

**ALL WE
LIKE SHEEP**

NELLIE L. McCLUNG

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a <https://www.fadedpage.com> administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at <https://www.fadedpage.com>.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

Title: All We Like Sheep and Other Stories

Date of first publication: 1926

Author: Nellie L. McClung (1873-1951)

Date first posted: Dec. 3, 2021

Date last updated: Dec. 3, 2021

Faded Page eBook #20211203

This eBook was produced by: Al Haines, John Routh & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

ALL WE LIKE SHEEP

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

NELLIE L. McCLUNG

Author of
“Sowing Seeds in Danny,” “Purple Springs,”
“Painted Fires,” etc.

THOMAS ALLEN
PUBLISHER—TORONTO

Copyright, Canada, 1926
by
NELLIE L. McCLUNG

PRINTED IN CANADA

T. H. BEST PRINTING CO., LIMITED
TORONTO, ONT.

These stories, with the exception of “Carried Forward,” are reprinted by the kind permission of *Maclean’s Magazine*, *The Western Home Monthly*, and *The Toronto Star Weekly*, for which courtesy the author and the publishers desire to express their appreciation.

Lord, let me live while I can see
The beauty in the blossoming tree,
The message in the wayside flower,
And love it for its one short hour;
While morning song of lark and jay
Can scatter all my doubts away,
And lift my poor heart from the sod,
And tell them I am born of God;
While I can feel I'm linked with all
The burdened ones who halt and fall;
While I can feel my share of blame
In every cheek that's dyed with shame;
While I can feel life's burdens sweep
Across my heart and drive out sleep;
While I can suffer, hunger, strive,
Lord, let me live—

For I'm alive.

But if the time should come when I
Forget to lift my eyes on high,
Forget to seek for love divine,
Or seek it but for me and mine;
When my dim eyes shall fail to trace
Thy image in each human face;
When, lulled by comfort, ease and pride,
I find my soul is satisfied
To build its house of wood and hay,
Letting the old world go its way;
Content to preen before a glass
Where wounded ones barefooted pass—
Easing my conscience if I must
By throwing hungry dogs a crust—
Then, Lord, Thy crowning mercy shed
And let me die—

For I am dead.

CONTENTS

ALL WE LIKE SHEEP

MEN AND MONEY

ONE OF THE MCTAVISHES

GETTING AWAY FROM THE TELEPHONE

THE NEUTRAL FUSE

RED AND WHITE

BANKING IN LONDON

CARRIED FORWARD

BELLS AT EVENING

All We Like Sheep and Other Stories

ALL WE LIKE SHEEP

I.

So my dream of sheep is over! The Bank has won the bet. It held the stakes, so there was nothing to do but make my way through the green velvet hangings which obscure the approach to the Manager's office, sit in the swing chair and sign my name in the place provided on the back of my War Bonds, receive my note, signed so gaily ten months ago, and come away sorrowful. They said I could not make money out of sheep on shares. I said I could. They were right. So I have apologized—and paid!

To-day I have put away all their little things—the dog-muzzle—the sheep-bells—the numerous beautifully illustrated booklets which the Livestock Department so lavishly bestowed on me—the catalogue of sheep supplies—the card which tells the world that I am a member in good standing of the Provincial Wool Growers' Association.

My sheep are gone. So is my money! All is over. Ashes to ashes! Dust to dust! Bonds to Bank!

If sheep would rhyme with grief, if ewe would rhyme with woe, it might be some relief to let my sorrow flow in heavy black-edged words of deepest indigo. But I know I never could write polite poetry about rams and lambs while feeling the way I do to-day.

But I am going to tell about it. My heart is too soggy with sorrow to keep it all to myself. I will have spiritual pneumonia unless I get this load of grief off my chest.

The trouble began many years ago, unnoticed and unsuspected at the time. "Who would have thought that there was anything sinister and menacing in sheep pictures—woolly-faced Shropshires, with their black noses; or white-faced Leicesters, with their wool so correctly parted down the middle of the back; or the dainty black and white Hampshires, with their symmetrical markings. From earliest infancy I was exposed to the contagion of these, and one of the first pictures my young eyes rested on when they opened on this troubled world was of a beautiful flock of sheep stepping

gaily down a dusty road with the glowing tints of the Autumn sunset falling athwart their woolly sides. Behind them rose the purple heather hills, and before them strode the shepherd and his dog. No wonder my young heart was bound to them!”

Looking around me now as I sit here with ashes on my head, I can see six sheep pictures which have poured their sinister influence into my heart and have helped to work my destruction. I have received their influence in many ways. An open magazine on my desk shows glaring headlines:

“SHEEP, THE FARMER’S BEST PROPERTY!”

The morning paper gives in full a speech made by the Live Stock Commissioner of this Province setting forth the profit that can be made from sheep—of which I, fresh from the loss of my war bonds, read one paragraph—and choked!

My first move in the direction of sheep owning was to buy a collie dog named “Philip”—now of hallowed memory. In the city we lived in there were stringent laws regarding dogs; any dog that appeared on the street unchaperoned might be taken to the pound. Philip was taken quite regularly, for he was very friendly and easily caught. Each time I went from home Philip was taken by the dog catcher, and it took two dollars to get him out. Overhead expenses were thereby so much increased that I put the matter before the city authorities and asked them if, in view of the steadiness of my trade, they would not give me a flat rate on Philip, or at least take him ten times for fifteen dollars. They agreed that there should be some consideration shown to the old subscriber, and after that my pound bills were greatly reduced.

Philip was promised a flock of sheep to mind some day, and lived on hopefully, keeping his muscles firm by thrashing every dog in the neighborhood when the mood was on him and the dog was not too big.

There was one sable collie who lived near us whom Philip chastised regularly, and with deacon-like dignity. The painful scene usually occurred on the road, and after it was over Philip always walked majestically homeward, and from the top step of the veranda would sit expectorating yellow hairs for the remainder of the day, tired, but very happy. We never knew what offence the sable collie had committed, or how Philip knew that his time had come to be thrashed, but no one could doubt that it was a deep sense of duty which impelled Philip to action.

One day, when the sable collie was receiving his correction, a Ford car came gaily around the corner and ran into the two dogs. The sable one

escaped, but Philip was badly hit. He reached his own veranda, though, without a moan, and there lay down to rise no more.

It was a severe blow to the sheep industry to lose my entire plant in this way!

But the cosmic urge came again. I met the contagion everywhere, it seemed. But I will not spare myself—I will set it down here in cold typewriting that I was warned.

I have a brother, a sane and sober stockman, who, seeing the way my thoughts were leading, said earnestly to me: “Nellie, forget it!”

I tried to argue, but he waved my reasoning aside. “Partnerships in stock are no good,” he warned me. “If you want to buy land, and put on a pair of overalls and a sun-bonnet and go out there and mind your own sheep, I’ll say you can do it and make money. But you can’t sit at a flat-topped desk, in a green house on One Hundred and Twenty-third Street, writing books, and expect to make money on sheep by Long Distance. I’m some older than you, and somewhat more skilled in the ways of the world, and I couldn’t do it. . . . I put out a bunch of cows one time with a farmer I knew well, who agreed to give me half the increase. He asked me quite casually if I would take the steer calves for mine and leave him the heifers. I agreed to this readily, for I remembered well that when I was on the farm trying to work into a herd of cows most of the increase was of the sterner sex.

“The next spring I went down to see them, and I have had a constant wonderment in my mind ever since as to how he did it. Talk of prophecy, and second sight, and birth control—that partner of mine had them all. Seventy-five per cent, of the increase were heifers, all doing well. A few cows were without calves, mooing and fretting over their loss—their calves had died in infancy, and had been males! The infant mortality rate had been high among the males of the flock, but the gentler sex were robust and healthy. There was no explanation, no redress. My calves simply were not. The female of the specie had been not only more hardy, but more prevailing than the male. It was fate.”

“But,” I said, “why did you consent to this arrangement? You would have been all right on a straight division.”

My brother sighed wearily. “Nellie,” he said patiently, “it wouldn’t have made any difference. It would have been something else. Jacob queered the partnership business in stock when he put up the game on his father-in-law.

He set in force, then, pre-natal influences which to this day work against the absent partner. It is Fate, woman! Would you fight against Fate?"

So spake William, my sage and seasoned brother, out of the depth of his experience.

Even that did not dampen my enthusiasm.

I sent my name and address to any place where a name and an address would bring a sheep book. They poured in upon me, and I read them all.

Soon I began to cast up small sums in arithmetic. One hundred ewes would give me an increase of one hundred and twenty-five lambs each year. I got these figures from an old English sheep man who lived near us, engaged in real estate. He has the reputation of being the best sheep man in this Province, but—I see the grim significance of it now—he owns no sheep!

I figured that in two years I would have one hundred and sixty-five breeding ewes, sixty-five a year old, with one hundred and thirty wethers for sale, which would bring me thirteen hundred dollars in cash. And then, of course, there would be the wool—one hundred original fleeces, averaging six pounds, at fifty cents per pound; two hundred and twenty-five fleeces the next year, and three hundred and fifty the next, etc.

It was very delightful exercise. I seemed to have forgotten all about shrinkage and seepage, and stealage and tickage and coyotage, and the unreasonable, inexplicable passion that sheep have for dying. No gloomy thoughts assailed my optimistic heart.

The more I figured on it the better I liked it. It seemed to me that sheep could not fail. "Two crops a year" and "quick returns," were the phrases that haunted my dreams, and I read the books again with fervor.

It was not long until I began to call up the stockyards and talk familiarly with unknown but pleasant-voiced gentlemen, of breeding ewes, lambs, wethers, free freight and Dominion Government rams; also of the probabilities of the wool market. Every one of these spoke encouragingly of the venture. All but one. There was one old stock man who counselled caution. I met him on the street-car one day, and he shook his head and looked at me with great kindness in his eyes when he told me he had heard that I was going to buy sheep. There was a troubled look on his face, mixed with great kindness, such as I have seen at funerals, and sometimes in the faces of old people at weddings. It was a paternal, worried look, mixed with a certain helplessness. I understand it better now than I did then.

He came to see me one day after that, good soul that he was and is, and he told me that he, too, like me, had dreamed dreams of sheep and had seen visions of wealth. And only last summer he had bought five hundred, and got free range on a whole section from the Dominion Government. He had hired shepherds, bought dogs, put up buildings, and started out with high hopes. . . .

“It was one continued tale of grief,” he said sadly. “The men fought, got drunk, left. People stole everything that was loose. They did not take the well, but that was about all they left. A prairie fire burned my hay, and the lake dried up. It was fierce. In the fall I sold out, and fortunately came out about even. But never again. That’s why I came to see you. Don’t! The only way to make a success of any kind of farming is to be on the spot.” . . .

I hate to have to write it now, but I must tell the whole blighting truth. Even this did not hold me back. I had often wondered what the Psalmist meant by that prayer, “Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.” I know now!

It was inevitable that I should meet sheep-dealers, for it was now noised abroad that I was “going into sheep.” One sought me out. He was black-whiskered, bright-eyed, thin and sinewy. He wore leather leggings and a sheepskin coat, and he called me “Lady.” I was disappointed in his appearance. I thought that sheep men had a docile, lamb-like look. Stories of the sheep country certainly paint them so. This man had none of it. His eyes were gimlet-like and keen, his voice rasping and hurried, he was impatient of delays.

Did I want the sheep, or did I not? Yes or no! There were more people wanting sheep now than could be supplied, and in spite of all he could do he could not get enough sheep to go round. But he had heard of me, and he had a bunch that he thought would suit me. I would have to decide quickly, though, for there were two “parties” after them. He had just stolen away to give me first chance because he liked to oblige a lady.

There was a pathetic significance about this flock of sheep, which he explained to me. They had been owned by a man in the southern part of the Province, who had just got them in good shape, having turned off the old ones, and was prepared to go right in for sheep and make a big thing of it when he took the “flu” and died. His widow could not carry on, and she had sent word for this man’s partner to come, and they went, and took the whole bunch off her hands and brought them into the stockyards.

Now he would like to do as well with them as he could for her sake. He had been “awful sorry for the widow, she was so attached to them, and knew them all by name. They would run when she called them. Gee, she hated to see them go!” His partner did not think he had ever seen a woman cry as hard as she did when she saw those sheep go away. The sobs out of her he never would forget!

I could see the sheep at the stockyards now, he said, but I would have to go out soon, as there were people after them every day.

The impression I got was that I needed to make haste or they would be snapped up. The sheep business was no place for loiterers.

He spoke eloquently of the shortage of wool, and declared it was every person’s duty to try to bring down the high price of living as it affects the poor working-man. He said that was the only thing that kept him in the sheep business.

It was about that time that I saw my duty plain. Someone had to buy sheep, find range and water, provide shelter and care for them, if the world was to have clothing, and I determined to go at once and inspect that carefully nurtured flock which had been so cruelly bereft of its master.

It was a dull day in January, the day I went to the stockyards. There were splinters of ice falling through the air, and banks of leaden clouds obscured the sun. A dull, cold day, something like the weather that Napoleon experienced in his disastrous retreat from Moscow. That, according to history, had been a cold day for Napoleon. This one was mine!

When I reached the stockyards it seemed to me, though I may have been mistaken, that everyone was expecting me.

The man at the gate, in the first two minutes that I was speaking to him, deplored the fact that he did not have money to buy sheep, for they “sure are the money-getters.” I was glad to have my judgment sustained by one so close in.

The man who had been attending to the sheep, a red-faced fellow with cotton batting in his ears, told me in strictest confidence that they were the best sheep that had been in the pens for years.

“There ain’t a poor one in the bunch,” he said; “you can see for yourself that there ain’t one above four years old.”

I asked him how he knew the age of a sheep—they all looked alike to me.

He threw up his hands in a gesture of despair. “Instink, lady, instink!” he cried. “In fact, it’s a gift. Some can do it, and some can’t. I always was handy with stock, from a child. My father was just the same. Some people have to look into a sheep’s mouth to know how old she is, but I never do, I tell it by her eyes. If they are bright and sparkling she’s young. There ain’t any old ones in this bunch, so you can’t see what a dead-eyed one is like, but you’ll see for yourself when you have handled as many as I have.”

The greatest unanimity seemed to prevail among the stockmen as to the excellence of those sheep. They were inspected and commented on by fully a dozen, and it was decided by all that they were a great bargain at fifteen dollars each.

Once I said that I thought I should have them examined by a competent man, who would look at them one by one, for I had read in the sheep bulletins that it was very disastrous for a beginner to buy old sheep. I spoke rather apologetically, for I felt it was hardly courteous to mention such a thing in view of the unanimity of opinion that prevailed regarding their youthfulness.

Just then a new man came into the yard and in a loud whisper told the man who was showing me the sheep not to be too keen about selling this bunch of sheep, for there was a “party outside wanting to get them very bad.”

The man with the sheepskin coat ordered them to be let out that they might file past me, and as they went by he told me various things, rather intimate and somewhat embarrassing, of their past history. But there was no embarrassment in their glass-alley eyes as they blinked at me over each other’s backs. There was an air of conscious innocence on their faces which made me distinctly uncomfortable as they sidled past and gave me a sort of “Mona Lisa” smirk as they went. They were so smug, so prim, so sure of something. They had such an insufferable “time will tell” look that I felt sure they were pulling off a joke on someone. I did not know, of course, who the joke was on, but I found out in due time.

Their air of innocence was abundantly justified by the events of the next few months, but perhaps it would be better if I said lack of events. The future held nothing to prove that they had lived, except in a few cases, anything but blameless lives.

It was one hundred and seventy-four ewes that I bought, each guaranteed by many earnest commentators to be sound, young and healthy; and the sheep dealer who was selling them to me assured me that a great many of

these ewes had had twins last year. His partner had gathered this interesting bit of personal history, I took it, from the weeping widow between sobs. I got twenty-five from another man, who was going out of sheep, and among these there were several pedigreed ewes and a fine-looking Shropshire ram.

The sheep were taken down to a farm on the Battle River on January 22nd. The man who was going to winter them for me had a long rick of green feed, containing, I forget how many tons, but it seemed to be enough to fortify them against hunger and want. The sheep bulletins had told the amount which sheep will eat, and, theoretically, we had plenty.

In February I went to see them and found them going strong. The “Mona Lisa” look had deepened in their cairngorm eyes, and the grin on their faces when they blinked at me had grown in intensity. But I forgot it when I saw them feeding on the sunshiny slope, picking the stubble through the snow. They were so capable, so industrious and self-supporting. The weather was glorious that day, with a deep blue sky, over which thin white rags of clouds drifted aimlessly.

The sheep were fat and happy, with no premonition of the vicissitudes which were to follow. They had made a gash in the side of the green feed stack which was out of proportion to the number of days that they had been employed in doing it, and this seemed to fill the farmer with apprehension.

“There are two or three of them,” he said to me, “that are bottomless pits. They act as if they had tapeworms. I’ve shut them in by themselves now, and am measuring the feed out to them, for there’s no satisfying them.”

I got some splendid photographs of them feeding on the hillside, and decided which one I would use for my letterheads when I sent out the intimation that I had fat lambs for sale.

When I came home I joined the Wool Growers’ Association and attended their Convention. I tried to approach the aristocratic wool barons on something like terms of equality, and in some cases got away with it.

Then I began to read sheep books in the Library. I read about oil cakes and corn silage. I read about ticks till I felt crawly. I read about Dorsets and Cotswolds, Merinos and Hampshires, Romney Marshes and Rambouillets. I read so much about sheep that I began to taste wool all the time. When I closed my eyes at night I could see sheep, acres and acres of them, feeding happily on the banks of the Battle River, and about this time I began to figure increases again.

The reports of the lamb crop were not so optimistic as I had hoped. Lambs were not arriving in the large numbers I had been led to expect. Several ewes had died, and I feverishly read the books to find the cause.

The books were plethoric in their information on all points except one, and that is, Why do sheep die? Mine seemed to just take a distaste to life—what the Scotch people call a “scunner”—and droop and fail and cease to be. By the first of April twenty of them had made the unimpeded journey to the grave.

I tried to tell myself that there were bound to be losses the first year—every enterprise had them, the books hinted at as much—but I did wish that sheep would show cause for their passing away. Just a word, a sign, a hint. This voiceless, wordless, soundless passing was discouraging in the extreme. One day a sheep would mingle with her compatriots, eating, drinking, pushing her way up to the feeding pen with every appearance of health and determination to see the thing through; the next day, cold and stiff and unresponsive, she would lie on the hillside, turned over on her back like an upset table, with her neat little Chippendale legs in the air.

After a dozen or so of them had gone I began to think of insurance for the flock, and then it was that I found that the insurance companies know all about the feeble link between sheep and the grave, and they asked a three hundred and ninety dollar premium to cover three thousand dollars' worth of sheep.

I declined, explaining to them that I already held my sheep on shares and did not feel like taking in another partner. Even at that they did not seem worried.

But spring came at last, overdue but repentant, and a flush of green came over the hills. A new energy and hopefulness came over the sheep, and I felt happy days were before us. About seventy wobbly lambs, with wondering eyes and elongated legs, had come to fill the gap left by their departed aunties, and in April the whole flock was sent down to the river flat for summer pasture.

The man who had taken the sheep on shares had assured me that there was an abundance of free range in the valley of the Battle River. Desolate and barren enough it surely was to keep out intending settlers, but we should have known that there is no land so poor, so rocky, so gravelly, but someone will buy it. There is no such thing as immunity from settlers.

Early in May one quarter of the Canadian Pacific Railway section was sold, and the price was eighteen dollars an acre. We did not know who had bought the land. That he had never seen it would be the only extenuating circumstance we could think of. We all had our own opinion of the poor simp, whoever he was. Any man who would buy a gravelly hillside, up which he would have to take his machinery with a derrick, was surely lacking in judgment. I believe I said something like this, or perhaps worse.

This was in the spring. Now, in these closing days of October, when I have settled up my accounts, squared up with the Bank, and sit here reviewing the devious path I myself have journeyed, I apologize to this unknown man who bought a collection of small boulders at eighteen dollars an acre. Who am I that I should sit in judgment on him? Forgive me, brother, for brother of mine you surely are, and if we meet hereafter at the Old Folks Home I shall grasp your hand in community of spirit.

After the sheep had been taken down to the river it was necessary to find a herder. When I first bought the sheep I had some notion of doing this myself, and had often thought of how glorious it would be to sit on the hillside, a handsome collie dog by my side, and watch the flock as they fed on the luscious green grass of the valley—Sabbath stillness all around, broken only by the birds mating in the woods above me, giving to my thoughts sweet words—sunshine, peace and adoration singing through my heart all day as I sat and watched the lambkins on the velvet sward at play. Lovely picture, full of rapture, but it did not come that way!

The first herder lasted three days and then left anonymously. The next one quit at the end of the first day.

I had a friend at the Coast whose powers of endurance I knew well, and in this emergency I sent for her. She came at once. We put up a tent for her, and fitted it up with stove, bed, pots, pans, etc., and there she took up her residence for the summer, with revolver, rifle, pony and saddle.

Soon I got a letter from her. "You have been cheated," the letter said, "if you bought these sheep for breeding stock. Only a few of them have any domestic tendencies. The rest of them are spinsters or wethers; but as racing stock they are hard to beat. Don't worry about the man who owned them having died of the flu, for he would have died of heart-strain anyway. Did you say the widow was sorry to part with them? Don't you believe it; if she shed tears, I bet they were tears of joy. Some of the dealers told you these sheep would run when she called them. They did not mention the direction, though. Send me a dog—the pony is getting tired!"

Then began a dog hunt. There seemed to be a great dearth of well-trained sheep-dogs, but by perseverance we found a beautiful sable collie who had had taken three prizes at the Edmonton dog show. His name was "Prince," and his beautiful appearance proclaimed his aristocratic breeding; but from the very first he refused to work with sheep. He was a cattle-dog, and had the cattle man's point of view on the sheep question.

But Prince wanted to do something to earn his money, and about the second day found some congenial occupation. There were some cattle feeding undisturbed in the valley, and the owners, like all cattle men, were rather resentful of the coming of the sheep. There had been no warfare, however, and everything would have gone well only for Prince, who, without authority, and entirely on his own initiative, chased every horned beast into the next township!

It was a delicate matter to explain to the cattle owners.

Prince was recalled, and there arose a cry for another dog. After some searching we found "Peggy," a slate-colored English sheep-dog, short-nosed and business-like. There was an unconfirmed rumor that she had a pedigree somewhere, and had very aristocratic forbears. Peggy was not caring. Under beetling brows she looked at life with strong distaste. She had no illusions and trusted no one. I think she must have owned sheep herself once, she was so utterly pessimistic. She would do her duty, nothing more, and she did it always with a scornful aloofness that forbade companionship.

In June I went to see the sheep again, and stayed over night in the tent with Pauline. We took more pictures. Perhaps the reader will think that I attach too much importance to these pictures. Well, perhaps if you paid as much for pictures as I did for these you too would regard them with respect.

On this visit I made the acquaintance of Bessie and Tommie, two of the lambs. Bessie's mother had died in the Spring, leaving her, a bright-eyed little wobbler, to be raised on the bottle. Tommie was an unwelcome child, disowned from the first by his mother. She refused to have her free soul bound by family cares, and when tied up for Tommy's convenience, kicked and struggled to break her neck if not released. "Give me liberty or give me death," was written in her flashing eyes. We gave her liberty, seeing that she was decent enough to give us a choice in the matter. So Tommy joined the bottle brigade, and he and Bessie were brought up together with Pauline as nurse.

The night was very still after the sheep had quieted down, so still that I could well believe there was no living thing in the valley. Not a dog barked,

not a cow bawled. Nothing but isolation and silence. All my dreams of the peaceful seclusion I would wrap around my soul came back to me as I lay staring into darkness, but they came back mockingly. Here now, you city dweller, tired of the noise and grind of the city, and weary of its eternal striving, come and bathe your brow in the cooling waters of silence. Reach out and help yourself—there is lots of it here! This is the pastoral life for which you have been crying out. There is nothing now between you and the stars but a very poor piece of canvas. You are far away from the haunts of men, with their tangled problems which have vexed your soul. Be calm and happy now, and indulge yourself in meditation.

But I could not be happy. It was too quiet, too remote, too far away, and when the coyotes on the hills above us opened up for the night, it seemed like a horrible place.

Pauline slept on. Coyotes were an old story to her. The only interest she had in them was to shoot them. I was not exactly afraid. Pauline and her six-shooter were a good protection, if any were needed, and Peggy slept inside the door. The coyotes only put on a short spasm that night, and then ceased, leaving the silence heavier than before.

But all night long I lay in a strange sort of dread of something. I felt that some terrible noise would come. It must come, everything was so still. It was the nightmare of childhood that had come back and held me fast in its power. I could only wait helplessly for it to burst.

Suddenly it came, loud, horrible and discordant. It broke beside my ear, and I sprang up with a scream. Two woolly faces, with bright eyes and open mouths, confronted me, and the noise ripped through me like a buzz-saw.

Then I saw what it was—Tommy and Bessie had looked in to see if breakfast was ready!

Pauline, like the good scout she is, was prepared, and two vinegar bottles fitted with milk were handed to the lambs. She did this without getting out of bed, holding one in each hand. Never did I see milk disappear faster from a bottle, and when it was gone she filled up the bottles with water from the zinc pail, and the two lambs took it and went away satisfied.

“They get this every morning,” she said; “I forgot to tell you. I hope they did not frighten you. Now you can go to sleep again.”

When we wakened again the valley was brimming with sunshine, and the glint of the river, as it wound its way slowly through its bushy course, had a real, neighborly friendliness which warmed my heart.

The sheep were let out of the corral and quickly made their way to the best feeding places, where they scattered and spread until they were merely like gray specks on the grass—"grass lice" Pauline described them.

Then she made a fire of sticks in the stove, and the tent soon became so hot that I was glad to make my escape and sit on the shady side of it. It was not long until she brought out her homemade table, spread with a white flour-sack, and on it a good breakfast of bacon, fried eggs, toast and coffee.

Then the world, and even the sheep industry, looked very good indeed.

Toward the end of June came the drought. June, that month of abundant rain in Northern Alberta—so recorded in all our literature and in the memory of the old settlers—suddenly refused to live up to its traditions. Every day the sun, bigger, brighter, hotter than ever, rolled up over the rim of the earth, and began its glittering journey through the blue sky, never glancing at the drooping leaves below. Every day the earth grew hotter and drier and harder, and the leaves more limp and lifeless; but the sun made its daily journey, apparently rubbing its hands in an excess of good fellowship, and went down at evening-time round and yellow and content, as if it had left the world better instead of worse. There was a particularly malicious twinkle in its eye at high noon, when its rays beat down on a row of cabbage plants which had hitherto held up their little heads, sustained by trifling contributions from a watering-can put on after sundown by a tired but hopeful woman, who could not believe her efforts had all been in vain.

The streams grew small, and sand-bars began to show in the Battle River, and the grass on the hillside had a tawny look. But the sheep, born for adversity as they were, seemed to work all the harder, as if determined to eat all they could before the grass was entirely scorched.

There was one field of wheat, belonging to the farmer who had wintered them, on which they had been allowed to run after the grain had come up a few inches in the spring, and in spite of the withering heat and dryness it held up better than any crop in the neighborhood. Its stalks remained green and full of life in spite of all the hardship it endured, and it was the opinion of all who saw it that the little feet of the sheep had packed the soil and conserved the moisture for the roots. Perhaps the time will come when every farmer will realize the value of sheep in the production of crops, especially in districts likely to be hit by summer drought.

One day, early in July, the weather took a change, if anything more malicious than before, for great banks of clouds, which seemed to promise rain, rolled up from the southwest, and the sun went into hiding. The people

watched the sky in an agony of hope. But they were not long left in doubt, for the clouds soon parted and the sun poured down again, just a little more brilliant, a little more defiant and uncaring than before. Then the hot winds began to blow with what seemed like unnecessary violence, for though there was nothing left to resist them, yet they seemed under orders to tear each drooping plant out of the ground and scatter it abroad.

Banks of black soil, ribbed and fluted in fantastic shapes like drifts of black snow, edged the fields, as if the wind, in sportive mood, had gone into elaborate mourning for the crops which were no more.

I talked to the woman who had watered the cabbage plants at nightfall. She had grown older since I saw her in the spring.

“There’s something so hard and heartless about the look of the sun that it makes me bitter,” she said; “it has a grin on its face when it goes down at night, a regular, threatening leer, as much as to say, ‘I will be back tomorrow to roast you some more’. . . . Isn’t it right for us to plant seed and expect them to grow? Isn’t it a legitimate undertaking? Or are we presumptuous in thinking we can grow a crop—tell me? Are we getting rapped across the knuckles because we have dared to plant and expect a crop?—tell me, because I can’t think any more. . . . It seems hard to believe that God is unfriendly. It does not seem fair when people are doing their level best. . . . There are so many other unfriendly things we rather expect God to stand with us. . . .”

I told her that good times would come again. There had been bad seasons before—every country had them some time. But she interrupted me.

“It will never rain,” she said, moistening her dry lips; “there’s no rain in the clouds—there’s nothing up there but more heat, and this terrible, consuming dryness. . . . My heart is as dry as my cabbage plants before the wind blew them away. . . . I lost something more than the garden this year, or the crop, or any material thing. It isn’t the loss that gets me—I’ve lost things before. My house burned once, with everything we had. Last year our crop froze, and was a total loss. These things happened, but it didn’t get in on me. The house and the crop went suddenly, and we knew the worst. There was no agony of suspense. . . . But this thing of hoping, fearing, hoping again, every day looking for clouds and finding none—or finding clouds that mean nothing—it gets me. I can’t stand it! I won’t stand it! . . . This is not rebellion, it’s exhaustion.”

There was a grimness in her young face, a settled despair, that drove me to the defensive. I told her that God was still friendly to us, but no doubt He

was trying to teach us something—some lesson we had failed to learn when put before us in pleasanter form. Prosperity had not done much for this neighborhood, for she herself had told me of the troubles and quarrels that had embittered their lives. There had been no good fellowship or kindness in the days of good crops, but only quarrels and bickerings and meanness. There had been wires cut, and gates thrown into the river, and dogs set on cattle, and calves stolen. The people of the neighborhood had not been kind to one another, or mindful of God, in the prosperous days. And now, when prosperity had failed to bring any good spiritual result, was not God justified in trying other means? For He is not willing that any should perish, and tries every way He can think of to save men's souls. God does not hesitate to mortify the flesh in order that the soul may be saved. Why should He? He did not spare His own Son in trying to save men's souls. That is just how important souls are in His sight.

Not having a very good hold of these things myself, I tried my best to explain them to her, for I know that is a good way to get a fresh grip on the truth when it seems about to slip away.

And as I looked over the parched gray land, with its burned-out grass, its wind-swept and sunbaked fields, its gaunt and eager-eyed cattle, its discouraged people, I felt the poisoned breath of unbelief coming up to attack me, and what could I do but send out a barrage of brave words?

II.

The rain came at last, full, free and abundant, feeding the sunbaked soil and filling the shrunken pools. It ran in tiny rivulets over the fields, and was swept down the tawny banks into the river. The dazed cattle stood in the fields and eagerly received it on their backs, never thinking of seeking shelter in the trees. This was the thing they had dreamed of.

It rained and rained and rained. It came like a flood when a dam has burst, and the sad old, dry old earth was ready for it all.

The sun that had wrought such havoc went into permanent hiding now, as if ashamed of its summer's work, and for many days the gray pall of heavy rain-clouds was over all. And day and night rain fell, pouring in floods down the window panes in the gray farmhouses: dripping incessantly from the unpainted roofs; filling and overflowing the horse-troughs and rain-barrels, those that had not fallen into staves; and making a flowing stream of every garden path. It fell joyously and with a careless munificence, entirely

unconscious of any error on its part in point of time. But everyone knew it had come too late!

It had come too late to save the wheat—too late for all except the field where the sheep had pastured. It had come too late for the cabbage plants which the hot winds had carried away; and it had come too late for the tired woman who had watered them at nightfall, for she gave up the struggle one hot Sunday morning, just as the sun rolled up again and began its deadly daily march through the blue sky. . . . She just died. It was not rebellion; it was exhaustion.

When the rain poured down on the parched hills and fields, and there sprang up after it grass for the cattle and sheep, and enough of it, we hoped, to put them through the winter; when late autumn flowers began to appear on the places that had been so desolate, I thought of the tired woman whose soul had grown so gray and sere, and thought of how in the stream of God's revivifying love it would grow green again and blossom like the hillside. I like to think of her over there, feeding her tired, wind-blown eyes on the beauties of the Heavenly City, and indulging her love for growing things in the flowers that never fade and the leaves that never wither.

She knows now—I am sure she knows now—that God is friendly.

The rain, which began in July and was plentiful through August, gave assurance of green feed, but little else in the way of crop, and many of the farmers of the district, having lost two harvests in succession, decided to leave their farms for the winter and seek employment elsewhere. The farmer with whom the sheep had wintered was one of these, and so it became necessary for me to get another home for them.

The flock now numbered three hundred and twenty, with about seventy late lambs, fine little black-nosed Shropshires.

I did not know it would be so hard. There was plenty of green feed in the country, and I was willing to give half the wool and half the lambs to pay for their board and keep, and this year the wool had sold well. But difficulties presented themselves.

One farmer agreed to take them if I would buy a quarter-section adjoining his farm, which he knew we could get for seventeen dollars an acre, for the owner had offered it to him at that price. We motored thirty miles to meet the owner, but found that he wanted nineteen an acre now, which seemed too much for scrub land in a neighborhood which was not particularly desirable.

We turned back and began our homeward journey, and though we were burdened with the cares of earth, with three hundred and twenty sheep, hungry and homeless, or about to be, staring us in the face, the glad old wine of the autumn sunshine and the golden splendor of the woods drove every anxious thought away.

The late rains had brought a vigorous growth to the trees, and there having been no frost, the leaves were in perfect autumn colors, gold and burnt orange, with a rare dash of red where the milkweed grew. Cattle and horses were feeding on the rich after-grass of meadow and stubble, and save for the absence of stacks there was nothing to declare the crop failure. The wild ducks sailed on the bosom of the lakes, riding gracefully over their ruffled waters. Every ravine and valley in its dress of autumn foliage seemed to have a lining of stiff gold brocade.

It was a good day to remember, and is one of the happiest memories I have of the sheep.

We heard of other men who had land to sell, and of widows who would be glad to part with theirs; but I must have a poor manner for buying land, for in every case the price went up without notice as soon as I intimated my desire to buy.

There was one quarter of scrub land, very conveniently placed for a sheep-run, whose owner lived in Ottawa. To him I sent a night letter, making him an offer, and asking him to reply by wire. Days passed and no word came. After I got home I received his reply. With true Homeric brevity he told me to "Guess again." The same day I got word from the sheep farm that the sheep had, without authority, broken into the neighbor's crop of green feed and made themselves perfectly welcome to the extent of about twenty dollars' worth of damage. Also, two more had died!

That same day a local society asked me to give an address at their regular meeting on "Sheep-Farming for Women"!

I declined.

The search for a home for the sheep continued. I wrote letters, telephoned, telegraphed (the Long Distance bill came in to-day), for the fear of a storm was upon me. The muskrats had made big houses; the wild geese were going south; the Indians said we were in for an early winter. I believed it all. At last there seemed but one thing to do—I must sell the sheep—I could delay no longer!

From the stockyards I learned that the British Columbia Government had sent out buyers for both cattle and sheep, and the hope sprang up within me that I might be able to do business with them. The Government representative very kindly promised to tell them about mine.

But the days passed and no word came.

On October the 9th came the first snowstorm, great soft blobs of snow that came staggering down as if uncertain of their way. The temperature was warm, and I kept telling myself that the sheep would take no harm. Besides, there was always the hope that the storm might not be so bad where the sheep were, for they were a hundred miles from the city. But the report I got next day showed that my hopes were in vain.

Toward night the wind rose and it began to grow colder, and before morning it was a bitter, cold and howling storm that lashed and shrieked its way through the valley. The sheep were huddled together in the corral, and, warm as their coats were, they suffered with the cold, for they bleated piteously all night. There had been four which did not reach the place of safety, and these perished in the night. They were found next day huddled together in a little hollow on the hillside, where they had lain down, trying to escape the lashing of the storm.

Then the whole matter of sheep became to me a tragic thing. Hitherto I had been able to take my losses with some degree of equanimity. Even the inexplicable passion for death that so many had indulged in, while I realized that it was an expensive performance, did not worry me like this, for it was no fault of mine. But at the thought of the poor helpless sheep bleating in the storm I grew panicky.

I 'phoned the stockyards, asking them what chances I would have of selling if I shipped them in. The report was not encouraging. There were no buyers just then.

Then I thought of the sheep-dealer from whom I had bought them. It was evident that I had been badly taken in. But now there was only one thing to do, and that was to sell, and I was prepared to sell to anyone.

One of the men to whom I 'phoned at the stockyards said to me: "Baatick" (naming the dealer) "is going to buy your sheep; I heard him say he was going down to bring them in."

I wondered how he knew, but was glad to hear that someone wanted them.

That day I 'phoned him.

Mr. Baatick was sore on the sheep business. The market was falling. He had lost two dollars a head on his last two shipments. He was tired of the whole thing. But he would try to find me a buyer, though he could promise nothing.

But in a few hours he came along with the buyer. He came in with a sort of prideful swagger and, figuratively, handed me over to the buyer much as a cat throws down a mouse at your feet, as if to say, “Can you beat that?”

The buyer was true to type. He was the Real Thing in a sheep-man—big, awkward, timid, and apparently foreign.

“Can’t speak much English,” Mr. Baatick explained to me in a low tone, “but he has the money in his mitt.”

I liked this big fellow who wanted to empty his mitt and take my sheep in lieu thereof.

Mr. Baatick told me all about him. “He lives ten miles out of the city. He knows nothing about sheep. I’ve promised to get him a good bunch, and am sure glad to be able to do a good turn for both of you. This man—he’s a Hollander—has plenty of feed, range and shelter, and wants five hundred good ones. He don’t know much—” the dealer’s voice fell confidentially —“innocent as a child, but his heart is all right. He’ll be good to them. Yes, he’ll take your dog, too, and give her a good home. He’s real handy with dogs, and a great fellow to stay at home; don’t enjoy himself out, for he knows he ain’t as bright as some. He gets nervous every once in a while, and gets scared someone will cheat him; but I told him you would not cheat no one.”

I liked the big fellow, who sat nervously on the edge of his chair and ran his eyes around the picture moulding in the room. He was so helpless and innocent, and so dumb.

His friend, the dealer, made all the arrangements. He talked faster and huskier than when I had bought the sheep from him. His voice was hurried, and worn and rasping, like a voice that knows it should shut down for repairs, but under stress of work cannot spare the time, and goes on to its own destruction. Punctured as it is, it drives onward full speed—on the rim!

The prices he offered seemed very low to me, and I said so.

Mr. Baatick gave me a piercing glance from behind his hand.

The buyer’s gaze was riveted on the chandelier, and his mouth had been carelessly left open.

“Take it, Lady,” Mr. Baatick said with his lips.

He crossed the room to look at a painting, and as he passed me he whispered: “This is more than the market price—take it!”

I hesitated, and decided to call the Yards again. Surely the price was higher than this. But when I called a firm of commission buyers I found the price they offered me for fat lambs was a quarter of a cent lower than the figure we were discussing.

The thought of another storm and my poor sheep without adequate shelter made me disposed to accept any fair offer.

The dealer pressed home the advantage.

“Now it is like this,” he said impressively, “here’s a man who wants to go into sheep, and he has the money to do it. He knows nothing about them, but he’ll learn—he’s smart enough about some things. Here’s you wantin’ to sell, and wantin’ to sell pretty bad. I bring you two together. Now, there’s nothing in this for me, not a nickel”—here his voice took on a fine tone of passionate unselfishness—“nothing! But what’s the good of livin’ if you can’t do a good turn to a friend once in a while, I say. Now, I bring you two together—you can do the rest. Make any bargain you like. Get them as cheap as you can, and sell them as high as you can.” He waved his arms impressively, first to the buyer, then to me.

“But, Lady,” he continued, “don’t hold out for higher prices, because the bottom’s gone out of sheep. I lost two dollars on each sheep I sold last week, and I was hit hard. Never mind—life ain’t all sunshine. I never expect to win every time—I take it, good or bad, with a smile. It’s the only way, Lady!”

I glanced at the buyer at this moment, and if I had not known that he didn’t understand the language I would have thought I detected something that resembled a wink in his pale blue eye. But the moment passed, and when I looked again he was the man with the hoe once more, looking helplessly at his friend.

“I not know nothin’!” he said, waving his arms; “I get scare—”

His friend reassured him. “Her sheep are good sheep,” he said, speaking very slowly, and as distinctly as his voice would allow—“good sheep—big—young. She sell sheep—cheap—she not want sheep.”

The buyer nodded, apparently comforted.

Just before closing the bargain I thought of the British Columbia buyers, and went to the ’phone to see if I could get any information from the

stockyards. Nobody seemed to know about them definitely. One man told me he thought they had bought all the sheep they wanted. I asked again about the market, and it was said to be going down.

Hearing me 'phone, Mr. Baatick told me he could have saved me the trouble. The British Columbia buyers had gone South to get theirs, and he had heard that they had bought all they wanted. He had just heard that—mind you, he didn't wish me to take hearsay, because he knew it couldn't be depended on. But he believed it likely, because the South was full of cheap sheep.

He glanced at the buyer to see if he were listening or undergoing any sort of an intellectual moment. Satisfied that he was not, Mr. Baatick slurred his voice and bent nearer to me.

“I could take him down to the South to-day and get him his choice of eight hundred good ewes at seven cents a pound. He could pick the best at that, but—”

He glanced again to see if all was quiet along the home front—and it was.

