs the Factor's widow that she keeps quite well except for an evil and tormenting spirit in her chest. She desires to know who are in our company, and when she learns that the *Okimow*, or Great Chief of the Peace River Country, is one of us, she asks for tobacco. Ah! the Chief at Fort Edmonton would be generous to her, but he is dead now and there is no tobacco to soothe her pain. When she was young, her people fought with the Blackfeet tribe in the Bear Hills, and many of the Crees were scalped. She fled through the forests to Fort Edmonton, carrying her two children on her back, but there was much rain and almost she was drowned crossing the rivers. That was many, many nesting-moons ago, and now she is old and her pipe is empty of tobacco.

"Is the kind lady going down the river to find a man?"

No! the kind lady has white hair and her man is dead.

"May be it is the *Okimow*?"

No! the *Okimow* has a wife in the South with brown hair.

Ah well! Ah well! but it was different when she was young. Then every woman's skin was full of oil and there were many braves who loved her.

After she has been led into the open, and has had her picture taken with us, the great *Okimow* takes her back to her blankets and fills her lap with a heap of pungent tobacco. It will be many moons before our honourable great-grandmother requires a fresh supply. "An old straggler," that is what I call her, after the beggar-woman who asked Sir Walter Scott for alms.

The religion of the gentle Nazarene has cut the fighting sinews of the Indians. This was why the Christianized Hurons were brushed off the earth by the tigerish and unapproachable Iroquois. The Hurons became soft, and being soft, they became a prey. In some inexplicable way, we Anglo-Saxons have managed to keep our bumps of veneration and combativeness well partitioned or estranged and so keep mastery of the changeling tribes who permit them to commingle. This is why the Indians are a dying race in a new country. This is why our honourable great-grandmother whimpers for tobacco instead of hurling us over the bank and throwing her camp-fire on the top of us. I could almost find it in my heart to wish that she had.

## CHAPTER XII

### AT THE PARTING OF THE RIVERS

"Think o' the stories round the camp, the yarns along the track  
O' Lesser Slave an' Herschel's Isle an' Flynn at Fond du Lac;  
Of fur and gun, an' ranch, an' run, an' moose an' caribou,  
An' bulldogs eatin' us to death!  
Good-bye—Good-luck to you!"

Mirror Landing, where we leave the boat to make the portage to Soto Landing, is on the Lesser Slave River, at its confluence with the Athabasca. Its name has been well chosen, for the Lesser Slave River is a clear stream, and shows a kindly portrait to all who look therein. A telegraph office, an official residence, a stable, and storage sheds are the only buildings. What is to be done with the portaging party, whom we have met here and who go back to Athabasca Landing on our boat, is beyond a mere woman to say. Both parties must spend the night here; there is only one bunk to every twenty persons, and those who hold possession utterly refuse to sleep outside with the mosquitoes and bulldog flies. Once I read a story in the Talmud which I considered wholly fabulous. It was about a mosquito saving the life of David when Saul hunted him upon the mountains. I no longer doubt this story, my incredulity having vanished this day with my courage. A mosquito is big enough to do anything.

A member of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, truly a most formidable appearing man, insisted on searching our luggage for contraband liquor. I was sorely displeased, and could have dealt him a clout with all my might, for the froward manner in which he turned out my things to the public view. He might have known if I carried a flask, it would be in my coat pocket. His only find was an unbroached bottle of elderberry wine which a rancher's wife was bringing home for her dinner-party next Christmas. Be it said to the youth's credit that upon the circumstances being explained to him he returned the wine to her. He had no authority for so doing, but assuredly he had the countenance

of a great example Yahveh of the Jews having aforetime "winked at" certain breaches of the law which He considered to be the better kept in their non-observance.

The liquor taken by the police is either given to the hospital at Grouard or poured on the ground as a libation to Bacchus and his woodland troupe. It is very foolish to ask the officer in command if his men ever drink themselves, for he will say, "Pooh! Pooh!" and use other argumentative exclamations that will fright you out of your wits. You would almost think the subject was loaded, and it takes a soft look and a wondrously soft answer to turn away his wrath.

Early in the evening I was invited to browse at the official residence, and I had a good time; that is to say, I found it distinctly entertaining. "I would say that you are very welcome," remarked my hostess as she held out both her hands, "were it not that it seems an understanding of the fact. I have read your *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, and feel that I know you extremely well."

It was fortunate I did not tell her she had confused me with Mrs. McClung, for she gave me eggs to eat that were most cunningly scrambled with cheese; also many hot rolls sopped in butter, and yellow honey in its comb.

This is a ramblesome bungalow and very comfortable. Musical instruments, couches, big cushions, book-shelves and pictures take on a peculiar attractiveness when they are the only ones in a hundred miles or more.

After supper we read *Phil-o-rum Juneau*, by William Henry Drummond, and discussed its relation to the French Canadian legend, *La Chasse-Gallerie*. Of all our Canadian legends, I like it the best, and it may happen that you will too. It tells how on each New Year's Night the spirits of the woodsmen and rivermen are carried in phantom canoes from these lonely northlands back to the old homesteads in the south, where, unseen and undisturbed, they mingle with their friends. The father embraces his children; the lover his maiden, the husband his wife, and once more the son lays his head on his mother's lap. All of

the voyageurs join the feast, the song, and the dance, so that no man is lonely in those hours, neither is he weary or sad. It is a better thing, I make believe, than even the communion of saints. But just before the dawn comes, the wraith men find themselves back on the Athabasca, the Mackenzie and the Slave, and no one speaks of where he has been, or of what he experienced, for all this he must keep hidden in his heart.

When, over a century ago, the legend first sprang to life, there were none save men to travel like this, but now, of times, a woman may travel too. I know this for a certainty in that each New Year's Night I go myself. In my dug-out canoe—delved from wishful thoughts and things like that—I take my hurried way across prodigious seas of ice where never living foot has fallen; adown ill-noted trails through silver trees; by hidden caverns that are the lairs of the running winds; over dark forests of pine and across uncounted leagues of white prairies which light up the darkness, till I come to the warmer southland, where youths and maidens make wreaths of greenery, and where mellow-voiced bells ring out the dying year.

And when those who are my own people feel their hearts to be of a sudden rifled of love; that some one has brushed their cheek, or that a head is resting on their shoulder, then do they know the exile has come back, for I have told them it will be thus.

And you, O my readers of the Seven Seas, now that we are friends and know each other closely, will you of New Year's Night be keenly watchful too.

It was here that our conversation wheeled off from the consideration of this legend to the northern postman. In the final summary he must be classed among those peerless fellows who, because of their courage and incredible endurance, have won for Canada this myriad-acred but hitherto waste heritage. No man here who puts his hand to the mail bags must ever look back; he must have the quality of keeping on against the odds. He is the modern young Lord Lochinvar, who stays not for brake and stops not for stone. Often his route is stretched out to hundreds of miles, and there is no corner grocery where he may thaw

out his extremities while mumbling driftless things about the weather and the government.

Presently the railways will have taken over his perilous profession, and he will exist only as a memory of pioneer days. For this reason I took great heed while my host talked concerning him and of the qualities which go into making a successful postie under the aurora. He must be agile, light of weight, abstemious, trustworthy, tireless, thewed and sinewed like a lynx, and, above all, he must have wire-strung nerves. In a word, his profession requires a strong will in a sound body.

"Does it ever happen that the mail is not delivered?" I asked.

My host hesitated, and made three rings of smoke while he considered the answer, as though he would be sure-footed as to his facts.

"Sometimes it is not delivered, Madam," said he; "there may be an untoward happening, in which event its delivery depends upon the recovery of the carrier's body."

When he made another three rings of smoke he proceeded with the story. "Yes! the mail-carrier in this country is a special person and must not be judged as general. He deserves a much better reward than he gets. To my thinking, it is a vast pity poetic justice so frequently fails. It may be that some day you will write a story about us Northmen, and if you do, be sure you set down how Destiny so often blue-pencils our lives in the wrong places. We will read your book down here, all of us, just to see if you have been true to us instead of laying up for yourself royalties on earth."

"And where do you bury a postman who dies with his mail-bags?" I further pursued.

"Holy Patriarch!" he ejaculated. "You don't think he is carried back to Athabasca Landing? His body is cached in a tree and the police are notified. When they give their permission, and when the ground is

thawed out in the spring, we bury him just where he died. It may, however, interest you to know that the letters 'O.H.M.S.' are cut on his tombstone."

"O.H.M.S." I repeated. "Don't you mean 'I.H.S.,' *Iesus Hominum Salvator*, the same as we write over our altars and on our baptismal fonts?"

"No!" he replied, "I mean 'O.H.M.S.'; the same as they stamp on government letters which are franked '*On His Majesty's Service*.' You see the work of delivering the mails down this way, while extremely arduous, must never for a moment be considered as menial. The carrier is a servant to none save His Imperial Majesty, George the Fifth, of England."

They are all gamblers, these Northmen: they play for love, for money or for the mere pleasure of the play, and Boys of our Heart, like the mail-couriers and the striplings of the Mounted Police, gamble with the elements for life itself.

"Ah, well!" remarked my host, as he put away his pipe for the night, "these fellows know the rules and dangers of the game when they 'sit in,' and while twenty-six of the cards are black, it is just as well to bear in mind that there are an equal number of reds."

On my return to the ship at midnight, I found that some one had seized and was occupying my state-room on the nine-tenths of the law idea. She seemed to be a woman turbulent in spirit, and, accordingly I left her in possession: also, I left her door open to the mosquitoes, who are evil whelps and more tutored in crime than you could believe.

The purser, a very agreeable and well-behaved man, gave up his office to me, but I did not rest well, in that a whirligig of jubilant mosquitoes was occupying it conjunctively. Being full-blooded and sometimes inclined to be rather mean, I endeavoured to accept this retributory plague as a chastening which might prove beneficial to both body and soul.

In the morning all the reckonings of the trip were settled at a desk beside my bunk, the men moving around with the prehensile tread of the villain who goes round a corner in the moving-picture films. I pretended they had not awakened me, and breathed with much regularity, but all the while I was stealthily peeping. They would not have understood if I had made objections to their entering, for here, at the edge of things, all men are gentlemen, or are supposed to be. Conventionality would be actual boorishness, and a woman must try and earn for herself the title of a good scout, it being the highest encomium the North can pass upon her.

Before leaving the ship for the portage, we backed into the Athabasca, and, after travelling two or three miles, unloaded a vast deal of freight at a little tent town on the bank. Here and there, through this country, you come upon these white encampments, which mean that the iron furrows of the railway are steadily pushing the frontier farther and farther north. This was the first load of freight to be brought down the Athabasca for the building of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. It was only rough hardware truck, but, withal, amiable to my eyes, standing, as it did, for the end of a long rubber between fur and wheat. You would like the looks of the young engineers who took charge of the stuff. They were no muffish sick-a-bed fellows, but brown with wind and sun, hardy-moulded and masterful. One of them has written something about life on the right-of-way, which he intends sending me to touch up a bit for a paper. It augurs well for a country when its workers love it and want to write about it.

And even so, My Canada, should I forget thee, may my pen fingers become sapless and like to poplar twigs that are blasted by fire. And may it happen in like manner to any of thy breed who are drawn away from love of thee.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### ON THE PORTAGE

We sing the open road, good friends,  
But here's a health to you.—WILLIAM GRIFFITH.

As one watches the efforts of the wagoners to store away the valises and rolls of blankets without ejecting the passengers, one remembers that Cæsar's word for baggage was *impedimenta*. But Prosper, our wagoner, is the best packer on the trail, also he can sing, "I've got rings on my fingers."

"It is strange there are so many dingy half-breeds in the world," says the person by my side who objects to her blankets being tied on behind. "To my thinking there is no colour to compare with white. 'Ishmaels,' I call these breeds."

Prosper's bearing under her choleric criticism is so superbly apathetic that I like him swiftly and completely. Any one can see that he is a man of substantial qualities and not to be excited by fidgety women.

It is fourteen rough miles from Mirror Landing to Soto Landing, along a black trail that lifts and dips through the tall ranks of the poplars and pines. The scenery offers no great varieties except those of light and shade, vista and perspective.

Whenever we pass through a thick-knit stand of pines, the people in the wagons are instinctively reticent and subdued, but, upon emerging into open space where there are only birches to throw a shimmering wayward shadow, 'tis observable that every one laughs or sings. It was *La Marseillaise* the eight Oblate Brothers sang, and once they broke into a French ballad the theme of which was—

"Mary, I love you,  
Will you marry me?"

The team on our wagon is a badly mated one. The off beast trots like a sheep and has a way of hanging her head as if some one had told her a story too shocking to contemplate: while Lisette, the nigh mare, although strong as a steel cable, picks objections to every foot of the way either with a kick or an idiotic sidelong prance. Now and then Prosper, who knows the whole truth about Lisette, and who looks more religious than he really is, advises her as to her forbears and predicts as to her posterity, but, like Job's wild ass, this whimsical-minded trailer "scorneth the multitude of the city and regardeth not the crying of the driver."

"She's a female voter, she is," says an Englishman, who has been back home on a visit, "and it's a tidy bit of walloping she needs."

The London suffragettes would have been pleased with our opinion of their countryman and that we were able to express it in the exact words. After a full and unreserved apology from the frightened traveller, we, in turn, retracted the indecorous charge that he was a ridiculous pinhead, and a man of low understanding, whereupon peace once more reigned in our wagon. It is astonishing what pernicious consequences may follow from the kicking of a wayward-minded mare on the trail. Most of the frontier tragedies are attributable to this very thing.

Anderson's stopping-place which we are passing used to be the only house between Grouard and Athabasca Landing, and accordingly is a notable landmark. Anderson is still unmarried. It is forced upon the notice of a traveller in these North-Western Provinces that every bachelor has little spruce-trees around his house. The bachelor thinks we don't suspect his reason, but we know it is because he hopes, some day, they may come in handy for Christmas-trees.

We stay for a little while at the house of Ernst and Minna, who came from Europe more than six years ago. It is a sheer joy to know Minna, who is a little round-bodied woman, firm-fleshed and wholesome as an autumn apple. She has been at Athabasca Landing

once. She hears there are trains there now. It may be that Madam saw them.

Minna had planned a trip to the Landing this summer but it happened she did not go after all. Ah, well! there is the money saved and she is sure to see the Landing again. Minna was going to the hospital of the good sisters to lie in with her fifth baby and Ernst was to stay here with the children. You may believe it too, that Ernst is no butter-fingers with children and a most cunning baker of bread. Minna says that down this way every man can bake bread—and does bake bread.

The little house by the trail would, of course, miss its mother for a while, but the garden seeds were in; the children's clothes were mended to the last stitch, and a parcel of baby's fixings was on its way to her from Edmonton. Now it happened there was too much important freight from the boat to carry this parcel and so it was left behind till the next trip. It was nearly too late and Minna was greatly perplexed, for surely she was going to see the Landing and how could she go without the baby's clothing.

But, at last, the parcel came, and the wagoner who delivered it was to call the next day on his return trip and take Minna with him over the portage to the boat. He came, and with him were several passengers. It was unfortunate there was no woman among them, for Minna had no neighbours; Ernst had gone down the trail, and her hour was upon her.

"Mother, she iss sick," explained her little son, "and no one iss in to come. I am by the door to stand till Father he comes back." It was nearly an hour before the distressful travellers were able to find Ernst, but no man ventured past the young sentinel.

The little daughter was half-an-hour old when Ernst was deposited on his door-step, but Minna had cared for the child herself. It was too bad the mother had fallen from the loft and hurt herself, for now, she cannot go to the hospital and she wanted to see the Landing. Ah, well! there is the money saved and that is something. It takes much money for five children.

"How old is the baby girl?" I ask, as I take my turn in kissing the mite's forehead, and in wishing that she may be a good little scout like Minna.

"She was one week last Tuesday. No! two weeks last Tuesday. Ah! Madam, I cannot surely say. Ernst I will ask him how old is the baby."

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Once on the journey we passed a speckled owl in a pine-tree, but she did not answer to our "Oo-hoo!" neither did she so much as open an eye. She looks rich unto millions, and thoroughly proof against all appeals. She is what Cowper called the University of Oxford, "a rich old vixen." I intend affecting this pose myself when I find the gold at the foot of the rainbow, in order that I may be extremely insolent to the bankers and to other offensive collectors.

Prosper says he often shoots owls who lodge in the fir-trees, and that he gets two dollars bounty from the government from each one. He does not know it is accounted a sin to him who kills a bird that has sheltered in a fir-tree, or an animal that has crouched thereunder, for this is the tree of the Christ-Child, and a House of Refuge in the forest to the denizens thereof. To those men or women who love the fir, its bitter taste on their tongues may be more holy than bread or wine, and may convey to them an inly grace.

Also it is wrong to cast away the Christmas-tree, or the ropes of greenery which have been used for the celebration of Christmastide. These should be burned upon the hearth as a sweet savour, and the fire-master should say, "Peace be to this household and to all the household of Canada."

The resin of conifers is a more agreeable and a more seemly offering to Our Lady of the Snow than aloes, or myrrh or spices, so that it behoves us, her children, to look anew to our censuring pots.

Since leaving Athabasca Landing, we have passed through enough uncultivated land to solve all the problems of Great Britain which arise

out of unemployed workmen, and out of slum conditions with their attendant evils.

As its stupendous acreage, enormous fertility, and its lifeless voids are daily thrust upon me, I am filled with amazement. Surely no land was ever so little appreciated by its owners. If there were an ocean between it and our more populous provinces to the south, one might the better understand the reasons. This waste heritage can only be accounted for on the grounds of a lack of interest, and because people are indolent and like to live softly. Only two members of the Alberta legislature have ever visited this country, and these two belong here. It does not need a new Moses to stand and say, "This is a goodly land"; it needs a new and more drastic Joshua, to take them by the ear and lead them in. The time is coming when the crops from this land will, each year, outstrip in value all the gold money in the world, and it will not be so long either. I intend to buy as much of it myself as I can afford, and if I can persuade the Christians of my own town to lend me the money instead of building churches, I shall buy more than I can afford. I have read much about this country, but I find it better to come here and tread out the grapes for myself.

While I have been taking stock mentally of these things, we have arrived at Soto Landing, on the Lesser Slave River, and already the Indian women have come out of their tents to watch our movements. These people are called squatters hereabout, but I prefer to call them nesters. They sow not, neither do they gather into barns. They don't care to do either.

They view us women with a quiet appraising look, but not understanding "their dark, ambiguous, fantastical, propheticall, gibbrish," I cannot learn their conclusions. The Factor's widow, who is still with us, heard one of the Indian men describe her hat as a pot, whereupon she remarked to him in excellent Cree that her pot lacked a handle. If I were to set down how the other Indians enjoyed this stabbing surprise, and how they were contorted with laughter by reason of their fellow's confusion, you would hardly believe me, so I shall not set it down.

One Indian woman wears a dress that has in it the many shocking colours of a Berlin-wool mat. She is pleased when we stroke it with our hands, and I can see she is as proud of it as I am of my dimity bed-gown with the pink rosebuds on it.

Dinner is ready on the boat and our appetites are too sharp-set to permit of delay. We eat and eat just as if eating were our chief and ever-lasting happiness, and as if life itself lay in a fleshpot.

This is a larger and better equipped boat than those on the Athabasca because it is meant for the lake traffic. We do not leave Soto Landing till three hours past the scheduled time, for Mr. J. K. Cornwall, the Member of Parliament for the Peace River Constituency, affectionately known hereabouts as "Jim," has chosen to make the portage afoot.

This country, from Athabasca Landing to the Peace River, is commonly described as "Jim's Country," and if you travel it over you will understand the reason.

Who supports the stopping-places on the river? Jim's freighters.

Who cuts the wood on the bank? Jim's Indians.

Who hauls the passengers, the freight, and the mail-bags over the portage? Jim's wagoners.

Who owns the ships on the Athabasca and the Slave? Why, Jim himself.

How Jim can look his pay-sheet in the eye every fortnight and keep laughing, is, to my thinking, the miracle of the North. But then it must be borne in mind that I have never seen Jim's ledger-book, and, as yet, no one else has except his accountants and bankers.

The dream of Jim's life has been to lay bare the wealth of the North, for the good of the North, and every day he is making his dream come true.

But I was telling you about Soto Landing. The freight shed here is in charge of a bachelor whose wardrobe is drying audaciously on the trees. He says he ties his clothes together with a rope and lets the current of the river wash them, but I think this statement is what Montaigne would describe as "A shameless and solemn lie."

He asks me how long I have been out from Ireland and I tell him three years. "What was the charge!" he pursues.

"Stealing the crown jewels," I reply.

"Oh!" says he, "it's the same time since I left the sod. It was for killing a landlord."

Now as this man came from New Brunswick, and as I came from Ontario, it may readily be seen that we have both become Albertans.

"Are you not ashamed to deceive a woman like me, and an ignoramus who is travelling north to gain instruction?" I ask of him.

"Woman! You're no woman. I mean you're no ignoramus—and, although you question us, I perceive you know more about the north than all of us. But seeing you wish to be further instructed, come with me to the freight shed that I may show you how the wholesale houses pack their goods. Believe me, Lady, I cut to the root of the matter when I say the only downright packers in this north country are the Hudson's Bay Company. You can plainly see this for yourself, and I hope you will inform the Board of Trade about it when you go home. Here, you will observe a set of scales, but the weights were insecurely attached and have been lost.

"This heap of refuse is the remains of a shipment of crockery that was crated too lightly. Errant improvidence, I call it. Lady, the pitcher is no longer broken at the fountain: it is our habit here to break it on the portage. It is no exaggeration when I say I am worked like a transcontinental railway system, hammering up boxes or shovelling out damaged merchandise.

"Cast your eye up at these chairs in the rafters, six dozen of them by actual count, sent north by a furniture house last year but delivery was refused by the purchaser."

"They look like good chairs," say I, "what is the matter with them?"

"Matter enough," he continues, "shipped as 'knocked-down' furniture, four legs to each chair, all of them hind legs. This was a matter of considerable vexation to the purchaser, who paid cash for the goods and for their transportation."

"But the furniture house will send the front legs," I argue.

"Might as well try to get blood out of sawdust," says he. Now, personally, I think this simile is an inconclusive one, for I have known timbermen to sweat great drops of blood into sawdust, and there is no reason why those drops could not be extracted.

This freight master is a compelling man, and he says the shippers are expert sinners and a parcel of ignorant and makeshift people. It may be he is right: it is not for me to gainsay him, or to further discompose his temper, when all the evidence is so plainly visible.

After this discussion, I play with the other children who tumble about on the hillside. They all talk Cree, and some of them who have been to school talk French and English.

