The CATTLE in THE STALL

NINA MOORE JAMIESON

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Nora Moore Jamieson

THE CATTLE IN THE STALL

SKETCHES AND POEMS

BY

NINA MOORE JAMIESON

Illustrated by
BEATRICE ROBERTSON

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FOREWORD

HER own serene and courageous “Finis”, which concludes this volume of her collected work, reveals more clearly than any formal foreword the essential character of Nina Moore Jamieson. So we need speak only of the environment of her childhood and later life—details that all who study an author’s work desire to know. She was an April maid, born in 1885, while her parents were staying with relations in Hollywood, Ireland, and spent some years as child and girl in the village of Cookstown, South Simcoe, where her father, W. F. Moore, was principal of the Public School. Later, the family moved to Dundas when Mr. Moore received the appointment as principal of the Public School there. She herself, followed her father’s profession, teaching first at Red Bay, in Bruce County, where she gathered the material for her novel, “The Hickory Stick”; then at Rosser, Manitoba, after taking a course at the Winnipeg Normal School; and finally, came back to Ontario and taught the school at Westover in Wentworth County.

Then she met Norman Jamieson of Beverly Township, married into farm life and became the mother of four—two sons and two daughters. Her mother once said, of this gifted daughter who was also so utterly simple in all her ways, “She was unfailingly cheerful, full of calm serenity and responsive kindness, qualities which her maternal grandfather had in a marked degree.” She gave with a lavish heart.

During the Great War her poems attracted the attention of the editor of the *Mail and Empire* and he persuaded her to write sketches of the life she knew for that paper. To the *Mail* and to the *Star Weekly*, to which she also contributed articles, the editors of this volume tender their grateful thanks for permission to use material taken from their files. In these writings and in her articles for various farm journals, Mrs. Jamieson won her way not only into the hearts of her readers of all classes, but into the ranks of Canadian literature.

THE CATTLE IN THE STALL

I hold no place of high import
    Where roars the thronging mart—
One of the little ones of earth
    I do my humble part.
With fork and pail and stable broom
    As evening shadows fall
In common tasks I tend for Him
    The cattle in the stall!

I love the knotted dark along
    The heavy, rough-beamed roof,
The cleanly crackle of the straw
    Beneath the shifted hoof;
The woven chorus of content
    That drones from wall to wall—
Because I love, for His dear sake
    The cattle in the stall.

For since of old a stable knew
    That wondrous Baby's birth,
Methinks He loves the cattle best
    Of all the beasts of earth.
Their kind eyes gave Him welcome there—
    They heard His first, faint call!—
Oh, proud am I to tend for Him
    The cattle in the stall!

Now comes once more the glorious night,
    Christmas of the year!
They watch in reverence and awe
    The miracle draw near.
The Child divine is born again—
    His love is over all—
It rests in benediction on
    The cattle in the stall!

ASSISTING THE FIRST ROBIN

THE old white cat, Tom, lay along the top rail of the fence and yawned in the gay sunshine. His coat was immaculate, for he had polished himself from stem to stern, above and below decks, abeam and abaft. (The boy has just been reading one of W. H. G. Kingsley's sea stories—hence the vocabulary! A few weeks ago it was Mexican cowboy stuff, and "loco" and "lariat" and "Gringo" had the floor). He regarded with scorn two busy white hens which scratched and gossiped industriously a few yards away. Foolish creatures, to spend so much energy hunting grubs, when they might bask idly in the warmth, as he did, confident that someone would provide plenty of food, presently!

Tom did not know that his attitude had any significance, but it had. Far more certain than the appearance of the first robin, the cat's first sunbath is a forecast of Spring. He let his strong, nervous claws sink idly into the rail, and suddenly the pull on his tense muscles roused all the old hunting instincts. His back arched . . . his tail lashed softly . . . he sniffed the air suspiciously. Somewhere field mice cowered . . . somewhere nests were in prospect, tiny bird babies, tender to his wicked old teeth—Ah! Spring! Spring! That is the time for a cat to be alive!

The old wagon that stood behind the drive house, hidden in a snowdrift all Winter, with only one wheel-rim showing out, emerged triumphantly under the thrust of the suddenly fervent sun last week. The wagon knows it is time for wagons to be on the job—and there it is, ready for business! The trough at which the noisy geese fed in December, disappeared when February kicked up so many storms and commotions. I saw it this morning, and it looked like an old friend. It still held chopstuff from the last feeding—and the geese were at it, as though they had never left it!

Jakie, the goat, has hardly been outside the stable all winter. He has a very keen regard for himself, that goat, and believes his self-respect requires one thing of him, only—that he shall taste every horse's hay and oats, to make sure it is first-class, and nibble samples from every cow's manger, and fill up his odd corners from the chop box when it is open, and jam his

strong, beautifully curved horns into the bran bags until the bran comes out, if he cannot find one that has been left handy for him.

When I see him patter elegantly across the stable yard, his slender, springy white legs twinkling under the bulging affluence of his fringed white body, and lean to scratch meditatively against a tree trunk, I know the season has turned the corner, Jakie is a good weather prophet.

He expects to use that tree steadily, or he would never have started at it!

You know that little rhyme of Stevenson's:

> "In Winter, I get up at night,
> And dress by yellow candle-light.
> In Summer, just the other way,
> I have to go to bed by day!"

I do hate this dressing by yellow candle-light. It always gives me an up-all-night feeling, though it may be actually seven o'clock by the real time. But these mornings, when John starts the household on its daily run about six, the sun is just making magic in the East, twisting the rainbow's tail, and squeezing the juice out of Aurora Borealis. Our bedroom window faces the way it should face—out towards his habitation—and above the black fringe of the cedars his streamers run across the sky.

There is a delicacy, a transparency in the nameless colors that slide and ripple before him. No wonder ancient peoples worshipped the sun, seeing no further than his majesty and splendor! It is worth the effort of getting up in the morning, just to see frail hues lighten and grow to a great shifting glory of beauty and promise in the Eastern sky. What if they do fade almost immediately? What if their ashes are dull and cold as the sun springs from them bright and confident? To-morrow's dawn will see the miracle renewed.

Something in the heart of the cedars is changing. Their tarnished and dingy coats have felt the touch of the conjuror's hand, and a vague, responsive green awakens, elusive as an ectoplasm. I see the sturdy nubs of my crocuses poking up in the sod, where yesterday grey ice ruled. Presently there may be a back-fire in the shape of hail or sleet storm, but what about it? Those determined little javelins thrusting their way from beneath snow and congealed leaves, flout the power of dying Winter.

Last night, John and I walked over to call on a neighbor—an old man with a rich store of recollections of other days. I had a pencil and notebook in my pocket, and wore the boy's barn rubbers over my slippers, because

ordinary low rubbers would have stuck traitorously in the mud at the second step. John took our invaluable gasoline lantern in his hand to show us the best places to step, and forth we went, into the still starlight, the lantern casting hobgoblin shadows at our feet.

We went across the fields, following the fences, where the drifts still had a backbone, and held us up. There was the little temporary pond beloved by the geese, who are wild with delight to get open water after the long frosts of Winter. They rush down there as soon as the big white egg has been laid in the nest, and the uproar they raise is deafening! We skirted it carefully, clinging to the rails of the snake fence, for the ice at the edge was unreliable. Then on along the sod, stumbling occasionally into a furrow in a slippery place. My broad, ungainly rubbers were heavy on my feet, but gave me a substantial foundation in the yielding, half-frozen soil.

After a while we came to the fence surrounding the bush, and when we had climbed it, and gone a short distance, I stood still, and let John go on ahead with his intrusive lantern. The night was so very beautiful! The stars shone so benevolently, so jovially, from the utter deepness of sky. The great trees, solitary or in groups, shadowy in the gloom, with their outreaching arms that blotted out the little twinkling lights of heaven, were so friendly, so filled with strength and the promise of new life!

A bush is delightful at any time, and particularly in Winter, when the snow grasps it about the knees, and smothers its darkness under soft fluffs of white, but it is a bit of fairyland on a mild night in Spring. I could almost think I heard the sweet sap hurrying up from the roots of the maples to receive its blessing out of the clean, cold air. Listening intently, I did hear the softest thrilling undertone—the very voice and melody of Spring.

But John could not hear them. He declared I was mistaken. Perhaps I was—it is early yet for them. But I did see a mosquito or two, lately, and on sunny days flies dance in the warmth at the south side of the house. Ah, that sun! It shows up every shabby spot in the carpet, and causes a regular riot in the mind of the housewife. New wallpaper—new paint—new rugs! The Spring sun, prying mercilessly into every corner, makes the old stuff look so utterly dissipated that its case is hopeless.

You could tell the season by the youngsters. Without warning, they became suddenly infected with the craze for skipping. Pat-pat! The little slippers go incessantly to the beat of the old rope. They have robbed their handsleigh of its pulling rope, and have begged various good bits from their father—and at times, have slaughtered my indoor clothesline for their futile

purposes. At all hours, in all places, they skip. Betty milks her cow at night, and takes the rope from Madge, giving her milk stool in place of it. Then she skips while Madge milks. The cows do not mind. Dear me, I wonder what the cows would mind!

It is nothing new to go into the stable and see a large black and white cow lying down comfortably, chewing her cud—and a youngster stretched out at ease along her back.

It is the time of year for a change—in diet, clothing and environment. I like to slide out, if only for a day, or a few hours, "to mingle with the Universe, and feel what I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal," as Byron has it. There is no guilt on my conscience when I elope with myself and leave the farm and the housework, and the milking with complete serenity. No use to go away with my body, and leave my mind back there fretting about dinner dishes and the gathering of the eggs. I go away all together, and come back that way. It is a holiday.

THE SPRING IS IN THE COUNTRY

Oh, the Spring is in the country! Don't you hear the warm rain falling,
As it falls on green wheat fields, with their faces to the sky?
Oh, the Spring is in the country! Don't you hear it calling, calling?
But here in squalid city streets, how desolate am I!

I know the sunny corners where the dandelions are peeping—
Ah, dearer far their homely face than fairest hot-house flower.
For it's Springtime in the country—and I cannot see for weeping—
Heart-homesick for the little farm, and childhood's happy hour.

I think I see the old stump fence, decked with the grapevine tender,
The long, green lane, the deep, dim bush, the bare old hill, I know
Are lovely now, and calm and still, and fresh with Springtime splendour.
And longing fills the heart of me, to bid me rise and go!

Alas!
The dear wee home below the hill, has now another master.
The black-ridged fields, the shouldering hill, the maples waving high,
Are mine no more forever—and my tears fall fast and faster.
For here in crowded city streets, how desolate am I!

THE HIGHWAY IN OUR MIDST

Away back in the Winter certain mysterious strangers were taking all sorts of liberties with our road. One day when I myself was travelling to Toronto in a big truck, several head of cattle careening along behind, I experienced a great thrill in having to turn out for surveyors who were squinting importantly along their little squinters that they lay on top of tripods for that very purpose. Immediately the great question arose to agitate our existence —Just which way was the highway supposed to come through?

I understand it was deeply discussed in the harness shop, the barber shop, the blacksmith shop, the garage and the fire hall. Some mournful prophets opined it would cut off somewhere near Troy, angle over towards the Governor's Road, catch it somewhere south of here, in the "clay", and so proceed onwards to Brantford and lesser places, ignoring us completely. That would eliminate the hills and winds that we have felt to be part of the beauty of the road, and besides, it was supposed to be a shorter way.

We could hardly believe all that. To think that a highway would be built to relieve the Hamilton-Galt line on the north and the Hamilton-Brantford road to the south—and miss this village! Passing by on the other side of Lynden we could easily understand. Not that we have a word to say against Lynden, you know. Probably it can't help itself—being on such friendly terms with Copetown and Jerseyville and Orkney may have cramped its style—but this village, that has been saving itself so long just for this highway, to be defrauded so cold-bloodedly!

We refused to accept the verdict, and see—in a few days out comes our Brantford paper with the joyful news that the highway has to pass right through our village, and so on, arriving duly in London. For this highway is one of the longest streets in the world, behold you—Dundas Street, running from Toronto to London! A nice thing if it failed to come this way when it had the chance!

The paper, to be sure, neglected to state just what road it would follow through the village. Naturally we jumped to the conclusion that it would use the streets already here—entering at the east end, where is first the residence

of the man who keeps goats, where the sign says “Welcome—speed limit 20 miles”.

Next is one of our very handsome churches, its comfortable red a picture among the trees and shrubs for which our village has such a name. Then in swift succession—even at twenty miles an hour—the local butcher, the Hydro man, the minister and the doctor on one side of the street, with the postman, the undertaker, the barber, the transport man, the foundry, the reeve, and so on down the list of our foremost citizens, on the other. John said he thought of buying the vacant corner next the foundry and holding it for a service station. He could pump gas, Edwin could look after repairs, the girls could sell gum and pop, and I could keep the books.

I always did want to scoop out wads of ice cream into those nice little cones—but the project died when I was appointed bookkeeper. Why, I can’t even keep track of a dictionary, let alone day books and double entry books and so on. Fortunately we did no more than speculate about it—for soon the news spread that the highway was to bend south with unconsidered suddenness—and it might have missed our service station.

They tell us now that it is to cut in at the back of the bake shop, which doubtless will blossom out in scarlet paint with black and purple trimmings, and become “Ye Olde Bunne Shoppe”. Highways have shed a lot of final “e’s” along their path!

It will emerge somewhere about the dark and devious aftermath of the post-office, completely ignoring our village cafe—locally described as a “calf”—and all our nice row of enterprising stores. Doesn’t this look like something queer in the Government? Why should it take a spite at our noble emporiums of trade? Why, down our front street it is possible to buy black strap molasses in bulk—and can that be done in the whole city of Toronto? I trow not! Just take in a great half-gallon sealer and get it filled—for about half a dollar! And we have cheese in this village that is real cheese—none of this meek stuff that has to wear tinfoil to keep itself from getting tainted by a bunch of lettuce or something equally powerful. This cheese of ours is of such a proper, nippy nature that I understand it eats the edge off the knife used for cutting it!

It is enough to make the town fathers feel like resigning to think that such a thing could be—to eliminate our cherished front street for the sake of saving a few rods to the motoring public. Saving! Look what they’ll miss! When people come into a place like this they want to see it all, of course. They want to see all that they can see, at twenty miles an hour. There is the

old watering trough in front of Jackson's Wagon Works—if they are lucky they will see old Dan himself lighting one of his famous long cigars that the barber buys specially for him, though they make him twist his face into knots before he can get them going, and he finds all sorts of fault with them all the time he is working on them.

There has been a rumor to the effect that the road is to go right through the wagon works! Then, missing our existing streets, it will flounder about in what we call New Ontario, and find itself once more when it gets near our two schools. A lot of good that would do. How could any teacher instruct a class in anything—from the phonic system all the way to the extremities of chemistry and physics, when the landscape is thronged with road gangs and the whiff of tar comes in the window?

Here we are, well situated between Toronto and London—and a pleasant change from either.

And there is our Memorial Hall—and our bowling green—and our skating rink—oh, well. We know how we'll vote, next time, if the Government does not make a proper business of putting this highway through our village.

A BENCH IN THE PARK

About the hardest day's work I can tackle, is a day in the city. There is always a rush and scurry to get away, leaving the house tidy and the necessary chores done. And then there is the hustle and turmoil of the city, the crowded streets, the noise and confusion, the hot wearisome pavements, the supercilious salespeople, and the utter impossibility of getting what one really wants.

Usually I shop at home, with a mail-order catalogue and a pencil, and have fair comfort. But the catalogue has its limitations. I can't buy boots that way, nor hats, nor dishes. It was dishes the last time—and boots. Threshing time is coming and my semi-porcelain has become very semi. The heavy hand of time has left me plenty of saucers, two very large platters, a great soup ladle—and precious little else.

I decided to buy the dishes first, and if I had any money left, I would celebrate with boots. So we went down to the city the other Saturday and I pursued my ideal of a dinner set, diligently. And found it, several times. But on each occasion a glimpse at the price tag brought me up short, with shocked conviction that the exchequer wouldn't stand it. I wanted a plain, unobtrusive set, neat but not gaudy, with good-sized cups that would fit one on top of the other with plenty of vegetable dishes and bowls and all that sort of thing. And I didn't care a snap for cream jug and sugar basin to match, nor for a teapot with a twisted spout and a groggy handle.