“I wanted to dispose of yours. I know you've had heavy losses this summer, and I sure want to help you get out as well as possible.”

I thanked him sincerely.

Then his voice came up to normal. “Yours are good ones—I know them, and I know they'll suit. This man wants nothing but good ones, and I've promised to see that he gets them.”

Here the buyer withdrew his gaze from the chandelier and burst into broken speech, with much arm-waving, but a stern glance from his friend cast fetters on his tongue again, and he subsided like a boiling kettle into which cold water had been suddenly thrown.

The point in dispute between us was the price to be paid for the ewes. We had agreed on the price for lambs and wethers.

Mr. Baatick impressed on me that only the best of the ewes would be taken by this man, but in order to get the deal through he would take, at the same price, all other ewes, broken mouthed though they might be, if they were in good condition and fit for mutton. Of course the very old ewes, if there were any, would have to go for three cents a pound, being valuable only for the hide.

I protested against this. There were no old ones except two. How could there be old ones, I asked him, when they had all been so young and vigorous ten months ago? I wondered how I happened to have even two old ones in such a carefully picked bunch.

Mr. Baatick knew. "I tell you, Lady," he said, "it ain't all a matter of age. Sheep sometimes get down thin and lose their teeth, just like people. Lots of young people ain't healthy people—you know that. But I know you can't have many poor ones, and he'll leave it to me—he don't know a thin sheep from a good one. I'll promise you there won't be more than five that have to be thrown out. You're getting a good price, Lady, and he is getting good sheep, now every one should be satisfied. I know I am, tho' I ain't getting a cent out of this, as you both know."

The sheep came into the city in four cars, late one night, when a bitter snowstorm was raging. In the "off-car" count I was three short of the number I should have had, and the next morning, by mistake, a pen of other sheep was opened, and they mixed with mine. When separated and counted the owner of the other sheep was one short, and as the mistake had not been of his making, one of my sheep had to be put with his to make his count correct.

Then the sheep were weighed and sold. All went well until we come to the ewes. The best ones were selected first and weighed. Then the broken-mouthed ones were brought in, and Mr. Baatick, staff in hand, began to discard the thin ones.

He had assured me that not more than five would be thrown out, and after he had examined the flock the first time he 'phoned me that he only saw two thin sheep among them. But when the sheep were driven in to the scales he threw them out like a vigorous badger digging a hole in the sand. His crook was upon the neck of every other sheep, and she was placed in the discard. These ewes which had been the widow's pride and the object of her deep affection—the mothers of twin lambs, young and prolific, ten months before—were adjudged by him now to be worth only three cents a pound.

In his decisions he had steady support from the "hands," all of whom I recognized as the enthusiastic clackers who helped him to make the sale less than a year ago.

"There's a poor one!" the red-faced one, still with the cotton batting in his ears, called. "I'd like to hear what Swift's buyer would say to that one if you was to fetch it over."

He was the one who had told me he knew by “instink” the age of a sheep.

“When sheep gets old like them you can’t expect to make money on them,” the old man with a moustache like a sea-lion said to me in mild reproof.

I never realized before how deadly is the blight of time when in ten short months, in which, alas, I had spent many hundreds of dollars on their care and keep, a flock of sheep could change from bright young ewes in the heyday of life, looking forward to many fruitful years, to faded, jaded, decrepit wrecks, sunken in years and general debility, with none so poor as to do them reverence.

“One thing goes hard against your sheep,” said the inside keeper of the gate, “and that is, that they are Shrops.”

“Why?” I asked in surprise. I should have been ready for anything by this time, but this was a new one.

“Shrops ain’t considered good any more,” he said, mysteriously.

“What have they done?” I asked.

“It ain’t anything they’ve done, Lady,” he explained, “only there’s better kinds. No one’s buying Shrops any more. They favor Oxfords, Hampshires, Southdowns and Rambelais.”

“Why,” I said, “you told me last January Shrops were the best, healthiest, hardest, best for wool and mutton, earliest to mature, longest-lived, eating the least and weighing the most. You certainly said so. I thought Shrops were the real Plymouth Rocks among sheep.”

“Well, Lady,” he said, “it’s just this way—it’s fashion. No one can help the fashion, now, can they, Lady? You might have a fine hat this year, and next year it will look like thirty cents. Shrops have gone out, that’s all. No one can help it, Lady. It ain’t your fault you happened to get the wrong kind.”

Well, it was kind of him to exonerate me from blame in the matter, anyway.

Before I left the stockyards I made an interesting discovery. The buyer, as soon as the sheep were sold, came to and perked up wonderfully. He lost the helpless and defenceless look, and when last seen he was talking fairly good English, and lots of it.

I was also somewhat taken aback to find out that he had no intention of going into sheep-farming—at least, not at present. He and the sheep-dealer, before they came to see me, had already arranged to sell my sheep to the dealers from British Columbia at an advanced price; so, when the dealer told me he thought the British Columbia buyers had bought sheep, he really made a record for himself, for he told the truth.

The casual reader will infer by this time that I am sore on the sheep business. I am sore on everything but the sheep themselves. Sheep, as the Christian Scientists say, “uncontaminated by human hypotheses,” are fine; gentle, likable, easily managed and profitable. We all like sheep; but the sheep business is not for the uninitiated. It is no venture for the amateur.

I wish to testify to the real, sincere and honest help which the Government gives to the sheep-farmer in the free freight, the sheep bulletins, and, above all, in the service of the Livestock Representatives at the stockyards, part of whose business it is to look after the inexperienced and unwary. Unfortunately for me, I did not know this when I bought or when I sold, and I think the Livestock Bulletins should make it plain to the intending purchaser that this service is theirs for the asking. The help of an experienced, practical, honest stockman (such as the Dominion representatives are), freely and cheerfully given, would save the intending buyer from the wiles of unscrupulous dealers—and there are such in the livestock business as well as in any other—and as the purchasing of stock is largely a matter of faith between buyer and purchaser, the livestock industry furnishes an attractive field for crooked dealing.

I have no hope that this story of mine will ever be used as a livestock bulletin, because it has such a heavy undertone of grief and lacks the bubbling optimism which gives livestock articles their charm; but as there are many inspirational articles already written showing the rosy prospects of the livestock industry, and many more likely to be written, a word of warning may not come amiss.

Livestock has an uncanny attraction for those of us who were brought up on farms and now live in the cities. Mingled with the pleasant memories of fields and flowers, and running streams, and new-mown hay, is the picture of the old red cow with a star on her forehead, and the woolly lambs playing on the green grass, and the black and white collie who never failed to spring to attention when the hens gave out the warning which means “hawks.” There is something so human and companionable about animals that when our ears are worn by city sounds and our throats are choked with dust, we just naturally want to own a few living things again, hoping (though this

hope is vain) that if we could get them back again—“Old Rhody” with the white star, and the black hen with her perennial following of black chickens, and good old “Nap” to chase the hawks away—our youth would come back with them.

But I must not let myself think about them, so I am going to stop right here and set down as my last word that the *absentee* owner of livestock will not find them a source of joy and gladness, but of heartbreak and loss. And I have written all this in the hope that it may catch the eye of many another simple pilgrim just about to be misled, who will stop and look and listen—and buy Victory bonds instead!

P.S.—The other day I got a card from a friend who did not know I had hastily retired from the sheep business. On the card was a flock of sheep feeding on the sloping banks of a river. In the foreground, was an old, old lady knitting. Beneath were the words:

In nineteen hundred and fifty-two
These may be them, this may be you,
If they escape the wolves and ticks,
And you keep out of politics.

MEN AND MONEY

In a certain small prairie town in Western Canada, twenty-five years ago, two houses were built side by side. You will perhaps remember them when I tell you that they stood on thirty-three-foot lots and were painted a stone color with brown trimmings. Each had a door and a large window in the front, with a small veranda, over which were two small windows; each had a gray roof and lean-to kitchen; and the houses were divided from each other by a fence painted with what was left over from the houses.

You will not need to be told that the same man had built them, owned and rented them, and you know he was a dull fellow, without imagination, or he would have put a dab of red paint somewhere in the trimming of one, and green in the other, or an extra gable in one, or another sort of kitchen, or put the chimney or a window in a different place, or made some other change to break the spell. But he did not do any of these things, for he had simply built them to rent, and renters are expected to be glad of anything to live in, and must not expect too much for twelve dollars and fifty cents per month, strictly in advance.

The front door opened into a small hall, whose meagre space was partially taken up by a gray painted stairway, and which afforded the occasional caller a full view of the inward workings of the kitchen, unless the door at the other end was kept shut; but the careful housewife overcame all danger of such exposure by hanging curtains over the door space. The living-room was to the right as you came in the front door, and the dining-room was separated from it by an archway and more curtains. The dining-room had one window, whose upper portion contained squares of red, blue, and amber colored glass; the large window in the front room followed the same design. The walls were plastered, and the floors were of fir.

By these peculiarities I am sure you will know the houses I mean.

Well, as I have said, there were two of them side by side, and by a curious coincidence they received their occupants the same day, and both mistresses were brides. William Brown, book-keeper for an implement firm, who had gone East and married Stella Morrow, of Peterboro; and Herbert S. Wilson, banker, who had married Miss Summers, one of the teachers, were the tenants; and the people of the small town called that street "Honeymoon Avenue."

When the observant ladies of the Reception Committee of the Ladies' Aid called on the two brides, which they did in due course, they were unable to decide who had the best furniture. Mrs. Wilson had a green carpet and green chenille portieres; Mrs. Brown's were dull blue. Mrs. Wilson's china was of the tea rose design, Mrs. Brown's was of the gold clover leaf; Mrs. Wilson had house plants, Mrs. Brown had a bird; Mrs. Wilson had a silk eiderdown on her spare room bed, Mrs. Brown had a crocheted bedspread which her grandmother had made.

After careful discussion the visitors of the Reception Committee were unable to institute a comparison, which should be abundant proof that the house of Wilson and the house of Brown had got away to a fairly even start.

At the end of the first year the equality which had existed between the two families was at an end, for there came into the Brown home a small, pink, blue-eyed infant, who constantly mistook the night for day, and persisted in wanting everyone to stand at attention.

Mrs. Wilson, who ran in the first afternoon to see him, presented him with a handsome garment, replete with blue bows, which she had bought the week before at a church bazaar—because, as she explained to her husband, “it was so hard to get out without buying something.” It was really a very handsome present for the young barbarian, who mistook it for something of an edible nature, and, even the first time it was put on him, chewed one of the dainty blue bows into shapeless sjudginess. But this misdemeanor did not decrease his mother's admiration.

There were times, of course, in the first six months when she wished he was not quite so imperative, and she often wondered how he could tell when she had gone down cellar for the vegetables for dinner, and why he raised such a piercing wail every time she went out of the room. But she always rushed to him with breathless haste, fully expecting to find that some evil had befallen him. When she reached his crib and found that he was still intact, her thankfulness always drove out her indignation, and when he flashed his blue-eyed, two-toothed, dimpled smile at her, she forgave him freely and marked his “board and keep bill” paid to date.

After the first year the observant caller would not have any difficulty in deciding which house had the best furniture. The Wilsons now had a new and handsome Turkish rug in their living-room; the Browns had a cradle in theirs. The Wilsons had Japanese grass mats and swinging chairs on their veranda; the Browns had a baby carriage on theirs. But there was no envy on either side of the mud-brown palings which divided the two houses; both

were satisfied with what they had. Sometimes, indeed, when young John Brown, dreaming of wolves, bears and kidnappers, awakened with loud wailings in the middle of the night, the Wilsons, hearing him, were sorry for their neighbors and were very glad that the quiet and calm of their own lives had not been disturbed by one of those overbearing young things who know nothing of that unwritten law regarding the right of others to undisturbed sleep at nights.

Young John Brown awakened regularly at the hour of five each morning, and insisted upon his parents doing likewise. Perhaps it was the spirit of his industrious grandmother, the one who had made the crocheted quilt, which had been inherited by him, for he loathed late sleeping and saw to it that both his parents began the day bright and early. Having accomplished this by the simple and unaided method of the human voice, young John settled down to a calm and refreshing sleep, during which time his mother, on tiptoe, hurried through her work to be ready to take him out when he awoke.

Her neighbor joined a literary club that winter and studied Maeterlinck and Matthew Arnold, fragments of which she passed on to young John's mother,—who said that when the baby was old enough to take with her she would be able to attend the meetings too. But the first time she took him to church he tried to usurp the attention which, by all laws of fair play, belongs to the minister, and so had to be taken out in disgrace.

John's father saw in his abounding energy large possibilities of future greatness.

"Notice the shape of his head, Stella," he often said; "it is a perfectly rounded head, indicating a well-balanced disposition. See the full forehead, with observation and reasoning equally full; veneration and consciousness especially large. This boy will never shirk his duty. Never mind, Stella, even if you can't get out to the Browning Club, or whatever it is, you're doing something when you are bringing up young John Brown. You'll have more to show for your time than the members of the Club in the spring."

"Of course I will," John's mother said cheerfully; "I expect John will be walking then, and won't I be proud when he can step out with me in the afternoon in his blue suit and white straw hat, and will be able to pass the time of day with the neighbors? He tries to say things now, and I think that's very smart for a baby only ten months old."

"He's a wonder," declared Mr. Brown, with conviction.

When John passed his first birthday and began to walk on his fat, uncertain little legs, he had his first photograph taken, and the friends on both sides of the house were remembered in the distribution. Most of them wrote back with strongly expressed admiration; some with faint words of praise. One unhappy aunt sent not a word, and was struck off Mrs. Brown's correspondence list forthwith. Mrs. Brown was too amiable a woman to be resentful even of such neglect, but she considered that anyone who was not moved with admiration on beholding such a beautiful child's face was too dull to bother with.

"When I go East I'll go to see Aunt Grace and ask for the picture. Evidently it is of no use to her," said Mrs. Brown.

Mr. and Mrs. Brown's good opinion of their son was further enhanced when, soon after his first birthday, he began to talk. Just what he was saying seemed to be unknown except to the immediate family. But it was plain as day to them. When asked what the kitty says, and what the cow says, and what the pig says, the answers he gave were strikingly similar in each case—but outsiders are often dull in such matters.

At sixteen months he had learned one unmistakable trick—he saluted and responded when his name was called. "John Brown," called his father, when he entered the front door, and John Brown, in whatever part of the house he happened to be, struggled to his feet, and, placing his heels together, stood very straight, and raising one fat hand, answered: "Present."

At least his parents said that he said "present," and it certainly sounded as much like that as anything else.

His next trick was to tell, with unfailing accuracy, where his papa's boy was, by patting his own blonde head and giving utterance to an animated whirl of sounds which seemed like a succession of "da's," but which his parents had no difficulty in understanding that what the child said was, "Right here, right here!"

The Wilsons were brought over to hear John's tricks, and although he did them beautifully and they laughed in apparent enjoyment, there was a slight lack of heartiness about their applause. If John had been a real actor he would have known that his audience was not in full accord with him, and that for some reason he had failed to put it over; but John did not care anything about their applause anyway—he had two devoted slaves on the front seats, and he did not look past them.

When the Wilsons went home they laughed a little about John's tricks. "The Browns are nutty over that kid," said Mr. Wilson; "they make me tired sometimes."

His wife suddenly went serious. "It's nice to be silly—sometimes," she said wistfully. "I often wonder . . . and wish——"

"I don't see it," he said "raising a squalling kid does not appeal to me—it is too much like work. If you want to you can adopt a half-grown one—past the howling age. I can't see myself parading up and down in my nightshirt singing 'Beulah Land' the way Brown did last summer. Echoes of that coming across the fence was enough for me. A kid costs too much time, sleep, and money; and I tell you, May, they're not worth it—now, that's the straight truth! Look at my father and mother—they raised eight, and my mother was an old woman, with a bonnet, at forty. She never had a good time—she just slaved for us kids. Every last one of us now is married and gone, and the two old folks are there alone. We write at Christmas, and send a shawl and a pair of gaiters; that's all the communication there is between us. It isn't fair, but what can we do? I can't talk to my mother for five minutes—we belong to different worlds. She couldn't raise kids and read the newspapers, too, and she dropped behind. Maybe she doesn't know it, but I do. It's nobody's fault, I guess, but it's uncomfortable, and I can't see the sense of raising a family and losing all the fun in life."

They had argued the question before, and always to the same conclusion.

That afternoon, when Mrs. Wilson was going down town for a hair-shampoo and manicure and saw her neighbor hanging out a washing, with young John holding on to her skirts and clamoring loudly for attention, she rejoiced in her freedom and the pleasant life she had. Bert was right, children were too much trouble!

The next summer John had a little brother, an exact duplicate of himself, blue-eyed, dimpled and imperative. In the hot nights, when the windows were open, the piping wail of the new baby often broke into the nightly stillness of the street. These midnight disturbances helped to decide the Wilsons to make a visit to the Coast, though they had a feeling of real pity for their neighbors left behind to struggle with the heat and the two young children.

"Maybe they like it," said Mr. Wilson, when his wife was saying that somehow she felt mean about leaving her neighbor; "some people do—it is a real instinct with some people to care for kids—but I must say it's not so

with me. And you can't do them any good by staying—you don't know how to mind a kid, anyway."

"She didn't know, either," persisted Mrs. Wilson, "but she's learning. I could learn, too, if I needed to. I wouldn't be afraid to try it," she added quickly, "but I am glad I don't need to learn just now."

That winter the baby, whose name was Tom, had a serious illness, requiring a trained nurse and a specialist. For a few days it looked as if he had decided to give up the journey on which he had started out so joyously six months before. His dimpled face, now shrunken and wrinkled like an old man's, haunted his father as he went about his work—it was too cruel that anything so little and so sweet should suffer pain.

"Brown walks like an old man," Mr. Wilson told his wife that day as they sat at lunch in the hotel. They had been out late at a dance the night before, and she had 'phoned to his office that she did not feel like cooking, and suggesting that they "eat out."

"I guess it would be a relief if the little kid did pass out. They can't afford nurses and doctors' bills like this. Brown was in to-day to see how much he could borrow on his life insurance, and I gathered from what he said they are pretty well up against it!"

Then they talked of other things.

But young Tom Brown did not die. There came a day when the troubled look went out of his tired eyes and he knew his mother when she bent over him.

When Brown came home to dinner he did not get a chance to make his usual inquiry, "Well, how is he?" for his wife was waiting at the door with the first real smile that he had seen for months.

"Billy!" she cried, "oh, Billy, he's better—he's going to get well!"

And then, quite without warning, she, Stella Brown, the brave, patient, tearless one, buried her head on her husband's shoulder and cried and cried.

Softly stroking her pretty hair, Mr. Brown noticed for the first time that it had in it streaks of gray.

It was a hard pull for the Browns to recover from the financial depression following the baby's illness. The specialist, who had been twice to see the child, was able, by that occult gift which many specialists possess, to divine the amount of their savings and make his fee cover it exactly.

“I wonder how he knew how much we had,” said Billy Brown reflectively, as he wrote the cheque which signed away all their savings for the last six years.

“That’s part of their course at college,” said his wife gaily. “Never mind, Billy, we have the boys to show for our time, and we’re still young and strong. We’ll start another savings account on the first of the month, and we’ll have garden stuff to sell, and our clothes will do for another year. We’ve enough left from the insurance money you borrowed to pay the nurse and our own doctor and the till at the drugstore, so we start even again—that’s not so bad.”

The two families did not see so much of each other in the years that followed, for the Wilsons moved into the big house which they built on another and more fashionable street, and sometimes months passed without the women seeing each other. The men met occasionally at the business men’s luncheons which were given once a week, and always regarded each other with real friendliness.

Mr. Wilson, in speaking of his old neighbor, said to his wife: “I like Brown, but the stories he tells about his kids certainly make me tired. The man doesn’t notice that he’s shabby himself and getting into a groove. He works in his garden as long as he can see, and then gets up early and goes at it again. But he’s bubbling over with enthusiasm all the time about the kids, and showed me their school reports. The kids are hustlers all right, and young John works in the printing office after school and is earning a set of books that way. The other fellow keeps chickens and has bought a bicycle. You’d think it was an automobile to hear Brown talk about it. The man’s simply dippy over those two youngsters.”

“Well, I don’t wonder,” said Mrs. Wilson, “they’re handsome and clever, and the most beautifully mannered children in town, everyone says. Mr. and Mrs. Brown will realize all their own ambition in the boys, and that’s something. They see their own dreams coming true, and that makes labor sweet and satisfying.”

“But they never have a trip or any fun,” said her husband.

“They get their fun at home—and that’s the best place,” was the reply. “Teas and dances and clothes don’t satisfy every woman, you know, Bert. Some of them have deeper ambitions than just to be well-dressed and able to play cards. . . . I sometimes envy the Browns. . . .”

“They’re welcome to the kids far as I am concerned,” Mr. Wilson said shortly. “It’s cost poor Brown all his salary to raise those kids so far, and now comes the most expensive time, for they have to be educated. He never takes a holiday—he does curl, but he never goes away for a bonspiel.”

“But they seem happy,” Mrs. Wilson urged; “there aren’t two people in town who stick together like the Browns. Don’t you remember that Sunday afternoon we saw them out walking with the boys? I thought they all looked so contented and happy, and the boys are such handsome youngsters. They may be poor, Bert, but they’ve something to show for their time.”

Her husband shrugged his shoulders irritably.

“I’ll tell you what they have,” he said. “They have a small six-roomed house, on a poor street and in need of repairs, five thousand dollars, life insurance—and that’s all they have in the world. His salary just covers expenses—he’ll have to borrow on his insurance again to send the boys to college. He’ll skimp and save and work to the end of his days. He’ll never take his nose from the grindstone, and she’s the same!”

“The boys represent their life work,” said Mrs. Wilson, persistently. “They haven’t got their money in the bank the way we have; they have it in the boys—the way we haven’t. They’ve worked to better advantage than we have.”

“I don’t see it,” he said as he went out of the room showing every indication of impatience.

One morning at breakfast a few weeks later Mrs. Wilson said to her husband, “Did you notice the school report this month?”

“No,” he answered tartly, “why should I?”

“There’s no reason,” she said quietly, “and no reason for my noticing it, only that I always do read it. Did you ever have a sore nail which, somehow, you like to hurt? Well, I read the school report for some such reason as that—and it always hurts.”

A long silence fell upon them. What was the use of going over all the arguments again?

Before he left he said more gently, “What were you going to tell me about the school report?”

“Nothing,” she answered, “except that the Brown boys are ahead again. John has passed his entrance with honors, and Tom is one year behind. Both names are the first on the lists.”

“That’s because ‘B’ is the second letter in the alphabet, I guess,” said Mr. Wilson. “Well, I’m glad you told me. I’ll know enough to keep out of Brown’s way for a few days.”

He said it laughingly, but his wife’s eyes were listless and weary as she sat leaning her head on her hands. She was still sitting there when the maid came to clear away the breakfast dishes.

The Browns, like other people, had dissensions and mutinies at times within their ranks. No four healthy people ever lived together in perfect harmony for an indefinite period, and the number could be lowered again, and yet again, without upsetting the truth of the statement.

To try to bring about harmony, Mrs. Brown had made it the rule to have Saturday afternoon a free time for the boys; but sometimes, by failing to do the work on Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon had to be broken into by unfinished business, and this was the cause of the frown which hung heavily on Tom’s face as he put strings on the sweet peas in front of the house.

“We’ve got too many flowers,” he said, grumblingly; “they always need to have something done to them. I like flowers that just grow and look out for themselves without bother to anyone. Flowers ain’t supposed to be a worry to anyone and spoil all his fun. If we hadn’t any I’d have more fun.”

Mrs. Brown was cleaning the veranda, and his remarks were addressed to her.

“That’s so, Tom,” she agreed, “and if we didn’t have the veranda I wouldn’t need to clean it; and if we didn’t have any clothes I wouldn’t need to wash them; and if we didn’t have anything to eat I wouldn’t need to cook, and then I wouldn’t have to wash the dishes. We’re certainly in hard luck having so many things, you and I.”

Tom worked on in silence, thinking of what his mother had said, but his heart was with the gopher hunt.

“There are lots of the boys who never have a thing to do. Joe Peters has no cow to feed or hens to look after, and they never bother with flowers. They just go out riding in the car every night, and I wish we were like them. The boys don’t even need to go to school if there’s anything else they want to do. Their house doesn’t look nice, but they sure have fun.”

Just then the afternoon mail came in, and in it there came a letter to Mrs. Brown from home. It was from her mother, and, as usual, she seized it with delight.

“Dear Stella,” it began, “we had a family gathering to-day, and we had every member of the family but you, and so we have decided that we really must have you at the next one. You have been gone for fourteen years now, and you have not been home even once, and now we want you to come to us for at least a month. Your boys are big enough to leave now, and we know that Billy has always wanted you to have a holiday, but you are so conscientious about doing your duty to the boys that you forget to do your duty to yourself.

“Now let me tell you what we have to offer in the way of inducement. We will all be here. Father is very well this summer, and greatly enjoying his new Ford. He will take you all over to see the friends. The brothers and sisters are all wanting you, dear Stella, and they are full of plans for giving you a great time. The corn will be ready then, and I hear talk of a great corn-bake in the maple-bush the first night you are here. The woods will be beautiful in September when the maples and beeches begin to turn.”

Mrs. Brown had seated herself on the veranda step to read her letter, and at this point in the reading a cry broke from her.

Tom ran to her at once. “Mother,” he cried, in alarm, “what is it?” Never in his life before had he seen his mother cry.

She was herself again in a minute. “It’s nothing at all, Tom,” she smiled, “only I just got homesick for a minute. Your grandmother wants me to come back home, and of course I can’t, because it would take too much money; but I got lonesome for a moment, and I wanted to see the apple-trees and the plums that I planted, and I wanted to see the milk-house with the stream running through it, and the hollyhocks and hydrangeas, and I wanted most of all to see mother and father and all of them. But I couldn’t leave you and John and Daddy here all alone, even if we had the money, which we haven’t; but we’ll have lots of it when you and John are through school, and then we’ll all go and see the old folks, and we’ll stay a year and motor all over Ontario in our Studebaker—and—”

The tears were still hanging around his mother’s gray eyes, and Tom could feel them, although they were not visible. He went back to the sweet peas, and soon had them all provided with good supports. When he came into the house his mother, shelling peas for dinner, was singing as usual.

“Mother,” he said cheerfully, “is there anything else I can do? I don’t mind work—I’d rather work, and I’m not going out with Joe Peters at all this afternoon—I want to stay with you. I’m sorry you can’t go, but I’ll hurry up with school, and we’ll soon have lots of things.”

“We have lots of things now, Tom,” his mother replied smilingly. “We have health and each other, and lots to eat, and enough clothes, and a good school for our boys, and I’m very happy. When we go home we’ll all go—I couldn’t go away for a month and leave you two boys. I would be thinking all the time that your knees were out and you had forgotten to wash behind your ears, and had gotten into poison ivy or something—oh, I am not homesick now, Tom, I am just thinking what a great time we shall have when we all go back home to see our folks and your Daddy’s people, and how proud I will be to show off my two boys.”

John and Tom Brown went through all the grades in the Public School, and when they entered the High School their record was something of a triumphal progress. They were able to take their matriculation, and then came the first real break in the family, when the boys went to the City to begin their college work. John was ready one year ahead of Tom, but he taught that year to help the family finances and to let his brother catch up with him. The City was only fifty miles away, and the boys came home each week-end on their bicycles in the summertime.

In May, 1914, when the University reports came out, it was found that the one hundred dollar scholarship had been awarded to John Brown, and Tom had taken the second one of sixty dollars. Both boys were at home when the reports were published, and the little house, now sadly in need of repairs, fairly throbbed with delight. Mr. Brown brought the paper home at noon and laid it on the table before his wife. The headline told the story. “Brown brothers take first and second scholarship for proficiency,” it said.

“The returns are beginning to come in, Mother,” said John, with a smile, as he kissed her.

Mrs. Brown’s voice was tremulous with happiness.

“Boys,” she said, “the returns have always come in. I got my reward every time either of you gave me a smile or a hug; and every time I heard you laugh, every time I saw my boys learning how to do their part in life, I was repaid a hundred times. Your father and I have had a great time raising you two big fellows—you’ve kept us young and well and happy, and now you’re bringing our rosiest dreams to pass. Talk about returns? Here!” And she kissed both boys and put the loudest kiss of all on her husband’s bald head.

“Billy, old man, what sort of a time have we had raising these two boys?”

“The very best,” he cried, “the very best!”

That was in May, 1914. In August came the war!

In August came the war!

At first no one believed that a real war had come; the time for that had gone by; it would be settled. The little groups of men who gathered on the street corners were unanimous in predicting that it would be all over by Christmas.

Every day Billy Brown brought the paper home when he came for lunch, and it was an excited group that read the war news and traced on the new war map, which an enterprising newspaper had sent out, the places mentioned in the reports.

When the neighbors light-heartedly discussed the war, predicting its early and successful ending, Mrs. Brown was silent and absorbed. One awful possibility held her heart in its cruel grip and darkened her days with fear—they might have to go!

There was no thought of conscription by the State, but there is a more inexorable law than was ever written down in cold type, and it was that law which was now driving the gladness and joy from the heart of many a man and woman. It is the law of conscience—the conscription of conviction.

Sometimes it comforted and reassured her to watch the men who walked the streets, the men who were older than her boys, and as yet unencumbered with family cares, and apparently idle. Surely they would go before there was a call for boys at school. She tried to think of the thousands and thousands who, all over the British Empire, were hastening at the call. Hers would not be needed. Indeed, she said to herself, there would not be training schools enough to train those who were offering themselves; there would not be a call for men when there were no facilities for training them. And besides, it would soon be over!

The boys went back to college when the Fall term opened, but their week-end visits had lost all their joyousness. They talked of nothing but the war. Recruiting officers had come to the college and urged every boy over eighteen to enlist.

“Why don’t they go to the bar-rooms and pool-rooms?” Mrs. Brown cried, indignantly. “Why do they not make their speeches to the idle men on the street corners? . . .”

“This isn’t a job for pool-room loafers, Stella,” said her husband, gravely, “this is going to take the best we have—and, I’m afraid, all we have.”

This was the first time he had admitted his fear that the war would be a long one, and there was something about his words that fell on her heart like the falling of clay on a coffin.

The thing she feared had come—Billy had admitted it.

But it was like her not to cry out or complain. There was no outward manifestation of the storm which swept over her soul, except that as the days went on her face seemed to shrink and wither.

The Brown boys enlisted in December, 1914, and went to Montreal for their training.

The morning they left the station was packed with people. Six other boys went with them, all under twenty-three years of age.

Some of the neighbors said they thought it queer of Mrs. Brown to go to the station. The neighbor who lived in the companion house next door, and who had no son to send, was perfectly sure she could not have gone if it had been her two boys who were going away, she was too sensitive and full of imagination. But some people, she agreed, were not so fine in the grain, and it was well for them.

It was a dull winter morning, with a cloudy, red sunrise, and deep white frost on the trees, when the boys went away. A winter morning before sunrise is always dull and chill, and does not make for cheerfulness; but there was no voice steadier than Mrs. Brown’s when she said goodbye to her two boys.

Mrs. Wilson noticed how she trembled when she helped her into the back seat of their car, but it was not Mrs. Brown who was crying as they rode together on their way back from the station.

Mrs. Wilson did not try to frame any casual word of sympathy as she watched her friend in deep admiration. At the top of the street they stopped to watch the train as it throbbed its way across the prairie. The smoke-wreath lay against the sunrise, and was touched by the first beams that came over the edge of the horizon.

“There’s nothing more beautiful than smoke!” said Mrs. Wilson, absently.

Mrs. Brown did not hear her. Her eyes were fixed on the disappearing train, and her ears were strained to catch the last echo of its strident whistle. When it was gone from her view something like a sob broke from her, but she sat very straight, and her voice was steady when she said, as if to herself, "It seems right that they should go together."

In the front seat Mr. Wilson was doing the talking.

"Brown, I congratulate you with all my heart. It's a wonderful service to fight for the liberty of the whole world when a terrible danger threatens it, and you're able to send two men to fight for all of us. I'm not going to tell you I sympathize with you—I don't, I envy you—and I'm very humble in your presence."

Billy Brown's face was pale, and twitching with many emotions, but he made no reply. He probably did not hear what the other man said. There was a little scene being enacted in the dark recesses of his memory, and he saw himself opening the door of his house and calling, "John Brown!"

From a litter of homemade toys he saw his eldest son, in a blue romper suit, with a tangled head of yellow curls, rise to his feet and, placing his little fat heels together, and lifting one plump, pink hand in token of salute, answer, "Present!"

"They have answered the call," he said, brokenly; "they have answered!"

It was a lonely house when the boys were gone, although Mrs. Brown did not spend a moment in idle grieving. She went bravely to the boys' room that afternoon and carefully put away all their things, sometimes pressing a kiss on a cap or a coat.

Her neighbor across the fence ran in to see her that afternoon and found her in the midst of her work. She took it as a further proof of Mrs. Brown's lack of sentiment. "She never seems to think anything will happen, and actually talks of when the boys will come home. I can't understand a mother being so composed at a time like this. And she's going to take boarders! I would have thought she would want to keep that room just as the boys left it, with everything in it to remind me of them. I know if it were my case I couldn't bear to touch a thing. But then, every one isn't like me!"

By her efforts in keeping boarders Mrs. Brown was able to supply her two boys with many comforts, and the thought that she was able to follow them with the ministry of her love comforted her in many a tragic moment when the horror of it all seemed more than she could bear. Then it was that, to keep the bitter waters from going over her head, she sang as she worked

—sang to keep herself from thinking—and her neighbor, hearing her singing, wondered at her lightness of heart. She forgot that people sometimes whistle going past a graveyard, and it isn't because they are lighthearted.

When the first Victory Loan was launched there were many reasons why Herbert Wilson was made the Chairman of the Committee. He knew the business men; he had time; he had enthusiasm; he was a good speaker; he was a heavy subscriber.

His first address made a great impression.

“I have, unfortunately,” he said, “no one to send”—and his voice trembled with deep emotion—“I am one of those whose lives have not been blessed with children; but I will fully, freely, gladly give myself and of my means to the cause of human liberty!”

To the first loan he subscribed twenty thousand dollars. His picture was published in the city papers. A large poster hung in the plate-glass window of the drawing-room in the big house.

The war is over now. The Armistice is signed. The nations are explaining!

If this were a story—a piece of fiction—a romance—I would give it a different ending. But it is not my story, and I have no option.

It was in August, 1917, when the sweet peas were spilling their perfume all over the garden and the tomatoes were turning red upon the vines, that the news came!

Mr. and Mrs. Brown had come in from church and were getting dinner ready, working together as usual. Two S. O. S. boys, working on farms near by, had come home with them for dinner, and to them Mrs. Brown was telling an episode in Tom's life when he had run away to the swimming-pool and some of the boys had stolen his clothes, and he had to stay hidden in the rushes until it got dark enough for him to make his way home unobserved, and how he had dressed himself in his best suit and had gone out to find the gang that had robbed him.

They were laughing so much they did not hear the door-bell, and the boy with the telegram came around to the back door.

The telegram regretted to inform them that Private Thomas Brown had been hit by a piece of shell and instantly killed on August 1st.

The next Sunday the other telegram came. It regretted to inform them that Private John Brown had been hit by a piece of shell on August 8th and instantly killed!

In the front window of the small house, still in need of repairs, the scarlet leaves of the Service Flag have been changed to gold. A small woman, whose hair is all gray now, goes softly about her work, often stopping absentmindedly as if she were listening for some sound which she does not expect to hear. The springiness has gone from her movements, and the neighbor across the fence says Mrs. Brown is "ageing." But she still has a smile when her husband comes home, and to him she often says: "It seems right that they should go together!"

At the desk in the inside office of the implement house Billy Brown still keeps the accounts of the firm. People say he bears up wonderfully well. Sometimes, when he is all alone, his shoulders sag a little, and he has been known to talk to himself, generally just a word, a name. "John Brown!" he whispers, and then, away back in the garden of memory, he sees a chubby fist go up; he sees a sudden flash of blue eyes and a toss of golden curls, and then he hears a childish voice make answer, "Present!"

"They did not fail," he whispers; "when their country called they answered."

He is not unhappy, for the past has its pleasures, too, as well as the present.

The assigned pay ceased when the boys were killed; and there are no pensions paid, for their mother is not a widow, neither were they the sole support of anyone. There came, however, from the Department at Ottawa, two typed letters, just alike, expressing polite sorrow!

The Wilsons have enlarged their house again, and Mrs. Wilson has her own car now. Why not? The money which they loaned their grateful country has been a good investment. It pays five and a half per cent. interest, and it is free from taxation. And twice a year come the cheques which speak a nation's gratitude.

For the loan of money our nation is very, very grateful. It is only the gift of men that is forgotten!

ONE OF THE McTAVISHES

Donald McTavish looked at what he had done. Great beads of sweat gathered on his forehead. Falling on his knees beside the prostrate ox, he peered anxiously into its glazing eyeballs. The heat in its body still gave him hope.

Dead things were stiff and cold, and old Prince was still warm and his legs pliable. But the eyes, so glassy and unresponsive, looked at him accusingly. He looked and looked into them to see if his old friend would not give him a sign, some word of explanation. But old Prince lay on his side looking sightlessly down the trail.

Donald would not admit to himself that the ox was dead. It could not be. It took more than a tap to kill an ox, and it was only a tap with the back of an axe—not a very heavy axe, either. Old Prince did not contradict him, but in his silence and majesty seemed to ask his master to wait and see—wait and see; time was nothing to those who had entered upon eternity. Eternity would prove all things, make all things plain. . . . Wait! . . . Wait!

A dark shadow fell at last on the white ox's side, and, looking up, Donald saw a carrion-crow circling, gently, deliberately, and with settled purpose, over the fallen animal. Donald threw up his arms and shouted, and the crow flew cawing away—a hateful, hoarse, flesh-hungry cawing, that seemed to Donald to link the bird with the devil himself.

He felt again for old Prince's heart. It was still, and even under the foreleg the flesh was growing cold. A groan burst from Donald's throat. He, Donald McTavish, a Christian man, had in a fit of temper killed his best friend and left him to be food for the carrion-crow.

"I am a man of sin!" cried Donald, and fell on his knees, his arms around the ox's withers. He tried to pray, but his thoughts would rise no higher than the sightless eyes of his old ox. Tenderly he closed them, and lovingly patted the faithful head; but he did it mechanically, for there was no softening of his own heart—it was heavy and cold in his breast. He wanted to cry, but the sound that came forth was an oath, and he turned and fled.

When he reached home his collie dog shrank from him with tail hanging, his eyes full of fear. Donald called him with an oath, and the dog ran yelping away. The lonely homesteader looked after him in dismay. When a dog deserts a man he is a lost soul!

He went to the sod-roofed stable where Charley, the mate of Prince, was tied. He called to Charley to stand over, but in such a changed tone that the ox shrank shivering over to the wall as if he feared a blow. Donald reached out his hand to touch the ox's warm side—he must touch something warm and breathing. The ox shivered with fear, and tried to shake off the hand as he would a fly that was biting him.

Then Donald McTavish knew—knew that he was leagued with the devil and all his powers, with the flesh-eating crows and the worm that dieth not; for had not he destroyed flesh, driven the light from an eye, the beat from a heart, and the heat from a living body?

“I am a man of sin!” he groaned again.

He went into the house and called his cat by name. She was gone! Nothing but a small alarm clock beat against the silence of the house, as if to keep it from swallowing him; and when suddenly, and for no reason, it struck a whirring alarm, and, jarring itself off the table, fell to the floor, cracking its glass straight across, he sprang up and completed its destruction by kicking it into the farthest corner.

It was a sunny day in May. The sun poured down its warmth and light on the budding earth; but to Donald McTavish even the sunlight was intolerable. Every bird that sang seemed to be taunting him with its song of gladness, and he would gladly have strangled them all. What right had they to life and warmth when over there that white mound of flesh lay so still and cold?

The dead ox now seemed to Donald three times as big as an ox should be. He watched it, fascinated, and almost made himself believe that he saw it move; but when his heart stopped pounding so that he could see, it lay there just the same—a huge white bulk; and—what was that?—something black moving by its side!

The thought of night coming on terrified the tortured man. If intolerable now in the bright light of day, what would it be at night, when a hundred mocking voices would come out of the darkness and pitiless faces would look in through the curtainless windows.

He pulled his hat down and began to run.

The Rev. Alfred Kingston, making pastoral calls upon his scattered flock, was driving his team of bronchos along the old Commission trail when he was suddenly confronted by a man running towards him.

“Are you a preacher?” was Donald's first question.

“Of the Anglican Church,” said the Rev. Alfred. “Are you in trouble?”

Donald looked at him sharply. The Rev. Alfred Kingston was a small, anæmic looking man, with long slender hands and thick glasses. He intoned his ordinary conversation just as he did the Church services. When he asked of Donald, “Are you in trouble?” it sounded like a chime of bells.

Donald leaned over the wheel of the buckboard. “Can you pray for a lost soul—a man of sin, who has taken the life of one of God’s innocent creatures?” he demanded.

The clergyman was not accustomed to such requests, and his face went a shade paler, but his voice rang clear and thrilling. “I can pray for any of the children of men!” he said.

“But can you pray for a man of sin—a child of the devil?” Donald almost roared at him.

The clergyman came out of his buckboard and, taking his prayer-book from his pocket, and raising his right hand in invocation, began sonorously:

“God, who at sundry times, and in divers places, has spoken to His people by the mouths of His prophets”. . . .

Donald shut his eyes and tried to listen, tried to go back to the “sundry times and divers places,” but all he could see was a huge, white shape, silent and waiting, full of strength that had gone out, full of heat that had turned to cold; a great white pulseless waiting something.

