

SOWING SEEDS in DANNY



Nellie L. McClung

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Photo, by Gauvin Gentzel, Winnipeg, Can.

“... and Danny ups and says ‘Chocoluts and candy men and taffy and curren buns and gingerbread.’”

Sowing Seeds in Danny

by
Nellie L. McClung

First published by Doubleday, Page & Company, 1908.

This story
is lovingly dedicated to
my dear mother.

“SO MANY FAITHS—SO MANY CREEDS,—
SO MANY PATHS THAT WIND AND WIND
WHILE JUST THE ART OF BEING KIND,—
IS WHAT THE OLD WORLD NEEDS!”

PEOPLE OF THE STORY

MRS. BURTON FRANCIS—a dreamy woman, who has beautiful theories.

MR. FRANCIS—her silent husband.

CAMILLA ROSE—a capable young woman who looks after Mrs. Francis's domestic affairs, and occasionally helps her to apply her theories.

THE WATSON FAMILY, consisting of—

JOHN WATSON—a man of few words who works on the “Section.”

MRS. WATSON—who washes for Mrs. Francis.

PEARL WATSON—an imaginative, clever little girl, twelve years old, who is the mainstay of the family.

MARY WATSON—a younger sister.

TEDDY WATSON.

BILLY WATSON.

JIMMY WATSON.

PATSEY WATSON.

TOMMY WATSON.

ROBERT ROBLIN WATSON, known as “Bugsey.”

DANIEL MULCAHEY WATSON—“Wee Danny.” “Teddy will be fourteen on St. Patrick's Day and Danny will be four come March.”

MRS. MCGUIRE—an elderly Irishwoman of uncertain temper who lives on the next lot.

DR. BARNER—the old doctor of the village, clever man in his profession, but of intemperate habits.

MARY BARNER—his beautiful daughter.

DR. HORACE CLAY—a young doctor, who has recently come to the village.

REV. HUGH GRANTLEY—the young minister.

SAMUEL MOTHERWELL—a well off but very stingy farmer.

MRS. MOTHERWELL—his wife.

TOM MOTHERWELL—their son.

ARTHUR WEMYSS—a young Englishman who is trying to learn to farm.

JIM RUSSELL—an ambitious young farmer who lives near the Motherwells.

JAMES DUCKER—a retired farmer, who has political aspirations.

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CHAPTER I

SOWING SEEDS IN DANNY

In her comfortable sitting room Mrs. J. Burton Francis sat, at peace with herself and all mankind. The glory of the short winter afternoon streamed into the room and touched with new warmth and tenderness the face of a Madonna on the wall.

The whole room suggested peace. The quiet elegance of its furnishings, the soft leather-bound books on the table, the dreamy face of the occupant, who sat with folded hands looking out of the window, were all in strange contrast to the dreariness of the scene below, where the one long street of the little Manitoba town, piled high with snow, stretched away into the level, white, never-ending prairie. A farmer tried to force his tired horses through the drifts; a little boy with a milk-pail plodded bravely from door to door, sometimes laying down his burden to blow his breath on his stinging fingers.

The only sound that disturbed the quiet of the afternoon in Mrs. Francis's sitting room was the regular rub-rub of the wash-board in the kitchen below.

"Mrs. Watson is slow with the washing to-day," Mrs. Francis murmured with a look of concern on her usually placid face. "Possibly she is not well. I will call her and see."

"Mrs. Watson, will you come upstairs, please?" she called from the stairway.

Mrs. Watson, slow and shambling, came up the stairs, and stood in the doorway wiping her face on her apron.

"Is it me ye want ma'am?" she asked when she had recovered her breath.

"Yes, Mrs. Watson," Mrs. Francis said sweetly. "I thought perhaps you were not feeling well to-day. I have not heard you singing at your work, and the washing seems to have gone slowly. You must be very careful of your health, and not overdo your strength."

While she was speaking, Mrs. Watson's eyes were busy with the room, the pictures on the wall, the cosy window-seat with its numerous cushions; the warmth and brightness of it all brought a glow to her tired face.

"Yes, ma'am," she said, "thank ye kindly, ma'am. It is very kind of ye to be thinkin' o' the likes of me."

"Oh, we should always think of others, you know," Mrs. Francis replied quickly with her most winning smile, as she seated herself in a rocking-chair. "Are the children all well? Dear little Danny, how is he?"

"Indade, ma'am, that same Danny is the upsettinst one of the nine, and him only four come March. It was only this morn's mornin' that he sez to me, sez he, as I was comin' away, 'Ma, d'ye think she'll give ye pie for your dinner? Thry and remimber the taste of it, won't ye ma, and tell us when ye come home,' sez he."

"Oh, the sweet prattle of childhood," said Mrs. Francis, clasping her shapely white hands. "How very interesting it must be to watch their young minds unfolding as the flower! Is it nine little ones you have, Mrs. Watson?"

"Yes, nine it is, ma'am. God save us. Teddy will be fourteen on St. Patrick's Day, and all the rest are younger."

"It is a great responsibility to be a mother, and yet how few there be that think of it," added Mrs. Francis, dreamily.

“Thru for ye ma’am,” Mrs. Watson broke in. “There’s my own man, John Watson. That man knows no more of what it manes than you do yerself that hasn’t one at all at all, the Lord be praised; and him the father of nine.”

“I have just been reading a great book by Dr. Ernestus Parker, on ‘Motherhood.’ It would be a great benefit to both you and your husband.”

“Och, ma’am,” Mrs. Watson broke in, hastily, “John is no hand for books and has always had his suspicions o’ them since his own mother’s great-uncle William Mulcahey got himself transported durin’ life or good behaviour for havin’ one found on him no bigger’n an almanac, at the time of the riots in Ireland. No, ma’am, John wouldn’t rade it at all at all, and he don’t know one letter from another, what’s more.”

“Then if you would read it and explain it to him, it would be so helpful to you both, and so inspiring. It deals so ably with the problems of child-training. You must be puzzled many times in the training of so many little minds, and Dr. Parker really does throw wonderful light on all the problems that confront mothers. And I am sure the mother of nine must have a great many perplexities.”

Yes, Mrs. Watson had a great many perplexities—how to make trousers for four boys out of the one old pair the minister’s wife had given her; how to make the memory of the rice-pudding they had on Sunday last all the week; how to work all day and sew at night, and still be brave and patient; how to make little Danny and Bugsey forget they were cold and hungry. Yes, Mrs. Watson had her problems; but they were not the kind that Dr. Ernestus Parker had dealt with in his book on “Motherhood.”

“But I must not keep you, Mrs. Watson,” Mrs. Francis said, as she remembered the washing. “When you go downstairs will you kindly bring me up a small red notebook that you will find on the desk in the library?”

“Yes ma’am,” said Mrs. Watson, and went heavily down the stairs. She found the book and brought it up.

While she was making the second laborious journey down the softly padded stairs, Mrs. Francis was making an entry in the little red book.

Dec. 7, 1903. Talked with one woman to-day *re* Beauty of Motherhood.
Recommended Dr. Parker’s book. Believe good done.

Then she closed the book with a satisfied feeling. She was going to have a very full report for her department at the next Annual Convention of the Society for Propagation of Lofty Ideals.

In another part of the same Manitoba town lived John Watson, unregenerate hater of books, his wife and their family of nine. Their first dwelling when they had come to Manitoba from the Ottawa Valley, thirteen years ago, had been C. P. R. box-car No. 722, but this had soon to be enlarged, which was done by adding to it other car-roofed shanties. One of these was painted a bright yellow and was a little larger than the others. It had been the caboose of a threshing outfit that John had worked for in ’96. John was the fireman and when the boiler blew up and John was carried home insensible the “boys” felt that they should do something for the widow and orphans. They raised one hundred and sixty dollars forthwith, every man contributing his wages for the last four days. The owner of the outfit, Sam Motherwell, in a strange fit of generosity, donated the caboose.

The next fall Sam found that he needed the caboose himself, and came with his trucks to take it back. He claimed that he had given it with the understanding that John was going to die. John had not fulfilled his share of the contract, and Sam felt that his generosity had been misplaced.

John was cutting wood beside his dwelling when Sam arrived with his trucks, and accused him of obtaining goods under false pretences. John was a man of few words and listened attentively to Sam's reasoning. From the little window of the caboose came the discordant wail of a very young infant, and old Sam felt his claims growing more and more shadowy.

John took the pipe from his mouth and spat once at the woodpile. Then, jerking his thumb toward the little window, he said briefly:

"Twins. Last night."

Sam Motherwell mounted his trucks and drove away. He knew when he was beaten.

The house had received additions on every side, until it seemed to threaten to run over the edge of the lot, and looked like a section of a wrecked freight train, with its yellow refrigerator car.

The snow had drifted up to the windows, and entirely over the little lean-to that had been erected at the time that little Danny had added his feeble wail to the general family chorus.

But the smoke curled bravely up from the chimney into the frosty air, and a snug pile of wood by the "cheek of the dure" gave evidence of John's industry, notwithstanding his dislike of the world's best literature.

Inside the floor was swept and the stove was clean, and an air of comfort was over all, in spite of the evidence of poverty. A great variety of calendars hung on the wall. Every store in town it seems had sent one this year, last year and the year before. A large poster of the Winnipeg Industrial Exhibition hung in the parlour, and a Massey-Harris self-binder, in full swing, propelled by three maroon horses, swept through a waving field of golden grain, driven by an adipose individual in blue shirt and grass-green overalls. An enlarged picture of John himself glared grimly from a very heavy frame, on the opposite wall, the grimness of it somewhat relieved by the row of Sunday-school "big cards" that were stuck in around the frame.

On the afternoon that Mrs. Watson had received the uplifting talk on motherhood, and Mrs. Francis had entered it in the little red book, Pearlie Watson, aged twelve, was keeping the house, as she did six days in the week. The day was too cold for even Jimmy to be out, and so all except the three eldest boys were in the kitchen variously engaged. Danny under promise of a story was in the high chair submitting to a thorough going over with soap and water. Patsey, looking up from his self-appointed task of brushing the legs of the stove with the hair-brush, loudly demanded that the story should begin at once.

"Story, is it?" cried Pearlie in her wrath, as she took the hair-brush from Patsey. "What time have I to be thinkin' of stories and you that full of badness. My heart is bruck wid ye."

"I'll be good now," Patsey said, penitently, sitting on the wood-box, and tenderly feeling his skinned nose. "I got hurt to-day, mind that, Pearlie."

"So ye did, poor bye," said Pearlie, her wrath all gone, "and what will I tell yez about, my beauties?"

"The pink lady where Jimmy brings the milk," said Patsey promptly.

"But it's me that's gettin' combed," wailed Danny. "I should say what ye'r to tell, Pearlie."

"True for ye," said Pearlie, "Howld ye'r tongue, Patsey. What will I tell about, honey?"

“What Patsey said’ll do” said Danny with an injured air, “and don’t forget the chockalut drops she had the day ma was there and say she sent three o’ them to me, and you can have one o’ them, Pearlle.”

“And don’t forget the big plate o’ potatoes and gravy and mate she gave the dog, and the cake she threw in the fire to get red of it,” said Mary, who was knitting a sock for Teddy.

“No, don’t tell that,” said Jimmy, “it always makes wee Bugsey cry.”

“Well,” began Pearlle, as she had done many times before. “Once upon a time not very long ago, there lived a lovely pink lady in a big house painted red, with windies in ivery side of it, and a bell on the front dure, and a velvet carpet on the stair and—”

“What’s a stair?” asked Bugsey.

“It’s a lot of boxes piled up higher and higher, and nailed down tight so that ye can walk on them, and when ye get away up high, there is another house right farninst ye—well anyway, there was a lovely pianny in the parlow, and flowers in the windies, and two yalla burds that sing as if their hearts wud break, and the windies had a border of coloured glass all around them, and long white curtings full of holes, but they like them all the better o’ that, for it shows they are owld and must ha’ been good to ha’ stood it so long. Well, annyway, there was a little boy called Jimmie Watson”—here all eyes were turned on Jimmy, who was sitting on the floor mending his moccasin with a piece of sinew. “There was a little boy called Jimmy Watson who used to carry milk to the lady’s back dure, and a girl with black eyes and white teeth all smiley used to take it from him, and put it in a lovely pitcher with birds flying all over it. But one day the lady, herself, was there all dressed in lovely pink velvet and lace, and a train as long as from me to you, and she sez to Jimmy, sez she, ‘Have you any sisters or brothers at home,’ and Jim speaks up real proud-like, ‘Just nine,’ he sez, and sez she, swate as you please, ‘Oh, that’s lovely! Are they all as purty as you?’ she sez, and Jimmy sez, ‘Purtier if anything,’ and she sez, ‘I’ll be steppin’ over to-day to see yer ma,’ and Jim ran home and told them all, and they all got brushed and combed and actin’ good, and in she comes, laving her carriage at the dure, and her in a long pink velvet cape draggin’ behind her on the flure, and wide white fer all around it, her silk skirts creakin’ like a bag of cabbage and the eyes of her just dancin’ out of her head, and she says, ‘These are fine purty childer ye have here, Mrs. Watson. This is a rale purty girl, this oldest one. What’s her name?’ and ma ups and tells her it is Rebecca Jane Pearl, named for her two grandmothers, and Pearl just for short. She says, ‘I’ll be for taking you home wid me, Pearlle, to play the pianny for me,’ and then she asks all around what the children’s names is, and then she brings out a big box, from under her cape, all tied wid store string, and she planks it on the table and tearin’ off the string, she sez, ‘Now, Pearlle, it’s ladies first, tibby sure. What would you like to see in here?’ And I says up quick—‘A long coat wid fer on it, and a handkerchief smellin’ strong of satchel powder,’ and she whipped them out of the box and threw them on my knee, and a new pair of red mitts too. And then she says, ‘Mary, acushla, it’s your turn now.’ And Mary says, ‘A doll with a real head on it,’ and there it was as big as Danny, all dressed in green satin, opening its eyes, if you plaze.”

“Now, me!” roared Danny, squirming in his chair.

“‘Daniel Mulcahey Watson, what wud you like?’ she says, and Danny ups and says, ‘Chockaluts and candy men and taffy and curren’ buns and ginger bread,’ and she had every wan of them.”

“‘Robert Roblin Watson, him as they call Bugsey, what would you like?’ and ‘Patrick Healy Watson, as is called Patsey, what is your choice?’ says she, and—”

In the confusion that ensued while these two young gentlemen thus referred to stated their modest wishes, their mother came in, tired and pale, from her hard day's work.

"How is the pink lady to-day, ma?" asked Pearlie, setting Danny down and beginning operations on Bugsey.

"Oh, she's as swate as ever, an' can talk that soft and kind about children as to melt the heart in ye."

Danny crept up on his mother's knee "Ma, did she give ye pie?" he asked, wistfully.

"Yes, me beauty, and she sent this to you wid her love," and Mrs. Watson took a small piece out of a newspaper from under her cape. It was the piece that had been set on the kitchen table for Mrs. Watson's dinner. Danny called them all to have a bite.

"Sure it's the first bite that's always the best, a body might not like it so well on the second," said Jimmy as he took his, but Bugsey refused to have any at all. "Wan bite's no good," he said, "it just lets yer see what yer missin."

"D'ye think she'll ever come to see us, ma?" asked Pearlie, as she set Danny in the chair to give him his supper. The family was fed in divisions. Danny was always in Division A.

"Her? Is it?" said Mrs. Watson and they all listened, for Pearlie's story to-day had far surpassed all her former efforts, and it seemed as if there must be some hope of its coming true. "Why och! childer dear, d'ye think a foine lady like her would be bothered with the likes of us? She is r'adin' her book, and writin' letthers, and thinkin' great thoughts, all the time. When she was speakin' to me to-day, she looked at me so wonderin' and faraway I could see that she thought I wasn't there at all at all, and me farminst her all the time—no childer, dear, don't be thinkin' of it, and Pearlie, I think ye'd better not be puttin' notions inter their heads. Yer father wouldn't like it. Well Danny, me man, how goes it?" went on Mrs. Watson, as her latest born was eating his rather scanty supper. "It's not skim milk and dhry bread ye'd be havin', if you were her child this night, but taffy candy filled wid nuts and chunks o' cake as big as yer head." Whereupon Danny wailed dismally, and had to be taken from his chair and have the "Little Boy Blue" sung to him, before he could be induced to go on with his supper.

The next morning when Jimmy brought the milk to Mrs. Francis's back door the dark-eyed girl with the "smiley" teeth let him in, and set a chair beside the kitchen stove for him to warm his little blue hands. While she was emptying the milk into the pitcher with the birds on it, Mrs. Francis, with a wonderful pink kimono on, came into the kitchen.

"Who is this boy, Camilla?" she asked, regarding Jimmy with a critical gaze.

"This is Master James Watson, Mrs. Francis," answered Camilla with her pleasant smile. "He brings the milk every morning."

"Oh yes; of course, I remember now," said Mrs. Francis, adjusting her glasses. "How old is the baby, James?"

"Danny is it?" said Jim. "He's four come March."

"Is he very sweet and cunning James, and do you love him very much?"

"Oh, he's all right," Jim answered sheepishly.

"It is a great privilege to have a little brother like Daniel. You must be careful to set before him a good example of honesty and sobriety. He will be a man some day, and if properly trained he may be a useful factor in the uplifting and refining of the world. I love little children," she went on rapturously, looking at Jimmy as if he wasn't there at all, "and I would love to train one, for service in the world to uplift and refine."

“Yes ma’am,” said Jimmy. He felt that something was expected of him, but he was not sure what.

“Will you bring Daniel to see me to-morrow, James?” she said, as Camilla handed him his pail. “I would like to speak to his young mind and endeavour to plant the seeds of virtue and honesty in that fertile soil.”

When Jimmy got home he told Pearlie of his interview with the pink lady, as much as he could remember. The only thing that he was sure of was that she wanted to see Danny, and that she had said something about planting seeds in him.

Jimmy and Pearlie thought it best not to mention Danny’s proposed visit to their mother, for they knew that she would be fretting about his clothes, and would be sitting up mending and sewing for him when she should be sleeping. So they resolved to say “nothin’ to nobody.”

The next day their mother went away early to wash for the Methodist minister’s wife, and that was always a long day’s work.

Then the work of preparation began on Danny. A wash-basin full of snow was put on the stove to melt, and Danny was put in the high chair which was always the place of his ablutions.

Pearlie began to think aloud. “Bugsey, your stockin’s are the best. Off wid them, Mary, and mend the hole in the knees of them, and, Bugsey, hop into bed for we’ll be needin’ your pants anyway. It’s awful stylish for a little lad like Danny to be wearin’ pants under his dresses, and now what about boots? Let’s see yours, Patsey. They’re all gone in the uppers, and Billy’s are too big, even if they were here, but they’re off to school on him. I’ll tell you what Mary, hurry up wid that sock o’ Ted’s and we’ll draw them on him over Bugsey’s boots and puttind they’re overstockin’s, and I’ll carry him all the way so’s not to dirty them.”

Mary stopped her dish-washing, and drying her hands on the thin towel that hung over the looking glass, found her knitting and began to knit at the top of her speed.

“Isn’t it good we have that dress o’ his, so good yet, that he got when we had all of yez christened. Put the irons on there Mary; never mind, don’t stop your knittin’. I’ll do it myself. We’ll press it out a bit, and we can put ma’s handkerchief, the one pa gev her for Christmas, around his neck, sort o’ sailor collar style, to show he’s a boy. And now the snow is melted, I’ll go at him. Don’t cry now Danny, man, yer going’ up to the big house where the lovely pink lady lives that has the chocaklut drops on her stand and chunks of cake on the table wid nuts in them as big as marbles. There now,” continued Pearlie, putting the towel over her finger and penetrating Danny’s ear, “she’ll not say she can plant seeds in you. Yer ears are as clean as hers,” and Pearlie stood back and took a critical view of Danny’s ears front and back.

“Chockaluts?” asked Danny to be sure that he hadn’t been mistaken.

“Yes,” went on Pearlie to keep him still while she fixed his shock of red hair into stubborn little curls, and she told again with ever growing enthusiasm the story of the pink lady, and the wonderful things she had in the box tied up with store string.

At last Danny was completed and stood on a chair for inspection. But here a digression from the main issue occurred, for Bugsey had grown tired of his temporary confinement and complained that Patsey had not contributed one thing to Danny’s wardrobe while he had had to give up both his stockings and his pants.

Pearlie stopped in the work of combing her own hair to see what could be done.

“Patsey, where’s your gum?” she asked. “Git it for me this minute,” and Patsey went to the “fallen leaf” of the table and found it on the inside where he had put it for safe keeping.

“Now you give that to Bugsey,” she said, “and that’ll make it kind o’ even though it does look as if you wuz gettin’ off pretty light.”

Pearlie struggled with her hair to make it lie down and “act dacint,” but the image that looked back at her from the cracked glass was not encouraging, even after making allowance for the crack, but she comforted herself by saying, “Sure it’s Danny she wants to see, and she won’t be lookin’ much at me anyway.”

Then the question arose, and for a while looked serious— What was Danny to wear on his head? Danny had no cap, nor ever had one. There was one little red toque in the house that Patsey wore, but by an unfortunate accident, it had that very morning fallen into the milk pail and was now drying on the oven door. For a while it seemed as if the visit would have to be postponed until it dried, when Mary had an inspiration.

“Wrap yer cloud around his head and say you wuz feart of the earache, the day is so cold.”

This was done and a blanket off one of the beds was pressed into service as an outer wrap for Danny. He was in such very bad humour at being wrapped up so tight that Pearlie had to set him down on the bed again to get a fresh grip on him.

“It’s just as well I have no mitts,” she said as she lifted her heavy burden. “I couldn’t howld him at all if I was bothered with mitts. Open the dure, Patsey, and mind you shut it tight again. Keep up the fire, Mary. Bugsey, lie still and chew your gum, and don’t fight any of yez.”

When Pearlie and her heavy burden arrived at Mrs. Francis’s back door they were admitted by the dark-haired Camilla, who set a rocking-chair beside the kitchen stove for Pearlie to sit in while she unrolled Danny, and when Danny in his rather remarkable costume stood up on Pearlie’s knee, Camilla laughed so good humouredly that Danny felt the necessity of showing her all his accomplishments and so made the face that Patsey had taught him by drawing down his eyes, and putting his fingers in his mouth. Danny thought she liked it very much, for she went hurriedly into the pantry and brought back a cookie for him.

The savoury smell of fried salmon, for it was near lunch time, increased Danny’s interest in his surroundings, and his eyes were big with wonder when Mrs. Francis herself came in.

“And is this little Daniel!” she cried rapturously. “So sweet; so innocent; so pure! Did Big Sister carry him all the way? Kind Big Sister. Does oo love Big Sister?”

“Nope,” Danny spoke up quickly, “just like chockaluts.”

“How sweet of him, isn’t it, really?” she said, “with the world all before him, the great untried future lying vast and prophetic waiting for his baby feet to enter. Well has Dr. Parker said; ‘A little child is a bundle of possibilities and responsibilities.’”

“If ye please, ma’am,” Pearlie said timidly, not wishing to contradict the lady, but still anxious to set her right, “it was just this blanket I had him rolled in.”

At which Camilla again retired to the pantry with precipitate haste.

“Did you see the blue, blue sky, Daniel, and the white, white snow, and did you see the little snow-birds, whirling by like brown leaves?” Mrs. Francis asked with an air of great childishness.

“Nope,” said Danny shortly, “didn’t see nothin’.”

“Please, ma’am,” began Pearlie again, “it was the cloud around his head on account of the earache that done it.”

“It is sweet to look into his innocent young eyes and wonder what visions they will some day see,” went on Mrs. Francis, dreamily, but there she stopped with a look of horror frozen

on her face, for at the mention of his eyes Danny remembered his best trick and how well it had worked on Camilla, and in a flash his eyes were drawn down and his mouth stretched to its utmost limit.

“What ails the child?” Mrs. Francis cried in alarm. “Camilla, come here.”

Camilla came out of the pantry and gazed at Danny with sparkling eyes, while Pearlle, on the verge of tears, vainly tried to awaken in him some sense of the shame he was bringing on her. Camilla hurried to the pantry again, and brought another cookie. “I believe, Mrs. Francis, that Danny is hungry,” she said. “Children sometimes act that way,” she added, laughing.

“Really, how very interesting; I must see if Dr. Parker mentions this strange phenomenon in his book.”

“Please, ma’am, I think I had better take him home now,” said Pearlle. She knew what Danny was, and was afraid that greater disgrace might await her. But when she tried to get him back into the blanket he lost every joint in his body and slipped to the floor. This is what she had feared—Danny had gone limber.

“I don’t want to go home” he wailed dismally. “I want to stay with her, and her; want to see the yalla burds, want a chockalut.”

“Come Danny, that’s a man,” pleaded Pearlle, “and I’ll tell you all about the lovely pink lady when we go home, and I’ll get Bugsey’s gum for ye and I’ll—”

“No,” Danny roared, “tell me how about the pink lady, tell her, and her.”

“Wait till we get home, Danny man.” Pearlle’s grief flowed afresh. Disgrace had fallen on the Watsons, and Pearlle knew it.

“It would be interesting to know what mental food this little mind has been receiving. Please do tell him the story, Pearlle.”

Thus admonished, Pearlle, with flaming cheeks began the story. She tried to make it less personal, but at every change Danny screamed his disapproval, and held her to the original version, and when it was done, he looked up with his sweet little smile, and said to Mrs. Francis nodding his head. “You’re it! You’re the lovely pink lady.” There was a strange flush on Mrs. Francis’s face, and a strange feeling stirring her heart, as she hurriedly rose from her chair and clasped Danny in her arms.

“Danny! Danny!” she cried, “you shall see the yellow birds, and the stairs, and the chocolates on the dresser, and the pink lady will come to-morrow with the big parcel.”

Danny’s little arms tightened around her neck.

“It’s her,” he shouted. “It’s her.”

When Mrs. Burton Francis went up to her sitting-room, a few hours later to get the “satchel” powder to put in the box that was to be tied with the store string, the sun was shining on the face of the Madonna on the wall, and it seemed to smile at her as she passed.

The little red book lay on the table forgotten. She tossed it into the waste-paper basket.

CHAPTER II

THE OLD DOCTOR

Close beside Mrs. Francis's comfortable home stood another large house, weather-beaten and dreary looking, a house whose dilapidated verandas and broken fence clearly indicated that its good days had gone by. In the summer-time vines and flowers grew around it to hide its scars and relieve its grimness, pathetic as a brave smile on a sad face.

Dr. Barner, brilliant, witty and skilful, had for many years been a victim of intemperance, but being Scotch to the backbone, he never could see how good, pure "Kilmarnock," made in Glasgow, could hurt anyone. He knew that his hand shook, and his brain reeled, and his eyes were bleared; but he never blamed the whiskey. He knew that his patients sometimes died while he was enjoying a protracted drunk, but of course, accidents will happen, and a doctor's accidents are soon buried and forgotten. Even in his worst moments, if he could be induced to come to the sick bed, he would sober up wonderfully, and many a sufferer was relieved from pain and saved from death by his gentle and skilful, though trembling, hands. He might not be able to walk across the room, but he could diagnose correctly and prescribe successfully.

When he came to Millford years ago, his practice grew rapidly. People wondered why he came to such a small place, for his skill, his wit, his wonderful presence would have won distinction anywhere.

His wife, a frail though very beautiful woman, at first thought nothing of his drinking habits—he was never anything but gentlemanly in her presence. But the time came when she saw honour and manhood slowly but surely dying in him, and on her heart there fell the terrible weight of a powerless despair. Her health had never been robust and she quickly sank into invalidism.

The specialist who came from Winnipeg diagnosed her case as chronic anaemia and prescribed port wine, which she refused with a queer little wavering cry and a sudden rush of tears. But she put up a good fight nevertheless. She wanted to live so much, for the sake of Mary, her beautiful fifteen-year-old daughter.

Mrs. Barner did not live to see the whole work of degeneration, for the end came in the early spring, swift and sudden and kind.

The doctor's grief for his wife was sincere. He always referred to her as "my poor Mildred," and never spoke of her except when comparatively sober.

Mary Barner took up the burden of caring for her father without question, for she loved him with a great and pitying love, to which he responded in his best moments. In the winter she went with him on his drives night and day, for the fear of what might happen was always in her heart. She was his housekeeper, his office-girl, his bookkeeper; she endured all things, loneliness, poverty, disgrace, without complaining or bitterness.

One day shortly after Mrs. Barner's death big John Robertson from "the hills" drove furiously down the street to the doctor's house, and rushed into the office without ringing the bell. His little boy had been cut with the mower-knives, and he implored the doctor to come at once.

The doctor sat at his desk, just drunk enough to be ugly-tempered, and curtly told Mr. Robertson to go straight to perdition, and as the poor man, wild with excitement, begged him

to come and offered him money, he yawned nonchalantly, and with some slight variations repeated the injunction.

Mary hearing the conversation came in hurriedly.

"Mary, my dear," the doctor said, "please leave us. This gentleman is quite forgetting himself and his language is shocking." Mary did not even look at her father. She was packing his little satchel with all that would be needed.

"Now pick him up and take him," she said firmly to big John. "He'll be all right when he sees your little boy, never mind what he says now."

Big John seized the doctor and bore him struggling and protesting to the wagon.

The doctor made an effort to get out.

"Put him down in the bottom with this under his head"—handing Big John a cushion—"and put your feet on him," Mary commanded.

Big John did as she bid him, none too gently, for he could still hear his little boy's cries and see that cruel jagged wound.

"Oh, don't hurt him," she cried piteously, and ran sobbing into the house. Upstairs, in what had been her mother's room, she pressed her face against her mother's kimono that still hung behind the door. "I am not crying for you to come back, mother," she sobbed bitterly, "I am just crying for your little girl."

The doctor was asleep when John reached his little shanty in the hills. The child still lived, his Highland mother having stopped the blood with rude bandaging and ashes, a remedy learned in her far-off island home.

John shook the doctor roughly and cursed him soundly in both English and Gaelic, without avail, but the child's cry so full of pain and weakness roused him with a start. In a minute Dr. Frederick Barner was himself. He took the child gently from his mother and laid him on the bed.

For two days the doctor stayed in John's dirty little shanty, caring for little Murdock as tenderly as a mother. He cooked for the child, he sang to him, he carried him in his arms for hours, and soothed him with a hundred quaint fancies. He superintended the cleaning of the house and scolded John's wife soundly on her shiftless ways; he showed her how to bake bread and cook little dishes to tempt the child's appetite, winning thereby her undying gratitude. She understood but little of the scolding, but she saw his kindness to her little boy, for kindness is the same in all languages.

On the third day, the little fellow's fever went down and, peeping over the doctor's shoulder, he smiled and chattered and asked for his "daddy" and his "mathar."

Then Big John broke down utterly and tried to speak his gratitude, but the doctor abruptly told him to quit his blubbing and hitch up, for little Murdock would be chasing the hens again in a week or two.

The doctor went faithfully every day and dressed little Murdock's wound until it no longer needed his care, remaining perfectly sober meanwhile. Hope sprang up in Mary's heart—for love believeth all things.

At night when he went to bed and she carefully locked the doors and took the keys to her room, she breathed a sigh of relief. One more day won!

But alas for Mary's hopes! They were built upon the slipping, sliding sands of human desire. One night she found him in the office of the hotel; a red-faced, senseless, gibbering old man, arguing theology with a brother Scotchman, who was in the same condition of mellow exhilaration.

Mary's white face as she guided her father through the door had an effect upon the men who sat around the office. Kind-hearted fellows they were, and they felt sorry for the poor little motherless girl, sorry for "old Doc" too. One after another they went home, feeling just a little ashamed.

The bartender, a new one from across the line, a dapper chap with diamonds, was indignant. "I'll give that old man a straight pointer," he said, "that his girl has to stay out of here. This is no place for women, anyway"—which is true, God knows.

Five years went by and Mary Barner lived on in the lonely house and did all that human power could do to stay her father's evil course. But the years told heavily upon him. He had made some fatal mistakes in his prescribing, and the people had been compelled to get in another doctor, though a great many of those who had known him in his best days still clung to the "old man" in spite of his drinking. They could not forget how he had fought with death for them and for their children.

Of all his former skill but little remained now except his wonderful presence in the sick-room.

He could still inspire the greatest confidence and hope. Still at his coming a sick man's fears fell away from him, and in their stead came hope and good cheer. This was the old man's good gift that even his years of sinning could not wholly destroy. God had marked him for a great physician.

CHAPTER III

THE PINK LADY

When Mrs. Francis decided to play the Lady Bountiful to the Watson family, she not only ministered to their physical necessity but she conscientiously set about to do them good, if they would be done good to. Mrs. Francis's heart was kind, when you could get to it; but it was so deeply crusted over with theories and reflections and abstract truths that not very many people knew that she had one.