All this I might have had for the price of a yearling calf or a pair of fat pigs. But alas! My little butter and egg money and the revenue from my early chickens, which had seemed such a worthy sum when I counted it before leaving home—withered in my hands as I timidly compared it with the price of the dishes that attracted me.

Long since I had dropped all thought of boots. Boots! A joke—in the same day with such financial cruising as the buying of dishes! I compromised at last, on open stock, and felt as dissatisfied as one deserves to be who compromises. Then I went and sat down in the little park that nestles right in the very heart of the busy city; sat there and waited for John.

Now, John has an insatiable passion for getting his hair cut. He can't go to town without seeking out a barber and instructing him to do his worst. Why is it, I wonder? Are all men like that? What is their notion for getting themselves all-but-scalped on every possible occasion? These and other idle thoughts occurred to me. For it was market day, and the city was full of sun-burned farmers, all yearning to slip away from their women-folk and spend their hard-earned coin for an unavailing hair-cut.

Meanwhile, I sat on a green-painted bench and looked at the old fountain, as it splashed its unwearied spray into the wide basin. And there was the time-honored statue of good old Queen Victoria, with its shield and flag and silent carved lions. Further down, stood the bronze replica of Sir John A., forever posing in front of the post-office. People came and went, and no one paid any more attention to me than to those silent statues. Presently two women sat down near me.

"Oh, dear—that old car!" said one, fanning her elderly countenance with an advertisement of housefurnishing bargains. "You never can get it when you want it. There should be better service right here in the heart of the city."

"How did you enjoy your summer cottage?" asked the other, arranging a number of small parcels in her shopping bag.

"Oh, my dear!" said the fanner, with emphatic impressiveness. "Such a time! We were there, right on the lake shore all July—just perishing with cold! Wearing sweater coats, crowding around the stove—absolutely perishing—perishing! And Harry's people came; first one sister and her children, then the other sister and her husband and little boy. It soon counts up, let me tell you—boarding two or three extra at a place like that!"

"Well, I should say so! But people never think of that. Have you left the cottage?"

"Oh, yes; gave it up at the end of a month. And here's August, so unbearably hot! I'm just going to take Ruth and Helen out to their Uncle Peter's, in the country. Harry can stay at his mother's—she lives down on John Street, not far from the office. You know Peter, don't you—Harry's oldest brother?"

"Yes—I think so."

"Well, we are going up there. Of course, it's awfully quiet, but the children can wear their old clothes and tear about all they like. I have no

bother with them there. It’s such a relief. . . . And Annie has four of her own. . . . She doesn’t mind another one or two——”

“Oh, there’s our car now!” interrupted her companion. “Come on!”

They arose and hurried to the corner and I sighed with relief as I watched them trotting away on their high heels. Their frail blouses revealed a prosperous elaborateness of embroidered camisoles. One had a wrist watch; the other ear-rings and a string of near-pearls. They roused in me a most unreasonable hostility.

Next came a man, and a little girl about the size of the twins. The man had a newspaper, in which he became absorbed as soon as he sat down. The child had an idea of her own, and proceeded to follow it out.

“Daddy—daddy!” she thumped him on the knee. “Daddy!”

“Huh,” he said enquiringly, still deep in his paper.

“Daddy—I want some ice cream! I want some ice cream, daddy!”

This sort of thing lasted for some time. Daddy said no, first emphatically then peevishly, and at last eruptively. I watched with interest, for the twins try all these schemes, too. At last, he yielded. If his no had meant no, there would have been no importunity. The youngster snatched the coin from his reluctant hand, skipped across among the traffic, and presently returned with her ice-cream cone.

It vanished. Then the fun began again. She thumped him on the knee once more. “Daddy!” she said in her childish treble. “Daddy, I want——”

“Oh my goodness!” exploded daddy, “Come on out of here. You’re forever wanting something—I haven’t a minute’s quiet.”

So they disappeared in the crowd, and even as they went I became aware of a very sweet, rather plaintive voice just behind me.

“O Willy!” said the clear tones, “Aren’t you tired?”

“No,” answered Willy, and his voice indicated a small alert young man. “Of course, the city always makes me weary, but I’m not played out. I know somebody that is, though!”

“Yes,” she agreed, and I’m sure she smiled as she said it. “I’m tired. I’ve tramped around through the stores, and I’ve spent all my money, and oh, Willy, I’ve only got about half what I want!”

I held my breath. What would Willy say? Would that plea meet an unkindly response? If so—I felt my knuckles tighten. A man can be so miserly mean when a woman asks for money! But Willy, bless his heart, rose nobly to the occasion.

"You'd better get what you want, now you're here," he said, in a most matter-of-fact way. "Or if you're tired, let me get it. What is it you want?"

"I must get the flannel," said she, in a low tone. Flannel? said I to myself. Flannel in August? But she went on, rather hurriedly. "I think I had better get it myself. O Willy, all this? No—I'll only need about half of it. . . . You're awfully good to me!"

"I intend to be . . . just that," said Willy gently. "Come on!"

So they also went, and left me feeling very cheerful and glad. I had to think of a man in our neighborhood who went to town with his wife, and when they got there he said to her:—"I suppose you want some money?"—and he gave her a quarter. Men like that, thank heaven, are rare enough to be remarkable. And presently a man came and sat down beside me and took off his hat. It was John.

"How do you like my hair-cut?" said he, blandly.

"Oh, John, your brains fairly show!" I said aghast, for truly it was the closest cut I've seen in a long time. He only smiled and put his hat on again.

"Got everything you want?"

"No," said I, and then with inspiration, added, "but I've spent all my money!"

"You always do," said John, crushingly. But he reached to his pocket, and brought out the shabbiest pocket-book in Ontario, "I guess I can stand a modest touch. How much do you want?"

"I don't want any," I said, "I just wanted to see what you would say."

"Oh!" said John, staring, "Well, ask me if I'm ready to go home, and see what I'll say to that!"

So I asked him and we went accordingly. And by the time I get enough money saved up for the kind of boots I want, his hair will have achieved sufficient growth to merit another hair-cut. I shall patronize the green iron bench again, while I wait for him. It is the most interesting spot in the city. I expect to get the plot for a novel next time I spend an hour there.

THE MINIATURE

I loved you once—but that was long ago.
    And do I love you now? I cannot tell,
My heart is dead—this only do I know—
    I loved you once and loved you passing well.

Then mists were rainbows where they touched your head;
    The clouds were sunshine, and the throbbing air
Breathed but your name upon the hours that sped.
    And life was light and music everywhere.

I loved you once—but fires grow dim and cold,
    And time can dull, thank God, the fiercest pain;
I loved you once—my eyes are growing old—
    Love never can come back to me again!

THE EARLY HEN GETS THE BROILERS

There is a clucking hen in the hen house—a real one, full of business, determined to hatch, and telling all about it on the least provocation. When we go in to gather the fruitful egg, she remonstrates. She camps on her chosen nest, and it is nothing to her when the other hens hop in alongside and all crowded as they are, deposit a nice warm egg for her to appropriate. If you have never seen a hen cadge eggs, you should! She quietly hoists herself, and with a swift, easy squirm, a twist of the wing, a cuddling of the body, she draws that egg under her. It is her egg, now—who can identify an egg? The furtive hostility in her eye shows what she thinks of the rest of us. She has important work on hand, and she implies that other folks are great time wasters, running around making a noise, not knowing enough to sit down quietly with a good clutch of eggs and keep them warm.

You might think the business of setting hens and raising chickens was one glad sweet song, wherein the amiable hen laid eggs, and hatched them into lovely chickens without a hitch in the program. Or in up-to-date places, the unfailing incubator turned them out. Well—I hesitate to hurt the feelings of an incubator, so let us just hint that even an incubator has its ups and downs. One of our busy neighbors once sent fifty eggs to a custom incubator to get them hatched, writing, “Dinny” carefully on each. But she had only five chicks for the lot. She had washed some of the eggs to make them look nice—and thus ruined them for life. Some were no good anyway, and some met bad luck. But after she had paid her five cents an egg to the incubator man, she figured that her five chicks cost too much.

Where poultry raising is a business, incubators are used, though I believe one poultry king has hens to help out the mechanical contrivances. But with most of us, the hens are a side line—something for the women folks to make a bit of money out of—and therefore carried on with the makeshift devices that are woman’s portion. An orange crate does for two hens; eggs of uniform size and shape and freshness are preferred. A layer of moist earth in the bottom of the box, then clover chaff or fine straw, then one egg—just

one egg at first to try the hen. It is a thrilling moment when she is shown her nice nest, and one draws back, waiting to see what she will do with it!

I always try them at night. They are ready to pitch camp then, anyway, and they are more mellow than in the morning. So I put the hen into her separate compartment just about dark, and never get over the thrill of watching how she acts. She may perch uncertainly on the edge of the box, looking doubtfully at its contents, aware that they are none of her choosing, yet unable to resist the lure, the promise of the nice brown egg cuddling down in the straw. Tentatively she lowers herself into the nest—it feels good—clean, comfortable, just her fit! The egg is snug below her warm breast—ah, this is the life!

She shuts her eyes in ecstasy. I go stealthily and get the rest of the setting, and slide them down beside her. She arises to look very fierce at this disturbance, and pecks at me viciously with her sharp beak. But as she sees the smooth eggs coming, she lifts a wing here, heaves herself there, until all are nicely covered. Oh, the silly hen knows what she does know, and knows it well!

After syrup-making time, comes the season when in most of our country kitchens, you may find a covered box or basket behind the stove, from which arise the small cheeps of young chickens. Sometimes a quart sealer full of warm water is wrapped in a bit of an old flannel shirt and set in the corner of this domicile, and the tiny creatures will fairly stand in piles on each other to get the heat of it to their poor little bodies. For the eggs do not all hatch at once—some will be twenty-four hours behind the others, and if you leave the first arrivals in the nest all that time, they will straggle out of it, or the hen will step on them—awkward thing!—or she may take a notion to go abroad with her first production and leave the possibilities to their fate. The alert farm lady forestalls this by taking away the wee fellows as soon as she hears them toot, and putting them out to pasture in the warmth of the kitchen.

So you see, a clucking hen opens up great vistas, in which we see ourselves the proud owners of ample flocks of plump broilers.

MUD

THE frost has come out of the ground times without number since it first went in last Fall, and each emergence has been a sore trial. Not that it really hurts our feelings to have old Jack Frost act in this capricious way—Pshaw! Not a bit. But he's such a villainous bootlegger—he carries so much of the wet goods about him that we like to see him safely tied up in his proper place.

Just bring him out of the ground and see what happens in no time. The winter roads go juicy and bottomless; the milk truck plows great furrows in them, where the ransomed waters frolic merrily and muddily. Cars are stranded by hill and dale, and honest old wagons that never learned to stall, pitch and roll towards the ditches most fearfully.

Mud! There was mud when Noah beached the ark, but he made so little comment on it that we conclude he was used to it. Mud is made of the dust of the earth, even as you and I, yet how snobbishly we frown upon it! Only children love it, and glory in paddling wet-footedly in it, or moulding it into ancient, child-loved shapes.

A dog or a cat will make choice footing, picking out the soundest, dryest path, but the average child will strike straight for the very depths of it. Why, I wonder? Why do the feet go down with such a joyous plop!—and why are little girls every bit as delighted with feet of clay as little boys?

I never long for cement sidewalks except in mud season, and we have had so much of that this year that I'm deadly weary of it. Such rain, such gloom, such an outraging of the housewifely instinct for clean floors! Each night it rains, and I lie and listen to the wasteful drip from the eaves. The cistern is full—I have to let that glorious soft water go into the ground.

And each morning as I go about my work there is a heaviness, a pressure as if locks and bars held me in. It is only the horror of the mud, however, that restrains me. Otherwise I would like to go and run up and down the lawn, and climb the old cherry tree, and swing on the swing, and jaunt away down to the bush with John for a load of wood, and race the dog to the orchard and back! Yes—just like that!

Spring is in the air, you know, and it doth work like madness in the brain. Spring is in the air—but alas, mud is on the ground, and not even the most temperamental housewife on the concession would dream of yielding to the wild, sweet urging of the wonderful new voice in the air, when that yielding would involve such a spattering and daubing as would undoubtedly come to her from it.

The kitchen floor—well, most people have imagination, so let us imagine it isn't muddy this weather. Let us pretend there are no wet boots nightly at the back of the stove in a more or less irregular row by the wood-box. Let us tell each other that we dreamed about the sad calamity that befell the twins when they filled their pockets with eggs, and then, being hand in hand and very merry, splashed gaily into a puddle out by the drive house—and fell down in it! The mangled remains of seven eggs and six eggs make only thirteen eggs, and doubtless the dog felt happy about it, when those coat pockets were emptied into his dish. Also, without doubt, the hens will lay more to-morrow.

Let us also weave a little fiction about the semi-swamped twins, who were pretty damp with tears above and puddles below, and had to retire from the scene modestly while some of their essential garments were put through the course of the law. Were they in any way depressed by the accident? Oh, my friends, twins are not like that! They do not depress.

It is largely due to their efforts that I have so much land on my kitchen floor. I reckon that they have carried in the most of a bushel of fine, brown earth in the course of the last few months. Dry earth is not so bad—it sweeps up, but oh, when it is moistened, it sticks like porridge.

There is a task for John when the roads dry a little, but I greatly fear he will be too busy at something else then to heed my injunctions. We have a very good gravel pit on the road down by the orchard, and some day if you chance along, you may espy (at least I hope you will) a determined-looking farmer, which is John, and his equally determined-looking wife, which is me (or I, at your choice). And we will have the grey horses and the old wagon, and the gravel will be catching it! A few loads of it around the buildings, make an unbelievable improvement!

Mud is depressing. The endless fight against it is on a par with the world's struggle against wickedness. It seems unconquerable, yet who would calmly sit down and endure its disgraceful sway, simply because of the hopelessness of mastering it finally? Our whole career as housewives, is measured by our ability to cope with uncleanness. That idea helps me a lot

when the sight of the smeary floors would lead me to sigh. The whole upward strain of this old world is towards purity, mental, moral, physical, spiritual, international, political—and its success depends on the individual.

That is why mud is so depressing—that is why one cannot be mentally serene amidst sordidness and dirt, for physical daintiness must underlie all other kinds. That is why beauty is so refreshing, so very wonderful and exhilarating to the tired soul. That is why, I do believe, these beautiful hyacinths of mine are filling the whole house with fragrance, and the power of their loveliness. Dirt may be discouraging on the kitchen floor, but to them it is a necessity. They lift themselves up from it, strong and inspiring. Dirt—it is only matter in the wrong place, after all, and with them, it has been placed aright.

Oh, it is muddy enough, but yet I would not want to miss these days of my life, though they are gloomy and wearying. There is always something pleasant and delightful to be found, even if it is no more than the little new chickens that arrived yesterday in a damp and dismal world. They are soft, little black masses with yellow crowns on their heads, and the hen is full of fretful jealousy. They are enough to make one forget the weather!

And I have a bulb in the window, here, tall and green, with a flower coming—I'm sure it is a daffodil, though candidly I don't know yet. To-morrow will tell. Meanwhile I must go back to my warfare with the broom and dustpan, for though I do not claim to be a model housekeeper, there are limits—yes indeed, there are!

THE PASSING OF THE PIONEER

"How natural he looks! How peaceful!"

Neighbors looked down at him as he lay in his last sleep, and spoke softly, as though in fear of waking him, though all of us knew no human voice had power to pierce that slumber. But oh, I moved away, and stood at the window, where so often he had stood, in homesick weariness. Cars hummed and droned in the busy streets; a motorcycle or two raved past; the street cars shrieked and clanged only a block away, and at the Salvation Army barracks, just around the corner, exuberant music exploited itself. He had been a stranger in a strange land, amidst all this uproar and bustle.

"How natural he looks!" they said—but they were wrong. In that setting he could never be at home. Yet for many years he had looked forward to the day when he could leave the heavy toil of farming and settle down in a pleasant little town house and spend the evening of his days leisurely and comfortably. He had forgotten how the roots take hold—and his had taken hold miles away, on the rolling hills and valleys of the old homestead.

So when he and his life-partner moved away to their town home they found something terribly lacking, though everything was convenient, and just what they had desired. There was water on tap in the kitchen, but oh, how flat and flavorless it seemed, and oh, how he longed, when sickness seized him, for a drink of water from the heart of the rocks, back on the old farm!