Donald roused himself and shook off the clergyman’s hand. “Hit it again, Mister!” he cried. “Try another one—that one don’t get me. Haven’t you got a hotter one—one with more zip in it?”

The clergyman turned over the leaves of his book and began again, intoning softly:

“Inasmuch as it hath pleased God to chasten the soul of His servant”
.

Donald interrupted again. “Good Lord, man, that kind of prayer doesn’t suit me. I am a guilty man, I tell you, with a heart of hate and hands of blood. Can’t you make up one for me? These prayers were made years ago—good prayers then, but they’re cold now. Rip off one of your own. Go to it now, Mister, I need it so bad.”

Donald fell on his knees and the clergyman knelt beside him.

Haltingly the clergyman began to pray. Never was heart more sincere in its desire to help; but the habit of years was on him—he could not break from his traditions; and so his prayer was a succession of phrases culled from the prayer-book—burned-out eloquence, their fires long dead. There was not one human, nourishing sentence, and Donald’s troubled heart found no balm.

He groaned aloud, and the clergyman redoubled his efforts.

“No use!” Donald cried at last, rising to his feet. “I know you’re doing your best, but you don’t seem to be able to touch my case at all.” A nice sense of justice prompted him to add, “But I’m mightily obliged to you, just the same.”

The clergyman looked at him gratefully. He was not accustomed to being thanked for his prayers; his own parishioners had always shown him that they considered it quite generous on their part to let him say prayers for them.

“I am sorry,” he said candidly; “I am afraid I am not very powerful in prayer.”

Donald groaned and beat his breast. “It’s a devil of a way for a man to be in. I don’t suppose there is anyone who can help me? You don’t know of anyone, do you? I heard a man in the Salvation Army once pray for a poor drunkard, and he just seemed to be talking to God face to face. He put it up to the Almighty to save that poor soul so strong that we just knew He could not refuse. You couldn’t sidestep that man; he covered every point with God’s own Word. I wish I could get someone like that.” And then he added, feeling that his words implied an invidious comparison, “He was a good deal older and bigger man than you; and those Salvation Army people have more experience with hard cases.”

There was a struggle going on in the clergyman’s soul. The man in him counselled one thing; the clergyman of the Established Church another. The man won.

“I’ll tell you where you can get help,” he said, speaking without his clerical accent. “There is a man in Calgary who is said to have great power in prayer. He is a Methodist parson, a preacher. I have heard that he has helped many.”

Donald looked at him gratefully.

“You can take my ponies,” the clergyman said. “Tomorrow is Sunday, but I can walk to my appointments.”

“I can’t leave my stock, though,” said Donald. “The grass is not long enough yet for feed. They’d starve.”

“I’ll stay by the stuff,” said the clergyman, without a moment’s hesitation. “I may not be able to pray, but I can look after your things as well as anybody, and I think I would like to do it. Come and show me what to do, and then get started for Calgary. The ponies will take you there in three days.”

An hour later Donald started on his long drive.

“Don’t hurry,” the clergyman called after him. “Stay as long as you like, and good luck to you.” He no longer intoned his words, and his voice was singularly kindly and companionable.

The first night of his journey Donald reached “Sixteen Mile House,” where he told his troubles to the kind-hearted landlady. She reassured him with many instances of the Calgary minister’s power of turning evil men to better ways.

“Sure and we have a case here in our own house,” she said. “Harry Loftus, here, that’s doing chores for us, used to be such a liar that, upon my word, the pigs wouldn’t come when he called them, and he got converted in one of the Methodist meetings in Calgary last winter, and now a finer man I have never seen. I wasn’t sure but what he’d break out again, but last week he put up stovepipes for me, and he never said a word that ain’t fit for a child’s readin’-book. I says then, ‘Harry’s got a dip, all right,’ I says. I’ll get you a bite of breakfast as early as you like and get you started; and be sure and give us a call on your way home.”

When Donald wanted to pay his reckoning the landlady declared he owed her nothing.

“Sure and do you think I would charge anything for a night’s lodgings for a poor man who was in distress about his soul and on his way to get relief? I am just proud to be able to help you, for, mind you, though I’m a rough woman now, so busy cooking for hungry men that I have hardly time to comb my hair, much less say my prayers—still, mind you, I was brought up strict, and my poor old father could put up as good a prayer as you ever listened to.”

The next morning at daylight Donald was again upon the trail, with the ponies dog-trotting off the long miles.

On the evening of the fourth day, after a trip of two hundred miles, including the fording of two rivers, a tired man driving two drooping ponies

in a rattling buckboard gray with dust crossed the Bow River Bridge and drove down the long, unlighted street.

Without difficulty Donald found his way to the Methodist parsonage. The door-bell gave forth no answering clang, but a head appeared at the window above.

“What’s wanted?” a deep voice asked.

“I want the minister,” said Donald.

“Want to get married?” the voice enquired.

The question was so unexpected that Donald did not immediately reply, and the voice went on: “All right, I can marry you from here. Get the lady and the ring and the license. I’m in quarantine here with smallpox, but I can marry you all right. I’ve done three couples this afternoon.”

“But I don’t want to get married,” said Donald, “I want to see you. I’m in trouble. I want you to pray for me. I’m a guilty man.”

The head at the window seemed to draw nearer, and Donald was conscious of two big kind gray eyes shining through the gathering darkness.

“Put your team away,” the minister said, “and come back. I’ll let you in if you’re not afraid of smallpox.”

“I’ve had it myself,” said Donald, “and am not afraid. I’ll come as soon as I get the horses put away.”

Donald stabled his team and returned to the quarantined parsonage, where, dirty, hungry and tired, he sat in a chair and looked about him. “Who has got it?” he asked.

“My boy,” replied the minister, pointing to an inner room. “His mother is away, and I couldn’t get the nurse I wanted, so I’m nursing him myself. Pretty bad case, too; but he’s over it now, and we’ll be out in a week. Now, what’s the trouble?”

Donald told him about the ox, sparing himself not at all, but dwelling with painstaking Scottish introspection on his own sinfulness of heart, and telling also of the Anglican clergyman who had directed him thither.

When he had done the minister asked his name.

“Now, Donald,” he said, “you are tired and hungry, and dusty and worried, and for all of these things the Lord has made provision. For your hunger we have food; for your travel-stained body we have soap and water

and clean clothes. We have a bed for your tired legs; and God's grace is sufficient for all the perplexities of your soul. Step in here and have a bath, and here you will find clean clothes, and I'll go down and get a good meal ready for the two of us. We'll attend to the body first, and then we'll have a talk about what troubles you."

Donald gratefully did as he was bid; and when supper was over the minister took down the Book and gravely read the story of the Prodigal Son.

"Now, Donald," he said, "you have made the move; you are seeking peace and pardon. You have come a long way to find help. God the Father is coming out to meet you. Do you believe He is as good as the old man in the story?"

Then they went on their knees, and the minister prayed the prayer of a strong man who walked with God—a great swelling, triumphant prayer, human, vitalising, piercing, such as had many times scattered the mists of sin and fear and unbelief.

Donald remembered that when the Salvation Army man was praying the drunkard for whom he prayed had many times cried out in agony, and at last had risen to his feet shouting, "I am saved!" while the glow in his face had triumphed over the marks of sin.

He listened now to the one who pleaded for him, expecting every minute that a mighty impulse would seize him to shout or sing. But when at last the minister was done and he opened his eyes there was no change anywhere—the room was the same, the green felt tablecloth was the same, the minister was the same, the heavy feeling of guilt in his heart was the same.

Donald rose quietly from his knees and said, "Minister, you have done your best; you've prayed strong enough to save a city-full; and I know now I am a lost man who has sinned away his day of grace."

"Don't ever say it, Donald, man," the minister said kindly. "God has many plans—as many plans as there are people. Some men are saved through fear, some through love; some are preached into the kingdom, some are sung into it; some are pushed in, some are prayed in; some work their own way in. I believe that you are the kind that will work your own passage, which is entirely different from beating your way. But, Donald, don't forget there is Someone else working for your salvation all the time, trying harder than I am to find the right way. Your Church of England friend tried and failed; I have tried and failed. What of it? We're only blundering men whose

lives are made up largely of trying and failing and trying again; but we are working for a Great Master, who turns our failures into successes.”

Donald looked at the minister in perplexity. “You have shown the way to many,” he said slowly, “but their hearts were more tender, maybe. It is this load of sin—I can’t believe I can lose it as easy as you say.”

“Don’t worry about anything being too easy, Donald,” the minister laughed. “Religion is never easy if it is any good. But I am going to put you to bed now; it’s sleep you need. What did you say your other name is? McTavish? Oh, well, I know what family you belong to now. It was one of your forebears who traced his lineage back beyond the time of Noah; and when a sceptical friend pointed out to him that everyone was drowned at the time of the Flood except Noah and his family, your ancestor floored this doubter by explaining that the McTavishes had their own boat! Now I know who you are, Donald.”

Donald laughed, the first time for days.

“Now to your bed,” said the minister, leading the way to the spare room. “Lie down in peace; we’ll have lots of time to talk to-morrow.”

But when the morrow came the minister was in no mood for talking; his head ached, his throat was sore, and he showed every indication of the dread disease. Like many another strong man, he went down completely, and in twenty-four hours he was in a raging fever.

For six long weeks Donald nursed him night and day, doing the cooking and scrubbing and washing. The minister’s son, a lad of ten, who had recovered from the disease, was taken out in the second week and sent to a friend in the country to recuperate. The doctor came once a day for a week, but finding Donald so capable, declared it was not necessary for him to come any more.

Every day kind friends came to make inquiries, and many were the offerings of jelly and chicken and broth that came to the parsonage.

The minister had never been sick a day in his life, and, like most strong men unused to pain, he rebelled against it. He could not bring any philosophy to bear on the loathsome disease which had him in its clutches. That he, the strong one, should be brought so low, so helpless, and should be so sorely afflicted, seemed more and more intolerable. Donald saw the brave fight he was making to keep back the rebellious thought and the impatient word, and saw, too, that the minister was disappointed in himself.

One night when the disease was at its worst, in the long, dreary stretch between twelve and three, the minister, tossing restlessly on his bed of pain, called Donald to him.

“Why is it, Donald?” he asked wearily. “What is all this for? I simply can’t bear it!”

“Have you no comfort?” Donald asked him. “Are there no unseen angels standing by you, soothing your pillow and cooling your brow? What about your religion, Minister?”

“What about it, Donald? That’s what I want to know—what’s happened to my religion?” The minister’s voice was querulous with pain. “I used to think I had a faith that would not shrink. . . . I don’t believe I ever had any religion, Donald, any sure evidence, or it would not leave me now. I thought my faith was strong, but it had never been tried; and now I haven’t any—I am cut off from my God, and it is all dark.”

“Minister!” cried Donald, “God is teaching you. It’s a hard lesson, but one we must all learn. If we were never thirsty we would not know how good is a drink of cold water from the spring; if we were never sick we would not appreciate our health; if we were never left without God’s presence we would not know how to prize it. He is leading you by the thorny path, just as He led me, but life and health and happiness are at the end of the road.”

Tears stole out from under the dark lashes of the sick man’s eyes. “You’re a good sort, Donald,” he said. “Lie down beside me, like my mother used to when I had nightmare, and don’t let the black man get me. . . . Hold my hand tight, Donald, and tell me about a stream, a cool mountain stream, that has speckled trout in it.”

Three weeks after this, when the minister was able to sit up and Donald was cutting his hair, the minister said: “When I took sick, Donald, you were all tangled up in your religion, and now you are out bright and clear. Won’t you tell me how it happened? I remember that night when you told me how hard your heart was and that there was no salvation for you. What has made the change?”

Donald worked away so long before replying that the minister turned to look at him. A quizzical smile was in Donald’s eyes. “Well, Minister,” he said at last, “you were in such a bad way sometimes, and in so much distress

about losing your religion, that I had to reason things out with you a lot; and some way, in trying so hard to convince you, I convinced myself.”

The minister leaned back on his pillow and laughed, a big laugh for a man who had been so sick and whose face was so pitifully thin.

“Donald, you old rascal,” he said, “I am sure now that the story was true—the McTavishes had their own boat!”

When the quarantine was over Donald and the dun-colored ponies retraced the long journey, not forgetting to call at the Sixteen Mile House. Donald had sent a message to his clerical friend, but was not sure whether it had reached him or not.

When he drove up to his own door, after an absence of six weeks, he was met by the old dog, who gave him a glad welcome. A patch of potatoes in bloom, and a garden that he had not even dreamed of, met his eyes and made him wonder if he were not on the wrong section. There were even some flowers blooming in the window of his small house.

When he went in the cleanliness of the house amazed him. The cat lay asleep in the sunshine as it fell on a mat on the floor; she was sleek and well cared for—so contented that she did not even trouble herself to look up.

Going out to put the ponies in the stable he met the Rev. Alfred Kingston, dressed in overalls and driving a team of oxen, coming in from haying.

The two men shook hands without a word.

“Well?” asked the clergyman at last.

“I’ve found it!” said Donald.

The other man looked at him closely. “Tell me,” he said.

That night, when all had been told, the clergyman said: “I knew you would find it, and I wanted to see for myself the change that would be worked in you. I have heard of the transforming power of God’s grace; I’ve talked about it, preached about it, but I have never really seen it until now. I have worked all my life, I think, on the edge of things, hoping that some good would come; but it has all been vague, indefinite, abstract. Now I know that once, anyway, I was able to help in a work that counted.”

Donald looked his benefactor squarely in the face. “Mr. Kingston,” he said slowly, “the Calgary minister told me to tell you that yours was the greatest work of all, for you were willing to do something in His name and

for His sake. It is not what we say; it is not how well we can pray—it is what we are, and what we are willing to do!”

GETTING AWAY FROM THE TELEPHONE

The Doctor said that what we both needed was to get away, away from everything, and forget the cares of life—forget everything, he said. I knew better, but I did not contradict the great man who is able to send people to bed, or to the Coast, or even farther, with a wave of his fat little hand. I knew that we both were pretty smooth at forgetting things. I can forget my appointment with the dentist, forget to pay the water and light bill until the discount days are past, forget to send back the egg crate, forget to get whipping cream, forget to pay the telephone bill until I have to see the Chief Operator to get a call through, and once I forgot to go to a luncheon where I was the guest of honor.

And as for the Senior Partner, he can forget in such a spectacular way that when we are all together exchanging stories about the general forgetfulness of our husbands, my sense of fitness always makes me withhold my contribution until the other members have spoken. I know mine will close the meeting!

So I was pretty sure it was not a course in forgetting we needed; but I liked the plan outlined anyway. We would depart from the line of travel, leaving it all to a friend of ours who is a pack-horse man, and who had written us to bring our own blankets and fishworms and come on. The month was August—the first week, when the horizons are blue with harvest haze and the nights are cool as a drink of mountain water.

We packed the blankets and dug out the fishworms, the neighbors coming to our help with the latter. We have our own fishworms, of course, but they are under the daisies in the backyard. When the tin box was full it was given to me to carry with instructions. Another neighbor, who had come over to see if he could “do anything,” told us we must put milk on the fishworms to make them rosy—the fish liked them rosy—in fact, expected them to be rosy. So we gave them a liberal dash of “Superior.”

All the way to the station, and especially when I was walking down the platform to the train, the can dripped its milky, earthy stream. I put them under the seat, on a newspaper, and opened the lid to give them air. I didn’t want to open the can, but the Senior Partner insisted. I said they had lived without air all their lives, and why should they need it now? He said he was

afraid they were too wet, and they might like to come up and sit on the edge of the can. I retorted that they had been rained on lots of times—hadn't they?—and had no perches to sit on. He reminded me that when it rained they came up, too—hadn't I seen fishworms on the ground after rain? I had, but I always thought they had come down in the rain. But I didn't say what I had thought; I just opened the can and moved across the aisle, leaving him and the worms to fight it out among themselves.

In about an hour there was great activity in the seat I had left. The fishworms had come up and out; they were on the floor and all over the outside of the can. My help was solicited, and I gave it; but we could not get them in again, they were too many. We put the can in a paper bag and, tying the top, put it under an empty seat, basely pretending we knew nothing of it. But I could not resist going over to see what the prisoners were doing. The milk leaking from the can had softened the paper, and again they were swarming!

The suggestion was made that I should put them in my gray leather saddle-bag, but it was scornfully rejected. So, too, was the one about putting my hat over them to keep out the light and induce sleep.

We got them off the train by using the Edmonton *Bulletin* to wrap them in. But even fishworms cannot stand stimulation! When the time came for them to be used—and we had bragged about our home-grown, hand-picked, milk-fed worms—we found their brief day was over. Rosy they were, as our neighbors said—rosy, but dead—their engaging wiggles all gone. The milk had “turned” this time, taking the worms with it.

Entrance, about forty miles east of Jasper, was our point of departure for the wilderness. Entrance is a little station under the shoulder of a hill, very picturesque and tiny, with the mountains towering above it.

There lives Tom Monaghan, one of the best-known pack-horse men in the mountains, into whose keeping we had placed ourselves. Tom knew where he was going to take us, but naturally did not waste any time telling us. Tom lives, as a gentleman should, with a town house and a country house. The town house was ours during our stay in Entrance, Tom assuring us he never used it anyway, preferring the country house, a mile or so distant, where he can be near his horses, of which he has over forty.

We had our meals at the restaurant, and good ones, too, of ham, eggs and coffee, served by a pretty little thing who looked as if she should be in school, but who was addressed as “mother” by a sleepy little girl who appeared from within, asking for more definite information regarding her

boots, and incidentally lodging a mild complaint about her brother's bossiness. The brother himself appeared and presented a contra-complaint regarding his sister's unladylike conduct when he was trying to button her dress.

In Tom's town house on the hill we saw many pictures of the chase—caribou, sheep, goats, and even a bear or two—lying sightless and dead, with their captors standing beside them, carelessly leaning on their guns, making some effort to deceive the public as to the state of their minds. From the ridge-pole hung hundreds of dollars' worth of skins—ermine, wolf, fox—no one coveting them, apparently, for their owner seemed to have no fear of robbery. In this country every person seems to have all the skins he needs or wants, and there is not the greed of getting which mars our human activities in the cities.

About noon we were ready to start. Tom had a great many brand-new canvas bags, into which he put our groceries; and two big square leather boxes (so stiff and strong they served as seats) to hold the kitchen pots and pans, and the knives and forks and dishes.

One of the many trains that come through Entrance went roaring by as we stood on the hill beside Tom's little house the next morning waiting for the final word. It was one of the through trains, which do not give the little place even a glance, but go sobbing past, tearing whole series of echoes loose from the mountain-sides. At the rear, on a flat car, stood a demure little house, with two wondering windows, like big eyes, in its side next to us. It was a modest little gray thing, never meant to tear through the country like this, and I wondered if I wouldn't look something like it when I got on the sorrel broncho, Bang, who even at that minute was standing in the corral, saddled and bridled, and watching me with a cold red eye, plainly disapproving of my size.

But it was too late now. Tom was fastening the last strap on Paddy, the old white pack-horse that carried the kitchen stuff with a folding table on top, and someone was telling me to get on.

We climbed the remainder of the hill above the house, with a finer view every minute. As we ascended a great feeling of exhilaration came over me. We were off—on a great new trail, with new sights, sounds and sensations, even if I knew some of the latter would be aching bones and stiff joints. Twenty years is a long time between rides. But one can't feel old on horseback—not the first half day, anyway.

Much of our road lay through a burnt forest, where the metallic black of the fallen timbers forms a glistening background for the gorgeously brilliant fireweed, whose deep burning purple makes the forest flame again.

On Summit meadows we crossed and re-crossed a dry stream bed where once a flashing mountain stream with shady trout pools had gladdened the hearts of the traveller. But now the mountain-sides above it have no trees to hold the snow, and so in the springtime there is but one bursting flood when the warm days come, and for all the long summer days only dryness and desolation.

The young forest is coming in little saplings three or four feet tall, but not in great abundance, for the fire of twenty-five years ago burnt not only the trees but the soil which grew them—and it takes a long, long time for Nature to recover.

Our first camp was on the Solomon, which was once a much larger stream, as its wide bed shows. Its supply of water has dwindled and shrunk from the common cause, and now it runs a mere shadow of the river it once was, with dead fish lying on the sand.

A bed of boughs with four blankets over them, after fourteen miles on horseback, is the Ostermoor of slumber, filled with the blessed essence of Nirvana and deep forgetfulness. There may be lumps in it, and gnarled and knotted timbers; it may be higher at the foot than the head, or have a posterior or lateral curvature; but no difference—you lie down upon it in peace, believing, and you will barely have closed your eyes when some harsh voice will call, “It is time to get up!” and it will be even so.

That is one of the real trials of a horseback trip with tent sleeping. There is no peace after five o’clock. The sun pours into the tent; you can’t draw down blinds and make a bluff at darkness. There is always some restless spirit abroad, too, who will not only get up but wants to brag about it and call the world to witness.

This early rising is an insidious habit, gradually undermining even the strongest character. I have suffered from it vicariously all my life. It cast its shadow on an otherwise happy childhood. I escaped from one regime only to find myself in a worse one, for the Senior Partner in his last re-incarnation must have been a milkman, and the pride of his beat! He came into life “not in entire forgetfulness,” either. He has great enthusiasm about the blessings of the early morning and the dim twilight of the reddening East, and all that. Unfortunately, too, the blessings he asks for himself he asks for others—not

only asks, but insists. I have long since learned not to argue. It is useless—I just crawl out, grumbling.

But this morning, outside the tent, the fire was crackling, the coffee boiling, the bacon frying, and Tom singing “I fear no foe in shining armour,” all of which proved to be sleep-dispelling agencies.

The next day on our travels we passed Montana Pete’s house, his summer residence, hospitably and invitingly left open. We looked in as we rode by. Montana had evidently left hurriedly and did not get either his upstairs or kitchen work entirely done; but the open door plainly indicates that Montana Pete has nothing to hide, but calls the world to witness that his soul is delivered from the cares of housework. We heard that he had gone North, but that could not have been true, for when we got back to Entrance he was there, comfortably settled in a round-backed chair on the veranda of the restaurant, smoking the pipe of peace and ready to share his experiences on land and water with any who wished to hear.

Our second camp we made on the Hay River, a fine stream, with fish of various kinds in its quiet pools. It was at Hay River that I made my first tactical error (but life is full of just such fallings and slippings)—I gave it away that I could scale and clean fish!

It happened in this way: the men went down stream a mile or so to a deep pool which Tom had never known to fail. I did not want to go—nothing in life just then seemed to me so desirable as to lie on my bed of boughs and try to forget the dull ache of my bones. But I did not say that; I would not confess to one bit of stiffness. Who could think of doing this when past forty? In fact that is one reason we go on a horseback trip—we want to tell the world we are just as young as we ever were. So I said I wanted to write up my notes and darn a pair of stockings and read “Adam Bede.” I felt afterwards I had overdone the matter of excuses. Three excuses are always too many.

They went off at last, telling me they hoped I wouldn’t be lonely or frightened. Tom said there was really very little danger. Bears would not hurt anyone—they were only cross when they had their cubs—and, anyway, this was not the real bear country. I asked about the bear marks we had seen that day—fire signs torn down and claw marks in the torn bark of trees—but Tom said they had been done by bears just passing through. Eagle’s Nest Pass was the real bear country—he couldn’t remember ever seeing a bear just here.

While the sun shone brightly through the tent, warm and cheerful, I read and slept, and rubbed my knees with capsicum, and got a lot of sleep caught up, and was glad I hadn't gone to the trout pool. But when, later on, I wakened shivering in the iron gray dusk of the cheerless tent, in a lonely silence in which not even a squirrel chirped or a bird sang, and when I called the dog and got no answer but the mocking echo of my own voice, which came back dismally hopeless, I was convinced that I should have gone.

I set to work to build up the fire with dried willows, which made a cheerful, crackly blaze, and carried in more wood from the river-bank, all the time wondering why I was so long deserted by my menfolks.

My teeth chattered a little when I thought of the huge claw marks we had seen that day in the trees and the torn fire placards. Evidently the bears resented the inroads of human beings on their domain, and so they might not like to see a tent pitched and fire burning. All the stories I had ever read or heard of people being attacked by bears came back to me, and not a bit of comfort could I get from Tom's assurances that this was not a bear country. I didn't see that it mattered much, when it was all over, whether the bear was a resident bear or just a transient.

The sun had gone behind a mountain, and twilight filled the valley like a cup. I tried to call the dog again—I would have given anything for the comfort of his sharp little face—but he had gone with the men.

The silence grew more intolerable every minute. Sometimes I grew cold with fear as the bushes cracked ominously; then hot with rage. It was no fun to be left like this, and they would certainly hear from me. I know now how true it is that an ill-tempered woman is a good housekeeper. Every time I thought of how badly I had been treated I had an impulse to do something. I straightened up the tent, I repacked the dunnage bags, I looked around for further occupation, and then it was that I fell into error.

I noticed the three trout in a pan of water, the last of the morning's catch. Seizing them eagerly, I scaled and cleaned them in the fading light, and put them in the pan to fry. I would be in a better position to browbeat my companions if I had supper ready—I knew that—and besides, anything was better than sitting listening. One can hear so many things, and all so terrifying.

It was seven o'clock before the men came home. They had strings of fish and were gloriously hungry and happy. So was I as soon as I saw them.

“Were you frightened?” they asked me, with, I think, some real compunction. “We didn’t intend to stay so long, but they bite better after sundown. You weren’t frightened, were you?”

“Me!” I lied gaily, “not a bit. It never bothers me to stay alone” (meaning it will not bother me any more—I’ll go with you next time). It does not seem so bad to lie if it’s done cheerfully, and by this time I had said so often that I was not stiff or tired that it came out easily. It’s all in the practice!

And that night when we sat around the big fire, a pile of brush behind us to hold the heat—for the night was chilly—and the big moon filled the whole valley with a steely blue light, and we listened to the night sounds, and Tom told us what they were, I was sure that my fear had been delusions, and I was glad I had denied them. There was not a voice in the valley that was not friendly and kind.

But, all the same, after that I joined every fishing-party. Also, I regret to say, I scaled the fish!

Our next camp was at Rock Lake, which is thirty-three miles from the railroad—a beautiful little lake, almost as brilliantly colored as Lake Louise, and with the same background of wooded mountains with snowy caps. The Forestry Department has a ranger’s cabin here, and a friendly young chap, the ranger, came out to meet us and give us the “freedom of the city,” accompanied by an invitation to use his cook-stove for our bannocks. Here we stayed for three days, with our tent on the lake shore, every day under a brilliantly blue sky with billowy white clouds that could be seen reflected in the greenish blue water below. We roamed happily over the mossy trails or rode the horses over windfalls and down dry creek-bottoms; we visited the Indians, who had brought their cattle down to graze on the rich meadows to save their own on the Grande Cache, many miles away; and we came back to our camp at night so tired and hungry and happy that we quite decided we would all apply for the position of fire-ranger next summer and leave the world and all its deceitfulness behind us forever. Just a little bacon, flour and dessicated potatoes, a few pack-ponies, an axe, a tent, a pot and a pair of blankets, is a modest outfit; and yet when the fire burns and the night is fine and the trail weariness soothes the brain, it seems to be all that one needs for happiness.

The Indians of the Grande Cache are fine-looking people, straight, tall, clean-looking, and highly respected by the trappers. Their word is taken

without question, for the old Indian tradition of honesty is still in their blood.

One fine old lady, very dignified in her neatly fitting black and white striped dress, and with her iron gray hair combed straight back and held with a jet comb, took us into her tepee, the largest one I ever saw. But it was all needed, for she had three families of grandchildren visiting her—bright-eyed little things, with hair neatly braided in pig-tails tied with faded but clean ribbons. Some of the little girls had middies with red bow ties, and serge skirts, and running-shoes, for Eaton's catalogue is a well-known and much revered volume, and pack-ponies carry express packages from Entrance. A Singer sewing-machine in the tepee made another connecting link with the outside. Our hostess told us, through an interpreter, that she had made five tepees this year, one containing one hundred yards of canvas. This latter one was for Curly Philips, the well-known packman of Jasper, who has taken parties of "ladies from States" for years.

Moccasins and mitts, made of moose hide of their own killing and tanning, are made by the old lady, too, assisted by the women members of her family, and sold to the stores in Entrance and Brule—so many of them she has lost count. Her moccasins are particularly well shaped, and are as soft as a kid glove.

But there is a tragedy going on in the lives of these people. Back on the Grande Cache, where they moved when they were asked to leave Jasper Park, there has been no school provided for them, although there are sixty children of school age. They understood from the Government agents who induced them to sell their holdings in the Park that they could go wherever they liked and take up land, and they chose this remote district because of its remoteness and consequent good hunting. Now the agents say they told them they must settle in an organized district in order to get a school. The Alberta Government has no jurisdiction in unorganized territory, and the Dominion Government takes no responsibility in matters of education. So these sixty native-born Canadians are growing up in ignorance, and the hearts of the parents are greatly troubled over it.

It is well to make much of our Indian chiefs and pay their way to come to the Capital City to take part in welcoming our Governor-General—it strengthens their loyalty to shake the hand of the King's representative—but it would be better still to listen to them when they ask the Government to give them a school for their children. It may not make much apparent difference for a few years, but these bright-eyed youngsters, when they are men and women grown, handicapped in the race of life by their own

ignorance, will not have the respect for the flag that their parents have. They will remember with bitterness that they were cheated in their childhood of something which the years cannot restore, and their hearts will not beat with patriotic glow. And why should they? It is, as Henry VanDyke says, "For every soul denied the right to grow beneath the flag becomes its secret foe."

On the third day of our stay at Rock Lake we broke camp and made another day's journey to Eagle's Nest Pass, climbing all the way, sometimes hanging on the side of a mountain and looking down on the eerie depths below. But one soon learns not to be frightened, for the ponies have a cat-like way of climbing. If a foot slips they stop and cautiously restore it to a safe place again, and then go on as if nothing had happened. They have no nerves or apprehensions. Their philosophy seems to be: "We haven't been killed yet, and it is not likely we ever will. What has been will be. Up to the present the past has taken care of the future." My horse put his front foot through a rotten log in a bridge one day, and instead of growing excited, as I did, he stopped, leaned his weight cautiously on the other foot, drew up the one that had gone through, and got safely over. Then he stopped and waited for me to get off, flicking an ear at me as much as to say, "If you're a lady at all now, you'll go back and fix the bridge."

He did all he could, too, to encourage me to walk down the hills when he found I had some tendency to do this, and at the top he would draw carefully up to a good dismounting place and stop suggestively.

The night we camped at Eagle's Nest Pass is one I will not soon forget. We placed our tent just behind the fire-ranger's cabin, which stands facing a broad meadow of bunch grass, with tall snow-capped mountains towering over it. At the other side of the meadow the hills rise gradually to a height of probably a thousand feet, and on their sides are myriads of tiny paths, hardly visible, the open roads of the mountain rats. The spring, from which we got the water for our cooking, bubbles out from a depression in the meadow, greenish blue and cold as ice, and of a hardness that defies ordinary soap.

The cabin, unfloored, unchinked, with bark flooring, is built of hewn logs, and the guides showed us with pride the great log at the top, which was put in place by Sam, the Norwegian violinist, who came to the wilderness to get away from the distractions of life, and lived in this cabin alone for years, but has now gone farther North. Sometimes, when the mood was on him, he would play for the traveller who happened to come and spend the night, and the men who heard him knew they were listening to one of the world's great Masters. One of them, who had been so favored, told us Sam had always the fear he would go back to the city and tread once again its dusty, choking

streets. He was afraid it would win him yet from the life in the open which he loved. So he had left his violin behind him at Entrance when he made his last northward trek, hoping that his hands might forget their skill and grow heavy and coarse as a woodsman's hands should be, and thus the door leading back would be closed forever. It is a strange story, and one can but vaguely guess at its meaning.

At suppertime, while we ate the beefsteak and onions we had brought with us in a can, and the dessicated potatoes—which regain their moisture when they get a chance to soak, and taste very well when fried in bacon fat—the talk turned on bears. The fire-ranger had seen a big one licking out a jam pail, right in front of where we were sitting, just two weeks ago. Tom grew reminiscent, too, of bears, and told us of a fight which had taken place a mile or so away, when a cinnamon and a black bear had met in deadly conflict. The ground had been torn up for many rods, and in a sort of cache of brush and leaves the victorious black bear had left the body of his victim—very dead it was when Tom found it—but from the pieces of black bear scattered about it would appear that the victory had been dearly bought.

The sun sank early behind the mountains, and in this high altitude the night was cold as a raw night in November. We had a collapsible tin stove, which we set up in the tent, and with a fire of dry wood it soon had the tent so unbearably hot that we were forced to loosen the pegs and get our heads out in order to breathe.

In that uncanny hour called the middle of the night I wakened to find the tent stonily cold and quiet and the night blue-black. All the bear talk that I had heard came back to me in every gruesome detail. Tom told his story so well that I could see the fiery eyeballs, hear the growls of rage, and see the blood-soaked fur. I knew the mate of the dead bear had killed the other one, and now with the lust of killing would walk these mountain passes thirsting for blood . . . any one's . . . ours would do!

Just then the bushes crackled and soft, padding footfalls went around the tent. I stopped breathing and could feel my hair standing straight up. But I did not utter a sound; I felt it was a time to preserve a discreet silence. But in that hour I made resolves that if ever I saw the light break on the eastern hills I'd be content to read books on mountain travel, and go to picture shows to see wild life, I would! I would!

But my courage came back with the sun, which was a long time getting over the mountains. I felt better when Harvey said it was quite likely it was a bear I had heard.

The next day we rode to the Pass, leaving our camp as it was, and climbing all the way. The grass along the path grew stunted and small, dry and brittle looking, with queerly colored moss clumps. We had left behind us in the lower altitude the deeply blue Monk's Hood, which makes the roads beautiful with rich color, and now real Alpine flowers appear. There are infinite varieties of daisies, purple with yellow centres, and yellow with brown centres, and a flower I have never seen anywhere else, a closely headed and cup-shaped flower, bearing many flowerets on the one stock, some yellow and some purple. The familiar dandelion could be seen, too, so big and shaggy it looks as if it were setting out to be a shasta daisy.

When we reached the pass we dismounted and sat on the hillside to have a good look. We were then far above the tree-line, and not far from the perpetual snows. Before us was the cold, grayish purple shoulder of Cathedral Rock, with one side torn upward, showing broken strata of rock. In a black hole on the eagle's rock, far above the reach of human hands, is the eagle's nest, where each year the eagle population is augmented. One of the men told us he found a young one on the ground last spring, scrawny and half dead from its fall, and though he fed it and cared for it the best he could, it died in a few weeks.

At our right is the waterfall, which has worn out a great semicircle in the rock with the great floods which go down in the Spring, but which when we saw it was but a tiny stream falling into a quiet green pool below. The fire-ranger, who knows every inch of the ground, told me to throw a stone in the pool, which I did, and was surprised to hear no sound but its striking the surface of the water. We pelted many stones into this innocent and quiet pool, but no trace of a bottom could we find.

In a little pocket in the wall of rock we saw a dainty flower blooming, with tiny white blossoms and a round and shiny leaf. About a saucerful of earth had lodged here, and some enterprising seed had found a lodgement and opened up for business. I wanted it for a hanging basket, and lifted it out without disturbing a tendril, but when I looked at it in my hand my heart softened, and I put it back carefully—and I am glad I did. After a seed has pioneered as hard as this one it deserves to live its life in undisturbed repose, and besides, I was afraid it would be like the young eagle that fell out of the nest—civilization would smother it.

We were looking for sheep, goats and bears. I wasn't exactly looking for bears, but Harvey told us it was quite likely we would see one if we kept quiet. I asked Harvey, just previous to this, what we should do if we did see a bear, and received the reassuring word that it would not be necessary for

me to do anything—the horses would do it all. “Just hang on,” Harvey said. I asked him if a bear could outrun a horse, but he thought any of ours would be able to hold its own with a bear. So I decided not to walk down any of the hills; not to lag behind; not to take my feet out of the stirrups; not to hang one foot over the horse’s neck; not to sit sideways; not to do anything, in fact, but hang on—but to do that pretty thoroughly.

Everyone was looking up the mountain-side for sheep or goats. I wasn’t worrying about them—I was quite content not to see anything. Harvey told us it was a rare thing to ride this way and not see something—he had never done it—but then, of course, he was generally alone. Talking frightens them. I was glad to hear that.

I could look up the grizzly side of the mountain, with its hanging rocks and broken fissures, starting growing pains in my neck trying to see to the very top, and imagine I saw bears with cubs lurking in a purple shadow; and every white rock of suitable size could be made into a sheep or goat without a bit of trouble. Our party seemed to be somewhat disappointed at the lack of game. I believe they thought I had scared them away; and I remembered guiltily that on the two occasions on which I had driven through Buffalo Park at Wainwright I had seen not one buffalo, and the people who were with me declared this to be most unusual.

I tried to make amends. Just before us, as we came down the stony path, was a darksome cave in the mountain opposite, with a grayish blue rock above it, perched uneasily on its southeast corner; such a blue-black, inky cave it might have robbers, bandits, bootleggers, bears and mountain lions in it. I rode up close to the others and pointed dramatically, but without speaking (remembering my orders).

We all stopped and looked. No bear could have wished for a better location or a nicer place—high, dry, southern exposure, convenient to the roads—just a nice walk to the river—mountain rats and rabbits in abundance—open view and all that.

I was willing to believe there were bears in the cave—and I still believe it—great woolly ones, with fiery eyes and evil dispositions, purple pasts and seared consciences, muttering savagely to themselves at that very moment, and breathing threats of vengeance on us as we rode below. Harvey need not feel that he had failed as a guide so far as I was concerned. The believing heart is a great thing to have, even on a hunting trip.

We came back to the railroad by a different trail, spending three days on the way, for when at the end of the first day we turned into a glassy glade

beside the Hay river just at sundown, and made our camp in the velvety stillness, it seemed as if we could not leave it with only one short night's stay.

The night was bright with stars, and the big round moon stood over our camp-fire as we sat and talked. Harvey told us, in his quiet way, many tales of the wilderness which he loves. He cannot understand why people herd together in cities when the quiet places are all the while beckoning to them. More than twenty years ago he came, a lad from England, and when from the train windows he saw these mountains, timber clad and snow-capped, with flowering meadows and rushing streams, he knew it was his own country and that here he would live out his days. He had gone twice to Edmonton, but could not stick it, it was so noisy and crowded and altogether nasty.

He told us of a wonderful view, a few miles from where we were, on the Lookout Mountain, where the Government were building a little house for a permanent fire-ranger, who could see the smoke of a fire for fifty miles. Many a time, Harvey said, he had turned aside from the trail to climb the ridge just to see it again—this amazing view, with its hundreds of mountain peaks and glimpses of mountain lakes.

The next morning we packed our bannocks and bacon and our camera and set off. To the Moberley cabin we went, and left our pack-horses there with a corral full of other horses belonging to the men who are building the cabin, and with just our three saddle ponies began the climb.

It was a tough one—the last two thousand feet we had to make on foot—but it was worth it all. Unfortunately the day was hazy, and the camera did not work well, but I can see it yet when I shut my eyes.

Away to the east we looked out across the foothill country—the prairies of our own country, of farmhouses and fields—where patient people wait for rain upon their crops. But to the west, north and south there was spread before us all the fantasy, the extravagance of Nature in her most whimsical moods. The hills were folded one upon the other in grotesque disorder, and yet with such calmness and dignity, such stillness and majesty, there seemed to be a purpose and plan in it all. Between us and the highest hills were smaller ones whose bare backs were ridged with fallen timbers, giving something of the effect of exaggerated shredded wheat biscuits; beyond them, glimpses of the placid Hay River, whose Indian name means “God passed this way.”

On the sky-line are the snow-capped mountains, some with sharp peaks like spires, some blunt and spread out like great hipped roofed barns, and all softened with a glorious blue haze, beautiful like liquid velvet; and, over all, towering white clouds against an azure sky.

On the Lookout Mountain, nearly six thousand feet high, it was cold and fiercely windy, but we did not notice how cold we were until we turned to go; and even then we went reluctantly, looking back to see the trailing shadows marching over the valleys below us, dulling the living green of the forests as they passed, but moving always with steady, unhurried pace.

On the highest point the Lookout cabin is built, anchored safely at each corner with guy ropes to hold it from the tempest that comes with fierce suddenness and goes as quickly.

Here the ranger will live all year, and with the aid of the telephone will be able to watch the forest for fires and warn the other rangers of the danger. It will be a quiet life for someone.

The men who were building the house, James Mills and Louis Holm, were talking about us when we came, wondering if by any chance we might come to see them. All day they had watched the trail below, but somehow had missed us—and everyone counts when people are few; everyone is important and precious, and that is why the few scattered people of the wilderness develop into such decided, colorful, positive people. They are either good or bad. In the cities faces, and characters too, blur in the crowd—grow indistinct and vague. We become dull people, we who are merely the millionth part of a crowd. It isn't our fault; humanity is pliable, and life's forces are very strong.

I thought of all this when we "sat in" with the two men, at their hearty invitation, to a good meal of their own cooking on the shady bank beside their camp. They were eager for news of the outside world, and the questions they asked were clear-cut and thoughtful. The stamp of the lonely places was on them—and it was the stamp of true gentleness and worth.

Now we are home again and back at it. There are meetings to be attended, letters written, bills paid, coal to order, meals to cook, tag-days, receptions, delegations, resolutions, amendments, saving clauses, committee meetings, dressmakers. Somebody is always starting something, and above all earth's clamor, cutting through it, insistent, commanding, imperative, not to be denied or ignored, comes the ring of the telephone.