When little Danny's arms were thrown around her neck, and he called her his dear sweet, pink lady, her pseudo-intellectuality broke down before a power which had lain dormant. She had always talked a great deal of the joys of motherhood, and the rapturous delights of mother-love. Not many of the mothers knew as much of the proper care of an infant during the period of dentition as she. She had read papers at mothers' meetings, and was as full of health talks as a school physiology.

But it was the touch of Danny's soft cheek and clinging arms that brought to her the rapture that is so sweet it hurts, and she realised that she had missed the sweetest thing in life. A tiny flame of real love began to glimmer in her heart and feebly shed its beams among the debris of cold theories and second-hand sensations that had filled it hitherto.

She worried Danny with her attentions, although he tried hard to put up with them. She was the lady of his dreams, for Pearl's imagination had clothed her with all the virtues and graces.

Hers was a strangely inconsistent character, spiritually minded, but selfish; loving humanity when it is spelled with a capital, but knowing nothing of the individual. The flower of holiness in her heart was like the haughty orchid that blooms in the hothouse, untouched by wind or cold, beautiful to behold but comforting no one with its beauty.

Pearl Watson was like the rugged little anemone, the wind flower that lifts its head from the cheerless prairie. No kind hand softens the heat or the cold, nor tempers the wind, and yet the very winds that blow upon it and the hot sun that beats upon it bring to it a grace, a hardiness, a fragrance of good cheer, that gladdens the hearts of all who pass that way.

Mrs. Francis found herself strongly attracted to Pearl. Pearl, the housekeeper, the homemaker, a child with a woman's responsibility, appealed to Mrs. Francis. She thought about Pearl very often.

Noticing one day that Pearl was thin and pale, she decided at once that she needed a health talk. Pearl sat like a graven image while Mrs. Francis conscientiously tried to stir up in her the seeds of right living.

"Oh, ma!" Pearl said to her mother that night, when the children had gone to bed and they were sewing by the fire. "Oh, ma! she told me more to-day about me insides than I would care to remember. Mind ye, ma, there's a sthring down yer back no bigger'n a knittin' needle, and if ye ever broke it ye'd snuff out before ye knowed what ye was doin', and there's a tin pan in yer ear that if ye got a dinge in it, it wouldn't be worth a dhirty postage stamp for hearin' wid, and ye mustn't skip ma, for it will disturb yer Latin parts, and ye mustn't eat seeds, or ye'll get the thing that pa had—what is it called ma?"

Her mother told her.

“Yes, appendicitis, that’s what she said. I never knowed there were so many places inside a person to go wrong, did ye, ma? I just thought we had liver and lights and a few things like that.”

“Don’t worry, alannah,” her mother said soothingly, as she cut out the other leg of Jimmy’s pants. “The Lord made us right I guess, and he won’t let anything happen to us.”

But Pearl was not yet satisfied. “But, oh ma,” she said, as she hastily worked a buttonhole. “You don’t know about the diseases that are goin’ ’round. Mind ye, there’s tuberoses in the cows even, and them that sly about it, and there’s diseases in the milk as big as a chew o’ gum and us not seein’ them. Every drop of it we use should be scalded well, and oh, ma, I wonder anyone of us is alive for we’re not half clean! The poison pours out of the skin night and day, carbolic acid she said, and every last wan o’ us should have a sponge bath at night—that’s just to slop yerself all up and down with a rag, and an oliver in the mornin’. Ma, what’s an oliver, d’ye think?”

“Ask Camilla,” Mrs. Watson said, somewhat alarmed at these hygienic problems. “Camilla is grand at explaining Mrs. Francis’s quare ways.”

Pearl’s brown eyes were full of worry.

“It’s hard to git time to be healthy, ma,” she said; “we should keep the kittle bilin’ all the time, she says, to keep the humanity in the air—Oh, I wish she hadn’t a told me, I never thought atin’ hurt anyone, but she says lots of things that taste good is black pison. Isn’t it quare, ma, the Lord put such poor works in us and us not there at the time to raise a hand.”

They sewed in silence for a few minutes.

Then Pearl said: “Let us go to bed now, ma, me eyes are shuttin’. I’ll go back to-morrow and ask Camilla about the ‘oliver.’ ”

CHAPTER IV

THE BAND OF HOPE

Mary Barner had learned the lesson early that the only easing of her own pain was in helping others to bear theirs, and so it came about that there was perhaps no one in Millford more beloved than she. Perhaps it was the memory of her own lost childhood that caused her heart to go out in love and sympathy to every little boy and girl in the village.

Their joys were hers; their sorrows also. She took slivers from little fingers with great skill, beguiling the owners thereof with wonderful songs and stories. She piloted weary little plodders through pages of "homework." She mended torn "pinnies" so that even vigilant mothers never knew that their little girls had jumped the fence at all. She made dresses for concerts at short notice. She appeased angry parents, and many a time prevented the fall of correction's rod.

When Tommy Watson beguiled Ignatius McSorley, Jr., to leave his mother's door, and go swimming in the river, promising faithfully to "button up his back"—Ignatius being a wise child who knew his limitations—and when Tommy Watson forgot that promise and basely deserted Ignatius to catch on the back of a buggy that came along the river road, leaving his unhappy friend clad in one small shirt, vainly imploring him to return, Ignatius could not go home, for his mother would know that he had again yielded to the siren's voice; so it was to the Barner back door that he turned his guilty steps. Miss Barner was talking to a patient in the office when she heard a small voice at the kitchen door full of distress, whimpering:

"Please Miss Barner, I'm in a bad way. Tommy Watson said he'd help me and he never!"

Miss Barner went quickly, and there on the doorstep stood a tiny cupid in tears, tightly clasping his scanty wardrobe to his bosom.

"He said he'd help me and he never!" he repeated in a burst of rage as she drew him in hastily.

"Never mind, honey," she said, struggling to control her laughter. "Just wait till I catch Tommy Watson!"

Miss Barner was the assistant Band of Hope teacher. On Monday afternoon it was part of her duty to go around and help the busy mothers to get the children ready for the meeting. She also took her turn with Mrs. White in making taffy, for they had learned that when temperance sentiment waned, taffy, with nuts in it, had a wonderful power to bind and hold the wavering childish heart.

There was no human way of telling a taffy day—the only sure way was to go every time. The two little White girls always knew, but do you think they would tell? Not they. There was secrecy written all over their blond faces, and in every strand of their straw-coloured hair. Once they deliberately stood by and heard Minnie McSorley and Mary Watson plan to go down to the creamery for pussy-willows on Monday afternoon—there were four plates of taffy on their mother's pantry shelf at the time and yet they gave no sign—Minnie McSorley and Mary Watson went blindly on and reaped a harvest of regrets.

There was no use offering the White girls anything for the information. Glass alleles, paint cards or even popcorn rings were powerless to corrupt them. Once Jimmy Watson became the hero of an hour by circulating the report that he had smelled it cooking when he took the milk to Miss Barner's; but alas, for circumstantial evidence.

Every child went to Band of Hope that Monday afternoon eager and expectant; but it was only a hard lesson on the effect of alcohol on the lining of the stomach that they got, and when Mrs. White complimented them on their increased attendance and gave out the closing hymn,

Oh, what a happy band are we!

the Hogan twins sobbed.

When the meeting was over, Miss Barner exonerated Jimmy by saying it was icing for a cake he had smelled, and the drooping spirits of the Band were somewhat revived by her promise that next Monday would surely be Taffy Day.

On the last Monday of each month the Band of Hope had a programme instead of the regular lesson. Before the programme was given the children were allowed to tell stories or ask questions relating to temperance. The Hogan twins were always full of communications, and on this particular Monday it looked as if they would swamp the meeting.

William Henry Hogan (commonly known as Squirt) told to a dot how many pairs of shoes and bags of flour a man could buy by denying himself cigars for ten years. During William Henry's recital, John James Hogan, the other twin, showed unmistakable signs of impatience. He stood up and waved his hand so violently that he seemed to be in danger of throwing that useful member away forever. Mrs. White gave him permission to speak as soon as his brother had finished, and John James announced with a burst of importance:

"Please, teacher, my pa came home last night full as a billy-goat."

Miss Barner put her hand hastily over her eyes. Mrs. White gasped, and the Band of Hope held its breath.

Then Mrs. White hurriedly announced that Master James Watson would recite, and Jimmy went forward with great outward composure and recited:

As I was going to the lake
I met a little rattlesnake;
I fed him with some jelly-cake,
Which made his little—

But Mrs. White interrupted Jimmy just then by saying that she must insist on temperance selections at these programmes, whereat Pearlle Watson's hand waved appealingly, and Miss Barner gave her permission to speak.

"Please ma'am," Pearl said, addressing Mrs. White, "Jimmy and me thought anything about a rattlesnake would do for a temperance piece, and if you had only let Jimmy go on you would have seen what happened even a snake that et what he hadn't ought to, and please ma'am, Jimmy and me thought it might be a good lesson for all of us."

Miss Barner thought that Pearlle's point was well taken, and took Jimmy with her into the vestry from which he emerged a few minutes later, flushed and triumphant, and recited the same selection, with a possible change of text in one place:

As I was going to the lake
I met a little rattlesnake;
I fed him on some jelly-cake,
Which made his little stomach ache.

The musical committee then sang:

We're for home and mother,
God and native land,
Grown up friend and brother,
Give us now your hand.

and won loud applause. Little Sissy Moore knew only the first verse, but it would never have been known that she was saying dum—dum—dum—dum—dum—dum—dum—dum dum-dum-dum, if Mary Simpson hadn't told.

Wilford Ducker, starched as stiff as boiled and raw starch could make him, recited "Perish, King Alcohol, we will grow up," but was accorded a very indifferent reception by the Band of Hopers. Wilford was allowed to go to Band of Hope only when Miss Barner went for him and escorted him home again. Mrs. Ducker had been very particular about Wilford from the first.

Then the White girls recited a strictly suitable piece. It was entitled "The World and the Conscience."

Lily represented a vain woman of the world bent upon pleasure with a tendency toward liquid refreshment. Her innocent china-blue eyes and flaxen braids were in strange contrast to the mad love of glittering wealth which was supposed to fill her heart:

Give to me the flowing bowl,
And Pleasure's glittering crown;
The path of Pride shall be my goal,
And conscience's voice I'll drown!

Then Blanche sweetly admonished her:

Oh! lay aside your idle boasts,
No Pleasure thus you'll find;
The flowing bowl a serpent is
To poison Soul and Mind.

Oh, sign our pledge, while yet you can,
Nor look upon the Wine
When it is red within the Cup,
Let not its curse be thine!

Thereupon the frivolous creature repents of her waywardness, and the two little girls join hands and recite in unison:

We will destroy this giant King,
And drive him from our land;
And on the side of Temp-er-ance
We'll surely take our stand!

and the piece was over.

Robert Roblin Watson (otherwise known as Bugsey), who had that very day been installed as a member of the Band of Hope, after he had avowed his determination "never to touch, taste nor handle alcoholic stimulants in any form as a beverage and to discourage all traffic in the same," was the next gentleman on the programme. Pearlle was sure Bugsey's selection was suitable. She whispered to him the very last minute not to forget his bow, but he did forget it, and was off like a shot into his piece.

I belong to the Band of Hope,
Never to drink and never to smoke;
To love my parents and Uncle Sam,
Keep Alcohol out of my diaphragm;
To say my prayers when I go to bed,
And not put the bedclothes over my head;
Fill up my lungs with oxygen,
And be kind to every living thing.

There! I guess there can't be no kick about that, Pearl thought to herself as Bugsey finished, and the applause rang out loud and louder.

Pearlie had forgotten to tell Bugsey to come down when he was done, and so he stood irresolute, as the applause grew more and more deafening. Pearl beckoned and waved and at last got him safely landed, and when Mrs. White announced that to-day was Taffy Day, owing to Miss Barner's kindness, Bugsey's cup of happiness was full. Miss Barner said she had an extra big piece for the youngest member, Master Danny Watson. Pearlie had not allowed any person to mention taffy to him because Danny could not bear to be disappointed.

But there were no disappointments that day. Taffy enough for every one, amber-coloured taffy slabs with nuts in it, cream taffy in luscious nuggets, curly twists of brown and yellow taffy. Oh look, there's another plateful! and it's coming this way. "Have some more, Danny. Oh, take a bigger piece, there's lots of it." Was it a dream?

When the last little Band of Hoper had left the vestry, Mary Barner sat alone with her thoughts, looking with unseeing eyes at the red and silver mottoes on the wall. Pledge cards which the children had signed were gaily strung together with ribbons across the wall behind her. She was thinking of the little people who had just gone—how would it be with them in the years to come?—they were so sweet and pure and lovely now. Unconsciously she bowed her head on her hands, and a cry quivered from her heart. The yellow sunlight made a ripple of golden water on the wall behind her and threw a wavering radiance on her soft brown hair.

It was at that moment that the Rev. Hugh Grantley, the new Presbyterian minister, opened the vestry door.

CHAPTER V

THE RELICT OF THE LATE MCGUIRE

Close beside the Watson estate with its strangely shaped dwelling stood another small house, which was the earthly abode of one Mrs. McGuire, also of Irish extraction, who had been a widow for forty years. Mrs. McGuire was a tall, raw-boned, angular woman with piercing black eyes, and a firm forbidding jaw. One look at Mrs. McGuire usually made a book agent forget the name of his book. When she shut her mouth, no lips were visible; her upturned nose seemed seriously to contemplate running up under her sun bonnet to escape from this wicked world with all its troubling, and especially from John Watson, his wife and his family of nine.

One fruitful cause of dispute between Mrs. McGuire and the Watsons was the boundary line between the two estates. In the spring Mrs. Watson and the boys put up a fence of green poplar poles where they thought the fence should be, hoping that it might serve the double purpose of dividing the lots and be a social barrier between them and the relict of the late McGuire. The relict watched and waited and said not a word, but it was the ominous silence that comes before the hail.

Mrs. McGuire hated the Watson family collectively, but it was upon John Watson, the man of few words, that she lavished the whole wealth of her South of Ireland hatred, for John Watson had on more than one occasion got the better of her in a wordy encounter.

One time when the boundary dispute was at its height, she had burst upon John as he went to his work in the morning, with a storm of far-reaching and comprehensive epithets. She gave him the history of the Watson family, past, present, and future—especially the future; every Watson that ever left Ireland came in for a brief but pungent notice.

John stood thoughtfully rubbing his chin, and when she stopped, not from lack of words, but from lack of breath, he slowly remarked:

“Mistress McGuire, yer a lady.”

“Yer a liar!” she snapped back, with a still more eloquent burst of invectives.

John lighted his pipe with great deliberation, and when it was drawing nicely he took it from his mouth and said, more to himself than to her:

“Stay where ye are, Pat McGuire. It may be hot where ye are, but it would be hotter for ye if ye were here, and ye’d jist have the throuble o’ movin’. Stay where ye are, Pat, wherever ye are.” He walked away leaving Mrs. McGuire with the uncomfortable feeling that he had some way got the best of her.

The Watsons had planted their potatoes beside the fence, and did not dream of evil. But one morning in the early autumn, the earliest little Watson who went out to get a basin of water out of the rain barrel, to wash the “sleeps” out of his eyes, dropped the basin in his astonishment, for the fence was gone—it was removed to Mrs. McGuire’s woodpile, and the lady herself was industriously digging the potatoes.

Bugsey, for he was the early little bird, ran back into the house screaming:

“She’s robbed us! She’s robbed us! and tuk our fence.”

The Watson family gathered as quickly as a fire brigade at the sound of the gong, but in the scramble for garments some were less fortunate than others. Wee Tommy, who was a little heavier sleeper than the others, could find nothing to put on but one overshoe and an old chest

protector of his mother's, but he arrived at the front, nevertheless. Tommy was not the boy to desert his family for any minor consideration such as clothes.

Mrs. McGuire leaned on her hoe and nonchalantly regarded the gathering forces. She had often thought out the scene, and her air of indifference was somewhat overdone.

The fence was on her ground, so it was, and so were two rows of the potatoes. She could do what she liked with her own, so she could. She didn't ask them to plant potatoes on her ground. If they wanted to stand there gawkin' at her, they wur welcome. She always did like comp'ny; but she was afraid the childer would catch cowl'd, they were dressed so loight for so late in the season. She picked up the last pailful as she spoke, and retired into her own house, leaving the Watson family to do the same.

Mrs. Watson counselled peace. John ate his breakfast in silence; but the young Watsons, and even Pearlie, thirsted for revenge. Bugsey Watson forgot his Band of Hope teaching of returning good for evil, and standing on the disputed territory, he planted his little bare legs far apart and shouted, dancing up and down to the rhythm:

Chew tobacco, chew tobacco,
Spit, spit, spit!
Old McGuire, old McGuire,
Nit, nit, nit!

Mrs. McGuire did occasionally draw comfort from an old clay pipe—but Bugsey's punishment was near.

A long shadow fell upon him, and turning around he found himself face to face with Mary Barner who stood spellbound, listening to her lately installed Band of Hoper!

Bugsey's downfall was complete! He turned and ran down the road and round behind an elevator, where half an hour later Pearl found him shedding penitential tears, not alas! because he had sinned, but because he had been found out.

The maternal instinct was strong in Pearlie. Bugsey in tears was in need of consolation; Bugsey was always in need of admonition. So she combined them:

"Don't cry, alannah. Maybe Miss Barner didn't hear yez at all at all. Ladies like her do be thinkin' great thoughts and never knowin' what's forminst them. Mrs. Francis never knows what ye'r sayin' to her at the toime; ye could say 'chew tobacco, chew tobacco' all ye liked before her; but what for did ye sass owld lady McGuire? Haven't I towld ye time out of mind that a soft answer turns away wrath, and forbye makes them madder than anything ye could say to them?"

Bugsey tearfully declared he would never go to Band of Hope again. Taffy or no taffy, he could not bear to face her.

"Go tell her, Bugsey man," Pearlie urged. "Tell her ye'r sorry. I w'uldn't mind tellin' Miss Barner anything. Even if I'd kilt a man and hid his corp, she's the very one I'd git to help me to give me a h'ist with him into the river, she's that good and swate."

The subject of this doubtful compliment had come down so early that morning believing that Mrs. McGuire was confined to her bed with rheumatism. Seeing the object of her solicitude up and about, she would have returned without knowing what had happened; but Bugsey's remarkable musical turn decided her that Mrs. McGuire was suffering from worse than a rheumatic knee. She went into the little house, and heard all about it.

When she went home a little later she found Robert Roblin Watson, with resolute heart but hanging head, waiting for her on the back step. What passed between them neither of them

ever told, but in a very few minutes Robert Roblin ran gaily homeward, happy in heart, shriven of his sin, and with one little spot on his cheek which tingled with rapture. Better still, he went, like a man, and made his peace with Mrs. McGuire!

CHAPTER VI THE MUSICAL SENSE

Mrs. Francis, in the sweetest of tea gowns, was intent upon Dr. Ernestus Parker's book on "Purposeful Motherhood." It was the chapter dealing with the "Musical Sense in Children" which engrossed Mrs. Francis's attention. She had just begun subdivision C in the chapter, "When and How the Musical Sense Is Developed," when she thought of Danny. She fished into the waste-paper basket for her little red note-book, and with her silver mounted pencil she made the following entry:

DANIEL WATSON,
AGED 4.
MUS. SENSE. DEVELOPED. IF SO, WHEN. IF NOT,
HOW, AND AT ONCE.

She read on feverishly. She felt herself to be in the throes of a great idea.

Then she called Camilla. Camilla is always so practical, she thought.

To Camilla she elaborated the vital points of Dr. Parker's theory of the awakening of the musical sense, reading here and there from the book, rapidly and unintelligibly. She was so excited she was incoherent. Camilla listened patiently, although her thoughts were with her biscuits in the oven below.

"And now, Camilla," she said when she had gone all over the subject, "how can we awaken the musical sense in Daniel? You know I value your opinion so much."

Camilla was ready.

"Take him to hear Professor Welsman play," she said. "The professor will give his recital here on the 15th."

Mrs. Francis wrote rapidly. "I believe," she said looking up, "your suggestion is a good one. You shall have the credit of it in my notes."

Plan of awakening mus. sense suggested by C——.

Camilla smiled. "Thank you, Mrs. Francis. You are very kind."

When Camilla went back to the kitchen and took the biscuits from the oven, she laughed softly to herself.

"This is going to be a good time for some further suggestions. Pearl must go with Danny. What a treat it will be for poor little Pearl! Then we must have a new suit for Danny, new dress for Pearl, new cap for D., new hat for P., all suggested by C. There are a few suggestions which C. will certainly make."

On the evening of the professor's recital there were no two happier people in the audience than Pearlie Watson and her brother Daniel Mulcahey Watson; not because the great professor was about to interpret for them the music of the masters—that was not the cause of their happiness—but because of the good supper they had had and the good clothes they wore, their hearts were glad. They had spent the afternoon at Mrs. Francis's (suggested by C.). Danny's new coat had a velvet collar lovely to feel (suggested by C.). Pearl had a wonderful new dress—the kind she had often dreamed of—made out of one of Mrs. Francis's tea gowns. (Not only suggested but made by C.). It had real buttons on it, and there was not one pin needed. Pearl

felt she was just as well dressed as the little girl on the starch box. Her only grief was that when she had on her coat—which was also new, and represented one-half month of Camilla's wages—the velvet on her dress did not show. But Camilla, anticipating this difficulty, laid back the fronts in stunning lapels, and to complete the arrangement, put one of her own lace collars around the neck of the coat, the ends coming down over the turned-back fronts. When Pearl looked in the glass she could not believe her eyes!

Mr. Francis did not attend piano recitals, nor the meetings of the Browning Club. Mrs. Francis was often deeply grieved with James for his indifference in regard to these matters. But the musical sense in James continued to slumber and sleep.

The piano recital by Professor Welsman was given under the auspices of the Ladies' Aid of the Methodist Church, the proceeds to be given toward defraying the cost of the repairs on the parsonage.

The professor was to be assisted by local talent, it said on the programmes. Pearl was a little bit disappointed about the programmes. She had told Danny that there would be a chairman who would say: "I see the first item on this here programme is remarks by the chair, but as yez all know I ain't no hand at makin' a speech we'll pass on to the next item." But there was not a sign of a chairman, not even a chair. The people just came up themselves, without anybody telling them, and did their piece and went back. It looked sort of bold to Pearl.

First the choir came in and sang: "Praise Waiteth for Thee, O Lord, in Zion." Pearl did not like the way they treated her friend Dr. Clay. Twice when he began to sing a little piece by himself, doing all right, too, two or three of them broke in on him and took the words right out of his mouth. Pearl had seen people get slapped faces for things like that. Pearl thought it just served them right when the doctor stopped singing and let them have it their own way.

When the professor came up the aisle everybody leaned forward to have a good look at him. "He is just like folks only for his hair," Pearl thought. Pearl lifted Danny on her knee and told him to look alive now. She knew what they were there for.

Then the professor began to play. Indifferently at first after the manner of his kind, clever gymnastics to limber up his fingers perhaps, and perhaps to show how limber they are; runs and trills, brilliant execution, one hand after the other in mad pursuit, crossing over, back again, up and down in the vain endeavour to come up with the other hand; crescendo, diminuendo, trills again!

Danny yawned widely.

"When's he goin' to begin?" he asked, sleepily.

Mrs. Francis watched Danny eagerly. The musical sense was liable to wake up any minute. But it would have to hurry, for Daniel Mulcahey was liable to go to sleep any minute.

Pearl was disgusted with the professor and her thoughts fell into vulgar baseball slang:

"Playin' to the grand stand, ain't ye? instead o' gettin' down to work. That'll do for ketch and toss. Play the game! Deliver the goods!"

Then the professor began the full arm chords with sudden fury, writhing upon the stool as he struck the angry notes from the piano. Pearl's indignation ran high.

"He's lost his head—he's up in the air!" she shouted, but the words were lost in the clang of musical discords.

But wait! Pearl sat still and listened. There was something doing. It was a Welsh rhapsodie that he was playing. It was all there—the mountains and the rivers, and the towering cliffs with glimpses of the sea where waves foam on the rocks, and sea-fowl wheel and scream in

the wind, and then a bit of homely melody as the country folk drive home in the moonlight, singing as only the Welsh can sing, the songs of the heart; songs of love and home, songs of death and sorrowing, that stab with sudden sweetness. A child cries somewhere in the dark, cries for his mother who will come no more. Then a burst of patriotic fire, as the people fling defiance at the conquering foe, and hold the mountain passes till the last man falls. But the glory of the fight and the march of many feet trail off into a wailing chant—the death song of the brave men who have died. The widow mourns, and the little children weep comfortless in their mountain home, and the wind rushes through the forest, and the river foams furiously down the mountain, falling in billows of lace over the rocks, and the sun shines over all, cold and pitiless.

“Why, Pearlie Watson, what are you crying for?” Mrs. Francis whispered severely. Pearl’s sobs had disturbed her. Danny lay asleep on Pearl’s knees, and her tears fell fast on his tangled curls.

“I ain’t cryin’, I ain’t cryin’ a bit. You leave me alone,” Pearl blubbered rudely, shaking off Mrs. Francis’s shapely hand.

Mrs. Francis was shocked. What in the world was making Pearl cry?

The next morning Mrs. Francis took out her little red book to enter the result of her experiment, and sat looking long and earnestly at its pages. Then she drew a writing pad toward her and wrote an illuminative article on “Late Hours a Frequent and Fruitful Cause of Irritability in Children.”

CHAPTER VII

“ONE OF MANITOBA’S PROSPEROUS FARMERS”

Mr. Samuel Motherwell was a wealthy farmer who lived a few miles from Millford. Photographs of Mr. Motherwell’s premises may be seen in the agricultural journals, machinery catalogues, advertisements for woven wire, etc.—“the home of one of Manitoba’s prosperous farmers.”

The farm buildings were in good repair; a large red barn with white trimmings surmounted by a creaking windmill; a long, low machine shed filled with binders, seeders, disc-harrows—everything that is needed for the seed-time and harvest and all that lies between; a large stone house, square and gray, lonely and bare, without a tree or a shrub around it. Mr. Motherwell did not like vines or trees around a house. They were apt to attract lightning and bring vermin.

Potatoes grew from the road to the house; and around the front door, as high as the veranda, weeds flourished in abundance, undisturbed and unnoticed.

Behind the cookhouse a bed of poppies flamed scarlet against the general sombreness, and gave a strange touch of colour to the common grayness. They seemed out of place in the busy farmyard. Everything else was there for use. Everybody hurried but the poppies; idlers of precious time, suggestive of slothful sleep, they held up their brazen faces in careless indifference.

Sam had not planted them—you may be sure of that. Mrs. Motherwell would tell you of an English girl she had had to work for her that summer who had brought the seed with her from England, and of how one day when she sent the girl to weed the onions, she had found her blubbering and crying over what looked to Mrs. Motherwell nothing more than weeds. The girl then told her she had brought the seed with her and planted it there. She was the craziest thing, this Polly Bragg. She went every night to see them because they were like a “bit of home,” she said. Mrs. Motherwell would tell you just what a ridiculous creature she was!

“I never see the beat o’ that girl,” Mrs. Motherwell would say. “Them eyes of hers were always red with homesickness, and there was no reason for it in the world, her gettin’ more wages than she ever got before, and more’n she was earnin’, as I often told her. Land! the way that girl would sing when she had got a letter from home, the queerest songs ye ever heard:

Down by the biller there grew a green willer,
Weeping all night with the bank for a piller.

Well, I had to stop her at last,” Mrs. Motherwell would tell you with an apologetic swallow, which showed that even generous people have to be firm sometimes in the discharge of unpleasant duties.

“And, mind you,” Mrs. Motherwell would go on, with a grieved air, “just as the busy time came on didn’t she up and take the fever—you never can depend on them English girls—and when the doctor was outside there in the buggy waitin’ for her—he took her to the hospital—I declare if we didn’t find her blubberin’ over them poppies, and not a flower on them no mor’n nothing.”

Sam Motherwell and his wife were nominally Presbyterians. At the time that the Millford Presbyterian Church was built Sam had given twenty-five dollars toward it, the money having

been secured in some strange way by the wiles of Purvis Thomas, the collector. Everybody was surprised at Sam's prodigality. The next year, a new collector—for Purvis Thomas had gone away—called on Mr. Motherwell.

The grain was just beginning to show a slight tinge of gold. It was one of those cloudless sunshiny days in the beginning of August, when a faint blue haze lies on the Tiger Hills, and the joy of being alive swells in the breast of every living thing. The creek, swollen with the July rain, ran full in its narrow channel, sparkling and swirling over its gravelly bed, and on the green meadow below the house a herd of shorthorns contentedly cropped the tender after-grass.

In the farmyard a gigantic turkey-gobbler marched majestically with arched neck and spreading wings, feeling himself very much the king of the castle; good-natured ducks puddled contentedly in a trough of dirty water; pigeons, white winged and graceful, circled and wheeled in the sunshine; querulous-voiced hens strutted and scratched, and gossiped openly of mysterious nests hidden away.

Sam stood leaning on a pitchfork in front of the barn door. He was a stout man of about fifty years of age, with an ox-like face. His countenance showed the sullen stolidity of a man who spoke little but listened always, of a man who indulged in suspicious thoughts. He knew everything about his neighbours, good and bad. He might forget the good, but never the evil. The tragedies, the sins, the misdeeds of thirty years ago were as fresh in his memory as the scandal of yesterday. No man had ever been tempted beyond his strength but Sam Motherwell knew the manner of his undoing. He extended no mercy to the fallen; he suggested no excuse for the erring.

The collector made known his errand. Sam became animated at once.

"What?" he cried angrily, "ain't that blamed thing paying yet? I've a good notion to pull my money out of it and be done with it. What do you take me for anyway?"

The collector ventured to call his attention to his prosperous surroundings, and evident wealth.

"That's like you town fellows," he said indignantly. "You never think of the hired help and twine bills, and what it costs to run a place like this. I pay every time I go, anyway. There ain't a time that I let the plate go by me, when I'm there. By gosh! you seem to think I've money to burn."

The collector departed empty-handed.

The next time Sam went to Millford he was considerably surprised to have the young minister, the Reverend Hugh Grantley, stop him on the street and hand him twenty-five dollars.

"I understand, sir, that you wish to withdraw the money that you invested in the Lord's work," he said as he handed the money to Sam, whose fingers mechanically closed over the bills as he stared at the young man.

The Rev. Hugh Grantley was a typical Scotchman, tall and broad shouldered, with an eye like cold steel. Not many people had contradicted the Rev. Hugh Grantley, at least to his face. His voice could be as sweet as the ripple of a mountain stream, or vibrate with the thunder of the surf that beats upon his own granite cliffs.

"The Lord sends you seed-time and harvest," he said, fixing his level gray eye on the other man, who somehow avoided his gaze, "has given you health of body and mind, sends you rain from heaven, makes his sun to shine upon you, increases your riches from year to year. You have given Him twenty-five dollars in return and you regret it. Is that so?"

“I don’t know that I just said that,” the other man stammered. “I don’t see no need of these fine churches and paid preachers. It isn’t them as goes to church most that is the best.”

“Oh, I see,” the young man said, “you would prefer to give your money for the relief of the poor, for hospitals or children’s homes, or something like that. Is that so?”

“I don’t know as there’s any reason for me givin’ up the money I work hard for.” Sam was touched on a vital spot.

“Well, I’ll tell you the reason,” the minister said; his voice was no louder, but it fell with a sledge-hammer emphasis. He moved a step nearer his companion, and some way caught and held his wavering vision. “God owns one-tenth of all that stuff you call your own. You have cheated Him out of His part all these years, and He has carried you over from year to year, hoping that you will pay up without harsh proceedings. You are a rich man in this world’s goods, but your soul is lean and hungry and naked. Selfishness and greed have blinded your eyes. If you could see what a contemptible, good-for-nothing creature you are in God’s sight, you would call on the hills to fall on you. Why, man, I’d rather take my chances with the gambler, the felon, the drunkard, than with you. They may have fallen in a moment of strong temptation; but you are a respectable man merely because it costs money to be otherwise. The Lord can do without your money. Do not think for a minute that God’s work will not go on. ‘He shall have dominion from sea to sea,’ but what of you? You shall lie down and die like the dog. You shall go out into outer darkness. The world will not be one bit better because you have passed through it.”

Sam was incoherent with rage. “See here,” he sputtered, “what do you know about it? I pay my debts. Everybody knows that.”

“Hold on, hold on,” the young man said gently, “you pay the debts that the law compels you to pay. You have to pay your hired help and your threshing bills, and all that, because you would be ‘sued’ if you didn’t. There is one debt that is left to a man’s honour, the debt he owes to God, and to the poor and the needy. Do you pay that debt?”