Many a time, as he stood at this very window, looking out on this same noisy street, the eyes of his mind saw the young wheat on the upland, green and sturdy after the Spring rains. Or he visioned the plodding team and the moist furrow, and longed for the feeling of the plow lines over his shoulders.

His hands are thin now, and laid across his still heart. Their work is done, yet the evidence of their labor endures. Many a day he toiled strongly, clearing his land from bush, stumping it, picking off the stones, building fences, draining wet fields, making roads and raising what crops he could, meantime.

He, who had been glad to work with oxen, lived to see tractors snorting upon his acres. He who had been proud to drive in a lumber wagon, would journey to his last resting place in a motor hearse. He who had walked miles through night and storm for a doctor when sickness first struck his own home in the early days had, at the last, the care of a medical man summoned by telephone, armed with hypodermics, X-ray instruments and all the strange, wonderful, yet futile trappings of the profession.

There were beautiful flowers about his casket—white, fragrant and waxen, but what would he have said to them if he could have seen them, I wonder? I remember a Spring day at home when he came walking up through the orchard, which was a mass of bloom, and he stopped and looked at it with utter enjoyment.

"Nothing to equal that ever came out of a hot-house," he said. "Apple blossoms, white clover and lilacs—they beat 'em all every way!"

. . . . The time came at last. The house was full of people—old friends, who had come to bid their dead comrade farewell, men with hard, rough hands and toil-bent shoulders, whose weatherbeaten countenances advertised their calling. And the young town minister stood forth in the midst of them to speak. He spoke nicely, comfortingly, encouraged by the presence of townspeople, who had come to know the pioneer during his time among them, and had wished to pay their last respects at this hour.

But how could they know him as we knew him? What knowledge had they of the long, honest days of ungrudging labor which he gave for the improvement of a corner of this country of ours. His work, and the thoroughness with which he performed it, helped to create the solidity of our present-day prosperity. He practised no slipshod methods—what was done by his hands or under his direction possessed thoroughness and durability.

He kept the weeds cut in his fence corners, and along the road side—a small thing, perhaps, yet characteristic of the man. These old men are dropping away from us, and much of their history dies with them, untold, for they deem it hardly worth telling. Of course, they did the things that had to be done seventy or seventy-five years ago, but they did them unconscious of any remarkable quality in the circumstance. Their matter-of-fact attitude towards the necessary drudgery of existence and progress is one that we might study with advantage in these days of softer living and easier ways.

The pioneer was typical of his generation in that he did not seek to evade the hard tasks that lay in his path. I have heard him tell about the days he and other old-timers put in with their teams, scraping the school yard,

drawing soil over the knobs of rock to make it level and beautiful, or hauling away stumps and debris. The time was given freely in those days; now, nothing is done about the school unless there is good pay for it.

When I hear people say of any undertaking—“It cannot be done”—when last I saw him, with closed eyes and folded hands, but as we knew him in other years, when he used to come stepping with slow dignity down the lane to have a word with us on the events of the day. Many a time I have heard him say: “A man can do anything he honestly tries to do—if only he doesn’t get discouraged too soon.” And, thinking of the hardships and difficulties of his own life, it seems that his words held truth.

It is dangerous for a man to labor too hard, physically, for it makes him prone to mental apathy. When the body is continually weary, the mind has small chance for growth. This fact has often led me to marvel that our pioneer, though a man whose days were claimed by toil, yet retained a broad and kindly attitude of understanding and appreciation. He could talk without gossiping, and could argue without recrimination.

But now it is all over. He and others like him, go down to the silent grave, and because they failed to advertise themselves, their work will soon be forgotten. He was a man of deeds—honest, friendly deeds; he built well and faithfully. Canada is better to-day because of his straight-forward years, and his example of up-rightness.

THE WINDS OF SPRING

THERE is a wind to-day—the wild sweet wind of Spring. It comes in circles—it meets one around every corner, high and boisterous. It is the cleansing wind, cold and strong, before which we scurry, after which we labor to complete the work unceremoniously begun.

For it is such a meddlesome thing! Who would have noticed that pile of papers, browned by exposure to the weather, matted with dampness, mouldy and heavy? With unwearying fingers, the wind has turned them over, loosened their hold on each other, crisped them, given them weapons of noise and individuality, and sent them forth to taunt us. Flap! Flutter! Across lawns just waking to new green beauty, against fences where fresh paint clasps them close, the careless wind chases them.

Which means that our native love of order drives us to go after them, gather them together, and burn them. Because of the wilful impetuosity of the wind, we dare not burn them immediately upon collecting them, so we cram them into a sack, and wait for a quiet hour.

It is just as well, for while we wait more come along. There are piles of leaves from last Fall, that have been banked moistily in corners, or in soggy masses under trees, or tucked away beside the verandah steps. All at once these find themselves released, and they scurry lightly on the crest of the sudden gusts, and let themselves down very conspicuously where the anxious housewife will see that they also must be burned. So into the bag they go, along with the protesting papers.

The wind can do little with such items as old boots and rubbers—and while we are at it, can anyone explain how these treasures come to be scattered about the way they are in the Spring? Certainly they were not out on the lawn last Fall, or ranged along the cellar windows, or lying negligently among the lilacs. Nobody goes outdoors in Winter and removes foot-coverings in snowdrifts. The things weren't there in the Fall—but they certainly are there now, and if the dog didn't look so unbelievably innocent over it, we'd never think of suspecting him. But he has them to account for, as well as the great bones, well-gnawed and antiquated looking, that surround his chosen sunning spot.

How one average dog can accumulate such immense and unattractive bones of all varieties rather puzzles his owner. What does he intend to do with them? Keep them in sight, as though they were diplomas to his prowess? They also will burn—but oh, what a sickening smoke they do send forth! Far, worse than the boots and rubbers!

When the wind dies down, about evening, and a cool dampness comes across the world, and a frail slice of a moon hangs in the thin blue of the sky, and away down the hill frogs begin to talk—then let us have a bonfire. Years may witness that we are growing old, but there is still hope of our undying youth while we can thrill to a bonfire.

I really grudge having one in daylight—it does not mean half as much. Daylight bonfires are eminently practical and sensible and sanitary and all the rest of it. But night-time bonfires are exciting, with their leaping of flames and surging of shadows, with their sudden gusts of gay sparks to rush upwards and slowly subside into blackness, with their mystery and risk and glare.

After the orchard has been trimmed, there are piles of brush that soon dry out. There are masses of cedar ends from the hedge. There are tangles of old vines, and perhaps some bits of splintery planks from the stable floor. All fine fuel! Out on the face of a furrowed hill the pile is set, the match applied. A night to remember long!

In course of time even the ashes of it will disappear! For the team will come along, and the plough pass over the wide grey patch, and turn deep down all traces of the burning. It has to be carefully done, however, for fear of hidden nails and sharp ends of metal, and bits of broken glass that may have been among the debris. Horses' feet invariably find such things! . . . . What is there about this wind to make one restless? Why does it bring queer broken thoughts of tall trees bending on a mountain side—white water springing down the face of ancient rocks—ageless waves climbing a stubborn shore? It stirs the responsive wanderlust that lurks in every one of us! Any person could be a gipsy—in the Spring!

Well for us, that bonds of custom hold us fast! A man may feel the tug of yearning for wild spaces and the smell of camp-fires—but who is to know of it but himself as he follows the team down the long dark furrow? The earth turns over in moist obedience. Far overhead wild birds challenge the season. Away on the horizon a fine plume of smoke tells of busy factories, noisy machines.

Sometimes—when there is wind tearing madly abroad in the sunny day, and Spring fever seems to hold us fast—it seems as if we were becoming too civilized altogether. It seems as if we should be out dancing with the dry leaves and the greening shrubs!

Instead of which we hold ourselves in, carefully, for fear of what the neighbors would say! At least, they can’t say anything damaging about a bonfire—and we’re going to have a beauty, to-night!

LOVE TRIUMPHANT

Dear arms, that held me in the bitter pain—
Dear heart, that beat so warmly to my own—
Dear eyes, and shall I meet your glance again?
            I am alone—alone!

You were my all, in those bright, happy days.
You are my all, wherever you may be—
The sun will add new radiance to his rays
            When you come back to me!

Lips bid farewell, and hand withdraws from hand,
But hearts cling close, in anguish or in bliss,
Though you be far, in some war-weary land,
            I cherish still your kiss!

You are my all—your honor is my pride!
You are my all—and though you come to me
Broken and wounded, yet, dear, by your side
            My happiness shall be!

Dear one, you gave me joy of all the world,
Gave me so much, such treasure is my store,
Having your love, your love with kisses pearled,
            How can I ask for more?

Yet this I feel, and know it to be true—
While love endures, and memory holds your kiss,
Not life nor death can sever me from you.
            Love bridges the abyss!

THE SOCIAL CUP OF TEA

This is the busy time for farm women. Not simply because of the chickens that are foaming out of the colony houses and slithering down the little runways like surplus suds on a washday; not because of the many pairs of lace curtains that Spring inquisition stretches on the rack, out in the sunshine of the front lawn, where their pristine stiffness returns to them a hundred-fold, thanks to much starch and taut stretchers; not even because of gardens where weeds grow so much faster and stronger than anything else, until the hoe becomes a deadly tyrant, and there is no more room on the hands for blisters; not for any one of these reasons, nor even for all together is this such a very strenuous season for farm women.

It is because of the meetings.

There will be lawn socials and strawberry festivals and garden parties and Sunday school picnics—and for everything its own particular committee meeting. But of all societies the Women's Institute surely leads in the number and amplitude of its gatherings. It has the start of church societies because it takes in the women no matter what church they belong to—no matter whether they dodge ladies' aid and women's missionary bands. Moreover, it has the support of the Government, being under the Department of Agriculture, and therefore secure as far as backing is concerned.

Each Summer delegates are sent out to visit the various branches and deliver addresses. The branches have no responsibility except to entertain the delegate and deliver her to her next speaking-place. That does not sound like much, and it really isn't much—but oh, what a buzz it causes.

About this time the women's missionary society is having its returned missionary to speak on an afternoon—and as all the W.M.S. belongs to the institute as well, it means that we dare not have missionaries and delegates too close together. We MUST get our housework done, in betweenwhiles!

Anybody will entertain the lady—but on second thoughts what about our housecleaning? Some of us have the spare bedroom all torn up; some of us have no curtains up yet; some of us have June weddings weighing on our shoulders; some of us have babies that are teething, and that cry in the night;

and some of us are bespoke for visitors. So there you are—who will have the delegate overnight and to meals?

And who will trot her along to the next stop? In the good old days, we used to hitch the team to the democrat, and dad and mother and a daughter and daughter-in-law or two went along and took her to her destination and cheerfully heard her give her address for the second time. Now, it is some brave lady with a car who takes all chances of a flat tire on a remote concession, or a broken axle (from too many stout women in the back seat), or a shortage of gas halfway between here and there. She will courageously venture forth to convey Mrs. Delegate to her appointed place.

Now it is the biggest mistake you ever made if you think of country women as too busy to enjoy life. Quite the contrary. I do not think we run any risk of falling into despondency because of our dull lives. On the other hand, we are in some danger of becoming double-chinned and undeniably portly from the effects of all these meetings.

For every meeting has its inevitable refreshments to wind up with. I am not going to describe what we have—but you will know, when you drive through the country, and see the church door or the school door ajar and hear the voices of women within, that after the meeting there will be refreshments. If your car has to break down anywhere, let it be convenient to one of these places!

If you see a pleasant home with a stretch of lawn in front, shrubs and flowers to frame it, and cars of all ages and conditions crowding buggies and democrats in the lane and stable yard, and if you have a little courage and a little interest in your fellow-women, just halt a bit, and attend the meeting. You will find a plain and ordinary woman in charge of it—that is the charm of it! The president does not have to be brilliant nor imposing nor awfully clever. She will probably be quite nervous, and make a good many blunders, that the city woman, if experienced and professional in the business of office-holding, would never make.

But that does not matter a button. A blundering president is really much better for a society than an expert one—she forces the members to come to her aid, and share her responsibility! Besides, there is no particular damage a president can do, no matter how she blunders!

Sometimes the menfolks frown when they have to give up the "light driver" on a day when they wanted it on the cultivator. Sometimes the hired man scowls because the missus is late getting home, and he has to milk the cows she usually handles. Sometimes the youngsters lament when the lovely

cake with whipped cream or cherries on it is whisked off to a meeting instead of gracing the home table. Sometimes the baby is naughty, and whoops up his war cry in the full tide of affairs, when the secretary is reading the minutes of last meeting, or the imported delegate is giving her talk. Or he may make a snatch at the tray when it passes, and shower the whole works with cream and sugar. But who minds a baby or two? Let them come, bless their hearts. We are not of much account if we can't stand something from them.

So, between five and six, these lovely afternoons, you may see the women on their homeward way. The plates or parcels they carry are very negligently wrapped—their work is done. Two or three large ladies in a little old democrat, with a youngster or two tucked in at the back on a shawl that is to save their "good" clothes from the dusty floor; a basket or so, a fat baby and his inevitable satchel; a big umbrella which was originally brought to afford shelter from the beaming sun, but is more inclined to poke its patrons in the back of the neck, pluck off their cherished hair nets, or wallow down so low that the horse is hidden; a horse of the safe variety, guaranteed to pay no attention to feminine driving, however whimsical, but to plod decently home at supper time—a horse that will suffer his bridle to afflict his ear most grievously, yet preserve his calmness—a horse that will not shy, nor balk, nor run away, nor kick, nor bite, nor lie down in harness—in short an institute horse—all these you may spy and interpret along the roads these days.

THAT FIRST DOMINION DAY

It really is not so very long ago—quite within the lifetime of many whom we knew. What did they tell us about it? One of the mistakes we make is to let people with their wealth of reminiscence slip away, so that the little intimate stories of earlier days in this land of ours are lost, and only the bare, statistical bones of history remain.

In 1867 nobody dreamed of the network of highways we now have in this province. It is hard to dream highways when surrounded by bush almost impenetrable in its vastness and wildness. In Southern Ontario there were roads—corduroy, plank, mud, stone, clay—and very good roads they were, too, as many an old-timer will bear witness.

People did not go very far from home, then. It was possible to be quite lost within a few miles of it. Country children could grow to manhood and womanhood and never see a train or the smoke of a factory, or know what coal looked like, or taste an orange or banana. Young men with whiskers thought it no shame to attend school and learn what they could. Bare feet were the usual warm weather wear, except for state occasions in the life of youth.

You ought to hear Dan Jackson tell about the good old days. He remembers—he has all sorts of quaint and whimsical bits of stories to tell to the interested listener—and, he is the lad that can tell them, too. John and I spent the evening with him and Mrs. Jackson, and it was hard to believe, as one looked about that beautiful house that he had been the barefoot country boy he described himself, when Confederation was new.

He played us some of the old jigs on his violin—didn't you know he was one of the enthusiasts responsible for reviving the old-time fiddling that has become so popular again of recent years?—and then he laid down the bow with a sigh, declaring his fingers were too stiff to play. "But I always did love to get music out of anything," he admitted, "even when I was a kid. . . . We had lots of fun, then, though children to-day would think it a bare life. . . . And it was a bare life—that is why we enjoyed our fun so thoroughly! We couldn't afford to be too particular about it. Why, I remember the first

Dominion Day—lived in Rockton then—did you know the Khan—Bob Kernighan? Yes, yes, of course you did!”

His glance roamed about the room—at the grate, rosily warm under its mantel of gleaming oak—at the hardwood floor laid in a pattern of his own contriving (I’m going to steal it from him, some day!)—at the soft lights, the evidences of taste and beauty, as though finding it difficult to reconcile the modern present with the picture of the past he was recalling.

“Well, we heard some sort of rumor about great doings in Dundas on the First of July. Didn’t know just what it might be, but some of us figured we’d go and see. Soldiers—bands playing—fireworks—a great adventure, mind you, to make such a journey—it took a lot of courage, though it is not really many miles from Rockton to Dundas.

“There was Bob—the Khan, you know—and Emmerson, and me—and some more, and we went. How? Why, walked, of course? Walking was the chief way of getting anywhere, then. Nobody ever died from excessive walking. It was a hot day, too, and we about gave up. But we kept on, encouraging each other, and at last, when we got so we could see down into the valley and get a glimpse of red coats and hear a faint note of a bugle, nothing could have stopped us.