Even so, I am not worrying. I know what I am going to do. I know a place where the cries of the marketplace will never penetrate. We picked it out while we were at Rock Lake. It's a sheltered corner, with a horseshoe of woods around it, commanding a view of the length of the lake and the snow-capped mountains beyond. There are trees there for hammocks (and we'll make them of barrel-staves and spread over them red blankets with green stripes); and we will build a cabin of logs, with a fireplace of stones, the pretty ones that glitter with quartz and have veinings of red and blue; and we will get water for our cooking from the spring which comes green-cold out of the leafy bank to fall with a musical gurgle into the lake below.

And all day we'll watch the trout leaping in the green blue waters, and the lavender veils weaving and draping around the heads of the mountains. And we won't know what the day of the month is, only that it is summer; nor the time of day, only that it is afternoon; and thus will be restored unto us the years which the cankerworm and the caterpillar and the boll weevil have eaten.

THE NEUTRAL FUSE

In the East Golding neighborhood where she lived she was called the "Bride" until her first baby came, and then it hardly seemed a fitting title; but she was so dainty and be-frilled and sweet, with her London clothes and her foolish little hats that were never made for the windy prairie, that the neighbors felt the need of some word that would be adequate.

She won her way into the hearts of the people because there was nothing that she could not do. What she could not do when she came she immediately set about to learn. After taking one lesson from Mrs. Hiram Smith in making bread, she astonished the neighborhood by taking the prize at the Fair, even though her teacher was among the competitors. No one was more delighted than Mrs. Smith. To have anyone else win from her would have been a downfall, but to have her own pupil do this—that was distinction.

The young women of the neighborhood were just a little inclined to resentment at first. No English bride had any right to be as good-looking as she was! A slight figure; a head of syrupy yellow hair that just "went right" all the time, and always looked as if it had just been done; blue eyes with black lashes, and dimples, and a voice that was so sweet and soft that no one minded the accent, and the tiniest feet. No English girl had any right to feet like hers. But in spite of these handicaps the Bride won her way.

She got the children on her side first, for of course they did not understand that she was a stranger and from another country, and therefore to be held in suspicion until she proved herself worthy of a place in the East Golding society. They only knew that she showed them the most wonderful games and puzzles; she knew songs and tricks with handkerchiefs, and had come to the school on a dull, cloudy afternoon soon after she had arrived in the neighborhood because she said she was lonely and wanted to play with the children "if the teacher did not mind." After that she came every Friday afternoon, and soon there was a general attendance of the older people, who just happened to drop in.

Having been a school-mistress in England (though she hardly looked old enough to be out of school herself), she gave the children physical culture exercises which were of the contagious kind, and soon the whole neighborhood were touching their toes and swaying from side to side as they counted "one—two—three—four."

All but Mrs. Ewing! Mrs. Ewing was not going to touch her toes and act silly even if everyone else was doing it. What would she touch her toes for anyway? It was some time since Mrs. Ewing had even seen her toes, and that may have had something to do with her reluctance, but Mrs. Ewing did not admit it. She took the ground strongly that good, decent toes did not need to be touched; she also darkly muttered that a new broom sweeps clean, and that there was such a thing as being too sweet to be wholesome and too good to be true.

Mrs. Ewing had come from London herself many years ago, and confided out of her deep knowledge of that great city to her friend Mrs. Winters that there were plenty of these “dashing kind of play-actin’ girls over there just waitin’ a chance to marry a decent man and get to Canadar; and though they could fool the Canadians that had never seen their like, they were very far from foolin’ Marthar Ewing!” Mrs. Winters, her friend, gave to this statement hearty and immediate assent, and added that she would like to see the person who *could* fool Marthar Ewing, for if there was such a person on land or sea one thing was certain sure, that such person had never been seen or as much as heard of by Sarah Winters! Then the two ladies had a cup of tea, and just a little mite of fruitcake to go with it—“the white kind that never lays heavy on your stomach”—and spent a very happy and neighborly time.

All unconscious that she had been weighed by Mrs. Ewing, her countrywoman, and found wanting, the Bride went joyously on her way. She liked everyone, and expected that they would like her. There was no one so popular at the parties, but she made a different use of her popularity from anyone else. When Ted Smith, who considered himself quite the best dancer in East Golding, came to claim a dance with her she reminded him that he had not yet danced with his hostess or her guest, and the gay Mr. Smith thereby received a lesson in courtesy which he sorely needed. Many a girl who got only dances with brothers-in-law, uncles, and other girls, was pleasantly surprised to find her card full, not knowing that the Bride gave her dances conditionally. People who had stayed away from the dances because they had had such dull times at them before her coming now began to attend, and it was on these that the Bride bestowed her attention.

She had an intuitive instinct for detecting loneliness or embarrassment or awkwardness, and a magical way of dispelling it. Even good old John Baker, who had the firemark on his face, so badly disfiguring it that he shrank from meeting anyone, was beguiled by her to come to a party at her house, and he had such a good time that he did not miss a dance all that winter, and in the

spring got up his courage to write a proposal to the elder Miss Spink. Some said the Bride put him up to it, but that was never known for sure. Be that as it may, the proposal was accepted, and two people who had thought they were past hope were made very happy.

Not only at the dances did she shine. She played the organ for the church services, and taught a class of admiring girls in Sunday-school; and her eager face, so full of interest and sympathy, was many a young minister's inspiration and help when he tried to preach to the East Golding congregation and found some of them sound asleep and others looking dreamily out of the windows, their thoughts busy with the growing crops or the price of hogs—anything except the wanderings of the children of Israel. Her attention never appeared to wander, and her kindly greeting was sure. There was also a good dinner for the minister, and the use of her tiny little parlor, where a gaily-flowered couch could be made into a bed at a moment's notice.

The capitulation of Mrs. Martha Ewing happened in threshing time. The mill was coming to her farm, and at the last minute the girl that was going to come from town to help to cook for the men fell sick—"the way they always do," said Mrs. Ewing.

Mrs. Ewing was in deep distress. She said she could have done it all herself only her feet got so sore now since she "had fallen into flesh." The party telephone just hummed with her complaints. There was scarlet fever in the neighborhood just then and several were in quarantine.

The Bride rose to the occasion. In a pink and white house dress, with pink stockings and white canvas shoes, she arrived two hours before dinner time and gathered the disordered household together in her capable little hands, and had the dinner on the table when the avalanche of men swept in from the field. The owner of the outfit was John Baker, whose heart was tender toward the woman who had shown him kindness. John immediately released his best English boy to help her in the house, and the three days that the threshing lasted passed very pleasantly. Mrs. Ewing was able to sit at the kitchen table in billowy importance and have all the things brought to her that she needed to bake with, resting her feet on the stool made of tomato cans. In this way was her supremacy maintained.

Speaking to her friend Mrs. Winters of the incident, she said, "I could tell she was a good girl when I saw her save all the small potatoes and peel them to fry at night for the men—lots of 'ussies would have pitched them

out, but not she. Oh, I say, when you get a good English girl there is nothing like her on earth—that is what poor Ewing so often said to me.”

For fifteen years she has lived in East Golding. No one calls her the Bride now. The London clothes and the flirty little hats have all disappeared, and their successors, too. The last seven years have been lean and sad ones, and hard times have come to the good people of East Golding, which is in the drought area of the West. The women who knew her as the Bride have never called her Mrs. Benton. She is “Sadie” to them, and it is to her that they are always able to tell all their troubles. She never fails to see some way of comforting them. She always has time for other people’s troubles, for she does not seem to have any of her own.

“I sure wish I had your nerve, Sadie,” the Regent of the Daughters of the Empire said to her one day; “the way you can stay alone with just the children and work all the time without getting cranky beats me—and you not brought up to it the way we were. How do you do it? I guess you have better stuff in you than the rest of us.”

“Oh! I do get cranky, too,” was the reply, “but I try not to show it. It would break Joe’s heart if I were cross with him, and it would be a shame to do that, for he is the best fellow in the world. And I am sure I never could be cranky with my good neighbors; and it would be a crime to work it off on the two boys. So there you are—what can a poor woman do?”

That night, after the work was done, she sat at the west window looking at the flaming sky, wondering about life with all its cares and disappointments. It was at this time of day that she allowed herself the luxury of thinking her own thoughts. In the little red book which she kept in the drawer of her sewing-machine she wrote:—

“Why am I chained to pots and pans,
Dishes to wash and meals to get?
Heavy white dishes and drab farm hands,
Reeking of stables and heavy with sweat?
Dust in clouds that go past my door
And winds that fret and fret and fret?—
Winds that scream past the house at night,
Whispering things that they have no right
Even to think of, much less say.
I hate the wind with its evil spite,
And it hates me with a hate as deep,
And hisses and jeers when I try to sleep.”

“There, now,” she said, “I feel better; it is a good way to work off a fit of the blues, and it does not hurt anyone.”

After a fiercely windy night she added the following lines:

When the wind seizes the window frames,
Raving and cursing and calling them names,
Cruel as only the wind can be,
It isn't the windows it's shaking—
It's me!

The last seven years have left their mark on the Bride, and not much of her girlish beauty remains other than her wonderful blue eyes. The golden hair is broken now and dulled with gray; the joints of the little hands are coarsened with hard work, and the backs of them have many brown spots. Outside work has darkened her face, but the fair, white skin appears again in her two fine boys, now aged fourteen and twelve.

In spite of all their hard times and disappointments, the Bride of the early years has never admitted defeat. “No one is beaten until he acknowledges it,” she often tells her husband, “and we are a long way from admitting it yet.”

Often she repeats the words of her creed: “I believe that the bad years are behind me. I believe the rain will come, and prosperity, as much of it as we need, will come to us. If we had never had a set-back we might have grown purse-proud and haughty. Let us be thankful we are well and strong.”

The biggest disappointment was missing the trip to England which they had planned. They were going to go to England for a year, put the boys in school, and motor through Kent, where she was born; but the year set for the trip was the first of the dry years, and as each year was worse than the last, the trip faded farther and farther away.

There was one year of the seven when the prospects were of the best until the middle of July, and then in twenty minutes all the year's work and hopes lay in ruins, for hailstones, jagged and cruel and big as hen's eggs, had battered every growing thing into the ground, and had even broken down the young trees which they had planted. The Bentons were the hardest hit in the whole neighborhood, for all their crop was gone, their farm lying straight in the path of the storm.

But it was Sadie Benton who thought of a use for the hailstones. With the help of the two boys she gathered a pailful of them and used them for freezing a can of ice-cream, and called in the neighbors. And after they had

gone away some of them said it was well to see her so cheerful. “Wasn’t it well for people who could take things so lightly? But they did not see, of course, what she wrote in her little red book that night after they were all gone.

“I don’t think I would mind it so much,” she wrote, “if we had lost our crop by a prairie fire, or a spark from an engine, or any way that was caused by the carelessness of human beings; but when God sends destruction it is terrifying. I thought we were good friends with God. I thought he liked to see us working and getting ahead. I wish I could ask someone about this. I am trying to keep on believing, for it is a wicked thing to sow the seeds of unbelief, and I will not say a word to anyone.”

The hail had done its work so completely that there was no feed for the cattle that year, and as they had quite a large herd of pure-bred Holsteins it became necessary to buy from their more fortunate neighbors to provide for these. This expense made a serious drain on their savings, and as the next year was one of the driest, the prospects grew darker and darker. However, there was enough short straw to feed the cattle, and that was something. Many a night, after the children had gone to bed, Joe and his wife had done much figuring as they sat at the kitchen table.

“I wish now I had not told the boys so much about the old country,” she said one night; “it would not then have been such a disappointment.”

“Never mind that, Girl,” her husband said soothingly. “We would all have been dead if it had not been for your stories. I hope we will get enough to let you go anyway, for you can bring back the story of what you saw, and the whole neighborhood will have it secondhand; and I don’t know but to hear you tell it is just about as good as to go—and far cheaper!”

She came over and put her arms around his neck. “Joe, do you think I would go without you? Do you think I could leave you here alone to cook and do everything? Why, Joe, your poor, lonely face would haunt me some night when I was dining at the Piccadilly, and in the midst of all the festivity I would be found with my eyes set and staring into one of the crystal chandeliers, and all the people would rush to me, crying, ‘Oh! what is it? What is she looking at?’ They would see nothing, of course, but I would be staring at you—gaunt, unshaven, starved, and wild—and then I would go mad and have to be sent home in a straight-jacket!”

Joe laughed and patted her head. “Well, Sadie, so long as your imagination holds out I believe we will pull through, but if you ever get dull and gray like the other women I will just curl up and die. Now, remember

you have to hold out, no matter what happens, for everyone in this neighborhood depends on you.”

“I will try, Joe, I will try; but, oh, dear, why doesn’t God send rain? If I had as much rain as God—for He has the oceans, the rivers, and the seas and the lakes, and all the machinery to haul it up into the clouds and sprinkle it down on us—I could not keep from sending it, even if no one was asking; for I would see the flowers fading and hear the cattle bawling, and I would push all the buttons at once and call off even the Recording Angel from his books. It would be ‘All hands to the pumps’ if I were God!”

She stopped suddenly and shuddered.

“Maybe I shouldn’t talk like this, Joe—does it sound wicked to you? You know, sometimes at night when I lie awake listening to the wind I get frightened and think the wind has it in for me someday. It—it threatens me, Joe!”

“Now, old dear,” said Joe, “that is all imagination. You are just beginning to get nervous, and you have simply got to get away for a little while to get back your nerve. I get goofy sometimes, too, but I have you to cheer me up, and you, poor girl, have no one. I am no more good to cheer you than the man in the moon.”

“Oh, yes, you are,” she said. “I never feel frightened when you are at home; it comes when I am alone in the house and the wind is blowing. I know there is no truth in it, but I do hear things, Joe, that are horrible.”

“Poor little Sade!” he answered tenderly, “I wish I could take you away from the wind and the dust and this land of heartbreak.”

At once she became the comforter again.

“It will all come right, Joe. I know it will. Every country has its bad years, and ours will pass and all our dreams will come true yet. I believe in God. Remember how Job was tried and he sinned not, and it was all made up to him. So it will be to us, and all this long dreary time we have not been utterly cast down. We have each other and our two fine boys, and we can go to our beds at night, as Robert Louis Stevenson said, ‘weary and undishonored’—that is something.”

A few days after this conversation—hot and terrible days, when the grain seemed to stand motionless and parched—Joe got an offer to go to the town ten miles away to help in a bankrupt sale which was being held. He was glad of a chance to earn a little money, which would at least get some

groceries. He got a Galician who had worked for him before to go on with the summer-fallowing.

“You will be all right, Sade,” he said when he told her he had the offer. “Get the Daughters to come over when your flowers are in bloom. I don’t know what you will give them to eat, but I never saw you stuck yet, and you can give them such a good time they won’t know whether you have fed them or not.”

She laughed a little wearily.

“I will do it, Joe,” she said, “if the wind will just leave my flowers until they bloom. I think maybe the wind will be man enough to see that I have not asked for favors, carrying all the water myself. Don’t you think I deserve to have a few flowers?”

“You deserve the finest and loveliest flowers in the world, Sade, and I believe the wind is ready to admit it.”

Joe left on Monday morning, not without some misgivings, for he could see that she was not feeling just like herself; but she assured him that it would be foolish to lose a chance of earning some money when they were in such need if it.

The day he left there was some promise of rain, for thick, murky clouds came up in the West, darkening the afternoon sun and giving some comfort in the grateful shade which fell on the burning country.

Sheltered from the west wind, at the front of the house, were the flowers, on which she had bestowed the care usually attributed to an efficient guardian angel; and they had answered to her affection, for they were now glossy and healthy, and their buds were beginning to show the color. Dark red climbing nasturtiums were next the wall, with everything in readiness for their upward journey. In front of them were the dwarf nasturtiums in mixed colors, bordered with mignonette and sweet alyssum, whose dainty white flowerets would set off the brilliant coloring of their bolder brothers.

She had imagined the effect, and thrilled over it every time she thought of it, and, now that the blossoms were actually showing, her pleasure was so poignant it hurt. Her heart beat too quickly and chokingly. There was always the chance of a horrible wind that would swagger into her little garden, tramp over it with hob-nailed boots, tear it to pieces, and go thundering on, like Marie Corelli’s motorists who kill children in English villages.

“I’ll enjoy them while I can,” she murmured apprehensively as she brought out her potatoes in a pan for peeling, and her little canvas stool.

There she sat and worshipped at her little altar of beauty, praying with frenzied earnestness that the God of the falling sparrow might be their God and hers, and stay the ruthless hand of the wind. Another day would see them out, and then she would call her friends and have the party; but it seemed to her beauty-loving and fearful heart that she must have the flowers first. She was so near them now she could think of nothing else.

All afternoon the world seemed to stand still. The air was heavy and close, like the smother of furs in summer. The clouds, cavernous and full of navy blue shadows, stood over the baking earth, charged with rain, yet withholding it, taunting the parching grain with the nearness of relief, as torturing as the trickle of water to a man dying of thirst in the desert.

“Oh, God, I do not understand! Let not my heart break trying to,” prayed Sadie Benton in an agony as she wandered from window to window.

Sadie sat up till midnight watching the sky, which had begun to seethe and roll. Strange patches of light from the departed sun glowed on the mountainous clouds, revealing their weird and restless movements.

Falling asleep as soon as she went to bed, she dreamed of rain—rain that ran down the window panes, making a pleasant throaty gurgle as it ran in foaming streams into the cracks of the dry ground; rain falling on parching fields and lifting up the drooping heads of stunted crops that were ready to die; rain so gentle and tender that the cattle held up their faces to receive its soft caress; rain that washed her precious flowers with fingers gentler even than her own.

Then something harsh and terrible wakened her. It was the wind, shaking the windows in its great knotted, battling fists—the wind, fierce, and without mercy. She put her hands over her ears.

In the morning she wrote again in her little book below her last entry:

“I might have known—I might have known
That the wind would wait till my flowers had grown;
And then come roaring down the trail
To beat my flowers with its threshing flail.
And there they lie—and my heart is stone.
I know it isn’t the flowers alone
That the wind has murdered in roaring glee;
It isn’t the flowers that are lying dead
With blackened body and bleeding head—
It’s me!”

The Daughters of the Empire had a hurried meeting—an emergency had arisen. They must send Sadie Benton to the Convention in the City. The Regent had called them together and reported that when she went over to see Mrs. Benton the morning after the storm, she found her serene and calm, but queer. Mrs. Pollard, not being much of a psychiatrist, could not explain very well, but was certain that Mrs. Benton was “queer.”

“It was the flowers that just finished her off,” said Mrs. Pollard. “The roof blowing off the machine-house didn’t seem to bother her; but she had buried the flowers, mind you, not a trace of any of them is to be seen. She said it seemed to be the decent thing to do, and she was writing when I went in, in her little book. Now, we didn’t intend to send a delegate, on account of the expense, but we just will. Sadie has to go. It will cheer her up, and she sure needs it. Mind you, she brought me in for breakfast, and was as cheerful as ever to the boys and got them off for school, but she’s queer. She said: ‘I don’t suppose the flowers mind being dead. It’s really rather nice to be dead.’ Now, that’s queer talk from Sadie . . . so we’ve just got to persuade her to go; and we have enough money to send her and give her ten dollars to spend.”

The women were agreed, and set off in a body to persuade Sadie to be their delegate. Rules of procedure did not harass the Daughters; they got things done by “unanimous consent.”

Two weeks later the train brought Sadie Benton to the station in the big city eighty miles from East Golding. Some of the old sparkle was in her eyes as she came through the iron gate where the blue-coated policeman with white helmet directed the traffic which passed between the two banked walls of humanity. All the fatigue of her long day and of the long years seemed to have fallen from her, and she was only conscious of a great elation.

The four great double doors on each side of the station were opened outward, and through them swept the summer breeze refreshingly. Unaccustomed smells were in her nostrils as she sat on one of the cool oak seats to watch the stream of people who passed. Oranges, cherry-cheer, gum, mingled with stale tobacco-smoke and the old bread and mouldy cheese of forgotten lunches. Disinfectants, mothballs and last week’s clothes blended with the heavy perfume of the powder of a painted lady who stood close by furtively watching the door, painfully standing on her spike heels, which somehow made the swollen ankles look more swollen. Sadie watched her, fascinated by the crimson redness of her lips, vivid as a wound that will not

heal, and even then was conscious of the thrill of delight which color always brought to her.

A group of women had come to bid a friend goodbye—women in bright sport suits, so boldly colored and gay that Sadie wanted to stroke them in gratitude for the gleam they made on the grim gray floor. When a child in a rose romper tried to slide across the tiled floor Sadie's hands went out to catch him. He seemed like a gorgeous butterfly. Magazines with colored covers hung by their corners around the news booth, and bottles of brightly colored drinks in glass cases seemed to beckon to her. Over in a corner, above the open box where a woman with the arms of a purple sweater tied around her neck listened to the wires, there stood a thin white china glass globe which every few seconds was filled with golden light, which held a moment and then faded. When it gleamed she noticed the word "Telegraph" in bold black letters. She watched the bright light come and go, come and go, bright, then dark, until it seemed that she would have to go and beg them not to put the light out at all.

Suddenly she realized that she had been sitting there a long time, for the lights were burning in the inverted alabaster bowls overhead, and although the room was as bright as ever and the stream of people still surged between the wide doors, she could tell that night had fallen. She wondered vaguely if she had been asleep, but she was not alarmed or greatly concerned, for a new and delightful sense of detachment was upon her. It seemed so strange to have nothing to do. The women had told her they wanted her to "just loaf" for the three days before the Convention began, and get well rested, so she would be able to enjoy every minute of it and bring home a good story of everything that happened. They had said that, now that there was so much to discourage them, they felt they must get something to cheer them up from the outside, and that was why they were sending her, for she would bring back the best story. They did not once hint that she needed the trip; but Sadie knew what was in their hearts, and she loved them for not saying it, and determined to do her best for them. She knew they would like to hear what the women were wearing, and what she had to eat, and just what the other women looked like, in addition to the regular work of the Convention.

An impulse to go to the lunch-counter and get a cup of coffee came to her, but her great weariness inclined her to find a bed; and besides, she wanted to get so many things that even the ten cents which the coffee would cost was a consideration. She would be quite all right until morning, and then she would get a good breakfast.

She arose with some difficulty, her limbs stiff from the unaccustomed inactivity, and made her way to the big doors of the station, and there when she looked into the street her heart bounded with joy, for the rain, blessed rain, was falling in tiny parallel lines between her and the street lights, and the pavement was shining-wet. An automobile which rolled away from the station trailed behind it a crimson ribbon until it turned west on Eighth Avenue.

Just across the street a friendly window, bright with red geraniums and white star of Bethlehem, beckoned her, and she felt that there she would find rest and a welcome for the night. It was soon arranged, and the obliging clerk carried the straw valise upstairs to a room in the front of the house.

“This is the only room we have,” he said, “and I am afraid you may find it pretty noisy—there are a lot of trains and cars go by in the night.”

“Oh, I will like that,” she said eagerly, “then I will not be able to hear the wind.”

He looked at her closely. “I guess they won’t bother you,” he said kindly, “you sure do look tired.”

A gleaming brass bed by the open window offered rest for her weariness, and without undressing she lay down with a great sigh of relief. She was so tired that it seemed to her that she had spread herself all over the bed.

After hours of deep sleep—or so it seemed—she noticed that the bed did not stand still as a bed should, but moved with a motion of a train, and vibrated with the grinding of the wheels on iron rails; but it was quite pleasant and she was not alarmed, for she knew such a big and handsome bed would know its business and know where it should go. City ways were surely wonderful, and she was determined to see all she could!

The bed certainly knew where to take her, for it brought her into the most wonderful garden she had seen since she left England. It was a very friendly garden, for the flowers she looked at came right into her hands. Crimson roses were everywhere, and they were coaxing her to take them. It did not seem polite to refuse them. And then she noticed the beads hanging on little trees in glittering strings. She remembered that it was beads she wanted for the two little Bates girls, whose mother had died. Lily must have a blue string to match her eyes—and she was sure that Nellie would like the red ones. While she was making her selection she noticed that a girl with short, bushy hair was standing beside her, and it seemed that she was asking her something, but it was hard to understand. It was something about

paying, and just for a minute it frightened her. Then she remembered that she had plenty of money. A delicious sense of great wealth came to her. It was a new and delightful feeling.

“I have the gold of the sunset, the silver of eve, up my sleeve,” she said. She smiled when she noticed the rhyme she had made, and, seeing the girl’s look of surprise, patted her hand reassuringly.

She now noticed for the first time that she had not her valise, and for a moment she wondered where it was. Then she remembered, but the delightful feeling of abundance shut out every other feeling. She knew she would never lack anything again. Her heart was so full of joy that she could not keep from singing

“My father is rich in houses and lands;
He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands:
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,
His coffers are full—He has riches untold.”

Her voice had a mellowness it never had before and rolled away from her in billows of sound, not one voice only, but a full choir of heavenly singers. Even after the words were sung she could hear the melody weaving around her, folding her in crimson waves of sweetness. She shut her eyes with the rapture of it. When she opened them she found people staring at her curiously, and she tried to smile at them. She had an impulse to sing again and start the wonderful melody, but her lips were cracked and stiff.

Then came a voice—like the wind which wakened her when she was dreaming of rain—a voice harsh and terrible like the wind: “Madam, I arrest you! You are shop-lifting!”

The words went crashing through her brain, each one exploding like a dum-dum bullet. And yet she saw everything around her with the vividness of a flash of lightning.

On the counter before her there were strings of beads displayed on high holding rods, in great variety of colors. A girl in a brown dress and with bobbed hair stood behind them, her mouth wide open. Three women stood in the aisle, clutching each other as if in fear. Beside her stood the young man whose hand was still laid on her arm.

“Where am I?” she asked.

The young man looked at her closely. He knew that question. They all ask it.

“You are in the Fifteen-cent Store,” he told her, “and you must come with me.”

“What have I done?” she asked him.

“Look in your bag,” he said quietly.

Then she saw that her bag was full of the crimson roses which she had seen, but they were not real roses, only paper ones. In her hands were the two strings of beads.

“You must come with me to the Police Station,” he said.

Again the words crashed through her like a jagged streak of lightning, leaving behind them the very darkness of the pit, into which her soul sank without even a cry.

The next day in the Police Court there were three cases of shop-lifting. Hers was heard first.

Not having slept or eaten, her eyes were bloodshot and wild, her hat was crooked, and her clothes badly wrinkled.

“How do you plead?” asked the Judge.

The question had to be explained.

“Guilty,” she faltered.

“Now, there are far too many cases of this kind coming before me,” said the Judge, “and I am going to give each of them the limit. We will see if we cannot put a stop to this petty thieving. You admit that you are guilty. Three months. Next case!”

(Now, by all the rules of short-story writing, this is the place to end the story, and this is the logical ending. In many cities this would have been the ending, but it so happened in the city of which I am writing that the ending was on this wise)—

“How do you plead?” asked the Judge.

The question had to be explained.

“Guilty,” she faltered.

The Judge wrinkled her forehead. She was an attractive woman, with a neat gray silk hat and a rose-colored silk dress. Her brown eyes had grown a little weary and sad from looking on human misery in the manifold forms in

which it came before her, but she had never grown accustomed to it, and now her tender heart was stabbed by the hopelessness in Sadie Benton's face.

"Detective Smithers," she said, "will you tell me what you know of this case?"

Detective Smithers was only too glad to tell.

"I was called on the 'phone," he said, "to the Fifteen-cent Store, your Honor, yesterday morning. They told me this woman had come in as soon as the store opened and wandered about aimlessly. When she came to the artificial flowers she took some in her hands. One of the girls asked her if she wished to buy, but she did not seem to understand. The girl asked her if she had any money, and she gave some outlandish answer about gold and silver and houses and lands. Then she began to put them in her bag—not like a thief, your Honor, the girls said, but just as if she were picking flowers. Then she took two strings of beads. I was sent for and can say the same, for I watched her. She was like a woman picking flowers in her own garden, leisurely and because she loved them. She's no common shoplifter, your Honor."

"Thank you, Detective Smithers," said the Judge, "I think you are right."

"I am going to suspend sentence, Mrs. Benton," said the Judge kindly, "but I want you to stay three days with a friend of mine, Dr. Crossley."

"But I only want to die," said the prisoner. "I have been arrested for shop-lifting. I can't go on living."

"You'll not feel that way about it when you have had three days with Mrs. Crossley. She is a doctor who understands mental processes. She'll show you what happened."

Sadie sat huddled in her chair. The Crown Prosecutor touched her shoulder.

"Don't feel too badly over this, ma'am," he said. "You mustn't take it too hard. We feel sure you are honest. Just something slipped in your brain. Brains are queer things—they can go out of order just like stomachs, or livers, or gasoline engines."

Sadie's eyes grew wider with astonishment. "I never knew people in police courts were kind like this—kind to"—she could not frame the word.

Mrs. Crossley came in then, a big woman with a deep voice.

“Where’s my patient?” she asked.

She and the Judge had a hurried consultation in the next room, then she led Sadie to her car and drove to her home in the suburbs of the city.

Somehow it was easy to talk to Mrs. Crossley, and in her big, white bed, so downy and soft, with a stone crock full of lilacs on the floor beside it, it was easy to sleep.

While Sadie slept Mrs. Crossley studied her case. The straw valise revealed many secrets. There were the lists from different neighbors, samples to match and things to buy, and then her little red book with its entries.

When Sadie awoke after ten hours’ sleep Mrs. Crossley had considerable knowledge of her case. Indeed she knew more of Sadie Benton than did any of the East Golding people, with whom Sadie had lived for fifteen years.

When she awakened a maid came in and dressed her hair, and put a blue silk gown on her, with brightly colored birds embroidered on it, and brought her a dainty breakfast on a tray. Sadie had not tasted food for forty-eight hours, and in spite of her troubles she ate it all. Then her hostess came in to talk to her.

“When does your husband expect you home?” she asked.

“On Saturday,” Sadie replied. “He will come to meet me, but how can I go home? Everyone will know.”

“No one knows, dear,” said her hostess. “The Judge gives out no information from her Court. Her Court is a sort of mental hospital, not a place of punishment. We try to find out what is wrong with our people and how it happened—and how to prevent its happening again. Now, I want you to tell me all about yourself. You know those albums which ask the guests to write in their favorite flower and quotation, and how they take their coffee, and all that. Just talk about yourself.”

“There’s nothing to tell,” said Sadie, “I have a good man and two fine boys, and a lot of nice neighbors. I have brought disgrace on them. Who will believe me when I say I have no recollection of being in that store?”

“I will,” said Mrs. Crossley; “I know it is true.”

“Did anyone else ever do it?” Sadie asked eagerly.

“Yes, and people have done other things that were much worse. You haven’t hurt anyone—no one has lost even five cents.”

“But to be arrested!” said Sadie in horror.

“Now, listen,” said Mrs. Crossley. “It was a good thing you were arrested. It gives us a chance to tell you what is wrong. You came into the city for a week. You did a week’s work the day before you left, didn’t you? Tell me all you did.”

“I made a shirt for Frank, baked bread, boiled a ham, made pies, and churned. I had to leave things for the men, you know.”

“Yes. What time were you up the morning you left?”

“Well, I couldn’t sleep, anyway. I was excited about coming, and so I got up at four and scrubbed the floor and washed a few tea-towels and things.”

“Yes, and then drove ten miles and rode eighty on the train. Did you eat anything on the train?”

“I wasn’t hungry,” said Sadie, “and besides, I needed the money I had for other things.”

“You haven’t eaten anything, then, since you left home until just now?”

“No, but—”

“Yes, I see. Now, tell me, how do you put in your time when you are at home? When do you get up in the morning?”

“At five in the summer. You see, there’s the cows—and I like it. It’s lovely in the morning. Sometimes the dawn is all rose and amber, and the dew on the grass sparkles like diamonds. . . . Work is beautiful,” she finished lamely.

“Up late, too, sometimes?”

“Oh, yes, when someone comes in. We like to see our neighbors.”

“You board the teacher, do you?”

“Sometimes.”

“And you have men working for you in harvest and seeding. Then you do some things for the neighbors. When that woman was sick—I forget her name—”

“Do you mean Mrs. Porter, or Mrs. Snider?”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Crossley, “both. Just what did you do for them?”

“Only what any neighbor would.”

“But for how long?”

“Mrs. Porter was in bed a month, and Mrs. Snider is sick yet. I sent her some things the day I left.”

“And you had a good bit of trouble about a girl once?”

Sadie’s face was full of fear.

“I cannot talk about that,” she said, “it’s a secret.”

“It troubled you quite a bit,” said Mrs. Crossley kindly, “and you worried over it. Was it you who had to tell her mother at last?”

“No one else would, and I knew how I would feel, but—”

“It was hard on you,” interrupted Mrs. Crossley.

“Oh, but think of the poor mother!” said Sadie.

“Then that couple who couldn’t agree—you were in that, too. You tried to get them to make up?”

“They did make it up,” said Sadie proudly. “They only needed someone to talk to them. But how did you know? I never told anyone.”

“I didn’t know,” said Mrs. Crossley, “but I read faces, and I have lived in country neighborhoods. You are worn out bearing other people’s burdens, setting aside your own comfort, stifling your own desires, belittling your own disappointments, though you seem to have borne every kind. If your man drank you would have borne that, too. I knew you were a burden-bearer when I saw in your bag all the commissions you had taken for other people.

“You have been giving out all your life, laying up treasures in Heaven sure enough, but running close to mental bankruptcy here. You have issued big cheques on your mental bank when you had a very small reserve, and had many an overdraft that was always honored before, and you managed to meet it some way; but this time, when you put still heavier burdens on yourself, just for a few minutes the bank stopped payment and left you in the lurch. It had to come—it was bound to come!

“Now, I’ll illustrate it in another way,” continued Mrs. Crossley, going to the switch and turned on the three lights in the room. “You see,” she said, “they are all burning evenly—one light is as strong as another. But watch. Just outside in the hall is the switchboard. I am going to do something there. The lights will not go out, but they will be changed.”

Mrs. Crossley went into the hall for a second. Then one light grew very bright, and the other two quite dim.

“What did you do?” Sadie asked interestedly.

“I took off a little thing called the neutral fuse. Now one is very bright and two are dull.”

“Can you bring them right?” asked Sadie.

“Just as easily, by putting back the equalizer. Just for a little while the equalizer in your brain went off. Imagination, love of pretty things, your desire to give pleasure, all of which are strong in you at any time, burned very bright, like this light; caution and discretion, and the desire to pay your way, burned dim. During that time you saw lovely colors in flowers and beads, and you wanted them to make people happy. You forgot that you must pay for them—that faculty was burning dimly, and the bright light had its way with you. If the dim light made any protest you didn’t hear it. This little lapse is a danger signal. It will not come back again unless you let yourself get as tired and exhausted as you were. It’s no disgrace to have a brain go out of order; you would not feel disgraced if your liver went on strike or your stomach refused to function. It is quite aristocratic to have a heart that misses a beat, so why should anyone feel so disgraced to have a brain that falters in its work? Indeed, it is a wonder that women on the farm do not all develop mental trouble, they work so hard, and have had, in the last few years particularly, so many disappointments.”

“Then I am not a thief!” cried Sadie Benton, sitting very straight in her chair.

“No, you are not. You worked at such high tension, bearing everyone’s troubles, trying to do the work of two or three people, you blew out your neutral fuse and had to be run into the service station to get fixed up.

“Now you know the danger and will be more careful. You are not going to the Convention, you are going to stay here with me until the end of the week, and then you will go home feeling better. I will give you a certificate to show that you were not able to attend the Convention.”

The two women’s eyes met in a long understanding gaze. From Sadie Benton’s face the clouds of trouble rolled back and were gone. “You are something like God,” she said softly, “in the way you understand.”

And so it happened that Sadie Benton, who had helped many in their day of trouble, was not left desolate when her own black hour came upon her.

RED AND WHITE

Mrs. Rosie Starblanket, taking the pipe from her mouth and narrowing her black eyes into two smudgy lines, listened to the footsteps of her son as he approached the parental dwelling. Mrs. Starblanket did not understand the language of flowers or of precious stones, and had not heard of the hankerchief flirtation, but she did know something of the language of footsteps; and on this occasion, as her son came quickly down the board walk, Mrs. Starblanket reached a quick conclusion,—she thought she knew what the joyousness of his approach meant.

Now it happened that Mrs. Starblanket was for once astray in her diagnosis, but, as her historian, I hasten to exonerate her from blame.

Johnny Starblanket's footsteps on this particular blue-black midnight in July were of amazing lightness. There was evidently some great source of exaltation which had shod his feet with wings.

Mrs. Rosie Starblanket, his mother, knew but one form of exaltation, now that the great days of buffalo hunts were over. Exaltation, as she knew it, came in one form, and one only,—conical in shape, dark green in color, with the makers' name in gold letters, and a gold seal below. So Mrs. Starblanket, intently listening, assumed—falsely, as it proved—that her son had been drinking.

Johnny had been to "the Beach" for the evening, and as this was prior to prohibition days, and four adequately equipped bars were diligently striving to alleviate the thirst of the population from eight o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock at night, Mrs. Starblanket had another extenuating circumstance to condone her mistake.

The air was heavy, and electrical with thunder-storms. Lightning stabbed the big clouds which lay over Blueberry Island, across the Lake. Above her head, in the velvety blackness of the night, a hive of mosquitoes circled and spread, monotonously chanting their complaints; but none came near Mrs. Rosie Starblanket, whom mosquitoes had long since passed up as a tough proposition.

When Johnny stepped off the walk and turned into the gate, which was always left open, his mother greeted him. There was no word spoken—just a sound, but the sound had in it all the essentials of a kindly greeting.

Interpreted, it ran: "There you are—I see you! Where have you been? and how are you?"

Johnny replied by another sound, which meant "I'm jake! How's yourself?"

Ordinarily this was all that would have passed between them, for Mrs. Starblanket had learned, in a long term school, that it is no time for talking when the exalted mood was upon any of the male members of her house.

But to-night it was Johnny who did the talking. He had been hoping his mother would be in her accustomed place at the west end of the white-washed log-house, for he wanted to talk to her. Great events had transpired, and his mother must know of them.

"Maw," he said, "I got a girl."

Mrs. Starblanket deliberately lit her pipe before replying. If that was all that was wrong it would keep until she got her pipe going. Then she made another sound, which meant "I suppose it had to come sometime, so go on and let me know the worst."

Johnny had been educated at the Industrial School, and had learned the use of language. He was now Assistant Station Agent at the Beach.

"She is one Jim-dandy girl, Maw," he began; "you know her. It is Minnie Hardcastle. You knew her mother, didn't you?"

Mrs. Starblanket nodded, but it was so dark Johnny did not see the signal of acquiescence, and he repeated the question.

His mother offered no denial.

"She went to the school, you know, when I did, at Brandon, but she was small then. She is just eighteen years old now, and smart—say, Maw, you should see her wait on table there! She's at 'The Homestead,' and all the fellows are after her. But to-night at the dance I asked her out straight, and she likes me better than any of them!"

His mother smoked on, but Johnny did not resent her apparent indifference.

There was a long silence between them, then Mrs. Starblanket carefully knocked the ashes from her pipe, put it in her blue print dress pocket, and began to talk. "Her father was white man," she said.

Johnny caught the implied disparagement. "But her mother was Indian, all Indian—Cree, too," he said eagerly. "You know the Lily people; they

were good Indians, Maw—good Indians, like our folks.” There was an appeal in the boy’s voice that he knew would bring his mother around. “Fathers don’t count like mothers,” he continued; “you know that.”

Mrs. Starblanket, of course, did not deny this. She was willing to admit, like all other students of sociology, that the virtues of the mother are sometimes visited on the children.

“She’s pure Indian in everything but looks,” urged Johnny, “and doesn’t like white men a bit. You see, she takes me when she could have lots of white men; told me she would never marry a white man—wants pure Indian. She remembers her father, and just hates him—says she hopes he’s dead, and all that.”

“Humph!” Mrs. Starblanket swung around on her stool and addressed the place in the dark where her son was sitting. “What about Maggie?” she asked.

Johnny made an impatient gesture, which his mother felt as plainly as if she had seen it. “Maggie ain’t got no style to her—and she toes in too bad,” he said.

His mother shifted uneasily in her seat and drew her own mocassined feet under her skirt.

“Anyway, she’s got another fellow,” said Johnny, “a big freight handler on the train. She wouldn’t look at me last night at the dance, just made a face at me when I passed. Maggie isn’t caring a cent about me.”

“Maybe not,” said his mother, “maybe so. You better go slow on this other girl—she’s too white for us, Johnny. It don’t do any good, these mixtures. White is all right; Indian all right; I don’t like breeds.”

Mrs. Starblanket spoke with deep scorn. Why not? In her veins ran the blood of princes, and it was her great comfort that all her children had intermarried with undefiled Indian families. Johnny, her youngest and dearest, must not be allowed to stumble. Everything else had been taken from her but her pride of blood, and the slumbering resentment against the conquering race which had robbed the red man of everything but his honor awoke with increasing passion.

“Maggie’s the best girl for you,” she said; “you can’t depend on white ones—some day they’ll see another fellow and let you slide—I know! You can’t count on white ones, they change.”

“What about Maggie, then?” cried the boy, indignantly. “She’s the one that has changed; she’s the one that makes faces at her old fellow.”

“You left her first,” said his mother, severely. “I not blame Maggie—I’m glad she has another fellow. Maggie’s a good girl—she make moccasin, basket, everything. White girls all for spend and dance.”

A sudden crash of thunder, following upon a blinding flash of lightning, drove them indoors, and the rain, which had been threatening all evening, poured down in torrents. It ran in floods down the square-paned windows, and poured in and out of the barrels which Mrs. Starblanket had placed at the corner of the house for her supply of soft water.