One little girl, with the fine insouciance of eight years, says there is no use praying *Le Bon Dieu*, for He doesn't understand Cree very well. She has repeated her prayer over and over but she has never had a soft-faced doll yet.

Solemn little mother! Her prayer, at any rate, is reasonably specific, and I can see how one of these days it is going to be answered.

It is good to rest in the shade of the trees while these copper-coloured babies jabber about me in soft Cree, and finger my hair and clothes. Truly, I am very fortunate and have much fulness of pleasure. I

might be that same good girl whom an English playwright describes as having never compromised herself, and yet the wickedest child who ever was slapped could hardly have had a better time.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ON THE LESSER SLAVE RIVER

Gitchie Manito, the Mighty,  
Mitchie Manito, the bad;  
In the breast of every Redman,  
In the dust of every dead man,  
There's a tiny heap of Gitchie—  
And a mighty mound of Mitchie—  
There's the good and there's the bad.—CY WARMAN.

From Soto Landing, the Lesser Slave River bends its course to the north and west till it empties into Lesser Slave Lake at Sawridge. It is a small river, being about a hundred and fifty feet wide and about thirty deep. Owing to its sharp curving banks much care is required in its navigation. Its banks are heavily wooded and as we pass down its quiet reaches we seem to have sailed into a dreamful world, where just to breathe is a delight. I account it sinful to talk in these surroundings, but one may not hope to enjoy solitude for any considerable time in a country where women-travellers are sufficiently rare to arouse a raging curiosity in the breast of every male entity who comes within reach of her. People like these northmen, who live out of doors most of the year, are not easily bored. They are interested in things; they are perennially young, and this, I take it, is the secret of Pan.

Now, the trouble about having a man near is that he is always picking up your things and so making you nervous. I prefer to wait till ready to move before regaining my handkerchief, my back-comb, my hand satchel and my scarf. This is why I pretend not to notice the iron-built person with strong white teeth who has seated himself nearby and who is watching a chance to restore something. He is what the Irish call "bold-like." I know what he is thinking about and understand his motive perfectly. He wants to know if I have ever been north before. He is the thirteenth man so to wonder. I am, however, severely purposed not to tell him.

There is a belief, common in the cities, that no questions are asked in the bush; that people may travel for days together without divulging ends. Here is a good place to spend an arrow on this widely droll deception. An uninquisitive man is as hard to find here as an unsociable cockerel. Goodness Divine! the chief use of a stranger in the woods is to keep the denizens of it from dying from *ennui* and lack of news. They would consider it the essence of uncordiality not to show an interest in the affairs of a stranger, especially as the stranger might possibly have succeeded in smuggling a flash [Transcriber's note: flask?] or two past the police on the prohibition line.

This bush-ranger catches me off my guard when a bulldog fly takes a piece out of my ear. It is his opportunity to produce a vial of collodion for the wound. As he pulls out the cork and finds a match to dip in the mixture, he tells me that the bulldog fly is no sweet angel and equal to ten thousand times its weight in prize-fighters—a statement which I do not think it fit to disbelieve. The collodion having eased the hurt this impudent gentleman draws up his chair and talks with an immense volubility concerning the species, genera, and habits of these flies till one might take him for a professor of entomology.

The long winter nights in this province enable the denizens of it to become well posted in any subject which they may elect to pursue. This was how the late Bishop Bompas, who lived here for over half a century, became the first authority in the world on Syriac, so that the *savants* of Europe were wont to refer their mooted points to this lonely old prelate for decision, waiting a year, or often longer, for the answer which was carried by Indians for hundreds of miles down the out trail to Edmonton. My new friend declares that, like Montaigne, the bulldog fly has only one virtue and that this one got in by stealth.

"Yes?" say I, with a rising reflection which delicately hints at an answer.

He does not seem to hear me, this cold-chilled, care-hardened northerner, and goes on stuffing his pipe with exit-plug and searching through pocket after pocket for a match as if my remark were of no concernment. He is trying to pretend he has known me for a long time,

and that I was the one who took the initiative in this acquaintanceship. This is why I became dumb, and why he repeats his statement. Still I am wordless, whereupon he vouchsafes, with an exasperating drawl, that the fly's one virtue lies in the fact that it prefers picturesque food which is very eatable.

Our parliament should legislate against the cunning arts of these designing northerners, against which no town-bred woman may hope to set up an adequate defence, however perfect may be her poise, or fertile and calculating her brain.

This person tells me that all a man needs to succeed in the North-West Provinces is to keep his head hard and his pores open—a recipe, no doubt, equally applicable in the more southerly regions, and one which I am supposed to deduct he, himself, has proven with very happy success.

He has been south getting people to come to the Peace River Country, the new and unpossessed empire where there are twenty-two hours of daylight and which will, one day, be belted by a string of cities and gridironed by a score of railways. It is good to listen to this fellow talk, for, in his calculations lineal or intellectual, he can measure nothing less than a mile. He is typical of the great and splendid body of Canadian and English pioneers who have absolutely no truck with pessimism. These men and women are opening up this empire and they are under no misapprehensions concerning it. They are people with a vision, which vision they are willing to endorse with the best years of their lives.

*Kitemakis*, the poor one, who intends writing the book about the white folk, has drawn near to us and is listening to our talk. We invite her to join us and, after awhile, she tells us curious legends of the north in which fear does many times more prevail than love; these, and old superstitions which catch your fancy sharply and fresh the dusty dryness of your spirit.

Although they are in no great credit with historians, it is an odd idea of mine that the only true history of a country is to be found in its fairy

tales. These seem to be the crystallization of the country's psychology. On the trail, on the river, in the woods, you may glean from the Redmen and their mate-women tales that are well veined with the fine gold of poetry, but which, as a general thing, are inconclusive and do not serve aright the ends of justice. As you search into the untaught minds of these Indian folk and pull on their mental muscle, you must perforce recall the amazing sensation of the gentleman who took the hand of a little ragged girl in his and felt that she wanted a thumb.

Or again, in your Anglo-Saxon superiority you may feel like that Merodach, the King of Uruk, of whom a philosopher tells us. This Merodach wished to make his enemies his footstool, so as he sat at meat, he kept a hundred kings beneath his table with their thumbs cut off that they might be living witnesses to his power and leniency.

And when Merodach observed how painfully the kings fed themselves with the crumbs that fell to them, he praised God for having given thumbs to man. "It is by the absence of thumbs," he said, "that we are enabled to discern their use."

Listen now to this tale of the North: Once there was a smiling woman in this land and wherever she went she brought warmth with her and light, so that even the ice melted in the rivers. Her eyes were blue like the flowers and her skin was white like the milk of a young mother. As she passed through the land the fish swam out of their caves, the birds rested on their nests, and even the dead women who were in the clay stirred themselves when she passed over, for once they had known lovers and had carried men children. She was vastly kind, this woman, and was known even to the dear God and the Holy Virgin in the country of the beautiful heaven.

Now, there was also in this river land an evil man of impetuous appetite who was part bear, and had seven tongues, and his arms had claws instead of hands. And it befell that when he saw the woman and heard her voice that was sweet like the singing voice of an arrow when it leaves the bow, he yearned to her with a vehement love and wooed her with cunning words and with dram songs that she might come to him and be his mate-woman.

"So strong am I," he said, "that my blow can break any skull. My skin is flushed, and my flesh is warm with thoughts of you. My bed is of soft skins and I will feed you with yellow marrow from white bones. I am *Mistikwan*, the Head, and I have strength and skill to feed the mouth of my woman. I am *Askinekew*, the Young Man."

But the woman flouted him, for he was hateful with his hands of hair and his seven tongues; besides she knew, this woman, that there were matters of scandal against him and that the people of the Crees said *weyesekao*, "He is a flesh-eater," and hid themselves in the trees as he passed by.

And because she thus flouted him, the dew stood out on his face like the juice on the fir-tree, for he loved her most exceedingly.

But as he drew near and grasped her in his strong arms that could not be unloosed, the woman's heart became weak as the poplar smoke when it turns into air.

And thus he holds her for nine months, this *Askinekew*, the Young Man who is strong and very mischievous, till she bears him a son, when it happens that for three months he falls asleep so that the woman goes free to bring heat and light to the river-land and meat and fish to the kettles.

Thus does Kitemakis, "the poor one," tell me the story of winter and summer and of the birth of the year.

And Kitemakis, who has "the young lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks," advises me to hold no converse with left-handed people, for it is well known in these parts that such have communion with the devils.

I am bewared too, that if I have a bad dream, that is to say, if I dream of small-pox, or of white people, I must cut a lock from over my ear and burn it in the fire.

Also, Madam is instructed to throw away the wishbone of any bird she may eat in order that it may grow again and be food for other folk.

And Kitemakis tells me further that when Amisk, the beaver, dies his soul lives on. In the happy hunting grounds the beaver was a carpenter who, through some distemper of the mind, kept working while the moose were on the runway so that he frightened them away. This caused the chief hunter to become very angry and he said to the beaver, "Thou shalt built always, and men shall break down thy work and take thy pelt for covering. Also, thou shalt eat wood forever."

I cannot hear any more of these stories for my attention is drawn to a man who has come close to the ship in a small row-boat. The engine has stopped and a permit is handed to him over the side of the vessel. The man looks like a Scotchman, seems like an Irishman, but in reality is a German, an erstwhile soldier, who makes his livelihood in curing and smoking fish. He is indulging in a surly and wrong-headed paroxysm because Elise, his wife, is not on the boat. Elise went to the city to have her teeth filled and still lingers in the south. A certain rude fellow with a brass-throated laugh is suggesting of the soldier-fisherman that Elise may be appreciative of the change of society and that he is foolish to look for her under two months. "Better enjoy your permit before Elise gets home; that's my advice," enjoins the tormentor.

"About the viskey, not one tam I care," replies the irascible husband, "it's ma vife I vant. Ma vife she in Edmonton stays"—a praiseworthy choice on his part which, to our way of thinking, minifies the oft-urged but yet unproven claim that "A woman's only a woman, but a good cigar's a smoke."

As the man pushes off, Baldy, a pucker-faced fellow whose real name is Nathaniel, assures me that this German is considered "sorta queer" hereabouts, and that it is nothing short of flat irreverence for a man to speak so lightly about his permit in a land of such inordinate thirsts.

This matter of leaving home for the treatment of sore molars has suddenly become an important one in the north. Hitherto, the traders of the Hudson's Bay Company and the missionaries did not need to go to the city on business, or to see their mother-in-law; their errand was teeth. But this summer, the Company seems to have waxed over-wise, for the Inspector of Posts is bringing a dentist. It was only yesterday that a woman who [Transcriber's note: line possibly missing here] women alike consider this to be an ill courtesy and hold to the hope that the dentist may be drowned at Athabasca Landing. The woman who tells me of it believes when one gives nine-tenths of her time to the Company, the church, and the household it is not wicked to take one-tenth for herself. Indeed, there are times when she honestly desires to be wicked and to take several-tenths for herself. The whole arrangement she stigmatizes as a graceless one and a blot on the Company's escutcheon.

Still, there are drawbacks in being so far from a dentist. It was only yesterday that a woman who was using the river as her wash-pot, dropped her new set of teeth overboard. She had not been out for five years and made the trip with her husband and her two youngest sons at the cost of much time and money. However amusing the incident might be to thoughtless onlookers, at the bottom it was almost tragic, and she, at least, is hoping that the H. B. Co. dentist will meet no dire or untimely fate before reaching Grouard. This is a healthful-bodied, healthful-minded woman with a temperament that adjusts itself to life. She is proud of the fact that she is educating her five sons at home; that she cooks for the ten men engaged in her husband's saw-mill, and that she has twelve hundred cabbages in her garden. I am glad she wears a hoop of diamonds on her finger and that her fur wrap would cost a fortune in Paris. It means that her husband is no stingy, unappreciative curmudgeon and that all is well with her.

Sawridge is at the mouth of the Lesser Slave River where it enters into the lake of the same name. At present, it consists of a Hudson's Bay Company post and a telegraph office. Some day, by reason of its location, it will be a good-sized town. Farther on are the Swan Hills and the Swan River. This is the river referred to by Lever in *Charles*

*O'Malley*. The young gentleman whose affairs were in an ill posture had his choice, you may remember, between going to "Hell or Swan River." This was a libel on the place and an impudent falsity, for, if you omit the mosquitoes with their unhandsome manners, one might call it the trail to Paradise. Besides, if life cut too hard the young gentleman might have taken his last trail here. It would not have been a bad death either—a wide sky, a wide sea, and a sudden dip into immortality—or oblivion.

On the lower deck, the Indians who travel to Grouard for the Golden Jubilee of the great Bishop Grouard are whiling away the time by playing poker. The cards which they use weigh twice as much as when purchased, but why worry in a land where microbes are unheard of and so have no pernicious consequence. These Indians have the air of unambitious men; they have not cared to come into the big Canadian job. They appear to do little else than eat, sleep, and gamble. But, god of civilization, what else is there to do except make love, and men cannot make love to preposterous women who work always. These fellows have, however, one saving quality, having never formed themselves into unions. Now that even the farmers have gone over to the enemy, the Redmen would appear to be our last hope.

A doctor on the boat who knows all about the Indians, tells me of their misfortunes, peccadilloes, their thin transitory pleasures and their love and practise of idleness. But this is not strange, for gossip is so common in the north that every one knows "the carryings-on" of every one else from the Arctic circle clear up to the Landing. Indeed, I have heard tell that these northerners know what you are up to before you have done it.

The Indians, the doctor would have me notice, are beginning to chew gum and hence their teeth and gums are deteriorating.

The mildewed fellow who is dealing the cards is pestiferous with disease. His birth was a biological tragedy. The doctor thinks he could best serve his tribe by dying without delay.

André, the man who has just won the jackpot, is not the prototype of the expression "Honest Indian." He is a bad Indian, a most bad Indian.

"His profession?" I ask.

"Oh, André is my camp-cook," is the reply, "and when he washes himself he uses quite a cupful of water." By way of amends, André affects a stupendous scarf-pin, a watch-chain, and two rings. Ah well! to quote Mr. Artemus Ward, "The best of us has our weaknesses, and if a man has jewelry let him show it." Besides, it is entirely thinkable that even a man like André might have to dress for those whose discernment goes no deeper than clothes and ornamentation.

The difference between an Indian and a half-breed lies in the fact that the Indian is in treaty with the government and lives on a reservation. The breed is free to come and go, but his blood is just as pure as the Indian's so far as its redness is concerned.

In most cases, the children look to their mother as the head of the family. The doctor says this is quite fitting. Take the case of Marie there—Yes! the little girl with the precise plaits—she is the daughter of old Henrietta and a Mounted Policeman. Jacqueline, her sister who in-toes so queerly, is the result of old Henrietta's fancy for a fur trader. It can be readily seen how several masculine heads to the family would complicate matters and that it is wholly desirable the girls should look to their mother for their lineage. In the north, as yet, it has not been necessary to cover vices with cloaks.

The Indian women have fallen on better days since the government passed a law prohibiting the Indian from selling his cattle without a permit from the agency, and making it illegal for a white man to purchase. Previously, the Indian gambled away his animals, leaving his squaw and papooses to suffer from starvation.

"The old effigy" asleep in the sun is, I am informed, a chief of distinction. Like Froissart's Knights, the hereditary chieftain may be blind, crippled and infirm. His body fordone with age is by them

considered to be full of the spirit of wisdom. He is the giver of law and keeper of traditions. The Indians have no dead-line in their tribal codes, it being held in suspension north of 55° with the league rules and the game laws, a fact which leads to the deduction that what the world has gained by civilization is fairly balanced by what it has lost.

While we have been getting acquainted with the Indians, our ship has carried us into the finest duck grounds in the world, the teal and mallard rising from the rice beds in almost incredible numbers. It seems impossible that their numbers should ever be noticeably depleted, nor are they likely to be, until Grouard, which we have now reached, has become the splendid metropolis its people have planned and which, no doubt, their efforts will one day materialize.

"We believe," says my medical friend, "that any one who says Grouard isn't going to be a large city hasn't got things properly sized-up. I hope you won't go south again, my interesting child," he further continues; "it would seem like being cut off in the flower of your days. While sometimes shadowed here, the days are never dull, and if no one loves you in this burgh, believe me, it will be entirely your own fault."

## CHAPTER XV

### THE BISHOP OF THE ARCTIC.

The trail hath no languorous longing;  
It leads to no Lotus land;  
On its way dead Hopes come thronging  
To take you by the hand;  
He who treads the trail undaunted, thereafter shall command.  
—KATE SIMPSON HAYES.

Half a century ago Bishop Taché wrote a letter to France, in which he asked for some missionaries. In response to this appeal a certain young Grouard was sent to Fort Garry. When Bishop Taché looked over the slender stripling he said: "I asked for a man; they sent me a boy." But a year later he wrote again: "Please send me more boys." This was fifty years ago, and from that day to this the northern world has had but one opinion of Grouard—he makes good. He is a worker who sticks to his text. To-day, he is the head of the Catholic missions in the far north, and his diocese, until lately, included the very Yukon.

He is seventy-seven years old (but we don't believe it), with a leonine head, an unrazored face and a chest like a draught horse; an erect man who commands the instant attention of whatever company he enters. Assuredly, he is the type of the sound mind in the sound body. It is not to be wondered that his attractive personality made him the cynosure of all eyes, and that his name was on every tongue when, several years ago, he went to England, there to attend a great conference of his Church.

Bishop Grouard is alert in manner and has a kindly consideration for the poorest person. Attend you, sirs and madams, to observe the Old World courtesy in its highest perfection, you must see it in the person of a French gentleman who holds a position of honor in the far, far north, it is an absolutely truthful courtesy, that has its roots in a big warm heart, so that it becomes the very bone and fibre of the man. By way of placating our more southerly dignitaries in what may seem an

invidious comparison, it may be urged that Bishop Grouard's urbanity has never suffered such cross-currents as the municipal watering cart, speed-limit fines, or the bill collectors, for, as yet, these well-conceived but ill-approved institutions are entirely unknown in the strangely blissful regions north of 55°.

It is for the fiftieth anniversary of Bishop Grouard's consecration as a priest that all of us have gathered from Edmonton to Hudson's Hope to celebrate. We are assembled at Grouard on Lesser Slave Lake, the missionary post that was built here forty-nine years ago and named after the hero of this day. Our assembly is what smart society reporters would describe as "mixed," and the word would be correctly used; nevertheless, the interest and colour of this occasion are in no inconsiderable measure due to this very fact. Besides, ours is a goodly fellowship.

Here we have Father Orcolan from Rome, who has written books on astronomy; Jake Gaudette, who was born in the Arctic Circle; Indian Chiefs from near and far, with their wives and children; big Jim Cornwall, the Cecil Rhodes of the north; Bishop Jousard, the coadjutor, a short man with a hard-bitten sun-scorched face; factors and traders from outlying posts (believe me, right merry gentlemen); Judge Noel and his legal company, who have been dispensing justice in the regions beyond; lean-hipped, muscular trappers who toe-in from walking on the trails; equally lean-hipped river men who toe-out from keeping their balance on a log; children from the mission schools; black-robed nuns, doctors, government officials, and stalwart ranchers in homespun and leather—even bankers. This short gentleman, who looks as if he had just heard a good idea, is George Fraser, wit and journalist. The tall man in khaki with the positive shoulders is Fred Lawrence, pioneer and trader, likewise Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society; these and other interesting folk, the pictures of whom even my newly cut quill stops short at delineating. In truth, they are all here—the world and his wife—excepting only white girls. "It would seem too much like a special miracle," explains an Irish rancher, "to find half a dozen colleens set down here in Grouard—something like finding posies in the snow of December."

And the good Bishop Grouard is overcome because he doesn't deserve the homage of these people. "Truly, madame, I did not think to receive all this honour. I am only an old voyageur, a poor old fellow who gets near the end of the river."

"Does the paddle grow heavy, monseigneur?" I ask, "or is it that the journey is long?"

"Non, non, madame; it is the thought of home at the end, and the loved ones."

"But surely, monseigneur, the end is yet a long way off. Your eyes are not dimmed, neither is your natural force abated. And did we not this very day hear you speak to the tribes in six tongues?"

"Six was it?" queries the bishop. "Six! Ah, well! they seem to come to me easily. I feel like the man who had only to open his mouth to have roast ducklings fly therein."

Now this old northman has a close grip on twelve languages—it was Father Fahler who gave me the list—so that his modesty is truly disconcerting in an age wherein vanity seems to vary inversely with talent. He is a master in the use of Greek, Latin, French, English, Cree, Eskimo, Rabbitskin, Chippewaian, Beaver, Slavis, Dog Rib, and Loucheux.

Bishop Grouard is an exegete and printer of no mean order, having translated the service book of the Catholic Church into seven languages and printed them himself. I do not know if the printing press he brought into these northern fastnesses was the very first, but if not, it was assuredly the second, for there is only one other.

What these books have meant to the tribes it is not for mere terrestrial folk to say, but if the Catholic doctrine of supererogatory works be a reasonable and true one, of a surety it is a splendid balance that is laid up to the good bishop's account. In the more southerly provinces, where people like books, it is an easy matter for messieurs the publishers to roll out scores of editions to the greedy public, but up

here in the north publishing a book becomes both a joke and a tragedy. In the first place, people do not care for books; in the second, the people do not know the alphabet.

This was how Bishop Grouard came to build schools for the children. He had to teach the Indians to read. If you care to you may go to the school across the bishop's driveway and see the children. There are hundreds of them, or even more, but if you wait awhile we will go together, for they are giving a play to-night, and at this moment are rehearsing their parts. It was Sister Egbert and Sister Ignatius who wrote the play; the theme, I have heard, is an incident in the life of the bishop.

But it takes a long time to learn reading; besides, there are many distractions. And then the older folk whose eyes are smoke-dimmed by the tepee fires may never hope to con the letters. It were ill reasoning to suppose so. For these people who are less literate the kind bishop painted pictures of angels on the walls and on the ceiling of the church, and he made one of the Crucifixion, over the altar, a glowing canvas instinct with living reality. The onlooker may truly say of this what Ruskin said of Raphael's "Transfiguration": "It goes directly to the heart. It seems almost to call you by name."

If you have lived long in the north you will have been wondering this while back how our workaday ecclesiastic got his materials into Grouard. How came his printing press, his type, his canvass, and his paints? Where did this man get the furniture for his schools, his hospitals, his church? Where did he get the boards for all these buildings?

The boards, curious person, were cut at his own saw-mill, from which boards he fashioned the furniture with his hands. "But how," you persist, "did he bring the machinery for his sawmill?"