“We got a drink at the spring—you know where it runs out of the mountain below Fisher’s, there? And my, how hungry we began to be! Had never thought about that when we came away. But the more we thought about it the worse we felt, so we hunted through our pockets and we scraped up eighteen cents among us. There was a bake-shop down in the town—I forget who owned it. We must have been great looking customers going in and asking for bread. It was five cents a loaf. ‘Is this all you’ve got boys?’ the man asked us—and when we told him it was and where we came from and all, he let us have four loaves. But when we got out the town boys were waiting for us, knowing by the tufts of hair sticking up through the roofs of our hats and by our home-made trousers and shirts and all that we were country lads.

“They tried to take our bread away and finally stoned us up under the railroad bridge and forbade us to come back. So we hung round above the town all day up along the Peak, and the sides of the mountain—and you know old John Devan’s toll gate up the road? Old John Devan and his toll gate—gone how many years?

“That was the first time I ever saw a sky rocket. I think there was some sort of sham fight that day, too. But presently it began to get dark, and”—his

voice was surprised, as though this was a new point to him, "do you know, I got homesick! Yes, sir, homesick! But the rest wouldn't go. So I struck off alone, scared—blubbering too, I daresay. And I was lost. Had to ask the way to Rockton. Pretty soon a democrat came along and I ran behind it, holding on. Soon I pulled myself up and in, and of course, fell fast asleep in a minute.

"Next thing I knew somebody was looking at me with a light. I had gone all the way home with the democrat to a farm away beyond my own home. Mrs. McMullen—what puddings and pies she could make! Had a dog-churn—such a place for a boy to go—I had often been there. Well, she sent her husband to take me right back home, as the swamp lay between—and ghosts were very real in my young days."

"And the other boys?"

"Oh, they did not get home until two or three next morning. Bob's mother kept him chained to a post for two weeks after it—I took my licking, just as I had expected to. I wouldn't have missed it for any licking—who would?"

SAP'S RUNNING

GET the sap buckets ready! Hunt up the spiles and scour the rust off them! See that the big, black iron kettles, that came over with the pioneer generation from Ireland, are clean and sound! For maple syrup time is coming nearer, and who wants to miss it? Maybe we do not aspire to the modern evaporator and the scientific rules of the commercial producer—maybe we just make a few gallons for our own use. Anyway, the time is approaching, and there is delight in the very thought!

For day by day, as the sun strengthens, winter is forced to relax his cruel grip on the world. Hidden water trickles with a delicate voice under cover of ice and snow so honeycombed and spongy that they fall back, here and there, to betray its presence. In the still languor of noon, steam rises from roofs and fence rails damp and black and fragrant. Even in northward-looking places icicles fade rapidly, their steady drip-drip a monotone to all the voices of the day.

Unsuspected flies appear out of nowhere. They know sap is ready to run and will presently provide them a sweetness! And the maples, vaguely aware of their sudden importance, tremble with the weight of the rich burden they carry! Thrifty housewives, inspecting the dark, leafless trunk and branches, rejoice to think of the coming of the syrup—and sigh to admit the work it entails!

But the children have no sighs! Rushing home from school to shout the glad news, "Sap's runnin'! Hey, sap's runnin'!" they cannot have patience to wait for slow adult feet, but fling off again, down the lane to the clump of maples at the turn, to hang their own pails carefully and hopefully below the gashes their own eager hands can rive in the tree. And the small harvest, brought daily into the farm kitchen, is handled for them by that person who manages to conduct a dozen enterprises daily with fair success. She boils it until the maple flavor is well established and then she turns it efficiently into a syrup of proper heaviness by merely adding brown sugar!

This sort of concoction is not offered for sale—never think that! It would be a breach of the law, for one thing, and a grievous ingratitude for another! . . . . A boy's mother would not deal with him so. When he works so hard to

accumulate all that sap, and resists so manfully the temptation to drink it, he knows she will not fail in her part. And speaking of drinking it—how many a successful and wealthy man to-day looks back across his years of struggle and triumph, to find as one of his happiest memories that simple joy—a long, cool drink of the faintly sweet, indescribably characteristic sap of the maple!

Dusk falling, perhaps—the long, pale shadows creeping across hill and valley—lights shining from the windows—a dog's voice somewhere—the steady plop-plop of water nearby—a feeling of frost coming with the night—and a faint call from somewhere, "Will—y! Will—y! Supper's ready! Come!" . . . .

Night, too, holds its glamour in maple syrup time. All day in the bush some one has been going to and fro, collecting the sap from the various trees tapped, drawing it to the great fire, where in the big black kettles it is boiled and boiled, hour after hour. A piece of fat pork, suspended above the cauldron at a calculated height, catches the upheaving liquid as it threatens to foam disastrously over the edge. Oil on the syrup has the proverbially soothing effect, and the syrup retreats within the confines of the kettle once more.

A switch of pine boughs is another discouragement to the ebullient and scalding syrup. Many a kettleful has been soundly whipped into place by this quaint but efficacious method. Old-timers complain that maple syrup to-day lacks something in flavor. It lacks the suavity of the fat pork. It has no trace of the aromatic pungency of the pine bough! Possibly, too, it is without the taste of smoke that sometimes did invade syrup boiled down over the open fire in the heart of the maple bush.

The boiling, when begun, is continued to the finish. And what a lot of time it does take! How vague and slight must be the actual trace of sugar in sap as it comes from the tree! So much moisture to be driven off before color and weight and penetrating sweetness reward. The springing glare of the fire against the silent whiteness of snow—the tall, gaunt trees, stretching upward into the gloom—the silent shape of the dog lying watchful at a safe distance—the recurrent upheaval of the boiling mass—the eddying steam with its characteristic maple fragrance—these make the night of boiling-off one to be remembered long and happily.

It is not likely to be a solitary time. How do the boys and girls of the neighborhood know so definitely when it is to be? Lightly and casually they gather, interested, merry, ready for games that make the night echo with the

sound of youthful voices. They know where there will be some syrup left in the kettle for their pleasure—and they know, too, what to do with it.

Unhappily, the splendid hard maples of an earlier generation have been slowly but surely yielding to the pressure of the times. Farms have passed from the hands of those who loved and spared the noble trees, into the brief tenure of men who simply want to snatch from them the swiftest and surest money to be had.

Maple wood is valuable, easily converted into cash. Maple syrup—or hardwood floors? Have we chosen? Or have we simply accepted a decision without questioning its source? Maple syrup is still to be had—of course. But it is no longer a general crop on the majority of farms, as once it was. It has become a novelty to farmers, as to city people. Still, in chimney corners there are old people who can tell us stories about the making of it in other years. And still, rushing excitedly home from school, there are youngsters who have no mind to lose the fun and the enjoyment of it.

Sap's running! Good news—sap's running!

THE INTERESTING COW

“Oh she’s clever, yes, indeed!” said the lady in the tailored suit, most impressively. “Why, she can even make a cow interesting! Anybody that can interest me in a cow——”

“A cow is so-er-commonplace!” said her companion, plump, comfortable-looking in a most expensive coat. “A horse, now—a horse is a noble animal——”

They sat across the table from me the last time I was in town for a day. It was a nice, light, respectable place, where for four bits the white-cap brings you enough to keep you going till the doctor comes. Each of them had a little green teapot about the size of a mucilage bottle, and they had bread-and-butter and frisky salad. They had not interested me in the slightest until their conversation hooked upon the versatile person who had painted a Durham red for them. Then I sat up and looked at them.

Long ago I came to the conclusion that city folk could never be brought into sympathy with actual farm conditions. They don’t feel inclined; it is too much trouble to acquire an understanding of these matters. So it was something of a shock to think that these two unmistakably urban ladies were actually willing to consider the personality of the cow.

Interested. Now what does get a person interested in anything? Not knowledge of it, that’s certain, for I know nothing about airplanes except that I hope in some future existence I may know the glorious thrill of driving one—feeling it rise like a bird, tasting the intoxication of flight, poising, wheeling, dropping with absolute consciousness of power and control.

But a cow—that’s different. Nobody needs to wait until another incarnation to get acquainted with a cow. Her joy-stick is within arm’s length of most of us, and her fuselage is frying in many a homely pan, right now, throughout this fair land. Her propellers make calf’s foot jelly, and bologna and other commercial products. From potted tongue to ox-tail soup, and from the great horn spoon to real leather club bags, the mild and gentle cow assists to the best of her ability. She will live in a field by the side of the road, and be a friend to man, any time except in Winter. Of course, there

isn’t much romantic action about a cow. There is no heroic dare-devilry about her to attract the public eye; you don’t see much of her in the movie world. She is no screen star.

Her unpleasant habit of bawling discourteously counts against her. Her manners are undeniably, rather vulgar. She has a way of breathing in one’s face, snuffling with unseemly curiosity, and of course, chewing, chewing, shamelessly and ever-lastingly—oh, she’s vulgar yessir, yessir!

Now what is interesting about all this? I wonder! Of course, cows are about fifty per cent. of the conversation in our happy home, for we are buying or selling them, or milking or feeding them, or concerning ourselves with them or their by-products, for hours out of every day. That’s a commercial interest. Outside of that, cows have a certain attraction for me because they are decent, hard-working citizens, who look to the welfare of their offspring, and mind their own business very consistently. But I couldn’t write a novel about one!

Life must be very barren to people who do not have a wide variety of interests. Goodness me, I like to have lots of roots and branches. I don’t care about crocheting, or tatting, but that is after all, no disgrace. And I never could raise much curiosity on the subject of the after life, or what becomes of the soul after it leaves the body. I’ve had little scoldings for my seeming indifference but it isn’t indifference really. I wouldn’t think of prying into my father’s private papers—though he never told me not to do it, and he does not lock his desk. There are some things one simply doesn’t do.

One night I rode up in the stage with a man who brimmed over with prophecies. He had it figured up that in so many years the end of the world would come. I had to yawn.

“The end of the world will come for me, when my little engine stops running,” I said, unsentimentally. His eyes grew round with horror and he would have thrown up his hands only that he had to balance the groceries that tottered on his inadequate lap.

“But when the Lord comes again——” he protested, getting up plenty of steam for a hot run.

“Now just a minute,” said a stout lady, who was wedged in at the other side of him, and who had been taking in his arguments with both ears. “When I go to town I leave my girl her work to do in the house and mind the baby. And my boy has his chores to do. They know I’m gone and they know I’m coming back. But they have their work to do, and not to be playing with

matches and such. They don’t need to come a-running down to the gate, looking for me, or quarrelling about what time they think I’ll be home, or what I’ll bring for them. Nor they don’t need to be trying on my dresses, or wasting the food and the like of that. I don’t lay down too many laws—but I trust them, and I expect them to show judgment.”

It did not end the argument for the futurist gentleman, but it clinched it for me. If the Lord can look after me in this world He can in the next, and there is nobody else who can handle a proposition like that. So ouija boards and Sir Oliver Lodges never cause me to read beyond the headlines. One life at a time is more than I can attend to now and then. As for interfering with those who are at rest—it seems to me a little indecent. We’ll have all eternity to talk to them, so why fret at the brief separation? Why strive to reach across and snatch them back. We love them, and miss them, and we can bring them back in our hearts; the little child who has gone across will come back and pluck the harsh words from our lips and the evil deeds from our hands, if we let it. But to bring that dear one back just for curiosity——

I said I wasn’t interested, but it seems as if I might be if I tried hard enough. A person changes, with time. Take a geranium, and let it stand always the same way, and it grows all to one side. I suppose we grow one-sided too, according to the way the sun shines on us. That is why some of us are so bitter against free trade, and some are so fierce on the subject of tariff—we stand that way towards the light.

It is pleasant to meet with people who are broad-minded, and able to see both sides of a question without getting cross-eyed. I have always been afraid of growing all one way and losing the ability to allow for the other fellow’s point of view.

I wonder if I ever told you about Ziba Fisher’s pigs? He bought a pair of little ones, one Fall, when he was away threshing, and brought them home and put them in an old hen-house, which had an opening in the lower corner of the door about six inches square. That was originally intended to let the hens out—he kept a small kind. Well, Ziba went back to the threshing business again, and left the pigs to his wife’s tender mercies. He was away threshing for eight or ten weeks, and when he came home he found he had a pair of pigs six feet long and six inches in diameter!

Those pigs allowed themselves to be shaped by circumstances. They should be a warning to humanity.

NOVEMBER

I love to stand upon the hill and watch the night come down
With tattered clouds to hide the stars—with shadows like a frown,
With wisps of rain upon the fields, the stubble dead and brown!

There comes a roaring in the dark—the wind among the trees!
A roaring and a lashing like the tide on stormy seas!
Tecumseh's braves make war again such eerie nights as these!

The scattered leaves lie dank and dead, awaiting sleet and snow,
The naked trees in anguish weave their bare arms to and fro,
And o'er the hill the ancient stumps in long procession go—

Gnarled fingers set against the sky like hands of men who died
Pale victims of the Red Man's hate, in fiery torture tried—
Long years ago when mighty pines those stumps held high with pride.

In gathering dark methinks I see that silent, savage host.
Wild eagle feathers in the hair of each fierce warrior ghost—
The wind shrieks out their battle cry and echoes to their boast.

OLD COUNTRY CHURCH

"Oh, come to the church in the wildwood! Come to the church in the dale!" A sweet and simple old song—touching the heart in its direct and natural appeal. For the proper setting of a place of worship would seem to be among the stately trees, with a far, faint skyline, of rolling hills visible beyond the great dark trunks. The zephyrs of Summer play lightly about the building, wafting bird songs in at the opened windows to mingle with the hymns of human worshippers, and flower fragrance to add its homage to their offerings of prayer and praise.

Piercing wintry winds in their season lash upon the humble building, even as cares and distresses beat and hammer on the souls of men and women. But the purity of the snow, the cleansing of its severity, create a fitting background for the little church in the wildwood. And look! Even as the wildest storm scores across the countryside, driving a wall of fine, hard snow before it—the brave little blurr of smoke from the church chimney tells that preparations are being made for service—for it is the Sabbath, storm or no storm!

The season of mud, Spring and Fall, is the most difficult of all for the rural church to face. When Autumn rains and constant frosts, or Spring sunshine and daily thaws frustrate and delay the settling, the minister, after scrambling along fences, carefully picking the least boggy spots on the road, getting wet to the knees or taking a soaking from some passing cloud, will find himself almost alone in the little church.

Maybe it is supposed to be an afternoon service. The caretaker, having attended to the fires, has gone home again to watch the road and see whether there will be any one brave enough to plod through the sticky roads. The little church is silent—empty. Sunlight filters in at the tall windows with their oblong panes of colored glass. It shows worn and shabby pews, with faded cushions here and there, provided by thoughtful wives for rheumatic or crippled elderly husbands. The bare boards of the floor with their wide cracks full of dust, and their unpainted surfaces scored with the passing of many feet, tell of a day when lumber was cheap and plentiful, for they are of ample width, and probably two inches thick, at least.

Time has softened and mellowed the once harsh coloring of the walls. The women of the church were very proud when they managed that distempering of strong green. Such a clean, decent color! How the little oil lamps, set about the walls between the windows, with round silvery reflectors, show their soft gleam at evening gatherings against that vividness! How well it lasts! What a background it makes to the subdued and slightly frayed crimson of the pulpit carpet and the railings of the little choir!

There may be great city churches with magnificent pipe organs operated by electric power and played by master musicians, as seemly accompaniment to the voices of carefully chosen and specially trained singers. But it may be that to the Divine ear there is a sincerity and sweetness in the music of the country choir. It is a small organ—squeaky perhaps, requiring a great deal of pumping. Once in a while some key insists on sounding all through the playing—or perhaps one or two of the most used keys go dumb, amputating harmonies in most confusing fashion.

But how it has served! The minister, sitting quietly, alone, at the back of the church this Sunday afternoon, finds his eyes suddenly misting as he thinks of the sorrowful little services, when some loved member of the community has been brought within the church doors for the last time. He thinks of the white monuments on the slope of the hill behind the church. Sturdy old pioneers who gave their labor to the erection of the first, rude log church; frail children who could not endure the hardships of life's battle, and faded away quietly in the arms of grieving mothers; young wives, hastily snatched from loving circles; strong men, cut down in the pride of their strength—and the little old organ has watched them all!