Johnny Starblanket lighted a small coal-oil lamp and began to make his preparations for slumber. This well-dressed young man, resplendent in new tan boots and red tie, seemed like a casual caller in the white-washed cabin, on whose walls hung many a trophy of the brave old days. He hung his collar and tie on the horns of an antelope, threw his boots on a tanned buffalo hide, and flung himself on a canvas stretcher in the corner of the room.

The raging of the storm made further conversation impossible, and for this Johnny was not sorry, for he knew his mother’s moods too well to try to change them. In a vague, boyish way Johnny had compassion for his mother. He knew that life had grown gray and uneventful for her since the cottages had been built all around the Lake and the whole place had become filled with white people, to whom his mother was simply an Indian woman who occasionally did a washing for them.

He could remember the time, long ago it seemed now, when their house was the only one on the Lake as far as he could see, and when the hunters gathered with his father and big brothers around the fire in the winter evenings, and all the talk was of big game and shooting.

He could still recall the joy of being carried on his mother’s back through the woods, when the acrid smell of the camp-fire got in his eyes as she stooped over to stir something in a pot. Around them he could hear the howling of the wolves, but he was not afraid.

The change had come suddenly, with the building of the railroad to the Beach, and the hunters had gone North. Soon after his father had died, and he had gone to school in Brandon to begin his education from books and teachers.

At the end of four years he had come back to his mother's white-washed house beside the Lake and began his work in the Station.

At first the excitement of trains leaving and arriving, the surging crowd, the dances in the evenings, the bands which came out from the City and played in the Pavilion, all seemed like a wild dream of delight after the rigid discipline of the School; and yet, when he went back to his mother's cabin at midnight and listened to her stories of buffalo hunts and the felling of big game, his soul longed for the silent ways of the forest. By day he was Jack Starblanket, in all respects a white man, doing a white man's work in the throbbing avenues of trade; at night, with the sound of the Lake licking the gray boulders on the shore, mingling with his mother's soft voice as she told him the stories of his people, he was an Indian, descendant of Chief Starblanket, and to whom the far country called.

Mrs. Starblanket lived again the thrilling scenes of life as she told them to her son. Civilization, which had closed in about her so terribly in the last four years, seemed now to choke and stifle her; and it was only in these dark nights, when the kind mantle of darkness blotted out the offending evidences, that her tongue was loosened and something of the old joy of living came back to her.

In daylight she could not look out without seeing the desecrated woods, the patches of clearing, the circle of red and white cottages which had broken out like a rash on the fair surface of the sandy shore. There were fences and flagpoles and sidewalks and running wells on all sides. There was an automobile road from the City, over which the honking, chucking, ill-smelling dragons of autos raced and jostled each other. No wonder that so many of the birds and squirrels had fled in terror.

"Too many people," Mrs. Starblanket often mourned to herself as she walked in the early morning along the sandy shore. Behind the cottages there was a board walk, and a good road, but she scorned them in her heart; and besides, she liked the crunch of the white gravel under her moccasined feet.

The late night and the early morning were the times she liked best, for then the cottage dwellers were within doors, and the calm face of the Lake was not disfigured with their presence, and the horrible clatter of the screaming, laughing bathers was stilled.

In the morning, too, her own birds, the meadowlarks, flickers and thrushes, feeling much the way she did, claimed the woods for their own,

and drove their songs of defiance into the open windows of the late-sleeping cottagers.

Some of these had even brought their own birds with them, as if the wild ones were not good enough for them, and these wretched little creatures, some of whom sang bravely in their gilded cages, hanging on the painted verandas, drew forth Mrs. Starblanket's pity and scorn.

"They take everything," she muttered to herself; "they can't let anything be. Ain't a bird singing in the trees better than a poor thing sitting on a roost? But the bird in the woods is free, and its own boss, and they want to be boss of everything. Nobody is safe now—they grab everything."

That night, after Johnny had gone to bed, Mrs. Starblanket long lay winking at the darkness. There was an unwonted bitterness in her heart as she thought of what her son had told her. He wanted to marry this white girl, for white she was to Mrs. Starblanket in spite of Johnny's spirited defence of her Indian parentage.

"White!" Mrs. Starblanket muttered; "and she'll lie in bed till noon, and wear rags on her head when she gets up, and paint her cheeks, and go out all afternoon to sit on some other woman's veranda and gab and cackle. She'll not make moccasin or tan hide, and when she has a kid she'll be sick a year before and a year after, and then never have another."

Mrs. Starblanket scorned the lady-like weaknesses of the Beach dwellers, which she had so often heard discussed by them with great frankness. She often wanted to tell them of the twelve children she had raised—and "never lay in bed a day" in her life. They surely were the good-for-nothing set, these white women, with their pains and their nerves and their operations.

And now Johnny was going to marry one of them, and his good wages would be spent on doctors' bills and operations and crazy frilled things. The sore touch to Mrs. Starblanket in all this was that her brightest and best dream was shattered by this new turn in her son's affairs. There was no chance now of Johnny going back to the life to which all Indians belonged—to the life of his father and his grandfather and the older brothers, who had fled before civilization's choking breath. Johnny, the powerful, the fleet of foot and strong of arm, who, when he was five years old, could put his arrows into a tree like a man and ride the worst pony at the Fair—she could see Johnny pushing a baby carriage up and down the sidewalk while his wife played cards with other white women and told them "how many stitches she had put in the last time." She supposed a place would be found

for her in the kitchen, where she could wash and iron, and polish the slippery floors. It looked like a life sentence for both Johnny and her.

Mrs. Starblanket made no sign of all this the next morning, but was especially attentive to Johnny when she got ready his breakfast of eggs and bacon. Poor Johnny, he would soon be cooking his own—*her's*, too; while his mother had him she would “use him good.”

The mother's solicitude was unnoticed, for John Starblanket's heart was busy with other matters. Like most men, Indian and white alike, the attention of his women-folk was only noticeable in its absence. But Mrs. Starblanket was not worrying or even thinking about this. Indian women do not live on words of praise and honeyed phrases.

The storm of the previous night had left the Lake fretful and complaining, although the sun had come up in a cloudless sky and the wind had gone down. But the waves rolled in upon the shore petulantly, whimpering of the night and what its fury had done.

Johnny went gaily whistling out of the gate, but suddenly remembered something which he wished to say to his mother. Coming back to the door, he called to her: “I'll bring Minnie down to see you, Maw. She's real Indian—you'll see! She's been asking about you.”

His mother made a sound in her throat which Johnny knew meant assent, and he resumed his whistling. “I won't come home to-night,” he said, “but we'll both come down to-morrow night for supper. We'll come in canoe mos' likely. Oh, yes, there's something else I want to say. The papers say there's going to be war over in Europe. There's lots of talk goin' round, and fellows say we'll all have to go mos' likely.”

Mrs. Starblanket nodded. War! That was more of a man's job than handing out train tickets like Johnny was doing now. War! She remembered when her grandfather had painted his face and gone out early. . . . War! What was she thinking of? “They won't fight!” she said in contempt; “white men won't fight; they're too soft, too lazy, too fond of easy things!”

II

The instinct to house-clean is inherent in women. It is a sure wall of defence against the arrows of fortune, for with a clean house a woman can face the world even though it turns to her a frowning countenance.

Mrs. Starblanket's first impulse now was to set to work to clean the house so that Minnie Hardcastle would see that Johnnie was the son of a

woman who knew how to make a man comfortable. The floor would be none the worse of a scrubbing; the windows, cleaned though they had been a few days before, were now spotted with flies; the stove could easily be made a brighter black; there were weeds in the garden, too, which Mrs. Starblanket could remove.

She rose hurriedly and began to set away the remains of the breakfast, with many plans for improving the appearance of her house, and glad of the two whole free days in which she had to do it. She'd let this white man's daughter see that John Starblanket had been "fetched up good," and if he picked up with lazy women now it wasn't because he had been used to them.

Mrs. Starblanket knew well the ways of cleaning a house. Though she would not have admitted it, the cottage dwellers had taught her many things; and if her heart had been heavier since their coming, her house at any rate had been cleaner. Curtains had appeared at the small windows, and vegetable dishes had mysteriously supplemented the functions of the black pot in which her potatoes and cabbages were boiled. Better methods of washing, too, had superseded the fire on the shore and the rubbing of clothes by hand on a stone.

For two days Mrs. Starblanket practised all her skill in household arts. Every treasure of her house was brought to light. Johnny would not feel badly about his mother and her Indian ways. The beaded suit with the gauntlets to match was hung carelessly on the head of Johnny's bed, just as if beaded suits were but incidents in his life. The bearskins were beaten on the line until no more dust could be dislodged, and the one and only houseplant, given to Mrs. Starblanket by one of her last year's patronesses, and carefully brought through the winter by heavy newspaper coverings on the coldest nights, was turned around to show the best side of its luxuriant leaves, and of the jardiniere she had made for it from some silver paper she had picked up on the shore.

"Mos' likely they'll be hungry," she said to herself as she went over to one of the cottages to negotiate for a chicken. Chicken, she knew, was the proper offering when company was coming. White though she was, Johnny's girl would be "treated good."

If Mrs. Starblanket had not watched herself closely she would have grown quite happy over her preparations, but she kept up a scornful attitude to the whole proceedings. She put tiger-lilies in a pickle bottle on the table for a centre-piece; she brought out all her plates and washed them in soapy water, and polished them till they shone. She knew the more dishes people

use at a meal the “sweller” it is. She folded white paper napkins into tepees before each plate, and had her steel knives scoured to look like silver. Mrs. Starblanket was feminine enough to prepare more thoroughly for an enemy than a friend.

If it had been Maggie, the basket-maker, who was coming for a meal—Maggie, her choice for a daughter-in-law—there would have been none of this; but for this white girl there would be nothing amiss, and no need for apologies. She would let Johnny’s girl see that she knew how a meal should be cooked!

That evening, while Minnie served dinner in the long dining-room of the Winnipeg Beach Hotel, overlooking the blue waters of the Lake, she was watched by at least two pairs of masculine eyes. Johnny’s deep-set, languorous gaze followed her graceful movements with admiring, prideful looks. She was his girl, the swellest girl at the Beach, and *his*. He gloried in her somewhat haughty beauty, her well-poised head, her neatly coiled hair, the springiness of her step, and the neatness of her attire. But Johnny did not analyze her appearance—all his adoration of her was covered when he told himself “she sure is a swell girl!”

The other pair of eyes were gray and oyster-lidded—not so young or so bright as Johnny’s, not so honest in their admiration. They belonged to a man, thick-set and prosperous-looking, who had come on the evening train.

He spoke to a younger man who sat beside him. “Great place they have here!” he said, looking about the long dining-room approvingly, with its many tables; “this place was virgin wilderness the last time I saw it. Just nineteen years ago a bunch of us were out hunting for a week—lived with the Indians and shot big game—feared neither God nor man. We sure were wild young colts. That was the time a fellow could have a good time; there were no laws, no ten commandments, and no consequences. The present was everything.” He laughed reminiscently. “I wish I could see it as it was then. The Indians were in great form. They took us up the lake in canoes, and showed us how to tan hides and make moccasins. There were some pretty girls among them, with shy brown eyes and red cheeks. That girl,” pointing to the next table, where Minnie was serving, “reminds me of one of them—same carriage and same dignified manner. By Jove! she is a pretty girl.”

“Hush!” said the other man, with some embarrassment, “she’ll hear you.”

“That won’t hurt her—they all like to hear it, young or old. Don’t worry about me. I make no mistakes with women. There’s just one system with

them, young man. Go after them—they like to be chased—and *lay on the blarney*. You can't put it on too thick. Now, watch me if you want to see how it's done."

When Minnie passed the table at which he was sitting he lifted his hand to attract her attention. "How are you, my dear?" he said blandly, regarding her with a beaming smile.

A full ten seconds passed before she replied, and then her answer came deliberately: "I am quite well." The voice was serenely calm and level, and would have been disconcerting to a less self-assured man.

"My dear," he beamed, "I did not need to ask. All I needed to do was to look and see the roses on your cheeks and the sparkle in your eye. My dear girl, to look at you makes me young again."

Minnie's eyes were narrowing as he spoke, and the two dull red angry spots which rose in her cheeks emphasized the high cheek-bones. There was something about him that gave her a feeling of nausea. Not that Minnie Hardcastle had not been made love to in public before—she too long had been a waitress in a summer hotel to experience any surprise at the foolishness of men, young or old, and had thought herself prepared for anything—but there was something in the tone of the stranger's voice, a sort of vaseline softness, that stirred bitter memories.

"What do you want to eat?" she asked hurriedly, forgetting her accustomed courteous manner in her intense desire to return to a strictly business basis with this well-favored guest whose eyes were turned upon her in such bold admiration.

"Eat?" he laughed noisily, "I have not got to that yet, my dear. I am too busy admiring the roses. I am walking in the garden in the cool of the evening—don't hurry me. My dear, will you tell me, were you born up here in this wild country, or have you stepped out of a picture, or where did you come from?"

Minnie's eyes were half-closed as she asked: "Are you fresh, or just foolish?"

The younger man laughed, and looked at his companion to see if his composure had wilted at all. But the bland face revealed nothing.

"I'm just foolish," he said, still smiling.

"In that case," said Minnie testily, "I do not mind telling you I was born near here. My mother is dead and my father is, too, I hope."

“Bless its heart!” he cried, bursting into a laugh as if some witty word had been spoken—a great throaty laugh which had no mirth in it—the sort of laugh in which no one joins. “It has a temper for all it looks so mild. Well, well, we won’t press the point any further.”

“Ham and eggs, roast beef, pork chops, sausage,” repeated Minnie mechanically, and with no hint in her voice of any emotion other than the desire to serve the two men and get it over as quickly as possible.

The guests decided in favor of roast beef, and when Minnie had gone the older man had just a hint of anger in his heavy eyes. The younger man adroitly ignored the incident, and began to talk of other things.

The portly gentleman, however, had been wounded in a tender spot, and could not easily forget it. “It’s all a part of this damned uplift business!” he snarled, attacking the roll beside his plate with unnecessary violence; “there is no place where a man has any liberty any more. Here, even here in this neck of the woods, the half-breed girls after a year or two in these infernal industrial schools get the airs of a duchess, and imbibe notions entirely beyond their place. There are no shy, modest little girls any more, who blush when they are spoken to and know how to take a compliment. Now they stare back and talk back, and I’ll bet that black-eyed jade wants to vote, and all the rest of it. A real man might as well be dead as live in this world when the bars go and every last woman is of this independent kind. Good Lord! where’s the fun of living? What will we do after ten o’clock?—tell me that. We might as well go to war and kill Germans as stay at home here and drink ice-water . . . the darned women get my goat, anyway; there’s a few of them in this country that ought to be deported.”

He was growing more and more inflamed as he went on.

“Now, this is part of it—this half-breed waitress talking back, handing it to me like a queen. There was a time when a girl would lose her job for this, but now the laboring people have the whip hand on us, and we have to keep civil, even to these mongrel half-breeds!”

Without knowing it he had raised his voice.

When he was through speaking a shadow fell across his table, and, looking up, he found himself looking into the face of Johnny Starblanket, who, without apparent motion, had made the distance across the dining-room.

Indian-like, Johnny had made no sound, but stood facing the other man and waiting for him to speak.

“Well,” said the big man, harshly, “what do you want?”

“I heard you speak of half-breed waitress,” said Johnny, slowly. “I just wanted to say—I just want you to hear—that there’s no such word as ‘half-breed’ in this country. If you think there is you had better forget it quick. If you are afraid you can’t forget you had better get out. It ain’t healthy here for people who can’t forget the word. That girl you spoke to is Indian girl—straight Indian. Her mother was daughter of a chief; her father don’t matter—he was nothing.”

“What about her father?” the white man asked, insolently.

“Her father don’t count,” said Johnny, slowly, “he was just yellow dog of white man, the kind we see some time at the hotel—fresh guy that talks too much.”

Johnny waited motionless for a reply to his words, staring into the muddy depths of the fat man’s eyes. There was tense silence in the room. The air was electrical. Anything might happen. Every one had heard Johnny’s words.

The big man tried to bluster a reply, but there was a slumbrous fire in the inky blackness of the Indian boy’s eyes which caused him to change his mind. “All right, all right, my boy,” he stammered, “no harm done, I hope.”

“No harm done!” Johnny repeated, with emphasis; “no harm done—just thought of, but not done,” and with the same gliding motion he returned to his seat.

The meal proceeded in silence, the older man giving his orders in sulky monosyllables. But his eyes devoured the girl’s face, following her graceful movements as she cleared the table next to them.

From his corner Johnny Starblanket sat and watched, and drew his own conclusions. He had heard of men like this, whose desires were evil, and who regarded all young, innocent things as their legitimate prey. Johnny had even known bad Indians, though not many. On all such he poured the contempt of his young heart. He would kill them gladly, joyously, as his father had once with his bare hands killed the wildcat which attacked little Rose, his sister. But his love for Minnie drove out all baser thoughts, and the paramount emotion of his passionate young heart was the joy of possession. Minnie, the admired one, was his girl, she liked him best of all the boys.

In the construction he put upon the white man’s admiration for Minnie Johnny was not exactly correct in his assumption that it was entirely evil. Evil it certainly was at first, as most of the man’s impulses were, but as he

watched her now deftly clearing away the dishes from the table near at hand he was conscious of another emotion. It was not exactly remorse or memory—it was a sudden growing wonder.

When the meal was over Johnny strolled out to the veranda, quite conscious of his striking figure and elegant new clothes; conscious also of the sensation that had been produced by his words to the flashy stranger. The Indian love of admiration was strong in Johnny. Young, fine-looking, earning money, Johnny Starblanket felt a thrill of pride and joy such as his ancestors had felt in the supreme moment of the chase.

He stretched himself in one of the folding canvas chairs which stood on the screened-in veranda overlooking the lake, and cast his black eyes out over the water. Blueberry Island, where he had often gone in pursuit of the berries which gave it its name, stretched blue and misty on the eastern skyline. White-winged boats, with an occasional colored parasol above them, dotted the placid surface of the lake. It was the quiet hour at the Beach, the hush that came before the clamorous arrival of the city trains. Leisurely he took the evening paper from his pocket and casually glanced at the head lines.

“England sends ultimatum to Germany,” he read, and whistled, not in surprise, but just because he liked whistling and felt the need of doing something. The trouble in Europe made no ripple on the complacent soul of John Starblanket, yet he read the front page article through with a growing feeling of wonder. War was plainly hinted at, and yet war seemed to belong to a glorious day long past.

He read the article again, then folded the paper, replaced it in his pocket, and made his way to the back door to see if he could get a word with Minnie. A restlessness had seized him, a strange thrilling excitement. He wanted some one to applaud him—praise him—admire him!

Minnie was filling her tray from the oilcloth-covered table, and skilfully keeping the flies at bay at the same time, when Johnnie filled the doorway of the kitchen. Minnie’s quick smile seemed to fill the room with radiance.

“Come on, Minnie,” he said, “it’s dandy out. Can’t you get a spell off? You’ve often let the other girls out before it was all over. As long as you slave away they’ll let you, girl—take that from me.”

“We’re short to-night,” Minnie said, lifting her tray. “I hear them calling, Jack. Just wait till I place these and I’ll come back. Won’t you sit down?”

“No, thanks, I don’t fancy hanging around a kitchen. I’ll go over and wait at the bandstand. But hurry up—I want to get out in the canoe—I want to tell you something.”

“I must go and get in this pie,” said Minnie, “they’re waiting. But I’ll come to the bandstand as soon as I can get out. Wait for me there.”

“You bet!” was the hearty response, and Johnny strolled leisurely across the green grass plot to the main street, where the first of the evening trains was arriving.

The same old holiday crowd surged through the doors and eddied out to the platform, milling and weaving the same gorgeous coloring of sweaters and blazers and sailor hats, amid the same holiday chatter, the idle things so joyously spoken by people whose day’s work is done and who are off for a “time.”

John Starblanket moved among them with something of the grace of the old Chief, his great-grandfather, when the tribe had assembled to do him honor—absolutely aloof and unconcerned in appearance, and yet alive to every nod or word or glance of approval.

“Gee! ain’t it good to get away from those darned pavements and get a sniff of real air instead of that fanned stuff!” The speaker, making her way past Johnny, was one of the smartest dressers in the “Notions,” with the widest hat, the shortest skirt, and the thinnest blouse. “Now, why can’t I get a job out here? Gee! I’d do anything, catch frogs, hold clothes for the bathers, or even sling hash, to get here. Say, girls, honest, I know a girl out here that waits on table and is all done at eight o’clock, and she sure has a fine time as I ever saw a girl with.”

They were making their way to the Pavilion, being among the passengers from the first section of the “Moonlight.”

“Say, Speers, your language is lovely,” said the tallest girl of the group, a salesgirl from the hardware section. “Now, I’ve seen girls with lots of things—I’ve seen them with beaus, and with jags even, but I never saw one with a ‘time’!”

“Oh, shut up, Brown, you highbrow!” snapped the little one; “you know what I mean. That’s what’s keepin’ you back—you know too darned much, and every one’s afraid to talk before you only me.”

She was ruffing a curl which had lost some of its beauty in the heat, holding one hair lightly and sending all the others up the pole by a skilful movement of her thumb and finger.

“Don’t be sore, kid,” said the tall girl; “you’re not much on language, but you get there all the same. I’m jealous of you—that’s all that’s wrong with me. Don’t be sore on a wallflower.”

“Many a true word is spoken in jest,” said the little cashier, gravely, as she applied a pink chamois to her nose; “but if you wanted to be human I believe you could do it, and you’d sure be a world-beater with those long lashes of yours. Only you’re so stiff and prim, and have a way of making people feel small. That won’t go with men—you have to make them feel sporty and smart and beamy. You have to look at them with mute admiration in your eyes—and, gee-whizz, when I can do it with these peepers of mine, what couldn’t you do with those Mazda lights of yours? Why don’t you try it once, Brown, just for fun?”

Brown shook her head gravely. “What’s fun for the bad little boys is death to the frogs,” she replied.

“There you go again, quoting poetry and making me feel ignorant because I don’t know what it’s all about, though of course I get the run of it. But no one likes to be put in wrong. Now, look, Brownie, do you see that good-looking Indian boy over there?”

John Starblanket had walked by slowly, moving with all the grace and suppleness of his race.

Miss Brown looked after him with interest.

“Some kid, eh?” said the cashier. “Do you want to see how it is done, Brown? If so, follow me, but not so close as to get in the machinery. Safety first! This is a time for skilful treatment.”

“Oh, say, Speers!” Miss Brown spoke with animation now. “Leave the Indian boy alone—I’ll bet he’s got a girl some place. Have a heart, woman, and don’t cut in on the native race. There ought to be a law against it, the same as selling liquor to them.”

“Well, there is no law, my lady, no law but the law of get what you can and how you can. The world is your parish, so to speak. I’m a dead shot, a real go-getter, and I get what I go after.”

“Leave the Indian boy alone,” urged Miss Brown, gravely, “he looks like a nice kid.”

“Well, I won’t bite him; I won’t even scratch him; I only want to have him around for a spare. I’ve got my permanents and regulars, haven’t I? An ice-cream soda won’t break him. I’ll let him go back to his Minnehaha all

right, all right. I just want to make things pleasant for him. Can you find any fault with that?"

The second section of the "Moonlight" came in, and another surging crowd of the city's youth in their nightly quest for pleasure gravitated to the Pavilion, where the "Officers of the Day" march called to them to come and dance.

John Starblanket, leisurely smoking a long cigar, leaned against the bandstand, still conscious of the admiring glances of the girls who passed him, but unmoved by them, for in his heart there was only one flame burning.

"They ain't one, two, three alongside Minnie," he was thinking, as they danced past him; "they haven't got the style she has, nor the set-up."

But he did wish she would hurry, for he, too, wanted to dance. The music fairly hurt him, it was so sweet and piercing. Why couldn't she get out like other girls instead of sticking in that furnace of a kitchen washing dishes? She'll stay till the last dish is dried, too—that's her kind.

The second dance was called, and still Minnie had not appeared, and Johnny's annoyance was growing every minute. He moved down towards the entrance so that he would see her when she came in.

The dance was a weird sort of shuffling two-step, which has since become very popular, with runs and glides quite bewildering. Johnny had not seen it before, and now took his cigar from his mouth to watch. There was something fascinating about it.

The cashier, who glided by dancing with one of the delivery men, was drawing more attention than any other girl on the floor. Her blouse was the thinnest in texture and the lowest in cut, her skirt the shortest and tightest, and her hold of her partner the closest and most gripping. She had often said that what she did she did well, and her style of fox-trotting bore out the statement.

"Some fine stepper," Johnny said to himself.

It so happened that when the music stopped she was right beside him, and as she turned to find a seat brushed closely against his coat-sleeve, exuding the sweet odor of violets. Quite unconsciously she raised her eyes, and suddenly let the lids fall in apparent confusion.

"You sure can dance," Johnny said, wondering at his own boldness, as he motioned her to take his seat.

“Oh, do you think so?” she murmured. “I love it, you know. Don’t you?”

Her voice was as sweet as the tinkle of the Mission bells. She was fixing a wandering hairpin as she spoke.

“We never danced much at the Mission,” Johnny said, blushing pleasantly.

“It’s no trick to learn,” volunteered the cashier; “I’m sure I could show you how—not here in this mob of course; but if we had a little more room I could show you. I’ve showed lots of boys, but I have to have room. If you come out on the veranda, where there ain’t so many dancers, I’ll show you in no time. I just know it would be easy for you.”

Johnny didn’t know just how it happened. There is a word for it—several words with Latin derivation, but all meaning the same. It is a sort of temporary displacement of affection—not serious if rearranged in time. The evening air from the lake was soft as velvet and resonant with laughter and gaiety; the band played the sort of music which sends rhythmic thrills through the heart; something like a cut-out was sounding in Johnny’s impressionable heart. The flattery in the cashier’s eyes was irresistible.

When the dancing lesson, accompanied by much laughter and ragging from an interested group of spectators, was over, and Johnny, who had a quick ear and sense of rhythm, was complete master of the fox-trot, Miss Speers archly hinted at an ice-cream soda, declaring that after a hot dance it was the thing she was fondest of.

To her surprise her companion, with a hurried word of thanks, abruptly declared he had forgotten all about a friend of his who was waiting for him, and that he must go.

“It’s my girl,” he said, with a quick blush of boyish confusion. “Gee, I don’t know what she’ll say!” and he was gone.

Miss Speers’ look of surprise was so apparent that the crowd around laughed good-humoredly.

“Stung, kiddo!” they cried.

“Well, what do you know about that for ingratitude?” said one.

“He hasn’t a girl at all, I’ll bet—he just wanted to save the two-bits,” ventured another.

“He’s nothing but a cheap skate,” added a third.

“Come and teach me,” one big fellow said, laughing, “and I’ll pay in advance. I won’t leave you high and dry without even a cone at the end of the lesson, either. I’ll treat teacher both times.”

Miss Speers made a brave attempt to join in the fun, but her pride had received a severe shock in the Indian boy’s abrupt departure.

“Gee-whizz!” she said to Miss Brown, who was one of the company, “did I dream it, or is it true? Tell me, Brown, did that boy turn me down? Did he actually say he had a girl some place, another girl? What right has he to be thinking of another girl when I’m giving full time to him? I feel like a defeated candidate, Brown.”

“Oh, leave the Indian boy alone, Speers,” said her friend; “I like him all the better because he did remember his girl. You’ve already got more fellows than you’ve time for.”

“Sure Mike!” said Miss Speers, modestly, “but it’s the principle of the thing. I can’t afford to lose my punch, Brown. You don’t understand—it’s professional pride with me. And now, listen, draw near and hear. This will cost him more than the price of a soda before he’s done with me. He started something when he put me in the place where people had the laugh on me!”

III

Johnny, meanwhile, quite unconscious of the storm he had left behind him, went to the place where Minnie had said she would meet him, and, not finding her, proceeded to the hotel to find the reason for delay.

The summer evening was going; already purple shadows of night were wrapping the shores, and the lights on the motor-boats glittered in the darkening twilight. Cautious mothers were making their way to the shore with coats and sweaters for their ungrateful children, for the first breath of Autumn had come. The faint sadness which it brings touched Johnny’s young heart, and he shivered with a vague sense of dread. “Darn it all!” he muttered to himself, “why can’t things last? We’ve had no summer yet.”

A sense of disappointment filled his heart. The evening had gone wrong, and it was all Minnie’s fault—she would stick around there until the last pan was washed. She was too honest, Minnie was; she went hunting work, and did more than any two of the other girls.

On his way to the hotel Johnny met the stranger whose remarks regarding half-breeds had called forth his indignation. The stout gentleman was in an amiable and apologetic mood, and had his own reasons for a

conference with the Indian boy. Since the scene in the dining-room the placid though muddy waters of his soul had been ruffled, and conscience, long since atrophied from disuse, was vaguely stirring in its long sleep. The Indian boy probably knew certain things—or didn't know—and he was glad of this chance meeting, which would give the appearance of casualness to the whole incident which was so necessary. He would find out, if he could, how much was known of the pretty waitress's history.

"I say," he began affably, "I want to thank you for putting me right in there. I meant no harm, you know. It's just my nature to jolly the girls along—nothing to it but a bit of fun. You came on me so quick I couldn't gather my wits together fast enough to apologize, but I do it now. You were quite right, and I was wrong."

The stranger put out a flabby hand, and Johnny took it readily. The older man's apology fell agreeably on his ears. He was evidently a person of importance. The well-ironed crease in his trousers; the russet shoes, well-polished and pointed; the Panama hat with its well-blocked crown, and the white hands, so far removed from toil, gave evidence of his standing in the world of men, and a new feeling of power came over John Starblanket. This man, wealthy and important as he undoubtedly was, had apologized to him.

The Indian is always magnanimous and gracious. "The incident is forgotten," said Johnny, in the stately manner of his great-grandfather.

"Perhaps you would tell me something about this very beautiful girl. Beauty interests everyone, and I cannot pass a flower, a tree, or a beautiful scene, without stopping to admire it. It is my habit of mind. This girl with her ease and grace of movement would attract attention in New York City. Am I asking too much if I ask you to tell me about her?"

"There is nothing much to tell," said Johnny. "She attended the Mission school when I did, and she has good people on her mother's side. They are the Fox Hills Indians. Her mother was one of the chief's daughters, and she was born here nineteen years ago, I think."

"But what about her father?" the white man asked, and if Johnny had been looking closely he would have noticed that the flabby hands twitched nervously.

"No one knows much about him," said Johnny, slowly; "she doesn't talk, neither does her mother; it is forgotten. Indian women do not tell their troubles," he concluded proudly.

A wave of relief swept over the other man's face. "Indian women do not tell their troubles"—behind that kindly wall his craven soul covered and felt itself hidden. Just for a moment, then the thought came tormentingly from somewhere that it was just possible the Indian boy knew more than he was telling. It might be well to find out for sure. There was one way of loosening any man's tongue, Indian or white, one sure way to make a man tell what was in his heart. It was just an off-chance, this suspicion of his—most improbable, and yet not impossible,—and for his own satisfaction he wanted to know how much was known.

"Miss Hardcastle is engaged to be married to me," said Johnny, after a pause. "We expect to be married at Christmas if I get the promotion I am looking for."

"My boy," said the older man, warmly, and in his desire to accomplish his object his words sounded almost sincere; "my boy, I congratulate you, and wish you the very best of life's good things. You deserve them all, too, you and your beautiful young lady. And now let us have a drink to your best happiness."

He turned towards the door of the bar, but Johnny stopped him. "You forget," he said, "that Indians cannot be supplied with liquor in public bars."

The other man laughed. "Oh, no, my boy, I wasn't forgetting, and I wasn't going near the bar. I carry a little all the time for emergencies, my boy—cramps, snake-bites, weddings, christenings, engagements—I'm prepared! This seems to be one of the times. Rotten tough luck, too, not to be able to get a drink like other people—rank injustice, I say. But if these infernal temperance cranks get their way we'll all be in the same boat in a year from now, so let us get a drink while we can."

"I'm sorry," said Johnny, hastily, "but I am looking for Miss Hardcastle now. I have missed her some way, and I don't want to keep her waiting."

"Say, boy," said the older man, lowering his voice, "don't run after 'em too much. They're all the same. Keep 'em guessing—that's the system—don't let 'em be too sure of you. Now, I've had my own way with women all my life, and I've let them do the chasing if there was any to be done."

"She's different," said the Indian boy, simply; "she's independent and high-tempered—she not stand anything. There's too many fellows after her—white men, too, lots of them. She never looks at any of them, though."

The older man laughed in a way that made Johnny feel very young and green and countrified.

“Lad, you’ve got a lot to learn about women. Now, come with me; my room is on the first floor. It will only take a minute, and remember, a year from now there may not be any in the country, so take a snort while you can, I say. It will make you enjoy your evening all the more. I’m as dry as a covered bridge, so come on.”

In half an hour Johnny and his companion came back to the Pavilion, the latter, accustomed as he was to the effect of liquor, comfortably warmed and stimulated, feeling himself rather a fine fellow, with only the weaknesses of other fine fellows; all very attractive failings, too, and excusable on the ground of frail humanity.

John Starblanket’s outlook on life had suffered more. The fine passionate tenderness of his heart was driven out by something coarse, sensual and selfish—something which made him, his wishes and desires, the centre of his little world, instead of the girl whom he had loved so well. Toward her now he had a feeling of annoyance, disappointment, even anger, and he asked himself over and over again, “Why wasn’t she here when she promised?” No one had seen her.

His annoyance soon passed in the glamor of the lights and the music, and in the exaltation which was growing in his heart, for John Starblanket’s training and education had broken down temporarily, and all the primitive savage instincts were surging within him. He wanted action, noise, motion, excitement, admiration. If it had been forty years earlier he could have painted his face, sharpened his tomahawk, and found an outlet for his turbulent soul in stalking some of the young braves of another tribe. But this was in the year of grace nineteen fourteen, and there were laws and conventions to be considered.

To all intents John Starblanket was a white man, an employee of a great Railway, a young man of promise, who held a position of trust. The law had placed a ban on the evil thing that had the power to set aside his training and turn him back to savagery again. But even the law cannot control that elusive, uncertain and variable factor which enters into every human equation. Individuals can find a way to evade and elude the law, and so make its good purposes of no effect. The law had tried to save John Starblanket from his enemy, but the law had failed.

As Johnny swung gaily in among the dancers, who now surged around the Pavilion in a promenade, it so happened that the cashier from the “Notions” was the first person he saw, and she, for her own purposes, smiled up at him in a way that made his eyes shine with a mistier light.

When Minnie had finished her work she had hastily changed her white uniform for a muslin dress and come out to find Johnny. She had a guilty feeling of having delayed too long, and already had words of explanation prepared with which to soothe his impatient spirit.

At the bandstand, where she expected to find him, she found an empty chair, which she carried down to the shore below the Pavilion. Sinking gratefully into its green and white striped seat, she suddenly realized how utterly tired and footsore she was. The music fell about her in a refreshing shower, under which the feeling of weariness and lonesomeness gradually gave way. She was not alone any more in this great rushing, excited throng of people that surged and milled and chattered and danced and ate. Minnie could not regard them quite the same as one who did not have to feed them, but, happily enough, she reflected, she would not always have to carry trays and sweep off crumbs. Johnny would get a raise at Christmas, and already she had saved enough to buy her dress and a fur coat.

Minnie's life had been a singularly lonely one on account of her unhappy parentage and the Indian's dislike of half-breeds. Her mother's people had tolerated her, and that was all. All the anguish of the child who is not liked had been her portion—the nameless, unspoken, crushing weight of being different from other children, though it was not until she went to school at the Mission that she knew the reason. Then it was Maggie Hoskin, arrogantly proud of her pure red blood, who had scornfully classified her, using the evil word that had gone crashing through her young heart with its benumbing cruelty.

Then Minnie understood for the first time, in a flash of blinding horror, why it was that she was never given first place in any of the games; why her grandmother had never taken her with her as she did her other cousins when she went visiting “up the Lake,” never even seeming to look at her; and why her mother had often crushed her in her arms with fierce tenderness, and then hastily pushed her away as if she could not bear the sight of her.

When the teacher at the Mission, noticing her troubled face, had gently sought the cause, Minnie, Indian-like, had hid her grief and bravely lied about it. The place in her heart was too sore for even Miss Bowden's tender hands, so she missed the consolation that might have been hers.

Tonight as she sat by the shore and listened to the band and the rhythmic movement of the feet of the dancers, with the velvety coolness of the evening on her face and in her mouth, which somehow seemed to satisfy her

like a drink of water, and with the blue lake spread at her feet, reflecting the sun-flecked clouds, Minnie's heart was filled with a great peace.

All her life, even in the saddest times of her lonely childhood, the open spaces, the water, trees and birds had comforted her, whispering to her a message of hope. Nothing mattered, these said, nothing. The sun would shine, the gentle, cooling breezes, bearing perfume, would come; the birds' wings would go flashing by. Nature was always all right—it was only people who were bad and cruel.

But since Johnny Starblanket had come into her life Minnie's times of sadness had almost disappeared. Johnny knew everything about her, and he didn't mind. Johnny's approval was enough to banish every bitter thought, and in his towering strength, so abundant, so assured, Minnie's trembling heart had found rest.

Only one thought now troubled her, but this she tried to put from her as being disloyal. Sometimes Johnny had frightened her with his fierce love-making, when his eyes burned deep and his breath smelled like that of a white man. Among the Indians, she knew, liquor was forbidden, and at the Mission she had been taught that liquor drinking was very wicked, and would do dreadful things to the lining of stomach, for Miss Bowden had shown them a picture of it; but she wished that Johnny would not drink it, for when he had the burning eyes he was not gentle and kind to her, but had a way that made her afraid. But Johnny had said that when they were married he would never think of it, because he would not have time to think of anything but her, and at the memory of his words Minnie's heart was flooded with a tender sweetness.

She knew that if she could only get him to come away from the Railway, away up into the big woods, where the rivers sweep down to the sea, and the woods are crimson in autumn, and the nights are filled with silence, he would be all her own, and she would never be afraid. Here there were too many people, too much talk and noise, too many things moving, and no peace, no quiet.

Johnny would get tired of it all, too, just as she was, and then they would take the two canoes and go down North—north to the big country—and live their lives as her people and his had lived theirs before all these troublesome, noisy things had come upon them.

With these quieting and comforting thoughts filling her mind Minnie's lithe young body relaxed in the comfortable canvas chair, and her tired hands lay at rest on her lap. The music seemed to grow softer and softer and

to drift farther away. Now it was only the roar of the big river that she heard—the big falls where the rainbow throws its lovely arch across the foam—and soothed by the sound she fell fast asleep.

Minnie was awakened by the passing of many feet. The crowd was swarming out of the Pavilion toward the train, which stood on a siding with its engine gently throbbing its impatience to be on the way. The dance was over. Rousing herself, she stood up, chilled by the night air, stiff and miserable. Slowly her thoughts came back. Where was Johnny? And why hadn't he met her? Something must have happened to Johnny!

Fear drove out every other thought as she turned toward the Pavilion, from which the crowd still poured. Who could she ask? Not a familiar face did she see.

Suddenly she became rigid as a piece of iron, and with ancestral instinct flattened herself against the white wall of the Pavilion, watching with eyes that glinted like dagger-points. Johnny was passing, with the cashier beside him. Johnny was talking too loudly, gesticulating and rolling in his walk, and his eyes were burning, deep and glowing, like a camp-fire in the black night. His hand held the white girl's bare elbow, and he bent over her caressingly.

Then it was well for little Miss Speers that Minnie had no instrument of death in her hand, for Minnie's mind held but one thought. She was pure Indian now, with no restraint or compunction, and would have killed the girl as joyously as her grandfather had killed the bear at the falls where the rainbow throws its radiance.

Like a ghost Minnie darted after them through the throng, and saw them enter the train. Then she watched from the shelter of a tree for Johnny's return. She was partly white now, and reasoned with herself that, failing to find her, Johnny had danced with the girl and was now putting her on the train—that was all. It was right that he should do this; Johnny was the sort that would always be kind and polite to any girl. The surging flood of anger had left her pale and trembling, and in her thin summer dress she shivered in the night air. She argued, reasoned, tried to persuade herself it was all right. She must be fair, and always fair.

It was a night brilliant with stars, but with no moon, and the big arc lamp at the Station threw a brassy light on the trees around, whose leaves rippled and whispered in the shore wind. It seemed to Minnie that she had slept for days, maybe weeks, her joints were so stiff and cold, and the events of the day were so far removed.

Johnny would be sorry and concerned over her, and afraid that she might have a cold. It was nice to have someone who cared. Her mind alternated with lightning rapidity from one attitude to the other. Rage and jealousy, that made her veins run fire, were succeeded by a calm mood in which she told herself she must be true to Johnny whatever happened, and must continue to believe in him.

While Minnie fought with her emotions the “Moonlight” rapidly took on its passengers, a throng of shouting, laughing young people, whose excitement still prevented them from thinking of the tired time ahead of them. Thoughts of the morning after, with its languor and fatigue, had no power to blight to-night’s pleasure; there was only one time for them, and that was to-night, with its flirtations, music and fun.

Minnie darted forward as the engine shrieked its last warning and the train bell began to ring. With noiseless steps she ran over the deserted platform in the faint hope that Johnny might have gone into another car; but as the cars passed by her one by one, gathering speed as the great engine plowed its way into the night, no one came off, and no one noticed the slim wraith of a girl who stood wringing her hands in mute agony.

Faster and faster the train swept by, every window revealing happy young faces, hateful to her as she glimpsed them passing, and appearing to mock and scorn her in her misery.