That was easy; he brought it here in a steamboat. Any one could tell you that.

"But where did he get the steamboat?"

Oh! he built the boat himself—the first steamboat on the Lesser Slave Lake. In it, if he cared, he could carry his printing press and his canvases also.

It will not be surprising if the historians of the future appraise Bishop Grouard's combination of wisdom and action as something keenly akin to genius. Indeed, they are almost sure to.

I cannot tell you what the anniversary services meant—it cannot be expected of any one who is versed in the Thirty-nine Articles of the English Church instead of the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin—but I came away from them with languorous impressions of golden robes, silver censers, and wavering lights, the odour of lilies and lilacs that wilted in the heat; a suspended cross with an agonized Christ, wan and attenuated; of purple and scarlet cloths, of dark-haired young priests, husky and brown-skinned. There were other things like a shepherd's crook, and smoke of incense, but, most of all, there was a music that mothered you and stayed with you. In some way or other these old plaintive songs of Egypt seem fitted to the boreal regions, but why I cannot explain.

In the city we must perforce set a stage for a drama, but here Nature has made a setting for us high on a hill overlooking a wide meadow that slopes to the bay. You have read something like this in classic myths, or maybe it was in Shakespeare, but it doesn't greatly matter; the play is the thing. For myself, I made believe that is the slope of Parnassus—for the Pythian hero was also a promoter of colonization, a founder of cities, a healer of the sick, an institutor of games, a patron of arts.

It is on this outdoor stage in its June-tide glory that we banquet; that we sing; that we play our parts. And it is here that Keenosew the Fish, chief of the Crees, with rapid rush of speech and voice of military sharpness, presents the homage of his tribe. In like manner do also the other representatives of other northerly tribes. Each chief wears a Treaty medal as a pledge from her Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria.

It is here also that a fair-faced woman of our company expresses the reverence of her sisters of the diocese for Monseigneur the Bishop, and, as a token of the same, presents to him a plate heaped high with coins of gold.

And from this hill it is that we ride through the newly cut road, a thousand men and women of us in stately procession, but withal gaily caparisoned. Observe, if you will, our ribbons and fringes of gold; the little flags in our bridles; our lynx-skin saddle clothes, and the wreaths of purple vetch that hang from the pommels. Look well at our black soutanes, scarlet coats, grey homespuns, and yellow moose hides, for we are proud this day and wear our finest feathers. It is not well to be disturbed by the untamable naughtiness of our horses, for the northern trailer, you must have heard, has no stomach for glitter of trappings, neither does he like the feel of neighbours. As we ramble down a white aisle of birch and poplar, the feet of our horses tread out for us the odour of leaf mould, which odour is the panacea of the world.

We do not ride with any preconceived plans, or because of any propaganda. Neither are we knights who sally forth to right wrongs, albeit we have the truest knights of all with us—he who has snow on his head but fire in his heart; he who has taught these tribes by doing.....

This day we ride without review or forecast. We ride because we are glad. All we ask of life is room to rove adown this long white pathway in this young world. It is the best that life can give—room to ride.

## CHAPTER XVI

### NORTHERN VISTAS

My name is Ojib-Charlie,  
I like to sing and dance.—CY WARMAN.

The reader will excuse my chronicling the Jubilee before telling about Grouard. I have no excuse other than caprice, nor any precedent other than the fact that Chinese authors write their stories backward. To resume then:

You will remember the medical doctor on the boat was telling me how, one day, Grouard would be a large city. I wish to go further and declare it one now in spite of its small population, that is if you will accept with me the definition laid down by an ancient Jewish writer who defined a large city as a place in which "there are ten leisure men; if less than so, lo! it is a village."

No one seems to be working unless it be the Indians who are training their horses for the sports that are to take place the day after to-morrow, which sports will last for a week. This might be the leisurely land of the hyperboreans where there is everlasting spring and the inhabitants never toil or grow old—

"A land in the sun-light deep  
Where golden gardens glow,  
Where the winds of the north, becalmed in sleep,  
Their conch-shells never blow."

The first men we meet are the civil-engineers. Nearly every one surveys here, and even the wild geese run lines along the sky. These engineers are pleasant-spoken men of proper spirit, who have been hammered into hardihood by work and weather. Nearly all of them invite you to eat in their camps: "Come over to my stamping-grounds," says a youth who looks like a walking pine-tree. There is no doubt in the world he is lonely for his women-folk whom we happen to know

"down home," for when we accept he smiles and says "Heaven bless you endlessly!" He gave us a good supper, too, of hot and savoury food, and the coffee, though served in cups of unbelievable thickness, was undeniably nectar.

Afterwards, we walk into the village to get acquainted with the people thereof, and to secure lodgings. Over the doors of some of the shops there are signboards written in Cree, that is to say in syllabic symbols which look like the footprints of a huge bird.

We are accosted by a gentleman of the Bible Society who wishes to sell us copies of the New Testament, which book, he says, is lightly esteemed in the North. He asks me if I belong to my Creator, but I dissemble in that I have never been able to say God created me without distinct reservations. There are certain ugly and reproachful traits in my make up which it seems sacrilegious to attribute to the Deity. This colporteur has a keen, clean mind—any one can see that—and I like him for his childlike straightness of soul.

He is carrying copies of the gospels in the different Indian languages, but, so far, has sold but few. Doubtless the Indians think with that Mendizabel, the Prime Minister of Spain, who once said to George Borrow, "My good sir, it is not Bibles we want but rather guns and gunpowder."

The knowledge one picks up on a walk down the street is varied in character and throws a light on village life several hundred miles from a railway.

There are three churches here, also a pool-room and a moving picture show. It costs fifty cents to see the latter.

When a trapper is not working he is whittling. This is a bad year for the trappers: two summers came together.

Eggs are a dollar a dozen and four loaves of bread may be had for the same price. Beef sells for twenty-five cents a pound and butter for sixty-five.

There is an outcropping of coal on a mountainside twelve miles away. A sample of the coal has been sent to Edmonton for analysis.

The main café is built of logs and a notice in English advises the wayfarer to "Stick to our pies. Never mind the looks of the house," it further enjoins. "It's the oysters we eat, not the shell."

The village boasts of a brass-band with twenty instruments. Although instructed by wire to meet us at the boat to-day, they failed to assemble, the members of the company having quarrelled over the selections to be played.

Lots on main street sell as high as two thousand dollars each.

A gentleman in tweed suit with capacious pockets and tan leggings which he has brought with him across the Atlantic, has decided to stand for the legislature at the next election. "The electors will say," he assures us, "that I have been drunk. They will say that I have been in jail, but I shall reply with repartee. You see I've always been deucedly clever at repartee."

The Mounted Police Barracks, the Indian Agency, the Hudson's Bay Post and the Catholic Mission are on the hill above the village. The Church of England Mission lies out and beyond, on a further hill. The bankers ride out to the further hill to play tennis with the pretty English girls who teach in the school.

When an elderly jocose Irishman so far forgets himself as to say "darlint" to a breed-girl, he must not be surprised if she draws a wry face and calls him *muchemina*; that is to say, "bad berries."

I might write a book on the news to be picked up on this main street, if a tide of sleep did not threaten to submerge me. In this dry crystalline atmosphere, one must sleep an hour or two sometimes, however unwilling the spirit or unique and alluring the things present.

My room at the lodging-house is the best the place affords in that it has a cotton curtain for a door, and as yet doors are only used in the

outside walls of the houses. The curtain is not, however, of much account in that the green lumber of the walls has warped to such narrow dimensions that the occupier of the adjoining room would have to shut his or her eyes to keep from seeing you. On the contrary part, you must of necessity go to bed in the dark unless you wish to fall a victim to the crafts and assaults of the mosquitoes who are attracted by the lamp. In a fortnight or so, they will have completely disappeared, but, in the meanwhile, if you would escape their nasty niggling ways you must neglect your hair, teeth, and sun-scalded nose. A real-estate agent was telling me to-day how the mosquitoes often disappeared in a night, and, to illustrate this fact, related a story of a Tipperary Orator, who said, "My fellow-countrymen, the round towers of Ireland have so completely disappeared that it is doubtful if they have ever existed."

.... A wagon is leaving this morning for St. Bernard's Mission on the hill, and by some felicity I am invited to go with it. Bill, who is the driver, received a bullet wound in a Mexican rebellion; had his leg broken by a fall from "a terrible mean cayuse"; lost an eye and part of his nose in a mine explosion, and says, by these same tokens, he will live to be a hundred unless he loses his head to the government. Bill was married once down Oregon, way, but his wife divorced him. His wife was very short-sighted, but, contrawise, her tongue was long. Besides, she was appallingly like her mother.

This trail to St. Bernard's, passing as it does through a trail of lanky poplars and birch in green lacy gowns, is a right pleasant one, and fills you with the great joy of growing things.

And also it is very pleasant this morning to shut your eyes that you may the better inhale the fine brew of the conifers, the reek of the wild roses, the pungent wafture of the mint from the meadows, and above all, the subtle incense of the warm spawning soil. This is to have a happiness as large as your wishes. This is to think thoughts that are very secret and only half-way wise.

At St. Bernard's the nuns take me to see their finely manicured garden with its rows of cabbages, leeks, turnips, radishes and its many herbs such as parsley, mint and sage. Their potatoes are coming on

well and so are the posy beds. This sweet-breathed garden is tilled by voluntary labour and held in common, but it must be remembered the nun's occupation does not afford her any special opportunities for knowledge of the world at large and its shrewder ways.

I can easily discern that the pride of this garden are the cabbages, probably because more care has gone into their culture. Indeed, this vegetable seems to be peculiarly favoured by all gardeners of all classes, for even the haughty Diocletian, when asked to resume his crown, said to the ambassadors, "If you would come and see the cabbages I have planted, you would never again mention to me the name of empire." In this garden-plot the sisters have erected a pedestal upon which stands a fair shining woman, even she who is the mother to their Lord and wonderful God.

In order that her labour may become an offering to her tutelary spirit, every woman should have a statue in her garden embodying her highest ideal, whether it be of Isis, Mrs. Eddy, or Diana, the "Goddess excellently bright." Such a statue would tend also to keep her religion a divine intimacy rather than a creed or an institutional observance.

Sister Marie-des-Anges shows me the hospital, and pleasures me with a delicious cordial which is made out of wild berries and which tastes better than champagne.

Those who have an eye for esoteric apartments with etchings and faint-coloured prints on toned-down walls, would not be impressed with the wards and offices of this hospital where all the furniture is home-made. It is, however, cleverly contrived and has the prestige of being literally the original "mission furniture"—no one can gainsay it. In this connection, give me leave to transcribe here a passage which I have met with in the book of Thoreau, the naturalist. "Why should not our furniture be as simple as the Arab's or the Indian's?" he asks. "When I think of the benefactors of the race whom we have apotheosized as messengers from heaven, bearers of divine gifts to man, I do not see in my mind any retinue at their heels, any car-load of fashionable furniture."

I know not the answer of this question unless it be that we of Canada need practice in the excellencies of those graces which have respect to personal simplicity and disrespect to communal opinion. I have a mind to make a trial of this.

It was in this hospital that "Twelve-Foot" Davis (now in heaven) gave his instructions to his partner, Jim Cornwall, to take his body on a sled to the Peace River and bury it on the height of land.

People in the cities are too busily absorbed in the transactions of peers and politicians to know northern philanthropists like "Twelve-Foot" Davis, the first man to introduce steel-traps into this country and to thus dare the wrath of the omnipotent and indomitable "Company of Gentlemen Adventurers." You may not know it, but the steel trap has done as much for the Indian as the self-binder has for the white man.

But down here every one knows that "Twelve-Foot" Davis was held in high esteem, and any man will tell you, as Bill the driver told me, how it was a full hand this fine frontiersman laid on the Lord's table and that none of the cards were lacking.

Twelve-Foot Davis was so called because, in the days of the Caribou rush, he staked a claim of twelve feet. Each prospector was allowed one hundred feet and there was no claim left when Twelve-Foot appeared on the scene. But to be assured in his mind he was not outdone, he measured the claims and found that two of the prospectors were holding two hundred and twelve feet. Davis wanted those extra twelve feet and the prospectors decided to give him a place directly in the centre of their claims on a spot where a basin of shale lay. From this narrow claim, Twelve-Foot dug up a large quantity of gold, and this was the only spot on the entire creek where the least trace of ore was found, even his neighbours being unable to pan out a grain. It was from this happening that he derived the name which, because of the question it carries on its face, would, as a *nom-de-plume*, be worth a corresponding amount of gold to an obscure author.

Bill, who is fairly amenable to bribes, takes me over to the further hill where the Church of England Mission stands, which Mission was

the spiritual husbandry of the late Bishop Holmes.

It would be pleasant to tell of this place and of the school, but Bill is in haste and will not tarry my leisure. It may be that his swaying motive is another bribe.

It was only three months ago that the Bishop and his family started for England, and soon afterwards came the news that he had died in a London hospital. The teachers tell me the family who went out together on this holiday are never coming back, in that they cannot afford to take the journey now that the bread-winner is gone. The furniture is to be sold and the house will be done-over for another bishop.

As I walk through the home which for many years has been the most hospitable one in the north, it is with a mist in my eyes and a painful tightness in my throat. I touch the chords of Auld Lang Syne on the piano in honour of Madam, the mother; I kiss the house-flowers for the love of the young girls who carried them safely over the long, long winter; I finger the books in the library with affection in memory of the good Bishop who once told me kindly tales of these Indians who were his friends.

And when I, too, have gone, may it happen that some one who understands will touch my books in like manner, and say good-bye to them for me. I could not so endure it of myself....

... It was six days later at the sports that I received a proposal of marriage from Prosper, an Indian who is a trainer of horses. It was not wholly a surprise, in that he had already approached the master of our party with an overture to buy me. The master had hesitated to tell me of this for fear I might be offended. "You see, Lady Jane," he explained, "it is like that case in *Patience* where the magnet wished to attract the silver churn."

"Yes?" asked I, "and what did you say to him?"

"Oh! I told him he was a master-fool; that you were nothing but a great cross-examiner who had the misfortune to be born a woman."

And his reply.

"He said he did not understand me but he saw you laughed a great deal and showed your teeth. He says he would not beat you, but would be very mild and agreeable with you."

Now, I was not offended, for the proposal from this young Apollo of the forest only meant I was no longer regarded as a mysterious invader from another and strange land.

Why should he not propose? In this northern world distinctions fall away and all are equal. As a usual thing, the Indian regards a white woman impersonally or with a half-contemptuous indifference. To him, we are frail, die-away creatures deplorably deficient in energy, yet, strange to relate, wholly lacking in the spirit of obedience. Scores of ill-instructed novelists to the contrary, no Indian has ever assaulted a white woman. This is an amazing fact when one considers how, for nearly two centuries, the Indian has guided our women through the forests; piloted them down the rivers; and has cared for them in isolated outposts. The Indian has lived rough and lived hard, but, in this particular, he is morally the most immutable of all God's estimable menfolk.

When Prosper pleaded his case personally, he broke ice by requesting me to accept a pair of doe-skin gauntlets more beautiful than ordinary. In spite of my declining the gift, he asked "Will you marry with me?" assuring me, at the same time, that I was his *saky hagen*, or "one beloved." I would not have to travel far. He is one day from here if there be wind, but two days with no wind. He likes the noise I make in my throat when I laugh. The master explained to Prosper, "This is only a way she has of gargling her throat beautifully," a wicked cynicism which was lost on the bronze-faced tamer of horses in that gargling is, to him, an unknown and hence an incomprehensible practice. The master also advised Prosper to keep the gloves for, if I listened, he would indubitably need them later.

Prosper is a hardily-built man with admirable shoulders and a bearing like Thunder Cloud, the American Indian who was the model for Mr. G. A. Reid's picture entitled "The Coming of the White Man." Also, Prosper is daringly ugly. When I tell him I am already married, he says, "You need not go back. Your man can find many women by the great Saskatchewan River."

It may interest the curious to know that Prosper ultimately sold me the gauntlets for my man, and put away the money with an imperturbable serenity worthy the receiving-teller of a western bank.

... The sports were inaugurated by the slaughter of an ox for the benefit of the treaty Indians. It is foolish to shudder when we see the throat of a bullock cut. When a bird dips its long bill into the chalice of a flower it is doing precisely the same act.

The heart of this bullock was fat, so that good fortune abides with the tribe. A lean heart is always unlucky. Once Ba'tiste killed an animal that had hairs on its heart, and Holy Mother! Holy Mother! that winter he trapped a silver-fox.

The white men played a game of baseball which would have given cause for thought to those impersonal pawns known as professionals; it was so very original. But, after all, baseball is only cricket gone hysterical, and perhaps the game may be further evolved under the aurora. Some one must take the onus of initiative. Originally the game was very primitive and I have heard tell, or I may have read, that it was really a baseball club which Samson used to kill the Philistines.

The results of the horse races are not posted, a fact which tends to a democratic spirit. If you want to see the start or the finish you must bunch with the crowd at the post. This also enables you to learn how wonderfully an excited Cree can vociferate: there is no other place in the world where a more efficient instruction can be had. And when words fail him, Sir Hotspur says: "Uh-huh!" and makes other sounds in his teeth like a flame when it leaps through dry rushes.

The mysteries of straight, place, and show are not probed here and no Indian throws a race. The best horse always wins. The Cree jockey rides bareback and beats his horse from the start. This, they tell me, is necessary because there is no best strain in Indian ponies. They are as native and unimproved as the horses of Diomedes that roamed the hills of Arcadia.

The tents, booths, and dining-rooms skirt the track, and so the squaws can leave their cooking to engage in their own contests without any unnecessary loss of time. These include a tug-o'-war, a horse race and foot races. The men engage in canoe and tub races, boxing bouts, swimming and smoking contests, bucking-broncho exhibits and other physical tests for which they have a fondness and natural aptitude. Gambling is in full swing and no one thinks it necessary to apologize. Several men squat side by side on the ground and pass a jack-knife from one to the other under a blanket which covers their knees. The gambler has to guess in which hand the knife is to be found. It is the same game as "Button! Button! Who has the button?"

The drum-song, that rude rough song of the suitor, does not start till after nightfall. As a general thing, the man sings it in a tent lying on his back, his face flushed and his eyes suffused. "Hai! Hai!" he cries with a blurred staccato that is without response, "otato-otooto-oha-o."

After awhile, he seems to become hypnotized by the recurrence of this measured rhythm which is without melody and without gaiety. These drum-songs are indubitably the survivals of earlier days when the man-animal roamed through the land and made love-calls in the trees.

The drum-man has one pronounced characteristic; you can never mistake him for a Christian. On one of the drums, there was a sun-symbol marked in blue, but this may have been an accidental ornamentation. Or it may be the drum-suitor is a Christian who merely claims the masculine prerogative of changing his principles with his opportunities. You can never tell.

But on the whole, the discordancy of the drum is no worse than that of the fiddle which supplies the music for the dance. Why people say "fit as a fiddle" I can never surmise, for a fiddle is always becoming unfit.

One hears much complaint in our province over oak floors well waxed, but here is a dancing floor that is laid while you wait. Cross-beams are placed on the ground and over them are put planks of uneven thickness. When in use, the floor seems almost as active as the feet of the dancers.

The crowd is made up of dusky belles from the tribes of the Athabasca, Slave, and Mackenzie Rivers; many braves, and some few white men whom I pretend not to recognize. I am like the man Herrick writes about, "One of the crowd; not of the company."

The dancing is of a primitive order not unlike the natural movement which street children make to the strains of the hurdy-gurdy.

In higher circles, it is known by the name of the turkey-trot. Scientists classify it under the more dignified appellation of "neuromuscular co-ordination."

As compared with a ball, say at Government House, this one has some marked peculiarities. There are no chaperones, no refreshments, many sitting-out places, and it is wholly in the dark save for the light of a tolerant and somewhat remote moon.

A white woman who watches it is considered by the men of her own race to be one of five things—stupid, innocent, mean, obstinate, or unduly curious, whereas to be accurate she may only be a conscientious scribe.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A COUNTRY WOMAN AT THE CITY RACES

Still do our jaded pulses bound  
Remembering that eager race.—R. W. GILBERT.

This favour would never have come to me if I had not found a two-eyed peacock feather in the paddock. It isn't reasonable to suppose that a simple, country-bred person from back Alberta-way could have such story-book luck on her first wager. La-la-la!

All the way down I kept praying, "Lead not Janey into temptation," knowing right well I would slay any one who kept me out. I take off my hat to myself.

"Dear me!" says John. "One would think you cut your teeth on a bit instead of a pen." Some people like the idea of betting: some don't.

At this Woodbine race-course in Toronto, they no longer have turf accountants. Their days were numbered when careless people started to call them bookies. They have been succeeded by steel slot affairs called pari-mutuel machines. The words pari and mutuel would seem to be almost synonymous, one meaning equal, the other reciprocal. The reciprocal arrangements are like this; the party of the first part gets the money; the party of the second part, the experience. "And the machine?" you ask. (I asked that too.) The machine, which is only an impersonal way of saying the Jockey Club, gets as its commission five per centum of all wagers, and I am told it makes as high as eight thousand dollars the day. There are as many ways of fixing the races as there are of making bannocks on the Mackenzie River, but you can't fix the machine. It never gets tired of being good. This being the case, people must study the science of betting just as politicians study the ways of the electorate.

A shrewd-spoken gentleman with ruddy features and fierce white moustachioes to whom I was introduced in the paddock, told me some of these rules he had learned. He said "My Good Lady, I can see you have an honest face, although you come from Western Canada where the people are exceedingly singular. I will therefore proceed to tell you in confidence what I know concerning the canons of betting."

"A tip, so far as I can make out"—and here he flicked a butterfly off my shoulder—"is a secret told to the whole betting ring."

"Unless you have money to lose you should bet small till you are using money which you have won."

He told me many other rules about gambling, with much eagerness, for he seemed to conceive a liking for me, but it avails nothing that I tell them to you, in that no man gives heed to another man's method of plying the art, thinking his own a vastly greater superiority, in which respect gamblers do closely approach to the fraternity of the pen known as authors.

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This Woodbine race-course is a fair tarrying place, and I enjoy its beauty with luxurious wonder. Outside its high palings, there are thickly peopled, fusty streets, for this is the very heart of the city. Why any place should be called the heart of the city I cannot conjecture, except that both the civic and human heart are places of huge trafficking and, above all things, desperately wicked.

The near foreground is a finely brushed lawn that, here and there, has burst into flame-red flowers. In the centre of the ring where the hunters take the hedges, two beautiful elms hold themselves proudly erect as if to say, "Look at us, O woman of little wit! look at us; we are finer creations than man, or even than horses."