“Well, you’ll never get a cent out of me anyway. You have a mighty poor way of asking for money—maybe if you had taken me the right way you might have got some.”

“Excuse me, Mr. Motherwell,” the young man replied with unaffected good humour, “I did not ask you for money at all. I gave you back what you did give. No member of our congregation will ask you for any, though there may come a time when you will ask us to take it.”

Sam Motherwell broke into a scornful laugh, and, turning away, went angrily down the street. The fact that the minister had given him back his money was a severe shock to some of his deep-rooted opinions. He had always regarded churches as greedy institutions, looking and begging for money from everyone; ministers as parasites on society, living without honest labour, preying on the working man. Sam’s favourite story was the old one about the woman whose child got a coin stuck in its throat. She did not send for the doctor, but for the minister! Sam had always seen considerable truth in this story and had told it to every minister he had met.

He told himself now that he was glad to get back the money, twenty-five dollars was not picked up every day. But he was not glad. The very touch of the bills was distasteful to him!

He did not tell his wife of the occurrence. Nor did he put the money in the black bag, where their money was always kept in the bureau drawer, safe under lock and key. He could not do that without telling his wife where it came from. So he shoved it carelessly into the

pocket of the light overcoat that he was wearing. Sam Motherwell was not a careless man about money, but the possession of this particular twenty-five dollars gave him no pleasure.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OTHER DOCTOR

The young minister went down the street with a thoughtful face.

"I wonder if I did right," he was thinking. "It is a hard thing to talk that way to a human being, and yet it seems to be the only thing to do. Oh, what it would mean for God's work if all these rich farmers were saved from their insatiable greed."

He turned into Dr. Clay's office.

"Oh, Clay!" he burst out when he had answered the young man's friendly greeting, "it is an awful thing to lay open a mean man's meanness, and tell him the plain truth about himself."

"It is, indeed," the young doctor answered, "but perhaps it is heroic treatment your man needed, for I would infer that you have been reading the law to someone. Who was it?"

"Sam Motherwell," the minister answered.

"Well, you had a good subject," the doctor said gravely. "For aggravated greed, and fatty degeneration of the conscience, Mr. Motherwell is certainly a wonder. When that poor English girl took the fever out here, it was hard to convince Sam that she was really sick. 'Look at them red cheeks of hers,' he said to me, 'and her ears ain't cold, and her eyes is bright as ever. She's just lookin' for a rest, I think, if you wuz to ask me.'"

"How did you convince him?"

"I told him the girl would have to have a trained nurse, and would be sick probably six weeks, and then they couldn't get the poor girl off their hands quick enough. 'I don't want that girl dyin' round here,' Sam said."

"Is Mrs. Motherwell as close as he is?" the minister asked after a pause.

"Some say worse," the doctor replied, "but I don't believe it. She can't be."

The minister's face was troubled. "I wish I knew what to do for them," he said sadly.

"I'll tell you something you can do for me," the doctor said sitting up straight, "or at least something you may try to do."

"What is it?" the minister asked.

"Devise some method, suggest some course of treatment, whereby my tried and trusty horse Pleurisy will cease to look so much like a saw-horse. I'm afraid the Humane Society will get after me."

The minister laughed.

Everybody knew Dr. Clay's horse; there was no danger of mistaking him for any other. He was tall and lean and gaunt. The doctor had bought him believing him to be in poor condition, which good food and good care would remedy. But as the months went by, in spite of all the doctor could do, Pleurisy remained the same, eating everything the doctor brought him, and looking for more, but showing no improvement.

"I've tried everything except egg-nog," the doctor went on, "and pink pills, and I would like to turn over the responsibility to someone else. I think perhaps his trouble must be mental—some gnawing sorrow that keeps him awake at night. I don't mind driving Pleurisy where people know me and know that I do feed him occasionally, but it is disconcerting when I meet strangers to have kind-looking old ladies shake their heads at me. I know what they're thinking, and I believe Pleurisy really enjoys it, and then when I drive past a farmhouse to see

the whole family run out and hold their sides is not a pleasure. Talk about scattering sunshine! Pleurisy leaves a trail of merriment wherever he goes.”

“What difference does it make what people think when your conscience is clear. You do feed your horse, you feed him well, so what’s the odds,” inquired the Rev. Hugh Grantley, son of granite, child of the heather, looking with lifted brows at his friend.

“Oh, there you go!” the doctor said smiling. “That’s the shorter catechism coming out in you—that Scotch complacency is the thing I wish I had, but I can’t help feeling like a rogue, a cheat, an oppressor of the helpless, when I look at Pleurisy.”

“Horace,” the minister said kindly, with his level gray eyes fixed thoughtfully on his friend’s handsome face, “a man in either your calling or mine has no right to ask himself how he feels. Don’t feel your own pulse too much. It is disquieting. It is for us to go on, never faltering and never looking behind.”

“In other words, to make good, and never mind the fans,” the doctor smiled. Then he became serious. “But Grantley, I am not always so sure I am right as you are. You see a sinner is always a sinner and in danger of damnation, for which there is but one cure, but a sick man may have quinsy or he may have diphtheria, and the treatment is different. But oh! Grantley, I wish I had that Scotch-gray confidence in myself that you have. If you were a doctor you would tell a man he had typhoid, and he’d proceed to have it, even if he had only set out to have an ingrowing toe-nail. But my patients have a decided will of their own. There’s young Ab Cowan—they sent for me last night to go out to see him. He has a bad attack of quinsy, but it is the strangest case I ever saw.”

The gaiety had died out of the young man’s face, and he looked perplexed and anxious.

“I do wish the old doctor and I were on speaking terms,” he concluded.

“And are you not?” the minister asked in surprise. “Miss Barner told me that you had been very kind—and I thought—” There was a flush on the minister’s face, and he hesitated.

“Oh, Miss Barner and I are the best of friends,” the doctor said. “I say, Grantley, hasn’t that little girl had one lonely life, and isn’t she the brave little soul!”

The minister was silent, all but his eyes.

The doctor went on:

“‘Who hath sorrow, who hath woe, who hath redness of eyes?’ Solomon, wasn’t it, who said it was ‘they who tarry long at the wine’? I think he should have added ‘those who wait at home.’ Don’t you think she is a remarkably beautiful girl, Grantley?” he asked abruptly.

“I do, indeed,” the minister answered, giving his friend a searching glance. “But how about the doctor, why will he not speak to you?” He was glad of a chance to change the subject.

“I suppose the old man’s pride is hurt every time he sees me. He evidently thinks he is all the medical aid they need around here. But I do wish he would come with me to see this young Cowan; it’s the most puzzling case I’ve ever met. There are times, Grantley, when I think I should be following the plough.”

The minister looked at him thoughtfully.

“A man can only do his best, Horace,” he said kindly.

CHAPTER IX

THE LIVE WIRE

“Who is this young gentleman or lady?” Dr. Clay asked of Pearlie Watson one day when he met her wheeling a baby carriage with an abnormally fat baby in it.

“This is the Czar of all the Rooshia,” Pearl answered gravely, “and I’m his body-guard.”

The doctor’s face showed no surprise as he stepped back to get a better look at the czar, who began to squirm at the delay.

“See the green plush on his kerridge,” Pearl said proudly, “and every stitch he has on is hand-made, and was did for him, too, and he’s fed every three hours, rain or shine, hit or miss.”

“Think of that!” the doctor exclaimed with emphasis, “and yet some people tell us that the Czar has a hard time of it.”

Pearl drew a step nearer, moving the carriage up and down rapidly to appease the wrath of the czar, who was expressing his disapproval in a very lumpy cry.

“I’m just ’tendin’, you know, about him bein’ the czar,” she said confidentially. “You see, I mind him every day, and that’s the way I play. Maudie Ducker said one day I never had no time to play cos we wuz so pore, and that started me. It’s a lovely game.”

The doctor nodded. He knew something of “ ’tendin’ games” too.

“I have to taste everything he eats, for fear of Paris green,” Pearl went on, speaking now in the loud official tone of the body-guard. “I have to stand between him and the howlin’ mob thirstin’ for his gore.”

“He seems to howl more than the mob,” the doctor said smiling.

“He’s afraid we’re plottin’,” Pearl whispered. “Can’t trust no one. He ain’t howlin’. That’s his natcheral voice when he’s talkin’ Rooshan. He don’t know one English word, only ‘Goo!’ But he’ll say that every time. See now. How is a precious luvvy-duvvy? See the pitty man, pull um baby toofin!”

At which the czar, secure in his toothlessness, rippled his fat face into dimples, and triumphantly brought forth a whole succession of “goos.”

“Ain’t he a peach?” Pearlie said with pride. “Some kids won’t show off worth a cent when ye want them to, but he’ll say ‘goo’ if you even nudge him. His mother thinks ‘goo’ is awful childish, and she is at him all the time to say ‘Daddy-dinger,’ but he never lets on he hears her. Say, doctor”—Pearlie’s face was troubled—“what do you think of his looks? Just between ourselves. Hasn’t he a fine little nub of a nose? Do you see anything about him to make his mother cry?”

The doctor looked critically at the czar, who returned his gaze with stolid indifference.

“I never saw a more perfect nub on any nose,” he answered honestly. “He’s a fine big boy, and his mother should be proud of him.”

“There now, what did I tell you!” Pearlie cried delightedly, nodding her head at an imaginary audience.

“That’s what I always say to his mother, but she’s so tuk up with pictures of pretty kids with big eyes and curly hair, she don’t seem to be able to get used to him. She never says his nose is a pug, but she says it’s ‘different,’ and his voice is not what she wanted. He cries lumpy, I know, but his goos are all right. The kid in the book she is readin’ could say ‘Daddy-

dinger' before he was as old as the czar is, and it's awful hard on her. You see, he can't pat-a-cake, or this-little-pig-went-to-market, or wave a bye-bye or nothin'. I never told her what Danny could do when he was this age. But I am workin' hard to get him to say 'Daddy-dinger.' She has her heart set on that. Well, I must go on now."

The doctor lifted his hat, and the imperial carriage moved on.

She had gone a short distance when she remembered something:

"I'll let you know when he says it, doc!" she shouted.

"All right, don't forget," he smiled back.

When Pearlie turned the next corner she met Maudie Ducker. Maudie Ducker had on a new plaid dress with velvet trimming, and Maudie knew it.

"Is that your Sunday dress," she asked Pearl, looking critically at Pearlie's faded little brown winsey.

"My, no!" Pearlie answered cheerfully. "This is just my morning dress. I wear my blue satting in the afternoon, and on Sundays, my purple velvet with the watter-plait, and basque-yoke of tartaric plaid, garnished with lace. Yours is a nice little plain dress. That stuff fades though; ma lined a quilt for the boys' bed with it and it faded gray."

Maudie Ducker was a "perfect little lady." Her mother often said so; Maudie could not bear to sit near a child in school who had on a dirty pinafore or ragged clothes, and the number of days that she could wear a pinafore without its showing one trace of stain was simply wonderful! Maudie had two dolls which she never played with. They were propped up against the legs of the parlour table. Maudie could play the "Java March" and "Mary's Pet Waltz" on the piano. She always spoke in a hushed vox tremulo, and never played any rough games. She could not bear to touch a baby, because it might put a sticky little finger on her pinafore. All of which goes to show what a perfect little lady she was.

When Maudie made inquiries of Pearl Watson as to her Sabbath-day attire, her motives were more kindly than Pearl thought. Maudie's mother was giving her a party. Hitherto the guests upon such occasions had been selected with great care, and with respect to social standing, and blue china, and correct enunciation. This time they were selected with greater care, but with respect to their fathers' politics. All conservatives and undecided voters' children were included. The fight-to-a-finish-for-the-grand-old-party Reformers were tabooed.

Algernon Evans, otherwise known as the Czar of all the Rooshias, only son of J. H. Evans, editor of the Millford *Mercury*, could not be overlooked. Hence the reason for asking Pearl Watson, his body-guard.

Millford had two weekly newspapers—one Conservative in its tendencies and the other one Reform. Between them there existed a feud, long standing, unquenchable, constant. It went with the printing press, the subscription list and the good-will of the former owner, when the paper changed hands.

The feud was discernible in the local news as well as in the editorials. In the Reform paper, which was edited at the time of which we write by a Tipperary man named McSorley, you might read of a distressing accident which befell one Simon Henry (also a Reformer), while that great and good man was abroad upon an errand of mercy, trying to induce a drunken man to go quietly to his home and family. Mr. Henry was eulogised for his kind act, and regret was expressed that Mr. Henry should have met with such rough usage while endeavouring to hold out a helping hand to one unfortunate enough to be held in the demon chains of intemperance.

In the Conservative paper the following appeared:

We regret to hear that Simon Henry, secretary of the Young Liberal Club, got mixed up in a drunken brawl last evening and as a result will be confined to his house for a few days. We trust his injuries are not serious, as his services are indispensable to his party in the coming campaign.

Reports of concerts, weddings, even deaths, were tinged with partyism. When Daniel Grover, grand old Conservative war-horse, was gathered to his fathers at the ripe age of eighty-seven years, the Reform paper said that Mr. Grover's death was not entirely unexpected, as his health had been failing for some time, the deceased having passed his seventieth birthday.

McSorley, the Liberal editor, being an Irishman, was not without humour, but Evans, the other one, revelled in it. He was like the little boys who stick pins in frogs, not that they bear the frogs any ill-will, but for the fun of seeing them jump. He would sit half the night over his political editorials, smiling grimly to himself, and when he threw himself back in his chair and laughed like a boy the knife was turned in someone!

One day Mr. James Ducker, lately retired farmer, sometimes insurance agent, read in the Winnipeg *Telegram* that his friend the Honourable Thomas Snider had chaperoned an Elk party to St. Paul. Mr. Ducker had but a hazy idea of the duties of a chaperon, but he liked the sound of it, and it set him thinking. He remembered when Tom Snider had entered politics with a decayed reputation, a large whiskey bill, and about \$2.20 in cash. Now he rode in a private car, and had a suite of rooms at the Empire, and the papers often spoke of him as "mine host" Snider. Mr. Ducker turned over the paper and read that the genial Thomas had replied in a very happy manner to a toast at the Elks' banquet. Whereupon Mr. Ducker became wrapped in deep thought, and during this passive period he distinctly heard his country's call! The call came in these words: "If Tom Snider can do it, why not me?"

The idea took hold of him. He began to brush his hair artfully over the bald spot. He made strange faces at his mirror, wondering which side of his face would be the best to have photographed for his handbills. He saw himself like Cincinnatus of old called from the plough to the Senate, but he told himself there could not have been as good a thing in it then as there is now, or Cincinnatus would not have come back to the steers.

Mr. Ducker's social qualities developed amazingly. He courted his neighbours assiduously, sending presents from his garden, stopping to have protracted conversations with men whom he had known but slightly before. Every man whose name was on the voters' list began to have a new significance for him.

There was one man whom he feared—that was Evans, editor of the Conservative paper. Sometimes when his fancy painted for him a gay and alluring picture of carrying "the proud old Conservative banner that has suffered defeat, but, thank God! never disgrace in the face of the foe" (quotation from speech Mr. Ducker had prepared), sometimes he would in the midst of the most glowing and glorious passages inadvertently think of Evans, and it gave him goose-flesh. Mr. Ducker had lived in and around Millford for some time. So had Evans, and Evans had a most treacherous memory. You could not depend on him to forget anything!

When Evans was friendly with him, Mr. Ducker's hopes ran high, but when he caught Evans looking at him with that boyish smile of his twinkling in his eyes, the vision of chaperoning an Elk party to St. Paul became very shadowy indeed.

Mr. Ducker tried diplomacy. He withdrew his insurance advertisement from McSorley's paper, and doubled his space in Evans's, paying in advance. He watched the trains for visitors

and reported them to Evans. He wrote breezy little local briefs in his own light cow-like way for Evans's paper.

But Mr. Ducker's journalistic fervour received a serious set back one day. He rushed into the *Mercury* office just as the paper went to press with the news that old Mrs. Williamson had at last winged her somewhat delayed flight. Evans thanked him with some cordiality for letting him know in time to make a note of it, and asked him to go around to Mrs. Williamson's home and find out a few facts for the obituary.

Mr. Ducker did so with great cheerfulness, rather out of keeping with the nature of his visit. He felt that his way was growing brighter. When he reached the old lady's home he was received with all courtesy by her slow-spoken son. Mr. Ducker bristled with importance as he made known his errand, in a neat speech, in which official dignity and sympathy were artistically blended. "The young may die, but the old must die," he reminded Mr. Williamson as he produced his pencil and tablet. Mr. Williamson gave a detailed account of his mother's early life, marriages first and second, and located all her children with painstaking accuracy. "Left to mourn her loss," Mr. Ducker wrote.

"And the cause of her death?" Mr. Ducker inquired gently, "general breaking down of the system, I suppose?" with his pencil poised in the air.

Mr. Williamson knit his shaggy brows.

"Well, I wouldn't say too much about mother's death if I were you. Stick to her birth, and the date she joined the church, and her marriages—they're sure. But mother's death is a little uncertain, just yet."

A toothless chuckle came from the adjoining room. Mrs. Williamson had been an interested listener to the conversation.

"Order my coffin, Ducker, on your way down, but never mind the flowers, they might not keep," she shrilled after him as he beat a hasty retreat.

When Mr. Ducker, crestfallen and humiliated, re-entered the *Mercury* office a few moments later, he was watched by two twinkling Irish eyes, that danced with unholy merriment at that good man's discomfiture. They belonged to Ignatius Benedicto McSorley, the editor of the other paper.

But Mrs. Ducker was hopeful. A friend of hers in Winnipeg had already a house in view for them, and Mrs. Ducker had decided the church they would attend when the session opened, and what day she would have, and many other important things that it is well to have one's mind made up on and not leave to the last. Maudie Ducker had been taken into the secret, and began to feel sorry for the other little girls whose papas were contented to let them live always in such a pokey little place as Millford. Maudie also began to dream dreams of sweeping in upon the Millford people in flowing robes and waving plumes and sparkling diamonds, in a gorgeous red automobile. Wilford Ducker only of the Ducker family was not taken into the secret. He was too young, his mother said, to understand the change.

The nomination day was drawing near, which had something to do with the date of Maudie Ducker's party. Mrs. Ducker told Maudie they must invite the czar and Pearl Watson, though, of course, she did not say the czar. She said Algernon Evans and that little Watson girl. Maudie, being a perfect little lady objected to Pearl Watson on account of her scanty wardrobe, and to the czar's moist little hands; but Mrs. Ducker, knowing that the czar's father was their long suit, stood firm.

Mr. Ducker had said to her that very morning, rubbing his hands, and speaking in the conspirator's voice: "We must leave no stone unturned. This is the time of seed-sowing, my

dear. We must pull every wire.”

The czar was a wire, therefore they proceeded to pull him. They did not know he was a live wire until later.

Pearl Watson's delight at being asked to a real party knew no bounds. Maudie need not have worried about Pearl's appearing at the feast without the festal robe. The dress that Camilla had made for her was just waiting for such an occasion to air its loveliness. Anything that was needed to complete her toilet was supplied by her kind-hearted mistress, the czar's mother.

But Mrs. Evans stood looking wistfully after her only son as Pearl wheeled him gaily down the walk. He was beautifully dressed in the finest of mull and valenciennes; his carriage was the loveliest they could buy; Pearl in her neat hat and dress was a little nurse girl to be proud of. But Mrs. Evans's pretty face was troubled. She was thinking of the pretty baby pictures in the magazines, and Algernon was so—different! And his nose was—strange, too, and she had massaged it so carefully, too, and when, oh when, would he say “Daddy-dinger!”

But Algernon was not envious of any other baby's beauty that afternoon, nor worried about his nose either as he bumped up and down in his carriage in glad good humour, and delivered full-sized gurgling “goos” at every person he met, even throwing them along the street in the prodigality of his heart, as he waved his fat hands and thumped his heavy little heels.

Pearl held her head high and was very much the body-guard as she lifted the weighty ruler to the ground. Mrs. Ducker ran down the steps and kissed the czar ostentatiously, pouring out such a volume of admiring and endearing epithets that Pearl stood in bewilderment, wondering why she had never heard of this before. Mrs. Ducker carried the czar into the house, Pearl following with one eye shut, which was her way of expressing perplexity.

Two little girls in very fluffy short skirts, sat demurely in the hammock, keeping their dresses clean and wondering if there would be ice-cream. Within doors Maudie worried out the “Java March” on the piano, to a dozen or more patient little listeners. On the lawn several little girls played croquet. There were no boys at the party. Wilford was going to have the boys—that is, the Conservative boys the next day. Mrs. Ducker did not believe in co-education. Boys are so rough, except Wilford. He had been so carefully brought up, he was not rough at all. He stood awkwardly by the gate watching the girls play croquet. He had been left without a station at his own request. Patsey Watson rode by on a dray wagon, dirty and jolly. Wilford called to him furtively, but Patsey was busy holding on and did not hear him. Wilford sighed heavily. Down at the tracks a freight train shunted and shuddered. Not a boy was in sight. He knew why. The farmers were loading cattle cars.

Pearl went around to the side lawn where the girls were playing croquet, holding the czar's hand tightly.

“What are you playin'?” she asked.

They told her.

“Can you play it?” Mildred Bates asked.

“I guess I can,” Pearl said modestly. “But I'm always too busy for games like that!”

“Maudie Ducker says you never play,” Mildred Bates said with pity in her voice.

“Maudie Ducker is away off there,” Pearl answered with dignity. “I have more fun in one day than Maudie Ducker'll ever have if she lives to be as old as Melchesidick, and it's not this frowsy standin'-round-doin'-nothin' that you kids call fun either.”

“Tell us about it, Pearl,” they shouted eagerly. Pearl's stories had a charm.

“Well,” Pearl began, “ye know I wash Mrs. Evans’s dishes every day, and lovely ones they are, too, all pink and gold with dinky little ivy leaves crawlin’ out over the edges of the cups. I play I am at the seashore and the tide is comin’ in o’er and o’er the sand and ’round and ’round the land, far as eye can see—that’s out of a book. I put all the dishes into the big drip-pan, and I pertend the tide is risin’ on them, though it’s just me pourin’ on the water. The cups are the boys and the saucers are the girls, the plates are the fathers and mothers and the butter chips are the babies. Then I rush in to save them, but not until they cry ‘Lord save us, we perish!’ Of course, I yell it for them, good and loud too—people don’t just squawk at a time like that—it often scares Mrs. Evans even yet. I save the babies first, I slush them around to clean them, but they never notice that, and I stand them up high and dry in the drip-pan. Then I go in after the girls, and they quiet down the babies in the drip-pan; and then the mothers I bring out, and the boys and the fathers. Sometimes some of the men make a dash out before the women, but you bet I lay them back in a hurry. Then I set the ocean back on the stove, and I rub the babies to get their blood circlin’ again, and I get them all put to bed on the second shelf and they soon forget they were so near death’s door.”

Mary Ducker had finished the “Java March” and “Mary’s Pet Waltz,” and had joined the interested group on the lawn and now stood listening in dull wonder.

“I rub them all and shine them well,” Pearl went on, “and get them all packed off home into the china cupboard, every man jack o’ them singin’ ‘Are we yet alive and see each other’s face,’ Mrs. Evans sings it for them when she’s there.

“Then I get the vegetable dishes and bowls and silverware and all that, and that’s an excursion, and they’re all drunk, not a sober man on board. They sing ‘Sooper up old boys,’ ‘We won’t go home till mornin’ and all that, and crash! a cry bursts from every soul on board. They have struck upon a rock and are going down! Water pours in at the gunnel (that’s just me with more water and soap, you know), but I ain’t sorry for them, for they’re all old enough to know that ‘wine is a mocker, strong drink is ragin’, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.’ But when the crash comes and the swellin’ waters burst in they get sober pret’ quick and come rushin’ up on deck with pale faces to see what’s wrong, and I’ve often seen a big bowl whirl ’round and ’round kind o’ dizzy and say ‘woe is me!’ and sink to the bottom. Mrs. Evans told me that. Anyway I do save them at last, when they see what whiskey is doin’ for them. I rub them all up and send them home. The steel knives—they’re the worst of all. But though they’re black and stained with sin, they’re still our brothers, and so we give them the gold cure—that’s the bath-brick, and they make a fresh start.

“When I sweep the floor I pertend I’m the army of the Lord that comes to clear the way from dust and sin, let the King of Glory in. Under the stove the hordes of sin are awful thick, they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil! But I say the ‘sword of the Lord and of Gideon!’ and let them have it! Sometimes I pertend I’m the woman that lost the piece of silver and I sweep the house diligently till I find it, and once Mrs. Evans did put ten cents in a corner just for fun for me, and I never know when she’s goin’ to do something like that.”

Here Maudie Ducker, who had been listening with growing wonder interrupted Pearl with the cry of “Oh, here’s pa and Mr. Evans. They’re going to take our pictures!”

The little girls were immediately roused out of the spell that Pearl’s story had put upon them, and began to group themselves under the trees, arranging their little skirts and frills.

The czar had toddled on his uncertain little fat legs around to the back door, for he had caught sight of a red head which he knew and liked very much. It belonged to Mary McSorley,

the eldest of the McSorley family, who had brought over to Mrs. Ducker the extra two quarts of milk which Mrs. Ducker had ordered for the occasion.

Mary sat on the back step until Mrs. Ducker should find time to empty her pitcher. Mary was strictly an outsider. Mary's father was a Reformer. He ran the opposition paper to *dear* Mr. Evans. Mary was never well dressed, partly accounted for by the fact that the angels had visited the McSorley home so often. Therefore, for these reasons, Mary sat on the back step, a rank outsider.

The czar, who knew nothing of these things, began to "goo" as soon as he saw her. Mary reached out her arms. The czar stumbled into them and Mary fell to kissing his bald head. She felt more at home with a baby in her arms.

It was at this unfortunate moment that Mr. Ducker and Mr. Evans came around to the rear of the house. Mr. Evans was beginning to think rather more favourably of Mr. Ducker, as the prospective Conservative member. He might do all right—there are plenty worse—he has no brains—but that does not matter. What need has a man of brains when he goes into politics? Brainy men make the trouble. The Grits made that mistake once, elected a brainy man, and they have had no peace since.

Mr. Ducker had adroitly drawn the conversation to a general discussion of children. He knew that Mr. Evans's weak point was his little son Algernon.

"That's a clever looking little chap of yours, Evans," he had remarked carelessly as they came up the street. (Mr. Ducker had never seen the czar closely.) "My wife was just saying the other day that he has a wonderful forehead for a little fellow."

"He has," the other man said smiling, not at all displeased. "It runs clear down to his neck!"

"He can hardly help being clever if there's anything in heredity," Mr. Ducker went on with infinite tact, feeling his rainbow dreams of responding to toasts at Elk banquets drawing nearer and nearer.

Then the Evil Genius of the House of Ducker awoke from his slumber, sat up and took notice! The house that the friend in Winnipeg had selected for them fell into irreparable ruins! Poor Maudie's automobile vanished at a touch. The rosy dreams of Cincinnatus, and of carrying the grand old Conservative banner in the face of the foe turned to clay and ashes!

They turned the corner, and came upon Mary McSorley who sat on the back step with the czar in her arms. Mary's head was hidden as she kissed the czar's fat neck, and in the general babel of voices, within and without, she did not hear them coming.

"Speaking about heredity," Mr. Ducker said suavely, speaking in a low voice, and looking at whom he supposed to be the latest McSorley, "it looks as if there must be something in it over there. Isn't that McSorley over again? Low forehead, pug nose, bulldog tendencies." Mr. Ducker was something of a phrenologist, and went blithely on to his own destruction.

"Now the girl is rather pleasant looking, and some of the others are not bad at all. But this one is surely a regular little Mickey. I believe a person would be safe in saying that he would not grow up a Presbyterian."—Mr. Evans was the worshipful Grand Master of the Loyal Orange Lodge, and well up in the Black, and this remark Mr. Ducker thought he would appreciate.

"McSorley will never be dead while this little fellow lives," Mr. Ducker laughed merrily, rubbing his hands.

The czar looked up and saw his father. Perhaps he understood what had been said, and saw the hurt in his father's face and longed to heal him of it; perhaps the time had come when he

should forever break the goo-goo bonds that had lain upon his speech. He wriggled off Mary's knee, and toddling uncertainly across the grass with a mighty mental conflict in his pudgy little face, held out his dimpled arms with a glad cry of "Daddy-dinger!"

That evening while Mrs. Ducker and Maudie were busy fanning Mr. Ducker and putting wet towels on his head, Mr. Evans sat down to write.

"Some more of that tiresome election stuff, John," his pretty little wife said in disappointment, as she proudly rocked the emancipated czar to sleep.

"Yes, dear, it is election stuff, but it is not a bit tiresome," he answered smiling, as he kissed her tenderly. Several times during the evening, and into the night, she heard him laugh his happy boyish laugh.

James Ducker did not get the nomination.

CHAPTER X

THE BUTCHER-RIDE

Patsey Watson waited on the corner of the street. It was in the early morning and Patsey's face bore marks of a recent and mighty conflict with soap and water. Patsey looked apprehensively every now and then at his home; his mother might emerge any minute and insist on his wearing a coat; his mother could be very tiresome that way sometimes.

It seemed long this morning to wait for the butcher, but the only way to be sure of a ride was to be on the spot. Sometimes there were delays in getting away from home. Getting on a coat was one; finding a hat was the worst of all. Since Bugsey got the nail in his foot and could not go out the hat question was easier. The hat was still hard to find, but not impossible.

Wilford Ducker came along. Wilford had just had a dose of electric oil artfully concealed in a cup of tea, and he felt desperate. His mother had often told him not to play with any of the Watson boys, they were so rough and unladylike in their manner. Perhaps that was why Wilford came over at once to Patsey. Patsey did not care for Wilford Ducker even if he did live in a big house with screen doors on it. Mind you, he did not wear braces yet, only a waist with white buttons on it, and him seven! Patsey's manner was cold.

"You goin' fer butcher-ride?" Wilford asked.

"Yep," Patsey answered with very little warmth.

"Say, Pat, lemme go," Wilford coaxed.

"Nope," Patsey replied, indifferently.

"Aw, do, Pat, won't cher?"

Mrs. Ducker had been very particular about Wilford's enunciation. Once she dismissed a servant for dropping her final g's. Mrs. Ducker considered it more serious to drop a final g than a dinner plate. She often spoke of how particular she was. She said she had insisted on correct enunciation from the first. So Wilford said again:

"Aw, do, Pat, won't cher?"

Patsey looked carelessly down the street and began to sing:

How much wood would a wood-chuck chuck
If a wood-chuck could chuck wood.

"What cher take fer butcher-ride, Pat?" Wilford asked.

"What cher got?"

Patsey had stopped singing, but still beat time with his foot to the imaginary music.

Wilford produced a jack-knife in very good repair.

Patsey stopped beating time, though only for an instant. It does not do to be too keen.

"It's a good un," Wilford said with pride. "It's a Rodger, mind ye—two blades."

"Name yer price," Patsey condescended, after a deliberate examination.

"Lemme ride all week, ord'rin' and deliv'rin'."

"Not much, I won't," Patsey declared stoutly. "You can ride three days for it."

Wilford began to whimper, but just then the butcher cart whirled around the corner.

Wilford ran toward it. Patsey held the knife.

The butcher stopped and let Wilford mount. It was all one to the butcher. He knew he usually got a boy at this corner.

Patsey ran after the butcher cart. He had caught sight of someone whom Wilford had not yet noticed. It was Mrs. Ducker. Mrs. Ducker had been down the street ordering a crate of pears. Mrs. Ducker was just as particular about pears as she was about final g's, so she had gone herself to select them.

When she saw Wilford, her son, riding with the butcher—well, really, she could not have told the sensation it gave her. Wilford could not have told, either, just how he felt when he saw his mother. But both Mrs. Ducker and her son had a distinct sensation when they met that morning.

She called Wilford, and he came. No sooner had he left his seat than Patsey Watson took his place. Wilford dared not ask for the return of the knife: his mother would know that he had had dealings with Patsey Watson, and his account at the maternal bank was already overdrawn.

Mrs. Ducker was more sorrowful than angry.

“Wilford!” she said with great dignity, regarding the downcast little boy with exaggerated scorn, “and you a Ducker!”

She escorted the fallen Ducker sadly homeward, but, oh, so glad that she had saved him from the corroding influence of the butcher boy.

While Wilford Ducker was unfastening the china buttons on his waist, preparatory to a season of rest and retirement, that he might the better ponder upon the sins of disobedience and evil associations, Patsey Watson was opening and shutting his new knife proudly.

“It was easy done,” he was saying to himself. “I’m kinder sorry I jewed him down now. Might as well ha’ let him have the week. Sure, there’s no luck in being mane.”