She stood there until the last car had disappeared around the turn and the roar of the train had been swallowed up in the night sounds. Motionless she stood, like one who had forgotten her surroundings, forgotten everything. On her face was a puzzled look of childish fear, pain and wonder. Then she turned and ran through the deserted street to the back entrance of the hotel, and up the three flights of stairs to her little room under the rafters.

The night, with its wells of blackness and its cruel silence and weird noises, is a hard time to be brave. The whole scheme of things seems so big and black and all-embracing, so utterly heartless, so inexorable and hard to entreat. Most of us are cowards until the sun comes back.

When the inky blackness of the night filled the room under the rafters Minnie could find no way out of her troubles. The bitter truth, no matter how she tried to explain it, could not be set aside—Johnny had gone away with another girl. He had been drinking, too, and he was gone! He would lose his place in the Station for this, for the boss had told him he would not have a man who drank. All their plans for getting a home back in the woods, where she could raise vegetables to sell to the campers, and earn money for

nice curtains, and maybe a parlor rug, were broken down. . . . It was hard to give up all the things she had planned as they passed before her now in melancholy review.

Minnie was nineteen years old, and every day, every hour of that time, there had been a longing in her heart for something. First it was a vague wish for a place in her family; then for a father and mother, like other children; and, after she knew that this could never be, for a home of her own, and someone for her very own.

John Starblanket, the handsome young Indian, with his strength and his devotion to her, had seemed to make possible all the dreams and hopes of the nineteen years. And now the picture was broken—the game was hopeless—the cards were not coming right.

All this was while it was dark. But as morning approached over the lake came the blue light of dawn, reddening as the sun drew nearer, until two bands of color lay along the eastern shore-line, the deep blue of the night and the blood-red of coming day. Below them the lake lay calm and placid, and every minute the red band widened and grew more luminous.

Minnie washed her face in the little blue enamel basin, and as she carefully arranged her hair, with her gaze on the coming day, new thoughts were taking shape in her mind. The sunrise began to have its effect on her, and to tell her about new days, new beginnings. It was impossible to look at the glory that was growing across the lake and not respond to it.

“When the cards do not come right what do you do?” she asked the sunrise. “There’s no use holding them and trying and trying, is there?” She knew what her mother had done—she had held the cards in her hands, just held them, confessing herself beaten.

“What do *you* do?” she asked of her image in the mirror, fixing upon it a sternly compelling eye which refused to be evaded.

“You shuffle the cards all over again,” replied the image in the glass; “you just shuffle them, and then try again!”

Minnie nodded her approval of the answer, and, turning, greeted with new hope the rising sun.

She dressed herself in her best suit, not knowing where the day might lead her, and went hastily downstairs. She had but the one thought in her mind—she would shuffle the cards again, she would not hold them as they were.

Mrs. Pelatski, the proprietor, meeting her in the hall, asked kindly, "How are you and Johnny coming on?"

From the solicitude in her voice Minnie suspected that she knew something, and a momentary impulse came to cry out all her trouble to the older woman; but close upon this again came the Indian impulse to say nothing, but bravely hide all, lying, if necessary, that the sore spot in her heart might remain hidden. Forcing herself to speak, she stammered, "I don't know what happened to him last night."

Mrs. Pelatski came to the rescue. "Look here, Minnie, I want to tell you about that. That old rake who tried to get fresh with you in the dining-room last night took Johnny to his room and gave him liquor. That's a criminal offence, and we now have it on him for future use. He is a member of Parliament from the East, and naturally doesn't want to go to jail. We have the evidence on him all right, for two of the girls saw him, and I'm just telling you in case you need it. And here's another thing. His brother is Magistrate Brown, in the City. That's a good thing to know, too."

Mrs. Pelatski passed on into the kitchen to give her orders for the day. Men might come or men might go, but meals go on forever.

Minnie had made a sudden resolve. Following Mrs. Pelatski into the kitchen, she asked abruptly, "Can you spare me to-day? I would like to go to the City—I need to go. I will come back in good time."

Mrs. Pelatski looked at her closely, a kindly glance, full of sympathy and having in it a promise of help. "Sure, Minnie, run along," she said. "Have you enough money, and everything you need?"

Minnie nodded and ran back to her room. The first train would be leaving in a few minutes. Her preparations were simple. From a locked drawer she took a revolver, loaded it, and slipped it into her handbag, then hastily pinning a hat on her shining black hair, she ran downstairs and over to the Station.

IV

When John Starblanket wakened from his fitful slumber that morning he was at first under the delusion that an earthquake had occurred and some large building had fallen on him. His head ached, his hands appeared to be powerless, every joint was stiff and sore, and one eye refused to open. Thinking, too, proved to be such a painful process that he abandoned it and lay perfectly still, looking at a small barred window through which a sickly indoor light was filtering.

The only thing he knew about his surroundings was that he had never been in this place before, with its cellar-like air, foul and reeking with evil odors. It nauseated him, and with a painful effort he sat up to look about him. This revealed to him the astonishing fact that he was handcuffed!

Slowly the mental processes began, and John Starblanket recalled step by step the devious path which had led him thither. He recalled the dance at the Pavilion, the girl who dared him to come with her on the train, the big delivery man who had brought her to the Beach and who got fresh with him and had to be dealt with. Johnny recalled a breaking window on the train, and a shower of glass which cut his hands. Feeling a bump on his cheekbone, which was very tender and sore, he wondered what the delivery man was feeling like this morning, and if he had got his features back into place. John Starblanket recalled with a fleeting thrill of satisfaction that the delivery man had crumbled up like a disabled jack-knife at the first blow, and that the friends who came to his assistance had seemed equally brittle. From the floor of the cell John Starblanket, handcuffed, swollen of cheek and black of eye, recalled these scenes with a measure of pride which was in no way dimmed by his surroundings. It had taken four policemen to bring him there, he remembered, and he had given them plenty to do. So, all things considered, and remembering, too, how the night had ended, he still felt it had been a great night.

He had not yet reached the repentant mood, for an Indian does not repent easily, especially of what he does while under the influence of liquor. Liquor drinking to an Indian is a great joyous adventure, so hard to achieve, so hilarious and glorious while it lasts, that repentance is a small part of the experience; and John Starblanket as he lay handcuffed and bruised and sore in No. 7 cell in the Police Station had all the blissfully exultant heart glow of one who comes to the end of a perfect day.

Suddenly he thought of Minnie, and at the thought the high light of exhilaration began to pale. Minnie would be sore about this. He could not explain it to her, either; she wouldn't understand how it felt or how it all happened. Minnie was too white to know about certain things. She would likely cry and fuss around and make a row, like white women do, though Johnny admitted that he had never known Minnie to cry. Still, he felt sure she could, and he became very uncomfortable in thinking of what was ahead of him.

Then there was his mother, too—she didn't like this at all. She would not cry, of course, but she would have a sore heart and look down and say nothing.

Johnny's sensation of glamor began to fade when he thought of his women folks; his spirits drooped, and the deep dejection of "the morning after" claimed him for its own.

When Minnie reached the City and made her way to the Police Station she found that a charge of being drunk and disorderly, also of assault and battery against the person of John Salter, driver for the T. Eaton Co., Ltd., and further, of assault against the person of Thomas Smith, train conductor, had been preferred against John Starblanket, baggage man, and would be heard that afternoon at three o'clock before Magistrate Brown.

The clerk in charge kindly asked her if she wished to see the prisoner, but she said she did not. She only wanted to know when the case would be heard, and would he please give her Magistrate Brown's street and number. The clerk was a leather-faced little chap, with beady eyes, and he showed himself quite willing to talk to the well-dressed half-breed girl, but Minnie passed quickly out into the street.

The noise and confusion of the street traffic beat upon her mercilessly; the hurrying people, clanging streetcars, darting automobiles that roared at each other their shrill threats and warnings; newsboys calling "Extra," delivery men wedged in the traffic—a familiar street scene on a busy morning, but to Minnie a scene of terror. A white husky dog, with wolf's ears and a collie nose, ran nervously through the throng, yelping his fear and terror—a poor lost thing, belonging, like herself, to the kindly open spaces. She watched him, terrified, as he darted across the street only to meet a fire-engine as it came swiftly through an alley, and with an almost human shriek run blindly under its wheels! She turned away, sickened at the sight.

Reaching the home of Magistrate Brown, Minnie rang the bell, wondering at her own boldness. There was no fear in her heart now. She could dare anything, do anything, like the settlers in fire-swept regions, who rush from the burning forest knowing the lake is just beyond—the lake with its cool green waters, where they will find rest and safety.

Magistrate Brown was at home, and received her in his dimly lighted library. Minnie had no words prepared, but the quiet dignity of her race was in her manner, and this impressed him favorably.

"There is an Indian boy in the cells waiting for you to hear his case this afternoon," she said. "He got drunk at the Beach, and came in on the 'Moonlight,' acting very bad, and fighting. He is my man, and I want you

not to send him to jail, but let him come back with me. I will look after him.”

Magistrate Brown was a kindly man, but he was also a magistrate, sworn to uphold the law. It was not the first time that a woman had pleaded for her man. He cleared his throat in his magisterial manner, and said, shaking his head: “But, my dear girl, I can’t do this. If the man has been guilty of an offence the offence must be punished. I’m sorry for you, as I am always sorry for the relatives of offenders, but it is my duty to uphold law and order.”

While he was speaking Minnie could see again the white husky caught and mangled under the wheels, and her words came fast. “But you don’t understand,” she said, lapsing into the Indian manner of speech, “he is good boy—never drinks—saving his money—nice—but white man takes him up to his room and gives him drink out of bottle—then white girl gets him at dance—coaxes him away into City here. He’s good boy if damn whites only leave him alone.”

“Oh, I see,” the magistrate said, soothingly; “that is too bad. If we could prove that against the white man it is a criminal offence, for which the penalty is two years. I do not see how that can mitigate this Indian’s offence, but if you like to prefer a charge against the white man it will be heard. Do you know who he is?”

Minnie nodded, her eyes narrowing wickedly. “His name is Brown,” she said, her words falling in a marked staccato; “he’s a Member of Parliament from East—long piece away.”

The magistrate sprang from his chair. “Nonsense!” he cried, “you don’t know what you are saying.”

Indian-like, Minnie made no reply, but gently smoothed her handbag.

The magistrate quickly recovered his composure. “Now, look here, my girl,” he said, and his voice had a rougher tone, “I’ll be as easy as I can on this Indian boy, but law is law, and he has to be punished. He must learn to take the consequences. I am under oath to enforce laws. Your charge against this man Brown would be hard to prove. Brown is a very common name, and he would be hard to find. Your Indian will be dealt with leniently, and the lesson will do him good.”

The magistrate rose and motioned her to the door with a gesture that he had found efficacious in ending interviews. However, this time it missed fire.

“Let out my man to-day—let him go free,” she said. “I take him away, far away; this is no place for Indians. It was great country once—all grass and trees and buffaloes—all our country. You came, you white men, with guns and killed us—drove us out—stole our land. All right—keep it! You’ve made it great country, I guess—lots of money, lots of cars, lots of noise, lots of lies. It suits you—it don’t suit us—let us go. We’ll go away down North—far away—we won’t come back. Let us go!”

Just at that moment the magistrate’s brother, who had arrived on the late train from the Beach and had slept late, came into the library, yawning and rubbing his hands. In the dim light he did not notice the girl, and began to talk to his brother.

“You’ll have a full docket this afternoon, Dan, I think. We had a lively time coming in on the train from the Beach with a drunken Indian boy who ran amuck and pushed the conductor through a window. I was in another car, but I heard about it at the station. Fortunately no person was much hurt; but there were three or four arrested. Sorry I missed all the fun.”

He laughed good-naturedly. The West was surely the place to get excitement.

Minnie took a step forward, and as the pallid light from a heavily curtained window fell on her the magistrate’s brother gave an exclamation of surprise.

“You’ll not miss all the fun,” she said, in an even voice. “You will be at the trial to-day, and you will be asked where the Indian boy got his liquor. It would be a pity for you to miss all the fun.”

Minnie had regained her composure, and spoke now as she had been taught at the Mission.

The magistrate looked from one to the other—then made a quick resolve. “When the case against your friend is called to-day it will be dismissed,” he said to Minnie without turning around, and when he turned to see if she understood what he had said she was gone.

The sun had gone down in a haze of golden glory behind the trees along the lake-shore, and from the upper sky, where every cloud had a lining of flame, there fell a radiance on the placid water. But Mrs. Starblanket’s eyes, peering sharply over the lake, were only vaguely conscious of its beauty, for she looked for a canoe bringing the visitors for whom she had been preparing the last two days.

The chicken was fried to a golden brown, and the boiled potatoes were steaming on the back of the well-polished stove. The water pitcher, with real ice in it, stood on the table. Every plate in the house was in readiness.

The first train from the Beach roared past, not even stopping at the Station, but rushing through the trees behind her house with a shrieking whistle that filled the evening air with tatters of sound.

Mrs. Starblanket shivered as she listened. Never had a train seemed so overbearing and hostile. "It sure don't give a damn!" she said to herself as she watched the funnel of smoke that caught the evening glory and carried it away to the City.

Vaguely disappointed because Johnny and his girl were late, she built up her fire, mashed the potatoes with a gem-jar, and went outside to her favorite seat behind the house. They could come or they could stay away; she was ready anyway. But a grave loneliness was on her soul, and her pipe went out unnoticed.

On the eight o'clock train from the City, which crossed the Beach train, they came, and in her excitement Mrs. Starblanket did not notice that Johnny's face was swollen on one side, or that his good blue suit was baggy and crumpled. Her eyes were all for Johnny's girl, so neat and stylish in her well-made suit.

Mrs. Starblanket was afraid of her at first, but when they sat down to eat, and Minnie seemed so pleased with everything, praising the cooking, and making Johnny compliment his mother's art, too, the older woman's heart melted toward the handsome girl whose only fault was that she was partly white.

"Johnny will sleep soundly to-night, Mrs. Starblanket," said Minnie, as they washed the dishes together. "He has had a hard day. It is too hard work at the Railway—too many heavy things to handle—and sometimes glass breaks and cuts one's hands so bad. Even Johnny gets tired sometimes, strong as he is. Anyway, he is thinking of quitting the Railway. He is going to give notice to-morrow."

Mrs. Starblanket gave an exclamation of surprise. So did Johnny, his surprise mixed with protest.

Minnie's eyes commanded silence. "Yes," she went on, "Johnny told me about the place down North where your other sons are, and how you would like to go, too. I know I would like it. There are too many people here, too

much noise and crowds all the time, and never any quiet time any more. It's a right place for white people, but no good for Indians."

When the dishes were washed the three sat in silence on the shore and watched the night come down in purple splendor, hushing the world, even the noisy Beach world, to sleep. Long after midnight they sat there, rarely speaking, but each one happy in thinking of the big country "down north" beckoning to them with its promise of peace and plenty and good hunting—three happy Indians about to enter into their native heritage of open air and open sky.

BANKING IN LONDON

I determined to deposit my money. I knew that was an easy thing to do, even pleasant, the simplest form of banking operation; and so with my money in my black bag I entered a bank.

To the young lady behind the wicket I addressed myself. "I wish to open an account," I said. I spoke casually. I wanted her to understand that banking money was a daily experience with me.

"Yes, madam," she said, but not in that eager, welcoming way I had expected; "but you must see the manager."

"Where is he?" I asked, looking around at the many men I saw through the brass lattice, perched up on their high stools.

"You must wait for him in the waiting-room," she said. Her manner was dignified and grave. I gathered from it that a bank manager was not to be achieved at a single bound, but must be won by patient waiting.

Through the blue velvet hangings she directed me to the waiting-room. It was dark, small and empty. I waited. The steady rumble of London's afternoon traffic went by. When my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom I found the heavily shrouded window, and, drawing back the funereal hangings, I gazed into the street. I counted the buses; I figured out my expenses for the day—and I waited.

A door led from the waiting-room. It was marked "Private." I believed it led to the retreat of the manager whom I would see. I watched it hopefully; it might open any moment. Time passed.

Suddenly I looked at my watch: it was after half-past two. The place seemed to be deserted. A fear broke over me—they had locked up and gone home—they had forgotten me! The night watchman would find me, here, with this money! He might shoot me!

I was leaving the waiting-room hurriedly, but to my relief I found no one had gone. The young lady was still in the cage, the occupants of the high stools were still repeating sums of money to each other. Fear making me bold, I again addressed the young lady.

"Tell me," I said, "what the delay is? I see I have begun wrong some way. I am a stranger, you see, and I do not know your ways. Perhaps you do

not take money on Mondays; maybe you have all the money you want. Or should I give a three-days notice of motion, or wire ahead for a reservation? I see I am wrong, but please tell me how to go on from here.”

She looked at me wonderingly.

“Has it anything to do with Lent,” I said, “or full moon, or the Lord Mayor’s show?”

“Oh, no,” she replied, puzzled, “not at all. The manager will see you presently. I will tell him again.”

“Yes, do,” I said; “and please tell him I do not want to borrow money, but to deposit it. I think you could not have made that plain. I know people who want to borrow money have to wait, but not depositors.”

“Certainly, madam,” she said, politely.

Again I went back to the dim little room, and again time passed. A man came out of the private door, hat in hand, and passed into the street, but still the door turned its inhospitable back on me. The shadows lengthened in the street as the afternoon wore away.

I looked out through the blue hangings to reassure myself that the staff were still at work, and saw one fellow untwisting his legs from around the shank of his stool. It looked to me as if he were getting ready to go. A sudden impulse seized me. I would see what was behind the closed door. She had said the manager would see me presently. All right. He would if his eyesight happened to be good—he would see me! I knocked.

The door opened, and a tall man in gray stood in the murky doorway.

“Well?” he asked. His tone betokened a certain amount of resignation, not untinged with annoyance.

“Did the girl at the wicket tell you I was here?” I asked, trying to speak haughtily, but finding my courage seeping away. I began to see that it was presumptuous of me to bother the staff with my little personal affairs.

He disdained my question. “Now what is it, exactly, that you want?” he asked.

“I want to open an account,” I said, “and I made the mistake of thinking this was a bank. It is marked so, but it must be a mistake.”

“Do come in,” he said.

I came in.

“Now, do sit down.” His tone gave me to understand that my habit of not coming in and not sitting down was very annoying.

I sat down.

He spread his hands on the table as if it were a seance.

“Now, tell me what it is,” he said patiently.

“I want to open an account,” I said doggedly. “I still want to, and it’s the same account I wanted to open an hour ago.”

“Very good,” he said, “very good. We are not refusing money, but you must give me a reference.”

I began all over again.

“I must be using the wrong words,” I said, “you have misunderstood me. But see, I have the money, and I want you to take it and keep it for me. I don’t want you to loan me money; I have it here in Bank of England notes.”

“Even so,” he said, “we must have a reference.”

I could think of nothing that would be both suitable and becoming.

“What do you want a reference for?” I asked at last. “Are you collecting references?”

“It is our rule,” he said with finality.

I put the money in my bag and stood up.

“Good afternoon,” I said. “I’m sorry I have to go. I’ve had a pleasant time, but it is getting late, and I really must find a bank.”

“This is a bank,” he said, “and you will have to give a reference wherever you go in England. Don’t you know someone in London?”

“Give me time,” I said, “I have only been here since Saturday.”

“You must know someone,” he persisted.

“I do,” I replied, “I know Lady Astor.”

“Who is she?” he asked wearily. I knew now I was undergoing an intelligence test.

I shook my head. “If you have never heard of the British House of Commons,” I said severely, “it’s too long a story for me to begin.”

“Who else do you know?” he asked. “Some business man perhaps?”

“Yes,” I said, “I know Sir Charles Starmer.”

There was no gleam of intelligence in the cold eyes that regarded me. I must explain further.

“Sir Charles Starmer,” I said reproachfully, “is the editor of the *Northern Echo* and twenty-six other newspapers.” (I was not really sure about my figures, but I felt it was no time to be mean with Sir Charles over a few newspapers).

“I have not heard of him,” he said.

“Well,” I said, “it’s your turn now, anyway. Who do you know?”

We looked at each other through the dusky light of the room, and it seemed like a deadlock in the proceedings.

“Look here,” he began, with a sudden flash of intelligence, “have you a passport?”

I had.

When he had it spread before him he read it aloud: “McClung, Nellie Letitia; married; eyes brown, mouth large.”

He looked at me closely.

“By Jove! that’s right,” he cried. “Hair brown—slightly gray. That’s right, too,” apparently surprised at the coincidence.

Then he studied the photograph, comparing it with me.

“Don’t you think it’s a good picture?” I said.

He refused to commit himself. “It appears,” he said at last, guardedly, “that you are the person described in this passport.”

“Don’t be rash,” I said, “I would not like you to lose your job over this.”

My sarcasm was lost.

“There is very little chance for fraud,” he said, still regarding me critically.

“Fraud!” I cried hotly. “Fraud! You make me tired. Do you know, I can borrow money in any bank in Canada with less bother than this!”

“Quite!” he agreed with me. “Quite! I have always heard that the banking in Canada is done in very loose fashion. Very well, then,” he said, “we will take your money.”

Then it was my turn.

“Oh, indeed!” I said, “but remember I have my family traditions, too. You must convince me that you are to be trusted. Who are you? and what did your grandmother die of? I cannot leave my money with unauthorized people.”

“Quite!” he said again, and solemnly placed before me the financial statement of the bank.

“And now,” he said. “I will have to have a specimen signature for reference.”

“Would you like a lock of my hair?” I asked.

“It will not be necessary,” he replied gravely.

“And now, how shall we open this account?” I asked gaily. “Having gone so far I certainly want to see it done right. Just do whatever your custom is. Do we open with the National Anthem? Or, under the circumstances, would it not be better to use ‘O Canada’?”

His air of perplexity deepened.

All went well until the day came when I returned to draw out my balance. Again I had to wait to see the manager.

“Look here,” he began, “do I understand you are going away?”

“I am going on Friday,” I said, “and I came in to draw my balance.”

“This is Monday,” he said, shutting one eye and transfixing me sternly with the other.

“Am I wrong again?” I asked. “Is Monday the wrong day to draw money?”

He pursed his mouth reflectively and beat his chin with his forefinger. “You should have given us more notice,” he said at last.

I gasped. “Notice to draw fifty pounds?” I said. “Will you miss my account as much as that?”

“Certainly not,” he corrected me, “but how are we to tell how many cheques you have issued?”

“You do not need to tell,” I said; “I can talk, and I will tell you. The stubs in the cheque book will tell you.”

“You may have written more than these,” he persisted.

“But I didn’t,” I said.

“And it would be very embarrassing to have them presented after you had taken your money,” he continued without heeding my interruption.

“It would be embarrassing for the holder of the cheque,” I said, “but not for you.”

“It would certainly embarrass us,” he said virtuously, and here he looked at me with grave reproof; “and I should think it would embarrass you.”

“Well, it won’t,” I said, “because I haven’t written any but these.”

He still hesitated.

“Well,” I said, “do you think I had better cancel my sailing and stay another month to see if any other cheques come in?”

“Oh, no, I do not advise that,” he said.

“Well, then,” I said, “get along in there and tell me my balance, and I’ll write a cheque to cover it. I know what it is, but I just want to know if you do. Now chase yourself, my lad, for, pleasant as it is, I cannot stay all day talking to you.”

He seemed to loom taller and grayer than ever, and the look he gave me was one of the deepest wonder.

But I got the money.

When our business relations were at an end he grew almost genial. “You will come again, I hope,” he said; “and if you do I hope you will again open up an account with us.”

“Oh, yes,” I agreed, “surely I will. I wouldn’t think of going anywhere else. I would not care to break in another bank manager at my time of life. I will surely come to you—but do be careful,” I said.

I know he will not be there when I go back. All depositors are not as long suffering as I am. Someone will shoot him.

CARRIED FORWARD

PART I.

The silence of a funeral is like no other silence in all the world. Even the work-horses knew there was something wrong, and, coming to the bars of the pasture, had put their heads through, and stood in a solemn, unblinking row, as motionless and subdued as undertakers, watching the yard filling with the horses and buggies which were bringing the neighbors.

On a knoll in the back pasture which commanded a view of the premises the cows had assembled in a startled group, drawn together in the fellowship of mystery. The sheep grazing on the summer fallow seemed to be trying to curb the uncouth caperings of their offspring, with a lack of success that was almost human.

Leaving the door-yard, whose silence they found oppressive, the hens led their broods down the bank of the creek and passed unmolested into the freshly plowed garden, rich in fishworms, where in opulent undertones they tried to direct the activities of the clamorous crowds that followed them.

In the yard the neighbors' horses dozed comfortably in the soft May sunshine, undisturbed by any questionings of life or death. They only knew it was quiet and warm and that it was good to be at rest, with the clutch of the harness gone from their tired shoulders. As the neighbors arrived in their wagons and buggies the women went at once into the house, using the back door; but the men went to the big barn, where Luke Berry, the bereaved husband, received their sympathy, which, though awkwardly expressed, was none the less sincere.

Luke had dressed himself in his "other suit" and put on a stiff collar. The latter irritated him somewhat, causing him to chafe at its narrow confines. He was a good-looking, thick-set man, with dark blue eyes, in which to-day there was a look of deep bewilderment.

"It isn't as if she had been sick and I was prepared for this," he said brokenly, "but here she was two days ago as well as one could expect, helping me to cut potatoes, complaining a little of a pain in her side; but that was nothing more than I would expect. . . . She was not exactly a delicate woman either. . . . never lay in bed more than three days with any of the children. By gosh, I don't see how having a baby should kill a woman. It's natural and right that they should have them, and, of course, we all know

they suffer, but they shouldn't die! Women don't seem to have the sand in them they used to have; my mother raised fifteen and lost five, and I have often heard my father say they never had a doctor in the house, and never needed one. . . . I got the doctor as soon as Mrs. Peters said there was something wrong, and he said as soon as he came that it was too late to do anything—that he should have been called as soon as she took sick. He said something, too, about a month or two ago being the right time to call him in. But how in thunder did I know there was going to be any trouble? Well, anyway, here I am, left with all these children, all girls, too; and even the baby is alive and well—and her gone!”

After relieving his feelings thus Mr. Berry rested on his elbows on the half-door and, leaning back, searched the faces of his neighbors for an explanation. “This is a pretty how-do-you-do, boys; now, isn't it?” he asked, after a pause.

The men shook their heads gravely. It was quite evident that Luke Berry had been badly treated.

“We are all sorry, Luke,” said Bob Walters, who, being an auctioneer, was readier of speech than the others, and naturally became the spokesman of the party. “It sure is an awful blow for a man to be left with a family, and all young. I don't suppose you know what you will do yet!”

With unerring instinct Bob knew that it was best to get this sad event on an earthly plane. The problem of a housekeeper was earthly enough.

“God knows,” said Luke bitterly; “I don't. I never thought I would come to the place when I was looking for a housekeeper—and it don't seem fair. Here I am, a man who has always worked hard; never took a holiday the way lots of men do, just slaved and worked and paid my debts; and here, just when I was getting on my feet, with most of my machinery paid for, and that new quarter of school land, look what has happened to me! It's not a square deal. I didn't deserve this, boys.”

The huge windmill on the barn was throwing its gaunt arms against the slight breeze that had sprung up, and filling the tank above with much creaking and groaning of machinery, throwing a shower of water on the ground around them.

“Stop it, Dave,” Luke said impatiently to the hired man; “it don't seem right to have so much noise even here in the barnyard, and, anyway, don't you know the tank is full enough? There is no use wasting water.”

He went back to the subject that was so heavy on his heart, and searched the faces of his neighbors for corroboration of his case.

“Talk about a set-back, boys, well, here’s where I get mine! It would have been easier to have lost every horse in the place and had the barn burned. . . . And what beats me is I don’t see why it had to happen. I have been a square shooter, and I think I have been a decent neighbor. I never was any hand for going to church, because with machinery to look after and chores to do I never seem to get the time. There was always something to get ready, and Sunday seemed like the time to get it done. God knows I never spared myself, and seems to me God should be willing to give a man a chance when he sees he is willing to work. . . . I can’t square this in my mind with common fair play!” He was pounding his closed fist as he spoke on the half-door of the box stall, and continued to do it as again he looked for light or some explanation in the faces before him. Even the auctioneer could only shake his head and venture the opinion that “it sure was tough.”

Lifting the discussion out of the trembling fog of metaphysics into which it had now fallen, and where none of the company felt at ease, Mr. Walters, with a deft stroke, placed it safely on the solid ground of economics once more.

“The worst thing about a man losing his wife,” he began, stopping long enough here to light his pipe and carefully drop the match in one of the water pails, “is the housekeepers that he has to put up with. There may be good women who go out working, but, by George, no one can tell that to my brother Dan. Dan lost his wife just a year ago now, and he has had five women already. First he tried a man and his wife. They were just married and looked strong and likely. Everything went well for about a week, and then one morning the woman did not get up—it was the man that got the breakfast. Dan might’uv stood that, but when he saw the man getting ready to carry her breakfast to bed it looked a little much of a good thing. He did not say anything until it had happened three times, and then he told her what he thought. He told her his wife had never had a meal in bed in her life only when the children were born; and, by George, do you know what that saucy lump snapped back at him? ‘I quite believe you, Mr. Walters,’ she said, ‘your wife was different in lots of ways from me, but remember this when you are making comparisons, that she died at thirty-three. Get that? She died, and I am not figuring on an early grave and leaving a flock of orphans!’ Gee, that cut Dan, and he paid them off right there. Now he has a red-haired dame that never gives him a civil word, though she is good to the kids. But she makes him get the men’s shirts done up in town, and buy all

the bread, and he has to do the milking all himself. But she knows he is in a corner, and you bet she hands it to him rough, and her pulling down forty dollars a month.”

Conversation became general then, for each of the men had contributions to offer on this subject.

In the house the big room, from which the sunshine was shut out by the dark green Holland blinds, was filled with women, all sombrely dressed in black; big, deep-bosomed women, most of them, with sunburnt faces and thick red hands that worried their owners to-day in their uncertainty just where to put them. Good hands they were, kind, skilful and ready when there was work to be done; but to-day every woman was unpleasantly conscious of their size and their redness, and of the difficulty of concealment in the absence of aprons. The pervading odor of the house was that of freshly scrubbed floors mingled with camphor, and, after the arrival of Grandma Brown, mothballs, for Grandma Brown had on her widow's veil, which was taken from its bed of mothballs only for funerals, with the one exception of the Sunday that the Masonic Lodge attended Divine Worship. Grandpa Brown had been laid away with Masonic honors thirty years before, and since then his widow had felt that she belonged to the Order, and faithfully attended the one open meeting of the year, wearing the veil as a token of membership.

To-day she did not stay in the front room, where the silence was rather terrifying, but went to the rooms above, where the work of dressing the children and making them ready for the funeral was going on.

The neighbors had made a thorough cleaning of the house according to the unwritten laws of neighborhoods, and there was hardly a trace of the smell of small babies and unwashed milk-cans which had prevailed prior to this upheaval.

Conversational efforts were made at intervals by the women in the darkened room, but, although held up bravely for a few moments, these soon flickered, languished, wavered and went out, and silence fell deeper than ever. Even the children, who sat uncomfortably on the edges of their chairs, were motionless and dumb, as if they did not wish by their activity to cast aspersions on the inactivity of the dead. The clock, which stood on a shelf of its own, with an elaborately scalloped newspaper drape, seemed to feel the solemnity of the hour, and after clearing its throat to strike, changed its mind, gurgled once, and went on with its ticking.

The company in the front room increased with the coming of each buggy. Many had come from a distance to pay their respects to the dead and look their last on her white face, telling each other in sighing whispers that she looked “natural.”

Upstairs a frightened group of children, all washed and brushed, were herded together in one of the bedrooms, and warned to stay clean by Mrs. Peters, who had taken charge of the proceedings. They sat dully on the bed, awed by the silence of the house. Suddenly little Julia began to cry.

Mrs. Walters undertook to scold her. “Bad little girl to be crying,” she said, “and the whole house full of people! Bad little girl, crying, and her poor mother lying dead downstairs!”

At this Julia’s grief flowed afresh.

Grandma Brown, who had laid aside the crepe veil to be better able to lend a hand, took the sobbing child on her knee and stoutly defended her. “Well, Missus Walters,” she said, “I don’t know just how you look at these things, but I should say there is no one has any more right to cry than young Julia here. I would say this is her funeral, if you get my meaning, and if she feels like crying I am not going to try to stop her. I lost my mother when I was about her age, and the neighbors told me afterwards that I whooped it up for fair, and none of them could stop me; and looking back now, I know I had good reason, and I am glad I knew enough to cry. I had two stepmothers, and I guess they did the best they could, poor things—I am not holding anything against them—but I never tell a kid to stop crying. I don’t blame them for howling any time.”

“Why, Grandma Brown, whatever makes you talk like that? Life isn’t as bad as all that, even if there are hard places in it, like the one we are at today,” said Mrs. Peters, soothingly. Mrs. Peters was a placid woman, with straw-colored hair, not a strand of which was ever out of place.

“Life is hard on the people who cannot take their own part,” the old lady persisted; “that’s what happened to the poor girl downstairs. She never grumbled—never got mad—took it all. Did without things all her life. Stayed at home and fed pigs while Luke went out to buy more land and more pigs. Had a baby every year, and broke her heart when they died. To be sure Luke was a good man; he never beat her or starved her. There are other ways of killing a woman. Annie was dumb and Luke was blind—and this is what happened.”

“But Annie was fond of him, too. He was good to her in his own way,” said Mrs. Walters.

“Yes, she was fond of him,” Mrs. Brown admitted. “That is what beats me. It is so easy for women to be fond of someone. Their affections go out with a little hook on the end, like a wild cucumber vine, and whatever they grab they say it is fate. Oh, I know, I have seen this lots of times, and the next one will be just as fond of him.”

“Oh, Grandma, let poor Annie get cold before you think of the next one,” said Mrs. Peters, reprovngly.

“All right, but I make my guess that he will be married in six months. Of course, you can’t blame him, for there are the children to think of, and it takes a woman to look after them. And then there will be more children, and if their mother dies there will be another woman some place who will take the job of minding them and raising more. It is a great plan, and a great world for men.”

Mrs. Peters looked at her neighbor in astonishment. “Grandma Brown,” she said, “I never heard you talk that way before. It is a good thing the children are too young to understand, and I hope you won’t talk that way before Hilda, for she is a wise little thing for twelve years old. You would be surprised at the things she has asked me. Indeed, she knows too much. I didn’t know what to say to her. I wouldn’t for the world have her hear you. There is no use turning a child against her father.”

Grandma Brown lowered her voice. “That’s so,” she said, “there is no use in making the child bitter. She will be that soon enough. So I’ll be careful. And there is only a board wall between this room and the one she is in, and she’s as sharp as a cat, I know.”

In the next room, standing guard over her young pink sister, Hilda Berry, the eldest daughter of the house, heard every word that had been said, and in her heart there raged a bitter feeling of resentment. Her father was to blame in some way. She knew that sometimes her mother cried and was impatient with all of them; and once she said she wished she were dead and done with it all. But there was no one whom Hilda could ask. When she had tried to get Mrs. Peters to tell her on another occasion where she got all the babies she brought to people, Mrs. Peters had told her that was not a nice question for a little girl to think of. “God sends the babies, and it is not our business at all,” she had said, and Hilda had tried to be satisfied with this meagre explanation; but she could not help thinking that when she had to mind them

and wash for them, sleep with them and wean them, she had some right to be interested, or even consulted about their coming.

Ever since she could walk Hilda had had a baby dragging after her. Her earliest memory was of teaching her sister Mary to walk, and being soundly scolded by her father for letting her bump her head in the process. Never had she as much as gone to the stable to look for eggs without taking a baby by the hand, or with one in her arms; and scarcely a full night's sleep had she ever had with the incessant demands of a last year's baby. And to be told that God sent them did not increase her good opinion of the Almighty. Not one of them could she spare, for she loved them all with an almost fierce love; but she did wish no more would come until all of them were big enough to feed themselves and "tell." Her little arms were so tired some nights she could not sleep with the ache of them.

The sudden death of her mother had left Hilda stunned. It just could not be. In a vague way she held to the hope that Mrs. Peters would bring her back. Mrs. Peters could do wonderful things. The way she supplied babies all over the neighborhood was wonderful; and once she brought to life a boy who had been drowned; and Hilda knew she could make a flower grow from just a leaf, for they had one of these now in the kitchen window.

In the first outcry of her grief Mrs. Peters had told her she must not cry; she must be an extra good girl now, for if she wasn't she would never see her mother again. And knowing Mrs. Peters' powers, Hilda had held to the hope that by great goodness on her part she might have her mother given back to her. Mrs. Peters and God, who worked so well together in the matter of bringing babies to people who had not asked for them, might do a good turn in a pinch for the same people, and this seemed to be the time. Hilda knew that their Swedish neighbor surprised them all by what he did once. One of their cows had fallen into his well and been drowned. It had not been his fault, for the cow had no business to be in the field where the old well was. Her father admitted that he had no claim for damages, and when the Swedish neighbor had expressed his sorrow by saying it was "too damn bad," they thought the incident was closed. But two days afterwards they got a surprise. One of the Swede's cows had twin calves, and he brought over one of them for a present—the best one, as they found out afterwards—and everyone said it was real decent of him. It would be just like God to be decent at a time like this.

Following Mrs. Peters' suggestion that if she were not good she would never see her mother again, Hilda had worked with the strength of a full-grown woman, rising the first in the morning, and not quitting until the last thing was done at night. She would not give God or Mrs. Peters any excuse for not bringing her mother back.

But as the hour for the funeral drew near Hilda grew apprehensive. She tried not to be impatient, remembering that it would take time for God and Mrs. Peters to get everything arranged. Instinctively she knew that it would be harder to bring someone back than to shove a baby into even an unwilling family, and she kept warning herself that she had never known or heard of anyone who had been as dead as her mother who had come alive again; but perhaps it did happen and was not spoken of. There were things like that.

She looked out of the window and saw the fields all full of sunshine, with their new crops showing green and beautiful. Black shadows of the drifting clouds ran over the green, like twisting, creeping giant hands, which made her afraid, for they all seemed to be coming to the house with some evil intention. The sickening smell of wolf-willow blossoms came to her from the pastures. A meadowlark on the fence post sang straight at her. It was easy enough for him to sing. His mother wasn't dead, and he had no baby to mind, and, besides, any time he did not like the way things were going he could fly away and never come back. Hilda hated the meadowlark because his heart was so light, while hers was breaking, and she wished his song would choke him. She felt to him the way she felt to the lighthearted children at school on the few occasions she had been at school. She could not understand how they could be so care-free. When the other children, whose backs were not aching with the burden of little brothers and sisters, would propose a game, and dash into it with all the abandon of childhood, Hilda would sit stiff and unhappy, wishing that they would not do it. Somehow it hurt her.

The new baby slept quietly, undisturbed by the fact that her father had not yet looked at her. Hilda could have told her that this neglect would last until her successor arrived. Last year's baby was quite popular with Luke Berry—that is, when its behaviour was beyond reproach—but he boasted of his inability to do anything with a baby when it cried, and was emphatic in declaring that he would rather sleep in a snowbank than in the house with a crying youngster.

The baby slept quietly, and Hilda felt free to go downstairs to see if there were any signs of her mother's return. The women in the parlor stopped talking when she came in, and many a sigh of sympathy fell on the silence when she tip-toed over to the coffin and looked eagerly into the cold, set face. She touched her mother's cheek, and wondered how it could be so cold and what made her lips so blue; but she did not ask the women, for she knew that all this was as great a mystery to them as it was to her. Hope still burned in her heart. Maybe God would be "decent" like the Swedish neighbor. Maybe He was leaving it to the very last to let all the people come and see what would happen. Her grandmother, when she had visited them one summer, had told her lots of stories about God, and in everyone of them God came out best. The one Hilda liked the best was about the one about the fire coming down from Heaven, and the man of God prayed for it. Hilda loved that one, though she couldn't help feeling a little sorry for the other men, who prayed so hard and did not get even a flicker out of their gods. That was very hard, especially after they had cut themselves with knives to show how bad they were feeling. Hilda would have been quite willing to slash herself now, but she knew it wouldn't do any good. The man of God had been very off-hand about it, her Grandmother said, and even joked with the prophets of Baal, saying, "Your gods must be asleep, or off on a journey." She must not let on she was a bit afraid.

But Hilda's face was so white and her eyes so full of excitement that the women were afraid to speak to her. Their hearts were bleeding for her, but not one of them could frame a sentence of sympathy. Their wordlessness had driven them to the cleaning of the house. That was the outlet for their feelings, and Hilda did not misunderstand their silence. Neither did she resent all the scrubbing and tidying that had taken place, nor think that it was a reflection on her mother's housekeeping. Her mother worked all the time, and so did she. No one could work longer than that. The women knew that, and most of them did the same. But when anyone died the others let their own work go, even letting the cows go un milked if necessary, to "do for" the family of the one who was gone. There was no criticism in these acts of neighborliness.

Hilda noted the new paper on the pantry shelves, the polished kitchen stove, the shining windows. Even the face of the clock had had the fly-stains removed, and Hilda's sharp eyes saw that part of the dome of St. Paul's had come off too. (Hilda did not know it was the dome of St. Paul then; she only knew that it was a great church somewhere in England, and that her mother had been careful to wipe it with a soft rag, breathing on it gently). Every pot and pan was scoured and shining, the clothes-horse was full of freshly

ironed clothes, and a great batch of bread filled the kitchen table, covered with her mother's clean apron to let it cool and not dry out. She listened for a minute to hear it crack and sing, and just for a fraction of a second in her delight she forgot the trouble of her heart. Her mother had often called her to listen to the bread and rejoice with her over another good baking. Her mother loved the smell of the clean clothes, too, when Hilda brought them in from the line all sweet with sunshine, and her delight in them had been Hilda's cure many a time for an aching back when the washing was all done, dried and brought in. She wished her mother could see the sparkling kitchen now, and then corrected herself by thinking she would soon see it. Hilda would not let her faith waver. Her grandmother had told her about Peter walking on the water, and doing fine, too, until he got afraid, and then down he went. So she must keep on believing!