Off in the background, with nothing intervening save the elms, little sailing yachts like white birds, rock and dip in the sapphire blue of the bay. Strong-built motor-boats scud across the horizon in so terrific a hurry one can hardly follow their wake for dust. (The editor will kindly

permit me to say "dust.") We watch them, from our box, three women of us, with a field-glass which we use in turn for all the world like the three hoary witches who had only one eye between them.

I like this landscape better than our prairie. The trouble with the prairie is that you always seem to be in the middle of it. The garden of Time and Chance, it has no parts or passions unless, indeed, its spaces seem unfriendly. It has no mystery, no changeability, no complexity.... But all this is digressing from the races and from the beautifully dressed women who look like tall-stemmed flowers. I heard a man in the next box compute that the feathers worn in the enclosure had cost a hundred thousand dollars, but no matter what they cost they were worth it—willow plumes, fish-spines, aigettes, birds-of-paradise, ostrich mounts, ospreys, and other things I cannot name. Indeed, my own hat has two bright scarlet wings which cause me no small satisfaction, in spite of the fact that John says they are not so much wings as a challenge to combat. Moreover, he says when I am better civilized, I will know that feathers of any kind are an atavism and no fit dress for Christian people. It is trying to have a near relative with such views. The younger men of the enclosure affect Newmarket coats, or Burberry's, and cloth spats, also field-glasses swung across their shoulders. They express horse-language emphatically without a word. The older men who have attained to the dignity of the Bench or the Cabinet, run to silk hats and frock coats.

The enclosure is occupied by the favoured few who have boxes and who are designed by the Grand Stand as "the society bunch." I would like to write about this distinction, and sometime I will, but just now the three-year olds are cavorting down the great white-way, for the autumn cup which has \$2500.00 tucked away in its inside. It is on Star Charter that I have my hard-earned western dollars—egg and butter money, mind you—and I must pay strict attention to this race. I think he'll win. The Lord never gave him those legs and that frictionless gait for nothing. I'm sure of that.

The horses do not mind their manners at the starting bar, but pick objections, prance, and kick each other with the most admirable

precision. I have read that when the Otaheitans first saw a horse they called it "a man-carrying pig." It is not possible to improve on the definition.

But, after awhile, the horses make a clean break from the bar and are off in a spume of dust. Gallant-goers they are, and this is sure to be a tight race. Their necks are strained like teal on the wing, and almost you expect to hear a sharp shot and see one tumble. Indeed, they might be birds in autumn flight, in that they run in a wedge and seem to obey a collective consciousness.

The jockeys ride high on the horses' shoulders and they ride for a fall. The purple and blue jockey holds the lead and he's going some. The enclosure says he is.

But the blue and silver jockey is fighting him for every inch and he's gaining. The enclosure says he is.

The orange and black jockey is third. He's carrying my egg and butter money. He'll win though, for the jockey who stays second or third must get the advantage of the leading horses as a wind-shield. Presently he will slip the bunch; he's sure to. The enclosure says he is. John tells me to stop adjuring the jockey, that he will never hear me.

They've only a little way to go now—only a little way—and the orange and black is coming steadily to the front. Even John gets excited and keeps saying, "Good l'il ol' cayuse," and things like that, which are bad form down East. Steadily on—steadily past the blue and silver—steadily upon the haunches of the red and blue—now on his shoulder—now on his neck—and now a neck ahead. This was how the orange and black won, but you should have been there to see it.

And to think it all came from finding a two-eyed peacock feather in the paddock!

Between races, we visit the paddock, insinuating our way through the crowd in order to get near the ring where the horses show their paces to the racegoers who make believe they are judges of speed,

condition and stamina. As a matter of fact, the horses are all very much alike—wiry, wispy things like lean greyhounds with rippling veins that stand out in relief, muscles of rawhide, and bell nostrils. There is little difference in their speed either—a second, two seconds, or mayhap three—but these seconds are, in their results, so vastly different to the turfmen that all other contrarities become as nothing. The jockeys who know the horses from their hoofs up, and who ride with instinct, are perhaps the only men who can fairly hazard what the results will be—or should be.

They tell me that most of these jockeys die of consumption. This is probably owing to the fact that they must rigidly train the flesh off their bones. Napoleon said that Providence always favoured the heaviest battalions. The dictum has no application to jockeys. Our Western maxim that a cowboy is only as good as his nerves would be of more general applicability.

But while, in the horses themselves, there seems to be little of marked individuality, think of what volumes could be written on their names. Here we have Ringmaster, Gun Cotton, Froglegs, Song of the Rocks, Tankard, Scarlet Pimpernel, Porcupine, Pons Asinorum and other names which hold a lure. So exactly co-natural are they to our extended acquaintanceship among the humans back in the Province of Alberta, that our homesickness vanishes into the sunny blue.

There were nine horses in the autumn steeplechase and Young Morpheus would have beat handily had he not fallen on the last jump. The jockey rocketed over his head and lay still, but Young Morpheus, being a thoroughbred and no welcher, ran on and came slashing in to the finish. That horse has a soul like John's and mine, only better than John's. The prize was carried off by Highbridge, who seemed to be the favourite, for the enclosure turned itself into a pandemonium. Men and woman who before were separate entities, became merged into a mass of frantic arms and white faces that with a pleading voice coaxed the winner down the homestretch to victory. It is the steeplechase that probes to the depths mankind's capacity for physical enjoyment.

"But the jockey was thrown," you say, "and lay still?" Think you we wear the willow because of it? Not so, Honourable Gentleman. We are consoled by the well-turned and doubtless truthful reflection that—

"Bright Lucifer into darkness hurled,  
Was happier than angels quiet-eyed."

I did not see any more of the races because I was summoned to the Government House box and invited to tea with the occupants thereof. They must have heard what an excellent dairywoman I am, and things like that, but how they heard I cannot surmise unless John has been telling.

"I'd like to live in your Province," said the Governor, "living is mercilessly high there, but money keeps moving; money keeps moving, and a fellow like me need never go to work without his breakfast."

In the Directors' room, we refreshed ourselves with little sweet cakes and tea from a delicious brew. And in this room, I talked with the handsome, well-mannered women from Kentucky, Virginia, and Hamilton who have brought thither their horses—about six hundred in all—for this autumn meet.

I have made up my mind that John shall not argue me into going home, not if I have to fall ill from discomposure of spirit, and, as for Toronto, ever hereafter it shall be to me a new city of Beucephala in honour of its horses and because of the immutable game-loving disposition of its people.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### IN NORTHERN GARDENS

Away from the beaten tracks there are still by-paths where hyacinths grow in the springtime.—ARTHUR EDWARD WAITE.

Far off in the Southland, it is in the habit of Spring to come lagging over the land. She is a princess. You can tell it by her manner of moving, and her fine lady ways. Often, she is greatly bored.

Under the north star it is different. Spring is a wilding horsewoman, sweet and graceless, pirouetting a-tiptoe and waving to us kisses.

Hush! and hold you still, my merry Gentlemen. You may catch them if you try, and they are not in the least sinful.

Goldilocks, I call her.

"A young mother," you say, "and no Columbine."

Pray thee have it so, for when this season of seven sweet suns has begun, she is all things to all men.

What an ado there is when she calls to her flower-children and chides them to arise and put on their dresses.

Sleepy heads! Sleepy heads!

The vi'lets peer out of their green bed and complain of the cold, and as for the ferns, instead of expanding into fans of green, they curl themselves into foolish fiddle heads and beg to finish their dream.

The shy anemone, with flushed face, gets her up first that she may be with her mother. She is Spring's favourite child, but mark you, the maiden wears a ruff of fur about her neck, and snuggles into it, just as the pussy-willow does into his coat of grey.

Those flowers that have butter-pats to heads come on apace. Some there are who call them dandelions but we shall call them children's gold.

Ah! if flowers would only sing.

How terribly long has been the winter with its tiresome monochrome of white. Every vestige of colour has been bleached out of the earth like one would bleach a tablecloth.

By way of solace, our northern Indian paints his face and wears a scarlet sash as, by the same token, you and I wear poster coats and purple plumes.

It was recorded a day ago that when our dogs run away from us they always travel southward. There is no doubt in the world they are seeking colour.

Over the way from my study-window there is a glass-house where a man who, aforetime, taught school now grows flowers. The transition is surely a natural one.

His is the last conservatory on this hemisphere—at least I've heard tell it is.

He lets me walk up and down its long blossom-bordered aisles whenever I am so minded. Here, in his floral sanctuary, one may take deep draughts from the warm subtly-scented air till, someway or other, it is transmuted into the alembic of the soul.

May no blight fall on his roses or his heart! May God love him and let him live long!

This man's roses are of ivory and pink, but a few are red as if they might be the blood of some great wounded queen.

Nearly all the roses are long-winged and heavy-headed. They could not be otherwise when they come and go from the land where dreams

are born. Once, a poet told that the soul of a rose went into his blood. This was how he came to write the *Idylls of the King*.

One of the gardeners ties the red roses to stakes and he will not have it that the habit is cruel. "You may have noticed, Lady"—and here he tightly draws the cord—"that most folk are hung by their sweethearts." I almost hate this man.

Hath not a rose-tree organs, passions, senses? If you prick it does it not bleed? Verily I say unto you that it hath and it does.

It is near to April before the lilies are at flood-tide. You must needs see them before Passion Week when the gardeners cut and send them to a large hungry place called down the line, where, in prairie churches of tin and pine and sod, the Eastertide worshippers consider the lily and sing songs about death and life.

Not an inch of space is lost in the long lines where, tall and lissome, the stalks bend and curtsy to the passer-by. The glory of the lily is short-lived, for always they are cut off in maturity. The message they give is not one of prophecy and resurrection as the writers have ever taught. You may hear the message if you are still enough. "There is no second flowering time" they whisper. "Love while life doth last."

But, after all, the lilies are white like the snow outside, so that I esteem the big purple hyacinths better, and the bobbing daffodils.

There is an osier chair in one room wherein I often sit and watch the buyers flit from plant to plant. The women who come from the British Isles choose primroses, while those of Ontario and the other provinces to the south, prefer a lilac in bloom, marguerites, or carnations—anything they knew and loved at home.

The Fraus, Madames, and Senioritas from Europe (every one must have a blossom for Easter, else where is luck to hail from?) are better satisfied with heliotropes, azaleas, and claret-coloured cyclamens.

Our erstwhile teacher places the Norway pines close under the palms; the tree of shade and the tree of sun that sigh vainly for each other. I like him for this. He knows that Titiana loved Bottom. He must know it.

Very few care for my favourite flower—the narcissus. I always buy it, and a fern. There are folk who despise ferns because they are nothing but leaves but I like them for their history. They are the survival of the fittest; types which Nature, in her great printing-press, never breaks up. They are the old-timers of the vegetable world.

Also, I walk down the tomato avenue and take my pick—that is I do if I have enough money, for, here, at the edge of the world, they are as expensive as Jacob's mess of pottage. One does not dream of robbing banks so much as stripping tomato-vines.

Tomatoes do not ripen out of doors (but you must not tell the Board of Trade I said so) unless on a sunny slope, or by reason of some other special dispensation.

Other vegetables thrive, and the cauliflowers attain a size and perfection elsewhere undreamed of.

Never were there such toothsome red radishes as are grown here in the north, large, firm, and flavorful. They are not so big, though, as the radishes the Jews used to raise long ago of which it was said a fox and her cubs could burrow in the hollow of one. I have, however, seen a pumpkin large enough for a fox-warren, but candour compels the confession that the gardener fed it daily with milk by means of an incision which he made in its stalk.

Our strawberries are not the equal of those grown on the Pacific slope, but are larger, sweeter and firmer than Ontario berries.

We do not sit under our own fig-tree (nor, alas, our apple-tree), but why should we sigh when each summer the sunflower springs up to a height of twelve or fifteen feet? It is the palm-tree of the north, only more beautiful.

The Mormons on their exodus from Illinois to Salt Lake City sowed sunflower seeds along the trail, and ever since it has been marked by sunflowers. In the province of Saskatchewan, the Russian refugees sometimes divide their fields by rows of poppies. In Manitoba, their hedges are of sweet-peas; in British Columbia, of broom.

After awhile, when all our real-estate has been sold, and all our companies have been promoted, we of Alberta shall have time and inclination to consider our provincial plant.

Grant us then that it may be the sunflower!

## CHAPTER XIX

### COMMUNING WITH THE RUTHENIANS

I hear the tale of the divine life and the bloody death of the beautiful  
God, the Christ.—WALT WHITMAN.

This is my first visit to Mundare, on the Canadian Northern Railway, and to the Ruthenian Church—the church with glittering domes, the foundation stone of which was laid by the great Laurier himself. "Who is this Sir Laurier?" I ask. "Ach! I cannot tell you. He a great man is," says Michael Veranki, "his hair is like to the wild cotton in August, and his face is beautiful, even like the face of the great Archbishop Syptikiyi, who is a soldier and a prince, and the like of whom there never was. Believe me, Messus, he has seven feet high and has seven tongues wherein to speak."

"About this Laurier? Ya! Ya! almost I forget. He the stone of the church placed in the corner, and we drew him in a wagon with six bullocks. He the King's man is, and a smile in his eyes there comes, quick, quick, like the wind comes on the wheat. Ya! Ya! we much like this King's man."

Nearly all the people are gone into the church and I follow. There are no seats, so all of us stand, the sexes separated like the sheep from the goats.

One's eyes become riveted on the large globe of cut crystals that hangs from the ceiling near the centre of the church, and the hard white lights from it strike sharply on my eyeballs like dagger points. All the people are making reverences and placing something on their foreheads like oil, but it may be holy water. Know all men by these presents that I, even I, am the poor ignorant wife of a Protestant person, and understand not the meaning of these obeisances, nor of this beautiful fête to which all the Austrian folk of the countryside have come with not so much as one mouthful of bread to break their fast.

Neither shall one drop of liquid moisten their parched lips for these three hours unless—Holy Mother and all the Blessed Saints, pray for our presumption—unless indeed, it might fall to the lot of a woman to take into her lips the sacred blood from the golden spoon which the priest dips into the chalice, the holy chalice that is surmounted with something dazzling like a star, so that no woman may even look thereon.

Feeling all the while like wild oats amid the wheat, I take my stand by a pillar close to the door and pretend not to stare. Ere long, a young girl touches me and tells me she is inquested to bring me to the sisters. I follow her through the church and into the vestry where a little nun presses my hands and calls me by name. Once, she was my escort through the Monastery at St. Albert, over by the Sturgeon River. Of course I remember her. She is the china shepherdess in black who says "Please" instead of "What?" and who comes from Mon'real. Also she lisps, but what odds? Plutarch tells us that Alcibiades lisped and that it gave a grace and persuasiveness to his discourse.

She presents me to the other sisters, none of whom speak English, and invites me out to the monastery to visit. All of the sisters look middling healthy, not having the parchment-like pallor of the city nuns.

The service, she explains, is the Finding of the Holy Cross. I must not think it idolatry when they do veneration, indeed, I must not. "Eet is what you call—Ah, Madame! I cannot find the word—eet is what you call—" "A Symbol," I ask. "Oui, Oui, a symbol!"

With many gesticulations and no small difficulty she tells me how the Empress Helena, mother of the great Constantine, once had a heavenly dream which enabled her to discover the very piece of ground wherein the holy cross was hidden away. It lay under two temples where heathens prayed to Jupiter and Venus instead of to Jehovah. She caused these temples to be torn down so as not one stone was left, and underneath were found three crosses. Being doubtful as to which was the cross of the Lord Christ, the Empress had all three applied to the body of a dying woman. The first two crosses had no

effect (it was the good Bishop Macarius, you must know, who helped her), but, at the touch of the third, the dying woman rose up perfectly whole.

This is a story worth lingering on, and the little nun would tell me more about it, only the celebrant priest has come into the vestry and talks with us before he goes to the basement to change his vestments.

They are impressive garments which he wears, but one might imagine their proving correspondingly oppressive. Kryzanowski is the wretched name of him. He is a large, fair man, this priest, in the full force of life, with an unmistakable air of distinction. On a snap judgment, I should place to his credit the ability to deal with a supreme situation. He is a priest of the Uniat Church, which church, so far as I may understand, is a compromise between the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic, the compromise consisting of a prayer for the Pope instead of for the Czar.

In our White Alberta much antipathy exists between the Orthodox Greek Church and the Uniats, and several years ago they had a lawsuit which they took to the Privy Council in England, and which drove to insanity one of our cleverest barristers. They are bonny fighters, these Ruthenians from Galicia, and if they cannot "have the law" on one another, they may always have the consolation of fisticuffs. And what, pray, are muscles hard for and skulls thick, except to fight? Riddle me that!

Presently, when we shall have tied down and diverted their tremendous fighting energy into what is usually described as civilization, we shall, of a surety, find a human voltage here which will send these Slavic peasants high up the scale where well-conceived and successful endeavour is weighed and appraised. At present, ah, well! they are young and positive and he is the best man who survives.

The little sister brings me back into the church, where she places a chair for me close beside the altar facing the congregation, an act and fact which cause me not a little amazement and considerable trepidation. Will the priest permit an unhallowed woman of lean and

meagre accomplishments—and she a Protestant—to sit so close to the holy of holies? Will he?

He does not even appear to see me and swings the censor close, close to my head, over and over again, with the same free-handed gesture of Millet's sower. He swings it out and about, hither and yon, till all my garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia; until, like Solomon's spouse, my hands dropped myrrh.

Sometimes it is a rude Slavic peasant who swings the censor or lays the spice on the live coals—a rough-necked man with red-brown hands and face. He wears a caftan, or long cloak of skin, upon which red leather is cunningly appliqued in pleasing designs. I doubt not he is from Bukowina, or "the beech-woods," for the women of that province are skilled craftswomen. He swings the censor with such deftness, that were I not benumbed by the languorous odour of the smoke-thick air, I would be wondering how this queer shock-headed acolyte with his bovine stolidity came to acquire the revolver wrist in such a high state of development. Surely it is well I am stupefied, for it might be irreverent so to wonder.

But for that matter, all this service belongs to the people and not to any stilted crucifers or superior choristers smacking of professional piety. As occasion may demand, an older woman comes forward and snuffs a candle with her fingers and replaces it with a fresh one. The women even carry the candles through the church when the ritual so requires it. They do not appear to have any self-consciousness, but perform their part gladly and naturally. This may arise from the fact that they have been accustomed in Austria to taking part in religious dramas such as *The Nativity*, which drama they once staged at Edmonton. I did not see it, but Sister Josephat at the Ruthenian Monastery gave me a picture of the *dramatis personæ* taken during a rehearsal.

"See! See! Madame Lady. See! See!" said Sister Josephat. "Et ees ver' fonny. *De tree wise men are womens*, womens I tell you. Yes! the black one too! She is Alma Knapf."

This drama was vastly appreciated, especially by the younger fry of the community, who enjoyed seeing the devil carry a Jew off the scene with a pitchfork and cast him into hell with certitude and great vigour. The older folk considered this treatment unduly drastic and an unwarranted loss of useful material. Here in the North, we do not believe in killing Jews—no, nor even bank-managers—where we are not infrequently paled to the quick to provide money for real-estate payments or to margin up against the bad news the ticker-tape has spelled out. Yes! it would be highly unreasonable to allow the Ruthenian folk to kill off the Jews and bankers and it would make us uncommonly sorry.

... I like to watch these farmer-women carry the tall, white candles under the dome. It seems like a vision picture or some sense memory that has filtered down to me through the ages, but what the memory is I cannot say. Indeed, once I read of a strange country where men used to run races with lighted candles, and the victor was he whose flame was found burning at the goal.

I think the memory which troubles me must be of Jacob's rods which he made into "white strakes." He performed his rite under the *libneh*, or white poplar-tree, even as we perform them under the white poplars of Alberta.

And while the women march, they chant a weird harmony, the men's voices coming in at intervals like pedal points. There is no organ, or any tyrannous baton, but only, "They sang one to another," as the Jews did at the building of their temple.

I am strangely, inexpressibly moved by this tone-sweetness. Sometimes it is massive, triumphal, and inspiring as though the singers carried naked swords in their upraised hands; or again, it seems to be the sullen angry diapason of distant thunder in the hills.

But mostly they sing a pæan or lamentation of the cross, heavy with unspeakable weariness and the ache of unshed tears. Surely this is the strangest story ever told. It is as though they sing to a dead god in a dead world.

And, sometimes, sight and sound become blended into one, and the sound is the sobbing urge of the pines ... the people as they rise and fall to the floor are the trees swayed by the wind. The cross they are lifting is wondrous heavy, so that it takes four strong fellows. It is built of oak beams and the figure of the Nazarene is of bronze. As the lights fall from the windows on the outstretched body, with its pierced hands and thorn-stung brow, it seems as though the tragedy of Golgotha is being re-enacted before my very eyes, here on this far-away edge of the world. The thing is ghastly in its awful realism, so that I am crushed and confounded. It falls like flakes of fire on my brain, till my mind's ear catches again and again that most horrifying cry of the ages, "My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"

But I cannot tell you more of this story of the Lord Christ who was crucified, except that in some way it has become a personal thing to these worshippers, and, maybe, a joyful one. It must be joyful, for, at last, they hang a garland of flowers over the upright beams of the cross and from it draw long, long ribbons of scarlet and white and blue; which the women carry to the ends of the church like floating streams of light, and between which the men and children stand to sing *Alleluia* and *Alleluia*.

I know not why the priest stoops to the ground and touches it with fingers or his lips. Sometime the little sister from Mon'real will tell me.

Henry Ryecroft, in his *Secret Papers*, recounts how he used to do this same thing. "Amid things eternal," he says, "I touch the familiar and kindly earth." It was in the silent solitude of the night when he walked through the heart of the land he loved.

I have always desired to see the mysterious sacrifice known as the elevation of the host, but, now that I am an arm's stretch from the altar, I do not look but cover my face with my hands. Only I see that a dull red flames behind the man's ear when he takes the white wafer, and the veins of his neck swell as if they hurt.

But I look into the faces of the women and the men in the front line who receive the sacred essence from the golden cup and golden spoon,

and almost I can hear what their eyes are saying. What odds about low foreheads, thick lips, and necks brown like the brown earth when each has the god within? The Ruthenians—or Galicians, if you like the name better—may be a sullen folk of unstable and misanthropical temper; they may be uncouth of manner, and uncleanly of morals, but I shall always think of them, as on this day, when I saw the strange glamour on their faces that cannot be described except that it came from a marvellous song hidden in their hearts.