CHAPTER XI

HOW PEARL WATSON WIPED OUT THE STAIN

Mrs. Motherwell felt bitterly grieved with Polly for failing her just when she needed her the most; "after me keepin' her and puttin' up with her all summer," she said. She began to wonder where she could secure help. Then she had an inspiration!

The Watsons still owed ten dollars on the caboose. The eldest Watson girl was big enough to work. They would get her. And get ten dollars' worth of work out of her if they could.

The next Saturday night John Watson announced to his family that old Sam Motherwell wanted Pearl to go out and work off the caboose debt.

Mrs. Watson cried, "God help us!" and threw her apron over her head.

"Who'll keep the dandrew out of me hair?" Mary said tearfully, "if Pearl goes away?"

"Who'll make me remember to spit on me warts?" Bugsey asked.

"Who'll keep house when ma goes to wash?" wee Tommy wailed dismally.

Danny's grievance could not be expressed in words. He buried his tousy head in Pearl's apron, and Pearl saw at once that her whole house were about to be submerged in tears, idle tears.

"Stop your bleatin', all of yez!" she commanded in her most authoritative voice. "I will go!" she said, with blazing eyes. "I will go, I will wipe the stain off me house once and forever!" waving her arm dramatically toward the caboose which formed the sleeping apartment for the boys. "To die, to die for those we love is nobler far than wear a crown!" Pearl had attended the Queen Esther cantata the winter before. She knew now how poor Esther felt.

On the following Monday afternoon everything was ready for Pearl's departure. Her small supply of clothing was washed and ironed and neatly packed in a bird-cage. It was Mary who thought of the bird-cage "sittin' down there in the cellar doin' nothin', and with a handle on it, too." Mary was getting to be almost as smart as Pearl to think of things.

Pearl had bidden good-bye to them all and was walking to the door when her mother called her back to repeat her parting instructions.

"Now, mind, Pearl dear, not to be pickin' up wid strangers, and speakin' to people ye don't know, and don't be showin' yer money or makin' change wid anyone."

Pearl was not likely to disobey the last injunction. She had seventeen cents in money, ten cents of which Teddy had given her, and the remaining seven cents had come in under the heading of small sums, from the other members of the family.

She was a pathetic little figure in her brown and white checked dress, with her worldly effects in the bird-cage, as she left the shelter of her father's roof and went forth into the untried world. She went over to Mrs. Francis to say good-bye to her and to Camilla.

Mrs. Francis was much pleased with Pearl's spirit of independence and spoke beautifully of the opportunities for service which would open for her.

"You must keep a diary, Pearl," she said enthusiastically. "Set down in it all you see and feel. You will have such splendid opportunities for observing plant and animal life—the smallest little insect is wonderfully interesting. I will be so anxious to hear how you are impressed with the great green world of Out of Doors! Take care of your health, too, Pearl; see that your room is ventilated."

While Mrs. Francis elaborated on the elements of proper living, Camilla in the kitchen had opened the little bundle in the cage, and put into it a pair of stockings and two or three handkerchiefs, then she slipped in a little purse containing ten shining ten-cent pieces, and an orange. She arranged the bundle to look just as it did before, so that she would not have to meet Pearl's gratitude.

Camilla hastily set the kettle to boil, and began to lay the table. She could hear the velvety tones of Mrs. Francis's voice in the library.

"Mrs. Francis speaks a strange language," she said, smiling to herself, "but it can be translated into bread and butter and apple sauce, and even into shoes and stockings, when you know how to interpret it. But wouldn't it be dreadful if she had no one to express it in the tangible things of life for her. Think of her talking about proper diet and aids to digestion to that little hungry girl. Well, it seems to be my mission to step into the gap—I'm a miss with a mission"—she was slicing some cold ham as she spoke—"I am something of a health talker, too."

Camilla knocked at the library door, and in answer to Mrs. Francis's invitation to enter, opened the door and said:

"Mrs. Francis, would it not be well for Pearl to have a lunch before she starts for her walk into the country; the air is so exhilarating, you know."

"How thoughtful you are, Camilla!" Mrs. Francis exclaimed with honest admiration.

Thus it happened that Pearl Watson, aged twelve, began her journey into the big unknown world, fully satisfied in body and soul, and with a great love for all the world.

At the corner of the street stood Mrs. McGuire, and at sight of her Pearl's heart stopped beating.

"It's bad luck," she said. "I'd as lief have a rabbit cross me path as her."

But she walked bravely forward with no outward sign of her inward trembling.

"Goin' to Sam Motherwell's, are ye?" the old lady asked shrilly.

"Yes'm," Pearl said, trembling.

"She's a tarter; she's a skinner; she's a damner; that's what she is. She's my own first cousin and I know *her*. Sass her; that's the only way to get along with her. Tell her I said so. Here, child, rub yer j'int's with this when ye git stiff." She handed Pearl a black bottle of home-made liniment.

Pearl thanked her and hurried on, but at the next turn of the street she met Danny.

Danny was in tears; Danny wasn't going to let Pearlie go away; Danny would run away and get lost and runned over and drowned, now! Pearl's heart melted, and sitting on the sidewalk she took Danny in her arms, and they cried together. A whirr of wheels aroused Pearl and looking up she saw the kindly face of the young doctor.

"What is it, Pearl?" he asked kindly. "Surely that's not Danny I see, spoiling his face that way!"

"It's Danny," Pearl said unsteadily. "It's hard enough to leave him widout him comin' afther me and breakin' me heart all over again."

"That's what it is, Pearl," the doctor said, smiling. "I think it is mighty thoughtless of Danny the way he is acting."

Danny held obstinately to Pearl's skirt, and cried harder than ever. He would not even listen when the doctor spoke of taking him for a drive.

"Listen to the doctor," Pearl commanded sternly, "or he'll raise a gumboil on ye."

Thus admonished Danny ceased his sobs; but he showed no sign of interest when the doctor spoke of popcorn, and at the mention of ice-cream he looked simply bored.

“He’s awful fond of ‘hoo-hung’ candy,” Pearl suggested in a whisper, holding her hand around her mouth so that Danny might not hear her.

“Ten cents’ worth of ‘hoo-hung’ candy to the boy that says good-bye to his sister like a gentleman and rides home with me.”

Danny dried his eyes on Pearl’s skirt, kissed her gravely and climbed into the buggy beside the doctor. Waterloo was won!

Pearl did not trust herself to look back as she walked along the deeply beaten road.

The yellow cone-flowers raised their heads like golden stars along the roadside, and the golden glory of the approaching harvest lay upon everything. To the right the Tiger Hills lay on the horizon wrapped in a blue mist. Flocks of blackbirds swarmed over the ripening oats, and angrily fought with each other.

“And it not costin’ them a cent!” Pearl said in disgust as she stopped to watch them.

The exhilaration of the air, the glory of the waving grain, the profusion of wild flowers that edged the fields with purple and yellow were like wine to her sympathetic Irish heart as she walked through the grain fields and drank in all the beauties that lay around, and it was not until she came in sight of the big stone house, gloomy and bare, that she realised with a start of homesickness that she was Pearl Watson, aged twelve, away from home for the first time, and bound to work three months for a woman of reputed ill-temper.

“But I’ll do it,” Pearl said, swallowing the lump that gathered in her throat, “I can work. Nobody never said that none of the Watsons couldn’t work. I’ll stay out me time if it kills me.”

So saying, Pearl knocked timidly at the back door. Myriads of flies buzzed on the screen. From within a tired voice said, “Come in.”

Pearl walked in and saw a large bare room, with a long table in the middle. A sewing machine littered with papers stood in front of one window.

The floor had been painted a dull drab, but the passing of many feet had worn the paint away in places. A stove stood in one corner. Over the sink a tall, round-shouldered woman bent trying to get water from an asthmatic pump.

“Oh, it’s you, is it?” she said in a tone so very unpleasant that Pearl thought she must have expected someone else.

“Yes’m,” Pearl said meekly. “Who were ye expectin’?”

Mrs. Motherwell stopped pumping for a minute and looked at Pearl.

“Why didn’t ye git here earlier?” she asked.

“Well,” Pearl began, “I was late gettin’ started by reason of the washin’ and the ironin’, and Jimmy not gettin’ back wid the boots. He went drivin’ cattle for Vale the butcher, and he had to have the boots for the poison ivy is that bad, and because the sugar o’ lead is all done and anyway ma don’t like to keep it in the house, for wee Danny might eat it—he’s that stirrin’ and me not there to watch him now.”

“Lord! what a tongue you have! Put down your things and go out and pick up chips to light the fire with in the morning.”

Pearl laid her bird-cage on a chair and was back so soon with the chips that Mrs. Motherwell could not think of anything to say.

“Now go for the cows,” she said, “and don’t run them home!”

“Where will I run them to then, ma’am?” Pearl asked innocently.

“Good land, child, have I to tell you everything? Folks that can’t do without tellin’ can’t do much with, I say. Bring the cows to the bars, and don’t stand there staring at me.”

When Pearl dashed out of the door, she almost fell over the old dog who lay sleepily snapping at the flies which buzzed around his head. He sprang up with a growl which died away into an apologetic yawn as she stooped to pat his honest brown head.

A group of red calves stood at the bars of a small field plaintively calling for their supper. It was not just an ordinary bawl, but a double-jointed hyphenated appeal, indicating a very exhausted condition indeed.

Pearl looked at them in pity. The old dog, wrinkling his nose and turning away his head, did not give them a glance. He knew them. Noisy things! Let ’em bawl. Come on!

Across the narrow creek they bounded, Pearl and old Nap, and up the other hill where the silver willows grew so tall they were hidden in them. The goldenrod nodded its plummy head in the breeze, and the tall Gaillardia, brown and yellow, flickered unsteadily on its stem.

The billows of shadow swept over the wheat on each side of the narrow pasture; the golden flowers, the golden fields, the warm golden sunshine intoxicated Pearl with their luxurious beauty, and in that hour of delight she realised more pleasure from them than Sam Motherwell and his wife had in all their long lives of barren selfishness. Their souls were of a dull drab dryness in which no flower took root, there was no gold to them but the gold of greed and gain, and with it they had never bought a smile or a gentle hand pressure or a fervid “God bless you!” and so it lost its golden colour, and turned to lead and ashes in their hands.

When Pearl and Nap got the cows turned homeward they had to slacken their pace.

“I don’t care how cross she is,” Pearl said, “if I can come for the cows every night. Look at that fluffy white cloud! Say, wouldn’t that make a hat trimming that would do your heart good. The body of the hat blue like that up there, edged ’round with that cloud over there, then a blue cape with white fur on it just to match. I kin just feel that white stuff under my chin.”

Then Pearl began to cake-walk and sing a song she had heard Camilla sing. She had forgotten some of the words, but Pearl never was at a loss for words:

The wild waves are singing to the shore
As they were in the happy days of yore.

Pearl could not remember what the wild waves were singing, so she sang what was in her own heart:

She can’t take the ripple from the breeze,
And she can’t take the rustle from the trees;
And when I am out of the old girl’s sight
I can-just-do-as-I-please.

“That’s right, I think the same way and try to act up to it,” a man’s voice said slowly. “But don’t let her hear you say so.”

Pearl started at the sound of the voice and found herself looking into such a good-natured face that she laughed too, with a feeling of good-fellowship.

The old dog ran to the stranger with every sign of delight at seeing him.

“I am one of the neighbours,” he said. “I live over there”—pointing to a little car-roofed shanty farther up the creek. “Did I frighten you? I am sorry if I did, but you see I like the sentiment of your song so much I could not help telling you. You need not think it strange if you find me milking one of the cows occasionally. You see, I believe in dealing directly with

the manufacturer and thus save the middleman's profit, and so I just take what milk I need from So-Bossie over there."

"Does she know?" Pearl asked, nodding toward the house.

"Who? So-Bossie?"

"No, Mrs. Motherwell."

"Well, no," he answered slowly. "You haven't heard of her having a fit, have you?"

"No," Pearl answered wonderingly.

"Then we're safe in saying that the secret has been kept from her."

"Does it hurt her, though?" Pearl asked.

"It would, very much, if she knew it," the young man replied gravely.

"Oh, I mean the cow," Pearl said hastily.

"It doesn't hurt the cow a bit. What does she care who gets the milk? When did you come?"

"To-night," Pearl said. "I must hurry. She'll have a rod in steep for me if I'm late. My name's Pearl Watson. What's yours?"

"Jim Russell," he said. "I know your brother Teddy."

Pearl was speeding down the hill. She shouted back:

"I know who you are now. Good-bye!" Pearl ran to catch up to the cows, for the sun was throwing long shadows over the pasture, and the plaintive lowing of the hungry calves came faintly to her ears.

A blond young man stood at the bars with four milk pails.

He raised his hat when he spoke to Pearl.

"Madam says you are to help me to milk, but I assure you it is quite unnecessary. Really, I would much prefer that you shouldn't."

"Why?" Pearl asked in wonder.

"Oh, by Jove! You see it is not a woman's place to work outside like this, don't you know."

"That's because ye'r English," Pearl said, a sudden light breaking in on her. "Ma says when ye git a nice Englishman there's nothing nicer, and pa knowed one once that was so polite he used to say 'Haw Buck' to the ox and then he'd say, 'Oh, I beg yer pardon, I mean gee.' It wasn't you, was it?"

"No," he said smiling, "I have never driven oxen, but I have done a great many ridiculous things I am sure."

"So have I," Pearl said confidentially, as she sat down on a little three-legged stool to milk So-Bossie. "You know them fluffy white things all made of lace and truck like that, that is hung over the beds in rich people's houses, over the pillows, I mean?"

"Pillow-shams?" he asked.

"Yes, that's them! Well, when I stayed with Camilla one night at Mrs. Francis's didn't I think they were things to pull down to keep the flies off ye'r face. Say, you should have heard Camilla laugh, and ma saw a girl at a picnic once who drank lemonade through her veil, and she et a banana, skin and all."

Pearl laughed heartily, but the Englishman only smiled faintly. Canadian ways were growing stranger all the time.

"Say," Pearl began after a pause, "who does the cow over there with the horns bent down look like? Someone we both know, only the cow looks pleasanter."

"My word!" the Englishman exclaimed, "you're a rum one."

Pearl looked disappointed.

"Animals often look like people," she said. "We have two cows at home, one looks like Mrs. White, so good and gentle, wouldn't say boo to a goose; the other one looks just like Fred Miller. He works in the mill, and his hair goes in a roll on the top; his mother did it that way with a hair-pin too long, I guess, and now it won't go any other way, and I know an animal that looks like you; he's a dandy, too, you bet. It is White's dog, and he can jump the fence easy as anything."

"Oh, give over, give over!" the Englishman said stiffly.

Pearl laughed delightedly.

"It's lots of fun guessing who people are like," she said. "I'm awful smart at it and so is Mary, four years younger'n me. Once we could not guess who Mrs. Francis was like, and Mary guessed it. Mrs. Francis looks like prayer—big bug eyes lookin' away into nothin', but hopin' it's all for the best. Do you pray?"

"I am a rector's son," he answered.

"Oh, I know, minister's son, isn't that lovely? I bet you know prayers and prayers. But it isn't fair to pray in a race is it? When Jimmy Moore and my brother Jimmy ran under twelve, Jimmie Moore prayed, and some say got his father to pray, too; he's the Methodist minister, you know, and, of course, he won it; but our Jimmy could ha' beat him easy in a fair race, and no favours; but he's an awful snoo pie kid and prays about everything. Do you sing?"

"I do—a little," the Englishman said modestly.

"Oh, my, I am glad," Pearl cried rapturously. "When I was two years old I could sing 'Hush my babe lie,' all through—I love singin'—I can sing a little, too, but I don't care much for my own. Have they got an organ here?"

"I don't know," he answered, "I've only been in the kitchen."

"Say, I'd like to see a melodeon. Just the very name of it makes me think of lovely sounds, religious sounds, mountin' higher and higher and swellin' out grander and grander, rollin' right into the great white throne, and shakin' the streets of gold. Do you know the 'Holy City,' " she asked after a pause.

The Englishman began to hum it in a rich tenor.

"That's it, you bet," she cried delightedly. "Just think of you coming all the way across the ocean and knowing that just the same as we do. I used to listen at the keyhole when Mrs. Francis had company, and I was there helping Camilla. Dr. Clay sang that lots of times."

The Englishman had not sung since he had left his father's house. He began to sing now, in a sweet, full voice, resonant on the quiet evening air, the cows staring idly at him. The old dog came down to the bars with his bristles up, expecting trouble.

Old Sam and his son Tom coming in from work stopped to listen to these strange sounds.

"Confound them English!" old Sam said. "Ye'd think I was payin' him to do that, and it harvest-time, too!"

When Dr. Clay, with Danny Watson gravely perched beside him, drove along the river road after saying good-bye to Pearl, they met Miss Barner, who had been digging ferns for Mrs. McGuire down on the river flat.

The doctor drew in his horse.

"Miss Barner," he said, lifting his hat, "if Daniel Mulcahey Watson and I should ask you to come for a drive with us, I wonder what you would say?"

Miss Barner considered for a moment and then said, smiling:

“I think I would say, ‘Thank you very much, Mr. Watson and Dr. Clay, I shall be delighted to come if you have room for me.’ ”

Life had been easier for Mary Barner since Dr. Clay had come to Millford. It was no longer necessary for her to compel her father to go when he was sent for, and when patients came to the office, if she thought her father did not know what he was doing, she got Dr. Clay to check over the prescriptions.

It had been rather hard for Mary to ask him to do this, for she had a fair share of her father’s Scotch pride; but she had done too many hard things in her life to hesitate now. The young doctor was genuinely glad to serve her, and he made her feel that she was conferring, instead of asking, a favour.

They drove along the high bank that fell perpendicularly to the river below and looked down at the harvest scene that lay beneath them. The air was full of the perfume of many flowers and the chatter of birds.

The Reverend Hugh Grantley drove swiftly by them, whereupon Danny made his presence known for the first time by the apparently irrelevant remark:

“I know who Miss Barner’s fellow is! so I do.”

Now if Dr. Clay had given Danny even slight encouragement, he would have pursued the subject, and that might have saved complications in the days to come.

CHAPTER XII

FROM CAMILLA'S DIARY

It is nearly six months since I came to live with Mrs. Francis, and I like housework so well and am so happy at it, that it shows clearly that I am not a disguised heiress. My proud spirit does not chafe a bit at having to serve meals and wear a cap (you should see how sweet I look in a cap). I haven't got the fear on my heart all day that I will make a mistake in a figure that will rise up and condemn me at the end of the month as I used to be when I was book-keeping on a high stool, for the Western Hail and Fire Insurance Company (peace to its ashes!). "All work is expression," Fra Elbertus says, so why may I not express myself in blueberry pie and tomato soup?

Mrs. Francis is an appreciative mistress, and she is not so entirely wrapped up in Browning as to be insensible to a good salad either, I am glad to say.

One night after we had company and everything had gone off well, Mr. Francis came out into the kitchen, and looked over his glasses at me. He opened his mouth twice to speak, but seemed to change his mind. I knew what was struggling for utterance. Then he laid fifty cents on the window sill, pointed at it, nodded to me, and went out hurriedly. My first impulse was to hand it back—then I thought better of it—words do not come easily to him. So he expressed himself in currency. I put the money into my purse for a luck penny.

Mrs. Francis is as serene as a summer sea, and can look at you without knowing you are there. Mr. Francis is a peaceful man, too. He looks at his wife in a helpless way when she begins to explain the difference between the Elizabethan and the Victorian poets—I don't believe he cares a cent for either of them.

Mrs. Francis entertains quite a bit; I like it, too, and I do not go and cry into the sink because I have to wait on the guests. She entertains well and is a delightful hostess, but some of the people whom she entertains do not appreciate her flights of fancy.

I do not like to see them wink at each other, although I know it is funny to hear Mrs. Francis elaborate on the mother's influence in the home and the proper way to deal with selfishness in children; but she means well, and they should remember that, no matter how funny she gets.

April 18th.—She gave me a surprise to-day. She called me upstairs and read to me a paper she was preparing to read before some society—she belongs to three or four—on the domestic help problem. Well, it hadn't very much to do with the domestic help problem, but of course I could not tell her that so when she asked me what I thought of it I said:

"If all employers were as kind as you and Mr. Francis there would be no domestic help problem."

She looked at me suddenly, and something seemed to strike her. I believe it came to her that I was a creature of like passions with herself, capable of gratitude, perhaps in need of encouragement. Hitherto I think she has regarded me as a porridge and coffee machine.

She put her arm around me and kissed me.

“Camilla,” she said gently—she has the softest, dreamiest voice I ever heard—“I believe in the aristocracy of brains and virtue. You have both.”

Farewell, oh Soulless Corporation! A long, last, lingering farewell, for Camilla E. Rose, who used to sit upon the high stool and add figures for you at ten dollars a week, is far away making toast for two kindly souls, one of whom tells her she has brains and virtue and the other one opens his mouth to speak, and then pushes fifty cents at her instead.

Danny Watson, bless his heart! is bringing madam up. He has wound himself into her heart and the “whyness of the what” is packing up to go.

May 1st.—Mrs. Francis is going silly over Danny. A few days ago she asked me if I could cut a pattern for a pair of pants. I told her I had made pants once or twice and meekly inquired whom she wanted the pants for. She said for a boy, of course—and she looked at me rather severely. I knew they must be for Danny, and cut the pattern about the size for him. She went into the sewing-room, and I only saw her at meal times for two days. She wrestled with the garment.

Last night she asked me if I would take a parcel to Danny with her love. I was glad to go, for I was just dying to see how she had got along.

When I held them up before Mrs. Watson the poor woman gasped.

“Save us all!” she cried. “Them’ll fit none of us. We’re poor, but, thank God, we’re not deformed!”

I’ll never forget the look of those pants. They haunt me still.

May 15th.—Pearl Watson is the sweetest and best little girl I know. Her gratitude for even the smallest kindness makes me want to cry. She told me the other day she was sure Danny was going to be a doctor. She bases her hopes on the questions that Danny asks. How do you know you haven’t got a gizzard? How would you like to be ripped clean up the back? and Where does your lap go to when you stand up? She said, “Ma and us all have hopes o’ Danny.”

Mrs. Francis has a new role, that of matchmaker, though I don’t suppose she knows it. She had Mary Barner and the young minister for tea to-night. Mary grows dearer and sweeter every day. People say it is not often one girl praises another; but Mary is a dear little gray-eyed saint with the most shapely hands I ever saw. Reverend Hugh thinks so, too, I have no doubt. It was really too bad to waste a good fruit salad on him though, for I know he didn’t know what he was eating. Excelsior would taste like ambrosia to him if Mary sat opposite—all of which is very much as it should be, I know. I thought for a while Mary liked Dr. Clay pretty well, but I know it is not serious, for she talks quite freely of him. She is very grateful to him for helping her so often with her father. But those gray-eyed Scotch people never talk of what is nearest the heart. I wonder if he knows that Mary Barner is a queen among women. I don’t like Scotchmen. They take too much for granted.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FIFTH SON

Arthur Wemyss, fifth son of the Reverend Alfred Austin Wemyss, Rector of St. Agnes, Tilbury Road, County of Kent, England, had but recently crossed the ocean. He and six hundred other fifth sons of rectors and earls and dukes had crossed the ocean in the same ship and had been scattered abroad over Manitoba and the Northwest Territories to be instructed in agricultural pursuits by the honest granger, and incidentally to furnish nutriment for the ever-ready mosquito or wasp, who regarded all Old Country men as their lawful meat.

The honest granger was paid a sum varying between fifty and one hundred fifty dollars for instructing one of these young fellows in farming for one year, and although having an Englishman was known to be a pretty good investment, the farmers usually spoke of them as they would of the French-weed or the rust in the wheat. Sam Motherwell referred to his quite often as "that blamed Englishman" and often said, unjustly, that he was losing money on him every day.

Arthur—the Motherwells could not have told his other name—had learned something since he came. He could pull pig-weed for the pigs and throw it into the pen; he had learned to detect French-weed in the grain; he could milk; he could turn the cream-separator; he could wash dishes and churn, and he did it all with a willingness, a cheerfulness that would have appealed favourably to almost any other farmer in the neighbourhood, but the lines had fallen to Arthur in a stony place, and his employer did not notice him at all unless to find fault with him. Yet he bore it all with good humour. He had come to Canada to learn to farm.

The only real grievance he had was that he could not get his "tub." The night he arrived, dusty and travel-stained after his long journey, he had asked for his "tub," but Mr. Motherwell had told him in language he had never heard before—that there was no tub of his around the establishment, that he knew of, and that he could go down and have a dip in the river on Sunday if he wanted to. Then he had conducted him with the lantern to his bed in the loft of the granary.

A rickety ladder led up to the bed, which was upon a temporary floor laid about half way across the width of the granary. Bags of musty smelling wheat stood at one end of this little room. Evidently Mr. Motherwell wished to discourage sleep-walking in his hired help, for the floor ended abruptly and a careless somnambulist would be precipitated on the old fanning mill, harrow teeth and other debris which littered the floor below.

The young Englishman reeled unsteadily going up the ladder. He could still feel the chug-chug-chug of the ocean liner's engines and had to hold tight to the ladder's splintered rungs to preserve his equilibrium.

Mr. Motherwell raised the lantern with sudden interest.

"Say," he said, more cheerfully than he had yet spoken, "you haven't been drinking, have you?"

"Intoxicants, do you mean?" the Englishman asked, without turning around. "No, I do not drink."

"You didn't happen to bring anything over with you, did you, for seasickness on the boat?" Mr. Motherwell queried anxiously, holding the lantern above his head.

"No, I did not," the young man said laconically.

“Turn out at five to-morrow morning then,” his employer snapped in evident disappointment, and he lowered the lantern so quickly that it went out.

The young man lay down upon his hard bed. His utter weariness was a blessing to him that night, for not even the racing mice, the musty smells or the hardness of his straw bed could keep him from slumber.

In what seemed to him but a few minutes, he was awakened by a loud knocking on the door below, voices shouted, a dog barked, cow-bells jangled; he could hear doors banging everywhere, a faint streak of sunlight lay wan and pale on the mud-plastered walls.

“By Jove!” he said yawning, “I know now what Kipling meant when he said ‘the dawn comes up like thunder.’”

A few weeks after Arthur’s arrival, Mrs. Motherwell called him from the barn, where he sat industriously mending bags, to unhitch her horse from the buggy. She had just driven home from Millford. Nobody had taken the trouble to show Arthur how it was done.

“A fool ought to know,” Mr. Motherwell said.

Arthur came running from the barn with his hat in his hand. He grasped the horse firmly by the bridle and led him toward the barn. As they came near the water trough the horse began to show signs of thirst. Arthur led him to the trough, but the horse tossed his head and was unable to get it near the water on account of the check.

Arthur watched him a few moments with gathering perplexity.

“I can’t lift this water vessel,” he said, looking at the horse reproachfully. “It’s too heavy, don’t you know. Hold! I have it,” he cried with exultation beaming in his face; and making a dash for the horse he unfastened the crupper.

But the exultation soon died from his face, for the horse still tossed his head in the vain endeavour to reach the water.

“My word!” he said, wrinkling his forehead, “I believe I shall have to lift the water-vessel yet, though it is hardly fit to lift, it is so wet and nasty.” Arthur spoke with a deliciously soft Kentish accent, guiltless of r’s and with a softening of the h’s that was irresistible.

A light broke over his face again. He went behind the buggy and lifted the hind wheels. While he was holding up the wheels and craning his neck around the back of the buggy to see if his efforts were successful, Jim Russell came into the yard, riding his dun-coloured pony Chiniquy.

He stood still in astonishment. Then the meaning of it came to him and he rolled off Chiniquy’s back, shaking with silent laughter.

“Come, come, Arthur,” he said as soon as he could speak. “Stop trying to see how strong you are. Don’t you see the horse wants a drink?”

With a perfectly serious face Jim unfastened the check, whereupon the horse’s head was lowered at once, and he drank in long gulps the water that had so long mocked him with its nearness.

“Oh, thank you, Mr. Russell,” the Englishman cried delightedly. “Thanks awfully, it is monstrously clever of you to know how to do everything. I wish I could go and live with you. I believe I could learn to farm if I were with you.”

Jim looked at his eager face so cruelly bitten by mosquitoes.

“I’ll tell you, Arthur,” he said smiling, “I haven’t any need for a man to work, but I suppose I might hire you to keep the mosquitoes off the horses. They wouldn’t look at Chiniquy, I am sure, if they could get a nip at you.”

The Englishman looked perplexed.

“You are learning as well as any person could learn,” Jim said kindly. “I think you are doing famously. No person is particularly bright at work entirely new. Don’t be a bit discouraged, old man, you’ll be a rich land-owner some day, proprietor of the A. J. Wemyss Stock Farm, writing letters to the agricultural papers, judge of horses at the fairs, giving lectures at dairy institutes—oh, I think I see you, Arthur!”

“You are chaffing me,” Arthur said smiling.

“Indeed I am not. I am very much in earnest. I have seen more unlikely looking young fellows than you do wonderful things in a short time, and just to help along the good work I am going to show you a few things about taking off harness that may be useful to you when you are president of the Agricultural Society of South Cypress, or some other fortunate municipality.”

Arthur’s face brightened.

“Oh, thank you, Mr. Russell,” he said.

That night Arthur wrote home a letter that would have made an appropriate circular for the Immigration Department to send to prospective settlers.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FAITH THAT MOVETH MOUNTAINS

When supper was over and Pearl had washed the heavy white dishes Mrs. Motherwell told her, not unkindly, that she could go to bed. She would sleep in the little room over the kitchen in Polly's old bed.

"You don't need no lamp," she said, "if you hurry. It is light up there."

Mrs. Motherwell was inclined to think well of Pearl. It was not her soft brown eyes, or her quaint speech that had won Mrs. Motherwell's heart. It was the way she scraped the frying-pan.

Pearl went up the ladder into the kitchen loft, and found herself in a low, long room, close and stifling, one little window shone light against the western sky and on it innumerable flies buzzed unceasingly. Old boxes, old bags, old baskets looked strange and shadowy in the gathering gloom. The Motherwells did not believe in giving away anything. The Indians who went through the neighbourhood each fall looking for "old clo'" had long ago learned to pass by the big stone house. Indians do not appreciate a strong talk on shiftlessness the way they should, with a vision of a long cold winter ahead of them.

Pearl gazed around with a troubled look on her face. A large basket of old carpet rags stood near the little bed. She dragged it into the farthest corner. She tried to open the window, but it was nailed fast.

Then a determined look shone in her eyes. She went quickly down the little ladder.

"Please ma'am," she said going over to Mrs. Motherwell, "I can't sleep up there. It is full of diseases and microscopes."

"It's what?" Mrs. Motherwell almost screamed. She was in the pantry making pies.

"It has old air in it," Pearl said, "and it will give me the fever."

Mrs. Motherwell glared at the little girl. She forgot all about the frying pan.

"Good gracious!" she said. "It's a queer thing if hired help are going to dictate where they are going to sleep. Maybe you'd like a bed set up for you in the parlour!"

"Not if the windies ain't open," Pearl declared stoutly.

"Well they ain't; there hasn't been a window open in this house since it was built, and there isn't going to be, letting in dust and flies."

Pearl gasped. What would Mrs. Francis say to that?

"It's in yer graves ye ought to be then, ma'am," she said with honest conviction. "Mrs. Francis told me never to sleep in a room with the windies all down, and I as good as promised I wouldn't. Can't we open that wee windy, ma'am?"

Mrs. Motherwell was tired, unutterably tired, not with that day's work alone, but with the days and years that had passed away in gray dreariness; the past barren and bleak, the future bringing only visions of heavier burdens. She was tired and perhaps that is why she became angry.

"You go straight to your bed," she said, with her mouth hard and her eyes glinting like cold flint, "and none of your nonsense, or you can go straight back to town."

When Pearl again reached the little stifling room, she fell on her knees and prayed.

"Dear God," she said, "there's gurms here as thick as hair on a dog's back, and You and me know it, even if she don't. I don't know what to do, dear Lord—the windy is nelt down."

Keep the gurns from gittin' into me, dear Lord. Do ye mind how poor Jeremiah was let down into the mire and ye tuk care o' him, didn't ye? Take care o' me, dear Lord. Poor ma has enough to do widout me comin' home clutterin' up the house wid sickness. Keep yer eye on Danny if ye can at all, at all. He's awful stirrin'. I'll try to git the windy riz to-morrow by hook or crook, so mebbe it's only to-night ye'll have to watch the gurns. Amen."

Pearl braided her hair into two little pigtails, with her little dilapidated comb. When she brought out the contents of the bird-cage and opened it in search of her night-dress, the orange rolled out, almost frightening her. The purse, too, rattled on the bare floor as it fell.

She picked it up, and by going close to the fly-specked window she counted the ten ten-cent pieces, a whole dollar. Never was a little girl more happy.