There have been weddings—sprinkled with tears and kisses, blessed with prayers and kind thoughts; christenings—fair little baby faces—serious fathers—mothers with grave eyes, lighted by something very soft and spiritual; Thanksgiving services, when for bounteous harvest and peaceful days and rugged prosperity sincere gratitude poured out from young and old; and many, many regular services, when he had stood up there behind the low, unpretentious desk, looking searchingly over the faces of his well-loved people!

He has watched them through the slow, struggling years. Babies coming in their mother's arms, wrapped in shawls, but pink and white and sweet and innocent as they emerged from the dark wrappings; toddling on unsteady legs, sometimes breaking into the sermon with clear high childish treble that won from him a kindly smile, and from the congregation the indulgence due

to their artlessness, sitting warmly against their mother, heads crowded comfortably into the softness of her coat—or drowsing at ease in strong fatherly arms.

Children of school age, with round, wondering eyes that somehow touch a great well of tenderness in his heart and fill him with deep consciousness of his shortcomings, so earnestly do they watch him and accept his words—then the sudden awkwardness of adolescence, the swift leap from childhood to young manhood and womanhood—he thinks of them all with warmth and a very great comfort! His people!

He knows how poverty has hampered them, and how they must pinch and save in order to give the children an education—music lessons—books—even decent clothes. Yet he knows, too, the hospitality that has many a time taken him in over night, fed him, rejoiced his heart, sent him on his way with a goodly feeling of security. . . . The sinking sun shines with sudden brightness across the narrow, plain room, and a glory fills the bare little church. The fires are dying out. . . . No one is coming this afternoon. He may as well go home. The caretaker is saying to himself that it is a shame the minister walked all that way through the awful roads, and not a soul could turn out. Clean discouraging, that sort of thing!

But the minister, coming out and closing the door, turns to the setting sun with a face that is newly confident—a face refreshed, softened, strong and serene. The church has done its appointed work.

HEAT

THE broad, dry leaves of the corn in the garden curled and rustled complainingly together as the hot wind stirred the dust below. Little eddying swirls of the pulverized soil followed the movements of the atmosphere, adding to the distress of the unhappy hens which cowered close to any least shade, with gaping beaks and outspread wings and despairing eyes. Now and then a wizened apple dropped in mute surrender from its failing hold on the tree. Berry bushes along the fence showed the dark clotted drooping redness of berries over-ripe before properly grown.

The tree toad chirruped his dry harsh note somewhere in the dazzle. Was he summoning by his incantations the powers that rule the moisture of the season? Was he pleading for more drought—or for relief from it? Was he in the grip of some power which forced him to sing and sing, until rain broke across the thirsty land?

Shingles on the roofs of the buildings had an oddly ruffled look. Their edges were crisping under the constant baking, and their bleached surfaces showed a multitude of incipient cracks. In the sides of the barn the unpainted boards drew further apart so that the sun filtered through in many a seam and crevice. Though the great doors stood open right through, the heat here was more appalling than elsewhere—for the hay as it came in was impregnated with it, and the whole building held and gathered it.

Day after day the horses labored heavily among the hills, while dusty, steamy but determined the men saved their hay. Sleeves rolled above elbows showed the tanned arms—opened collars gave the sun still further opportunity for searing. Wide hats shielded the heads. Nondescript overalls completed the outfit. As the forks swung up their load of hay from the ground, that restless wind shook forth accumulations of dust. A very grimy job, this, with the hay.

Now and then the weary horses lifted their heads and blew out their nostrils. Their eyes held a certain wildness as they stared towards the hazy horizon where clouds massed and moved, yielding occasional low grumbling noises. Then the heavy heads drooped again until the word of command moved them on down the field. Rain! They ached for it, sniffed

for it—then patiently resigned themselves to wait longer yet in the intolerable heat and labor.

The dog had given up his usual convoy of the team and wagon, and lay under the tree by the barn door, where he could watch the load as it came from the field. Yet he, too, was restless, feeling something ominous in the sky and air. His panting halted at times, and he rose whining uneasily, to pad silently back and forth seeking something. Not yet! Not yet! His instinct seemed to warn him and he came back each time to lie down unsatisfied, his sombre gaze fixed on distance. . . .

The horses in a cloud of dust, plodded down the lane with their towering load. Their sides heaved with the effort as they ascended the gangway and at length stood in their place on the barn floor. How dark it was in there, after the glare without! Yet the heat had come with them, bedded solid in the springy hay.

So full were the mows that the mechanical fork on its track no longer availed. The load had to be taken off by hand, and placed with judgment. Little pails of water, brought for drinking, proved tepid and nauseating. Little jokes and stories, usually passed about with laughter, were left unspoken.

High among their yielding hay, the men failed to notice the strange cold air that suddenly entered and circled about. But the horses felt it—knew its portent—welcomed it with shivers of delight that set the harness voiciferating. Then it was gone again—but how much nearer was the thunder all at once! Its deep note held a menace—and the flicker of lightning was low and lurid below the density of the leaden sky. Everything stood out with startling vividness—the little frame house just south of the barn showing up every detail. The thin plume of smoke that hinted of the meal in preparation—the neat but wilted curtains at open windows—the drooping hollyhocks and nasturtiums reluctant to admit defeat—and across the deadly stillness the faint fret of a little child—and then—

Jagged, blinding, the lightning tore the sky! And before the eyes could close to shut out the fearful brightness, the roar of terrific thunder smote the air with deafening fury!

There was an interval of silence, in which it seemed as though a hidden monster crouched to spring. A strange whistling broke it—a whistling at first distant, but approaching rapidly, sending ahead a smell that alarmed the nostrils. But now it had come—and in the barn, dark with the impending storm, nervous fingers struggled with the heavy harness while other hands

dragged at the unwilling doors, and the horses, all excited by the assault on senses of sight and smell and hearing, twisted and tossed their heads almost in panic.

The dank smell of rain on heavy surface dust subsided swiftly as sharp drops merged into a sheet of water. Fierce flashes and thunder that followed without an interval, so covered all other sight and sound that the team and driver vanished to the stable like wraiths. The torrent of rain smote mightily on roofs and walls—and how the parched wood drank it in!

Somehow the old dog was in the stable, crouching in a stall, content. Hens surprised and not altogether pleased, scuttered damply in their invariable stupidity for shelter that was no shelter at all. Gulps of water tore their way from spouts, and overshot the eaves. Pails spun from their shelf—rose vines bowed to the earth—untimely gloom split asunder repeatedly to shattering bursts of frantic flame and clamor. . . . . .

And a sweet coolness crept in the wake of the rain, blessing the land that had been suffering the torments of heat and drought. Cattle standing under trees in scorched pasture fields could lie down at last pleasantly damp and cool. Tiny streams, almost exhausted with their long struggle, pulsed with new strength. Springs and wells, so long weak and low, stored up again within themselves the reserves they were planned to guard. Bright drops scattered from every slight support and a deep sigh of gratitude welled from the very heart of the world in the relief from the burden of heat.

THE ROMANCE OF FENCES

ANY observant person who travels about Ontario must be struck with the variety in marking boundaries—in other words, with our fences. The story of the land is written in them. They speak plainly of the struggles and privations and labors of those who set them up. They tell, sometimes pathetically, of those almost forgotten almost Herculean conflicts of man with nature, in order that our province might be what it is to-day.

Let us read from them, not as scientists, but as students of their story. Which fence came first? One might suppose the stump fence, that fantastic but effective barrier of pine roots turned on edge and laid in a line with their earth-filled faces showing all one way. It gave the impression of a stockade—a defence—a barrier to keep out what was out, and to keep in what was in. But the stump fence was a makeshift, an expedient for the use of left-overs.

The first operation in bush country must be the felling of the trees. Stumps could wait where they were, fast in the ground, for a time. When the tall tree was down, sunshine dried the soil, and presently the stump would begin to rot, and be less difficult to remove. Meanwhile, if any sort of fence became necessary, there was plenty of material in the felled tree.

The first fence was made in the simplest fashion. A log was laid on the ground, and the line continued by another. They were not laid end to end, but one was backed about 18 inches behind the other. These were bound by a wooden toggle—a grooved piece, shaped above and below to lie across the logs and hold them in place. The lower logs were big and heavy. The next layer smaller, because they had to be lifted and so on until the last was simply a pole.

We are more familiar with the rail fences. Each spring when the snow went a couple of weeks were devoted to the splitting of rails. We can hardly realize what this meant—iron wedges that must not be put to work when frosty, in frozen wood, but must be gently warmed at a small fire; wooden gudgeons, shaped like wedges, but six inches, perhaps, at the top, made out of white oak or hard maple, and driven with a great beetle.

The beetle was made sometimes of a hard maple knot with a handle set into it, or of iron-wood, and bound with a metal ring. It was a mighty weapon, carrying several hundred pounds driving weight in the hands of a good man—and it took a good man to wield it. It was a job that tried a man's strength and endurance and whatever knack he had and thus produced experts who made a game of it, and found pride and joy in competing with each other along lines of speed and deftness. Thus the labors of pioneer life provided the sports, and the exertions paid for the fun.

As often a man was single-handed in his fight with the wilderness, so many of these fences were of the one-man type. There was the rustle fence, with boom on top and centre; the straight rail fence, made with post planted in the ground, and stake bound alongside with tree wires to contain the rails—bottom, centre and top. For stony ground, where it was a problem to insert and keep posts in the soil, the snake fence came into its own. The snake fence had a charm other fences lacked. Its twisting course lent romance to the scene. Wild berries grew in the angles, little girls with pink sunbonnets played house where its enclosing arms made walls with such delightful shelves for the bits of crockery that served as dishes, and garnished those accommodating spaces.

The rails were easy to let down when evening came, and the tinkle of some old brass cow bell told that milking time was near and cattle were rambling home. It was an easy fence to climb when a timid feminine heart took fright at the antics of some great horned beast, and flight was the outcome of panic. In fact, it was a satisfying fence, taking all the space and material it wanted, and attending to business in spite of its romantic tendencies.

Then there was stake and rider fence—really a snake fence with a rider in the centre of the panel—and many a goodly bit of land was surrounded by fence of this description. When a little plot was cleared and worked and sowed with something or other, it was time to put some sort of protection about it to keep stray cattle from despoiling, and to indicate its extent. These fences were built of rails, chiefly pine, or cedar, a few oak, some basswood, some white ash.

In time, stumping became general, and then a problem arose—where could the stumps be put when they were lifted from the soil, as lifted they must be to clear land for farming operations? Soon the rail fences were being taken down, and the great gnarled stumps of mighty pines were set up in their place. Many of these fences endure to this day, a monument to the

past glories of the province, as well as to the untiring industry of our forefathers.

Once in a while an enterprising sheep endeavored to scale the spikes and spears of the stump barrier, and was found by his distressed owner, dead or near it, dangling from the strong, slender jagged points which caught the thick wool.

There are many miles of stone fences in certain parts of the province. Up the old Brock road towards Guelph, along some of the ways leading into Galt, may be seen low walls that indicate infinite labor. They are laid without mortar, round hard heads built up with small broken pieces, the whole symmetrical, carefully aligned, enduring. Those stones were picked from the fields, by hand, laid into place by hand, and the hands that set them there are gone from the scene of their toil.

Sometimes the fence is merely one flat slab laid on another, sliding here and there, getting over-balanced and dragging itself out of true. It always seems to me that the builders were hurried and weary, and said: “We’ll lay these stones up here in a temporary fence, now, and after a while, when we have cleared the farm, and have more time, we’ll make a proper fence.”

What about the wire fences? More modern, these, more standardized, less characteristic of the country they serve. They were once acclaimed as the best kind to have where the snow was inclined to drift. They were open enough to let it through. And when the farm woman wants to keep her small chickens in the small chicken department, she takes her butter and egg money and buys poultry wire enough to keep them in. When the little pigs show a tendency to run across the lawn, she tells the man of the house her opinion, and forthwith he buys the kind of fence that pigs need.

Regarding barbed wire, one says nothing. Its history is carved deep in the heart of our nation, and the scars are not yet healed.

And now we have come to the stage when people decide to have no fence at all, but to let the lawn run open to the street, and tie up everything that might feel like running over it. Thus we progress, thus we come back to our pioneer stage, and thus, presently, we shall be most industriously building fences once more, that will be genuine barriers.

THE CYCLE OF THE WHEAT

The hay is in, on this farm, but what a piece of work it was to get it in! It had to be fairly snatched between showers. When rain was not actually coming down, it was either threatening desperately or else backing up for a fresh start. July was wet on both sides, this year, full of juice as a ripe tomato. And hot! Whew! What sun-burned necks did ripen in the cherry orchard! I felt sorry for the girls many a day when they were down on the south side, filling basket after basket, and all the little breeze there was shut off by the trees and the hill!

But to-day I made the first applesauce of the season, and they picked the last of the cherries, so we turn the page to something fresh. That will be the threshing, probably. Wheat is standing gloriously in its tall and heavy shocks on fields and fields throughout this part of the province.

A good field of wheat is an excellent advertisement of the land it grows on. Good wheat land is good land. Good crops mean more than simply good crops. They mean that the farmer is going to be able to draw a free breath or so. He is going to be able to pay off some of his indebtedness—and that means more cash to somebody else, better times all round. It gives a hoist to everything, including cheerfulness, which is perhaps as much benefit to the nation as hard cash could be itself!

Then think of that straw—straight and strong, and sweet and golden! What fun it was when we went to visit somewhere during summer holidays, in our pinafore era, and were put to bed at night on great, corpulent, crackling straw ticks, that heaved up in the centre and positively refused to be subdued—for the first night or so, anyway! The sharp elbows of the straws poked into us if we whacked about in bed too much and got the heavy comforter that was supposed to soften them, shoved aside.

But this is getting away from the wheat, and after all, it does not deserve to be neglected. It is bound up with the history of the world, an ancient and venerable element in its life. History is full of famines that swept off countless multitudes—because the crop failed. It tells of many a fair city that had to open its gates—because the stores of grain ran out and utter starvation broke down the spirit of the defenders.

It tells of harvests standing ready to garner, and of savage raiders that fired and wasted that precious food. It shows that countries have been settled, railroads built, treaties signed, laws passed—because of wheat. I suppose turnips and potatoes have the same romance behind them. It is a poor thing that does not have its own amazing story!

As soon as the wheat is cut, the hens know it. The field may be at the very back of the farm, behind a bit of woods or even across the road, but the hens, with joyous outcry, fling themselves into it, and only interrupt their energetic feasting to lay an egg and cackle about it, "Cause and effect! Cause and effect! Plenty wheat—plenty egg!" And then they go on to another sheaf.

Now flour comes in new. In the days when we all made our own bread, we took particular care to have enough old flour to do us past this stage. We had an idea that new flour was not equal to that which had aged a little. I once went into a store in the city when I lived there and asked for pastry flour. "Oh, yes, madam," said the clerk, briskly, "Here you are—the very best Manitoba wheat! Nothing equal to it for your pies and cakes."

I had supposed everybody knew better than that. Pies and cakes can be made from that strong Western flour—but what a pity to waste it on that! Nature meant it for the bread of the world. She handed out sun and rain and cool dull days for the filling of the grain, and she supplied the peerless soil of the great plains to grow it on. But Nature bothers nothing with cakes and pies. Adaptations, softer methods, give us the softer wheat. We can look after that ourselves.

To-morrow we expect to thresh. The machine came in last night about eleven, and it marks a stage in our family life when I say that we are all in bed but Edwin. John, heretofore, has always been on the scene to superintend, and I have not gone to bed without seeing that the men with the machine had their suppers and were offered a bed. But these threshers live right in the village and not quite so dependent on the farm women as when they are out on a long road, and places are far apart.

Somehow these threshings do not bother me as they once did. Shall I ever forget my first! I was baking for a week ahead, bound to have plenty of food on hand, yet forever balked by their changing dates. Sometimes they were coming on Monday, and sometimes they wouldn't be there until Wednesday. Oh, well—it is only a matter of a dozen men for a meal or two, and that is neither here nor there except when one has little children to handle at the same time.

And now I hear the rain coming down. That puts a stop to threshing from the field, at least until the grain has time to dry. Think of my row of cherry pies, and my apple pies. They will not keep. They must be eaten while fresh, but why worry about pies? When do they ever go to waste, threshing or no threshing, if there are young folks at hand, and they have half a chance? And the sun will come out to-morrow, and the good wind blow, and one of these days the threshing will be over, and the wheat will once more start on its appointed task of feeding the hungry, and piling up wealth for the nations.