There are no seats in the church, and while the sermon is being preached the people stand—all except the mothers with babies, who sit on the floor. These babies have pressed their mouths to the sacred ikon the same as the older folk, and, doubtless, some gracious kindly angel will guard them ever hereafter. Indeed, I hope so, and that she will give unto them those things I most crave for myself.

Father Kryzanowski delivers the sermon in the Ruthenian language. I am glad, for I am tired of hearing I should be a different person. I don't want to be, except to have hands of healing and a heart that is always young. Yes! these are the things I most crave for myself.

.... Good gentlefolk! will you be pleased to stay and eat brown bread with us at the wagons, and cheese and hard-cooked eggs? We shall not give you meat, for we would discourage the beef-trust, and, besides, this is fast day.... But you shall eat your food off flaxen towels which we spun and wove with our own hands. Yes! and we have wrought northern flowers and prairie roses into them.

And further, believe us, Sirs and Mesdames, we sent five towels like unto these to Mary, the English Queen, that she might know that we are now Canadians and no Ruthenians.

And Michael Laskowicz shall take your picture, Lady, with his picture box, and you may have Hanka's necklace like as if you belonged to us, and Anna's head'kerchief which is always in this year's style.... and we shall clap our hands and laugh and say, "There! There! she belongs to us, this Mees Janey Canuck, now and without end." ...

They are engaging, these beechwood folk from Austria, and their loving kindness is like honey to my mouth.

If it were more genteel, I would like to speak them fair, and to write books about them, but I have set my face against authorship. I will not go into the writing business, for I do greatly prefer wealth and honour, and to have my picture taken on a verandah with my arm around a pillar as an exemplar of a three years of successful life in Alberta the Sunny.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE SHADOW OF THE SCAFFOLD

*It was my harassing duty to act as death-watch to the man who wrote the appended diary. On the day before his execution he made no entry, although he opened the book several times and once asked me to sharpen his pencil. I was not present at his execution, but was informed that he bore himself with dignity and calmness. The crime which he expiated with his life was the murder of his wife who had left him to live with another man. He had still one year to complete before obtaining his degree as a medical practitioner. At his trial, he refused to take refuge behind his wife's misdemeanour, nor would he permit his counsel to urge this plea on his behalf.*

*I have held this unique diary for over a year, not feeling at liberty to give it to the public while in 'the service of the Mounted Police.—E. F. M.*

*There are yet six days till I die.*

The words the judge said were "hanged by the neck till dead." Ever since, they have haunted me like a song that fastens itself on one and will not be forgotten. The words drag out their ghastly length to the sound of the Fort bell as it rings the hours. They drawl to the tread of the sentinel who walks back and forth outside my cell—*hanged—by—the—neck—till—dead.*

Does it take a man long to hang? I inquired of my guard, and although we are not supposed to talk, he laughed nervously and said he had once read of a doctor who cut down to a murderer's heart three minutes after the drop fell. There was still enough force in the heart to ring an electric bell.

*Five days more!*

They are a tireless breed, the red-police of Canada, and they have an eye in the centre of their foreheads that never sleeps. I once heard there was such an eye, but I forget about it.

This boy who watches me is nearly my own age, and I can see he is sorry for me. I will not whimper and wince, but will hedge myself about with a fence of laughter and bravado. It is the last kindness I can do to any one.

I like him better than the priest who visits me. I look at the priest with curious eyes, this man who in five days will wish me a pleasant journey into eternity. He it is who will read aloud my burial service while I yet live. They have no sense of propriety, these men.

May a murderer talk of propriety? No! but he may think on it, and write on it, and no one may contradict him.

This ecclesiastic has never loved a woman and so has never hated one, nor killed her in his hate.

Her mouth was like a red wound, but it was evenly pale with her face before I gave myself to the police.

God! I did not mean to strike her down; I did not mean to, but I did. Once, I read that no one was responsible for alienating a woman's affections but her own husband. If this be true, I murdered her twice.

I stooped to her as she lay at my feet and straightened her collar, also I pinned back a strand of hair that had come loose. Margaret is the best name of all. I like to say it often—Margaret.

*There are yet four days.*

It is not given to any living being, man or beast, to know the hour of his death, else the monstrous horror would drive him mad. Yet, I know it and am not mad. It must be that I cannot believe it; that nature protects me with a density through which I may not penetrate, or that there are yet four days—ninety-six hours!

When I was at school, I kept a calendar on the wall and struck off the days till Christmas or Easter, when I would be home again. Most boys did.

The guards in the hallways talk of horses and women and, sometimes, they forget me and laugh aloud. I know they have forgotten me, for when they remember their voices drop suddenly to a whisper. I heard one of them tell of a half-Cree he shot through the heart at the time of the Rebellion. There was, he said, no doubt of its being in the heart, for the fellow drew up his right leg.

The tragedy of my approaching death is its impossibility. How can one realize his execution when the homely smell of hot wheaten bread sifts into his cell? There is the odour, too, of horse-sweat on the guards as they come into my cell. They are the Royal North-West Mounted Police.

I do not know why they are royal and I am criminal, for, after all, the distinction between us is of slight consequence. They do by law what I did contrary to law. The results are the same. On the whole I think they are the worse: their killing by rule is so monstrously premeditated. And yet, this side of the subject has never occurred to me till now that I am the prisoner of the police.

But why should I carp and gird at these fine fellows? They are only the instruments of the state, that is to say of the citizens. I myself, by taxation, have contributed to the expenses of the scaffold whereon I shall be executed.

The priest pleads with me that I may not die in my sin. He does not understand, and I may not tell him, that Margaret died in hers, and that I must do likewise if I would spend eternity with her.

He carries the whole dogma of the Church in his face and shoulders, this old priest, but he is a good man and sincere. His endeavour is to help and comfort me, but his words are short-armed to relieve my agony. Surely my soul has descended into hell.

To-day, he spoke of my mother, but I would not have it. One need not die a hundred deaths....

"Oh! little did my mother think  
The day she cradled me  
O' the lands I was to travel in,  
Or the death I was to dee."

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My dread is not from fear of the physical pain of hanging, for, after all, the life of every man and every woman ends in a strangle. It is that these men will lay their hands on me and bind me with a rope and that I may not forbid them. The indignity of it is unbearable. The prison stripes, the handcuffs, the black cap—these are from the devil's wardrobe.

It fills me with mute stupefaction, the mental picture I draw of myself when I am swung out on a rope, a grisly limp nothing of humanity; I who this minute am young and full of sap and sinew. I cannot endure that men should look upon my countenance twisted into an inhuman grimace; on my horribly bulging eyes, and on my tongue hanging out like the purple petal of the wild flag. It is not decent so to mutilate a man.

And when they have thus distorted my face, then will they blot out its hideousness with quick-lime like one would rub an ugly picture off a slate.

This malign system of burying murderers in lime, and refusing the body to friends, doubtless has its origin in the Roman custom whereby the remains of the Christians were burned to ashes and cast into the river so that not a vestige would remain. The Romans thought in this way they would deprive their victims of all hope of the resurrection.

The guard keeps a light burning at night that he may watch me the better. It is his duty to deliver me alive to the executioner. If I were so minded, I could sever the radial arteries in my wrists with my teeth and he would not know. This is why I laugh out loud and will not tell why I laugh.

The wind blows bleak across the prairies and the brittle snow-flakes that beat on the glass outside the iron-bars have a sound like the whirr of swords. I wish the wind would blow always, for it lays a salve on my soul.

*On the third day.*

My muscles ache for use in this two-by-nothing cell, and, now and then, a close-shut but invisible fist hits me under the heart so that I feel I must fall from numbness. It is stupid and super-brutal to refuse me space wherein to walk. To-day, I went through some gymnastic exercises and forgot long enough to hum an air that Margaret and I danced to at the military-ball at Edmonton less than a year ago. I am not sure of the words, but they concern "an old grey bonnet with a blue-ribbon on it."

My God! but I have been a bungler at living. I have wagered with life and lost. I know it while I wait here to pay the reckoning and the knowledge confounds me.

I keep sifting this question over and over—why is it that men are hanged by the neck till dead?

I asked the priest and he quoted the verse about an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, yet it seems to me people sin more in the observance of this law than they would in its abrogation. It used to be said by the Jews there was a time to act for Jehovah by breaking His commandments.

There should come to me some severe punishment for the life I have taken, but it should be remedial in character rather than revengeful. Innately, I am not a criminal, and for thirty or forty years could be made to serve my race with the labour of my body and the sweat of my brain. It does not seem a good policy, nor economic, to kill a man in order to kill the evil that is in him.

*Two days.*

This morning, a silent, fat-faced man with inimical eyes came in and looked at me, as if appraising my weight. He dared not put his hands on me for I have yet two days.

I saw him once before, over two thousand miles from here, in a drug store in Toronto. The chemist told me this was Radcliffe and that he liked to play with children. He also said Radcliffe claimed to have adopted the profession out of purely charitable motives, there having been so many bunglings by amateur hangmen.

It is quite true what some one wrote that in waiting for the executioner to let him drop, society is revenged on the murderer.

As I sit here writing, there comes sharply to me on the frosty air the sound of hard hammering. There are two men working on my scaffold. I can tell from the recurring beats of the metal on metal.

It is appalling that the monstrous lesson these hammers are thudding out in the barracks yard has found me too late. It must always be late, for no man ever dreams that he will mount the scaffold.

No! I will not whine. I will not be a coward and gag at the gall, but, oh! I want to live so much. I want to live!

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE BABOUSHKA

There is a woman and she was wise,  
Wofully wise was she.—ROBERT SERVICE.

Now Judea was a Province too, only smaller than Canada, and it was subject to Rome. In Judea, there was a town called Bethlehem, which means a house of bread. It must have been that wheat was plentiful.

But this Bethlehem was a small, small place, and the Romans cared not so much as one finger's fillip that a strange white star waited there for a little while to light up a birth-bed.

I do not know if the star did wait, but it should have, for this was the most momentous birth which history has recorded in that, for all time, it changed the world's ideals. Its influence could only be weighed with planets in the balances. The baby's name was to be Dayspring, and Wonderful, and Emmanuel.

... It is well the baby lay in a manger else a bullock might have crushed him with its hoof...

And having for its central symbols a mother and a baby, this cult of the Christ can never perish. Its ethics may change; its authority may wane; its history be impugned, but its symbols are eternal.

Our idea of gift-giving at the Christ-mass-tide has grown up from the offering made at the manger by the three wise men who came out from the East, Casper, Melchior, and Balthasar. The myrrh they offered to a mortal; the gold to a king, the frankincense to God.

Whether to God, the king, or the child, all our gifts should first be brought to the manger, which is only another way of saying that

without love they avail nothing.

I know a story about these magi, and I will relate it to the children of the North. It was told to me by Maryam, the ninth girl-child of Michaelovitch, a Russo-Canadian, in the Province of Saskatchewan. It is about three wise men and a foolish woman. The woman is called Baboushka and her heart has become as water. Once, when she was working in her home, the three wise men passed on their journey to find the Christ-child and they gave her greeting. "Come with us, grandmother," they said, "for we have seen His star in the East and we go to worship Him."

"Surely I will come," said the old woman, "but the oven is heated for my bread and I must even now bake it. After awhile, I will follow and find where this star leads."

But she never saw the Christ-child because, when her bread was baked, the star no longer shone in the sky. Ever since she has been searching, but has never found Him. She it is who fills the children's stockings on Christmas Eve, and decks the fir-tree on Christmas morn, because she hopes to find in some poor child she has fed or clothed the little Lord Jesus whom she neglected hundreds and hundreds of years ago. Long before dawn on Christmas Day the children in Russia are awakened by the cry, "Behold the Baboushka!" and they spring out of bed on the instant hoping to see her vanish out of the window, but no child has seen aught save only the gifts she has left behind.

Maryam thinks—indeed, she tells it to the four winds—that the Christ-child has left Russia and has come to Canada in a big ship with a shipmaster.

And so Maryam is full of employment, almost every day, knitting mittens and long white scarves for babies and poor children. You never can tell, He may be even here on the prairie, the Christ-child whom the unwise old Baboushka disesteemed hundreds and hundreds of years ago. You can never tell.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE HERO PRIESTS OF THE NORTH

This they all with a joyful mind  
Bear thro' life like a torch in flame,  
And falling, fling to the host behind,  
'Play up! Play up! and play the game!'—NEWBOLT.

"For long years," said a Toronto editor the other day, "this country has produced few outstanding personalities except politicians."

Here spoke the little Canadian. By this country he meant the provinces to the south of the Great Lakes. Think of that! Think of that!

Why, man dear, north of the lakes we have outstanding personalities to burn—and we burn them. And, here and now, let me say that under the northern lights, politicians must, perforce, take a third or even a fourth estate, for always we have to reckon with the missionary priest, the business man, and the real-estate agent, before we begin to consider the politician. Even then, I am not so sure but the editor and the railway boss take precedence of the politician. In this large, airy land, politicians are truly but small fry from small places—inconsequential ephemera, who age in a heart-beat and die.

If I had realized at the start this was to be a chapter on the outstanding personalities among the missionary priests, I would have begun differently. I would have said that the Anglo-Saxon hungers for heroes, but that the heroes were rare—that this was why the raw, ragged wolf-land lying about the Hudson Bay and along the stretches of the Mackenzie River was of deep and peculiar interest, in that it had the distinction of producing crops of heroes and that the breed never seemed to run out.

I would have said that the story of the northern priest is the story of a man with an ideal, or, if you will have it so, with a dream; that the dream is one that disturbs his ease and leads him in perils often.

I would have gone further and shown this boy o' dreams to be at the same time a supreme realist and, without question, one of the highest types of human excellence in the last half-century; that he has the dauntless spirit of the soldier, the enthusiasm of the explorer, the enterprise of the merchant, and the patriotism of the statesman, and all for the sole object of helping humanity. In a word, that he is a special soul and must not be judged as general.

It is to be regretted I did not begin this way, but, to quote the Roman governor who gave judgment concerning the Nazarene: "What I have written, I have written."

... Among the missionary priests of the North there is, to-day, no greater outstanding personality than Bishop Stringer of the diocese of the Mackenzie River.

I used to know him years ago when he was Isaac Stringer, divinity student, a lusty young fellow, lean and clean and strong of wind, who could carry a ball down the field past all antagonists and send it spinning through the goal. When I say he has grown stout since those days, you must not make the deduction that he is under-worked and overfed like other bishops of whom we have heard tell. On the contrary part, north of 53° it is our profligate custom to starve all dignitaries. Indeed, it was only last winter that Bishop Stringer, on his way across the divide from the Mackenzie River to the Yukon, nearly lost his life from starvation. He and his companion, Charles F. Johnson, were lost in a mountain fog and missed the trail. Southern folk who sit in offices and parlours do not grasp the full meaning of this, and I cannot very well explain except to say that Dante had an exceedingly fine insight when he made the Inferno foggy.

For a week, in deep snow and deeper fog, they wandered in and out of Fool's River, the irony of which could not fail to rub them sore. Returning to the Fool's mouth, they spent three days making snowshoes and cutting up moccasins for webbing. From here they ascended the height of land and crossed three divides before finding an east-flowing river. But again the fog descended and now came the fight for

life. On and on they wandered, day after day, scarcely able to see a foot ahead and more than once treading on the verge of a precipice.

They had been living on a daily ration of a spoonful of flour and rice and the half of a red squirrel each. But even this gave out, and the sorely beset men tried eating moccasin leather, and ended on muckalucks or messinke boots. For the benefit of the uninitiated, I would explain that muckalucks are contrived out of raw sealskin. Bishop Stringer has since told me that when he had divided the food, his companion assigned the portions, and *vice versa*. This is one of the trail's lessons. At last, after eleven days of blind stumbling, they came out at an Indian camp on the Peel River. Twenty miles further down, at the Hudson's Bay Fort, the factor weighed the much-emaciated men and found that each had lost fifty pounds.

In his letter to his wife, who was visiting in Kincardine, Ontario, the Bishop says of his experiences: "The one thing that made us unhappy was that you and the others might worry about us when we did not turn up. But this feeling wore off when it meant a matter of life or death, and day after day we wondered how long we would last—whether you would ever hear from us. You can imagine we were much in prayer, and over and over again reconsecrated ourselves to the Master's service."

This Bishop of Mackenzie River is surely an outstanding personality, and reminds me of what Robert Louis Stevenson said of the late John Chalmers, a missionary of New Guinea: "You can't weary me of that fellow," he asserted; "he is as big as a house and far bigger than any church."

Bishop Stringer's predecessor in the diocese was William Carpenter Bompas, the Apostle of the North, the man who has been classified by the Church Missionary Society as "indisputably the most self-sacrificing bishop in the world."

His diocese, too, was the largest in the world, consisting of one million square miles. It had the same peculiarity as Bobbie Burns's "cauld, cauld kirk"—there were "in't but few."

William Bompas went North in 1865 and stayed there forty years, coming out only twice. On the first of these occasions he returned to England to be elevated to the episcopate.

The only medical training the Bishop had undergone was a short course in the treatment of snowblindness, and this when he went to England for his consecration. This is a form of blindness that causes great suffering among the Indians, and the Bishop had himself been stricken with it on several occasions. On one of these, stumbling painfully at every step, he was led by an Eskimo boy for seventy-five miles. Writing of his agonies, he says: "They are delights. The first foot-prints on earth made by our risen Saviour were the nail-marks of suffering, and for the spread of the gospel, too, am prepared to suffer."

Like Stringer, Bompas also endured frequent starvation, but seldom spoke of it as a personal happening, but rather as applying to others—a virtue most hard and difficult to be practised. Writing about it to a friend in England, he said: "Horses were killed for food and furs eaten at several of the posts. The Indians had to eat a good many of their beaver skins."

Another man who endured the privations of the pioneer in this district is the present Bishop of Keewatin, Joseph Lofthouse.

The most interesting, and certainly the most romantic story of his career, is that of his marriage. His sweetheart, a young English girl, was due to arrive on the yearly vessel of the Hudson's Bay Company. Lofthouse travelled several hundred miles to meet her, but found she had not come, being unavoidably detained in England. The following summer he made the same journey, but this time as the vessel pulled up the harbour, he was able to single out the lassie's face on the deck. Yes, sir! if you had lived among Eskimos and Indians all these years, you, too, would tremble and choke in the throat at the ship's rope hit the mooring-post.

But now the young couple found themselves in as trying a predicament as the Israelites with the sea in front, Pharaoh's army behind, and unscalable rocks on either side. In a word, there was no

minister to marry them. Things looked badly for them, and the lassie was thinking of returning home, when it suddenly occurred to the captain that, on the open sea, according to law, he was entitled to act as a magistrate. It was not long till the good ship slipped her moorings and stood out into the sweep of the Atlantic, where to a time-honoured form, the minister and the girl plighted their troth, symbolized it by the gift of a ring, and ratified it by the authority of the state, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

This is a good enough story to end with, but there are other outstanding personalities I must mention.

There is Bishop Holmes,[\[1\]](#) who resides at Athabasca Landing, and who has had many interesting experiences among the redskins. Like all true northmen, the Bishop speaks in a quiet, low tone, admirably adapted to the art of narrative. Once for weeks, he took charge of a Weetigo or Weendigo Indian, in order to protect him from relatives who sought to take his life. The man believed himself to be a cannibal, for in some strange way the idea had been suggested to him. After a time, the hallucination passed away, and the man returned to the camp.

Until comparatively recent years, the untutored redmen believed that people who were insane or in delirium were either obsessed or possessed of an evil spirit, and that it was necessary to kill them in order to prevent this spirit from entering into others. The plight of the relatives in these cases was pitiable; they could not allow a violently insane man or woman at large, and the killing was usually performed with great grief. This custom has fallen into desuetude, for, since the advent of the Mounted Police, the perpetrators are treated as murderers and accordingly hanged. The most arduous duty of the police is the bringing in of demented Indians or white prospectors from the North. It is a task that has, in turn, driven a stalwart redcoat insane. One's nerves are apt to snap when, for weeks, you sleep o' nights in the snow roped to a maniac.

And there was Rev. Henry Irwin, better known as Father Pat. He was a railroad priest on the Canadian Pacific, and, because of his unselfish work among them, became the idol of men. There are some

misguided folk who think of a priest as a feeble, microcephalous body with a black coat, a shovel hat, and a superb ignorance of the ways of the world. There are, we own, some priests like this, but Father Pat was not one of them. Indeed, his dress and deportment were such as to often cause scandal to good church folk who were not so conversant with his noble deeds and self-abnegation as were the railroad navvies and gold-miners. Father Pat had only been married a year when his wife and baby died, and, not so long after, he was found almost frozen to death in a snow-bank, from the results of which he died. Here was an elementary man fighting the elements. The North stands at salute.

Nor were the Roman Catholic missionaries less self-denying, or in any way smaller men than their Protestant co-workers. There was Bishop Breynat who froze his feet and amputated his toes with a penknife. "Sirs, it's bitter beneath the Bear."

In 1869-70, at St. Albert, the ecclesiastical head-quarters of the Catholic Church in Alberta, Father Leduc, a complete Christian, nursed the Indians who were sick with the small-pox until he contracted it himself. Then the other priests in turn fell in line as nurses until every man was a victim of the disease.

It is a scene that reminds one of Sir Walter Scott's romance where the clansman and his seven sons all fell for the chieftain, stepping forth gladly into the gap and crying: "One more for Eachim."

While the priests lay ill an Indian came for one of them to administer the last rites of the Church to his mother. What was done? You never could guess unless you lived in the North, so I may as well tell you. A young priest rolled his blankets closer about, gave orders to his attendants to carry him to the waiting sleigh, and, in this condition, made the painful journey. Mattress and all, he was borne into the sick-room, where he administered the viaticum to the dying woman.

Father Lacombe, whose good grey head all men know, is the pioneer missionary of Alberta. He is eighty-three years of age, and sixty-one of these years have been spent in the service of the North. The story of his life sounds like a new Acts of the Apostles. In the

science-ridden centuries to come, when these first white wanderers in boreal regions will be almost mythical characters, tradition will love to weave about them stories of romance and mystery—dramatic, preternatural stories such as we frame to-day about SS. Patrick, Augustine and Albanus.

Perhaps the most interesting event in Lord Strathcona's visit last year to Alberta was his meeting again with Père Lacombe. It was in the Government House gardens at Edmonton, overlooking the Saskatchewan River. All the guests fell back out of earshot while the aged men clasped hands and talked over other days and of the boys who had long since crossed the height of land to the ultimate sea.