"It was Camilla," she whispered to herself. "Oh, I love Camilla! and I never said 'God bless Camilla,'"—with a sudden pang of remorse.

She was on her knees in a moment and added the postscript.

"I can send the orange home to ma, and she can put the skins in the chist to make the things smell nice, and I'll git that windy open to-morrow."

Clasping her little purse in her hand, and with the orange close beside her head, she lay down to sleep. The smell of the orange made her forget the heavy air in the room.

"Anyway," she murmured contentedly, "the Lord is attendin' to all that."

Pearl slept the heavy sleep of healthy childhood and woke in the gray dawn before anyone else in the household was stirring. She threw on some clothing and went down the ladder into the kitchen. She started the fire, secured the basin full of water and a piece of yellow soap and came back to her room for her "oliver."

"I can't lave it all to the Lord to do," she said, as she rubbed the soap on her little wash-rag. "It doesn't do to impose on good nature."

When Tom, the only son of the Motherwells, came down to light the fire, he found Pearl setting the table, the kitchen swept and the kettle boiling.

Pearl looked at him with her friendly Irish smile, which he returned awkwardly.

He was a tall, stoop-shouldered, rather good-looking lad of twenty. He had heavy gray eyes, and a drooping mouth.

Tom had gone to school a few winters when there was not much doing, but his father thought it was a great deal better for a boy to learn to handle horses and "sample wheat," and run a binder, than learn the "pack of nonsense they got in school nowadays," and when the pretty little teacher from the eastern township came to Southfield school, Mrs. Motherwell knew at one glance that Tom would learn no good from her—she was such a flighty looking thing! Flowers on the under side of her hat!

So poor Tom grew up a clod of the valley. Yet Mrs. Motherwell would tell you, "Our Tom'll be the richest man in these parts. He'll get every cent we have and all the land, too; and I guess there won't be many that can afford to turn up their noses at our Tom. And, mind ye, Tom can tell a horse as well as the next one, and he's a boy that won't waste nothin', not like some we know. Look at them Slaters now! Fred and George have been off to college two years, big over-grown hulks they are, and young Peter is going to the Agricultural College in Guelph this winter, and the old man will hire a man to take care of the stock, and him with three boys of his own. Just as if a boy can learn about farmin' at a college! and the way them girls dress, and the old lady, too, and her not able to speak above a whisper. The old lady wears an ostrich feather in her bonnet, and they're a terrible costly thing, I hear. Mind you

they only keep six cows, and they send every drop they don't use to the creamery. Everybody can do as they like, I suppose, but I know they'll go to the wall, and they deserve it too!"

And yet!

She and Mrs. Slater had been girls together and sat in school with arms entwined and wove romances of the future, rosy-hued and golden. When they consulted the oracle of "Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief," the buttons on her gray winsey dress had declared in favour of the "rich man." Then she had dreamed dreams of silks and satins and prancing steeds and liveried servants, and ease, and happiness—dreams which God in His mercy had let her forget long, long ago.

When she had become the mistress of the big stone house, she had struggled hard against her husband's penuriousness, defiantly sometimes, and sometimes tearfully. But he had held her down with a heavy hand of unyielding determination. At last she grew weary of struggling, and settled down in sullen submission, a hopeless heavy-eyed, spiritless woman, and as time went by she became greedier for money than her husband.

"Good-morning," Pearl said brightly. "Are you Mr. Tom Motherwell?"

"That's what!" Tom replied. "Only you needn't mind the handle."

Pearl laughed.

"All right," she said, "I want a little favor done. Will you open the window upstairs for me?"

"Why?" Tom asked, staring at her.

"To let in good air. It's awful close up there, and I'm afraid I'll get the fever or somethin' bad."

"Polly got it," Tom said. "Maybe that is why Polly got it. She's awful sick now. Ma says she'll like as not die. But I don't believe ma will let me open it."

"Where is Polly?" Pearl asked eagerly. She had forgotten her own worries. "Who is Polly? Did she live here?"

"She's in the hospital now in Brandon," Tom said in answer to her rapid questions. "She planted them poppies out there, but she never seen the flowers on them. Ma wanted me to cut them down, for Polly used to put off so much time with them, but I didn't want to. Ma was mad, too, you bet," he said, with a reminiscent smile at his own foolhardiness.

Pearl was thinking—she could see the poppies through the window, bright and glowing in the morning light. They rocked lightly in the wind, and a shower of crimson petals fell. Poor Polly! she hadn't seen them.

"What's Polly's other name?" she asked quickly.

"Polly Bragg," he answered. "She was awful nice, Polly was, and jolly, too. Ma thought she was lazy. She used to cry a lot and wish she could go home; but my! she could sing fine."

Pearl went on with her work with a preoccupied air.

"Tom, can you take a parcel for me to town to-day?"

"I am not goin'," he said in surprise. "Pa always goes if we need anything. I haven't been in town for a month."

"Don't you go to church?" Pearl asked in surprise.

"No, you bet I don't, not now. The preacher was sassy to pa and tried to get money. Pa says he'll never touch wood in his church again, and pa won't give another cent either, and, mind you, last year we gave twenty-five dollars."

"We paid fourteen dollars," Pearl said, "and Mary got six dollars on her card."

"Oh, but you town people don't have the expenses we have."

“That’s true, I guess,” Pearl said doubtfully—she was wondering about the boot bills. “Pa gets a dollar and a quarter every day, and ma gets seventy-five cents when she washes. We’re gettin’ on fine.”

Then Mrs. Motherwell made her appearance, and the conversation came to an end.

That afternoon when Pearl had washed the dishes and scrubbed the floor, she went upstairs to the little room to write in her diary. She knew Mrs. Francis would expect to see something in it, so she wrote laboriously:

I saw a lot of yalla flowers and black-burds. The rode was full of dust and wagging marks. I met a man with a top buggy and smelt a skunk. Mrs. M. made a kake to-day—there was no lickens.

I’m goin’ to tidy up the granary for Arthur. He’s offel nice—an’ told me about London Bridge—it hasn’t fallen down at all, he says, that’s just a song.

All day long the air had been heavy and close, and that night while Pearl was asleep the face of the heavens was darkened with storm-clouds. Great rolling masses came up from the west, shot through with flashes of lightening, and the heavy silence was more ominous than the loudest thunder would have been. The wind began in the hills, gusty and fitful at first, then bursting with violence over the plain below. There was a cutting whine in it, like the whang of stretched steel, fateful, deadly as the singing of bullets, chilling the farmer’s heart, for he knows it means hail.

Pearl woke and sat up in bed. The lightning flashed in the little window, leaving the room as black as ink. She listened to the whistling wind.

“It’s the hail,” she whispered delightedly. “I knew the Lord would find a way to open the windy without me puttin’ my fist through it—I’ll have a look at the clouds to see if they have that white edge on them. No—I won’t either—it isn’t my put in. I’ll just lave the Lord alone. Nothin’ makes me madder than when I promise Tommy or Mary or any of them something and then have them frettin’ all the time about whether or not I’ll get it done. I’d like to see the clouds though. I’ll bet they’re a sight, just like what Camilla sings about:

Dark is His path on the wings o’ the storm.

In the kitchen below the Motherwells gathered with pale faces. The windows shook and rattled in their casings.

“Keep away from the stove, Tom,” Mrs. Motherwell said, trembling. “That’s where the lightnin’ strikes.”

Tom’s teeth were chattering.

“This’ll fix the wheat that’s standing, every—bit of it,” Sam said. He did not make it quite as strong as he intended. Something had taken the profanity out of him.

“Hadn’t you better go up and bring the kid down, ma?” Tom asked, thinking of Pearl.

“Her!” his father said contemptuously. “She’ll never hear it.” The wind suddenly ceased. Not a breath stirred, only a continuous glare of lightning. Then crack! crack! crack! on the roof, on the windows, everywhere, like bad boys throwing stones, heavier, harder, faster, until it was one beating, thundering roar.

It lasted but a few minutes, though it seemed longer to those who listened in terror in the kitchen.

The roar grew less and less and at last ceased altogether, and only a gentle rain was falling.

Sam Motherwell sat without speaking, “You have cheated the Lord all these years, and He has borne with you, trying to make you pay up without harsh proceedings”—he found himself repeating the minister’s words. Could this be what he meant by harsh proceedings? Certainly it was harsh enough taking away a man’s crop after all his hard work.

Sam was full of self-pity. There were very few men who had ever been treated as badly as he felt himself to be.

“Maybe there’ll only be a streak of it hailed out,” Tom said, breaking in on his father’s dismal thoughts.

“You’ll see in the mornin’,” his father growled, and Tom went back to bed.

When Pearl woke it was with the wind blowing in upon her; the morning breeze fragrant with the sweetness of the flowers and the ripening grain. The musty odours had all gone, and she felt life and health in every breath. The blackbirds were twittering in the oats behind the house, and the rising sun was throwing long shadows over the field. Scattered glass lay on the floor.

“I knew the dear Lord would fix the gurns,” Pearl said as she dressed, laughing to herself. But her face clouded in a moment. What about the poppies?

Then she laughed again. “There I go frettin’ again. I guess the Lord knows they’re there and He isn’t going to smash them if Polly really needs them.”

She dressed herself hastily and ran down the ladder and around behind the cookhouse, where a strange sight met her eyes. The cookhouse roof had been blown off and placed over the poppies, where it had sheltered them from every hailstone.

Pearl looked under the roof. The poppies stood there straight and beautiful, no doubt wondering what big thing it was that hid them from the sun.

When Tom and his father went out in the early dawn to investigate the damage done by the storm, they found that only a narrow strip through the field in front of the house had been touched.

The hail had played a strange trick; beating down the grain along this narrow path, just as if a mighty roller had come through it, until it reached the house, on the other side of which not one trace of damage could be found.

“Didn’t we get off lucky?” Tom exclaimed “and the rest of the grain is not even lodged. Why, twenty-five dollars would cover the whole loss, cookhouse roof and all.”

His father was looking over the rippling field, green-gold in the rosy dawn. He started uncomfortably at Tom’s words.

Twenty-five dollars!

CHAPTER XV INASMUCH

After sundown one night Pearl's resolve was carried into action. She picked a shoe-box full of poppies, wrapping the stems carefully in wet newspaper. She put the cover on, and wrapped the box neatly.

Then she wrote the address. She wrote it painfully, laboriously, in round blocky letters. Pearl always put her tongue out when she was doing anything that required minute attention. She was so anxious to have the address just right that her tongue was almost around to her ear. The address read:

*Miss Polly Bragg, english gurl
and sick with fever
Brandon Hospittle
Brandon.*

Then she drew a design around it. Jimmy's teacher had made them once in Jimmy's scribbler, just beautiful. She was sorry she could not do a bird with a long strip of tape in his mouth with "Think of Me" or "From a Friend" or "Love the Giver" on it. Ma knew a man once who could do them, quick as wink. He died a drunkard with delirium trimmings, but was terrible smart.

Then she stuck, under the string, a letter she had written to Camilla. Camilla would get them sent to Polly.

"I know how to get them sent to Camilla too, you bet," she murmured. "There are two ways, both good ones, too. Jim Russell is one way. Jim knows what flowers are to folks."

She crept softly down the stairs. Mrs. Motherwell had left the kitchen and no one was about. The men were all down at the barn.

She turned around the cookhouse where the poppies stood straight and strong against the glowing sky. A little single red one with white edges swayed gently on its slender stem and seemed to beckon to her with pleading insistence. She hurried past them, fearing that she would be seen, but looking back the little poppy was still nodding and pleading.

"And so ye can go, ye sweetheart," she whispered. "I know what ye want." She came back for it.

"Just like Danny would be honin' to come, if it was me," she murmured with a sudden blur of homesickness.

Through the pasture she flew with the speed of a deer. The tall sunflowers along the fence seemed to throw a light in the gathering gloom.

A night hawk circled in the air above her, and a clumsy bat came bumping through the dusk as she crossed the creek just below Jim's shanty.

Bottles, Jim's dog, jumped up and barked, at which Jim himself came to the door.

"Come back, Bottles," he called to the dog. "How will I ever get into society if you treat callers that way, and a lady, too! Dear, dear, is my tie on straight? Oh, is that you Pearl? Come right in, I am glad to see you."

Over the door of Jim's little house the words "Happy Home" were printed in large letters and just above the one little window another sign boldly and hospitably announced "Hot

Meals at all Hours.”

Pearl stopped at the door. “No, Jim,” she said, “it’s not visitin’ I am, but I will go in for a minute, for I must put this flower in the box. Can ye go to town, Jim, in a hurry?”

“I can,” Jim replied.

“I mean now, this very minute, slappet-bang!”

Jim started for the door.

“Howld on, Jim!” Pearl cried, “don’t you want to hear what ye’r goin’ for? Take this box to Camilla—Camilla E. Rose at Mrs. Francis’s—and she’ll do the rest. It’s flowers for poor Polly, sick and dyin’ maybe with the fever. But dead or alive, flowers are all right for folks, ain’t they, Jim? The train goes at ten o’clock. Can ye do it, Jim?”

Jim was brushing his hair with one hand and reaching for his coat with the other.

“Here’s the money to pay for the ride on the cars,” Pearl said, reaching out five of her coins.

Jim waved his hand.

“That’s my share of it,” he said, pulling his cap down on his head. “You see, you do the first part, then me, then Camilla—just like the fiery cross.” He was half way to the stable as he spoke.

He threw the saddle on Chiniquy and was soon galloping down the road with the box under his arm.

Camilla came to the door in answer to Jim’s ring.

He handed her the box, and lifting his hat was about to leave without a word, when Camilla noticed the writing.

“From Pearl,” she said eagerly. “How is Pearl? Come in, please, while I read the letter—it may require an answer.”

Camilla wore a shirt-waist suit of brown, and the neatest collar and tie, and Jim suddenly became conscious that his boots were not blackened.

Camilla left him in the hall, while she went into the library and read the contents of the letter to Mr. and Mrs. Francis.

She returned presently and with a pleasant smile said, holding out her hand, “You are Mr. Russell. I am glad to meet you. Tell Pearl the flowers will be sent to-night.”

She opened the door as she spoke, and Jim found himself going down the steps, wondering just how it happened that he had not said one word—he who was usually so ready of speech.

“Well, well,” he said to himself as he untied Chiniquy, “little Jimmy’s lost his tongue, I wonder why?”

All the way home the vision of lovely dark eyes and rippling brown hair with just a hint of red in it, danced before him. Chiniquy, taking advantage of his master’s preoccupation, wandered aimlessly against a barbed wire, taking very good care not to get too close to it himself. Jim came to himself just in time to save his leg from a prod from the spikes.

“Chiniquy, Chiniquy,” he said gravely, “I understand now something of the hatred the French bear your illustrious namesake. But no matter what the man’s sins may have been, surely he did not deserve to have a little flea-bitten, mangey, treacherous, mouse-coloured deceiver like you named for him.”

When Camilla had read Pearl’s letter to Mr. and Mrs. Francis, the latter was all emotion. How splendid of her, so sympathetic, so full of the true inwardness of Christian love, and the

sweet message of the poppy, the emblem of sleep, so prophetic of that other sleep that knows no waking! Is it not a pagan thought, that? What tender recollections they will bring the poor sufferer of her far away, happy childhood home!

Mrs. Francis's face was shining with emotion as she spoke. Then she became dreamy.

"I wonder is her soul attune to the melodies of life, and will she feel the love vibrations of the ether?"

Mr. Francis had noiselessly left the room when Camilla had finished her rapid explanation. He returned with his little valise in his hand.

He stood a moment irresolutely looking, in his helpless dumb way, at his wife, who was so beautifully expounding the message of the flowers.

Camilla handed him the box. She understood.

Mrs. Francis noticed the valise in her husband's hand.

"How very suddenly you make up your mind, James," she said. "Are you actually going away on the train to-night? Really James, I believe I shall write a little sketch for our church paper. Pearl's thoughtfulness has moved me, James. It really has touched me deeply. If you were not so engrossed in business, James, I really believe it would move you; but men are so different from us, Camilla. They are not so soulful. Perhaps it is just as well, but really sometimes, James, I fear you give business too large a place in your life. It is all business, business, business."

Mrs. Francis opened her desk, and drawing toward her her gold pen and dainty letter paper, began her article.

Camilla followed Mr. Francis into the hall, and helped him to put on his overcoat. She handed him his hat with something like reverence in her manner.

"You are upon the King's business to-night," she said, with shining eyes, as she opened the door for him.

He opened his mouth as if to speak, but only waved his hand with an impatient gesture and was gone.

CHAPTER XVI

HOW POLLY WENT HOME

“We’ll have to move poor Polly, if she lives thro’ the night,” the nurse said to the house doctor in the hospital that night. “She is making all the patients homesick. To hear her calling for her mother or for ‘someone from ’ome’ is hard on the sick and well.”

“What are her chances do you think?” the doctor asked gravely.

He was a wiry little man with a face like leather, but his touch brought healing and his presence, hope.

“She is dying of homesickness as well as typhoid,” the nurse said sadly, “and she seems so anxious to get better, poor thing! She often says ‘I can’t die miss, for what’ll happen mother.’ But for the last two days, in her delirium, she seems to be worrying more about her work and her flowers. I think they were pretty hard people she lived with. ‘Surely she’ll praise me this time,’ she often says, ‘I’ve tried my ’ardest.’ The strenuous life has been too much for poor Polly. Listen to her now!”

Polly was singing. Clear and steady and sweet, her voice rang over the quiet ward, and many a fevered face was raised to listen. Polly’s mind was wandering in the shadows, but she still sang the songs of home in a strange land:

Down by the biller there grew a green willer
A weeping all night with the bank for a piller.

And over and over again she sang with a wavering cadence, incoherently sometimes, but always with tender pleading, something about “where the stream was a-flowin’, the gentle kine lowin’, and over my grave keep the green willers growin’.”

“It is pathetic to hear her,” the nurse said, “and now listen to her asking about her poppies.”

“In the box, miss; I brought the seed hacross the hocean, and they wuz beauties, they wuz wot came hup. They’ll be noddin’ and wavin’ now red and ’andsome, if she hasn’t cut them. She wouldn’t cut them, would she, miss? She couldn’t ’ave the ’eart, I think.”

“No indeed, she hasn’t cut them,” the nurse declared with decision, taking Polly’s burning hand tenderly in hers. “No one could cut down such beauties. What nonsense to think of such a thing, Polly. They’re blooming, I tell you, red and handsome, almost as tall as you are, Polly.”

The office-boy touched the nurse’s arm.

“A gentleman who gave no name left this box for one of the typhoid patients,” he said, handing her the box.

The nurse read the address and the box trembled in her hands as she nervously opened it and took out the contents.

“Polly, Polly!” she cried, excitedly, “didn’t I tell you they were blooming, red and handsome.”

But Polly’s eyes were burning with delirium and her lips babbled meaninglessly.

The nurse held the poppies over her.

Her arms reached out caressingly.

“Oh, miss!” she cried, her mind coming back from the shadows. “They have come at last, the darlin’s, the sweethearts, the loves, the beauties.” She held them in a close embrace. “They’re from ’ome, they’re from ’ome!” she gasped painfully, for her breath came with difficulty now. “I can’t just see them, miss, the lights is movin’ so much, and the way the bed ’eaves, but, tell me, miss, is there a little silky one, hedged with w’ite? It was mother’s favourite one of hall. I’d like to ’ave it in my ’and, miss.”

The nurse put it in her hand. She was only a young nurse and her face was wet with tears.

“It’s like ’avin’ my mother’s ’and, miss, it is,” she murmured softly. “Ye wouldn’t mind the dark if ye ’ad yer mother’s ’and, would ye, miss?”

And then the nurse took Polly’s throbbing head in her strong young arms, and soothed its restless tossing with her cool soft touch, and told her through her tears of that other Friend, who would go with her all the way.

“I’m that ’appy, miss,” Polly murmured faintly. “It’s like I was goin’ ’ome. Say that again about the valley,” and the nurse repeated tenderly that promise of incomparable sweetness:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil,
for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

“It’s just like ’avin’ mother’s ’and to ’old the little silky one,” Polly murmured sleepily.

The nurse put the poppies beside Polly’s face on the pillow, and drawing a screen around her went on to the next patient. A case of urgent need detained her at the other end of the ward, and it was not until the dawn was shining blue in the windows that she came back on her rounds.

Polly lay just as she had left her. The crimson petals lay thick upon her face and hair. The homesickness and redness of weeping had gone forever from her eyes, for they were looking now upon the King in his beauty! In her hand, now cold and waxen, she held one little silky poppy, red with edges of white. Polly had gone home.

There was a whisper among the poppies that grew behind the cookhouse that morning as the first gleam of the sun came yellow and wan over the fields; there was a whisper and a shivering among the poppies as the morning breezes, cold and chill, rippled over them, and a shower of crystal drops mingled with the crimson petals that fluttered to the ground. It was not until Pearl came out and picked a handful of them for her dingy little room that they held up their heads once more and waved and nodded, red and handsome.

CHAPTER XVII
“EGBERT AND EDYTHE”

When Tom Motherwell called at the Millford post office one day he got the surprise of his life.

The Englishman had asked him to get his mail, and, of course, there was the *Northwest Farmer* to get, and there might be catalogues; but the possibilities of a letter addressed to Mr. Thos. Motherwell did not occur to him.

But it was there!

A square gray envelope with his own name written on it. He had never before got a real letter. Once he had a machinery catalogue sent to him, with a typewritten letter inside beginning “Dear Sir,” but his mother had told him that it was just money they were after, but what would she say if she saw this?

He did not trust himself to open it in the plain gaze of the people in the office. The girl behind the wicket noticed his excitement.

“Ye needn’t glue yer eye on me,” Tom thought indignantly. “I’ll not open it here for you to watch me. They’re awful pryin’ in this office. What do you bet she hasn’t opened it?” He moved aside as others pressed up to the wicket, feeling that every eye was upon him.

In a corner outside the door, Tom opened his letter, and laboriously made out its contents. It was written neatly with carefully shaded capitals:

Dear Tom: We are going to have a party to-morrow night, because George and Fred are going back to college next week. We want you to come and bring your Englishman. We all hope you will come.

Ever your friend,
NELLIE SLATER.

Tom read it again with burning cheeks. A party at Slater’s and him invited!

He walked down the street feeling just the same as when his colt got the prize at the “Fair.” He felt he was a marked man—eagerly sought after—invited to parties—girls writing to him! That’s what it was to have the cash!—you bet pa and ma were right!—money talks every time!

When he came in sight of home his elation vanished. His father and mother would not let him go, he knew that very well. They were afraid that Nellie Slater wanted to marry him. And Nellie Slater was not eligible for the position of daughter-in-law. Nellie Slater had never patched a quilt nor even made a tie-down. She always used baking powder instead of cream of tartar and soda, and was known to have a leaning toward canned goods. Mrs. Motherwell considered her just the girl to spend a man’s honest earnings and bring him to seedy ruin. Moreover, she idled away her time, teaching cats to jump, and her eighteen years old, if she was a day!

Tom knew that if he went to the party it must be by stealth. When he drove up to the kitchen door his mother looked up from her ironing and asked:

“What kept you, Tom?”

Tom had not been detained at all, but Mrs. Motherwell always used this form of salutation to be sure.

Tom grumbled a reply, and handing out the mail began to unhitch.

Mrs. Motherwell read the addresses on the Englishman's letters:

*Mr. Arthur Wemyss,
c/o Mr. S. Motherwell,
Millford P.O.,
Manitoba, Canada,
Township 8, range 16, sec't. 20. North America.*

"Now I wonder who's writing to him?" she said, laying the two letters down reluctantly.

There was one other letter addressed to Mr. Motherwell, which she took to be a twine bill. It was post-marked Brandon. She put it up in the pudding dish on the sideboard.

As Tom led the horse to the stable he met Pearl coming in with the eggs.

"See here, kid," he said carelessly, handing her the letter.

Tom knew Pearl was to be trusted. She had a good head, Pearl had, for a girl.

"Oh, good shot!" Pearl cried delightedly, as she read the note. "Won't that be great? Are your clothes ready, though?" It was the eldest of the family who spoke.

"Clothes," Tom said contemptuously. "They are a blamed sight readier than I am."

"I'll blacken your boots," Pearl said, "and press out a tie. Say, how about a collar?"

"Oh, the clothes are all right, but pa and ma won't let me go near Nellie Slater."

"Is she tooberkler?" Pearl asked quickly.

"Not so very," Tom answered guardedly. "Ma is afraid I might marry her."

"Is she awful pretty?" Pearl asked, glowing with pleasure. Here was a rapturous romance.

"You bet," Tom declared with pride. "She's the swellest girl in these parts"—this with the air of a man who had weighed many feminine charms and found them wanting.

"Has she eyes like stars, lips like cherries, neck like a swan, and a laugh like a ripple of music?" Pearl asked eagerly.

"Them's it," Tom replied modestly.

"Then I'd go, you bet!" was Pearl's emphatic reply. "There's your mother calling."

"Yes'm, I'm comin'. I'll help you, Tom. Keep a stout heart and all will be well."

Pearl knew all about frustrated love. Ma had read a story once, called "Wedded and Parted, and Wedded Again." Cruel and designing parents had parted young Edythe (pronounced Ed'-ith-ee) and Egbert, and Egbert just pined and pined and pined. How would Mrs. Motherwell like it if poor Tom began to pine and turn from his victuals. The only thing that saved Egbert from the silent tomb where partings come no more, was the old doctor who used to say, "Keep a stout heart, Egbert, all will be well." That's why she said it to Tom.

Edythe had eyes like stars, mouth like cherries, neck like a swan, and a laugh like a ripple of music, and wasn't it strange, Nellie Slater had, too? Pearl knew now why Tom chewed Old Chum tobacco so much. Men often plunge into dissipation when they are crossed in love, and maybe Tom would go and be a robber or a pirate or something; and then he might kill a man and be led to the scaffold, and he would turn his haggard face to the howling mob, and say, "All that I am my mother made me." Say, wouldn't that make her feel cheap! Wouldn't that make a woman feel like thirty cents if anything would. Here Pearl's gloomy reflections overcame her and she sobbed aloud.

Mrs. Motherwell looked up apprehensively.

“What are you crying for, Pearl?” she asked not unkindly.

Then, oh, how Pearl wanted to point her finger at Mrs. Motherwell, and say with piercing clearness, the way a woman did in the book:

“I weep not for myself, but for you and for your children.” But, of course, that would not do, so she said:

“I ain’t cryin’—much.”

Pearl was grating horse-radish that afternoon, but the tears she shed were for the parted lovers. She wondered if they ever met in the moonlight and vowed to be true till the rocks melted in the sun, and all the seas ran dry. That’s what Egbert had said, and then a rift of cloud passed athwart the moon’s face, and Edythe fainted dead away because it is bad luck to have a cloud go over the moon when people are busy plighting vows, and wasn’t it a good thing that Egbert was there to break her fall? Pearl could just see poor Nellie Slater standing dry-eyed and pale at the window wondering if Tom could get away from his lynx-eyed parents who dogged his every footstep, and Pearl’s tears flowed afresh.

But Nellie Slater was not standing dry-eyed and pale at the window.

“Did you ask Tom Motherwell?” Fred, her brother, asked, looking up from a list he held in his hand.

“I sent him a note,” Nellie answered, turning around from the baking-board. “We couldn’t leave Tom out. Poor boy, he never has any fun, and I do feel sorry for him.”

“His mother won’t let him come, anyway,” Fred said smiling. “So don’t set your heart on seeing him, Nell.”

“How discouraging you are Fred,” Nellie replied laughing. “Now, I believe he will come. Tom would be a smart boy if he had a chance, I think. But just think what it must be like to live with two people like the Motherwells. You do not realise it, Fred, because you have had the superior advantages of living with clever people like your brother Peter and your sister Eleanor Mary; isn’t that so, Peter?”

Peter Slater, the youngest of the family, who had just come in, laid down the milk-pails before replying.

“We have done our best for them all, Nellie,” he said modestly. “I hope they will repay us. But did I hear you say Tom Motherwell was coming?”

“You heard Nell say so,” Fred answered, checking over the names. “Nell seems to like Tom pretty well.”

“I do, indeed,” Nellie assented, without turning around.

“You show good taste, Eleanor,” Peter said as he washed his hands.

“Who is going to drive into town for Camilla?” Nellie asked that evening.

“I am,” Fred answered promptly.

“No, you’re not, I am,” Peter declared.

George looked up hastily.

“I am going to bring Miss Rose out,” he said firmly.

Then they laughed.

“Father,” Nellie said gravely, “just to save trouble among the boys, will you do it?”

“With the greatest of pleasure,” her father said, smiling.

Under Pearl’s ready sympathy Tom began to feel the part of the stricken lover, and to become as eager to meet Nellie as Egbert had been to meet the beautiful Edythe. He moped around the field that afternoon and let Arthur do the heavy share of the work.

The next morning before Mrs. Motherwell appeared Pearl and Tom decided upon the plan of campaign. Pearl was to get his Sunday clothes taken to the bluff in the pasture field, sometime during the day. Then in the evening Tom would retire early, watch his chance, slip out the front door, make his toilet on the bluff, and then, oh bliss! away to Edythe. Pearl had thought of having him make a rope of the sheets; but she remembered that this plan of escape was only used when people were leaving a place for good—such as a prison; but for coming back again, perhaps after all, it was better to use the front door. Egbert had used the sheets, though.

Fortune favoured Pearl's plans that afternoon. A book agent called at the back door with the prospectus of a book entitled, "Woman's Influence in the Home." While he was busy explaining to Mrs. Motherwell the great advantages of possessing a copy of this book, and she was equally busy explaining to him her views on bookselling as an occupation for an able-bodied man, Pearl secured Tom's suit, ran down the front stairs, out the front door and away to the bluff.

Coming back to the house she had an uneasy feeling that she was doing something wrong. Then she remembered Edythe, dry-eyed and pale, and her fears vanished. Pearl had recited once at a Band of Hope meeting a poem of her own choosing—this was before the regulations excluding secular subjects became so rigid. Pearl's recitation dealt with a captive knight who languished in a mouldy prison. He begged a temporary respite—his prayer was heard—a year was given him. He went back to his wife and child and lived the year in peace and happiness. The hour came to part, friends entreated—wife and child wept—the knight alone was calm.

He stepped through the casement, a proud flush on his cheek, casting aside wife, child, friends. "What are wife and child to the word of a knight?" he said. "And behold the dawn has come!"

Pearl had lived the scene over and over; to her it stood for all that was brave and heroic. Coming up through the weeds that day, she was that man. Her step was proud, her head was thrown back, her brown eyes glowed and burned; there was strength and grace in every motion.

When Tom Motherwell furtively left his father's house, and made his way to the little grove where his best clothes were secreted, his movements were followed by two anxious brown eyes that looked out of the little window in the rear of the house.

The men came in from the barn, and the night hush settled down upon the household. Mr. and Mrs. Motherwell went to their repose, little dreaming that their only son had entered society, and, worse still, was exposed to the baneful charms of the reckless young woman who was known to have a preference for baking powder and canned goods, and curled her hair with the curling tongs.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PARTY AT SLATER'S

"I wonder how we are going to get all the people in to-night," Edith Slater said gravely as the family sat at supper. "I am afraid the walls will be bulged out to-morrow."

"The new chicken-house and the cellar will do for the overflow meetings," George remarked.

"I borrow the pantry if it comes to a crush, you and I, Camilla," Peter Slater said, helping himself to another piece of pie. Camilla had come out in the afternoon to help with the preparations.

"No, Camilla is my partner," Fred said severely. "Peter is growing up too fast, don't you think so, mother? Since I lent him my razor to play with there's no end to the airs he gives himself. I think he should go to bed at eight o'clock to-night, same as other nights."

Peter laughed scornfully, but Nellie interposed.

"You boys needn't quarrel over Camilla for Jim Russell is coming, and when Camilla sees him, what chance do you suppose you'll have?"

"And when Jim sees Camilla, what chance will you have, Nell?" George asked.

"Not one in a hundred; but I am prepared for the worst," Nellie answered, good-naturedly.

"That means she has asked Tom Motherwell," Peter explained.

Then Mrs. Slater told them to hurry along with their supper for the people would soon be coming.

It was Mrs. Slater who had planned the party. Mrs. Slater was the leading spirit in everything in the household that required dash and daring. Hers was the dominant voice, though nothing louder than a whisper had been heard from her for years. She laughed in a whisper, she cried in a whisper. Yet in some way her laugh was contagious, and her tears brought comfort to those with whom she wept.

When she proposed the party the girls foresaw difficulties. The house was small—there were so many to ask—it was a busy time.

Mrs. Slater stood firm.

"Ask everybody," she whispered. "Nobody minds being crowded at a party. I was at a party once where we had to go outside to turn around, the house was so small. I'll never forget what a good time we had."