ROSES FROM THORNS

I sit and scrape potatoes
    Beside the kitchen door
And sometimes bits of peeling
    Fly out upon the floor.
The knife is dull and heavy—
    I hate the acrid smell!
I sit and scrape potatoes
    But I don’t scrape them well!

There’s someone at the pump stand
    In overalls of blue,
Those overalls are faded—
    They have a patch or two.
His fair hair takes the sunshine,
    His eyes laugh straight at me—
I sit and scrape potatoes
    As fluttered as can be!

I’m glad the door is open
    So I can see him there.
Some day, perhaps, my fingers
    May smooth his rumpled hair.
Those eyes, so full of laughter
    Make all my pulses sing—
I sit and scrape potatoes
    As happy as a King!

THE QUILTING

To-day Edwin took me down the road to the church about eleven. I had Jack, a muffled roll, in one arm, and a loaf of bread and the bread knife in the other, for when Edwin and I, in our big coats, sat side by side on the seat of the little democrat, we were so crowded that if we had wanted to turn over anything in our minds, we would have had to get out to do it.

It was a drive full of local color and we occupied ourselves pleasantly and harmlessly as we went along.

The little white church on the hill had a noble smoke on as we approached, and we knew that someone was there, and making things hum. Sure enough, when I opened the basement door, I saw the room well occupied. The furnace, which heats the church, is directly in line with the door, but at each side of it were women seated or moving beside two big quilts on frames.

There was a fire in the cook stove; baskets with the papers half rolled back, showing great promise of good things to eat, were set conveniently near it. One of the girls took Jack and began to peel off layers of wraps, as one might peel an onion. I laid down my bread and knife, took off my own wraps, and with every outward evidence of vast experience, proceeded to initiate myself into the mysteries of quilting.

John says that when he was a youngster you would see in almost any farmhouse a quilt set up in the frame, and in process of quilting. What intricate piecing and sewing, what patience, what yearning for beauty and for an outlet for the creative instinct found expression in those quilts of other years! The exchange of patterns, and of pieces, and of help, must have required some heavy bookkeeping, surely!

And those quilts wore! Held together by the sturdiness of the fabric, and by the sturdiness of fabric and by the close, finely-run stitching, they kept many a wayfarer comfortable, those long, cold nights of earlier times in low log houses where the untamed storms beat against the small windows, and perchance, the howl of the wolf on his lonely prowl added shivers independent of the temperature.

I like to think of those days. The chance wayfarer, seated by the great fire-place, telling the dwellers in the forest about the doings of the world beyond, or, coming himself from remote fastnesses, asking for news from these who dwelt closer to the front of things; the house, primitive but splendidly hospitable; the inmates, busy, kindly, thrifty, eager—giving up the best bed in the house to their guest, decking it with the quilts, symbol of their lives.

Now as we stitched at our work, down there in the basement, the talk turned on other days, and the work that used to be done by women. The soap they made, going through all the processes with ashes in dreary tedium! The full-cloth garments they made, the blankets, the socks, the shirts! Think of the painful little gardens, with stumps to distract the hoe, and stones to torment the spade!

Think of the home-made haircuts; the tallow that was used to keep the foot-gear soft, the starch from potatoes, the candles carefully moulded, the bread-troughs (I had a man of seventy tell me that one had been his cradle!) with their frequent, regular great burdens of hop-yeast bread—oh, how did those women ever do so much, with their limited resources?

Quilting is pleasant, easy, sitting-down work—but would a man do it? Laughingly some one flung the question, and laughingly some one else made answer. Of course not! Even to use up the good ends of material a man would not condemn himself to hours of such work. He would set up another stove, and buy another pair of blankets.

Every woman voted for the blankets. Real comfort in them! Quilts are so hard and heavy to wash—but blankets are soft, light, fluffy! Quilts, unless carefully made, wad up in knobs and lumps in the water, and take endless time in drying. Oh, every woman declared for blankets, and almost at once told of nice pieces she had at home that would do for a quilt!

The pencil marks ran in fan shape, about an inch apart. When we had worked the fans along one edge, the quilt was rolled to bring unworked territory within reach. One of the women, with a mean little pencil at the end of a bit of string surveyed it off for us. The pencil was rather hard for the job, and would not work except in certain hands. We threaded our needles, retrieved our errant thimbles, chased scissors, and through all, talked unceasingly.

The minister and his wife and two children came presently, and, while it was very pleasant for the women to have a man on the scene, I imagine that probably the man in question felt rather like a lion in a den of Daniels.

Anyway, I saw him hob-nobbing with Jack, and judged that the men had, as usual, contrived to get together. Then the two sauntered off, Jack hung over the minister's arm like a towel, but absolutely happy, with his preferred fingers safely in his mouth.

Talk about the ways of men! I had considered that when a baby started to suck his thumb or finger that instant means should be taken to break up the habit. My Baby-Book said so. Many worthy persons I knew who had more experiences than I could ever expect to have, declared it to be a habit altogether ruinous to a child. It filled the wrong places with adenoids and injured palates and flattened what it didn't swell. Jack slept famously with his comforting fingers. He was as happy as one could wish, but, of course, if it was not the correct thing, it must not be tolerated.

So I made him mittens of thick white material, and fitted them over the dear, soft little hands, and secured them on the sleeves, well above the elbow. Jack, bewildered over the loss of his beloved fingers, waved wild little paws in the air, tried to cram the whole thing into his mouth, revolted at the feeling of the fabric, cried piteously, missed his morning nap and his afternoon nap, and wept himself to sleep at night.

But I believe I would have persisted, feeling that I was doing what was best for him, had not John intervened. Once in a while he issues a fiat, and this was an occasion. The mitts came off.

I think it was the minister who came very near trouble when he praised one woman's stitching, and declared he had never seen such fine, even work. He had to make speed to save himself by saying that we all did wonderful stitching. But, he queried, didn't some women waste a lot of time over fancy work—yards of crocheting, endless tatting, useless embroidering, towels and pillow slips that represented considerable time, effort, and expense, and were simply too elaborate for comfortable use?

Some of the women agreed out and out, and swept such affairs into the discard, but others spoke quite seriously for the defence. It served a purpose. Some folks liked reading, and had no time for needlework; others enjoyed the fine sewing, seeing the pattern develop from mere outline into a thing of beauty. It was the desire to achieve, and the yearnings for an expression of some creative urge, unrecognized, but nevertheless active in most of us. The mother making dresses for her girls, and delighting to have them dainty and pretty; the father, painting his verandahs or porches; the daughter, toiling over her flower beds, or arranging her bedroom with its frills and frivols, all had the same impulse towards beauty in one form or another.

And after all, there is something to be said for crocheting. Reading is simply passive reception of the thoughts and efforts of another, but the work with thread and hook is a definite creation, an accomplishment of a tangible proof of energy and deftness. It is handiwork, and for my part, since I do none of it myself, it is always a joy to get it. When I married, an old lady gave me, with many apologies for the smallness of the gift, knitted lace enough for a pair of pillow slips; a girl friend gave me another lot. Later on, from time to time, a sister or a cousin would do the same sort of thing, and although I bought edgings, and made many pillowslips as my family grew and the bedding was more exactingly used, those that I cherished most were the ones that had been made for me by hands I loved.

We had our dinner there in the basement—and such a good dinner! The kettle on the little cook stove was long in boiling, but the baked beans, the hot scalloped potatoes, and the mince pie needed only a certain amount of heat to bring them to perfection. There we sat at the table, women who otherwise might never have had a meal together, and our talk was pleasant and friendly.

Do you imagine that when women spend such a day that they invariably gossip, whispering in corners, nudging, spreading unkind stories? Then you are quite wrong. Women to-day have much to think of, and in a leisurely gathering like this, they may tell the news of the neighborhood, as it is of common interest. But the sly hint and the hurtful slur have no place.

WHEN WAGONS WERE IT

DAN JACKSON, in our little village, says he is the oldest wagon man in Ontario, if not in the dominion. He has been in the business for over fifty years, and is still going strong. "I have taken the hub from the tree," he said, recently, when asked about the way things were done in the early days, "raved the spoke from the log, and stood up for days running the whip saw getting out felloes which were as hard as bone, when there was no such thing as a bent rim. And thank goodness," he added, with his characteristic chuckle, "I can still tell my son and my grandson a thing or two about making wagons."

Mr. Jackson went on to tell how the business was learned when Confederation was new. "At almost every four corners there was a wagon shop, composed of one master smith and one wood worker, who were backed up with a battalion of apprentice boys, from six to ten in number, hired at the princely salary of $30 the first year, $40 the second, and $60 the third.

"In 1870 I went through the mill. We apprentices did not eat with the Boss and the Missus. We took pot-luck—principally luck if we gained in flesh. Our occupation consisted of lighting the old box stove, splitting wood for the same, scrubbing and helping the Missus round the house, during the first year. The second year was devoted to getting out material for wagons which would be put on the market four years later.

"No wagon timber would be used in those days except what was taken from the forest in the months of October and November. When sap was down, white oak was fit for wagons. An oak tree, worth $100 to-day, could have been bought for $1 then. In October, the Boss would hie to the forest, pick out a tree for spokes, cut it down, sample the butt cut, and if not satisfied, cut another and let the first one rot.

"We apprentices would then cut the approved tree into spoke lengths, split them into billets, take them home and air-dry them for one year in the shade. In those days, white oak hubs were the only kind thought of. They also were cut in October, brought home to the shop yard, and left until the next June. Then the Boss would rig up a patent drag-saw composed of one

cross-cut and two apprentices. This would be the hub-manufacturing plant. After the billets were turned to the desired shape in—not a gauge lathe—but a fixture of one wooden pulley and shaft with motive power of two apprentices, we would baptize them in pine tar and they would then rest easy for a couple of years before the mortising process started—and it was so laborious that I simply want to forget it.

"The rim of a wagon in 1870 was a different proposition from what it is to-day. There were no bent rims—all pieced felloes, and those felloes were taken out of the centre plank of a log so the grain would run from the shoulder of the spoke, and no clipping at joints. Selling the finished wagon was different, too. In those days, men wanted to trade, rather than to buy, and they would trade everything imaginable, but money.

"Oh, yes!" and Mr. Jackson chuckled again, "if some of the old boys who are keeping the heavenly chariots in repair could come back and see us putting on a set of bent rims and tires in 60 minutes, they would say, 'Let us get back—they are forging ahead a little too fast for us old fellows who are gone!' "

SOFT WATER

Poppaea, the wife of Nero, used asses' milk to bathe in, didn't she? It was to soften and preserve and beautify her skin—that lovely, dazzling skin that was her chief stock-in-trade. But she failed, after all, to hold the imperial regard. What a pity she did not think about soft water!

Ah! After a sojourn in the city, where there is only one kind of water, what a joy to come home and get a good big basinful from the cistern. It comes spouting out from the pump with that rich amber tint that tells all about the old roof and the leaves in the eavestrough and other comforts of home.

Oh, soft water is the genuine article!

Then, on washday, when the boiler is sending up great white clouds every time the lid is lifted, and the suds foam gorgeously with sudden delightfully alarming threats of uprising amongst the contours and inflations of table cloths and pillow slips, centrepieces and crocheted bedspreads—what a part in the whole absorbing enterprise the soft water plays!

A winter rain in the city is a most depressing affair. Raw, chill, dark—the downpour carrying with it all the soot and dust and unpleasantness that the city's industry has sent up. Dismal, draggle-tailed washings hang dingily in shabby little back yards, enduring the moisture they did not need, and absorbing the grime that nobody needed.

Rubbers flop along the streets, protecting the feet of the wearer; rubberless shoes squelch and slither in the dampness, promising colds and coughs and pleurisy and rheumatism to the unfortunate being who wears them. Umbrellas collide at corners, dribble their accumulations down alien necks, hoist hats from hostile heads and make a great show of doing one thing while they are doing something entirely different.

Stores are steamily redolent of damp humanity. One's glasses are opaque upon entrance, and hardly become transparent until one has bought the wrong kind of stockings altogether, or purchased sweet potatoes, instead of the usual Irish.

That's rain in the city. Nobody wants it. It takes out the careful curl from the hair, and ruins the carpets. It makes the whole house messy and bestows upon the housekeeper all the train of nuisances resulting from damp garments that must be dried, pressed and prevented from shrinking in the process, from dripping umbrellas for which there is no room, wet foot-gear, and smeary tracks across the floors.

But in the country—ah, in the country! When the first trickle patters against the window, we hold our breath for fear of scaring it away. The air is still and heavy; the tarnished snow rotten with the imminent thaw. It is a small, fine "mizzle" at first. But presently it becomes a genuine, recognizable rain, coursing joyously down the roofs, spurting out from the old spout, chuckling, gurgling, gulping into the cistern.

It takes something to water a herd of cows with the generosity that their full performance requires. Milk is largely water, and when there is no water there is no milk. Once the milk supply gets down, it is a Herculean job to work it up again. Therefore, we try to keep plenty of drink in front of our animals, day and night. Go into the cow stable at midnight and stand a few minutes—you will hear some mannerless cow drinking audibly from her basin.

To-day, when the washing was well under way, a dreadful thing happened—the cistern pump began to whistle and suck air, work with great difficulty, and finally died down altogether.

Calamity! Think of melting snow—and the snow all dirt of the fields from the recent wind-and-snow storm! It takes a day, a day of heavy work, to melt enough snow for a fair-sized washing. But there was no time to lose. Everything would be frozen up in the old summer kitchen long before I could melt snow enough to go on with. And there was an Institute meeting next day, for which I must wash certain garments of the baby's.

I was floored until Edwin, the son of the house, and Happy, the hired man, appeared, and joyfully undertook to draw me enough water from the pond in our woods at the back of the place. They gathered all the spare milk cans together, took axes to chop a hole in the ice, pails with which to dip up, and (I think) a shotgun in the hope of seeing a jack rabbit by the way.

Presently they were back, driving the team right up so that the scandalous old Barney-horse rubbed his nose on one of the sheets as it hung on the line. They hastily pulled the cover off the cistern and swished their cans of water in. Again and again they made the trip, always fiercely arguing when they were not scuffling. The shotgun stayed at home as soon as I heard

about it. After a while it was chore time, and they tucked the cover over the cistern again and went their way to the stables.

And now I am cautiously governing the water supply and hoping for thaws or showers. Long may she rain!

THE COUNTRY STORE

Try to imagine a country village without its little store. It simply can't be done. The blacksmith shop—the church and burying-ground, the school somewhere in the middle distance—and the store. Very seldom has anyone taken thought to paint on the sign above it the name of the place in which it is situated. It is as though there were only one such store in the world—no need to name its location, or even its owner, very often. And there is really only one. The rest are duplicates!

Years ago, the country store was the community gathering place. Once, in our village, three of the women were appointed to tackle the school trustees about the matter of supplying hot lunch to the school children. The men were wary. We couldn't get hold of them in a regular meeting—they simply would not face the enemy. But the women appointed were the wives of the trustees, and it happened most opportunely that they took an urgent desire to go to the store all on the same evening to choose wall paper. Of course, the husbands had to go along.

It was a most informal affair. The men were all unaware of any pre-arrangement, and possibly felt safe in the presence of the usual collection of Saturday-nighters. But when the subject was introduced the fat was in the fire and they had to stay and endure the whole thing. And all the bystanders, very much interested, joined in the discussion, contributing greatly to the enthusiasm and excitement which followed.

No formal school meeting would have brought out more than half a dozen people—but there were a score or so, all keen to hear what was going on, and to have a voice in the matter. I may say the trustees balked very fiercely—they put a resolution on their books declining to entertain any discussion on the matter, and for all I know it stands there yet. But for nearly ten years the hot lunch has been successfully carried on in that school, in spite of it, and you may judge what you like from that.

The Post Office used to be a very important part of the store. Partitioned off by itself, with all its little boxes, bags, stamps and seals in imposing array, it represented the majesty of the government. But many of these little scattered offices were wiped out when the present system of rural mail

delivery came into force. One central delivering office did the work of a number of small ones. So, where we once sauntered two or three miles once a week to get the odd circular, weekly paper, or rare letter, now we have our daily brought right to our gate, and we are better citizens because of the added interest we take in Dominion and world affairs, and are more alive to what is going on among our fellow men.