But she felt the need of something. There was no one to turn to, and Hilda could not read the Bible which lay on the table in the parlor. She had tried, but it was not a bit like the reader at school, which had good big, shiny print, and pictures at the side to give a person a hint of what the word might be. She knew the Bible had a lot to say about God, and she often wished her mother had had time to read a little bit of it every night, the way her grandmother had done. Anyway, there was a motto her grandmother had left when she went away. It hung in the room where the baby was. It was very beautiful and looked like red velvet, though it was only paper when you got right up to it. And the words on it were in silver, cut in deeply; and there were silver flowers on the side which came right over the words, a shower of them like little silver bells, and the words said, "Ask, and it shall be given you."

She would say that over and over, and maybe that would do just as good as if she could read the Bible. If God knew as much as her grandmother thought He did, He would know she was doing the best she could. She thought it might help if she held the motto in her hands.

When the minister drove into the yard the men began to drift in from the stable, standing in groups around the door until Mrs. Peters, who always took the lead at funerals, got them persuaded to go right into the house and leave the space at the door for those who might come late. The blinds were drawn in the room, but enough of the bright sunshine had stolen in to reveal the objects there. One bright ray of light, which came through a hole in the green Holland blind, fell caressingly on the enlarged picture of Hilda's mother in her wedding-dress of the year 1896, with its billowy sleeves and

stiff passementerie. It was a crayon drawing which her mother had had made for her by a travelling salesman, who made a point of assuring his customers that they were "only paying for the frame." The frame was an elaborate one of fretted gold with an edge of oak.

To-day in the gloom of the silent room the young face of the bride gleamed and glowed in weird distinctness. It was the most living thing in this room of death, with its smiling eyes and speaking mouth and eager questionings. It was such a sweet, trusting and confident young face, smiling into the future, and demanding an answer by its very expectancy to the question, What have you got for me, Big World? It seemed to urge with all the insistence of radiant youth, "Something glorious and wonderful, I know, but tell me. . . . I am not afraid, whatever it is. . . ."

Just below stood the coffin, its wooden rest standing on the black mat bordered with the Greek key pattern, gleaming white; the coffin sombre black and final!

The minister came in then, shaking hands with all the neighbors. He was deeply sympathetic, and tried his best to show it, but could not get away from the difficulties of his position. He held fast to his prayer-book, with the leaf turned down where begins the Burial of the Dead.

"A very sad occurrence, this; the saddest death there is, I always think, is when a young mother is taken away in the very flower of her womanhood. It is so very difficult for the husband and father. But we must be resigned to the will of God, and not question His goodness. I know the kind neighbors are showing their sympathy in a thousand practical ways." He included them all in his pleasant smile.

The Reverend Mr. Albright had come out from the City, ten miles away, to conduct the funeral. Mr. Berry had not seen him before, though he had often heard of him, and so had the neighbors, for he was quite a famous golfer, and his picture in his golfing costume had been in the papers on the occasions when he had won championships. When Mr. Berry had 'phoned to ask him to come out he had been very nice about it, and said he would be glad to come if the funeral could be early in the afternoon, for he was due at a Service Club dinner at six o'clock.

Mrs. Peters came upstairs to tell Hilda to come down, for the service was going to begin. The thin Mrs. Humphrey would stay with the baby. Hilda said she thought she had better stay. Always Hilda had had to stay back to care for a baby, and the habit was deeply ingrained; but Mrs. Peters would not hear of it this time. "You must be at the service, and go to the grave,

too,” she added, “no matter who has to stay behind. Mrs. Humphrey can manage the baby, and you must be at the service. Sometimes there’s a lot of comfort in what the minister says. He will explain all about death, and show us why we should not grieve too much. My mother died when I was a little girl, and I’ll never forget how the minister’s words comforted me.”

All the children were in the room, seated in a close row beside the coffin—all but the two-year-old baby, who had been taken to one of the neighbor’s because she was too young to keep quiet. The others, hushed and awed, sat soberly through the service. Julia came to Hilda and held her hand.

Reverend Mr. Albright did not venture to stray from the words which were written in the book. Funerals always bothered him, for he felt embarrassed in the presence of grief. Human words seemed so utterly powerless. He wanted to comfort the forlorn row of little girls, especially the biggest one, whose eyes never left his face. But what could he say? Her mother had plainly died from overwork and child-bearing. In his nervousness he did not even speak in a natural tone of voice, but hurried along, trusting that the beautiful words of the service would carry comfort without any help from him. Hilda wished he would talk to them and tell them what he thought, instead of just saying a piece. He looked so nice and friendly, and so sure that everything was all right, perhaps he could explain all she wanted to know. Hilda only remembered that he said “Like as a father pitieth his children,” and it made her heart still heavier. She had hoped that God was more like her mother, who one time cried over Hilda’s sore hands when she had been out stooking wheat and had no gloves—not only cried, but found a pair of her own gloves that she had before she was married—and Hilda found out afterwards that they were her mother’s only gloves, and she had to go bare-handed to town all summer and until the season came for woollen mittens.

Her father sat with his head in his hands, so deeply engrossed in his own grief that he had not a word nor a glance for any of the children. Hilda vaguely felt his displeasure—they were to blame some way for what had happened, mostly because there were too many of them! But she could not fix the blame on any particular one of the sad little group. She knew they all loved their mother just as she did, and would not hurt her if they knew—even the noisy one, who was absent because she was noisy, loved her in her own way. But, all the same, Hilda instinctively felt that her father considered that he had been badly treated by his family, and for her mother to slip away and leave him this way was downright shabby. Hilda wished she knew how to defend her mother.

“Ask, and it shall be given unto you.” She said it when she saw Mrs. Peters lifting the children one by one to look at their mother’s white face. She would have cried then if she had not been saying over her promise and believing it so truly. Little Julia, having no promise to lean on, had to be carried out sobbing; and when she gave way, the whole family, except Hilda, broke into wild cries, which were only hushed when they were taken out and put into the buggies which were standing at the door, and where the prospect of a drive offered some consolation.

“I am asking God, and I am asking,” Hilda repeated as she saw the men preparing to screw down the coffin-lid. She stood beside the coffin, wanting to be the first one to see her mother open her eyes. . . . “Ask and it shall be given unto you.” One screw had gone in, and the second one was being turned. . . . “Ask and it shall be given unto you. . . . Oh, God, hear me, I am asking; do it now, God—she’ll smother if you don’t! Ask, and it shall be given unto you.”

Hilda had to stand aside to let the pallbearers get hold of the coffin. Grandma Brown had taken her by the hand and was patting it gently, and they were all moving out of the house. She had to follow.

Hilda did not take her eyes from the coffin all the way to the cemetery. It was in Mr. Peters’ light wagon, and the buggy she rode in was directly behind. Sometimes when the horses trotted over the rough road and the coffin was jolted, Hilda fancied she saw it move, and her heart almost stood still with expectancy. She could have screamed to the stolid driver, but she knew if God would keep His word He would do it handsomely, and bring her mother back strong and well. She was convinced now that it would happen right at the grave.

The funeral procession, like a slowly crawling black snake, wound its tedious way along the river-bank, sometimes dividing into sections as if the snake had suffered mortal injury; but these divisions no sooner occurred than they were healed, for the horse that had dropped behind would break into a trot of his own free will to regain his lost position, and those behind closed up. The road had many a tedious winding. Short-cuts there were through field and over summerfallow, but the unwritten law concerning funerals was well understood. The longest road must be taken. There must be no suspicion of hurry, nor any evidence of the worldly desire to save time. These things belong to life, not death. The last earthly journey of the deceased must be serenely slow, and free from all abbreviations.

The gleam of the afternoon sunshine fell dazzlingly on the growing fields. Away to the west the mountains stood in all their blue and silver majesty, silent, detached from worldly troubles, serene and sure. They seemed to rest on the very foundations of the world. Hilda tried to look at them and get some of the comfort that her grandmother said she got when she lifted her eyes to the hills from whence cometh help. There was no comfort in them for the little girl. They seemed to roll over her and crush her into a pitiful little handful of dust that the wind would drive away. Nothing mattered to them; they could not be sorry, no matter who died. What did they care for mothers? Secure in their dreadful permanence, they stood unmoved and uncaring. She went back to her text, and held to it with all the intensity of her devout little heart.

There was more comfort in the headlands and the road allowance, with their tender green grass, all blue-eyed and beautiful with the early crocuses, shading from foaming white through palest blue into deep cobalt and rich purple, and in the delicate embroideries of buttercups along the edge of the road, showing deeply golden against the black soil. Soft billowy breezes, scented with wolf-willow, lulled the air and carried the smoking dust away from the horses' feet.

Below them could be seen the placid valley, where the river wound itself through the evergreens and poplar, a twisted ribbon of silver which ran its full width when it ran straight, but folded itself at the turnings, and in one place made a row of shirring down the middle as it ran over the rocks. Saskatoon bushes showed deeply purple against the gosling green of the young poplars, and here and there a wild cherry tree in full blossom looked like a drift of snow that the sun had somehow overlooked!

The gate of the cemetery was open, and the procession moved slowly toward the open wound on the hillside with its swollen lips of lumpy yellow clay. The people alighted from their buggies and swarmed around the grave, where the coffin was already lying ready to be put into the rough box which was waiting. For once Hilda forgot to take charge of the younger children, but there were many eager hands ready to lift them down and take them to the grave. Hilda's teeth were chattering, and her legs seemed unwilling to carry her. God was far away, and the dreadful moment when her mother would be put in the grave was so near.

Hilda knew what happened when a person was buried. An Englishwoman, who officiated once at the annual event in the Berry family when Mrs. Peters was away, had told her. This lady's theology was as crude as her cooking, but in the absence of any other explanation Hilda had

accepted it. "People are put in the ground when they die," said the lady from Brick lane, "and the worms eat them, and that's all there is of that." The question of life, death and the judgment to come had arisen because that year's baby had died. It was with this thought in her mind that Hilda had carefully examined the coffin and tried to believe that no worm could get into it; but she knew that forever and ever is a long long time, and she could not forget that wood, even the best wood, will rot, and under a rotten log there are always worms. Her first impulse was to stay beside the buggy, for a great physical nausea had come over her. But there was the text, "Ask and it shall be given unto you." She must do her part. She would ask—ask—ask right to the last moment. Then it was up to God.

The women who stood around the grave noticed how deathly pale she was, and marvelled at her lack of tears. It did not seem natural for a girl of twelve to stand at her mother's grave with eyes that glittered in their dryness, and they were more than ever convinced that Hilda Berry was a "queer little stick", and when they saw her lips moving they were confirmed in that opinion. The grave had a poplar tree at its head, and in the choking silence before the minister began to read the service, Hilda held to the green trunk of the tree, dimly conscious of the gentle whisper of the wind through its leaves. The little leaves, not yet full grown, were turning over and over, glittering like little coins, and the shadows made a moving tapestry on the side of the open grave, which somehow softened the horror of it. Laying her cheek against the smooth, cool bark of the bole of the tree, Hilda found a comfort which in some way saved her heart from breaking.

The sweet words of consolation were hurried through. Then the men put on their hats, and some turned away.

Luke Berry stood stricken with grief, and the women in the black clothes wept profoundly. Grandma Brown, sustained by a peppermint which she drew from a deep pocket in her full black skirt, whispered to Mrs. Peters, to whom she handed a duplicate: "I am not going to cry for poor Annie. This will be the first night's sleep she has had for ten years. I hope she will have sense enough to tell them in heaven not to call her early, and just let her sleep it off; but I am not so sure that she won't be jumping up every ten minutes, thinking she hears the baby cry."

When they began to shovel the earth down into the grave Mrs. Peters took Hilda by the hand, and would have led her away, for all the people were going, but she held to the poplar and shook off the hand roughly. Her eyes were closed and her lips were trembling. Vaguely frightened, Mrs. Peters stood beside her.

The buggies were winding out of the gate. Her father had gone, and so had all the children save little Julia, who ran back to Hilda and stood holding her skirt. When the last shovelful of earth had been put in place, and the grave patted down smooth like a hill of potatoes, Hilda loosened her hold on the tree and, turning to Mrs. Peters, said, "I am ready now." Her voice was steady, but the eyes that looked into Mrs. Peters' were not the eyes of a child, but two great pools of darkness.

When they reached home Hilda went upstairs before she took off her coat and tam o'shanter. There was something she wanted to do. In the room upstairs, where the thin Mrs. Humphrey was trying to comfort the wailing infant, Hilda went to the wall and, taking the motto, richly red and silver, in her hands, she broke it across the middle. She stood for a moment or two irresolute, with the two pieces in her hands, then going downstairs to the kitchen stove, she took off the lid and dropped the pieces on the coals.

Then it was that something broke in her, and when Mrs. Peters came into the kitchen she found Hilda on the floor sobbing the dry, killing sobs of those who find themselves without hope and without God in the world.

II.

Life has a way of going on, no matter who dies. Even the slipping out of a mother cannot stay the pitiless course of time, which in Hilda's little world was made up of never-ending occurrences—cows to be milked; children fed; dishes washed; the baby changed and fed; bottles washed and filled—work without end, a dizzy round, bewildering and numbing because there was no end, no hope of achievement—ceasing only when utter exhaustion shut it all away from her with a kind black wall of sleep, so thick and sound-proof that it excluded even the baby's cry.

Always the wakening came slowly, tormentingly, and in this fashion: In her dream she was doing something pleasant, bringing up the cows to the bars, or playing with the dog in the pasture, or picking berries on the river-bank. Suddenly came the baby's cry—piercing, insistent and full of terror. She turned at once to rush to its relief, only to find her feet would not move; they were heavy as lead. Still the cries! Still the lagging feet! She struggled frantically, and strove to cry for help, but her lips were frozen, too. . . . After what seemed a long period of frantic effort and horror, the cry that was in her heart worked its way smotheringly to her lips and thus brought deliverance.

So began Hilda's days.

Nothing was the same, even outside! The river had a cruel gleam in its steely blue waters. She had no joy in the wild roses or columbine, for there was no one to exclaim with delight over them. The garden she and her mother had planted was a maze of weeds, forgotten by everyone but herself. The mountains, even on the brightest days, wore the frown they had on the day of the funeral, forbidding and scornful. While her mother lived Hilda had been able to picture great sunny rooms in the mountains, where green plush carpets on golden stairs, held in place by golden rods, led to other rooms where hung huge chandeliers of sparkling lights, fringed with glittering icicles, making glowing rainbows on the polished floors beneath; where white wicker furniture had bright chintz cushions on which green and blue birds, with scarlet breasts, sat on trees all white with blossoms.

Her mother had woven for her many gay fancies as they worked together through the long days, grieved as she was to see her faithful little helper so harassed and burdened with household cares.

“Never mind, Hilda,” her mother would say, “these children will grow up sometime, and will be useful, and then you and I will have nothing to do. You will have breakfast in bed every morning. You will press a button. A timid knock will sound on our door. ‘Come in,’ you will say. Enter Mary in a smoke blue dress, white apron and cap.

“‘Did you ring, Miss Berry?’ she will ask you.

“‘My breakfast, Mary,’ you will say; ‘oatmeal and cream, poached eggs, not broken, buttered toast, peach marmalade, coffee—and hurry.’

“‘Will she do it,’ you ask. Indeed she will, and she had better. I will remind her that you carried barrels of water to wash her clothes, and fed her tons of bread and milk with a spoon. Certainly she will do it.”

“And one for you, too, Mother; a tray for you?” Hilda had asked.

“I think I’ll have Julia for my servant, very smart in a gray and silver uniform,” her mother had replied.

Many hard places were passed pleasantly by these happy fancies of good days ahead, days of comfort and ease and reward.

But now everything was changed. Her mother was dead. Her God had gone on a journey. She had no hope of help from anyone. This was her fight, and hers alone. There was no one to care now whether she was tired or not. There was no escape, no turning back. She would carry on the work her mother left, expecting no help, no mercy. Life was like that, she thought, brokenly.

Hilda was awake early the first morning after the funeral, attending to the baby, and sat with the little thing in her arms watching the dawn that streaked the sky with rose and gold. She was thinking of her mother's last words to her, running them over in her mind as a devout worshipper would count her beads.

It was the day the doctor had come, and hearing her mother moan, Hilda had run into the room. Mrs. Peters had gone out of the room with the doctor, and for a few minutes Hilda and her mother were alone.

"Is it another baby, Mother?" Hilda had asked in alarm.

Her mother had nodded wearily. "And we didn't need another, did we, Hilda? But maybe it will die, like the one last year."

Hilda had seen her mother's lips quiver as she said it, and knew it was not from pain of body only, but of heart as well.

"Oh, no, Mother," she had said quickly, "we mustn't let this one die. We'll raise it, and be glad of it. I don't mind another one, really I don't. I'll mind it and be glad."

It was a brave lie, and Hilda was glad now that she had told it, for it brought a wan little smile to her mother's eyes.

For a while she had not spoken, and then, drawing Hilda close, she had said hurriedly, as one who is pressed for time: "Listen, dear, and try to remember what I say. You are young, but you'll remember if I ask you very particularly, won't you?"

Hilda had nodded wonderingly.

"Learn to speak out, Hilda," the mother had continued, "when you feel something ought to be said. All your life, I mean. Don't let anyone make you so frightened that you cannot speak. I have been like that, and it is no good. I often wanted to say things to your father, but I couldn't; I let the time pass when I should have spoken. You should have been in school. I wanted you to go every day, but I was not brave enough to make a row about it. I just took the easiest way, and it was wrong."

"Don't worry, Mother," Hilda had said, alarmed at her mother's burning hands and the finger tips so cold, like little balls of ice.

"Your father is not a bad man—see how good he is to his horses—but he didn't understand, and I didn't make him. His mother spoiled him first; then I sat still, too patient. It isn't patience, it's cowardice. And now we're gone, both of us, two grown women, and leaving you, a poor little girl twelve

years old, to do what we hadn't the courage to do. It's a heavy inheritance. And I'm sorry, Hilda!"

Her mind had wandered then. "He was foot-loose . . . he would walk out if I said a word . . . and I was tired . . . always a baby in my arms, and one coming . . . You won't be hard on me, Hilda . . . I was so sick . . ."

Hilda had put her arms around her and begged her not to worry over anything, but just get better.

"Your father is not a poor man . . . he could hire help for us. I knew, but he wouldn't talk . . . he just went dumb." Then she roused herself for one great effort. "Peace can cost too much, Hilda. It has cost me too much. Don't do it . . . don't be patient. Speak out. They can only kill you—and it would be best to die fighting . . . not like me, dying because I was too dumb. . . . You will be good to them, I know. I'm leaving you a woman's job, and you a child."

The old dog, black and white Jake, had come into the room and stood beside the bed, sensible that something was wrong.

The sick woman had put her hand on his head. "Jake will help you—won't you, Jake? Do your best, Jake, when I'm gone. A little girl and a dog . . . and maybe God will help . . . Anyway, I can't help it now . . . I am too sick."

The nurse had called Hilda to come away. And that was the last. Hilda had been sent with the other children to one of the neighbor's to keep the house quiet.

All that seemed a long, long time ago!

In a month the new housekeeper came. Mr. Berry brought her in one day, saying, "This is Mrs. Mauvers, Hilda. She is going to look after things. I hope you will be a good girl and help her all you can." Hilda shook hands with her gravely. She was a tall woman, with dead brown eyes set in a creamy face, and a queer smile that came slowly and went quickly, leaving her lips apart, and rather ghastly in their lack of mirth. She was showily dressed in an embroidered suit, with a heavily beaded blouse, and exuded a strange cloying perfume that filled the room and hung about even after she had gone upstairs.

It did not take her long to re-arrange the sleeping accommodation. Hilda and the baby had occupied the front bedroom since the funeral, the best

room that looked out upon the river, and this she quietly appropriated, asking Hilda to remove her things at once. Her manner was one of authority, and Hilda obeyed, but not without a sense of injustice.

The second day she made another change. "No children at the table—your father's health, my dear," she said to Hilda. "It is our first consideration, is it not? He must have quiet at his meals; no gentleman should be annoyed by children."

It was at the slack period of farm work, when Luke Berry had let his men go, and so he and Mrs. Mauvers had their meals alone in the dining-room. So keen was she for undisturbed mealtimes that she sent the children to the river-bank, giving them a cold lunch of bread and butter and jam.

"The bane of the New World," she said to Hilda, "is impertinent children, too well fed, too much noticed. Children should always be kept in the background—always. I have been in this country long enough to see homes ruined by indulgent parents and impossible children. When I get the house in order I'll put the baby on a system. You are giving her too much care. Remember, a baby should cry a certain amount each day."

"She is not three months old yet," said Hilda quickly. "It's dangerous to let a little baby cry."

Mrs. Mauvers smiled her slow coming smile while Hilda spoke, then in a flash it vanished, leaving the little girl looking into clay-cold eyes. Hilda wished she would go away, for her presence lay like a blight on everything. When the children came in they spoke in whispers, and walked about on tiptoe, shrinking away if she looked at them. There was something about her that seemed to possess the whole house. Hilda felt it was no longer a home for any of them.

It was no wonder, Hilda thought, that she could keep the house clean. She had no interruptions in her work, for the children made no demands on her. When little Marion fell into disgrace she was put back to bed without her breakfast, and all the sympathizers were driven from the house. However, they assembled in the backyard and carried on a sign-conversation with the small culprit, who stood on a chair to see out of the window. The conversation seemed to deal largely with reprisals, but when Mrs. Mauvers opened the door the sympathizers scampered away like frightened rabbits, and little Marion was left to meditate on her sins.

Mrs. Mauvers' voice was coldly authoritative when she spoke to the children or poor old Jake, who had tried to be friends with her. It was not

like any voice the children had ever heard. Hilda and Julia and Mary had a guessing contest about it. Hilda said it was like walking on spilled white sugar; Mary said it was like a grass cut; but little Julie, after long deliberation, said it was just like a button on a duster. Her voice changed entirely when Mr. Berry came in. It became soft and purring, even playful, when she, in her crisp house dress and boudoir cap, sat at the head of the table, beaming with good-humor.

From the room above the dining-room, where Hilda kept the baby at mealtimes, she could look down through the stovepipe hole upon them as they sat at meals. Fragments of the conversation floated up to her.

“I only want a home now; I am not a business woman, I am a homemaker . . . and when I read your ad. I said, ‘There I may be able to scatter a little sunshine and thereby comfort my own sad heart . . .’ I love the country with its healing balm and silence—and—and—I hope I can please you, Mr. Berry.”

Hilda couldn’t hear what her father said, but she noticed that he sat long over his dinner.

When dinner was over Mrs. Mauvers retired to her room for two hours while Hilda washed the dishes and swept up the kitchen. It was in this interval that Mary, Julie, Edith and little Marion stole back to supplement their frugal meal. But when Mrs. Mauvers found that this was being done she made a firm ruling—indiscriminate eating was not to be tolerated.

One night the baby cried, and Hilda’s ministrations were powerless to restore peace to her little mind. Mrs. Mauvers, in a bright red gown embroidered with black and gold birds, was upon the scene in a few moments with a bottle in her hand.

“This must stop,” she said, with the rasp in her voice, “your father must have his rest. No gentleman can bear a crying child.”

She took the baby from Hilda and laid her on the bed. “I will give her something to soothe her,” she said.

“No! no!” cried Hilda; “I can quiet her soon. It’s just a little colic. All babies cry sometimes; you say it’s good for them. We never give our children anything.”

Mrs. Mauvers poured the spoon half full and gave it to the baby before the half-awakened Hilda knew what had happened.

“Your father’s rest is our first thought,” she said.

“He could go to the granary,” Hilda said, indignantly. “I don’t like this; I’ll ask Mrs. Peters.”

Mrs. Mauvers laughed her short mirthless laugh. “You will do nothing of the sort. You will go to sleep like a good little girl, and be very thankful little sister has been given something to cure her little pains and make her sleep so soundly. See, I’m leaving you the bottle. It won’t hurt her.”

The baby slept soundly, not waking until ten o’clock the next day.

When Hilda complained to her father in the field next day he cut short her story. “Do as you are told, Hilda,” he said, “never mind what Mother used to do. Mrs. Mauvers knows her business. It would have been well for your mother if she had had as much sense about managing things.”

There was something about Hilda’s manner and the way she looked at him that annoyed him. Mrs. Mauvers was right about youngsters having too much notice taken of them.

Mr. Berry was ploughing down the weeds in the summerfallow and could see, as he worked, the long valley gleaming in the strong July sunshine. Away to the west stood the mountains, mistily blue, with their snowy summits glistening white. Luke Berry loved his farm and loved his work. The feel of the new furrow under his feet was comforting to him. He could not remember the time that he was not glad to be out in the fields at work. It was all he craved. And often of late years the fields had been his solace when increasing family cares had begun to embarrass him—so many children; the littered kitchen; his wife ailing, distracted, overworked. He was glad to get out of the house, and was driven back to it only by hunger.

Poor Annie, how soon she had faded and lost her good looks! He had been ashamed sometimes to find himself so glad to get away, especially when another baby was on the way, but he excused himself by thinking she had the telephone, and neighbors, and the doctor, too. Poor Annie, dragging around half dead, surely there should be some way . . . well, life was certainly hard on women. He would rather be dead than be tied to a kitchen and a pack of kids; but, of course, women had always done it, and maybe they did not mind. Their brains were different from men’s . . . but still it didn’t seem right!

An oriole darted between the horses’ heads and rose into the air with a burst of song and a flash of gold and red. Luke watched it, fascinated. That was the life, free as the air, going where he liked! That’s what made birds so

happy—they were free. But, he reflected, there are birds in cages that sing and live their lives contentedly because they know no better. There it is—men and women! And in that moment Luke was supremely happy in the sex allotted to him.

Life in the Berry household settled down into a dreary routine for Hilda and the other children. Mrs. Mauvers tolerated them only when they were doing something. Julie kept the lamps clean. Mary prepared all the vegetables. Hilda, in addition to the entire care of the baby, washed the dishes. There was no fun, no stories in the big kitchen now. An atmosphere of gloomy silence was on the children's spirits, noticed and commented upon by the neighbors.

“That black witch sure has put a spell on Luke when he can't see that she's starving his kids,” said Bob Walters, the auctioneer, as he drove home with his brother Dan. “It was a tough sight to see Hilda sneakin' out to the granary with some grub for them the other day. They say she feeds him like a prince and lets the kids eat turnips, or anything they can rustle. I wonder some of the women don't go over and see him. Luke wouldn't like to hear what the neighbors are sayin' about him! No, I don't consider it's my business—it seems more like a woman's job. It's sort of small business for a man to be carryin' tales.”

“If Grandma Brown were home,” broke in Dan Walters, “she would be the one to tell Luke off, and the black one, too. The old lady's not tonguetied. It's a damn shame, that's what it is! Luke seems sort of mesmerized. He buys the bread in town now, and sends the clothes to the laundry—and the other day I met him bringin' home a phonograph. If he had treated Annie that well he might have had her still.”

Hilda stoically performed her heavy share of the work, hoping against all appearances that she would be allowed to go to school when it opened. Rainbow Valley had only a summer school, beginning the first of July and continuing to the end of the year. She tried to introduce the matter to Mrs. Mauvers, but the deadline was hard to cross. Some people have an easy approach—a smiling, sunshiny path which leads straight into their soul. But not so Mrs. Mauvers. A moated grange, a dark tunnel, terrifying and mysterious, kept the world, at least the juvenile portion of it, at bay. When Hilda tried to approach her she found the sort of welcome a hungry traveller gets from an iron gate that is bolted and barred.

Sometimes Hilda almost hated the baby that had come to them so unwelcome, costing their mother's life, and now keeping her a prisoner night and day, shut off from every pleasure. It was going to burden her forever, it seemed, with no release in sight—for the years are long to a child, and without mercy. Why should she be tied to the baby forever? Her father cared nothing for it. Mrs. Mauvers had often said it would be a mercy if the little thing would follow its mother. And her mother had said that night that maybe it would die like the one before. And yet, when it cried, Hilda never failed to give it the best care her young hands could provide.

The morning of the Saturday before school started, Hilda had taken the baby in the little wagon that did service for a baby carriage over to the friendly straw-stack, where the children spent their happiest hours. Thither came Katrina Andersen, the daughter of their Swedish neighbor, bringing with her a dozen of her mother's stocky buns, still hot, and filled with butter that dripped lusciously from the paper bag. Hilda, with the little tin pail she had brought for the purpose, sought the cows under the shelter of a hill and milked the pail full, and quite a successful picnic was held on the side of the stack farthest from the house.

Old Jake, like the fine gentleman he was, did not press his claim on the buns, for he knew Hilda would seek the help of the cows to supplement his scanty rations, too, when the children had been fed. Miss Andersen, having provided the major portion of the meal, courteously refrained from the feast, though urged to do so, in order to leave more for the others. Miss Andersen did not for one moment let anyone think she was refraining for that reason. "Them buns!" cried she, "I eat so many of them buns to-day I scarce could see! No—thank—you. I never wish I could see a bun again. My mother say, 'Katrina, you well should grow if you don't bust.' "

When the meal was over Miss Andersen drew attention to her new dress, fearing that Hilda was not going to speak of it. "I don't like this old dress at all," she began. "We got it on the catalogue, and it ain't so good, but still for school it will do for hard scuffin'! It looked so good in picture Mamma says to Pa, 'Oh, let the kid have it—what's a few dollars?' And Pa says, in fun like, 'You wimmin make a poor man of me, with binder twine to buy, and the bottom gone from pigs, and bills for thresh, and all.' It don't look so awful good on me, maybe, like it did in catalogue. The girl there was taller, maybe." Miss Andersen twisted her bulky form critically, and looked as far around the back of her dress as nature would permit.

Hilda interposed politely. "It's just lovely, Katrina. The color and all suits you fine. You're not too stout; you're just a splendid straight up and

down figure.”

Katrina, thoroughly appeased, passed on to the next order of business. “A new teacher’s comin’ to our school, oh, swell! Her father is a wealthy blacksmith, and she is no need to teach one little bit, but just she likes. Mamma says we’ll let her see Rainbow Valley is not so worse, and have her out for visit at our place, with spare ribs and cardimum bread. Has your black lady got your clothes for school? Gee! I bet she’ll hate to mind the baby. She never washed a stitch yet, has she? But say, your pa sure is sweet on her, ain’t it? I guess it will be soon a weddin’, and your poor ma not already dead so long. But they might as well get married as live in sin! Ain’t it the truth?”

“What’s that?” Hilda asked, flushing under her coat of tan.

“Oh, I’da know; that’s what they say!” Katrina threw out her hands with a fine gesture, disclaiming all responsibility.

“I don’t believe it,” said Hilda, loyally. “My dad is a good man. See how kind he is to his horses.” She remembered her mother’s appraisal of him.

“Well, anyways,” said Katrina, “you ought be gettin’ on with school. Comes a few years and you will be big girl in grades and should be in High. Here is our Rosie now going to City to Normal her second this winter.”

“What’s that?” Hilda asked. Here was another mystery.

“I’da know,” Katrina confessed; “only it’s done in cities, and it’s not everyone as can, and our Rosie is one of them. But Ma says it’s rotten shame for you to be tied to a kid all your life, and maybe this one ain’t never goin’ to be strong, perhaps.”

“She’s a good kid,” Hilda exclaimed hotly; “takes her bottles, and sleeps, and everything. She is not big, but that’s nothing.”

Katrina drew near, and her voice breathed secrecy. “Hilda, say, I’ll cross my heart and spit on a stone never to tell—does she give the kid dope every night so it will sleep and not be disturbin’ them. They say she does, Hilda.”

“Certainly not!” Hilda replied warmly. “People shouldn’t say such things. I mind the baby, and she has nothing to do with it.”

“Well, anyways, Ma says dope like that makes kids’ heads big to swell, and when they grow up maybe they try to walk—like this—and they goes over.” Katrina showed how easily it could happen, even with a child that had never been given the offending medicine, by nearly falling on the sleeping infant in the wagon. Restored to her feet by Hilda, she resumed: “Ma says it

would be pretty bad for you, and would make you feel mean, if you found, after all your trouble, you had raised a crazy kid. But I must go. I just came to tell you about the teacher and how well she is. She is going to make a fine concert, all so *stelig*, for Christmas. Maybe I'll sing—Oh, I'd be too scared.” Miss Andersen held herself rigid in a trance of nervous but delicious anticipation. “I just wish I could make a sing like you, Hilda. Then my mamma would buy me the best dress on catalogue, I guess, maybe. Goodbye, Hilda.”

From a considerable distance on her homeward way Katrina shouted back, “Ain't it grand your pa is gettin' a car on the City! Yaw, sure! Didn't you know, I'll bet you did. Gee, don't it seem queer? Your poor ma never got nothings like this. Wouldn't she be sore if she knew? I guess she don't, though. And what she don't know won't hurt her! Come over again soon—I can't go to your house no more!”

Hilda, disconsolate, drew the little wagon home, the other children choosing to remain. There was no inducement for them to go home, and the straw-stack was on the way to Mrs. Peters'. Katrina's words had found a lodgment in Hilda's heart, and the approaching opening of the school in the Valley was agitating her. She determined to make a bold venture and ask her father. She would put her fortunes to the test.

When she entered the kitchen with the baby in her arms and began to prepare a bottle for the needs of her young sister, she could hear the murmur of voices in the dining-room. Mrs. Mauvers' voice was falling soft as goose-down.

Mr. Berry had evidently asked where the children were.

“I gave them their lunch as usual, a good wholesome lunch, and I expect they are gone for the day. They quite enjoy their jolly little picnics, and Hilda has gone with them. I am just a little afraid she meets that rather awful Katrina when she is out. She came here once, quite boldly, to the door, and asked for Hilda, and told me her mother was going to come to see me. Fancy! I told her I was quite busy, and not at all lonely; and I don't think Katrina will come again. I think it is much better for us to keep Hilda quite by herself.”

Hilda waited breathlessly for the reply.

“What's wrong with Katrina?” her father asked carelessly.

“Oh, Mr. Berry, what a question! She is a frightfully common little girl, with a sensual mouth, unusually large ears, indicating morbid curiosity—a

frightfully common child.”

Mr. Berry laughed, and Hilda could tell his mouth was full.

“The kid has to have some company, you know; minding a baby night and day must get pretty tiresome,” he said. “Anyway, my wife never objected to Katrina. She and Hilda have always been friends.”

Mrs. Mauvers sighed meaningly. “Children in this country are given great liberty, I see. Indeed, it seems there is no discipline at all. I am trying my best to bring order to your household; but, of course, if I cannot have your support I cannot go on. The father’s word must be law. He is master in his own house.” Her voice trailed away into a minor key.

Mrs. Mauvers had chosen the moment well. Luke Berry had just tasted his generous slice of custard pie. “Oh, I’m not interfering,” he said hastily; “I think you are doing all right. You are certainly a good cook, and you seem to manage the children easier than Mrs. Berry did. It seemed her work was never done.”

“Some women are poor managers; she probably lacked system.” Mrs. Mauvers began, stopping in amazement as Hilda burst into the room with hot words on her tongue.

“My mother’s work was never done because she did her work!” Hilda cried impulsively. “She took care of her children. She did not turn them out and let them rove about like lost turkeys. This woman, Dad, does nothing but get the meals and keep the house looking tidy . . . all to please you! Everything is done for one purpose, to stand well with you.”

“Hilda!” commanded Mrs. Mauvers, rising to her feet, “leave the room at once!”

Hilda did not hear her. She was addressing her father. “She never touches the baby; I mind it, and wash for it. And you would let her criticize mother! Mother never bought her bread nor sent out her washing. Mother did everything—and now—and now—”

Luke Berry looked on helplessly. “Hold your tongue, Hilda,” he said, “that’s no way for you to talk. Mrs. Mauvers is doing very well.”

Mrs. Mauvers left the table and with hankkerchief to her eyes sought the window, sniffing convulsively. She had been mending a strap belonging to the single harness, and had left it on the sewing-machine. She took it in her hand now.

“Look what you’ve done, Hilda,” her father said weakly. Darn it all! How he hated getting mixed up in women’s quarrels!

“Let her sniff!” cried Hilda. “But she’s not going to criticize my mother, I can tell you, nor you either.”

“Hilda! Hilda, have you forgotten that you are speaking to your father?” Mrs. Mauvers cried dramatically, coming back to the table. Then she turned to Luke. “Are you going to allow a chit of a girl to insult me,” she cried tearfully, “when I am doing my best to make a home for you? If I had spoken to my father like that he would have beaten me to death, but he was a man of authority, respected by all. He demanded respect from us. If Hilda were my child I know what I would do.”

Hilda paid no attention to her. “Dad, are you going to marry her? Katrina says you are, and that you’re getting a car. Mother worked herself to death and got nothing. She never had anything!”

Whereupon Mrs. Mauvers began to scream, and in the excitement Luke Berry, with quite a show of temper, shook Hilda, though not roughly, and told her to go to her room until she learned to curb her tongue.

Hilda wriggled out of his grasp and faced him. “We might as well have it out, Dad, while we are at it,” said she. “If I go to my room who’ll mind the baby? I couldn’t leave her with Mrs. Mauvers. She’ll give it dope to make it sleep, and that is very bad for babies, Mrs. Peters says . . .”

“I will not stay to be insulted,” interrupted Mrs. Mauvers, in her regal manner. “Hilda has been listening to evil gossip. I told you, Mr. Berry, I told you! Now it’s for you to say. I am going—I will not stay to be insulted.” She gave the impression of leaving the room, of sweeping majestically from the place where she had been so cruelly maligned, but managed to remain near enough to hear and see.

The baby began to cry, roused by the uproar, and that sound, always distasteful to Luke Berry, reminded him of the discomfort and disorder of his life—the dismal home-comings, the broken nights. Fiercely, now, unreasonably, his anger blazed against Hilda. He never knew how he found the harness strap in his hand. “You’d talk to me like that, would you?” he shouted. “I’ll teach you who’s boss in this house. Just when we’ve got someone who can run things you’d make a row, would you?”

She was a slim little wisp of a girl, and she did not resist his fury. She remembered her mother’s words and threw them at him defiantly. “You can’t do more than kill me, Dad,” she said.

Cruelly, cruelly the strap bit into Hilda's tender flesh. But even in her pain and rage she did not forget her little charge. They made a picture of misery as they went up the stairs.

"She has been getting quite beyond herself," Mrs. Mauvers said, as the door closed above, "and has been very rude to me several times, but I did not wish to be a tale-bearer. I had hoped to win her over. Now, come and finish your pie, Mr. Berry, and try not to be upset. One must maintain discipline." There was a gleam of triumph in her cold eyes, but her voice was of honeyed sweetness.

To this Luke Berry made no reply. Pulling his hat down, he left the house.

For once Luke Berry got no comfort from the sunshine and the mountains and the feel of the kind old earth. Hilda's eyes, so like her mother's but for the gleam of defiance, smote him with a vague fear. There was something back of it all, something he could not understand.

Luke Berry was not given to analysis of his thoughts, but he was dimly conscious now that Hilda had a weight of woe on her heart, and that her outburst of rage indicated a long smouldering. "Poor little kid," he said, "I am sorry I struck her. I wish I had talked to her quietly; but I couldn't with that woman there. Damn her and her father! Who cares about either of them? I wonder where that strap came from?"

Looking across the creek to his house, Luke was struck by the deserted appearance it bore. Not a child to be seen about the place, not a movement of life. He wondered where the children were. He so rarely saw them now. It was all very fine to have his meals in peace, but these children were his—he had some responsibility. This woman was overdoing the thing.

At five o'clock Mr. Berry unhitched his team and went home. It looked like rain. It had been a miserable afternoon. He even jerked his horses and yelled at them, thinking grimly, even while he was doing it, that he had fired men for doing the same thing.

No, Mrs. Mauvers had not seen the children since morning, but they often stayed away all day. There was no cause for alarm—their stomachs would bring them home. She had given them a "basket."

"What about Hilda? Has she come down?" he asked anxiously.

“No,” Mrs. Mauvers replied; “I thought it well to leave her alone until she professed sorrow for her rudeness.”

Luke Berry, more uncomfortable than he liked to confess, made the rounds of the neighborhood, and in answer to his inquiries learned that his children had come to Mrs. Peters, at three o'clock, been fed, and had left about four. The youngest one, Marion, who was not feeling very well, had been put to bed after Mrs. Peters had administered medical treatment, and was now asleep. But Julie, Edith and Mary had gone home, she thought.

“They don't seem to be very welcome at home any more, Luke,” said Mrs. Peters, “so you can't blame the little things for wandering. Your housekeeper wants them to keep out of your sight. What's wrong with a man when he can't bear the sight of his own children?”

“I didn't know it until to-day, Mrs. Peters,” Luke stammered humbly. “I don't want my children fed by the neighbors. I didn't know this was going on, but I thank you for doing it—you know that.”

“I would do more than that for Annie's children,” Mrs. Peters said, gravely. “I would have been over often, Luke, but that duchess of a housekeeper of yours gave me to understand I wasn't wanted; and as you knew where to find me I didn't like to butt in. I wasn't sure how things were. Hilda is so loyal to you she won't say a word.”

“You're always welcome, Mrs. Peters,” he said, and hurried away.

A drizzling rain began to fall, and the gray night was closing in early. It was quite dark when Luke found the children. The barking of the dog guided him to the spot. They were asleep in one of the pigs' holes in the straw-stack, solemnly guarded by Jake. In Julie's grubby hand was a half-eaten turnip.