Mr. Slater was dressed and ready for anything long before the time had come for the guests to arrive. An hour before he had sat down resignedly and said, "Come, girls, do as you think best with the old man, scrub him, polish him, powder him, blacken his eyebrows, do not spare him, he's yours," and the girls had laughingly accepted the privilege.

George, whose duty it was to attend to the lamps for the occasion, came in with a worried look, on his usually placid face.

"The aristocratic parlour-lamp is indisposed," he said. "It has balked, refuses to turn up, and smells dreadfully."

"Bring in the plebeians, George," Fred cried gaily, "and never mind the patrician—the forty-cent plebs never fail. I told Jim Russell to bring his lantern, and Peter can stand in a corner and light matches if we are short."

“It’s working now,” Edith called from the parlour, “burning beautifully; mother drew her hand over it.”

Soon the company began to arrive. Bashful, self-conscious girls, some of them were, old before their time with the marks of toil, heavy and unremitting, upon them, hard-handed, stoop-shouldered, dull-eyed and awkward. These were the daughters of rich farmers. Good girls they were, too, conscientious, careful, unselfish, thinking it a virtue to stifle every ambition, smother every craving for pleasure.

When they felt tired, they called it laziness and felt disgraced, and thus they had spent their days, working, working from the gray dawn, until the darkness came again, and all for what? When in after years these girls, broken in health and in spirits, slipped away to premature graves, or, worse still, settled into chronic invalidism, of what avail was the memory of the cows they milked, the mats they hooked, the number of pounds of butter they made.

Not all the girls were like these. Maud Murray was there. Maud Murray with the milkmaid cheeks and curly black hair, the typical country girl of bounding life and spirits, the type so often seen upon the stage and so seldom elsewhere.

Mrs. Motherwell had warned Tom against Maud Murray as well as Nellie Slater. She had once seen Maud churning, and she had had a newspaper pinned to the wall in front of her, and was reading it as she worked, and Mrs. Motherwell knew that a girl who would do that would come to no good.

Martha Perkins was the one girl of whom Mrs. Motherwell approved. Martha’s record on butter and quilts and mats stood high. Martha was a nice quiet girl. Mrs. Motherwell often said a “nice, quiet, unappearing girl.” Martha certainly was quiet. Her conversational attainments did not run high. “Things is what they are, and what’s the good of saying anything,” Martha had once said in defence of her silent ways.

She was small and sallow-skinned and was dressed in an anaemic gray; her thin hay-coloured hair was combed straight back from a rather fine forehead. She stooped a little when she walked, and even when not employed her hands picked nervously at each other. Martha’s shyness, the “unappearing” quality, was another of her virtues in the eyes of Tom’s mother. Martha rarely left home even to go to Millford. Martha did not go to the Agricultural Fair when her mats and quilts and butter and darning and buttonholes on cotton got their red tickets. Martha stayed at home and dug potatoes—a nice, quiet, unappearing girl.

When they played games at the Slaters that evening, Martha would not play. She never cared for games she said, they tired a person so. She would just watch the others, and she wished again that she had her knitting.

Then the kitchen floor was cleared; table, chairs and lounge were set outside to make room for the dancing, and when the violins rang out with the “Arkansaw Traveller,” and big John Kennedy in his official voice of caller-off announced, “Select your partners,” every person felt that the real business of the evening had begun.

Tom had learned to dance, though his parents would have been surprised had they known it. Out in the granary on rainy days hired men had obligingly instructed him in the mysteries of the two-step and waltz. He sat in a corner and watched the first dance. When Jim Russell came into the hall, after receiving a warm welcome from Mr. and Mrs. Slater, who stood at the door, he was conscious of a sudden thrill of pleasure. It was the vision of Camilla, at the farther end of the dining-room, as she helped the Slater girls to receive their guests. Camilla wore a red dress that brought out the blue-black of her eyes, and it seemed to Jim as he

watched her graceful movements that he had never seen anyone so beautiful. She was piloting a bevy of bashful girls to the stairway, and as she passed him she gave him a little nod and smile that set his heart dancing.

He heard the caller-off calling for partners for a quadrille. The fiddlers had already tuned their instruments. From where he stood he could see the figures forming, but Jim watched the stairway. At last she came, with a company of other girls, none of whom he saw, and he asked her for the first dance. Jim was not a conceited young man, but he felt that she would not refuse him. Nor did she.

Camilla danced well and so did Jim, and many an eye followed them as they wound in and out through the other dancers. When the dance was over he led her to a seat and sat beside her. They had much to talk of. Camilla was anxious to hear of Pearl, and it seemed all at once that they had become very good friends indeed.

The second dance was a waltz. Tom did not know that it was the music that stirred his soul with a sudden tenderness, a longing indefinite, that was full of pain and yet was all sweetness. Martha who sat near him looked at him half expectantly. But her little gray face and twitching hands repelled him. On the other side of the room, Nellie Slater, flushed and smiling was tapping her foot to the music.

He found himself on his feet. "Who cares for mats?" he muttered. He was beside Nellie in an instant.

"Nellie, will you dance with me?" he faltered, wondering at his own temerity.

"I will, Tom, with pleasure," she said, smiling.

His arm was around her now and they were off, one, two, three; one, two, three; yes, he had the step. "Over the foam we glide," in and out through the other dancers, the violins weaving that story of love never ending. "What though the world be wide"—Nellie's head was just below his face—"Love's golden star will guide." Nellie's hand was in his as they floated on the rainbow-sea. "Drifting along, glad is our song"—her hair blew against his cheek as they swept past the open door. What did he care what his mother would say. He was Egbert now. Edythe was in his arms. "While we are side by side" the violins sang, glad, triumphant, that old story that runs like a thread of gold through all life's patterns; that old song, old yet ever new, deathless, unchangeable, which maketh the poor man rich and without which the richest becomes poor!

When the music stopped, Tom awoke from his idolatrous dream. He brought Nellie to a seat and sat awkwardly beside her. His old self-complacency had left him. Nellie was talking to him, but he did not hear what she said. He was not looking at her, but at himself. Before he knew it she had left him and was dancing with Jim Russell. Tom looked after them, miserable. She was looking into Jim's face, smiling and talking. What the mischief were they saying? He tried to tell himself that he could buy and sell Jim Russell; Jim had not anything in the world but a quarter of scrub land. They passed him again, still smiling and talking. "Nellie Slater is making herself mighty cheap," he thought angrily. Then the thought came home to him with sudden bitterness—how handsome Jim was, so straight and tall, so well-dressed, so clever, and, bitterest of all, how different from him.

When Jim and Camilla were sitting out the second dance he told her about Arthur, the Englishman, who sat in a corner, shy and uncomfortable. Camilla became interested at once, and when he brought Arthur over and introduced him, Camilla's friendly smile set him at his ease. Then Jim generously vacated his seat and went to find Nellie Slater.

“Select your partners for a square dance!” big John, the caller-off announced, when the floor was cleared. This was the dance that Mr. and Mrs. Slater would have to dance. It was in vain that Mrs. Slater whispered that she had not danced for years, that she was a Methodist bred and born. That did not matter. Her son Peter declared that his mother could dance beautifully, jigs and hornpipes and things like that. He had often seen her at it when she was down in the milkhouse alone.

Mrs. Slater whispered dreadful threats; but her son Peter insisted, and when big John’s voice rang out “Honors all,” “Corners the same,” Mrs. Slater yielded to the tide of public opinion.

Puffing and blowing she got through the “First four right and left,” “Right and left back and ladies’ chain”; but when it came to “Right hand to partner” and “Grand right and left,” it was good-bye to mother! Peter dashed into the set to put his mother right, but mother was always pointing the wrong way. “Swing the feller that stole the sheep,” big John sang to the music; “Dance to the one that drewed it home,” “Whoop ’er up there, you Bud,” “Salute the one that et the beef” and “Swing the dog, that gnawed the bone.” “First couple lead to the right,” and mother and father went forward again and “Balance all!” Tonald McKenzie was opposite mother; Tonald McKenzie did steps—Highland fling steps they were. Tonald was a Crofter from the hills, and had a secret still of his own which made him a sort of uncrowned king among the Crofters. It was a tight race for popularity between mother and Tonald in that set, and when the two stars met face to face in the “Balance all!” Tonald surpassed all former efforts. He cracked his heels together, he snapped his fingers; he threaded the needle; he wrung the dishcloth—oh you should have seen Tonald!

Then big John clapped his hands together, and the first figure was over.

In the second figure for which the violins played “My Love Is but a Lassie Yet,” Mrs. Slater’s memory began to revive, and the dust of twenty years fell from her dancing experience. She went down the centre and back again, right and left on the side, ladies’ chain on the head, right hand to partner and grand right and left, as neat as you please, and best of all, when all the ladies circled to the left, and all the gentlemen circled to the right, no one was quicker to see what was the upshot of it all; and before big John told them to “Form the basket,” mother whispered to father that she knew what was coming, and father told mother she was a wonderful woman for a Methodist. “Turn the basket inside out,” “Circle to the left—to the centre and back, circle to the right,” “Swing the girl with the hole in her sock,” “Promenade once and a half around on the head, once and a half around on the side,” “Turn ’em around to place again and balance all!” “Clap! Clap! Clap!”

Mother wanted to quit then, but dear me no! no one would let her, they would dance the “Break-down” now, and leave out the third figure, and as a special inducement, they would dance “Dan Tucker.” She would stay for “Dan Tucker.” Peter came in for “Tucker,” an extra man being necessary, and then off they went into

Clear the way for old Dan Tucker,
He’s too late to come to supper.

Two by two they circled around, Peter in the centre singing—

Old Dan Tucker
Was a fine old man—

Then back to the right—

He washed his face
In the frying-pan.

Then around in a circle hand in hand—

He combed his hair
On a wagon-wheel,
And died with the tooth-ache
In his heel!

As they let go of their partners' hands and went right and left, Peter made his grand dash into the circle, and when the turn of the tune came he was swinging his mother, his father had Tonald's partner, and Tonald was in the centre in the title roll of Tucker, executing some of the most intricate steps that had ever been seen outside of the Isle of Skye.

Then the tune changed into the skirling bag-pipe lilt all Highlanders love—and which we who know not the Gaelic profanely call “Weel may the keel row”—and Tonald got down to his finest work.

He was in the byre now at home beyond the sea, and it is not strange faces he will be seein', but the lads and lassies of the Glen, and it is John McNeash who holds the drone under his arm and the chanter in his hands, and the salty tang of the sea comes up to him and the peat-smoke is in his nostrils, and the pipes skirl higher and higher as Tonald McKenzie dances the dance of his forbears in a strange land. They had seen Tonald dance before, but this was different, for it was not Tonald McKenzie alone who danced before them, but the incarnate spirit of the Highlands, the unconquerable, dauntless, lawless Highlands, with its purple hills and treacherous caverns that fling defiance at the world and fear not man nor devil.

Tonald finished with a leap as nimble as that with which a cat springs on its victim while the company watched spellbound. He slipped away into a corner and would dance no more that night.

When twelve o'clock came, the dancing was over, and with the smell of coffee and the rattle of dishes in the kitchen it was not hard to persuade big John Kennedy to sing.

Big John lived alone in a little shanty in the hills, and the prospect of a good square meal was a pleasant one to the lonely fellow who had been his own cook so long. Big John lived among the Crofters, whose methods of cooking were simple in the extreme, and from them he had picked up strange ways of housekeeping. He ate out of the frying pan; he milked the cow in the porridge pot, and only took what he needed for each meal, reasoning that she had a better way of keeping it than he had. Big John had departed almost entirely from “white man's ways,” and lived a wild life free from the demands of society. His ability to “call off” at dances was the one tie that bound him to the Canadian people on the plain.

“Oh, I can't sing,” John said sheepishly, when they urged him.

“Tell us how it happened any way John,” Bud Perkins said. “Give us the story of it.”

“Go on John. Sing about the cowboy,” Peter Slater coaxed.

“It iss a teffle of a good song, that,” chuckled Tonald.

“Well,” John began, clearing his throat, “here it's for you. I've ruined me voice drivin' oxen though, but here's the song.”

It was a song of the plains, weird and wistful, with an uncouth plaintiveness that fascinated these lonely hill-dwellers.

As I was a-walkin' one beautiful morning,
As I was a-walkin' one morning in May,
I saw a poor cowboy rolled up in his blanket,
Rolled up in his blanket as cold as the clay!

The listener would naturally suppose that the cowboy was dead in his blanket that lovely May morning; but that idea had to be abandoned as the song went on, because the cowboy was very much alive in the succeeding verses, when—

Round the bar bummin' where bullets were hummin'
He snuffed out the candle to show why he come!

Then his way of giving directions for his funeral was somewhat out of the usual procedure but no one seemed to notice these little discrepancies—

Beat the drum slowly boys, beat the drum lowly boys,
Beat the dead march as we hurry along.
To show that ye love me, boys, write up above me, boys,
“Here lies a poor cowboy who knows he done wrong.”

In accordance with a popular custom, John SPOKE the last two words in a very slow and distinct voice. This was considered a very fine thing to do—it served the purpose of the “Finis” at the end of the book, or the “Let us pray,” at the end of the sermon.

The applause was very loud and very genuine.

Bud Perkins, who was the wit of the Perkins family, and called by his mother a “regular cut-up,” was at last induced to sing. Bud’s “Come-all-ye” contained twenty-three verses, and in it was set forth the wanderings of one, young Willie, who left his home and native land at a very tender age, and “left a good home when he left.” His mother tied a kerchief of blue around his neck. “God bless you, son,” she said. “Remember I will watch for you, till life itself is fled!” The song went on to tell how long the mother watched in vain. Young Willie roamed afar, but after he had been scalped by savage bands and left for dead upon the sands, and otherwise maltreated by the world at large, he began to think of home, and after shipwrecks, and dangers and hair-breadth escapes, he reached his mother’s cottage door, from which he had gone long years before.

Then of course he tried to deceive his mother, after the manner of all boys returning after a protracted absence—

Oh, can you tell me, ma’m, he said,
How far to Edinboro’ town.

But he could not fool his mother, no, no! She knew him by the kerchief blue, still tied around his neck.

When the applause, which was very generous, had been given, Jim Russell wanted to know how young Willie got his neck washed in all his long meanderings, or if he did not wash, how did he dodge the health officers.

George Slater gravely suggested that perhaps young Willie used a dry-cleaning process—French chalk or brown paper and a hot iron.

Peter Slater said he did not believe it was the same handkerchief at all. No handkerchief could stand the pace young Willie went. It was another one very like the one he had started off with. He noticed them in the window as he passed, that day, going cheap for cash.

The young Englishman looked more and more puzzled. It was strange how Canadians took things. He turned to Camilla.

“It is only a song, don’t you know,” he said with a distressed look. “It is really impossible to say how he had the kerchief still tied around his neck.”

The evening would not have been complete without a song from Billy McLean. Little Billy was a consumptive, playing a losing game against a relentless foe; but playing like a man with unfailing cheerfulness, and eyes that smiled ever.

There is a bright ship on the ocean,
Bedecked in silver and gold;
They say that my Willie is sailing,
Yes, sailing afar I am told,

was little Billy’s song, known and loved in many a thresher’s caboose, but heard no more for many a long day, for little Billy gave up the struggle the next spring when the snow was leaving the fields and the trickle of water was heard in the air. But he and his songs are still lovingly remembered by the boys who “follow the mill,” when their thoughts run upon old times.

Peter and Fred Slater came in with the coffee. Jim Russell with a white apron around his neck followed with a basket of sandwiches, and Tom Motherwell with a heaping plate of cake.

“Did you make this cake, Nell?” Tom whispered to Nellie in the pantry as she filled the plate for him.

“Me!” she laughed. “Bless you no! I can’t make anything but pancakes.”

Martha Perkins still sat by the window. She looked older and more careworn—she was thinking of how late it was getting. Martha could make cakes, Tom knew that. Martha could do everything.

“Go along Tom,” Nellie was saying, “give a piece to big John. Don’t you see how hungry he looks.” Their eyes met. Hers were bright and smiling. He smiled back.

Oh pshaw! pancakes are not so bad.

Jim Russell whispered to Camilla, as he passed near where she and Arthur sat, “Will you please come and help Nellie in the pantry? We need you badly.”

Camilla called Maud Murray to take her seat. She knew Maud would be kind to the young Englishman.

When Camilla reached the pantry she found Nellie and Tom Motherwell happily engaged in eating lemon tarts, and evidently not needing her at all. Jim was ready with an explanation. “I was thinking of poor Thursa, far across the sea,” he said, “what a shock it would be to her if Arthur was compelled to write home that he had changed his mind,” and Camilla did not look nearly so angry as she should have, either.

After supper there was another song from Arthur Wemyss, the young Englishman. He played his own accompaniment, his fingers, stiffened though they were with hard work, ran lightly over the keys. Every person sat still to listen. Even Martha Perkins forgot to twirl her fingers and leaned forward. It was a simple little English ballad he sang:

Where’er I wander over land or foam,
There is a place so dear the heart calls home.

Perhaps it was because the ocean rolled between him and his home that he sang with such a wistful longing in his voice, that even his dullest listener felt the heart-cry in it. It was a song

of one who reaches longing arms across the sea to the old home and the old friends, whom he sees only in his dreams.

In the silence that followed the song, his fingers unconsciously began to play Mendelssohn's beautiful air, "We Would See Jesus, for the Shadows Lengthen." Closely linked with the young man's love of home was his religious devotion. The quiet Sabbath morning with its silvery chimes calling men to prayer; the soft footfalls in the aisle; the white-robed choir, his father's voice in the church service, so full of divine significance; the many-voiced responses and the swelling notes of the "Te Deum"—he missed it so. All the longing for the life he had left, all the spiritual hunger and thirst that was in his heart sobbed in his voice as he sang:

We would see Jesus,
For the shadows lengthen
O'er this little landscape of our life.
We would see Jesus,
Our weak faith to strengthen,
For the last weariness, the final strife.
We would see Jesus, other lights are paling,
Which for long years we have rejoiced to see,
The blessings of our pilgrimage are failing,
We would not mourn them for we go to Thee.

He sang on with growing tenderness through all that divinely tender hymn, and the longing of it, the prayer of it was not his alone, but arose from every heart that listened.

Perhaps they were in a responsive mood, easily swayed by emotion. Perhaps that is why there was in every heart that listened a desire to be good and follow righteousness, a reaching up of feeble hands to God. The Reverend Hugh Grantley would have said that it was the Spirit of God that stands at the door of every man's heart and knocks.

The young man left the organ, and the company broke up soon after. Before they parted, Mr. Slater in whom the Englishman's singing had revived the spiritual hunger of his Methodist heart, requested them to sing "God be with you till we meet again." Every one stood up and joined hands. Martha, with her thoughts on the butter and eggs; Tonald McKenzie and big John with the vision of their lonely dwellings in the hills looming over them; Jim and Camilla; Tom and Nellie, hand in hand; little Billy, face to face with the long struggle and its certain ending. Little Billy's voice rang sweet and clear above the others—

God be with you till we meet again,
Keep love's banner floating o'er you,
Smite death's threatening wave before you;
God be with you till we meet again!

CHAPTER XIX PEARL'S DIARY

When Pearl got Tom safely started for the party a great weight seemed to have rolled from her little shoulders. Tom was going to spend the night—what was left of it—with Arthur in the granary, and so avoid the danger of disturbing his parents by his late home-coming.

Pearl was too excited to sleep, so she brought out from her bird-cage the little note-book that Mrs. Francis had given her, and endeavoured to fill some of its pages with her observations.

Mrs. Francis had told her to write what she felt and what she saw.

She had written:

August 8th.—I picked the fethers from 2 ducks to-day. I call them cusmoodles. I got that name in a book. The cusmoodles were just full of cheety-wow-wows. That's a pretty name, too, I think. I got that out of my own head. The cheety-wow-wows are wanderers to-night, I guess. They lost their feather-bed.

Arthur's got a girl. Her name is Thursa. He tells me about her, and showed me her picter. She is beautiful beyond compare, and awful savin' on her clothes. At first I thought she had a die-away-ducky look, but I guess it's because she was sorry Arthur was comin' away.

August 9th.—Mrs. Motherwell is gittin' kinder, I think. When I was gittin' the tub for Arthur yesterday, and gittin' water het, she said, "What are you doin', Pearl?" I says, "gittin' Arthur a bath." She says, "Dear me, it's a pity about him." I says, "Yes'm, but he'll feel better now." She says, "Duz he want anyone to wash his back?"—I says, "I don't know, but I'll ask him," and I did, too; but he says, "No, thanks awfully."

August 10th.—The English Church minister called one day to see Arthur. He read some of the Bible to us and then he gave us a dandy prayer. He didn't make it—it was a bot one.

There's wild parsley down on the crik. Mrs. M. sed't wuz poison, but I wanted to be sure, so I et it, and it isn't. There's wild sage all over, purple an lovely. I pickt a big lot ov it, to taik home—we mite have a turkey this winter.

August 11th.—I hope tom's happy; it's offel to be in love. I hope I'll never be.

My hands are pretty sore pullin' weeds, but I like it; I pertend it's bad habits I'm rootin' out.

Arthur's offel good: he duz all the work he can for me, and he sings for me and tells me about his uncle the Bishop. His uncle's got servants and leggin's and lots of things. Arthur's been kind of sick lately.

I made verses one day, there not very nice, but there true—I saw it:

The little lams are beautiful,
There cotes are soft and nice,
The little calves have ringworm,
And the 2-year olds have lice!

Now I'm going' to make more; it seems to bad to leve it like that.

It must be very nasty,
But to worrie, what's the use;
Better be cam and cheerfull,
And appli tobaka jooce.

Sometimes I feal like gittin' lonesum but I jist keep puttin' it of. I say to myself I won't git lonesum till I git this cow milked, and then I say o shaw I might as well do another, and then I say I won't git lonesum till I git the pails washed and the flore scrubbed, and I keep settin' it of and settin' it of till I forgit I was goin' to be.

One day I wuz jist gittin' reddy to cry. I could feel tears startin' in my hart, and my throte all hot and lumpy, thinkin' of ma and Danny an' all of them, and I noticed the teakettle just in time—it neaded skourin'. You bet I put a shine on it, and, of course, I couldn't dab tears on it and muss it up, so I had to wait. Mrs. M. duzn't talk to me. She has a morgage or a cancer I think botherin' her. Ma knowed a woman once, and everybuddy thot she was terrible cross cos she wouldn't talk at all hardly and when she died, they found she'd a tumult in her insides, and then you bet they felt good and sorry, when we're cross at home ma says it's not the strap we need, but a good dose of kastor oil or Seany and we git it too.

I gess I got Bugsey's and Patsey's bed paid fer now. Now I'll do Teddy's and Jimmy's. This ain't a blot it's the liniment Mrs. McGuire gave me. I have it on me hands.

I'm gittin on to be thirteen soon. 13 is pretty old I gess. I'll soon turn the corner now and be lookin' 20 square in the face—I'll never be homesick then. I ain't lonesome now either—it's just sleep that's in my eyes smuggin them up.

Jim Russell is offel good to go to town he doesn't seem to mind it a bit. Once I said I wisht I'd told Camilla to remind Jimmy to spit on his warts every day—he's offell careless, and Jim said he'd tell Camilla, and he often asks me if I want to tell Camilla anything, and it's away out of his rode to go round to Mrs. Francis house too. I like Jim you bet.

CHAPTER XX

TOM'S NEW VIEWPOINT

Pearl was quite disappointed in Tom's appearance the morning after the party. Egbert always wore a glorified countenance after he had seen Edythe; but Tom looked sleepy and somewhat cross.

He went to his work discontentedly. His mother's moroseness annoyed him. His father's hard face had never looked so forbidding to him as it did that morning. Mrs. Slater's hearty welcome, her good-natured motherly smiles, Mr. Slater's genial and kindly ways, contrasted sharply with his own home life, and it rankled in him.

"It's dead easy for them Slater boys to be smart and good, too," he thought bitterly; "they are brought right up to it. They may not have much money, but look at the fun they have. George and Fred will be off to college soon, and it must be fun in the city,—they're dressed up all the time, ridin' round on street cars, and with no chores to do."

The trees on the poplar bluff where he had made his toilet the evening before were beginning to show the approach of autumn, although there had been no frost. Pale yellow and rust coloured against the green of their hardier neighbours, they rippled their coin-like leaves in glad good-will as he drove past them on his way to the hayfield.

The sun had risen red and angry, giving to every cloud in the sky a facing of gold, and long streamers shot up into the blue of the mid-heaven.

There is no hour of the day so hushed and beautiful as the early morning, when the day is young, fresh from the hand of God. It is a new page, clean and white and pure, and the angel is saying unto us "Write!" and none there be who may refuse to obey. It may be gracious deeds and kindly words that we write upon it in letters of gold, or it may be that we blot and blur it with evil thoughts and stain it with unworthy actions, but write we must!

The demon of discontent laid hold on Tom that morning as he worked in the hayfield. New forces were at work in the boy's heart, forces mighty for good or evil.

A great disgust for his surrounding filled him. He could see from where he worked the big stone house, bare and gray. It was a place to eat in, a place to sleep in, the same as a prison. He had never known any real enjoyment there. He knew it would all be his some day, and he tried to feel the pride of possession, but he could not—he hated it.

He saw around him everywhere the abundance of harvest—the grain that meant money. Money! It was the greatest thing in the world. He had been taught to chase after it—to grasp it—then hide it, and chase again after more. His father put money in the bank every year, and never saw it again. When money was banked it had fulfilled its highest mission. Then they drew that wonderful thing called interest, money without work—and banked it—Oh, it was a great game!

It was the first glimmerings of manhood that was stirring in Tom's heart that morning, the new independence, the new individualism.

Before this he had accepted everything his father and mother had said or done without question. Only once before had he doubted them. It was several years before. A man named Skinner had bought from Tom's father the quarter section that Jim Russell now farmed, paying down a considerable sum of money, but evil days fell upon the man and his wife; sickness, discouragement, and then, the man began to drink. He was unable to keep up his payments

and Tom's father had foreclosed the mortgage. Tom remembered the day the Skinners had left their farm, the woman was packing their goods into a box. She was a faded woman in a faded wrapper, and her tears were falling as she worked. Tom saw her tears falling, and he had told her with the awful cruelty of a child that it was their own fault that they had lost the farm. The woman had shrunk back as if he had struck her and cried "Oh, no! No! Tom, don't say that, child, you don't know what you say," then putting her hands on his shoulders she had looked straight into his face—he remembered that she had lost some teeth in front, and that her eyes were sweet and kind. "Some day, dear," she said, "when you are a man, you will remember with shame and sorrow that you once spoke hard to a broken-hearted, homeless woman." Tom had gone home wondering and vaguely unhappy, and could not eat his supper that night.

He remembered it all now, remembered it with a start, and with a sudden tightening of his heart that burned and chilled him. The hot blood rushed into his head and throbbed painfully.

He looked at the young Englishman who was loading the hay on the rack, with a sudden impulse. But Arthur was wrapped in his own mask of insular reserve, and so saw nothing of the storm that was sweeping over the boy's soul.

Then the very spirit of evil laid hold on Tom. When the powers of good are present in the heart, and can find no outlet in action, they turn to evil. Tom had the desire to be kind and generous; ambition was stirring in him. His sullenness and discontent were but the outward signs of the inward ferment. He could not put into action the powers for good without breaking away, in a measure at least, from his father and mother.

He felt that he had to do something. He was hungry for the society of other young people like himself. He wanted life and action and excitement.

There is one place where a young man can always go and find life and gaiety and good-fellowship. One door stands invitingly open to all. When the church of God is cold and dark and silent, and the homes of Christ's followers are closed except to the chosen few, the bar-room throws out its evil welcome to the young man on the street.

Tom had never heard any argument against intemperance, only that it was expensive. Now he hated all the petty meanness that he had been so carefully taught.

The first evening that Tom went into the bar-room of the Millford hotel he was given a royal welcome. They were a jolly crowd! They knew how to enjoy life, Tom told himself. What's the good of money if you can't have a little fun with it?

Tom had never had much money of his own, he had never needed it or thought anything about it. Now the injustice of it rankled in him. He had to have money. It was his. He worked for it. He would just take it, and then if it was missed he would tell his father and mother that he had taken it—taking your own is not stealing—and he would tell them so and have it out with them.

Thus the enemy sowed the tares.

CHAPTER XXI

A CRACK IN THE GRANITE

While Pearl was writing her experiences in her little red book, Mr. and Mrs. Motherwell were in the kitchen below reading a letter which Mr. Motherwell had just brought from the post office. It read as follows:

BRANDON HOSPITAL, August 10th.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Motherwell: I know it will be at least some slight comfort for you to know that the poppies you sent Polly reached her in time to be the very greatest comfort to her. Her joy at seeing them and holding them in her hands would have been your reward if you could have seen it, and although she had been delirious up to that time for several days, the sight of the poppies seemed to call her mind back. She died very peacefully and happily at daybreak this morning. She was a sweet and lovable girl and we had all grown very fond of her, as I am sure you did, too.

May God abundantly bless you, dear Mr. and Mrs. Motherwell, for your kind thoughtfulness to this poor lonely girl. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me."

Yours cordially,
(Nurse) AGNES HUNT.

"By Jinks."

Sam Motherwell took the letter from his wife's hand and excitedly read it over to himself, going over each word with his blunt forefinger. He turned it over and examined the seal, he looked at the stamp and inside of the envelope, and failing to find any clue to the mystery he ejaculated again:

"By Jinks! What the deuce is this about poppies. Is that them things she sowed out there?" His wife nodded.

"Well, who do you suppose sent them? Who would ever think of sending them?"

Mrs. Motherwell made no reply.

"It's a blamed nice letter anyway," he said, looking it over again, "I guess Polly didn't give us a hard name to them up there in the 'ospital, or we wouldn't ha' got a letter like this; and poor Polly's dead. Well, she was a kind of a good-natured, willin' thing too, and not too slow either."

Mrs. Motherwell was still silent. She had not thought that Polly would die, she had always had great faith in the vitality of English people. "You can't kill them," she had often said; but now Polly was dead. She was sick, then, when she went around the house so strangely silent and flushed. Mrs. Motherwell's memory went back with cruel distinctness—she had said things to Polly then that stung her now with a remorse that was new and terrible, and Polly had looked at her dazed and wondering, her big eyes flushed and pleading. Mrs. Motherwell remembered now that she had seen that look once before. She had helped Sam to kill a lamb once, and it came back to her now, how through it all, until the blow fell, the lamb had stood wondering, pleading, yet unflinching, and she had run sobbing away—and now Polly was

dead—and those big eyes she had so often seen tearful, yet smiling, were closed and their tears forever wiped away.

That night she dreamed of Polly, confused, troubled dreams; now it was Polly's mother who was dead, then it was her own mother, dead thirty years ago. Once she started violently and sat up. Someone had been singing—the echo of it was still in the room:

Over my grave keep the green willers growing.

The yellow harvest moon flooded the room with its soft light. She could see through the window how it lay like a mantle on the silent fields. It was one of those glorious, cloudless nights, with a hint of frost in the air that come just as the grain is ripening. From some place down the creek a dog barked; once in a while a cow-bell tinkled: a horse stamped in the stable and then all was still. Numberless stars shone through the window. The mystery of life and death and growing things was around her. As for man his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth—for it is soon cut off and we fly away—fly away where?—where?—her head throbbled with the question.

The eastern sky flushed red with morning; a little ripple came over the grain. She watched it listlessly. Polly had died at daybreak—didn't the letter say? Just like that, the light rising redder and redder, the stars disappearing, she wondered dully to herself how often she would see the light coming, like this, and yet, and yet, some time would be the last, and then what?

We shall be where suns are not,
A far serener clime.

came to her memory she knew not from whence. But she shuddered at it. Polly's eyes, dazed, pleading like the lamb's, rose before her; or was it that Other Face, tender, thorn-crowned, that had been looking upon her in love all these long years!

She spoke so kindly to Pearl when she went into the kitchen that the little girl looked up apprehensively.

“Are ye not well, ma'am?” she asked quickly.

Mrs. Motherwell hesitated.

“I did not sleep very well,” she said, at last.

“That's the mortgage,” Pearl thought to herself.

“And when I did sleep, I had such dreadful dreams,” Mrs. Motherwell went on, strangely communicative.

“That looks more like the cancer,” Pearl thought as she stirred the porridge.

“We got bad news,” Mrs. Motherwell said. “Polly is dead.”

Pearl stopped stirring the porridge.

“When did she die,” she asked eagerly.

“The morning before yesterday morning, about daylight.”

Pearl made a rapid calculation. “Oh good!” she cried, “goody—goody—goody! They were in time.”

She saw her mistake in a moment, and hastily put her hand over her mouth as if to prevent the unruly member from further indiscretions. She stirred the porridge vigorously, while her cheeks burned.

“Yes, they were,” Mrs. Motherwell said quietly.