This system of mail delivery has, however, struck a blow at the little store. It brings us copious catalogues from mail order houses, and makes it possible to obtain goods at city bargain prices, and shows us what "they" are wearing, and rouses us to ambitions such as the modest little store with its changeless window exhibits never dreamed of! In fact, these catalogues occupy a place in our lives the city woman does not understand. They help us very materially in keeping an eye on each other.

For instance—after addressing a meeting some months ago, I was entertained by the president of the society, whom I have known for some years. She said, "My, I like your dress! You got it out of So-and-So's catalogue, didn't you? The $5.95 lot? I was going to get the brown in that same style—but I thought—oh, well, I'd just put a few more dollars with that and get a kind-of good one. You never can tell what these cheap dresses will be. But it is nicer than I expected. Indeed it is!"

People buy hats and shoes and rugs and wall paper and sheets and shirts and anything and everything but live stock from these catalogues. Wall paper—that used to be a very prominent feature of country stores, and the farm women from miles around brought in their butter and eggs to trade for it. I boarded with the storekeeper at one of my schools, and my bedroom was so situated that anybody wanting to look at wall paper had to go through it to get to the store room beyond. Many a Saturday, at an unbelievable hour, farm women hunting wall paper, caused me to heave myself out of bed and dress hurriedly so that they could with due propriety follow the storekeeper into the wall paper department!

The country store as it is to-day has outgrown many of its ancient customs. It no longer handles the butter and eggs of the district. Farmers do not make butter, as a rule—they ship milk or cream to some great dairy. This means cash in the hand, instead of store-credit, and the invariable car provides a means of getting to the city and spending the money.

THE DARNING BASKET

I HAVE been mending socks and stockings, to-day, with a sort of concentrated fury. They have nearly all arrived at the stage where it takes about as much time and material to mend them as would earn the price of a fresh supply. I suppose the girls are old enough to mend their own, now, but something rises up to keep me from laying this burden on their young shoulders. They are both pegging away at school work with honest determination to get through their examinations, and all the time they can spare from studies should be spent bouncing youthfully about in the sunshine and keen air to keep the roses in their cheeks.

Mending stockings is a tedious business, and one that calls for a mature patience. Heavy socks are easy, even though the holes may be as big as the entire heel. Heavy mending yarn soon fills those, the needle slipping back and forth quickly with its long strand to weave in a new strong area. But when it comes to fine stockings, light cashmere socks, silk or mixed affairs of many colors, then one needs to draw a long breath and prepare for slow, careful work.

I sat in my little old rocking chair by the big north window. I hope all the people who came scudding down the hill in their nice cars took note of my dutiful labors. I had a girl to help me, once, with my washing, and she stretched every article out to its fullest length on the line, so that I had room for only about half my clothes. She explained that she wanted to make it "look a lot" for the edification of the neighbors!

She should have had a shot at this week's mending! It "looked a lot" without any encouragement. It was a lot. Jack had got his leg through some cranny not intended for boys' legs, and he had one stocking well opened down the back. The mate to it was quite good. What did I do?—Stitched the long tear on the machine. So if you see a small boy with a long seam up and down and crosswise in one stocking, the other being sound, you may be quite safe in saying, "Hello, Jack!"

I suppose, hundreds of other mothers are striving with socks that hamper and discourage them. A friend, in writing to me some time ago, said:

“Isn’t it appalling to think when you are drudging away at some task you hate, that thousands of women are doing the same—toiling, and resenting the necessity for it—giving their strength under protest. It is really an overwhelming thought, to me—it seems to make such a monstrous mountain of unwillingness—yes, even hostility.”

Quite an idea, to be sure! But I decline to entertain it, except as a warning. I do not care to subscribe to such a fund, and in any case, I have an idea it is much better to feel that in doing such work as this mending, I am one of a great company of women who are doing their best to provide for the welfare of their families, than to feel that I alone among women have such a burden to bear!

I have a sneaking feeling that we women to-day make a terrific fuss over what we have to do. In many ways we are a bit childish. There is a lot of work that does not require to be thought about, and analyzed, and weighed, and considered as to its possible reactions in our sub-conscious areas, and its effects on our mental vibrations. All it wants is doing—and no fuss about it.

It is my humble opinion that the average individual is canny, and will keep himself within recognized limits—will not lose his temper, or rage, or insist—unless he is quite certain he can get away with it. If a man is in a fury and wants to throw something, he does not pick out a red hot stove lid to hurl in his bare hands. Even in his blind anger he recognizes how it would hurt him. He will not bluster unless he is confident that bluster will work. Which brings us back to the fussing over our daily duties—we soon drop it if nobody pays any attention or shows signs of amending affairs to our advantage.

And I do not see anybody running down the hill to bear a hand with my mending, so perhaps I might as well work mechanically, lifting my mind from the odds and ends of woollen yarns, to set it down comfortably in the consideration of my fragrant little violets, or the fair loveliness of the orchard. Any woman who has an orchard in bloom to think of should be ashamed to let a small task disturb her serenity of mind!

Gardens—and chickens—and little kittens—and bees a-swarm—and the gorgeous Spring sunshine warm and bright across the world—yes, it would be a pity to waste time and energy in grumbling when we need all we can muster for the enjoyment of the season! It is worth something to walk up the road in the half-light after sunset, and watch the little lambs skipping madly, jumping up on stumps for the sheer joy of jumping down again, playing their pretty pointless games in all innocence and delight.

Winds may be cool, and send shivers down our backs, but the sun is warm to-day, and it will be no time until we are complaining about the terrible heat! I may as well put away most of these heavy socks, for where is there a man who wants to wear such things in the weather that will soon be on us? Indeed, I wonder how they can wear them at any time!

There they are, in neat pairs—Edwin's light ones with the red rim at the top, Happy's grey ones with their white toes and heels, John's heather in brown and blue, and the various extras that tell of family frivolities. In fact, looking at the mended hosiery of the family, I can read the recent history of its members.

FREEDOM

You may hamper my body with labor,
And bruise it with unearned blows,
But my soul is my own—it travels
To the path that the eagle knows!
To the heights—to the sun—to the glory,
I mount on my soul's bright wings—
I lie on a bed of the cloud-silk,
While over an angel sings!

For, oh, I have learned the Freedom
God gives, when in need we ask,
My body is held in the bondage
Of many a menial task,
But my soul soars out from the fetters
At the call of the twittering bird,
And I care not for pain or hunger
When the luring voice is heard!

Sweet, sweet, in the morning sunshine,
Oh, clear, in the golden air!
Whether in storm or shadow,
Fearless my soul may fare!
Away from the toil and the squalor
And the touch of the hated hand,
I fly on the pinions of Fancy
Through the portals of Happy Land!

MRS. SNODDY'S DIET

I HAD really never heard a word about Mrs. Snoddy's diet until the day our mutual friend, Mrs. Pruce, took us with her on a little trip up the other side of Drumbo, and I found myself introduced to this recent comer to our village.

"It is awfully kind of you to take me along, Mrs. Pruce," I said, as I settled myself beside the rather too abundant Mrs. Snoddy. "I enjoy a trip, and I seldom have one."

"That is just what I say!" declared Mrs. Snoddy, not giving Mrs. Pruce a chance to bring on her suitable reply. "I'm so grateful! You see, I never can attend any social affairs, since I've been on this diet—there are so few things I can eat. So I just stay at home, and often I feel quite lonely, don't you know. Quite shut off, as you might say. But," and she brightened visibly—"I have lost nineteen pounds already! In only three weeks! If I can lose just thirty more I'll be practically normal for my height."

"Didn't the doctor consider your age, too?" asked Mrs. Pruce, mildly, as she honked gently for an exploring cottontail that was undertaking a journey along our little side road. "He should allow a few pounds extra for that."

Mrs. Snoddy had a system of double chins, which she manoeuvred ceaselessly. I think her doctor must have told her to exercise them, and so keep them limber, for she gave them no rest, in either speech or silence.

"I think he probably considered everything, for he was one of the best doctors in Detroy-it. Mr. Snoddy got a diet prescribed too. Cost us each $42.50, but it was worth it. Nobody knows how different I feel—so light and buoyant. Oh, yes, he considered everything. Took our whole history, and our blood pressure, and if we'd had any operations, and what were they, and about hay fever and what diseases were in our family. He asked what my parents died with, but really——You see, mamma divorced daddy years ago, and they both married again, and my Aunt Seraph brought me up, so I have rather lost track of them. But I feel quite sure my people have always died respectably, anyway, and in good circumstances."

“What a view!” murmured Mrs. Pruce, sweeping a hand towards the lovely distance.

“Isn’t it, though!” Mrs. Snoddy agreed, rapidly, but with enthusiasm. “I am beginning to take an interest in life again. It was really very difficult to content myself, at first. So much water to drink every day—no cream, no bread, no potatoes, no sweet stuff!” She groaned slightly. “I just could not get used to all that lettuce—and raw carrots. If I could only have salad dressing—but there is oil in that, or egg, or cream—and after all, what use is a diet unless one sticks to it!”

There was something a bit pathetic in her face. She was such a pleasant looking, plump person that it seemed too bad to take away any of that comfortable flesh for the sake of a fad.

“But after a while the stomach shrinks and one doesn’t feel so hungry. I don’t mind now, so much. I’ll never go back to all that heavy, unnatural food again. If either of you would like to try my diet, I’ll be glad to write it out for you, and it won’t cost you anything——”

We declined firmly. Our husbands had often told us they preferred good, big, substantial women. Why should we bring ourselves down to a lettuce leaf and a raw carrot and a drink of water. Meanwhile we arrived at the place Mrs. Pruce was headed for, and it turned out to be a sort of community picnic at a big farm house. We were immediately surrounded by friends of hers who shook her so gladly by the hand, and insisted so heartily that we should all get out of the car and join the merry-making, that we yielded with pleasure.

After the games and races and contests and choruses, we were seated in the shade and presented with paper plates and napkins. Then—but why describe it?—some of the prettiest girls in Ontario with some of the best sandwiches in the Empire, came along and tempted us to eat.

“No-o—No, thank you,” said Mrs. Snoddy in hollow tones, beside me.

“Home-made bread,” the young lady reminded us, gently.

We yielded. Then along came some chicken sandwiches. “I really shouldn’t!” groaned Mrs. Snoddy. But she had a chicken sandwich. Soon there were some brown ones, with lettuce in between, and she felt free to enjoy them, because lettuce was part of her diet. I did not hear what she said about the salmon or the ham sandwiches. I really think she was beginning to get hungry by that time.

I had not expected salads—but who can resist a nice potato salad, after a drive in the crisp air? Mrs. Snoddy said it was not likely to have any oil in the dressing—and the cabbage salad was closely related to her cherished lettuce, and the beet salad, camouflaging a rare assortment of nuts, hard-boiled eggs, onions, radishes and baked beans, looked so innocent that anybody would have sampled it, diet or no.

By this time I felt that Mrs. Snoddy was becoming a bit reckless. Cakes in luscious procession were headed our way. Spanish bun—and angel cakes (eggs are so cheap, this year!)—and white layer cakes that only asked a chance to melt in the mouth—and chocolate cakes so rich and gorgeous that it would have been a sin to decline—and raisin cakes—and railway cakes—and Mrs. Snoddy tried them, every one!

She had overlooked the possibility of tarts. But here they were, lemon ones, with billows of fluff, and raspberry ones, such as our childhood knew, and jelly ones, unbelievably delicious. And doughnuts. And ice cream to wind up with. I kept my eyes away from Mrs. Snoddy. I had no wish to be a witness to her fall. I don’t believe she visits much in the country, and I don’t know where else in this year of grace such a spread would be so freely offered, even urged. Let her have one good splurge before returning to the high and dry buoyancy of the lettuce leaf and the grated carrot.

She sighed, and made a little pile of her remaining crumbs. There was a dreamy look about her face as I glanced to see how she was getting along. I knew some deep thought was stirring. Presently she spoke in a soft and lingering tone.

“I just wish Mr. Snoddy could have been here with us, for he, too, appreciates the simple, country hospitality!”

MAKING SOAP

LAST SUMMER when the mulberries were at their best, Aunt Caroline came over to help me do some down, as she expressed it. That was the day I came across the pail of lard that had acquired an air of its own—an air that was distinctive, arresting and full of sinister meaning. It was, in short, an odor.

Nobody's fault but my own, I suppose. When I rendered the pork fat, I should have put it into crocks, not into a tin honey pail, or else I should have used it without loss of time, having put it into that unworthy pail. My lip drooped when I saw its pallid purpleness, and my nose went up as my lip went down. But Aunt Caroline was brisk and cheerful.

"Never you mind," she said, comfortingly, "I'll come down maybe next week and make you a batch of soap out of that grease. There's a good five pounds there, anyway. Now you get two packages of lye, and a package of borax—that's all you need. I'll fetch my kettles and we'll make you the nicest lot of home-made soap—you'll never regret the spoiling of that grease!" said Aunt Caroline to me.

That was many moons ago, my children. We had other matters on hand that hot weather, and we kept saying to each other over the telephone, or when we met, "Never mind about the soap until cooler weather." So the Summer passed, and the Autumn. Then we said, maybe we had better wait until after Christmas; and then, every day that Aunt Caroline set to come was sure to turn out rainy or wild, and so the soap did not get made.

Last Tuesday she rang up, early, and I knew by the tone of her voice that she meant business.

"I'm coming down on Thursday to make that soap," she said briskly. "And if that woman that's listening in would save what grease she throws out, day after day, and make a bit too, maybe her young ones would come to school more decent than what they do. Oh, you needn't say 'whish-whish!' to me—I can hear her baby crying and I know the tick of her clock, so let her mind her own business."

With that my outraged neighbor clashed her receiver into place.

“There!” resumed Aunt Caroline, “I guess that settled her! Now I’ll be down a-Thursday, health and weather permitting, and I’ll bring my own big kettle. I’d come to-morrow, only its Ladies’ Aid day and I’m secretary. I don’t want to put soap-making ahead of my religion. This old maud-horse isn’t doing anything, and she’s sharp, so, look out for me, I’ll be down for dinner!”

That’s the way we do in the country—just get ready and go, knowing the welcome waits, every time. Thursday was such a wild blustery day that anybody but Aunt Caroline might have thought the weather did not permit! but behold you, the sharp-shod maud-horse pulled up at our kitchen door somewhere about eleven in the morning, and Aunt Caroline descended with dignity from the little one-horse democrat.

“Wait till I get my kettle!” she warned John, as he took the reins, “The tie rope is under the seat—and don’t feed her too many oats.”

I had the door open, and in she came, carrying a grey granite kettle that was about as big as a small wash tub. Her cheery face was red with the wind, but her eyes were bright and merry.

“And how’s everybody to-day?” she said, putting down the kettle on the corner of the wood box, and giving me a resounding kiss. “All ready for the soap business, I suppose!”

Now, if that benighted lard had an air last Summer, it undoubtedly had several atmospheres last Thursday. It was tinted like a chromo, and it almost answered when spoken to.

“It is a hairy fix—it is so!” said Aunt Caroline, shaking her head. “Now, you put on my kettle, and put four quarts of soft water in it. And put on your dish-pan—the granite one—and put four quarts of soft water into it, too. I’ll just run out and weigh out five pounds of grease, exact. The scales are in the granary, same as usual, I suppose?”

By the time I had the water measured, she was back again, and I watched as she dropped the grease into the kettle of water. Then she took a can and a half of the lye and dissolved it in the dish-pan—the party of the second part. Her next move was towards the wood-box, but after one scornful look at its contents, she went out to the woodshed. That’s Aunt Caroline, all over! I never knew her to come here and find in the wood-box the kind of wood she wanted. There have been times when she deemed it necessary to prowl round over the pile with the axe, scorning John’s efforts.

Presently she came in with some bark, the leg of an old chair, a piece of pine, and three chips, and she appeared quite satisfied. She stirred the grease, and I stirred the lye, until in the course of time they reached the boiling point.

"Now," she said, showing by her serious face that a crisis was upon us, "I'll pour in the lye-water, and you stir the grease—but mind and keep as far from it as you can, for I declare if it spatters it'll scald you to the bone!"