At the present time Père Lacombe is living at Midnapore, near Calgary, in a home for poor old folk and children, the money to build which he collected himself.

... And there is the story of Father Goiffon who was frozen near Emerson on the eve of All Saints' Day, 1860. It was told to me by Father Lestanc,<sup>[2]</sup> who, eighty years ago, was born at Brest in Brittany. Father Lestanc has been fifty-five years in the West and North, nineteen of which were spent at St. Boniface under Bishop Taché. In spite of his extreme age, Lestanc has a hardy-moulded figure, and a strong, clear voice. One cannot listen to him for long without being impressed by his affectional force and broad reach of humanity. He is not clear about things of yesterday, but take him back over the decades and his memory rings true as a bell.

Goiffon had been at St. Paul, Minneapolis, making the yearly purchases for his mission. Among other things he bought a city-bred horse to carry him home. Fifty years ago St. Paul was seventeen days' journey from Emerson, on the border-line, and folk travelled in caravans.

One day's journey from Emerson, Father Goiffon left the party that he might push on the more rapidly and reach his mission post to say Mass on All Saints' Day. To use a northern colloquialism, he travelled light, carrying with him but one meal and no blanket. Neither had he

matches or an axe, for, bear in mind, he was only a young priest, and he hoped to be in his shack by fall of night.

Soon after noonday there blew up a blinding snow-storm that made progress impossible. A usurping, all-invading sheet of snow settled down over the plains and turned the air into a white darkness. The man tied his horse to a willow shrub and lay down in the snow. The hours passed painfully on, but the youth kept his head buried in his saddle that his face might not freeze. When at last he looked up, he found his horse dead by his side. I told you a bit ago, it was a city-bred horse and no trailer.

And now came the fight for life. The boy priest had no shelter but the flaccid, unstrung body of his horse, already cold in death. I do not know about the pain of the night, except that at the edge of day, one foot and leg were frozen and the toes of the other, so that he could not stand upright. I wonder if he heard the bell from his home in France as he lay in the snow! They say men do. Something must have been sounding in his ears, for he did not hear the caravan as it passed him in the morning.

At midday he cut a piece of flesh off the horse and ate it.

"A crude diet, Mon Père," I remark.

"Oui, oui," replies the old Breton. "What you Anglais call a 'sleepshod' dinnaire! What would you, Madame? One must browse where he is tethered."

The rescue party from Emerson met a man and boy hauling in the stricken priest on a sledge. They had heard him sobbing in the snow.

The Indians doctored him for six weeks until his limbs threatened to drop off, and then sent a runner to St. Boniface to ask Father Lestanc what they would do with him. This happened fifty years ago, but Father Lestanc must walk to the window and look out into the garden for a while before he can trust his voice.

For men and dogs it was a round run of one hundred and forty miles from St. Boniface to Emerson, but in twenty-four hours Goiffon lay in Bishop Taché's palace at St. Boniface, on the banks of the Red River. Dr. Bunn, the physician at the Hudson's Bay post across at Fort Garry, awaited his arrival and amputated the already putrefied members. The next morning Goiffon was found to be bleeding to death; the stitches would not hold and the veins were open. Nothing could be done but to calmly await the end.

Father Lestanc broke the news to the household, whereupon the sorrowing but withal practical sister in charge of the kitchen placed a caldron of buffalo tallow on the stove, for, explains my narrator, "a priest's wake requires many, many candles."

The little serving-maids under the sister, doubtless whispering over the sad happenings upstairs, forgot to watch the pot, so that it "swelled much, Madame," over the red-hot stove till all the house was on fire.

Do not scold the girls, but wait till I tell you. Such a thing was never heard of. It was really Le Bon Dieu who permitted the house and cathedral to burn. There is no doubt of it, for, when the priest carried the dying youth out and laid him on the snow, the frost congealed the blood so that his veins ceased to empty themselves.

This was fifty years ago, and last summer, Father Goiffon came up from Petit Canada, near St. Paul, to attend a cathedral service at Winnipeg, on the site of Old Fort Garry.

"Oui, Madame, oui, I comprehend when you say *similia similibus curcuntur*. Literally, eet ees a frost kills, a frost cures. Eet ees a well thing the body ees so adaptive."

... And once Bishop Grandin was lost in the snow. It was in 1863, near Fort Resolution on Great Slave Lake.

With one Indian boy he was crossing the lake on the ice, following in the wake of a party of Hudson's Bay Company men. The Bishop's dogs were tired and fell behind. When a storm blew up he lost the trail.

The thermometer was at forty degrees below zero, and the storm was what Father Lestanc calls a "poudrerie"—that is to say, a storm where the snow blows up like fine powder. This does not sound unpleasant, but as an actuality it is, in the extreme North, a sinister snow that bites your face like driven needles.

The Bishop had no guide but the wind, and when a storm rises the wind veers. He gave the dogs their head, but even their homing instinct failed them in the storm and night, so that they crouched on the ice and howled in unison with the little Indian boy.

At dawn the boy said he smelled smoke, for he was an Indian, and smoke travels far in the clear, winnowed air of the North.

On looking to the west they sighted land, and after a painful journey met a dog-train coming toward them with men—the boy's father and uncle. The priest was celebrating a Mass for the repose of the Bishop's soul when he arrived, for "Les sauvages," says my informant, "had declared the Bishop would be frozen to the middle of his heart. Ah, little Madam! Whom Le Bon Dieu guards are well guarded."

I did not know about this Father Lestanc before. I thought he was merely an old Oblate Brother passing from the sixth to the seventh stage of man's little day. Now I know him for one of the outstanding personalities of the North, and, as such, would do him honour, even I who am of the world, worldly. I know things about him that happened years and years ago when this was no man's land. I know how once he nursed and buried a young man whose companions had abandoned him to die at Rat Creek, near Portage la Prairie.

The man had gone into the Indian camps against the wishes of his fellow-teamsters who were travelling from Fort Garry to Fort Charlton. But he was a gamester, and he went. This was how he contracted small-pox, and the reason his companions were forced to leave him to fight death for himself with a little supply of pemmican and some bannocks as his sole backers. You may not have noticed that the life of a gamester and the race-horse are short ones in the north-west, but it is, nevertheless, indubitably true, and this case was no

exception to the rule. His name? I do not know. One forgets names in the oblivious West.

Father Lestanc rolled the loathsome body in a blanket and decently buried it, for the buffalo hunters had learned that in cases of small-pox the healthiest thing a traveller can do is to mind his own special business.

"Did any one else catch the disease?" I ask.

"Non, non, no one else."

The old man muses a little, for he is growing tired, and this was fifty years ago. Suddenly memory floods in on him and he shows distress: "Pardon, Madam, pardon! I took eet. Oui, I took eet."

[1] Since deceased.

[2] Since deceased.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### COAL-MINING IN ALBERTA

Till dazzled by the drowsy glare,  
I shut my eyes to heat and light;  
And saw, in sudden night,  
Crouched in the dripping dark,  
With steaming shoulders stark  
The man who hews the coal to feed my fire.

—WILFRED WILSON GIBSON.

Solon once told Croesus that whoever had the iron would possess all the gold, but here Solon was taking coal for granted. Iron-mines are of comparatively little value unless coal-mines are within easy access. I think of this as I view the underground workings of a coal-mine, today, and of how our Royal Land of Canada has both minerals in immeasurable quantities. In this Province of Alberta alone, there is so much coal to burn that it will take a million years. Looking at this sheer face of coal twenty feet in height, I must perforce recall Oliver Wendell Holmes's remark that he was not at all nervous about a certain comet which threatened to destroy the earth, for there was so much coal in the world he couldn't bring himself to believe it had been made for nothing.

In time past, it was said hereabout that coal-mining did not pay; that the profit of the industry lay in its higher mathematics, by which was meant the formation of companies and the disposal of bonds and stocks. The primary work of The Coal Barons, it was further declared, consisted in laying up treasures on earth for themselves, leaving the shareholders to find reward in heaven. The "suckers" who purchased stock were said to have gone through the comparative degrees of mine, miner, minus. They were "the bitten."

From the uppermost appearance of things, these remarks would seem to be warranted, particularly as the true westerner has always something to sell and has even been known to lie about it, but a closer

and more careful study of affairs shows that, in this grim game, the mine-owners received neither the honours nor the tricks, that is, unless you are disposed to count the chicane as one. Most cases, in their futile efforts to bolster up the exchequer of the company, the barons have sacrificed their private fortunes, so that their titles may, with entire propriety be spelled barrens. It was one of these men who feelingly remarked: "When a man's affairs in this province go rocky, you may safely reckon on coal being the rock."

But now that the seven lean years of coal are over and the fat ones are well begun, now that coal as a revenue producer is only second to Mother Wheat, we can with calmer and more unbiassed judgment consider the causes which have hitherto been responsible for its "outrageous fortune."

Perhaps the commonest cause of failure has been the lack of adequate capital. The President's chair in a coal company is no place for empty pockets. To successfully operate his mine he requires money at any price. The initial outlay is large, the carrying expenses heavy, the unexpected demands many. Hitherto, this capital has not been readily forthcoming. Investors have preferred to buy town lots rather than industrial stocks. In older and more settled communities the opposite condition prevails. On the other hand, coal on the cars is cash. The mine operator takes his bill-of-lading to the bank and draws up to two-thirds of its face value. This enables him to meet his fortnightly pay-bill and general mining expenses, but, for two or three years, until sufficient rooms have been made in the workings of the mine, he cannot expect it to do more.

In the meanwhile, there is development work to be done and development work is expensive. The entries or hallways off which the rooms open are costly to drive and they must be beamed with great timbers held in place by tree trunks. Initial surveys have to be made, and expert superintendence paid for. It is for such work the President requires ready money and free money. He cannot possibly make his working expenses to cover those of development in that the same

managing staff is required to handle a small output as a large one. The same is applicable to the engines and hoisting machinery.

The second cause which has hitherto hindered successful operations has been lack of railway facilities and lack of a steady market. Emerson has defined commerce as taking things from where they are plentiful to where they are needed. Coal, we have shown, is plentiful; and that it is needed in the Canadian North-West we need hardly remark, but that it could not be carried needs explanation. For several years our railways were lamentably short of equipment, so that the mines had frequently to close down for days, or even weeks, their bunkers being entirely inadequate for storage purposes. This meant a severe loss to the mines in that their men and machinery stood idle and that lucrative contracts had to be cancelled.

Probably no industry has suffered so keenly from car shortage as that of coal-mining. The only people who have received windfalls from this regrettable state of affairs were the dishonest yard-masters who, unknown to the railway officials, did a secret but withal brisk business with the rival coal companies that bid for cars. It took a goodly slice off the profits of each car of coal to grease the large palm of the yard-master. And who in this pushful, practical age has ever heard of a car spotter in the railway yards buying a ton of coal? The plethora of his coal-bin is more to the credit of his wits than his morals. My mind is fully established in this thing; as a grafter he is the perfected article.

It may, however, be said in excuse for the car shortage, that the demand for coal cars synchronized with that of wheat, the rush for both being in the autumn and early winter. At first, the pioneer coal dealers in the villages and towns throughout the west, had neither the buildings wherein to store fuel nor the money to permit of their purchasing it, so that orders were seldom given until cold weather had actually set in.

While this condition of affairs still leaves something to be desired, the dealers have had several salutary lessons and are, as a generality, becoming much more forehanded. The population of the west has also

increased so vastly during these latter years, that the demand on the dealers, and accordingly on the mines, has gradually become steadier till, at last, the industry rests upon the well-settled foundation of a regular demand, a regular supply, and a dependable railway service, in other words, it fulfils the three conditions laid down in Emerson's definition of commerce.

A third difficulty which confronted mine operators, was the securing of experienced miners. The supply was distinctly inadequate, so that green hands had to be engaged—homesteaders who wanted to earn money during the winter, newly-arrived immigrants who took the first job which came to hand; and farm labourers who came west to take off the harvest and decided to stay in the country.

These men, while they came under the union scale of wages, were unable to do little else for the first winter than spoil their shots of dynamite, cave in the roofs, and blow out the timbers. The mine operator, however, rarely became disheartened so long as the green man didn't blow off his own head for, in this case, the operator would be called upon by the courts to pay staggering damages to the miner's heirs under the compulsion of an extraordinary statute known as the Labourer's Compensation Act.

But now, in these days of grace, owing to the investment of British and foreign capital, the unskilled man has been superseded by electric drillers and cutters—in a word, modern methods are being used in our mines with the result that we have fewer accidents and losses.

This application of machinery to the industry has also brought about a maximum of output with a minimum of expenditure. The development work can be done with more speed and less expense, so that the old disabilities under which western operators had to labour will soon be cancelled out of memory.

While the application of machinery to mining must indubitably minimize the probability of strikes, the operators must be prepared to reckon with these until the end of time, in that throwing down their tools appears to be the chief occupation of miners. It is hard to account

for this irresponsible vagary unless it be that they receive twice as much pay as other workmen. Or it may be that they make a fetish of the union, in which respect they do resemble certain stupid people in the southern seas who have a worm to their god and are wont to sacrifice oxen to it.

Now, miners on strike are persons of no very marked refinement, neither are they given to logic. What Tennyson says of the Light Brigade is finely applicable here—"Theirs not to reason why."

When you meet real strikers nothing counts. You may do everything which instinct, invention or despair can suggest, except descending to vulgar invective, yet without the slightest tangible result. No matter how soothingly their employer may speak to them, they are suspicious of him or her. The intervention must always come from a third party. These men are the latter-day exponents of the old rule laid down by Dean Swift for the better direction of servants: "Quarrel with each other as much as you please, only always bear in mind that you have a common enemy which is your Master and Lady."

To find yourself facing a square of irate strikers is to feel yourself very thin, very colourless, and amazingly inexperienced. It is to wonder at the rudeness of their speech, the largeness of their mouths, and to speculate in a Christianly way as to just what screw is loose in their mental make-up. I know this to be the way of it, for once we had a strike in a mine which I, with a strutting but misguided assurance, imagined to be the property of our family. Owing to a former superintendent having entered into an agreement with the union, I learned we were holding the mine co-operatively, and that I could not dismiss the men either individually or collectively.

The trouble happened in this wise: the president being absent for several months, it fell to me, as vice-president, to hold the reins. By reason of the facts that the seam of coal was pinching thin; that the miners were receiving one-third more than any others in the locality, and that we were producing on a falling market, we found we were losing nearly one hundred dollars a day. The superintendent invited the miners to discuss the matter without prejudice. They did not disallow

the correctness of his contention but refused to consider a reduction of their wages. They were content to stand by their side of the agreement and would see to it that the company did the same.

And here I showed a lack of discretion in allowing this matter to be discussed, for, while failing to deduce that it was highly preposterous to kill the goose who laid the golden egg, they still had the penetration to see that in closing down the mine because of lack of orders, my primary object was to nullify the agreement. Nothing could express their unmeasured contempt of the vice-president, and they left me under no misapprehension as to their opinion of me. They accused me of playing them, and being guilty of the offence, I was naturally offended at the accusation. Still, I declined to be led into further discussion, or to recriminate in kind, so that ultimately I came to feel strong as one does who is intentionally weak before her enemy. There was nothing for it. The miners had to walk out, all except the engineers who pumped the water from the sump. Now, the night engineer had a face so wicked that he might all his life have been stoking furnaces in the underworld, and he it was who permitted the men to enter the shaft and put a stick in the valve of the pulsometer so that the mine became flooded and several entries caved in.

I was quite as angry as my temperament allowed, and it would have given me much satisfaction to have killed them, for, after all, this is a most effective method of getting rid of your enemies. It was, nevertheless, no small satisfaction when the superintendent, a tight-built muscular Englishman, gave the engineer a touch or two that reminded the onlooker of a piston-rod in action. If might and right are not the same thing, they ought to be. Two weeks later, the works were re-opened with other workmen on a new wage scale. On arriving at the mine the following day, I found our former employees were picketing it. They had a crow to pluck with me, I could see that. The very air was portentous. Those workmen were like the horses of Phoebus Apollo in that their breasts were full of fire and they breathed it forth from their nostrils and mouths. But while the men were abusive and loud-voiced, they were never insulting, for even Satan finds it hard to forge a weapon against a smile and an unwavering courtesy. And, after all,

what can strikers do with a vice-president who is a woman? It seemed like taking an unfair advantage of them. It was only when we met the miner's wives that I learned my exceeding limitations; that the power fell out of my elbow and the stiffening out of my collar-bone.

When I say "we" I mean William and myself. Now, William was my driver, and he spent fourteen years in the British cavalry. He had served in Egypt and South Africa; he had fought his way through a screaming death at Omdurman and yes, I will say it—William was "a nob" and handsome as a circus horse. His deference as he lifted me down off the high seat, his manifest concern for my comfort, and his superb arrogance as he bade the women "Give over there!" were too much, for even these raging furies to reckon with. His coolness under a withering fire of invective restored me to normal and enabled me to stand pat.

To shorten the story, we had to engage three successive gangs before we won out. By that time the strikers had become divided, some having accepted work in other mines, while the remainder became discouraged and gradually gave up the picket.

I have dwelt at some length on this matter of strikes because, as yet, no actual operator has expressed his view point or his feeling under the ordeal, whereas the strikers have made the street corners vibrant concerning the villainies of their employers whom they designate as Capital. In dismissing this phase of mining, I would say a strike is to be avoided at almost any cost, for, apart from its factor as a somewhat strenuous builder of character, it is a victory which costs the operator too dearly both in the expenditure of nerves and of money.

... Before being led into the discussion of finances and strikes, I had started to tell you about an Albertan mine and its workings. The theme is worth picking up again. Before you go down, it is well to have a look around the machinery-room where the engines pump up the water and pump down the air. You will also be interested in the great spool or drum which unwinds the long steel cables by which the cage is lowered or hoisted in the shaft. One man stands beside it and controls it with a lever. The man behind the lever needs to be equally as steady

and effective a worker as the man behind the gun, for it is by this cage the men enter and leave the mine, although they may, if so disposed, ascend or descend by the escapement or ladder-shaft beside it.

It is the strict duty of the foreman to examine this drum, these cables, and the cage every day, and to record his findings in a book which he is required to keep in compliance with the laws regulating coal-mines. This man must also carefully test for gas. The maintenance of the air-circuit is a matter of much concernment to the operators, for on it depends not only the health and security of the men but the safety of the mine itself. Carbon monoxide, which is white damp, is more dreaded by the miners than any other gas because it is difficult to detect, having no odour, taste or colour.

The Bureau of Mines in the United States have recently discovered that canary birds are extremely susceptible to it and, after being exposed for three minutes to air containing one-sixth of the one per cent, of the gas, show marked distress. In eight minutes, they fall off their perches. As a result, many American miners are now using canaries to watch out for gas while they are at work.

Black damp, or carbon dioxide, may be detected by its peculiar odour. It is heavier than air and tends to suffocate fire. After an explosion has taken place these two gases become mixed and form what is known as after damp, a mixture which surely destroys all life remaining in the mine.

From familiarity with danger, miners become disdainful of it and careless to a degree that is well-nigh incredible. They will hold dynamite caps in their mouths for convenience, a risk which pales into nothingness the ancient simile of the weaned child who plays on the den of the cockatrice. He is a poor man of low-funk spirit who does not believe himself quick enough to cross a cage after the signal to ascend has been given. To run this venture is, to them, a matter of no moment. I have seen more than one miner caught and crushed through a slight miscalculation in this respect, but these accidents are so quickly forgotten that they do not act as deterrents to any noticeable extent. In truth, there seems little reason to doubt that most of the

sudden catastrophes which result in the loss of many valuable lives, are the result of some insane risk taken by one man. If these risks were not among those things which the Deity is said to "wink at," all miners would have been killed long ago.

If you feel inclined, you might stop awhile and look at the skeleton-like tibble of the mine, by which I mean the wooden framework above it; at the automatic self-dumping skips and at the rocking screens which sort the coal into the kinds known as lump, egg, and nut; but the tempestuous torrent of coal from the hopper bottoms of the cars would drown our talk and assault our eardrums, so, on the whole, it is just as well to take these things for granted.

One's first descent into a mine is an experience rather than a pleasure. To leave the sharp intensity of the sunlight and to be suddenly dropped into a horrible pit, is to feel oneself rolled into a tight little ball, with every nerve as hard as a nail. You hope, you pray, that the long, lithe cables which hold the cage are stronger than they look. You wonder if you will come out feet foremost in Australia, and if it will hurt very much. After a second or third experience, the sensation is one of swift adventuring, but few people care to inure themselves to this frame of spirit. Arrived at the shaft bottom, you are made aware with the aid of your cap lamp, of huge square timbers around you and of a "sump" or well, underneath. It is into this sump that all the entries of the mine are drained.

Without realizing it, you will have lowered your voice, for the darkness and stillness oppress you as though you were bearing a weight on your shoulders. The air is lifeless and leaden. This is assuredly The City of Dreadful Night. You feel as if you were the last survivor in a dead world. But presently, a strong hand will take yours in his and lead you through the Stygian darkness till your eyes become habituated to the gloom, when you will become aware of two tracks stretching away in the channel which has been hollowed out of the coal. Then you will be warned to step aside and keep close to the wall while a stocky-car holding probably three tons is, with a vast grinding of wheels, whirled by you to the cage, there to be hoisted to the tibble.

Your guide will explain that you are in the main entry or tunnel of the mine, and that there are other entries at right angles. These with the rooms which open off them, are surveyed by engineers with great exactness and according to certain regulations laid down in the mining statutes.

Here and there in the blackness, thin tongues of flame move about like fireflies. These are the lamps in the miners' caps. You have also a fire-fly in your bonnet, but, of course, it is only visible to the onlookers. These lamps are like little coffee-pots and are filled either with carbide or seal oil. In the more modern mines which are lighted by electricity, lamps are not required so much, although no man ventures into the mine without one. Faith is not nearly so estimable a virtue as sight, no matter what the theologians may say. It was a miner poet (you must not spell it a minor poet) who wrote the lines—

"God, if you had but the moon  
Stuck in your cap for a lamp,  
Even you'd tire of it soon  
Down in the dark and the damp.

Nothing but blackness above  
And nothing moves but the cars—  
God, in return for our love,  
Fling us a handful of stars."

These lamps are the footlights the miners hold up to Old King Coal as they pierce his sides with their electric drills, and wrench open his wounds with their ripping charges of dynamite. They call this shooting the coal, so it is just as well to keep your peculiar fantasies to yourself.

In a coal-mine one loses his sense of direction, for there is no heaven above, no earth beneath—nothing but silence and black impenetrableness.