Pearl set the porridge on the back of the stove and ran out to where the poppies nodded gaily. Never before had they seemed so beautiful. Mrs. Motherwell watched her through the

window bending over them. Something about the poppies appealed to her now. She had once wanted Tom to cut them down, and she thought of it now.

She tapped on the window. Pearl looked up, startled.

“Bring in some,” she called.

When the work was done for the morning, Mrs. Motherwell went up the narrow stair way to the little room over the kitchen to gather together Polly’s things.

She sat on Polly’s little straw bed and looked at the dismal little room. Pearl had done what she could to brighten it. The old bags and baskets had been neatly piled in one corner, and quilts had been spread over them to hide their ugliness from view. The wind blew gently in the window that the hail had broken. The floor had been scrubbed clean and white—the window, what was left of it—was shining.

She was reminded of Polly everywhere she looked. The mat under her feet was one that Polly had braided. A corduroy blouse hung at the foot of the bed. She remembered now that Polly had worn it the day she came.

In a little yellow tin box she found Polly’s letters—the letters that had given her such extravagant joy. She could see her yet, how eagerly she would seize them and rush up to this little room with them, transfigured.

Mrs. Motherwell would have to look at them to find out Polly’s mother’s address. She took out the first letter slowly, then hurriedly put it back again in the envelope and looked guiltily around the room. But it had to be done. She took it out again resolutely, and read it with some difficulty.

It was written in a straggling hand that wandered uncertainly over the lines. It was a pitiful letter telling of poverty bitter and grinding, but redeemed from utter misery by a love and faith that shone from every line:

My dearest polly i am glad you like your plice and your misses is so kind as wot you si, yur letters are my kumfit di an nit. bill is a ard man and says hif the money don’t cum i will ave to go to the workus. but i no you will send it der polly so hi can old my little plice hi got a start todi a hoffcer past hi that it wos the workhus hoffcer. bill ses he told im to cum hif hi cant pi by septmbr but hi am trustin God der polly e asn’t forgot us. hi ’m glad the poppies grew. ere’s a disy hi am sendin yu hi can mike the butonoles yet. hi do sum hevry di mrs purdy gave me fourpence one di for sum i mide for her hi ad a cup of tee that di. hi am appy thinkin of yu der polly.

“And Polly is dead!” burst from Mrs. Motherwell as something gathered in her throat. She laid the letter down and looked straight ahead of her.

The sloping walls of the little kitchen loft, with its cobwebbed beams faded away, and she was looking into a squalid little room where an old woman, bent and feeble, sat working buttonholes with trembling fingers. Her eyes were restless and expectant; she listened eagerly to every sound. A step is at the door, a hand is on the latch. The old woman rises uncertainly, a great hope in her eyes—it is the letter—the letter at last. The door opens, and the old woman falls cowering and moaning, and wringing her hands before the man who enters. It is the officer!

Mrs. Motherwell buried her face in her hands.

“Oh God be merciful, be merciful,” she sobbed.

Sam Motherwell, knowing nothing of the storm that was passing through his wife's mind, was out in the machine house tightening up the screws and bolts in the binders, getting ready for the harvest. The barley was whitening already.

The nurse's letter had disturbed him. He tried to laugh at himself—the idea of his boxing up those weeds to send to anybody. Still the nurse had said how pleased Polly was. By George, it is strange what will please people. He remembered when he went down to Indiana buying horses, how tired he got of the look of corn-fields, and how the sight of the first decent sized wheat field just went to his heart, when he was coming back. Someway he could not laugh at anything that morning, for Polly was dead. And Polly was a willing thing for sure; he seemed to see her yet, how she ran after the colt the day it broke out of the pasture, and when the men were away she would hitch up a horse for him as quick as anybody.

"I kind o' wish now that I had given her something—it would have pleased her so—some little thing," he added hastily.

Mrs. Motherwell came across the yard bareheaded.

"Come into the house, Sam," she said gently. "I want to show you something."

He looked up quickly, but saw something in his wife's face that prevented him from speaking.

He followed her into the house. The letters were on the table, Mrs. Motherwell read them to him, read them with tears that almost choked her utterance.

"And Polly's dead, Sam!" she cried when she had finished the last one. "Polly's dead, and the poor old mother will be looking, looking for that money, and it will never come. Sam, can't we save that poor old woman from the poorhouse? Do you remember what the girl said in the letter, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my little ones, ye have done it unto Me?' We didn't deserve the praise the girl gave us. We didn't send the flowers, we have never done anything for anybody and we have plenty, plenty, and what is the good of it, Sam? We'll die some day and leave it all behind us."

Mrs. Motherwell hid her face in her apron, trembling with excitement. Sam's face was immovable, but a mysterious Something, not of earth, was struggling with him. Was it the faith of that decrepit old woman in that bare little room across the sea, mumbling to herself that God had not forgotten? God knows. His ear is not dulled; His arm is not shortened; His holy spirit moves mightily.

Sam Motherwell stood up and struck the table with his fist.

"Ettie," he said, "I am a hard man, a danged hard man, and as you say I've never given away much, but I am not so low down yet that I have to reach up to touch bottom, and the old woman will not go to the poor house if I have money enough to keep her out!"

Sam Motherwell was as good as his word.

He went to Winnipeg the next day, but before he left he drew a check for one hundred dollars, payable to Polly's mother, which he gave to the Church of England clergyman to send for him. About two months afterwards he received a letter from the clergyman of the parish in which Polly's mother lived, telling him that the money had reached the old lady in time to save her from the workhouse; a heart-broken letter of thanks from Polly's mother herself accompanied it, calling on God to reward them for their kindness to her and her dear dead girl.

CHAPTER XXII

SHADOWS

One morning when Tom came into the kitchen Pearl looked up with a worried look on her usually bright little face.

“What’s up, kid?” he asked kindly. He did not like to see Pearl looking troubled.

“Arthur’s sick,” she said gravely.

“Go on!” he answered, “he’s not sick. I know he’s been feeling kind of used up for about a week, but he worked as well as ever yesterday. What makes you think he is sick?”

“I went out last night to be sure I had shut the henhouse door, and I heard him groanin’, and I said, knockin’ on the door, ‘What’s wrong, Arthur?’ and he said, ‘Oh, I beg your pardon, Pearl, did I frighten you?’ and I said, ‘No, but what’s wrong?’ and he said, ‘Nothing at all, Pearl, thank you’; but I know there is. You know how polite he is—wouldn’t trouble anybody. Wouldn’t ask ye to slap ’im on the back if he was chokin’. I went out two or three times and once I brought him out some liniment, and he told me every time he would be ‘well directly,’ but I don’t believe him. If Arthur groans there’s something to groan for, you bet.”

“Maybe he’s in love,” Tom said sheepishly.

“But you don’t groan, Tom, do you?” she asked seriously.

“Maybe I ain’t in love, though, Pearl. Ask Jim Russell, he can tell you.”

“Jim ain’t in love, is he?” Pearl asked anxiously. Her responsibilities were growing too fast. One love affair and a sick man she felt was all she could attend to.

“Well, why do you suppose Jim comes over here every second day to get you to write a note to that friend of yours?”

“Camilla?” Pearl asked open-mouthed. Tom nodded.

“Camilla can’t leave Mrs. Francis,” Pearl declared with conviction.

“Jim’s a dandy smart fellow. He only stays on the farm in the summer. In the winter he book-keeps for three or four of the stores in Millford and earns lots of money,” Tom said, admiringly.

After a pause Pearl said thoughtfully, “I love Camilla!”

“That’s just the way Jim feels, too, I guess,” Tom said laughing as he went out to the stable.

When Tom went out to the granary he found Arthur dressing, but flushed and looking rather unsteady.

“What’s gone wrong with you, old man?” he asked kindly.

“I feel a bit queer,” Arthur replied, “that’s all. I shall be well directly. Got a bit of a cold, I think.”

“Slept in a field with the gate open like as not,” Tom laughed.

Arthur looked at him inquiringly.

“You’ll feel better when you get your breakfast,” Tom went on. “I don’t wonder you’re sick—you haven’t been eatin’ enough to keep a canary bird alive. Go on right into the house now. I’ll feed your team.”

“It beats all what happens to our help,” Mrs. Motherwell complained to Pearl, as they washed the breakfast dishes. “It looks very much as if Arthur is goin’ to be laid up, too, and the busy time just on us.”

Pearl was troubled. Why should Arthur be sick? He had plenty of fresh air; he tubbed himself regularly. He never drank “alcoholic beverages that act directly on the liver and stomach, drying up the blood, and rendering every organ unfit for work.” Pearl remembered the Band of Hope manual. No, and it was not a cold. Colds do not make people groan in the night—it was something else. Pearl wished her friend, Dr. Clay, would come along. He would soon spot the trouble.

After dinner, of which Arthur ate scarcely a mouthful, as Pearl was cleaning the knives, Mrs. Motherwell came into the kitchen with a hard look on her face. She had just missed a two-dollar bill from her satchel.

“Pearl,” she said in a strained voice, “did you see a two-dollar bill any place?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Pearl answered quickly, “Mrs. Francis paid ma with one once for the washing, but I don’t know where it might be now.”

Mrs. Motherwell looked at Pearl keenly. It was not easy to believe that that little girl would steal. Her heart was still tender after Polly’s death, she did not want to be hard on Pearl, but the money must be some place.

“Pearl, I have lost a two-dollar bill. If you know anything about it I want you to tell me,” she said firmly.

“I don’t know anything about it no more’n ye say ye had it and now ye’ve lost it,” Pearl answered calmly.

“Go up to your room and think about it,” she said, avoiding Pearl’s gaze.

Pearl went up the narrow little steps with a heart that swelled with indignation.

“Does she think I stole her dirty money, me that has money o’ me own—a thief is it she takes me for? Oh, wirra! wirra! and her an’ me wuz gittin’ on so fine, too; and like as not this’ll start the morgage and the cancer on her again.”

Pearl threw herself on the hot little bed, and sobbed out her indignation and her homesickness. She could not put it off this time. Catching sight of her grief-stricken face in the cracked looking glass that hung at the head of the bed, she started up suddenly.

“What am I bleatin’ for?” she said to herself, wiping her eyes on her little patched apron. “Ye’d think to look at me that I’d been caught stealin’ the cat’s milk”—she laughed through her tears—“I haven’t stolen anything and what for need I cry? The dear Lord will get me out of this just as nate as He bruk the windy for me!”

She took her knitting out of the bird-cage and began to knit at full speed.

“Danny me man, it is a good thing for ye that the shaddah of suspicion is on yer sister Pearlie this day, for it gives her a good chance to turn yer heel. ‘Sowin’ in the sunshine, sowin’ in the shaddah,’ only it’s knittin’ I am instead of sewin’, but it’s all wan, I guess. I mind how Paul and Silas were singin’ in the prison at midnight. I know how they felt. ‘Do what Ye like, Lord,’ they wur thinkin’. ‘If it’s in jail Ye want us to stay, we’re Yer men.’”

Pearl knit a few minutes in silence. Then she knelt beside the bed.

“Dear Lord,” she prayed, clasping her work-worn hands, “help her to find her money, but if anyone did steal it, give him the strength to confess it, dear Lord. Amen.”

Mrs. Motherwell, downstairs, was having a worse time than Pearl. She could not make herself believe that Pearl had stolen the money, and yet no one had had a chance to take it except Pearl, or Tom, and that, of course, was absurd. She went again to have a look in every drawer in her room, and as she passed through the hall she detected a strange odour. She soon traced it to Tom’s light overcoat which hung there. What was the smell? It was tobacco, and something more. It was the smell of a bar-room!

She sat down upon the step with a nameless dread in her heart. Tom had gone to Millford several times since his father had gone to Winnipeg, and he had stayed longer than was necessary, too; but no, no. Tom would not spend good money that way. The habit of years was on her. It was the money she thought of first.

Then she thought of Pearl.

Going to the foot of the stairway she called:

“Pearl, you may come down now.”

“Did ye find it?” Pearl asked eagerly.

“No.”

“Do ye still think I took it?”

“No, I don’t, Pearl,” she answered.

“All right then, I’ll come right down,” Pearl said gladly.

CHAPTER XXIII

SAVED!

That night Arthur's condition was, to Pearl's sharp eyes, alarming.

He tried to quiet her fears. He would be well directly, it was nothing, nothing at all, a mere indisposition (Pearl didn't know what that was); but when she went into the granary with a pitcher of water for him, and found him writing letters in the feeble light of a lantern, she took one look at him, laid down the pitcher and hurried out to tell Tom.

Tom was in the kitchen taking off his boots preparatory to going to bed.

"Tom," she said excitedly, "get back into yer boots, and go for the doctor. Arthur's got the thing that Pa had, and it'll have to be cut out of him or he'll die."

"What?" Tom gasped, with one foot across his knee.

"I think he has it," Pearl said, "he's actin' just like what Pa did, and he's in awful pain, I know, only he won't let on; and we must get the doctor or he might die before mornin', and then how'd we feel?"

Tom hesitated.

"Remember, Tom, he has a father and a mother and four brothers, and a girl called Thursa, and an uncle that is a bishop, and how'd we ever face them when we go to heaven if we just set around and let Arthur die?"

"What is it, Pearl?" Mrs. Motherwell said coming into the room, having heard Pearl's excited tones.

"It's Arthur, ma'am. Come out and see him. You'll see he needs the doctor. Ginger tea and mustard plasters ain't a flea-bite on a pain like what he has."

"Let's give him a dose of aconite," Tom said with conviction; "that'll fix him."

Mrs. Motherwell and Pearl went over to the granary.

"Don't knock at the door," Pearl whispered to her as they went. "Ye can't tell a thing about him if ye do. Arthur'd straighten up and be polite at his own funeral. Just look in the crack there and you'll see if he ain't sick."

Mrs. Motherwell did see. Arthur lay tossing and moaning across his bed, his letter pad and pencil beside him on the floor.

Mrs. Motherwell did not want Tom to go to Millford that night. One of the harvesters' excursions was expected—was probably in—then—there would be a wild time. Besides, the two-dollar bill still worried her. If Tom had it he might spend it. No, Tom was safer at home.

"Oh, I don't think he's so very bad," she said. "We'll get the doctor in the morning if he isn't any better. Now you go to bed, Pearl, and don't worry yourself."

But Pearl did not go to bed.

When Mrs. Motherwell and Tom had gone to their own rooms, she built up the kitchen fire, and heated a frying-pan full of salt, with which she filled a pair of her own stockings and brought them to Arthur. She remembered that her mother had done that when her father was sick, and that it had eased his pain. She drew a pail of fresh water from the well, and brought a basinful to him, and bathed his burning face and hands. Arthur received her attentions gratefully.

Pearl knew what she would do. She would run over and tell Jim, and Jim would go for the doctor. Jim would not be in bed yet, she knew, and even if he were, he would not mind getting

up.

Jim would go to town any time she wanted anything. One time when she had said she just wished she knew whether Camilla had her new suit made yet, Jim jumped right up and said he'd go and see.

Mrs. Motherwell had gone to her room very much concerned with her own troubles. Why should Tom fall into evil ways? she asked herself—a boy who had been as economically brought up as he was. Other people's boys had gone wrong, but she had always thought that the parents were to blame some way. Then she thought of Arthur; perhaps he should have the doctor. She had been slow to believe that Polly was really sick—and had had cause for regret. She would send for the doctor, in the morning. But what was Pearl doing so long in the kitchen?—She could hear her moving around—Pearl must go to her bed, or she would not be able to get up in the morning.

Pearl was just going out of the kitchen with her hat and coat on when Mrs. Motherwell came in.

"Where are you going, Pearl," she asked.

"To git someone to go for the doctor," Pearl answered stoutly.

"Is he worse?" Mrs. Motherwell asked quickly.

"He can't git worse," Pearl replied grimly. "If he gits worse he'll be dead."

Mrs. Motherwell called Tom at once, and told him to bring the doctor as soon as he could.

"Where's my overcoat mother?" Tom called from the hall.

"Take your father's" she said, "he is going to get a new one while he is in Winnipeg, that one's too small for him now. I put yours outside to air. It had a queer smell on it I thought, and now hurry, Tom. Bring Dr. Barner. I think he's the best for a serious case. Dr. Clay is too young, Anyway, the old man knows far more than he does, if you can only get him sober."

Pearl's heart sank.

"Arthur's as good as dead," she said as she went to the granary, crying softly to herself. "Dr. Clay is the only man who could save him, and they won't have him."

The sun had gone down and heavy clouds filled the sky. Not a star was to be seen, and the night was growing darker and darker.

A sound of wheels came from across the creek, coming rapidly down the road. The old dog barked viciously. A horse driven at full speed dashed through the yard; Pearl ran shouting after, for even in the gathering darkness she recognised the one person in all the world who could save Arthur. But the wind and the barking of the dog drowned her voice, and the sound of the doctor's wheels grew fainter in the distance.

Only for a moment was Pearl dismayed.

"I'll catch him coming back," she said, "if I have to tie binding twine across the road to tangle up Pleurisy's long legs. He's on his way to Cowan's, I know. Ab Cowan has quinsy. Never mind, Thursa, we'll get him. I hope now that the old doctor is too full to come—oh, no I don't either, I just hope he's away and Dr. Clay will have it done before he gets here."

When Tom arrived in Millford he found a great many people thronging the streets. One of the Ontario's harvesters' excursions had arrived a few hours before, and the "Huron and Bruce" boys were already making themselves seen and heard.

Tom went at once to Dr. Barner's office and found that the doctor was out making calls, but would be back in an hour. Not at all displeased at having some time to spend, Tom went

back to the gaily lighted front street. The crowds of men who went in and out of the hotels seemed to promise some excitement.

Inside of the Grand Pacific, a gramophone querulously sang "Any Rags, Any Bones, Any Bottles To-day" to a delighted company of listeners.

When Tom entered he was received with the greatest cordiality by the bartender and others.

"Here is life and good-fellowship," Tom thought to himself, "here's the place to have a good time."

"Is your father back yet, Tom?" the bartender asked as he served a line of customers.

"He'll come up Monday night, I expect," Tom answered, rather proud of the attention he was receiving.

The bartender pushed a box of cigars toward him.

"Have a cigar, Tom," he said.

"No, thank you," Tom answered, "not any." Tom could not smoke, but he drew a plug of chewing tobacco from his pocket and took a chew, to show that his sympathies were that way.

"I guess perhaps some of you men met Mr. Motherwell in Winnipeg. He's in there hiring men for this locality," the bartender said amiably.

"That's the name of the gent that hired me," said one.

"Me too."

"And me," came from others. "I'd no intention of comin' here," a man from Paisley said. "I was goin' to Souris, until that gent got a holt of me, and I thought if he wuz a sample of the men ye raise here, I'd hike this way."

"He's lookin' for a treat," the bartender laughed. "He's sized you up, Tom, as a pretty good fellow."

"No, I ain't after no treat," the Paisley man declared. "That's straight, what I told you."

Tom unconsciously put his hand in his coat pocket and felt the money his father had put there. He drew it out wondering. The quick eyes of the bartender saw it at once.

"Tom's getting out his wad, boys," he laughed. "Nothin' mean about Tom, you bet Tom's goin' to do somethin'."

In the confusion that followed Tom heard himself saying:

"All right boys, come along and name yer drinks."

Tom had a very indistinct memory of what followed. He remembered having a handful of silver, and of trying to put it in his pocket.

Once when the boys were standing in front of the bar at his invitation he noticed a miserable, hungry looking man, who drank greedily. It was Skinner. Then someone took him by the arm and said something about his having enough, and Tom felt himself being led across a floor that rose and fell strangely, to a black lounge that tried to slide away from him and then came back suddenly and hit him.

The wind raged and howled with increasing violence around the granary where Arthur lay tossing upon his hard bed. It seized the door and rattled it in wanton playfulness, as if to deceive the sick man with the hope that a friend's hand was on the latch, and then raced blustering and screaming down to the meadows below. The fanning mill and piles of grain bags made fantastic shadows on the wall in the lantern's dim light, and seemed to his distorted fancy like dark and terrible spectres waiting to spring upon him.

Pearl knelt down beside him, tenderly bathing his burning face.

“Why do you do all this for me, Pearl?” he asked slowly, his voice coming thick and painfully.

She changed the cloth on his head before replying.

“Oh, I keep thinkin’ it might be Teddy or Jimmy or maybe wee Danny,” she replied gently, “and besides, there’s Thursa.”

The young man opened his eyes and smiled bravely.

“Yes, there’s Thursa,” he said simply.

Pearl kept the fire burning in the kitchen—the doctor might need hot water. She remembered that he had needed sheets too, and carbolic acid, when he had operated on her father the winter before.

Arthur did not speak much as the night wore on, and Pearl began to grow drowsy in spite of all her efforts. She brought the old dog into the granary with her for company. The wind rattled the mud chinking in the walls and drove showers of dust and gravel against the little window. She had put the lantern behind the fanning mill, so that its light would not shine in Arthur’s eyes, and in the semi-darkness, she and old Nap waited and listened. The dog soon laid his head upon her knee and slept, and Pearl was left alone to watch. Surely the doctor would come soon...it was a good thing she had the dog...he was so warm beside her, and...

She sprang up guiltily. Had she been asleep...what if he had passed while she slept...she grew cold at the thought.

“Did he pass, Nap?” she whispered to the dog, almost crying. “Oh Nap, did we let him go past?”

Nap yawned widely and flicked one ear, which was his way of telling Pearl not to distress herself. Nobody had passed.

Pearl’s eyes were heavy with sleep.

“This is not the time to sleep,” she said, yawning and shivering. Arthur’s wash-basin stood on the floor beside the bed, where she had been bathing his face. She put more water into it.

“Now then,” she said, “once for his mother, once for his father, a big long one for Thursa,” holding her head so long below the water that it felt numb, when she took it out. “I can’t do one for each of the boys,” she shivered, “I’ll lump the boys, here’s a big one for them.”

“There now,” her teeth chattered as she wiped her hair on Arthur’s towel, “that ought to help some.”

Arthur opened his eyes and looked anxiously around him. Pearl was beside him at once.

“Pearl,” he said, “what is wrong with me? What terrible pain is this that has me in its clutches?” The strength had gone out of the man, he could no longer battle with it.

Pearl hesitated. It is not well to tell sick people your gravest fears. “Still Arthur is English, and the English are gritty,” Pearl thought to herself.

“Arthur,” she said, “I think you have appendicitis.”

Arthur lay motionless for a few moments. He knew what that was.

“But that requires an operation,” he said at length, “a very skilful one.”

“It does,” Pearl replied, “and that’s what you’ll get as soon as Dr. Clay gets here, I’m thinking.”

Arthur turned his face into his pillow. An operation for appendicitis, here, in this place, and by that young man, no older than himself perhaps? He knew that at home, it was only undertaken by the oldest and best surgeons in the hospitals.

Pearl saw something of his fears in his face. So she hastened to reassure him. She said cheerfully:

“Don’t ye be worried, Arthur, about it at all at all. Man alive! Dr. Clay thinks no more of an operation like that than I would o’ cuttin’ your nails.”

A strange feeling began at Arthur’s heart, and spread up to his brain. It had come! It was here!

From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence and famine; from battle and murder and sudden death;—Good Lord, deliver us!

He had prayed it many times, meaninglessly. But he clung to it now, clung to it desperately. As a drowning man. He put his hand over his eyes, his pain was forgotten:

Other lights are paling—which for long years we have rejoiced to see...we would not mourn them for we go to Thee!

Yes it was all right; he was ready now. He had come of a race of men who feared not death in whatever form it came.

Bring us to our resting beds at night—wearing and content and undishonoured—and grant us in the end the gift of sleep.

He repeated the prayer to himself slowly. That was it, weary and content, and undishonoured.

“Pearl,” he said, reaching out his burning hand until it rested on hers, “all my letters are there in that black portmanteau, and the key is in my pocket-book. I have a fancy that I would like no eye but yours to see them—until I am quite well again.”

She nodded.

“And if you...should have need...to write to Thursa, tell her I had loving hands around me...at the last.”

Pearl gently stroked his hand.

“And to my father write that I knew no fear”—his voice grew steadier—“and passed out of life glad to have been a brave man’s son, and borne even for a few years a godly father’s name.”

“I will write it, Arthur,” she said.

“And to my mother, Pearl” his voice wavered and broke—“my mother...for I was her youngest child...tell her she was my last...and tenderest thought.”

Pearl pressed his hand tenderly against her weather-beaten little cheek, for it was Danny now, grown a man but Danny still, who lay before her, fighting for his life; and at the thought her tears fell fast.

“Pearl,” he spoke again, after a pause, pressing his hand to his forehead, “while my mind holds clear, perhaps you would be good enough, you have been so good to me, to say that prayer you learned. My father will be in his study now, and soon it will be time for morning prayers. I often feel his blessing on me, Pearl. I want to feel it now, bringing peace and rest...weary and content and undishonoured, and...undishonoured...and grant us...” His voice grew fainter and trailed away into incoherency.

And now, oh thou dignified rector of St. Agnes, in thy home beyond the sea, lay aside the “Appendix to the Apology of St. Perpetua,” over which thou porest, for under all thy dignity

and formalism there beats a loving father's heart. The shadows are gathering, dear sir, around thy fifth son in a far country, and in the gathering shadows there stalks, noiselessly, relentlessly, that grim, gray spectre, Death. On thy knees, then, oh Rector of St. Agnes, and blend thy prayers with the feeble petitions of her who even now, for thy house, entreats the Throne of Grace. Pray, oh thou on whom the bishop's hands have been laid, that the golden bowl be not broken nor the silver cord loosed, for the breath of thy fifth son draws heavily, and the things of time and sense are fading, fading, fading from his closing eyes.

Pearl repeated the prayer.

—And grant, oh most merciful Father for His sake; That we may hereafter lead a godly, righteous and a sober life—

She stopped abruptly. The old dog lifted his head and listened. Snatching up the lantern, she was out of the door before the dog was on his feet; there were wheels coming, coming down the road in mad haste. Pearl swung the lantern and shouted.

The doctor reined in his horse.

She flashed the lantern into his face.

“Oh Doc!” she cried, “dear Doc, I have been waitin’ and waitin’ for ye. Git in there to the granary. Arthur’s the sickest thing ye ever saw. Git in there on the double jump.” She put the lantern into his hand as she spoke.

Hastily unhitching the doctor's horse she felt her way with him into the driving shed. The night was at its blackest.

“Now, Thursa,” she laughed to herself, “we got him, and he'll do it, dear Doc, he'll do it.” The wind blew dust and gravel in her face as she ran across the yard.

When she went into the granary the doctor was sitting on the box by Arthur's bed, with his face in his hands.

“Oh, Doc, what is it?” she cried, seizing his arm.

The doctor looked at her, dazed, and even Pearl uttered a cry of dismay when she saw his face, for it was like the face of a dead man.

“Pearl,” he said slowly, “I have made a terrible mistake, I have killed young Cowan.”

“Bet he deserved it, then,” Pearl said stoutly.

“Killed him,” the doctor went on, not heeding her, “he died in my hands, poor fellow! Oh, the poor young fellow! I lanced his throat, thinking it was quinsy he had, but it must have been diphtheria, for he died, Pearl, he died, I tell you!”

“Well!” Pearl cried, excitedly waving her arms, “he ain't the first man that's been killed by a mistake, I'll bet lots o' doctors kill people by mistake, but they don't tell—and the corpse don't either, and there ye are. I'll bet you feel worse about it than he does, Doc.”

The doctor groaned.

“Come, Doc,” she said, plucking his sleeve, “take a look at Arthur.”

The doctor rose uncertainly and paced up and down the floor with his face in his hands, swaying like a drunken man.

“O God!” he moaned, “if I could but bring back his life with mine; but I can't! I can't! I can't!”

Pearl watched him, but said not a word. At last she said:

“Doc, I think Arthur has appendicitis. Come and have a look at him, and see if he hasn't.”

With a supreme effort the doctor gained control of himself and made a hasty but thorough examination.

“He has,” he said, “a well developed case of it.”

Pearl handed him his satchel. “Here, then,” she said, “go at him.”

“I can’t do it, Pearl,” he cried. “I can’t. He’ll die, I tell you, like that other poor fellow. I can’t send another man to meet his Maker.”

“Oh, he’s ready!” Pearl interrupted him. “Don’t hold back on Arthur’s account.”

“I can’t do it,” he repeated hopelessly. “He’ll die under my knife, I can’t kill two men in one night. O God, be merciful to a poor, blundering, miserable wretch!” he groaned, burying his face in his hands, and Pearl noticed that the back of his coat quivered like human flesh.

Arthur’s breath was becoming more and more laboured; his eyes roved sightlessly around the room; his head rolled on the pillow in a vain search for rest; his fingers clutched convulsively at the bed-clothes.

Pearl was filled with dismay. The foundations of her little world were tottering.

All but One. There was One who had never failed her. He would not fail her now.

She dropped on her knees.

“O God, dear God,” she prayed, beating her hard little brown hands together, “don’t go back on us, dear God. Put the gimp into Doc again; he’s not scared to do it, Lord, he’s just lost his grip for a minute; he’s not scared Lord; it looks like it, but he isn’t. You can bank on Doc, Lord, he’s not scared. Bear with him, dear Lord, just a minute—just a minute—he’ll do it, and he’ll do it right, Amen.”

When Pearl rose from her knees the doctor had lifted his head.

“Do you want hot water and sheets and carbolic?” she asked.

He nodded.

When she came back with them the doctor was taking off his coat. His instruments were laid out on the box.

“Get a lamp,” he said to Pearl.

Pearl’s happy heart was singing with joy. “O Lord, dear Lord, You never fail,” she murmured as she ran across to the kitchen.

When she came back with the lamp and a chair to set it on, the doctor was pinning a sheet above the bed. His face was white and drawn, but his hand was firm and his mouth was a straight line.

Arthur was tossing his arms convulsively.

The doctor listened with his ear a minute upon the sick man’s heart, then the gauze mask was laid upon his face and the chloroform soon did its merciful work.

The doctor handed Pearl the bottle. “A drop or two if he moves,” he said.

Then Horace Clay, the man with a man’s mistakes, his fears, his heart-burnings, was gone, and in his place stood Horace Clay, the doctor, keen, alert, masterful, indomitable, with the look of battle on his face. He worked rapidly, never faltering; his eyes burning with the joy of the true physician who fights to save, to save a human life from the grim old enemy, Death.

“You have saved his life, Pearl,” the doctor said two hours later. Arthur lay sleeping easily, the flush gone from his face, and his breath coming regularly.

The doctor put his hand gently on her tumbled little brown head.

“You saved him from death, Pearl, and me—from something worse.”

And then Pearl took the doctor’s hand in both of hers, and kissed it reverently.

“That’s for Thursa,” she said, gravely.

Tom was awakened by some one shaking him gently.

“Tom, Tom Motherwell, what are you doing here?”

A woman knelt beside him; her eyes were sweet and kind and sad beyond expression.

“Tom, how did you come here?” she asked, gently, as Tom struggled to rise.

He sat up, staring stupidly around him. “Wha’ ’s a matter? Where’s this?” he asked thickly.

“You’re in the sitting-room at the hotel,” she said. He would have lain down again, but she took him firmly by the arm.

“Come Tom,” she said. “Come and have a drink of water.”

She led him out of the hotel to the pump at the corner of the street. Tom drank thirstily. She pumped water on his hands, and bathed his burning face in it. The cold water and the fresh air began to clear his brain.

“What time is it?” he asked her.

“Nearly morning,” she said. “About half-past three, I think,” and Tom knew even in the darkness that she had lost more teeth. It was Mrs. Skinner.

“Tom,” she said, “did you see Skinner in there? I came down to get him—I want him—the child is dead an hour ago.” She spoke hurriedly.

Tom remembered now. Yes, he had seen Skinner, but not lately; it was a long, long time ago.

“Now Tom, go home,” she said kindly. “This is bad work for you, my dear boy. Stop it now, dear Tom, while you can. It will kill you, body and soul.”

A thought struggled in Tom’s dull brain. There was something he wanted to say to her which must be said; but she was gone.

He drank again from the cup that hung beside the pump. Where did he get this burning thirst, and his head, how it pounded! She had told him to go home. Well, why wasn’t he at home? What was he doing here?

Slowly his memory came back—he had come for the doctor; and the doctor was to be back in an hour, and now it was nearly morning, didn’t she say?

He tried to run, but his knees failed him—what about Arthur? He grew chill at the thought—he might be dead by this time.

He reached the doctor’s office some way. His head still throbbed and his feet were heavy as lead; but his mind was clear.

A lamp was burning in the office but no one was in. It seemed a month ago since he had been there before. The air of the office was close and stifling, and heavy with stale tobacco smoke. Tom sat down, wearily, in the doctor’s armchair; his heart beat painfully—he’ll be dead—he’ll be dead—he’ll be dead—it was pounding. The clock on the table was saying it too. Tom got up and walked up and down to drown the sound. He stopped before a cabinet and gazed horrified at a human skeleton that grinned evilly at him. He opened the door hastily, the night wind fanned his face. He sat down upon the step, thoroughly sober now, but sick in body and soul.