Luke Berry was a plain man, of few emotions, but the sight of his three little girls, ragged, barefooted and dirty, sleeping in a straw-stack where pigs had burrowed, guarded by the dog, more faithful and tender than he had been himself, stirred him to a great repentance.

The physical needs of his children, their clothing, food and shelter, were something definite and plain. He understood and acknowledged his duty there. Starved mentally and spiritually they might be, and he would feel no pang of conscience; but this—this was a deep and bitter disgrace. He had been shamed, too, in the eyes of his neighbors. Awakened the children tenderly, and with many a kind word, he brought them home.

Mrs. Mauvers, serene and smiling, gave them all a very friendly greeting. "And did you have a lovely day, children?" she said. "Your papa was quite worried about you, but I knew you would be safe." Then, quite as an afterthought, "But where is dear little Marion?"

Luke explained briefly. "Set places for the girls, Mrs. Mauvers, after you have washed them," he said. "The girls will eat with me after this? And will you please call Hilda and ask her if she will come down."

Mrs. Mauvers' face darkened. "Oh, she has been down," she said. "She is in much the same mood, and was quite impertinent with me again. She took up a fresh bottle for the baby. I think it very unwise to disturb them."

When the meal was over and the children had gone to bed Luke Berry went at once to his room, where he stood for a long time looking out into the drizzling night. Every shred of self-esteem had been stripped away from him. His mouth was filled with the gravel of remorse. What a selfish brute he had been to these poor little children! What must Hilda think of him?—faithful, hard-working little Hilda! He tried to think of how old she was, and was ashamed to find he did not know. . . . Well, he would make amends. Hilda must get to school. He would get Mrs. Peters to take the baby until she was a year old, anyway. Mrs. Mauvers would have to go—he could no longer bear the sight of her. Poor Hilda! She had never had the freedom a child should have. But he would make it all up with her to-morrow.

Tomorrow! A whole eternity can lie between to-day and to-morrow.

The dawn was graying the window in Hilda's room when she awakened the next morning, and for one thrilling moment she forgot all the trouble of the day before that had torn her heart with rage and pain; forgot that she and her father had quarrelled, and that he had definitely decided against her; forgot everything in a delicious dream, the glamor of which was still upon her.

In the dream she was getting ready for school. A new dress, shoes and coat were lying on her bed—brown shoes, smelling deliciously; a lovely dress, nicer than Katrina's—blue, with touches of red—and a leather school-bag. Then with waking came remembrance! The sting of her sore shoulders brought it all back with a choke of tears—the quarrel—her father's rage and heavy blows—Katrina's words, "Crazy kid, even after all your trouble, not able to walk!"

“Don’t be too patient, Hilda; it’s no good,” came back her mother’s words. “Don’t give in. Always remember what I am saying,” . . . and she had been doing it all summer, and she could go on and on! . . . “Too old for grades. Should be in High.” The days were going. All the children were getting ready for school, not one of them shackled and tied. It was not fair. There was no one to help her.

Thoughts of God came to her, sitting on His throne, watching her, maybe. Not He! What did He care? Did He care for her mother? She had been patient and loving, and had trusted Him. What did she get? A grave of yellow clay! Her children neglected, hungry, fed by the neighbors. That woman downstairs, the black-hearted devil, in her place. She would have a car to ride in, be praised and admired, for she took time to keep herself nicely dressed. She had no baby to tire her out! Hilda hated her in that hour with a murderous hate.

The first glow of dawn was shining in the window, making a luminous patch on the wall. It caught the small bottle of sleeping medicine that had stood untouched on the stand since that first night. Hilda sat up in bed and watched it, fascinated. She could not withdraw her eyes from it.

A horrible thought! Hilda caught her breath with a sob,—no, no that would be wicked! But the thought persisted. Then she would have time to mind the other four. She couldn’t mind the five. She could take them all to school with her if she hadn’t the baby. It wouldn’t be wrong—just a long sleep, with no pain, no struggle. Her mother had hoped that night that it would die. . . . Her mother wouldn’t blame her. No one else mattered. No one else mattered. Her mother would know there was no other way. . . No one to help her.

Terrible thoughts for a child—black and bitter thoughts; but this was a child with a woman’s burden and only the heart of a child to bear it.

Hilda got out of bed just as a yellow wave of sunlight smote the wall above the stand. The floor creaked under her feet like the breaking of timbers. The potent liquid in the bottle glowed like topaz. She poured out a brimming teaspoonful, so full she could not raise her eyes from it. As she carried it toward the bed the baby began to stir uneasily, beating the air with her little hands. It was hard to carry the spoon steadily, her heart was beating so.

Though her eyes were on the liquid in the spoon, Hilda knew the door was slowly opening. Through the gloom of the room something low and bulky was coming toward her with a slow motion. She stopped, trembling,

cold with fear. It was coming nearer . . . nearer. The spoon fell with a clang on the bare floor. The moving bulk took shape—blessed, familiar shape—as Jake’s cold nose was shoved caressingly into her hand.

Here was someone, warm, loving, real, who had come to her when her soul was crumbling under its burden of woe. Jake, who knew the best of her—Jake, the deliverer! She fell on her knees beside him, and, burying her face in his soft fur, burst into a passion of weeping.

“Oh, Jake! oh, Jake!” she sobbed, not caring who heard her, “you saved me! Oh! I was going to . . . oh, no . . . I wouldn’t! I forgot, but you didn’t. You didn’t forget what mother asked you to do. . . A little girl and a dog,” she said. “Good dog, Jake! How did you know? Who sent you? Was it God? Oh, I hope it was God! I hope He cares about us! I want to have God again! It’s hard to do without God, Jake. But how did you know? How did you get in? But you came to me . . . you came . . . in time.” She took the dog’s face in her hands and searched his eyes for an explanation, asking him again and again how he knew to come. But all she could read in their amber depths was a love, unquestioning, unfathomable—a love so deep that it went far beyond the limitations of a dumb brute’s intelligence—a love so perfect and unselfish that it could easily become a channel for the love of God.

The baby was waking happily on the bed, gurgling softly to herself. Hilda took her in her arms and rained kisses on the little face, while her own tears flowed freely, bringing marvellous relief to her burdened heart.

“My baby! Hilda’s little precious pet! Hilda wouldn’t hurt the little darling! Isn’t she sweet, Jakie? Crazy kid, indeed! She’s the best baby we ever had. And we’ll never leave her, will we, Jakie?”

In enthusiastic assent Jake wagged his tail, brushing the brown bottle to the floor, where the contents oozed harmlessly away.

Hilda washed her face and brushed her hair carefully at the stand. The pain in her shoulders was gone, and her heart was strangely light. Looking at herself in the glass, she saw a face illumined, rested, glad. The events of the day before seemed trifles to her now, things that could be as easily forgotten as a dream.

The rain of the night had ceased at dawn. A bright sun was flinging fingers of flame into the sky. Hilda’s room faced the north, but the whole sky was glowing with the promise of a new day; and the last trace of the

rain, a thick plank of a cloud, lying low in the sky, had a piping of rose on its eastern edge.

Hilda dressed herself with particular care. There was plenty of time; no one was stirring. The baby was now sleeping soundly again, her regular breathing making the sweetest music Hilda's ears had ever heard.

It was clear to Hilda now. God had not been able to send her mother back, but He hadn't forgotten her. When her sorrows were about to go over her head He had spoken to her the only way He could. He had cared for her soul; He had not left her. He had not let her . . . oh, no, no, she couldn't say it! No one would ever know. God had done a greater thing than sending back to earth again a tired woman to work and suffer. He had saved a soul from sin, and He would help her now with her father. . . . "Luke is not a hard man—see how good he is to his horses." She had misunderstood God, but now she knew. It is *souls* He cares for. He couldn't keep the strap from cutting into her shoulders, but He had healed the hurt of it now by flooding her soul with light. There was no more hate in her heart. Behind her, around her, was a new presence, a comfort, a strength, an understanding.

She would tell her father; she would make him understand. She felt it would be easy to make him understand, for it was all so clear to her.

The sun from the eastern window was flooding the kitchen when Hilda went downstairs. Her father was waiting for her with new words on his tongue. He had thought of what he would say, but when he saw her radiant face his words deserted him. He didn't need them. He just held out his arms.

BELLS AT EVENING

In that depressing moment of waking Mrs. Pierce was conscious only of a big uncomfortable heartache which seemed like the aftermath of a distressing dream. She rubbed her eyes and rumbled her hair in a vain attempt to clear up the mystery, moving higher on her mountainous pillows to get a better view of her surroundings, in the hope that some clue would be found to the gloom which was filling her soul.

The rag carpet in its soft pastel shades, which lay on the French gray floor, offered no assistance. Neither did the golden oak dresser, with its oval glass and frilled cover of dotted muslin, and its full length pincushion, also dressed in dotted muslin and laced with pink baby ribbon. The French doll in her be-ribboned hoop-skirt, which artfully concealed a ball of string, was gaiety itself and seemed to be perpetually shrugging her pretty shoulders at all the cares of the world and telling them where they could go to for all she cared! The washstand at the foot of the bed had a very cheerful splasher, on which brown ducks waded through green bulrushes which got in their way at every turn, and a brazen butterfly, rising cornerwise on teetering wings, looked down at them from over her shoulder. The washbasin was gay with bright pink wild roses, which came spilling out over the edges. The towels hanging on the rack had a band of drawn-work. Altogether it was a very cheerful room, with bluebirds sailing through the clouded border above the moulding and pink morning-glories on the counterpane.

But there was an ache in Mrs. Pierce's heart which could not be healed by material things. Indeed, the warmth and cheeriness of her surroundings only intensified the sadness in her heart. Mechanically she began to repeat:

“An old man pokes the fire into a blaze
In the home of his child, of his friend, of his brother.
He's outlingered his welcome; the slow-passing days,
Grown desolate, whisper and sigh to each other.
He hears the storm in the chimney above,
And bends to the fire and shakes with the cold,
While his heart still dreams of battle and love
And the cry of the hounds on the hills of old.”

Then she remembered. This was the day she was going away. Millicent was coming to take her to her home in the city. This was the place where her life ended, though no doubt she would live on and on.

“Why can’t people die decently all at once,” she cried out in her anguish. “Why can’t the end of life be a dignified ending instead of letting people go out bit by bit, eyes growing dim, ears growing dull, feet cramping, memory failing! . . . I wish I were God! I would send for every old person; I would call them in the way the banks call in the mutilated old bills. . . . Millicent says I cannot stay here alone; it is not the correct thing to leave one’s mother to live alone, especially when she is a little forgetful.

“Millicent has decided that I am not strong enough to resist her, but if my eyes were a little better she would not get me to leave. As it is I can find my way around this house. . . . Whatever made old Jane die? Ten years younger than I am, and yet she died. Did not say a word to me, either, just slipped off and died—just slipped away like Millicent used to do when she did not want to take Jim with her. The sly old Jane that I trusted so! She sure gave me the slip. I hope she is ashamed when she looks down and sees how she has left me. She knew very well I was depending on her to see me through—and she went first!”

Mrs. Pierce still lay watching the patch of yellow sunshine creeping over the floor.

“I know I should be thinking of the house of many mansions, but I do not want a mansion. I would not know my way around a mansion. I only want this house, number nine Princess Street, in this small town of Brandon. The only improvement I would ask is for a soft water tank in the basement and the kitchen painted again that soft and lovely robin’s egg blue—just like it was before—and the walk mended where the cement is broken. . . . And then I want just enough sight to get around and cook meals and wash a little and iron a little. I want to be able to ask some of the young girls who are attending Normal to come and spend Sunday with me, and have bean-feeds for the boys when they come home from the rink like I used to have for Jim. And I would like to have the Ladies’ Aid for tea at least the day they are piecing the quilts for the Indian school, and maybe one other time during the year. . . . Surely, Lord, I am not asking much.”

Mrs. Pierce shook her white hair rebelliously and walked over to the mirror. She was a tall old lady with graceful sloping shoulders, thin hands, on which brown spots were showing, well manicured nails, fine dark eyes. The entry in the big Bible gave her age as eighty years, but when she told it she always hastily added: “Sh-h-h!”

She had grown old very gracefully, and with great cheerfulness. She had not thought much about it. Neither had the congregation. No one could

organize a tag-day like Mrs. Pierce. No one could so well smoothe out a quarrel with the choir. No one could better comfort a poor little lonely bride who was homesick for her mother. She had made the angelcake for every wedding in the congregation for twenty years, and a pair of blue and white boottees for every christening, and sometimes at request of the friends had spoken the words of appreciation for the departed at funeral services. She always spoke on the anniversary Sundays, and had written a hymn of dedication for the new church, naming it the "House of Hope." Oh! she had a way with her—such a pleasant way that when her husband, the Reverend Edward Pierce, died, the congregation asked her to remain in the parsonage and be a sort of Pastor's Wife Emeritus for the congregation.

Time passed happily for Mrs. Pierce in spite of the loneliness of her widowhood. She saw a generation grow, marry and raise their young. She saw another generation of young grow, but instead of marrying and settling down as their parents had done, they had marched away at the call of their country, her own Jim, her only boy, among them.

In this time of great perplexity the mothers turned to her for comfort. She did not miss one of the Red Cross meetings, which were held in the church parlors, and never did she fail to bring a message of comfort in her opening service. Her brave words made many a tired back straighten and many a sad and anxious heart grow lighter. She had a way of inspiring courage. It was the flash of her eyes, the throwing back of her head, and a certain vibration in her voice.

Mrs. Pierce was always sure. She seemed to know God's plans as well as if she had helped to make them. There was no temporizing with her, no submitting of the conditional clause, "If it be Thy will." Not at all. There was a mathematical finality about her faith. God had made the world and put us here. If we did certain things we could depend on God to do His part; God's part followed ours as surely as Tuesday came after Monday. There was no chance of failure. The mouth of the Lord had spoken it!

People find it easy to follow a leader who is always sure.

Mrs. Pierce was sure Jim would come back. Was he not the child of her old age? And had she not given him to the Lord for the foreign field? God would look after the boy who was going to bear witness for Him in strange lands. She had done her part and the boy had done his. He was just ready to go when the call came, and was he not doing his part now in the smoke and fire of battle? It was all in God's hands, so why should she doubt? She or the boy might easily have failed, but God would not blunder.

Therefore the news found her unprepared. It could not be that Jim was dead! How could it be? God would not let it happen!

One by one the mothers whom she had so often comforted came to see if they could comfort her, but they shrank from the look in her eyes, which was that of a bewildered and hurt child. It is the look the beloved family doctor dreads to see in the face of his little patient.

Then it was that Jane Bosomworth came to see her. Jane had been a dissenter from the true faith. Jane had once said in the Bible Class that God was not omnipotent. Mrs. Pierce had stated that He was, to which Jane replied that He ought to be ashamed of Himself for the things which He allowed to happen. The discussion which followed was hot, and Jane did not return. But now it was Jane who brought comfort. Jane walked into the house without knocking and seated herself beside her old friend's bed without any preliminaries. "I like God all the better," she began, "because there are times when He cannot help Himself and has to take what He gets whether He likes it or not. God and man working together are omnipotent, but not God alone. . . . If I thought God was all powerful and could have everything just the way He wants it I would never forgive Him for letting my sister's baby be born with a harelip. But I know how it is with him. He never knows when someone is going to joggle His elbow when He is drawing a line or making a human face. That is how accidents come, and then God gets all the blame, and Him feeling worse about it than any of us. Mrs. Pierce, God couldn't help it or He wouldn't have let Jim get killed. You may be sure He will look well after Jim, now that He has him safe in Heaven, where He has everything His own way, and He will send someone else to China."

"It is good of you to come to me, Jane," said the old lady. "You were always a good sort, even if you did have strange beliefs."

"Beliefs don't matter," said Jane. "We have to believe just what we can believe, and I do my best to get hold of as much as I can."

"Maybe I did expect too much from God," faltered Mrs. Pierce after a pause.

Jane Bosomworth went to live with her after that visit. "She will never be sure of anything again," she had said to herself, "and it won't do for her to be alone so much. I have no one and she has no one—except Millicent, of course, but Millicent, even if she were at home, would be no company for her mother. So I will stay with her. I know how she feels. She can never trust God just the same. . . . It's the same as I was with Bosomworth. I always

knew he had a bad temper, but I never believed he would lift his hand to strike me, and no matter how mad he was I would check right up to him. Well, one day it happened, and I know it gave me one awful surprise. After that I never felt the same, and, you bet, I always kept well back when he was in a rage.”

That was eight years ago, and Mrs. Pierce and Jane had settled many a theological difference in that time. But now Jane was gone. Jane went to bed one night as well as ever, saying: “If I am out in the morning when the milkman comes don’t forget he owes us a ticket. I expect to get down early to the market to get the cucumbers.”

Jane was out when the milkman came, all right, but Mrs. Pierce forgot about the ticket.

Now the old glad life was all past, and to-day she had come to the end of her life as a leader in her own world, for Millicent was coming to take her to her home in the city. Millicent was coming—the prosperous, well-groomed wife of a bank president, who drove her own car and spent the winters in California—Millicent, who had become an Anglican since her marriage and was trying to forget “the crudities of the religion of her childhood.”

Through the six rooms of her little home Mrs. Pierce wandered, lovingly touching the familiar things with caressing fingers. The living-room still seemed to hold some of the bashful love of the hundreds of young couples who had been married there. She laughed reminiscently when she thought of the big Swedish widow who, when asked if she would take this man, etc., had said, “Sure Mike, I will—I can mak’ him work.” And she had made him work, too, and the adventure in matrimony had been a successful one.

In the golden oak china cabinet stood the cut-glass bowl from which all the babies of the congregation had been sprinkled. It stood on its own doyley of hairpin work, which had been presented by Mrs. Dennison on the occasion of the christening of her eighth child. The Discipline from which her husband had read the beautiful words of the service lay beside the bowl on a cushion of white satin. The door of the cabinet had been made to close tightly by the Reverend Edward’s ingenuity in tacking a piece of thick leather on the inside of the door to give the proper amount of pressure. She was thinking now of the day he did it. On Monday mornings he always wanted to work with his hands, and eagerly seized upon anything which needed fixing in the house or the church, for he had a decided gift with tools. She remembered how he had looked up at her that day, throwing back

his curly hair as he said, “Edith, I wish I had nothing to do but work with my hands. The world lost a good mechanic when I went into the ministry.”

And she had said, “But it gained a good mechanic of souls, Edward, don’t forget that. Remember it is a greater thing to mend character than even cabinet doors.”

Well, Edward had done his share of mending souls. She passed her hand lovingly over the device on the door. Edward had done his bit and passed on, glorious and unafraid.

“And so will I,” declared his widow. “I always said I would try to be a cheerful old wreck when I was cast up on the shore. I would wait smiling and serene for the tide to rise which would bear me off. I will not whimper.”

She went through all the rooms and said goodbye to the familiar things. In the study she sat in Edward’s round-backed chair and looked again at the forbidding volumes of the *Homilectic Review*. Dr. Withrow’s “*Harmony of the Gospels*” still lay where Edward had left it. Under the inkwell, which she had always kept filled, were the notes of the last sermon he had preached. The text was “At eventime it shall be light.” She read the notes again, and the clear, flowing hand seemed to speak of hope and calm. Unconsciously she nodded her head as she often had done when listening to Edward’s sermons. She never knew how anyone could resist the clear logic of them.

The carpet in the study was red and black—there had been enough left over when the new church pulpit platform had been done to cover this small room. The worn place beside the chair was the place where the visitors had sat—and what queer visitors Edward had! What strange people he found in his nightly prowlings around the town! She remembered some of the terrible people he had brought home with him and fed. She was never sure whether the spare room was occupied or not. . . She smiled when she thought of how Edward defended them, no matter who they were. He called them “the brothers for whom Christ died.” One of them stayed a week once, and when at last he did go it was in the night. Jim it was who discovered that the guest had gone, and broke the news by announcing: “Dad, the brother for whom Christ died has gone and taken your tweed suit with him. At least I cannot find it, and I wanted to borrow it.” But nothing discouraged Edward. He still brought them in, red-eyed and drunken, poor wrecks of humanity. He fed and clothed them, prayed with them and loved them, found jobs for them, scolded and counselled them. . . . She recalled the day of Edward’s funeral. How they came!—some of them respectable men now, and some of them still red-eyed and miserable; but they came in swarms, and they wept bitter

tears when they looked at the still, white face of the man who had been their friend.

The worn place on the carpet brought it all back. Often she had heard Edward praying with them. She put her hand reverently on the place where the pile of the carpet was all gone, for she knew many a time a poor sinner kneeling there had found salvation.

Mender of souls Edward had surely been, and now Edward was gone; his chair was empty; his pen was rusty; the room was silent. . . . “At eventime it shall be light!”

The kitchen was in some ways the hardest to leave. Here she had got ready the bean-feeds for Jim and his hollow young friends. Here she had made the angelcakes, hardly daring to breathe when they were in the oven, and keeping Jim out of the kitchen. Here she had reigned supreme and sure. She fingered the brown Betty teapot lovingly, breathing on the silver shamrocks and polishing them with the corner of her apron to see them shine once more. It had been a present from the Ladies’ Aid on one circuit, and it seemed to have in it the very essence of the pleasant kitchen, for it spoke of friendly chats when a few of the neighbors gathered. The conversation had always grown more animated when the cups were filled.

In the pantry she looked again at the jam pails where the groceries were kept—some of them were twenty years old or more, but what of it?—they were still shining. Typed labels told what they contained—rice, lentils, barley, cocoanut—Jim had typed them for her when he was going to the Commercial High. Down below were the crocks—the big sugar crock, and the flour crock, and the little squat one for salt. There they were, so solid, secure, ageless and serene, so undismayed by time or weariness.

Mrs. Pierce turned away from them with a shudder. Edward was gone. Jim, the glorious young Jim, was gone. She was going—but that little gray snub-nosed salt crock would last forever. How dreadfully permanent things are!

Millicent had told her it would be better if she did not bring any of the old stuff with her. It would not go well with the furniture in the room she was going to occupy. Anyway, Millicent had said it would be better for her to have entirely new surroundings. Millicent was so practical and sensible and right, and had told her mother how old things would bring too many memories, and above all things she must not let herself lament and repine.

Millicent was right, of course. Millicent was always right. Millicent was so successful and prosperous and abundant that her mother had often looked at her with wonder. She had grown to girlhood and womanhood in the same way. She had walked triumphantly through the grades at school. She had floated through fractions into decimals; mensuration had come so easily to her the teacher did not know what to do with her while he was teaching the others. She seemed to sweep down all the barriers as fast as they could be raised. Millicent was never discouraged, cast down or afraid.

Millicent would be sure to ask her if she had had her breakfast, and if she were to admit that she had not, Millicent would make her eat something. So, setting a few dishes on the table, she put some cornflakes in a dish and poured cream on them. She spread them around the dish to make it look as if the dish had been full. When she had it all arranged it looked as if someone had had a full meal. This was as near to deception as Mrs. Pierce had ever come in her life, but she dreaded Millicent and her practical mind, and she knew that she could not get a mouthful past the lump in her throat.

Promptly at the hour came Millicent in her shining new car, which glided to the door with a velvety murmur and seemed to come to a stop by its own intelligence. Millicent could see herself as the bountiful princess who had come to take her mother from the cold, gray life of toil into all the delights of a king's palace. The morning sun hitting the windshield shone into the room like a flash of lightning in slow motion, coming to rest on the illuminated address which announced itself in red and gold letters as having been presented to "The Reverend Edward and Mrs. Pierce on the eve of their departure from Deloraine."

The "estimable wife" referred to in the third paragraph stood looking at it now in the radiance of the car that was waiting to take her away—looking at it in a sort of dazed wonder as if she had not seen it before. One phrase stood out from the others, and she repeated it over and over: "On the eve of their departure."

Millicent came grandly to the door, her high heels making the luxurious tapping which blends so well with the rustle of silk.

"Are you ready, mother dear?" asked Millicent in her creamy voice. It also was the sort of voice which suggests silk linings.

"Ready," said the old lady promptly; "every goodbye said, every tear shed, every last look taken at what was a very happy home."

“Now, mother,” said Millicent, very firmly, “whatever you do, do not get sentimental. You cannot live alone, and we are going to make you *very* comfortable.”

With a firm step, and never a backward glance, the relict of the late Edward Pierce stepped into the waiting car. Up to that moment she had been a distinct and colorful personality. Now she knew the truth—the bitter truth—she was a relict now, a detached relict, a woman without work in all the world.

It was Millicent’s idea to have her go without the formality of saying goodbye to any of the old friends. Millicent said the effort of saying goodbye, and the expenditure of so much nervous emotion, would be hard on her mother. Millicent was always right.

The first morning she was there her breakfast was brought to her room by a white-capped maid. Mrs. Pierce voiced a protest. The maid was firm. “It is Mrs. Skelton’s wish that you should breakfast in bed each morning,” said she as she swung a mahogany table over the bed.

“But I detest the habit,” said the old lady warmly, as she sat up hurriedly; “I am not an invalid, and besides, it is sinful to spend the morning hours in bed. The morning is the best part of the day, when one is fresh and rested.”

Anna repeated the formula. “It is Mrs. Skelton’s wish that you should remain in bed for your breakfast.”

The old lady looked closely at her, interested at once in a new personality. Here was a young girl, probably away from home in a big city, who might be lonely, too, just as she was, and glad of companionship.

“Well, never mind, Anna, I will do my best,” she said kindly. “I suppose there are harder things in life than having to eat breakfast in bed. I will poke it down some way, and if you will promise not to bring me too much I will be your friend forever. Mrs. Skelton is a powerful woman and always gets her own way, and I know better than to try to change her. She always got her own way. When she was six years old we got her a little red wagon—we saved soap coupons to buy it with—and her father and I often remarked that no matter when we looked out of the window at the children playing, Millicent was riding and some other child pulling. It was a way she had, and she has it yet. And the other children were satisfied.” Mrs. Pierce was smiling at the memory.

“Yes, madam,” said Anna coldly, and yawned. She had been out late at the firemen’s ball the night before.

Mrs. Pierce got the full significance of the yawn and said no more. “At least I will not be a bore,” she said to herself as she bravely struggled with her breakfast.

Anna might not have been so absorbed in her own affairs that morning if it had not been for the fact that the henna wash she had used the day before had gone wrong and made her hair, which had been golden, an ugly color like burnt sugar, and her gentleman friend had been quite nasty about it, and there had been words between them.

Mrs. Pierce intended to speak to her daughter to see if it would not be possible to have her breakfast order reversed, but each time she started to speak of it the ’phone rang. Millicent was convenor of the Fish Pond Committee for the Rotary Street Carnival, and spent the greater part of her time at the ’phone.

“Can I not do something to help you, Millicent,” her mother had asked the first morning. “I used to be rather good at arranging things for the church. Do let me try, Millicent; I would love to think I could be of some use.”

Millicent smiled her superior smile.

“Mother dear, I am afraid you do not speak the language, and I am too busy to try to teach you, though I know you are very willing, and that is sweet of you; but just now I have a big job on my hands, and if you will just rest and be as happy as you can Anna will attend to your every want. She has her instructions.”

Then she tried to get the unapproachable Anna to give her something to do, but Anna lifted her plucked eyebrows in surprise and told her there was nothing, positively nothing. Anna’s manner was so distant and haughty she felt she should apologize for the presumption.

Mrs. Pierce had been three weeks in Millicent’s home and had seen her son-in-law twice at dinner. He was a grave man with a preoccupied air. When she spoke she could see he was not listening. It seemed impossible for people to be friendly in a room so large and high. The meals were served by the butler. She could not believe this was Millicent’s home, or anyone’s home for that matter. It had no personality. There was no sound of human occupation except the ringing of bells. There was no dog, cat or bird.

Mrs. Pierce spent long hours looking from her window on the narrow length of the street which she could see through the trees. Sometimes the street sweeper passed, and she envied him his job. He was a bent old man with a lame step, and sometimes sat on the curb to eat his lunch, which he carried in a newspaper. Mrs. Pierce wanted to ask Anna's permission to send him out a pot of tea, but somehow she had not quite the courage. She tried to interest Anna in the old man by drawing her attention to him and his newspaper lunch, but Anna assured her it was probably all he had ever been accustomed to, and quite good enough for him.

Millicent faithfully invited her mother to come driving with her each day when she went to her Golf Club, but the conversation of the friends who came with her was unintelligible to the old lady and rather terrifying. It was all about putting and mashies and foursomes and bunkers. And they all seemed to think that she was deaf, and roared at her in a way that was embarrassing. They used short words, too, well spaced.

"Do—you—find—cold—days—trying?" Mrs. Clairmont had said to her, in her high-pitched voice, one day as they sat together in the car at the Golf Club.

"No," Mrs. Pierce had replied, "I do not find cold days trying, and I do not find it hard to hear ordinary conversation, either. The only thing I find trying is living such an idle, good-for-nothing life. How do you do it?"

Mrs. Clairmont afterwards told Millicent that she was positively afraid of her mother, she had given her such a start in answering her back like that.

The hardest part of Mrs. Pierce's exile was that her own grandchildren seemed to avoid her. Betty, aged sixteen, bob-haired and cynical, was given to discussion of complexes and of something which she called "the frat." Ted, two years older, was filled with rage at the iniquities of umpires. She tried to talk to them, and once seemed to be getting a point of contact with Betty on the subject of a knitted sweater when Millicent interposed.

"No, mother," she said, "you are not going to start knitting. After your long years of working and slaving yourself for other people you are going to have a rest. Betty can buy her sweater at the Woman's Exchange."

Sunday was the most terrible day of all. The first Sunday the chauffeur had driven her to church, but would not come in. All the time of the service it worried her to think of leaving the young man outside. None of the family had come with her. Ted had gone with a party of boys to the Lake; Betty told her she never got up till noon on Sundays, and Millicent and her husband

spent the day at the Country Club. The church service was disheartening. The hymns were not familiar; the choir wore surplices; the minister read his sermon, and nobody spoke to her. All afternoon she sat in her room watching the cars that swept by, her heart heavy and burdened.

The days went by in the same monotonous way. She got Anna to buy her yarn, and she began to knit stockings for Sunshine. But she soon found out how slavish knitting can be when it is all one has to do; yet she set herself to the task as she had done everything, and the long days wore on. Edward's sermon was the spar to which she held—"At eventime it shall be light."

Millicent had a complete new outfit of clothes made for her, telling her as tactfully as she could that she might send the old ones to a rummage sale. At that the old lady flared up.

"My clothes have always been considered quite good enough for my station," she said with dignity.

To which Millicent replied sweetly: "Yes, mother dear, but your station is changed now, and I want to have a little tea for you next week to meet some of my friends, and you must look very sweet."

No person loved pretty clothes more than Mrs. Pierce, but she had no thrill in the new garments which Millicent had gotten for her. They seemed to be the uniform of her prison, beautiful though they were.

She often wondered why she could not talk to Ted, remembering how interested she had been in Jim's sports when he was Ted's age. She had loved to go and see Jim play lacrosse, and often had cheered herself hoarse in her excitement. What strange black wall was this which seemed to shut her off from everyone?

Sometimes she asked herself if she were already dead and gone to some sort of purgatory where the punishment was complete isolation, but that thought she put away as a wicked one and read her Bible and the *Christian Guardian*, except when she was watching the little stretch of street which she could see through the trees.

One morning when Mrs. Pierce awakened she seemed to lack ambition to rise. Why should she get up at all, or ever again? No one would miss her if she did not. Indeed, they might be glad to have her safely out of the way. Millicent's plan for her was to have her rest all the time. Anyway, the bed seemed the friendliest place, for when she lay in bed she often dreamed, and always in her dreams she was back in the old life of activity. Perhaps now, though it was daylight, if she lay very still the old dreams would come back,

bringing Jim and her old home and the boys and girls she had known. Perhaps even Edward would come!

When Anna came with her breakfast she pretended to be sleeping, for there seemed to be a glorious dream almost within reach. She must have slept then, for when she awakened the room was full of sunshine, so golden and bright it seemed to coax her to rise and come out.

She stretched herself luxuriously. It was good to be alive even if she was away from home—alive, and in possession of all her faculties—strong enough to oppose Millicent, if necessary.

“I must get up,” she said aloud, “I am a lazy woman to be lying here on this lovely day; but that was a great sleep, and I feel years younger.”

There was a knock on the door, to which she cheerily called, “Come in,” expecting that Millicent had come to see what was wrong with her. A young man in uniform, carrying a small black doctor’s bag, entered.

“Good morning,” he said, “I hope I have not frightened you.” His voice reminded her so much of Jim’s that for a moment she could not speak. “No, you did not frighten me one bit,” she said, “but you remind me so much of my son that you have taken my breath away.”

“I know Jim,” said the young man pleasantly. “That is why I wanted to come to see you. I am a doctor, and I wanted to see how you are. Now, will you do something for me?”

Would she? It seemed a hundred years since she had been asked to do anything for anybody.

“Well, then, get up and get dressed, and then come downstairs and I will join you there. My car is outside, and you and I are going for a ride. I have a surprise for you. You always liked surprises, didn’t you? You see I know all about you.”

“I love surprises,” she said ecstatically. “Jim and I were always planning them for each other. I will be down in ten minutes.”

It did not take her long to get dressed. Excitement made it easy for her to stoop and tie her shoes; every hook seemed to fasten without the slightest effort. Luckily no one was around to ask questions or tell her what to wear.

She ran down the stairs like a runaway schoolgirl, and with as much joy in her heart as any child ever had.

The car bore them swiftly through the city streets. Every breath she drew was sheer joy. Passing the football grounds they passed Ted, and in her new-found happiness she shouted to him, and although he turned and looked straight at them, he did not seem to see them and turned away with a puzzled look.

“Ted is wondering if you would like to go to see a game of rugby; he is thinking of asking you to-night,” said the young man.

“This must surely be my happy day,” she exclaimed gaily. “I would be delighted to go to a game, or anywhere that anyone asked me to go. My complaint is that no one thinks I need anything but absolute idleness and plenty to eat.”

“There will be no more idleness for you where you are going,” said her young companion, with a chuckle which sounded strangely familiar.

“You are so much like Jim,” she said. “I suppose you grew to be alike by being together. Now, notice, I have not even asked you your name. I do not want to spoil the surprise.”

“That’s right,” he said. “We want this surprise to come off without a hitch, for it is a good one.”

They were driving through the country now, and it was harvest time. Great fields of grain billowed and waved in the wind. Blackbirds on glittering wings circled and wheeled over a field of ripe oats, and a delicious smell of ripe grain came to them through the open windows of the car.

A young girl driving a horse and buckboard was making her way through a stubble-field to the stack where the men were working.

“Oh, I know that girl!” cried Mrs. Pierce. “She is taking the afternoon lunch to the men, and won’t they be glad to see her. I know what she has, too. She has saskatoon pie and ham sandwiches, and a great blue enamel pot of tea, with a blanket around it to keep it hot. I know, for I have been that girl. This place is all so familiar to me.”

A country church with a glistening spire pointing heavenward seemed to be drawing nearer and nearer to them. A modest white parsonage stood beside it. A vine, turning red with autumn, grew over the porch.

“Why, boy, it is Bethel! Good old Bethel, our first circuit! How did you know to take me out to Bethel? They were so good to me and always called me ‘the bride.’ I did not know that Bethel was so near—I thought it was in

Ontario. You are a wonderful fellow to know so well what I would like to see. Tell me, how did you know?"

"I didn't," her driver laughed. "It is this car which is the witch—it knows everything. It is called the Memory car. It should really be yours and then you could go back and visit all the old circuits."

"Millicent says it is not good for me to have my feelings stirred and too many old memories revived," she said, smiling. Somehow she could smile about it now, for Millicent and her restrictions seemed so far away.

"Hang Millicent!" said the young man promptly.

"Did Jim tell you about her? She always was rather hard on him."

"He told me more about you," he answered, "but I know Millicent, too."

After they had driven through a leafy woodland road, which had a glimpse here and there of a silvery stream, the young man said: "Now we are getting near. I want you to shut your eyes and get ready for the surprise. Keep your eyes closed tight—it's no fair if you cheat."

She felt the car stop and knew that she was getting out as easily as ever she did in her youngest days—there was no stiffness of her joints, and she had no fear of making a mis-step. Then she knew she was going up stairs spaced just as stairs should be. Her hand was on a door-knob, which turned as if someone inside had been watching for her. She stepped in with a cry of delight.

"Now you may open your eyes."

With a cry of rapture she looked about her. Everything was the same, but it seemed bigger and more beautiful. The rag rug which she had made was still at the foot of the stairs, gayer and more beautiful than when it was new. The stairs seemed wider and the ceilings higher; every picture on the wall sparkled its welcome; the farewell address given "on the eve of their departure" had a light shining on it which made every word glow and burn. It was an address of welcome now.

"It is my own home," she cried, "and it knows me!"

She passed into the kitchen and found it all the same, only more beautiful. It seemed like an ideal she had always had in her mind. The walls were painted the robin's egg blue which she liked so well, the wainscoting sparkling white; the sink was made of some material which glistened like

snow. The round window in the pantry had been changed to a stained glass one in which there was a cornucopia of fruit through which the sunshine fell; the shelves still held her old friends the jam pails, and as she looked at them they seemed to speak their names.

“It is all because I am so glad to get back,” she said to herself, “that everything looks so glorious. These tin jam pails look like pure gold to me.”

The kitchen floor was of blue and white tiling—the kind she had often looked at longingly in the colored pages of the magazines—and at the windows hung shimmering curtains of white silk which did not keep out one ray of sunshine and yet made a welcome and restful shade.

“Who has done all this?” she asked. “Did the church people send for me? Did they miss me and want me back?”

“Wait till you see the whole house and then I will tell you.”

He led her to the study door and opened it. There she stood transfixed with wonder. The red and black carpet was gone, and in its place there was a floor of what seemed like transparent velvet, through which she could see buried roses, white and pink and deeply crimson.

“Walk on it,” said the young man reassuringly. “It is a carpet that father wove when he was on earth. You are not any more surprised than I was when I saw it. Do you remember all the poor miserable people father used to gather in and pray with? Every rose is the tear of a penitent sinner.”

“Whose father do you mean?” she asked breathlessly. “My father,” he answered, turning around suddenly, and then exclaimed: “Mother, don’t you see who I am?”

She flung her arms around him and held him close. “Oh, Jim,” she sobbed, “don’t leave me the way you have done so many times. I cannot bear to wake up and find it is all a dream. Try to stay with me, Jim dear; I am so lonely and miserable there all alone.”

“This is no dream, mother,” he said, with a happy laugh which filled the whole house with music. “This is the surprise I told you about, and I have kept the best for the last. Look who is coming in!”

She raised her head.

“Edward!” she cried, “Edward! Tell me what this means, Edward? Where are we?”

“Don’t be frightened, Edith,” he said, taking her hand. “It is all right. This is what we used to sing about in our hymns. This is Heaven, but we did not know it was so close and so real.”

“Will I have to die to get here? Will I have to cross a dark river? May I stay here now, or must I go back and die?”

“You are here, dear. You will not have to go back—you are here and we need you, Jim and I, for there is much to be done.”

“What sort of work is there?” she asked, after a pause.

“Much the same as we did when we were on earth. I have charge of the people who come over unprepared, and who have terrible remorse over their wasted lives, and all sorts of bad habits to overcome. They are not so different from the poor souls I used to have in this very room.”

“But Edward, how does it come that the house is here? Isn’t this house still where we left it in Brandon? I do not understand.”

“This is the spiritual conception of the house on earth, and because we used it for God’s work it became immortal. Everything that has been used in God’s service lives forever. Nothing is thrown away or wasted except through sin. We did not know God could be so good as He is, Edith. We thought we believed His promises, but His goodness is greater than anything man can conceive.”

“And you are young, Edward,” she said after a long pause; “you are not an old man any more. Will I be young, too?”

He opened the door and led her to the crystal mirror which hung in the hall. She started back with a cry of gladness.

“You did not have to wait,” he said. “You have entered into your inheritance without any delay because you have lived a life of prayer and every force could work on you at once; there was no resistance on your part. You will be ready to go to work at once. You are going to help with the children who have had deformities on earth and whose hearts have been embittered. You will show them how it is going to be made up to them here.”

“Oh, Edward, I am so happy to have you and Jim again, and work, blessed work! Is this what your text means when it says ‘At eventime it shall be light’? I held to it and held to it, but there were times when I was almost in despair. But Edward, tell me, what about Millicent—will she come to us, too?”

“She will come,” he said, “though it may be a long time. She is trying to serve in her own way. There are many ways of serving God, and He never fails in His rewards, though He is grieved to see people spending their money for that which is not bread. Millicent will come. We have more knowledge here, and so have more patience. Now come outside. There are many of the old friends waiting to welcome you. Listen, they are singing now. That is for you, Edith. We have been looking for you and wanting you a long time.”

She stood with him on the veranda and saw stretched before her a great sunlit country with yellow harvest-fields. Many men and women were at work, and their happy songs came to her ears. Coming towards her were a great company of people who waved their hands in joyous welcome. She ran down the steps to meet them.

Millicent slept late that morning, for she had been the toastmistress at a banquet the night before. It was noon when she awakened. Anna brought her a cup of coffee in answer to the bell and told her that her mother had not awakened yet. When she had dressed Millicent went into her mother’s room, vaguely alarmed by Anna’s report. It was not like her mother to sleep so late.

She found her lying facing the window through which the sunshine was pouring. Her white hair was spread out on her pillow and her lips were smiling.

Millicent’s friends came in large numbers to the funeral, and sent many beautiful wreaths of flowers. They told Millicent she had one great comfort in her bereavement, and that was that she had been able to give her mother every comfort and care.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *All We Like Sheep and Other Stories* by Nellie L. McClung]