And yet, when you are alone in a mine, you may hear a sound like the sighing of great trees. This is probably the utterance of your own blood to which you are giving audience as when you put your ear to a conch-shell; or it may be the surging sigh of the enormous primitive

ferns, sigillarias and lepidodendrons who lay down in these strata as though for an eternal rest. In the counting-house of the years, vast cycles have come and gone till, now in these impertinent days of dynamite and electricity, uncouth, ungentle men have broken their rest forever. The complaint of the trees is not without judgment. The thing seems ill-done and almost, of myself, I can hear their tragical murmurings.

The temperature in the coal-mine does not vary with the seasons, and the men believe it healthier to work in this underworld than to be subject to the changes of climate above. They have also told me that there is no echo in a coal stratum. I do not know if this be true, but, of a surety, one's voice does not carry far in the dead air, and even the shots of dynamite seem to be muffled and indistinct. Nevertheless, it is my opinion—an irrational one, no doubt—that men who dig in mines should have music rather than men who eat in cafés. We need to recast our ideas about these things.

It makes no difference how you have quarrelled with these miners in a strike; it makes no difference that once you felt like murdering them in bulk, it is impossible to follow them day after day through the working of a coal-mine without seeing something heroic in their crude bent figures. You may not be able to understand the language they speak, for many of them are foreign born, but in time you come to talk to them through the smile, the touch on the arm, or the clap of the hands, which signals are, after all, the universal language of the world. Most of these men are kindly disposed and, when left free from the machinations of the lawyer, are capable of self-sacrifice for their employer, and even of affection. In every gang of men, whether in railway construction, lumber camp, or coal-mine, there is always an unamiable workman of ferocious egoism who is known as the camp lawyer. The legal fraternity will probably resent this misuse of their name, and properly so, for this fellow is froward in manner and has the same loving heart as a tiger. He it is who stirs up all the internal strifes and keeps them at boiling point. It is an art in which he greatly excels. In olden days, they called a man of his ilk a gallows knave, and the epithet was selected with care. Foremen are, nowadays, beginning to

pay less attention to the communion of saints in their camps and vastly more to the communion of sinners. It is a foreman's particular business to spot the lawyers early in the game and to deal with them as the occasion warrants.

There are many things to be observed down in these black entrails of the earth, but, before we leave, we will look at the stables. They are lighted by electricity. It is the work of the horses to haul the cars to the main entry where they are switched on to the electric cable. It is commonly believed that horses who live in mines become blind. This is not true. What they lose is their sense of colour, for in the dark all things are hueless. These horses are fat-fleshed and healthy, and are so tame they can almost be mesmerized into talking to you. They seem highly interested in the story I tell them of how once the Frenchmen put twelve thousand dead men and their horses down three coal-pits at Jemappes, and things like that. They appreciate carrots, sugar-lumps and apples, which have been steadily purloined from the cook's pantry at the bunk-house, in a way that is positively human. It would be unkind to enter the mine without carrying a treat for the horses, but now, having done so, let me bid all of you on the day-shift a very good fortune, and a safe return to God's blessed sunshine.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE PLAYGROUNDS OF THE WEST

Come, my love, and let us wander  
Cross the hills and over yonder.—CY WARMAN.

Banff, in the Rocky Mountains, has been so often called the playgrounds of the West, that the words have become trite and fail to carry their true significance. This fact is inevitably borne in on the Canadian who visits the place, and he wonders to himself why he has failed to understand it before.

Assuredly this is my experience as I ride around Tunnel Mountain this beautiful August day. The road is seven miles long, and from its winding ascent, one may look across the hills and down the wide valley where the green waters of the Bow River foam into white over the rocks. This is the full-robed, full-voiced choir of the mountain temple, but I do not know what it sings.

The Valley of the Bow River with its amphitheatre of hills is the wonder picture of the Rockies, combining, as it does, all that is most beautiful in art and nature. [Transcriber's note: because of the oddness of the grammar of this sentence, it may be that one or more words are missing.]

Across it, on Tunnel Mountain, is the splendid hostelry of the Canadian Pacific Railway; warm sulphur springs that bubble up out of the earth, and a cave of waters which is an extinct geyser, but might be the matrix of the hills themselves.

Geologists say that the eastern ranges of the Rocky Mountains are of the Eocene Age, and that the western ridges are Pliocene, and eons younger. But these revelations of science are almost as overwhelming as our ignorance. They tell of the immensity of time but do not sound it. It is not possible to level them to our mental capacity.

A wealthy Sheik who once lived in the Land of Uz told us how God challenged him to answer certain questions about the mountains.

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?"

"Who hath stretched the line upon it?"

"Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of the waters?"

But Job could not answer so much as one question, and he said, "Behold I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth."

This Job, it would appear, was no ordinary sort of man, and one who was very wise.

And ever since, mankind has puzzled itself with these riddles, even as you and I are puzzled. Sometimes we do not so much as believe in the great Lord, who is thought to have made this world, and we say, "Aha!" and other scornful words that are wicked exceedingly. But, up in the hills, we comprehend God without so much as an effort. He is natural here. These scenes of sublimity break in on our life's dead level and show us depth within ourselves unsounded before. Impulses which have been informulate, and aspirations which the years have strangled are brought to life and sentience. "Blessed be the hills," say I, and you must reply, "Amen and Amen."

This road twists upward easily, but, in one place, they have made it into stone stairways, with each tread many feet wide so that the horses can find firm footing. This stairway looks to be a hundred feet in height. All the horses must go one way round the mountain, and not turn backwards, for there is no room to pass on the trail. Every little while, you stop to look at the savage rock forms which surround you, or at their colours. It was no stinting brush that laid them on. Opal and wine-red, purple and ochre, splash the rocks with living hues of wonderful beauty. It is a pity we have not more lavish words for these transfiguration scenes of Nature. It is foolish to try and explain them

with our worn-out ones. Every traveller realizes this. For my part, in the mountains, I always feel like that Eton boy of fourteen, who was at the Battle of Waterloo. His first letter home was to this effect: "Dear Mamma: Cousin Tom and I are all right. I never saw anything like it in my life."

There are few birds hereabout. I have only seen a robin and a hawk. The hawk hovered above as if undecided what to do and then fell as if he had been dropped from a plummet. This bird has an instinct for the straight line that might shame even a Dominion land surveyor. This and the fact that the hawk has been known to eat mosquitoes, are his only claims to our attention or respect. All the world knows him for a predaceous bird, and that his heart is a fierce furnace.

A nice-seeming man who is working on the road tells me there are many kinds of animals in the Banff Park, but that they are all preserved. In the corral there are eighty buffaloes. The corral consists of two thousand acres. The white-tailed deer are so tame they come up to the village. There are wolverines, too, and these animals are of so covetous a nature they will steal even a frying pan. The Indians call them *carcajous*, which means "the gluttons."

This man says he was formerly a fur-pup, by which expression he means a trapper. He left the trap-line because his partner was always objecting to bacon for dinner. Huh! Huh! to hear him complain, one might almost think the Lord grew bacon for consumption at breakfast only.

Riding up the hill through the green trees, I feel as if I were in the opening paragraph of a story, and am half expecting at each bend of the road to meet a knight in armour with a retinue of servants. As he fails to appear I talk to Swallow, my mare, and she twitches her ears as though she understands. Indeed, there is little doubt but that she does.

"Let us stay awhile here," say I, "and look at this gay young squirrel. He is enlarging his burrow as if he intended finishing it in five minutes. He is no hireling squirrel. What say you, Swallow?"

If a mare can laugh, this one does, but maybe it is only her way of coughing.

"And I have an idea, Swallow, that she is inside with four or five baby squirrels, who think the world is lined with fur and that life consists in drawing nutriment from a warm breast. This must be the way of it."

"Step along, my pretty one, and may it happen we shall find the Knight round the next turn. Do you notice how the green trees grow like a mane on the hills?"

Swallow thinks differently. It is her opinion that the dark needle-like pines stand erect in the same way as the fur on a grizzly's back. I know this, else why does she shy violently as we make the turn?

"You are wrong, my pretty one," say I. "These pine-trees are very religious and much too dignified to attack you and me. Besides, the needles of the pines drive devils away, and if you carry a sprig of spruce with you in the woods, no ill-luck will ever come to you. Théophile Trembly, who is a woodsman and a ranger, told me this.

"Do not linger, Sweet-o'-my-Heart; the world is young and you and I may ride forever.

"These are juniper-bushes, any one can see. Maybe if I were to lie under one, like the Tishbite did, an angel might touch me. And maybe I should also find 'a cake baken with coals', and a cruse of water. I would tell you, Swallow, how it tasted in my mouth, for the Tishbite forgot this thing. And I would mention where the angel got the coals. They must have been the 'coals of juniper' of which King David wrote, for these are, to this very day, the best charcoals in all the world. Where the divine visitant found the match to kindle the coals...

"Ah, well! I'll ask the Padre about this, but like as not he'll say, "An irrevelant and irreverent question, M'Dear!" although it is neither one nor the other, for it argues well for humanity that an angel, who is generally portrayed as a rather offish being, should know where to find

a match and how to use it. A lot could be said on this very point. It pleases me not a little that an angel from the skies built a fire out of doors and cooked cakes on it. This surely means that when the angels take recreation they play at being men and that they have a kindly feeling for us. It might be that there are more of them around about than we have any idea, neighbourly-like angel of sap and sinew, who occasionally bear a hand in our work and who loaf around of evenings by the campfire. If an angel can cook on an out-door fire, he must know how to hang a blanket to the windward side, and an angel who knows this is no nidnoddy fellow, I can tell you.

"If you were listening more attentively, Swallow, and if I were not afraid of the Padre finding out, I would push this idea further and say that, when the angel was through with his meal, he would in all likelihood be humanely tired and would fall asleep on a heaped up mattress of fir needles and dried juniper leaves. These, as is their wont, would whisper immemorial secrets to him, so that he might come in time to be a little more tolerant of our failings and to wonder if it were altogether fair that the soul of a man should be damned for his body's needs. He might even think the same about a woman's soul. It cannot fail to vastly affect an angel's opinions when, instead of looking down from the sky, he lies on a bed of leaves and looks up at it. The whole colour and texture of his ideas must be altered. I believe he would come to feel that religious truths should vary to suit the needs of humanity, as those needs change, and that religion should serve men rather than men religion.

"A young god-man said something about this one day in a wheatfield, but he was reprov'd by his wincing hearers whose descendants are with us to this very day."

This conversation has become too philosophical for Swallow, whose ears are sweetly holden and who shows her wish to change my thought by single footing whenever we come to a level stretch. Doubtless, she hopes to draw my attention to her easy and right pleasant gait. If I owned her we might become great cronies.

On the top of the mountain to which we have come, the leaves on the deciduous trees seem smaller and about the size of rabbits' ears. On my way hither, I passed bluebells, ferns, heather, roses, wild cotton, and painter's brush, the plant which combines colour with heat. From several thousand feet below comes up to me the bellow of the train's engine, that makes long hollow echoes among the peaks. A peculiarity of the north is that the sounds seem only to emphasize the silence and loneliness. This engine makes an ill-noise, but without the railway, these mountains must have remained unseen to all except a hard-muscled and adventurous few. For this reason, we must feel something of the gratitude of the Chief of the Blackfeet Indians, who, in 1885, because of the friendly spirit of his tribe towards the builders, was given a pass ticket over the Canadian Pacific Railway by the President thereof. The ticket was given him in a carved frame. The letter in which he acknowledged the courtesy read like this: "I salute you, O Chief, O great One! I am pleased with railway key opening road free to me. The chains and rich covering of your name writing; its wonderful power to open the road show the greatness of your chieftainship. I have done.

his  
"Crow X Foot,"  
mark.

Standing on this hill and looking off into the sky, I and my horse seem poised in mid air. It wouldn't be so hard to fly. Hitherto, I have been following pleasure as something to be caught, and, of a sudden, I have ridden into it. Don't you know me? I am Columbine pirouetting on the white horse of the North.

Don't you know this is summer time on the hills where Nature has wealth to spill like a mad-woman and spills it? On this mountain-top, there is a wandering wind soft as a child's caress. I must make the best of it and of the fierce radiance of the sunshine, for, sooner than we bargain for, the Lord in his derision may send a cutting blizzard and it will be cold, so cold.

As I ride homeward down the trail, I lift up my voice and hallo to the sun for joy. You may call this mountain madness if you care to. Don't you know that it matters not a finger's fillip what any one says about a climber's mood or manner once she has reached the heights? Barbed arrows fall off in this rarefied air, and this, I take it, is the great reward of the climb.

There are other compensations on the heights. You may shut your eyes and have a vision of the land that lies beneath you ... let us say a vision of Mother Canada and her nine daughters, and of the part they are destined to play in history. You may open your eyes again to ponder how they will grapple with the problems of race assimilation; of arbitration and war; of morals and politics; and of labour and capital. You will conclude that nothing unfair can exist long in this land of wide spaces, and that Canada is sure to think and act greatly. And right here is a good place to repeat her prayer which it rests with each of us to answer—

"Bring me men to match my mountains;  
Bring me men to match my plains;  
Men with empires in their purpose  
And new eras in their brains."

When you are come down off the mountains there are other things to be seen at Banff, like the golf-links, the aviary, and the museums, but you will enjoy the water pastimes best, that is, if you are a Canadian or an American. The European will be shocked to see the sexes bathing together at this famous spa, for in Europe, it is their wish to bathe privately even in the ocean.

The outdoor swimming pool is a sulphur water, and comes up from the hot underworld. The pool is set in a splendid quadrangular court of grey stone, open to the sky, but shielded to windward with glass. Red-lipped flowers drip over its pillars, adding vastly to the charm of the scene. The pool is flanked on the hotel side by retiring-rooms which are as luxurious and sleep inviting as those of ancient Rome or Pompeii. Overhead, the guests may look down into the green waters

and watch the bathers spring from the diving-boards or cavort about like young dolphins, tritons, or lightsome naiads. No matter how phlegmatic you may be, you will wish to tarry here indefinitely and to rest from your labours, for a voluptuous languor slides into your veins till even the mountains round about seem illusory and unreal. Here it is "Paradise enow." With this alchemy of water and sun and these electric currents of earth and sky, you could hardly expect aught but healing and enchantment.

But the attendants will not let you stay too long in the water, for it is not wise to accumulate any more sulphur on your person than is necessary to strike a light, for, owing to our proximity to the magnetic pole, most of us are already dynamos.

At the fall of day, a storm rises in the hills. These seem to come close together and whisper, and the sound is like the whirr of swords.

Many people who are wise talk about storm spirits, so there must be such ... poor distracted beings who wring their hands and moan in black discord. It may be they are the souls of murdered folk, and those who have been executed, and they cry curses on all who live and love and laugh. You must be afraid of them if you are like me. My windows look down on the Valley of the Bow and out upon a riot of hills. There is nothing more beautiful in the girth of the Seven Seas, but, to-night, this scene is awesome and full of strangeness. The black clouds are laced with streaks of lightning, or it may be that the spirits thrust out red tongues in derision.

Lord, how it blows! and I am afraid of this thunder and the shouting of the storm. The wind grapples with the trees as though they were living creatures and it makes no difference that they crouch and cry for mercy. It is Bendan, the Pine Wrestler, who is out there, and when angry he can pluck up a young tree with his little finger or break it with a push of his shoulder. But he does not do this often; he only wrestles to make them strong.

It is better for a woman to go down to the great stone dining-hall with its yellow floor, where there is music, and dancing, and love-

making. It is a pretty play even to the onlooker. Or in the big central rotunda, which is the heart of this hostelry in the hills, she will find "there is always fine weather," and "the good fellows" are from all over the world and have strange stories to tell Canadian folk who stay in the North. In the cavernous fireplace, spruce logs burn redly, and by their light you may decipher the words on the mantelpiece: "The world is my school; travel our teacher; Nature our book, and God our friend." Overhead, in the fourth gallery, a deep-voiced singer is taking us into captivity. Listen, then, for it is only in music that critics are taken captive: literature has no such thralldom. It is about a perfect day that the singer sings, and this is what she says—

"And this is the end of a perfect day,  
Near the end of a journey too;  
But it leaves a thought that is big and strong,  
With a wish that is kind and true.  
For Memory has painted this perfect day  
With colours that never fade,  
And we find at the end of a perfect day  
The soul of a friend we've made."

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE OVERLAND TRAIL OF '98

Out of the North there rang a cry of Gold!—TOM McINNES.

Only this spring, a widow near Edmonton sold her quarter-section to a real-estate syndicate for eighty thousand dollars. She was one of the women who "stayed at home with the stuff" while her husband fared forth in search of gold at the time of the Klondike stampede in 1897-8. He died on the trail, and ever since the woman has ploughed the lone furrow both literally and metaphorically.

The handsome reward of her industry and pertinacity calls to mind that fable of Æsop's where the young men found that the hidden treasure their father had described to them was in the yield the soil had given after they had industriously digged it over.

We were talking about this the other night, and the humour and tragedies of the gold stampede, over the last bottle of champagne—positively the last—that remained of the most prolonged and celebrated spree that ever took place in the North. The vintage was a *Koch Fils* of 1892 and, therefore (to save your mental arithmetic), I may add, twenty-one years old. It was brought in by the Helpman Expedition, familiarly known to the local wiseacres of the day as "The Helpless Proposition."

Did it taste well?

I do not know.

I like lemonade with maraschino cherries better than champagne, but the party were agreed that it was excellent drinking. One said it had a pulse; another, that European grapes sucked in more sun than those grown in America; "The stuff that makes the world go round,"

remarked a third. Assuredly it looks well, thought I, and the bubbles caper like they were alive.

Under the balm and stimulus of the champagne, the men (all of them old-timers) were not indisposed to talk concerning the party who brought it into the country and of the things that befell them. Also, they tell about the other parties who attempted to reach the gold-diggings by the overland route from Edmonton. These were heart-breaking tales, with, here and there, a golden thread of humour showing up in the black fabric of despoliation and defeat.

The thirty members of the Helpman Party came from Great Britain. They were unfortunate from the start. They arrived at Edmonton on Christmas Eve, one of them, Captain Alleyn, being ill with pneumonia, from which disease he died a couple of days later. He was the artist of the party, and correspondent of Reuter's News Agency.

His was the first military funeral held in the North, so that it was an event around which much interest centred.

The expedition was under the command of Colonel Helpman and Lord Avonmore of Gortmerron House, County Tyrone, known to the local folk by the unkind name of "Lord 'Ave-one-more." He died last year in Ireland. "A truly remarkable man, my dear," said an old lady of our lemonade group, "and always he talked of smashing niggers."

All provisions and supplies for the gold crusade were brought from England, except the horses, and the duty thereon amounted to several thousand dollars. In truth, they were provisioned under War Office approval, for, said they, "We are English gentlemen and must travel as English gentlemen." Baled hay and hay-choppers, baths, beds, tents, sanitary conveniences, and other impedimenta were imported by the train-load.

These Canadian men will have it, moreover, that the Britishers brought in snowshoes for their horses, which gear they were wont to designate as "bloomin' tennis racquets." I might have believed this extraordinary statement had I not guessed that my narrator gleaned his

idea from the *Voyages and Explorations of Samuel de Champlain*, for these imperturbable northmen never so much as blink an eye when adding the inevitable pinch of spice to a story.

It is quite true though that the party did bring enormous supplies of "arrested" foods, egg powders, Westphalian hams, almost unlimited quantities of tinned ptarmigan, woodcock, plum-pudding, and other toothsome delicacies well calculated to pique the most jaded and club-debauched palate. Unfortunately, on being opened, nearly all these delicate edibles were found to be spoiled, so that the travellers were forced to exist on such crude diet as pig's face, rice, and beans.

But the liquors still remained. Allah be praised!—barrels and cases of it; yes! even kegs and demi-johns—brandy, burgundy, benedictine, claret, champagne, and canary—these and other brands which I forget, for my interest was attracted from the list to the wistful faces of these historians who think with love and longing on those rare old, fair old golden days that are gone beyond recall.

On their arrival at Edmonton, the commanders of the expedition were informed that a prohibition law was in force in the Yukon and that, in consequence, no spirituous liquors could be carried across its borders. This being the case, there was nothing for it but to drink the liquors in Edmonton. They had no licence to sell it, and to pour it upon the unappreciative prairie would be manifestly absurd—even wicked. This is why I was correct in saying that our vintage of the night was the last bottle of the most prolonged and celebrated spree that ever took place in the North. In truth, it was an Homeric carousal.

The spree lasted for six weeks, and fights with their legal sequences were frequent. To use the most generally approved northern expression of the day, "They just fit and fit," so that more than once the good Archdeacon of Alberta had to pour oil and balm into the broken bones and brittle nerves of the combatants. Indeed, he went so far as to have them nursed in his own home. He is a hale-hearted, fine-fibred gentleman, our Archdeacon.

It is hardly fair, however, to lay the entire spree to the credit of the stampeders. The population of Edmonton, in the late nineties, consisted of fifteen hundred people, and all the male portion of it used their utmost endeavours to prevent any good liquor going to waste. The gentry of the community were invited to partake, but the hewers of wood and drawers of water who had been engaged to exercise the pack-horses by walking them up and down, these, and the disorderly arrant idlers who hung on the borders of the camp, helped themselves. Their motto was the same as Lord Nelson's—"Touch and take." Indeed, the speedy manner in which they relieved the expedition of any encumbering wealth was truly most astonishing. They have a theory in the North that everything belongs by right to the man who has the greatest need. Now, the need of the North is a very big pocket and there are holes in it.

Ultimately, the party got away. They took the Swan Hill route that leads to the Old Assiniboine Crossing, but spring had already set in so that the trails were deep with water, and the muskegs were bottomless pits.

The leader of the expedition (by which they meant the foreman as distinct from the director) was Mr. Matthew Evanston O'Brien, an Irish solicitor and erstwhile Chief of Police in Australia. It is also said he was an English secret-service man. He died in April of this year at Wetaskawin, Alberta, where he was practising law.

The breeds and other packers who accompanied the party became insolent and purposely lost their loads. One man smashed the camp stove and dropped it into a river; others lost tents; while some found hay and oats as hard to hold as quicksilver. Being badly sheltered and underfed, nearly all of their hundred horses died, so that long afterwards teamsters coming to the south picked up wagon loads of harness besides other useful gear. In a word, like the man who tried all the rheumatism cures, the members of the Helpman Expedition were "done good."

Some of the party got as far as Fort Simpson on the Mackenzie River, but in the end every man, greatly chastened in spirit, turned

back to Edmonton, where some of them were stranded for several months before money came to take them on to England.