Soon a heavy step sounded on the sidewalk, and the old doctor came into the patch of light that shone from the door.

“Do you want me?” he asked as Tom stood up.

“Yes,” Tom answered; “at once.”

“What’s wrong?” the doctor asked brusquely.

Tom told him as well as he could.

“Were you here before, early in the evening?”

Tom nodded.

“Hurry up then and get your horse,” the doctor said, going past him into the office.

“Yes, I thought so,” the doctor said gathering up his instruments. “I ought to know the signs—well, well, the poor young Englishman has had plenty of time to die from ten in the evening till four the next morning, without indecent haste either, while this young fellow was hitting up the firewater. Still, God knows, I shouldn’t be hard on him. I’ve often kept people waiting for the same reason and,” he added grimly, “they didn’t always wait either.”

When Tom and the old doctor drove into the yard everything was silent. The wind had fallen, and the eastern sky was bright with morning.

The old dog who lay in front of the granary door raised his head at their approach and lifted one ear, as if to command silence.

Tom helped the doctor out of the buggy. He tried to unhitch the horse, but the beating of his heart nearly choked him—the fear of what might be in the granary. He waited for the exclamation from the doctor which would proclaim him a murderer. He heard the door open again—the doctor was coming to tell him—Tom’s knees grew weak—he held to the horse for support—who was this who had caught his arm—it was Pearl crying and laughing.

“Tom, Tom, it’s all over, and Arthur’s going to get well,” she whispered. “Dr. Clay came.”

But Pearl was not prepared for what happened.

Tom put his head down upon the horse’s neck and cried like a child—no, like a man—for in the dark and terrible night that had just passed, sullied though it was by temptations and yieldings and neglect of duty, the soul of a man had been born in him, and he had put away childish things forever.

Dr. Clay was kneeling in front of the box cleaning his instruments, with his back toward the door, when Dr. Barner entered. He greeted the older man cordially, receiving but a curt reply. Then the professional eye of the old doctor began to take in the situation. A half-used roll of antiseptic lint lay on the floor; the fumes of the disinfectants and of the anesthetic still hung on the air. Tom’s description of the case had suggested appendicitis.

“What was the trouble?” he asked quickly.

The young doctor told him, giving him such a thoroughly scientific history of the case that the old doctor’s opinion of him underwent a radical change. The young doctor explained briefly what he had attempted to do by the operation; the regular breathing and apparently normal temperature of the patient was, to the old doctor, sufficient proof of its success.

He stooped suddenly to examine the dressing that the young doctor was showing him, but his face twitched with some strong emotion—pride, professional jealousy, hatred were breaking down before a stronger and a worthier feeling.

He turned abruptly and grasped the young doctor’s hand.

“Clay!” he cried, “it was a great piece of work, here, alone, and by lamplight. You are a brave man, and I honour you.” Then his voice broke. “I’d give every day of my miserable life to be able to do this once more, just once, but I haven’t the nerve, Clay”; the hand that the young doctor held trembled. “I haven’t the nerve. I’ve been going on a whiskey nerve too long.”

“Dr. Barner,” the young man replied, as he returned the other’s grasp, “I thank you for your good words, but I wasn’t alone when I did it. The bravest little girl in all the world was

here and shamed me out of my weakness and,” he added reverently, “I think God Himself steadied my hand.”

The old man looked up wondering.

“I believe you, Clay,” he said simply.

CHAPTER XXIV THE HARVEST

Tom went straight to his mother that morning and told her everything—the party he had gone to, his discontent, his desire for company and fun, and excitement, taking the money, and the events of the previous night.

Mrs. Motherwell saw her boy in a new light as she listened, and Tom had a glorified vision of his mother as she clasped him in her arms crying: “It is our fault Tom, mine and your father’s; we have tried to make you into a machine like we are ourselves, and forgot that you had a soul, but it’s not too late yet, Tom. I hate the money, too, if it’s only to be hoarded up; the money we sent to Polly’s mother has given me more pleasure than all the rest that we have.”

“Mother,” Tom said, “how do you suppose that money happened to be in that overcoat pocket?”

“I don’t know,” she answered; “your father must have left it there when he wore it last. It looks as if the devil himself put it there to tempt you, Tom.”

When his father came back from Winnipeg, Tom made to him a full confession as he had to his mother; and was surprised to find that his father had for him not one word of reproach. Since sending the money to Polly’s mother Sam had found a little of the blessedness of giving, and it had changed his way of looking at things, in some measure at least. He had made up his mind to give the money back to the church, and now when he found that it had gone, and gone in such a way, he felt vaguely that it was a punishment for his own meanness, and in a small measure, at least, he was grateful that no worse evil had resulted from it.

“Father, did you put that money there?” Tom asked.

“Yes, I did Tom,” he answered. “I ought to be ashamed of myself for being so careless, too.”

“It just seemed as if it was the devil himself,” Tom said. “I had no intention of drinking when I took out that money.”

“Well, Tom,” his father said, with a short laugh, “I guess the devil had a hand in it, he was in me quite a bit when I put it there, I kin tell ye.”

The next Sunday morning Samuel Motherwell, his wife and son, went to church. Sam placed on the plate an envelope containing fifty dollars.

On the following morning Sam had just cut two rounds with the binder when the Reverend Hugh Grantley drove into the field. Sam stopped his binder and got down.

“Well, Mr. Motherwell,” the minister said, holding out his hand cordially as he walked over to where Sam stood, “how did it happen?”

Sam grasped his hand warmly.

“Ask Tom,” he said, nodding his head toward his son who was stooking the grain a little distance away. “It is Tom’s story.”

Mr. Grantley did ask Tom, and Tom told him; and there in the sunshine, with the smell of the ripe grain in their nostrils as the minister helped him to carry the sheaves, a new heaven and a new earth were opened to Tom, and a new life was born within him, a life of godliness and of brotherly kindness, whose blessed influence has gone far beyond the narrow limits of that neighbourhood.

It was nearly noon when the minister left him and drove home through the sun-flooded grain fields, with a glorified look on his face as one who had seen the heavens opened.

Just before he turned into the valley of the Souris, he stopped his horse, and looked back over the miles and miles of rippling gold. The clickety-click-click of many binders came to his ears. Oh what a day it was! all sunshine and blue sky! Below him the river glinted through the trees, and the railway track shimmered like a silver ribbon, and as he drove into the winding valley, the Reverend Hugh Grantley sang, despite his Cameronian blood, sang like a Methodist:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER XXV CUPID'S EMISSARY

Mrs. McGuire did not look like Cupid's earthly representative as she sat in her chintz-covered rocking-chair and bitterly complained of the weather. The weather was damp and cloudy, and Mrs. McGuire said her "jints were jumpin'."

The little Watsons were behaving so well that even with her rheumatism to help her vision she could find no fault with them, "just now"; but she reckoned the mischief "was hatchin'."

A change was taking place in Mrs. McGuire, although she was unconscious of it; Mary Barner, who was a frequent and welcome visitor, was having an influence even on the flinty heart of the relict of the late McGuire. Mary "red up" her house for her when her rheumatism was bad. She cooked for her, she sang and read for her. Above all things, Mary was her friend, and no one who has a friend can be altogether at war with the world.

One evening when Mary was reading the "Pilgrim's Progress" to her, the Reverend Hugh Grantley came in and begged to be let stay and enjoy the reading, too. He said Miss Barner's voice seemed to take the tangles out of his brain, whereupon Mrs. McGuire winked at herself.

That night she obligingly fell asleep just where Christian resolved to press on to the Heavenly City at all costs, and Mistrust and Timorous ran down the hill.

After that the minister came regularly, and Mrs. McGuire, though she complained to herself that it was hard to lose so much of the reading, fell asleep each night, and snored loudly. She said she had been young herself once, and guessed she knew how it was with young folks. Just hoped he was good enough for Mary, that was all; men were such deceivers—they were all smooth as silk, until it came to livin' with 'em, and then she shook her head grimly, thinking no doubt of the vagaries of the late McGuire.

The Reverend Hugh Grantley walked up and down the floor of his study in deep meditation. But his thoughts were not on his Sunday sermon nor yet on the topic for the young people's meeting, though they were serious enough by the set of his jaw.

His friend Clay had just left him. Clay was in a radiant humour. Dr. Barner's friendly attitude toward him had apparently changed the aspect of affairs, and now the old doctor had suggested taking him into partnership.

"Think of it, Grantley," the young man had exclaimed, "what this will mean to me. He is a great man in his profession, so clever, so witty, so scholarly, everything. He was the double gold medallist in his year at McGill, and he has been keeping absolutely sober lately—thanks to your good offices"—at which the other made a gesture of dissent—"and then I would be in a better position to look after things. As it has been, any help I gave Mary in keeping the old man from killing people had to be done on the sly."

The minister winced and went a shade paler at the mention of her name, but the doctor did not notice.

"Mary is anxious to have it brought about, too," he went on, "for it has always been a worry to her when he was away, but now he will do the office work, and I will do the driving. It will be a distinct advantage to me, though of course I would do it anyway for her sake."

Then it was well for the minister that he came of a race that can hold its features in control. This easy naming of her name, the apparent proprietorship, the radiant happiness in

Clay's face, could mean but one thing. He had been blind, blind, blind!

He heard himself saying mechanically.

"Yes, of course, I think it is the only thing to do," and Clay had gone out whistling.

He sat for a few minutes perfectly motionless. Then a shudder ran through him, and the black Highland blood surged into his face, and anger flamed in his eyes. He sprang to his feet with his huge hands clenched.

"He shall not have her," he whispered to himself. "She is mine. How dare he name her!"

Only for a moment did he give himself to the ecstasy of rage. Then his arms fell and he stood straight and calm and strong, master of himself once more.

"What right have I?" he groaned wearily pressing his hands to his head. "Who am I that any woman should desire me. Clay, with his easy grace, his wit, his manliness, his handsome face, no wonder that she prefers him, any woman would, and Clay is worthy, more worthy," he thought in an agony of renunciation. He thought of Clay's life as he had known it now for years. So fair and open and clean. "Yes, Clay is worthy of her." He repeated it dully to himself as he walked up and down.

Every incident of the past three months came back to him now with cruel distinctness—the sweetness of her voice, the glorious beauty of her face, so full sometimes of life's pain, so strong too in the overcoming of it, and her little hands—oh what pretty little hands they were—he had held them once only for a moment, but she must have felt the love that throbbed in his touch, and he had thought that perhaps—perhaps—Oh, unutterable blind fool that he was!

He pressed his hands again to his head and groaned aloud; and He who hears the cry of the child or of the strong man in agony drew near and laid His pierced hands upon him in healing and benediction.

The next Sunday the Reverend Hugh Grantley was at his best, and his sermons had a new quality that appealed to and comforted many a weary one who, like himself, was traveling by the thorn-road.

In Mrs. McGuire's little house there was nothing to disturb the reading now, for the minister came no more, but the joyousness had all gone from Mary's voice, and Mrs. McGuire found herself losing all interest in Christian's struggles as she looked at Mary's face.

Once she saw the minister pass and she beat upon the window with her knitting needle, but he hurried by without looking up. Then the anger of Mrs. McGuire was kindled mightily, and she sometimes woke up in the night to express her opinion of him in the most lurid terms she could think of, feeling meanwhile the futility of human speech. It was a hard position for Mrs. McGuire, who had always been able to settle her own affairs with ease and grace.

One day when this had been going on about a month, Mrs. McGuire sat in her chintz-covered rocking-chair and thought hard, for something had to be done. She narrowed her black eyes into slits and thought and thought. Suddenly she started as if she heard something, and perhaps she did—the angel who brought the inspiration may have whirred his wings a little.

Mary Barner was coming that afternoon to "red up" a little for her, for her rheumatism had been very bad. With wonderful agility she rose and made ready for bed. First, however, she carefully examined the latch on her kitchen door. Now this latch had a bad habit of locking itself if the door was closed quickly. Mrs. McGuire tried it and found it would do this every time, and with this she seemed quite satisfied.

About half after three o'clock Mary came and began to set the little house in order. When this was done Mrs. McGuire asked her if she would make her a few buttermilk biscuits, she

had been wishing for them all day.

When she saw Mary safely in the kitchen her heart began to beat. Now if the minister was at home, the thing was as good as done.

She watched at the window until Jimmy Watson came from school, and then, tapping on the glass, beckoned him to come in, which he did with great trepidation of spirit.

She told him to go at once and tell Mr. Grantley to come, for she needed him very badly.

Then she got back into bed, and tried to compose her features into some resemblance of invalidism.

When Mr. Grantley came she was resting easier she said (which was true), but would he just get her a drink of water from the kitchen, and would he please shut the door quick after him and not let the cat up.

Mr. Grantley went at once and she heard the door shut with a snap.

Just to be sure that it was “snibbed,” Mrs. McGuire tiptoed after him in her bare feet, a very bad thing for a sick-a-bed lady to do, too, but to her credit, be it written, she did not listen at the keyhole.

She got back into bed, exclaiming to herself with great emphasis:

“There, now, fight it out among yerselves.”

When the minister stepped quickly inside the little kitchen, closing the door hurriedly behind him to prevent the invasion of the cat (of which there wasn’t one and never had been any), he beheld a very busy and beautiful young woman sifting flour into a baking-dish.

“Mary!” he almost shouted, hardly believing his senses.

He recovered himself instantly, and explained his errand, but the pallor of his face was unmistakable.

When Mary handed him the cup of water she saw that his hand was shaking; but she returned to her baking with the greatest composure.

The minister attempted to lift the latch, he rattled the door in vain.

“Come out this way,” Mary said as sweetly as if she really wanted him to go.

She tried to open the outside door, also in vain. Mrs. McGuire had secured it from the outside with a clothes-line prop and a horse nail.

The minister came and tried it, but Mrs. McGuire’s work held good. Then the absurdity of the position struck them both, and the little house rang with their laughter—laughter that washed away the heartaches of the dreary days before.

The minister’s reserve was breaking down.

“Mary,” he said, taking her face between his hands, “are you going to marry Horace Clay?”

“No,” she answered, meeting his eyes with the sweetest light in hers that ever comes into a woman’s face.

“Well, then,” he said, as he drew her to him, “you are going to marry me.”

The day had been dark and rainy, but now the clouds rolled back and the sunshine, warm and glorious, streamed into the kitchen. The teakettle, too, on the stove behind them, threw up its lid and burst into a thunder of bubbles.

The next time they tried the door it yielded, Mrs. McGuire having made a second barefoot journey.

When they came up from the little kitchen, the light ineffable was shining in their faces, but Mrs. McGuire called them back to earth by remarking dryly:

“It’s just as well I wasn’t parchin’ for that drink.”

CHAPTER XXVI THE THANKSGIVING

The prairie lay sere and brown like a piece of faded tapestry beneath the November sun that, peering through the dust-laden air, seemed old and worn with his efforts to warm the poor old faded earth.

The grain had all been cut and gathered into stacks that had dotted the fields, two by two, like comfortable married couples, and these in turn had changed into billowy piles of yellow straw, through which herds of cattle foraged, giving a touch of life and colour to the unending colourless landscape. The trees stood naked and bare. The gardens where once the corn waved and the hollyhocks flaunted their brazen beauty, now lay a tangled litter of stalks, waiting the thrifty farmer's torch to clear them away before the snow came. The earth had yielded of her fruits and now rested from her labour, worn and spent, taking no thought of comeliness, but waiting in decrepit indifference for her friend, the North Wind, to bring down the swirling snow to hide her scars and heal her unloveliness with its kindly white mantle.

But although the earth lay sere and brown and dust-laden, the granaries and elevators were bursting with a rich abundance. Innumerable freight-trains loaded with wheat wound heavily up the long grade, carrying off all too slowly the produce of the plain, and still the loads of grain came pouring in from the farms. The cellars were full of the abundance of the gardens—golden turnips, rosy potatoes and rows of pale green cabbages hanging by their roots to the beams gave an air of security against the long, cold, hungry winter.

Inside of John Watson's home, in spite of November's dullness, joy and gladness reigned, for was not Pearl coming home? Pearl, her mother's helper and adviser; Pearl, her silent father's wonder and delight, the second mother of all the little Watsons! Pearl was coming home.

Events in the Watson family were reckoned from the time of Pearl's departure or the time of her expected home-coming. "Pa got raised from one dollar and a quarter to one dollar and a half just six weeks from the day Pearl left, lackin' two days," and Mrs. Evans gave Mary a new "stuff" dress, "on the Frida' as Pearl left or the Thursda' three weeks before," and, moreover, the latest McSorley baby was born "on the Wednesda' as Pearl was comin' home on the Saturda' four weeks after."

Domestic affairs were influenced to some degree by Pearl's expected arrival. "Don't be wearin' yer sweater now, Tommy man, I'm feart the red strip'll run in it when its washed; save it clean till Pearlie comes, there's a man."

"Patsey, avick, wobble yer tooth now man alive. Don't be havin' that loose thing hangin' in yer jaw, and Pearlie comin' home so soon."

The younger children, whose appetites were out of all proportion to the supply, were often "tided over" what might have been a tearful time by a promise of the good time coming. When Danny cried because the bottom of his porridge plate was "always stickin' through," and later in the same day came home in the same unmanned condition because he had smelled chickens cooking down at the hotel when he and Jimmy went with the milk, Mary rose to the occasion and told him in a wild flight of unwarranted extravagance that they would have a turkey when Pearl came home. 'N cranberry sauce. 'N brown gravy. No-ow!

The house had undergone some preparations for the joyous event. Everything was scrubbed that could be scrubbed. An elaborately scalloped newspaper drape ornamented the clock shelf; paper chains, made of blue and yellow sale-bills, were festooned from the elbow of the stove pipes to the window curtains; the wood box was freshly papered with newspaper; red flannel was put in the lamps.

The children were scrubbed until they shone. Bugsey's sweater had a hole in the "chist," but you would never know it the way he held his hand. Tommy's stocking had a hole in the knee, but he had artfully inserted a piece of black lining that by careful watching kept up appearances.

Mrs. Watson, instigated by Danny, had looked at the turkeys in the butcher shop that morning, asked the price and came away sorrowful. Even Danny understood that a turkey was not to be thought of. They compromised on a pot-roast because it makes so much gravy, and with this and the prospect of potatoes and turnips and prune-pie, the family had to be content.

On the day that Pearlle was expected home, Mrs. Watson and Mary were busy preparing the evening meal, although it was still quite early in the afternoon. Wee Danny stood on a syrup keg in front of the window, determined to be the first to see Pearlle.

Mrs. Watson was peeling the potatoes and singing. Mrs. Watson sang because her heart was glad, for was not Pearlle coming home. She never allowed her singing to interfere with more urgent duties; the singing could always wait, and she never forgot just where she had left it, but would come back and pick up at the exact place she had discarded it.

"Sure ain't it great the way ma never drops a stitch in her singin'," her eldest son Teddy had said admiringly one day. "She can lave a note half turned up in the air, and go off and lave it, and ye'd think she'd forgot where she left it, but never a fear o' ma, two days after she'll rache up for it and bring it down and slip off into the choon agin, nate as nate."

On this particular day Mrs. Watson sang because she couldn't help it, for Pearlle was coming home—

From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strands,

she sang, as she peeled the potatoes—

Where Africa's sunny fount—

"Come, Mary alanna, and scour the knives, sure an' I forgot them at noon to-day.

-tains

Flow down their crimson sands;
From many an ancient river
And many a sandy—

Put a dhrop more wather in the kittle Tommy—don't ye hear it spittin'?"

-plain

They call us to deliver—

Here a shout sounded outside, and Bugsey came tumbling in and said he thought he had seen Pearlle coming away down the road across the track, whereupon Danny cried so uproariously that Bugsey, like the gentleman he was, withdrew his statement, or at least modified it by saying it might be Pearlle and it might not.

But it was Pearl, sure enough, and Danny had the pleasure of giving the alarm, beating on the window, maudlin with happiness, while Pearl said good-bye to Tom Motherwell, who had brought her home. Tommy and Bugsey and Patsey waited giggling just inside the door, while Mary and Mrs. Watson went out to greet her.

Pearl was in at last, kissing every little last Watson, forgetting she had done Tommy and doing him over again; with Danny holding tightly to her skirt through it all, everybody talking at once.

Then the excitement calmed down somewhat, but only to break right out again, for Jimmy who had been downtown came home and found the box which Tom Motherwell had left on the step after Pearl had gone in. They carried it in excitedly and eager little hands raised the lid, eager little voices shouted with delight.

“Didn’t I tell ye we’d have a turkey when Pearlie came home,” Mary shouted triumphantly.

Pearlie rose at once to her old position of director-in-chief.

“The turkey’ll be enough for us, and it’ll be done in time yet, and we’ll send the chicken to Mrs. McGuire, poor owld lady, she wuz good to me the day I left. Now ma, you sit down, me and Mary’ll git along. Here Bugsey and Tommy and Patsey and Danny, here’s five cents a piece for ye to go and buy what ye like, but don’t ye buy anything to ate, for ye’ll not need it, but yez can buy hankies, any kind ye like, ye’ll need them now the winter’s comin’ on, and yez’ll be havin’ the snuffles.”

When the boys came back with their purchases they were put in a row upon their mother’s bed to be out of the way while the supper was being prepared, all except wee Bugsey, who went, from choice, down to the tracks to see the cars getting loaded—the sizzle of the turkey in the oven made the tears come.

Two hours later the Watson family sat down to supper, not in sections, but the whole family. The table had long since been inadequate to the family’s needs, but two boards, with a flour-sack on them, from the end of it to the washing machine overcame the difficulty.

Was there ever such a turkey as that one? Mrs. Watson carved it herself on the back of the stove.

“Sure yer poor father can’t be bothered with it, and it’s a thing he ain’t handy at, mirover, no more’n meself; but the atin’ is on it, praise God, and we’ll git at it someway.”

Ten plates were heaped full of potatoes and turnips, turkey, brown gravy, and “stuffin’; and still that mammoth turkey had layers of meat upon his giant sides. What did it matter if there were not enough plates to go around, and Tommy had to eat his supper out of the saucepan; and even if there were no cups for the boys, was not the pail with the dipper in it just behind them on the old high-chair.

When the plates had all been cleaned the second time, and the turkey began to look as if something had happened to it, Mary brought in the surprise of the evening—it was the jelly Mrs. Evans had sent them when she let Mary come home early in the afternoon, a present from Algernon, she said, and the whipped cream that Camilla had given Jimmy when he ran over to tell her and Mrs. Francis that Pearlie had really come. Then everyone saw the advantage of having their plates licked clean, and not having more turkey than they knew what to do with. Danny was inarticulate with happiness.

“Lift me down, Pearlie,” he murmured sleepily as he poked down the last spoonful, “and do not jiggle me.”

When Patsey and Bugsey and Tommy and Danny had gone to bed, and Mary and Mrs. Watson were washing the dishes (Pearlie was not allowed to help, being the guest of honour), John Watson sat silently smoking his pipe, listening with delight while Pearl related her experiences of the last three months.

She was telling about the night that she had watched for the doctor. Not a word did she tell about, her friend, the doctor's agitation, nor what had caused it on that occasion, and she was very much relieved to find that her listeners did not seem to have heard about the circumstances of Ab Cowan's death.

"Oh, I tell ye, Doctor Clay's the fellow," she said, her eyes sparkling with enthusiasm. "He knew what was wrong wid Arthur the minute he clapped his eyes on him—tore open his little satchel, slapped the chloroform into his face, whisked out his knives and slashed into him as aisy as ma wud into a pair of pants for Jimmie there, and him waitin' for them."

"Look at that now!" her father exclaimed, pulling out the damper of the stove and spitting in the ashes. "Yon's a man'll make his mark wherever he goes."

A knock sounded on the door. Teddy opened it and admitted Camilla and Jim Russell.

"I've got a letter for you Pearl," Jim said when the greetings were over. "When Tom brought the mail this evening this letter for you was in with the others, and Arthur brought it over to see if I would bring it in. I didn't really want to come, but seeing as it was for you, Pearl, I came."

Camilla was not listening to him at all.

Pearl took the letter wonderingly. "Read it Camilla," she said, handing it to her friend.

Camilla broke the seal and read it. It was from Alfred Austin Wemyss, Rector of St. Agnes, Tillbury Road, County of Kent, England.

It was a stately letter, becoming a rector, dignified and chaste in its language. It was the letter of a dignitary of the Church to an unknown and obscure child in a distant land, but it told of a father and mother's gratitude for a son's life saved, it breathed an admiration for the little girl's devotion and heroism, and a love for her that would last as long as life itself.

Pearl sat in mute wonder, as Camilla read—that could not mean her!

We do not mean to offer money as a payment for what you have done, dear child (Camilla read on), for such a service of love can only be paid in love; but we ask you to accept from us this gift as our own daughter would accept it if we had had one, and we will be glad to think that it has been a help to you in the securing of an education. Our brother, the bishop, wishes you to take from him a gift of £20, and it is his desire that you should spend it in whatever way will give you the most pleasure. We are, dear Pearl,

Your grateful friends,

ALFRED A. and MARY WEMYSS.

"Here is a Bank of England draft for £120, nearly \$600," Camilla said, as she finished the letter.

The Watson family sat dumb with astonishment.

"God help us!" Mrs. Watson cried at last.

"He has," Camilla said reverently.

Then Pearl threw her arms around her mother's neck and kissed her over and over again.

“Ma, dear,” she cried, “ye’ll git it now, what I always wanted ye to have, a fur-lined cape, and not lined wid rabbit, or squirrel or skunk either, but with the real vermin! and it wasn’t bad luck to have Mrs. McGuire cross me path when I was going out. But they can’t mane me, Camilla, sure what did I do?”

But Camilla and Jim stood firm, the money was for her and her only. Everyone knew, Jim said, that if she had not stayed with Arthur that long night and watched for the doctor, that Arthur would have been dead in the morning. And Arthur had told him a dozen times, Jim said, that Pearl had saved his life.

“Well then, ’t was aisy saved,” Pearl declared, “if I saved it.”

Just then Dr. Clay came in with a letter in his hand.

“My business is with this young lady,” he said as he sat on the chair Mrs. Watson had wiped for him, and drew Pearl gently toward him. “Pearl, I got some money to-night that doesn’t belong to me.”

“So did I,” Pearl said.

“No, you deserve all yours, but I don’t deserve a cent. If it hadn’t been for this little girl of yours, Mr. Watson, that young Englishman would have been a dead man.”

“Faith, that’s what they do be sayin’, but I don’t see how that wuz. You’re the man yerself Doc,” John replied, taking his pipe from his mouth.

“No,” the doctor went on. “I would have let him die if Pearl hadn’t held me up to it and made me operate.”

Pearl sprang up, almost in tears. “Doc,” she cried indignantly, “haven’t I towld ye a dozen times not to say that? Where’s yer sense, Doc?”

The doctor laughed. He could laugh about it now, since Dr. Barner had quite exonerated him from blame in the matter, and given it as his professional opinion that young Cowan would have died any way—the lancing of his throat having perhaps hastened, but did not cause his death.

“Pearl,” the doctor said smiling, “Arthur’s father sent me £50 and a letter that will make me blush every time I think of it. Now I cannot take the money. The operation, no doubt, saved his life, but if it hadn’t been for you there would have been no operation. I want you to take the money. If you do not, I will have to send it back to Arthur’s father and tell him all about it.”

Pearl looked at him in real distress.

“And I’ll tell everyone else, too, what kind of a man I am—Jim here knows it already”—the doctor’s eyes were smiling as he watched her troubled little face.

“Oh, Doctor Clay,” she cried, “you’re worse ’n Danny when you get a notion inter yer head. What kin I do with ye?”

“I do not know,” the doctor laughed, “unless you marry me when you grow up.”

“Well,” Pearl answered gravely, “I can’t do that till ma and me git the family raised, but I’m thinkin’ maybe Mary Barner might take ye.”

“I thought of that, too,” the doctor answered, while a slight shadow passed over his face, “but she seems to think not. However, I’m not in a hurry Pearl, and I just think I’ll wait for you.”

After Camilla and Jim and the doctor had gone that night, and Teddy and Billy and Jimmy had gone to bed, Pearl crept into her father’s arms and laid her head on his broad shoulder.

“Pa,” she said drowsily, “I’m glad I’m home.”

Her father patted her little brown hand.

“So am I, acushla,” he said; after a pause he whispered, “yer a good wee girl, Pearlie,” but Pearl’s tired little eyes had closed in sleep.

Mrs. Watson laid more wood on the fire, which crackled merrily up the chimney.

“Lay her down, John dear,” she whispered. “Yer arms’ll ache, man.”

On the back of the stove the teakettle simmered drowsily. There was no sound in the house but the regular breathing of the sleeping children. The fire burned low, but John Watson still sat holding his little sleeping girl in his arms. Outside the snow was beginning to fall.

CONCLUSION CONVINCING CAMILLA

"If you can convince me, Jim, that you are more irresponsible and more in need of a guiding hand than Mrs. Francis—why then I'll—I'll be—"

Jim sprang from his chair.

"You'll be what, Camilla? Tell me quick," he cried eagerly.

"I'll be—convinced," she said demurely, looking down.

Jim sat down again and sighed.

"Will you be anything else?" he asked.

"Convince me first," she said firmly.

"I think I can do it," he said, "I always have to write down what I want to do each day, and what I need to buy when I come in here, and once, when I wrote my list, nails, coffee, ploughshare, mail, I forgot to put on it, 'come back,' and perhaps you may remember I came here that evening and stayed and stayed—I was trying to think what to do next."

"That need not worry you again, Jim," she said sweetly. "I can easily remember that, and will tell you every time."

"To 'come back'?" he said. "Thank you, Camilla, and I will do it too."

She laughed.

"Having to make a list isn't anything. Poor Mrs. Francis makes a list and then loses it, then makes a second list, and puts on it to find the first list, and then loses that; and Jim, she once made biscuits and forgot the shortening."

"I made biscuits once and forgot the flour," Jim declared proudly.

Camilla shook her head.

"And, Camilla," Jim said gravely, "I am really very irresponsible, you know Nellie Slater—she is a pretty girl, isn't she?"

"A very pretty girl," Camilla agreed.

"About your size—fluffy hair—"

"Wavy, Jim," Camilla corrected.

"Hers is fluffy, yours is wavy," Jim said firmly—"lovely dark eyes—well, she was standing by the window, just before the lamps were lighted, and I really am very absent-minded you know—I don't know how it happened that I mistook her for you."

Camilla reached out her hand.

He seized it eagerly.

"Jim—I am convinced," she said softly.

Fifteen minutes afterwards Camilla said:

"I cannot tell her, Jim, I really cannot. I don't how know to begin to tell her."

"Why do you need to tell her?" Jim asked. "Hasn't the lady eyes and understanding? What does she think I come for?"

"She doesn't know you come. She sees somebody here, but she thinks it's the grocery-boy waiting until I empty his basket."

"Indeed," Jim said a little stiffly, "which one, I wonder."

"Don't you remember the night she said to me 'And what did you say this young man's name is, Camilla'—no, no, Jim, she hasn't noticed you at all."

Jim was silent a moment.

“Well now,” he said at last, “she seemed to be taking notice that morning I came in without any very good excuse, and she said ‘How does it happen that you are not harvesting this beautiful day, Mr. Russell?’”

“Yes, and what did you say?” Camilla asked a trifle severely.

Jim looked a little embarrassed.

“I said—I had not felt well lately, and I had come in to see the doctor.”

“And what was that?” Camilla was still stern.

“The ingenious device of an ardent lover,” he replied quickly.

“‘Ardened sinner you mean, Jim,’” she laughed. “But the next time you had a splendid excuse, you had a message from Pearl. Was my new suit done?”

“Yes, and then I came to see—”

There was a frou-frou of skirts in the hall. Camilla made a quick move and Jim became busy with the books on the table.

Mrs. Francis entered.

“Camilla,” she began after she had spoken cordially to Jim, “Mr. Francis is in need of a young man to manage his business for him, and he has made up his mind—quite made up his mind, Camilla, to take Mr. Russell into partnership with him if Mr. Russell will agree. Mr. Francis needs just such a young man, one of education, good habits and business ability and so, Camilla, I see no reason why your marriage should not take place at once.”

“Marriage!” Camilla gasped.

“Yes,” Mrs. Francis said in her richest tones. “Your marriage, Camilla, at once. You are engaged are you not?”

“I am—convinced,” Camilla said irrelevantly.

And then it was Mrs. Francis who laughed as she held out a hand to each of them.

“I do see—things—sometimes,” she said.

[The end of Sowing Seeds in Danny by McClung, Nellie L.]