Do not laugh at their misfortune. It is not seemly so to do, for, in all this wildly-warring world, there are few more bitter cups than the failure of a big financial coup in the which you have invested your own (and alas!) other people's money.

Besides, few of the scores of parties who started fared any better, while many faced worse. Some of them, like the Moody Expedition, returned because they could not make over two or three miles a day, they having to fell the impeding timber. At this rate of travel, the journey would have occupied five years.

Other crusaders returned because they had no food or money, a condition that scarcely makes for progress or health.

Still others came back because they had fallen out by the way, for the trail has the satanic peculiarity of developing all that is surly, selfish, or yellow in human nature. People who are tired, ill, and hungry lift the curtain of their character and forget to let it fall, so that the result is disillusionment to all concerned. Not a few men who started in on pronouncedly amicable terms, eating from the same plate both actually and figuratively, came out brimful with umbrage, hatred and pique. Murder on the trail may be almost a natural impulse.

But all the derelicts who returned had one well-defined peculiarity (albeit a negative one), they came in quietly by the back trails—they who had gone forth full-fed and wanton as young gophers. The North had rolled out their individuality like one might roll out dough. They were "the bitten;" gaunt-eyed starvelings; tattereddemalions who might have posed for Rip Van Winkle or The Ancient Mariner. The North is a goodly country and attracts goodly men, yet, even here, one may lose both his sense and his competence.

"Did no one succeed?" I ask.

"Oh yes!" replies a jocund old gentleman who has lived here these thirty years. "One man got through by hook or crook—chiefly crook. He was a real-estate agent and insurance broker."

Further questions elicit the fact that this broker was not so much a stampeder as an absconder. He was short in his returns to the insurance company and took this means of avoiding arrest. At least, so it was rumoured. He left Edmonton in the late winter with no money, no food—nothing but a small hand-satchel containing collars and blank premium forms. All the way along he insured the trailers on the straight life, endowment, or accident policies, or for sick benefits. They were far enough on the trail to realize that there was a distinct possibility of their requiring one, if not all these premiums, so our broker found fat pickings. Besides, each trailer had begun to think lovingly and longingly of his family at home, and of what a comforting compensation a ten-thousand dollar policy might be to them in the event of his death. Indeed, it seemed almost like swindling the company to take out a policy on this journey. But what would you? Here was their properly certified agent with the requisite papers to boot. One must take what the gods send.

At Athabasca Landing, our broker man stole a boat and made his way down the river. He fed at each camp he encountered; related how he had become separated from his party, and how he was hurrying forward to rejoin them. Under the circumstances, it was only natural that his hosts should supply him with enough food for a day or two. Besides, it would never do to let him die of starvation and he carrying their good money and insurance policies in his satchel—the little black hand-satchel wherein he kept his collars.

He reached Dawson early in the rush, but we do not know how it fared with him there—whether he crushed his money from stones or bones—for it was probable he took a new name, and, needless to say, he did not return via the overland route to Edmonton.

Two others who reached the northern Eldorado were Jim Kenealey and Jack Russell. It took them two years to get in. Russell struck pay-dirt in the Cape Nome District, but Kenealey, after abandoning several

claims, came out penniless. He died recently at the Cameron House, Strathcona, of which hotel he was proprietor. Kenealey, who came from Peterboro', Ontario, in the early eighties, was a clever sleight-of-hand artist and one time had an encounter with an Indian, it being natural and entirely reasonable that the Indian should demand the fifty cents that Kenealey claimed to have taken from his ear.

"But there were others who reached the gold zone," explains a lawyer who was, in those days, a cub-reporter, type-setter, and I know not what besides. "I have forgotten their names, but you may find them in the files of *The Bulletin*."

One of these parties comprised four men, Martin McNeeley from Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, George Baalam, W. Schreeves and W. J. Graham.

Schreeves and Baalam reached Dawson safely; Graham was drowned on the way, and McNeeley, who injured his foot, was left behind by the others somewhere near the Devil's Portage.

Some months afterwards, Mr. E. T. Cole of Pelican Rapids, Minnesota, with his party, stumbled upon a small tent in which they found a terribly decomposed body. It was McNeeley's. By his side there was a knife, a compass, a rifle, twenty-five rounds of cartridges, twenty pounds of flour, some meat, matches and wood. The following excerpts are from his diary—

"December 28, 1897—My partners deserted me and tried to cripple me further by taking my grub.

"January 5, 1898—Walked eight miles on my awful foot and am crippled on an Island alone. The pain of my foot is terrible."

The files reveal another tragedy in which two men from Brantford, Ontario, were the principals—the Strathdees.

Mr. A. C. Strathdee was one of the early stampeders. He went north with sixteen pack-horses. His only companion was his son, aged

twenty-two, W. Harvey Strathdee, a member of the Dufferin Rifles. They camped one night beside the Taylor Trail that leads to Nelson. In the morning, while cooking breakfast, Harvey sighted a moose and, straightway, started in pursuit. At noon he had not returned and his father, becoming anxious, tried to follow the trail, but unsuccessfully. At night, the now frantic man lit a fire and shot off his rifle in the hope that Harvey might see or hear them. He did this for eight terrible days and eight more terrible nights, till he realized that further delay would endanger his own life. In these eight days, half of his horses died from lack of food, the man being afraid to shift camp in case Harvey might find his way back.

Further on, he met James and John Fair of Elkhorn, Manitoba, who returned with him to spend yet eight other days in unavailing search. At Dunvegan, Mr. Strathdee engaged a white man, an Indian, and a dog-train to go in and make quest till spring. Then he came back to Edmonton, where he exacted promises from the journalists to forward to him at Brantford any report that might come in from the trails regarding the lost youth.

For a long time nothing came but, one day, some Indians brought in word how on their way north nearly a year before, they fell on the fresh trail of a lost white man and had followed it up. They knew he was white for he wore boots, and that he was lost because of his uncertain, round-about course. They found his body on a mountain between two logs. His arms were outspread and his cartridge belt and rifle lay by his side. The trees around had been burned, and the Indians were of the opinion that he had set them on fire to try and attract his father's attention.

That the public of Canada and the United States had little idea of the hardships to be endured on the overland trail was evidenced by the fact that a number of women attempted to take it. Some of them wore ordinary clothes with plumes in their hats, but the more knowing ones were attired in jaeger skirts and jerseys, also they wore jaeger caps that covered the face except for the nose and mouth. In their belts they carried six-shooters.

Letters were received here asking if the writers could get through to the Klondyke on bicycles; if there were good boarding-houses on the way, and if the Indians were troublesome.

For the instruction of the stampeders, the Honourable the Minister of the Interior, then Mr. Frank Oliver, issued a special number of *The Bulletin*, which was the farthest north newspaper, mapping out the route and the distances between the points.

By the shortest and best travelled trails, the entire distance from Edmonton to the Klondyke was 2,728 miles. This route was via the Athabasca, Great Slave, Mackenzie and Peel Rivers. From thence it crossed to Summit, La Pierre House, and down the Porcupine River to its junction with the Yukon River. From this point to Dawson was the home-run.

There are said to be sixty-eight roads to heaven, but this road to Dawson is not one of them.

Each man had six pack-ponies to carry in his supplies, which consisted of 900 lb. of food and 150 lb. of clothing and hardware, making in all, 1,050 lb. The ponies cost from twenty-five to thirty dollars, and it was conservatively estimated that the supplies cost \$250.00.

The food was calculated on the basis of the Mounted Police rations and was supposed to last a year, being doled out at the following ration per man, per day: flour 1- $\frac{1}{4}$  lb., beef 1- $\frac{1}{2}$  lb., bacon 1 lb., potatoes 1 lb., apples 3 oz., beans 4 oz., coffee or tea  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz., salt  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz., butter 2 oz., sugar 3 oz.

With praiseworthy discretion, many of the Old-Timers opened up depots to supply the parties with outfits, but, on the whole, there was no over-charging or money-grabbing such as one might have expected. On the contrary, the prices that prevailed were from 25 to 75 per centum less than those of to-day. Flour was \$2.50 per hundredweight; bacon 11 cents per pound, evaporated apples 8 cents, rolled-oats 3 cents, raisins 10 cents, and black tea from 25 to 40 cents. Pack-saddle

blankets cost \$2.00 a pair, and large grey blankets \$3.25. Long arctic socks cost from 50 cents to \$1.00, sweaters from \$1.00 to \$1.50, and cardigan jackets from \$1.00 to \$2.00.

Many kinds of costumes were affected. Some men were clad in fur from head to feet; others wore khaki, or sheepskin coats; and in one party every man had a coonskin coat.

Nothing, however, caused so much excitement in the burgh as the various modes of conveyance that were planned and built by the gold-seekers.

"Texas" Smith started alone on the longish trail with all his provisions packed in three barrels. These were equipped as rollers or wheels with a platform on top for sleeping purposes. He calculated that on the rivers the barrels would act as floaters and so could be comfortably navigated.

Texas travelled nearly nine miles before the hoops came off. He was able to retrace his steps to town by the beans the barrels shed on the road. They took his photograph, and that of his conveyance, before he started but, on his return, good-naturedly refrained, for it was distinctly noticeable that Texas had the air of having eaten the canary.

Breneau Fabian, a Belgian, invented a boat which, being intended for all elements, was constructed from galvanized iron. He called it Noah's Ark. It was built in two parts with a hinge in the middle. When open, it could be used on the river, for it had a keel; or on the snow, for it had runners. If he cared to, he could close up his boat by means of the hinge—that is, it would turn over, one part on top of the other, in which shape it was a caravan with wheels attached. His yoke of oxen were to be killed at Athabasca Landing and salted down as food for the journey.

For the information of the curiously inclined, I might say that until recently, Fabian's Ark served as a float at all civic processions such as Labour Day and the Queen's Jubilee, but it has had its day and its scrap heap.

Another man, whose name I could not learn, built an ice-boat on the Saskatchewan River. He had figured out that he could reach the placer-diggings by means of sails, thus acquiring a distinct monetary advantage over the folk and fellows who had horses, in that sails would not require to be fed with hay and oats.

Be it said to the credit of the folk and fellows that they cherished no grudge in their hearts, for, the sails refusing to act, they loaned him fourteen teams wherewith to haul his ice-boat on to the bank.

Considering the length and nature of the trail, perhaps the most bird-witted scheme of reaching the Klondike was that evolved by the "I Will" Steam-Sleigh Company of Chicago. They ought to have known better.

They built a train of four cabooses or cars, the motive power of which was steam. A marine boiler and engine were imported from the United States, upon which they paid \$500.00 custom toll. Also, they imported a revolving drum equipped with teeth, similar to those used on the log-roads in the big timber-limits, and sprocket-wheels, band-chains, and other things no mortal woman could be expected to remember. All the cars were on steel-runners. The one behind the engine contained fuel; the second was the living car, while the third held supplies.

Everything was packed and loaded ready for the hour of starting before the builders had tested the machine. All Edmonton was assembled to see the sight, while scores of Indians squatted around and stared like gargoyles. The workmen, with an air of high concern, twisted a bolt here, or a belt there; oiled a hub, or did one of the hundred things a mechanic does to an engine and boiler when he would have you believe he is earning his pay.

It was a proud moment when one of the builders stepped forward and touched his hat to a blue-uniformed official—a moment, too, that was fraught with serious issues, for the blue-uniform said, "*Let her go!*" All Edmonton ceased to breathe and the Indians looked almost pale.

There was a vast creaking; a shudder as if the caverns of the deep were opened; the wheels turned—and turned—and turned, and with each turn buried the machine deeper into the earth, there to remain till the day that Kenneth Macleod bought the marine boiler and engine for his sawmill. They say he bought it for a song, but no one ever heard the song. Ah! but those were right royal days for the Old-Timers, the like of which can never be.

I nearly forgot about the three cabooses. These stampeders who did not die of scurvy, hardship, starvation, or accident, and who returned via Edmonton, used the cabooses for shelter while they wrote home for money.

It was a long time before they were free of occupants.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### A SONG OF THIS LAND

Out of the North comes tumult, say they who are poets, and clangorous challenge to battle.

True, O Poets! And out of the North come men of robust mood who will keep our nation's honour, for this is a country where courage and truth are inborn; a land which sways the souls of its citizens unto high endeavour. From this country where, of old, dwelt the bow-bearers who were eaters of strong meat, will come high-hearted men of loyal temper, for this is the world's House of Youth. This shall be its nurse of heroes.

Money-flingers and careless, are these Northmen, says another, and wasters of wealth.

True, O Sir Time Lock, but when the gods would be thrifty they give their money away. The Gods are master-spenders and have learned the wide wisdom of being foolish. Do you follow me aright?

And this is the wisdom of our Northmen who have well tamed Dame Fortune and have set their sure brand upon her.

But, if money sticks not in their purses, and if they haggle not over coins, yet are these men businessful with a purpose for large enterprise. In these latitudes, we have deep-counselled companies of traders who, while they love the sweet power of money, have ever bartered fairly, and know that 'mine' and 'thine' are different words which rhyme well in all reckonings. I have sure grounds for knowing this, and am minded to say, "Hail! and all hail!"

The North is a numbed and haggard land of and snow, say many voices. In its vast voids lives a dark spirit which lures men on and tricks them so that they come, in time, to love that which punishes them. And if by some fair hap they are led into other and softer climes,

then do they fret and fever for the wolf-lands of the Yukon or the Mackenzie, as though some secret and unforbidden magic had entered their blood forever.

I will not speak contrariwise to these men, for it is meet that I should speak fairly. The love of the North, like the fiery kiss of genius, is a sorrowful gift, and none can say whether it is greater in joy or pain. She is an exacting mistress, this white-bodied, rude-muscled North, and, of times, she breaks and hurts a man till he drags his brokenness away to die. Yet, is she beautiful and passionately human; full of vigour and drunken with life, and her house stretches from the dawn to dayfall.

And why should men complain of the stabbing cold and of the unrestricted range of the young winds? Why do they wish to regulate God's snow and rain? What could be more hateful to men than unfaltering sunshine and ever-flowering fields?

In the winter of the fortified North, animals turn white as do the birds and the very earth itself. All were pallid and colourless but for the yellow belt of the setting sun and the black-green tree shadows that fall toward the pole. The rivers cease their singing; the birds are silent, and all is stilled to the bounds of the world save only the sonorous wind which is the breath of Claeg, the Bound One, who is the earth. Here, the north-east wind is Lord Paramount, and the Crees and Chipewyans have long known that Death comes from his direction.

Listen! I made an error, to say that all is stilled, for, of occasion, there is the mewl of the lynx; the yap of the timber wolf as he gives tongue in pursuit of *ah-pe-shee moos-oos*, the jumping deer; the howling infamy of the huskies seeking their meat from God; the raucous roar of the hulking moose blind with rage of love.

Listen! I made an error to speak of an all-whiteness, for, where the Aurora pins her colours to the sky, it is like unto an angry opal. This is Beauty Absolute. Her swinging swords of flame none have measured: who shall tell the measure of this land?

But listen! It is not beyond our understanding that men should feel the urge of this Northland and its strange enticement. Some there are who speak of it as the lure of the North; the fret of spring, or the call of red gods. Surely we may understand aright if we do but watch the birds flock hither of spring-time, and how the fish fight up against the streams though it be to suffer and to die. These cannot resist the drag of the magnetic pole, any more than you and I who have souls and are feeling folk!

But it is not always frigid here, for we have springtide and the season of seven sweet suns. "Good morrow!" shouts the tired Winter in the time of melting snows. "Good morrow!" shouts back the nimble Spring as he throws a mist of green over the young aspens. "Come fly with me and touch the sun," pleads the eagle to his sweetheart. "Come with me and be my love," woos Kiya, boatman of the Athabasca; "already the young birds are in their nests and soon they will fly away. Soon will the time of mating be past."

Aye! but the summer winds are honey-mouthed.

Aye! but the skies are star-enchanted, and there are fair stories I might tell about yellow grain fields and of red lilies like blown flame, but none save those who are prairie rangers would understand aright.

Besides, there are woolly-mouthed men and chattering daws who say secretly that we of the North are boasters, and that we tell ill tales.

But though we are impeached, yet will we say that our song is tinged with no lie. We are young men, and sowers of grain, and it is pleasant to glorify the largess of our harvest.

We are boasters, they tell, and full-mouthed, but why should we keep hidden and unshared the all-golden treasures of our fields? We will not hide this thing in our hearts, but, with fair speech, will sing it in a million-voiced canticle of praise. There is no need that we sing restrainedly of our goodly dower, or in measured words, for we are no servile race of hirelings, but free men and proclaimers of this land. Because we are witnesses that the talent of our country is folded in the

fecund earth, we will speak aloud to our neighbouring Saxons of friendly mind, and to the brotherhood of the soil throughout the universe. We will speak with them concerning our gold, and vineyards, and fine flour; of our forests, and fisheries, and apple orchards, till their veins stir as with the tang of old wine. These folk have need to know that in the North prosperity groweth widely; that here the unbelievable is achieved. This is the true fairy-land where swineherds and barbers, and much labouring men are raised to riches and power. Here is a dining-hall whose friendly feast is spread for all. Here every man may come and eat of our cakes and melons, of our honey and fat things.

The North has no need of an interpreter: it has need of heralds. Then ho! for our fierce and beautiful country; our strong and fertile country.

We will send these tidings Europeward and the far-delivered message shall not fall to the ground. It is a blithe young tune we shall sing, with a resonant chorus of "Canada, O Canada."

Fitting is it that we should sing to the Isles of Britain, for from them is the birth of this breed and theirs is the royal stamp we bear upon our fighting arm. We are the wide-ruling seed of the Saxons and ever shall we answer to the rally of the race. All hands around! We will pledge the homeland of Britain!

And who will sing this song of the North? Sit you here till we talk of this thing. I pray you prompt my pen as it forgets.

They have come hither to sing it from Ottawa, which is the Place of Councils, and the sovereign city in this fair house of Canada.

Hither have they come from the tobacco plantations of Essex; the yellow cornfields of Lambton; the luscious peach groves of Kent, and the vineyards of Welland. These are lusty fellows and of fine fibre.

Here are men of consideration from the thick-leaved apple orchards of Nova Scotia and from the dairy steadings of Oxford. Have you never heard concerning the round towers of Oxford which are stacks of

grain, and of the herds of black bulls which feed fatly on her meadowlands? Then it is small knowledge you have of this Dominion and the bright fortunes of its people.

Others have joined our chorus who are from mailëd Quebec, which is the eye of Canada; from Montreal, whose traffickers are among the honourable of the earth, and from Niagara, where, with subtle cunning, men have bridled Neptune, the Lord of Waters, and have made his trident into one of fire.

These courtly and free-handed fellows have hailed from Toronto. Beautiful Toronto! The city of work and play. I like well its stately homes and its women with honey-throated voices. And, here where I write at Edmonton under the aurora, these men of the Southern Provinces have assembled with our lads of the North and West who are leather-fleshed and hard-sinewed, but withal, comely. This is Edmonton on the Saskatchewan, which the bow-bearers call by another name, meaning the great river of the plains. This is the stranger-thronged city of the North; the city that has merited a cheer. It is here our glorious Lady of Alberta has placed her throne whereunto all her sons come up that they may pay her tribute of honour.

To this place come the farmer-folk from the wheatlands of the queenly Peace, and the priests and trappers from the Athabasca, which the bow-bearers call by another name, meaning the great river of the woods. And hither come the traders and road builders from the pass between the cleft mountains where, of old, dwelt Jasper of the yellow head; these, and the horse-taming men from young Calgary. We who love games and the glory of them, stand at salute.

These are the men from Winnipeg, the Mother City of the North. Honour upon honour be to her!

Right pleasant is it to present the likely-looking lads of Regina and of the deep soiled plains of Saskatchewan. On the plains, the straight-blowing wind is scented from the grassed headlands dappled with flowers. On the plains, dwell strong, glad men in the joy of their youth.

On the plains there lives some common mother of the common weal,  
who is the ancestress of our kings to be.

These others whom I have held back until now that your attention might not falter, are the dauntless, high-adventuring men who crossed the mountains to where the land lieth soft to the sea. These are the men of the new appointed city of Prince Rupert; the men of the fortunate, fair-built city of Victoria, and those of sure-seated Vancouver. May they build strongly and well. It is seemly that the forefront of our royal House of Canada should be of far-shining splendour.

We have high delight in this Province of British Columbia; in its unshorn hills that are furrowed with rifts of roses, in its fair-watered fruitlands, and in the rice and silk ships that come reeling down its bays. This is a new-peopled land of fostered folk and, of times, men's hearts fail them lest these stranger-guests march not in step with the genius of the race. We who are your sister provinces, O Columbia by the Sea, stretch forth our hands to you and pray you as sentinels to keep our portals straitly, but, notwithstanding, that you be wise in love to all things living... And, now, to the hither side of the mountains have come these western men of erect spirit to sing with us the song of the North and of Canada.

I wish my pen might tell you of our song, but this were a hard task, for while our voices are tuned to one chord our themes are manifold. Whatsoever things a man may desire, these may he find in his Mother Canada. Some men sing of her ample skies and the incorruptible glory of them; of her changing climes, limitless fields, and law-loving spirit. Others have pleasant cause of song in the rivers that give water to the people; in far-strung wires and clear highways to the sea; and in her great institutions of beneficence which conserve the moral energies of the citizens.

Some, in voice which sounds like supplication, sing that a sense of safety may be preserved in our homes, and that sweet tranquility may be the lot of our aged folk.

Others would have it that our ballot-strips fall from clean hands, and that no man thinks only of his own Province but of the well-being and good health of all.

May our children, O Canada! have strong bodies and souls above the lusts of gain, urges one, and let the women of our Dominion be skilled in mother-craft, but with their house windows open to the intellectual breezes of the world.... And I, of myself, am stirred to do tribute of praise. I am thy child, O Canada, dear Mother! How shall I have wisdom to order my words aright? O my lips sing this song! Sweet, my pen, tell this tale, for the fullness of my heart has made heavy my hand.

I will make a crown of maple leaves for you, and will twist them with flowers of the lily. See! I bring you native flowers; mint and roses and clover blooms. I bring you golden-rod and marigolds, and berries that are red. Take these from my hands, Good Mother! My heart is awed and I cannot speak aright.

Listen! All of us who sing to you have joined hands—Northmen and Southerners and men of the coast-line. It is our wish to tell your glory aloud that all may hear. It is wiser still to leave a part untold that the world may the better know it.

Hail to thee, O Canada, and hail to the flag! We who are thy children salute thee!

THE END

**T. H. BEST PRINTING CO. LIMITED, TORONTO**

[The end of Seeds of Pine by Murphy, Emily F.]