Therefore I braced myself, so near, and yet so far—spoon at the full stretch of my arm, while Aunt Caroline seized the dish-pan and poured in the lye-water, slowly, with extreme caution. It was well for us that her soap kettle is big enough for camp-meeting coffee, for that evil-looking mixture foamed heavily, brownly, towards the top of the kettle and I had to stir furiously to keep it from coming over.

Stirring was our main business for a considerable length of time. We talked about our cows, and their test—the Dairy Inspector had been here the day before—and we told how much butter we made, and how often we had to bake bread. Aunt Caroline's Ladies' Aid was knitting socks for sick soldiers in the San., and our Women's Institute was making quilts——.

Just about here we noticed that the clock had stopped. The soap mixture was supposed to boil an hour, but as Aunt Caroline said, easily, a little longer wouldn't hurt it. She stood by the stove, stirring and watching. Her apron was made out of a flour sack, with a big, round, blue trademark upside down in the middle of it, and the pocket clapped over the middle of that. Her plump arms were reddened with the heat, and her kind, cheerful face was ruddy beyond nature.

"I do believe I've got too much water in it," she said doubtfully. "Where's your box to run it off in? Now, I'll line it with these cotton sacks. You can stir awhile, I'm going to set box and all into one of your tubs. Then if I've got too much water it'll just run out when I turn the soap into the box."

So I stirred. We boiled that sharp smelling mixture for an hour and a half, standard time. Then with careful hand, Aunt Caroline added the dry borax, a half cup of coal oil, and when that had done its worst threw in a cup of cold water—maybe more.

"I like to see it drop off the spoon in clats," she said. "There's too much water in this to suit me, but—here goes!"

She heaved the big kettle up off the stove, and with a steady hand poured it into my wooden box. A dark brown fluid like prune juice immediately sluiced out from the cracks into the tub, and she viewed it with some anxiety.

“Your first soap—and maybe it won’t jell!” she said. “Well, you can wash with it just the same, even if it is soft. Now let me see if it makes a good lather!”

She scraped the sides of the kettle, where white flakes were already forming, and took her scraping over to the sink where she made a great swishing with a little water.

“It lathers!!” she declared, in triumph, showing me the white foam on her hands. “I’m sorry I lost my recipe, but I guess it’s a half a gallon of water in each kettle—not a gallon. Let your soap set till morning, and see how you like it.”

The soap set, and I like it. It is nice and white, and excessively lathery! I have a quantity of mutton tallow on hand, and one of these days there will be another busy time round here, making more soap. Isn’t it interesting to do things like that?

FROM A HILLTOP

WHOO! IT is cold these mornings! Not particularly cold on the thermometer, but chilly, shivery weather that plays havoc with the woodpile and last year's underclothes. I love to hear the roar of a good wood fire, when the cedar gives out its incense, and the maple chunks dissolve gently into red coals. There is no cleaner, sweeter heat than that of a wood fire. The small boy carries in great armfuls from the woodpile to the insatiable box behind the stove, and the man of the house resurrects his annual groan about the amount of hauling, sawing and splitting imposed on him by one small woman in a proportionately small house.

The cattle, which are stabled at night, turn out very reluctantly during the day, nosing about in the fence corners or standing sulkily on the sheltered side of the buildings. The Fall plowing ceases, of course, with the freezing up, and few there be who are at all ready to leave it, for although every prospect pleased to the uttermost the year round, there are yet farmers who would be away behind with their work as now. This failing may be noticed among all human beings. It is many a century since that historic gentleman was weighed in the balance and found wanting—and it occasioned surprise to no one but himself.

One hears so very little about Fall housecleaning that it would seem as though it had been overlooked. Women worked outdoors this Summer, using only such part of the house as must be occupied, so that the Fall sees the polish of the Spring cleaning yet unsullied. The outdoor work has driven home some sharp lessons—for one thing, that simplicity in household gear is much to be desired, and has everything to recommend it. We have cumbered ourselves with much serving until we have lost our sense of perspective. We have come to consider as necessaries many things which in other years were classed as luxuries. Yet they have only multiplied care and annihilated leisure—to what end?

I thought of it the other day as I climbed the big hill with the boy. I had told him I was too busy—yet all my busyness fell away at the sight of the disappointed child face. It came to me that the mothers of our boys in France have long since forgotten the dustings and sweepings those lads prevented

when they were little and “under foot”, but they remember with a wonderful gladness the hours they gave to romping and playing with those dear sons in the days of their childhood. I went.

The day was clear and sunny—a day for all outdoors to sing! We crossed the little “crick” on the tottery old log, and clashed and crashed through the dry leaves of the bush that fringes it. Then up the side of that bare, rough hill, rising angularly like the lifted knee of some sleeping Titan. We told each other that we would not pause to look round until we quite reached the top, so we bent to it, breathing heavily, helping each other over the rough places, until at last we reached the old grandfather stone that crowns the summit.

Then we let ourselves look—one long, satisfying look that followed the blue horizon. To the west, we could see the neighbors’ places, little red or white houses, in their orchards; cattle standing about in the fields; women at the clothes-lines, taking in their Monday washing, white, beautiful and sweet from frost and sun. There were the little patches of wheat, backward and dingy; acres of Fall plowing, straight or cramped, according to the nature of the man who held the plow—for I hold that there must be candor and honesty in a man whose plowing is free and true. The smoke from a few old stumps told where once the great pines had darkened the earth, and framing it all in a wide, varying band of green, the blessed trees held up their heads—bare maples or Christmas-like balsams and pines.

To the east and south the slope is away from us, although persistent little hills do their best to uphold it and tilt us to the north. But the old north stands like a wall at our backs, with tall hills whereon the roads seem to run straight into the clouds, with chequered patches of field and swamp laid out like a pattern, marked off by black lines of fence. Far against the sky we could see the smoke from the crawling train, like a feather in the clear air.

Only a few hundred feet above the daily hum-drum level; only half an hour’s walk from our own back door—yet we had a vista so wide and so inspiring that the little cares of everyday fell back, defeated, to their little place. For the crises of Time, from the Flood down, have found the measure of their strength upon some Mount Ararat or triumphed upon some Vimy Ridge of history.

Not a very big hill—it would mean nothing to many of my friends; but then, on the other hand, many of their choicest treasures are but a weariness of the flesh to me. Every man to his taste, of course—and thank God when the taste turns to the great outdoors.

SHINING 'EM UP FOR THE BIG FALL FAIR

When John brought the show harness, all shining as to brass and leather, into the house and spread it out on the parlor floor, I knew it was show time again. No doubt, as a proper housewife, I should have refused it space in the parlor, but really, why should I? It is quite as decorative as anything we have there, and, except for the piano, much more expensive! And I knew it would not be there long. The stable is not a good place to keep it in after it is polished, and no other room in the house is so free from dust and traffic as the parlor. Years ago I used to help John get his team ready to show. It was most interesting. He always specialized in general purpose, and for that it needs a clean-legged animal, round wherever a horse can be round, and fine in the bone. My scissors were missing from the sewing machine those days—we had them at the stable trimming the extra hair from ears and jaws. The half-worn underwear from other winters met its Waterloo in the polishing of smooth, broad backs.

Braiding tails, combing manes, oiling hoofs—dyeing afresh the scarlet wool tassels for the high collar tops, winding knots of bright ribbon to dangle from them—what delightful little oddments of occupation for breathless moments when the chief question was, "Is there any other thing that can be done to make them look any better?"

Yesterday when I went to hang up John's suit after he had changed and gone down to milk, I found them very heavy, and on investigating turned out of the pockets his entry tickets, a bunch of scarlet wool for weaving into the manes, a sample can of brass polish, and a great iron comb for taking the tangles out of the long, sweeping tails that are the very finishing glory of Mac and Rex.

It is very interesting to go to the big exhibitions, but to me there is something far more valuable in the small fairs. The individual is not swallowed up in the crowd there. Everybody knows everybody else. The bride goes to show her new clothes, and the groom goes to show his bride. The young mother takes her baby for all the neighbors to see, and the rest of

the family go because they want to see the other folks. The old men go and lean on the fence round the show ring, telling each other that the shows ain’t what they used to be. They mind the time when all around the grounds you couldn’t get space to tie up a horse, being full of horses already. When the church sheds in the town were filled, and the people who lived anywhere near the grounds were pestered to death with folks wanting to put in their horses for the day. When the hotel couldn’t begin to feed the fair-goers, and they ate their lunches on the grounds, leaving a litter of papers that scared all the colts into frenzy, and caused much annoyance to the officials—though it was generally left to the wind to clear it up.

Those were the good old days! Why, if the threshing machine was in the neighborhood, it might as well quit, that day. Not a man would work, anyway. Then a woman would be as contented as you please if she had a new hat or something for fair day. Now—well, now they just up-and-get themselves new clothes any time they take the notion, without waiting for the fair.

And so the old men mutter, forgetting that “the old order changeth, yielding place to new,” even in the matter of fall fairs. Along with the new comes the school fair, which has its place in the other. The children have their own little exhibitions, and then the winners compete in the regular fair. Teams of boys try out their skill in stock judging, and girls have a chance to show what they can do in the matter of cooking and nursing and sewing.

Everybody cannot get first place. It is entertaining to observe how the exhibitors carry themselves when the prizes are awarded. Sometimes a disappointed man makes a howl, and starts an argument with the judge, who, if he is a local man, has to endure hearing the history of his family and his own personal failings exploited for the benefit of the bystanders. Once when I was with John he came second to a team he had beaten at other fairs that same fall, and as the judge handed out the coveted rosette to the others the man and his wife turned upon us a glance of complete triumph.

“Now, how do you like it?” enquired the lady with emphasis. And I had to smile, though I felt like sticking out my tongue at her!

The prizes are many and varied, usually contributed by local merchants or prominent people. In this district one prize consists of a suit of clothes. John has only bought one suit for himself in years—he wins his clothes! He has brought me, on his horses, such articles as a dozen silver spoons, a very nice tapestry rug which now adorns the spare bedroom; a toilet set so pink and fluted and ornate that it seems a sort of ceremony to wash one’s face in

the basin, or use the soap from such a gay dish. He has the usual medals and cups. But for butter and fowl and bread and so forth, one may enrich the estate with wheelbarrows, whips, bridles, candlesticks, canton crepe blouses, a year of the local paper, flour, case of canned tomatoes, clocks and watches. I know a woman who fitted out her families with watches by showing butter!

WHEN CRISP OCTOBER CHILLS THE AIR

There is a certain hurry and scurry in the air these days, from the crisp, frost-edged mornings we get it, when the world is still heavy with sleep. Resentful cows who begin to think the stable their proper night quarters emerge from the shelter of the cedars, or the fading richness of piled leaves in the woods, or the padded velvet of green sod in the orchard. They approach the barn buildings with bovine dignity and slowness—and the dog does not bother them much.

It is the season of elusive odors that tantalize and bewilder him. He finds the trails of wild creatures crossing the tracks of his stolid cows and calves. He sees himself as a lone patrol in a sleeping world. Under his paws is the chill of early frost—in his nostrils the scent of moving life in the underbrush.

The cows move stablewards for morning milking of their own accord. He is free to investigate. He starts a chipmunk out of a nap—makes bold remarks to an indignant ground-hog who is asking nothing better than to withdraw himself from circulation—sends a wild goose or so squawking on its way, and finally makes a wholly inexcusable race at the hens that are starting the day right with a little argument at the hen-house door.

Hens are fairly frothing with feathers, just now. Taking on their winter weight coats, and discarding their summer finery recklessly, they are a nice example to us humans. We take our summer togs and carefully fold them and lay them away in the hope that they will still be up-to-date and large enough for us when another season comes. But then, you see, hens never have to bother about fashions. Feathers are always worn top-side up, and moulded to the figure. A hen does not even know that she has a figure—so why should she worry about her appearance?

It does seem as if all the outdoor creatures know that winter is coming. They seem to feel the urge to play, and make the most of the brief time remaining before snow will smother the world, and hide away their

treasures. So the cat chases shadows up the trees, and goes wild a bit, taking days and nights off in the depths of the woods where fluttering leaves make a ghostly rustling all night long, and the moon shows a goblin face over the frayed cloud trailers.

The wild geese that lag behind their earlier brothers on the way to other climes rouse strange response from their domesticated kindred: “Come! Come away!” they shout out of the grey rack of cloud. And the silly slaves of human power strive to follow! Uttering the desperate cry of the creature that would, but cannot, they hurl themselves along the ground, in a vain attempt to make their inadequate wings float their heavy bodies.

Early morning makes gypsies of us all, this time of year. So does evening, I declare! The smell of burning leaves, the scutter of tiny feet somewhere near, the cold rippling of a brown streamlet, the drumming of a partridge on a log, the thin wavering cry of a hound—what a little it takes to start us sniffing the air uncovering our swaddled instincts again!

Whether the sun is just coming up briskly to conquer the world and win it back to summery softness again for a few hours—or just going down after its brief triumph, we get that same tumult of the breast. It is the hunting instinct, and must have its outlet, somehow. That is really the explanation of our Fall campaign of housecleaning.

We feel like chasing all our belongings out of doors to earn the benison of sun and air before we have to live another winter with them. We want the cleansing of harsh agencies to come into our dwellings—brooms and soaps and floods of water. We want to see our rugs and drapes snapping on the line under the whip of a bitter wind. That ought to do them good!

We bring in our knots of mountain ash, dull red, hard, unyielding. We seek across our countryside for the glossy leaves, the warmly tinted berries, the brave little vines that will stay with us through the long, cold months and remind us of the day when bloom will live again in the open and color come back to a land too long ruled by the Frost King.

We pass by the golden rod where it flaunts itself in fence corners. Wise folks tell us it is nothing but a weed, and a very mischievous weed at that. But its villainous reputation does not restrain us from gathering it—its bitter odor does that. Almost as unpleasant as the scent of ox-eyed daisy—and for that we leave it to toss its defiance out in the open.

Isn’t a buckwheat field a forlorn sight! It has a certain ruddy charm before it is cut, but when the straggly sheaves lie about on the raw stubble

all brown and tangled like seaweed, or after they are gathered in—how pale and dead the field looks! But there is a whiff like honey as the wind passes over it! Something heady, something wild and sweet hints at hidden riches. We may be grateful to the buckwheat yet, before winter is over!

One of these nights there will be a great roaring wind! Oh, such a wind as ghosts ride on! It will tear apples and pears from their last swinging hold on leafless branches. It will throw down such a scatteration of crab-apples that the battered grass will glow jewel-red when morning comes. It will rip great limbs from groaning trees, and hurl them to the earth. Little squirrels will sit waking through the night, to be ready for their harvest, with the dawn.

For this is the clearing wind of Autumn—the wind that finishes the harvest of fruits and nuts and flowers. It sweeps the fallen leaves into piles, where they may have a chance to sink quietly back to the soil that gave them life, carrying that life back to be sent anew through its cycle once more. There may be rain with the wind, washing, scouring, gouging. The two love to work together.

But the end is coming—we feel it in the restlessness that masters us and drags us out to snatch the cold air, the sudden sun, the lovely, fleeting beauty of these Autumn days, so that we may have a treasure to go with us through winter's cold and stormy reign.

THANKSGIVING

THE grass is still green in the orchards, and under the big twisted old trees it is bright with apples—red, red Baldwins and Kings, pale Sweetings and livid Greenings. High on the trees a few brave Spies cling and swing in the wind, their color an arresting note against the cloud-swept sky. Sometimes the sun gleams coldly out on the Autumn world—sometimes the stormy bank hides him.

The leaves are damp and clinging underfoot, fading away from their first brilliance. Only the mulberry tree by the gate with its clear, lemon-colored leaves has pride in itself. It is more beautiful than at any other season. The tarnished grapevine has shriveled away from its staking and shows a few bleak grapes still holding to their place. The garden has been plowed, and the good, black soil stands in its crumbling furrows, waiting for the coming winter.

Out in the fields the dull stubble discourages the eye. The darkened old stump fences thrust their distorted fingers upwards, as though they were tortured beyond endurance. An occasional cow bawls forlornly in the stable yard, but most of the barn creatures stand stolidly before their well-filled mangers and munch endlessly, housed within the stables in daytime as well as at night.

The days are short. Darkness comes down unbelievably early. How cheery to see the warm kitchen lights, to smell the nameless odor of cedar in the stove, and to feel the comfort of peace and prosperity in such dreary weather! Whatever we may be thankful for this Thanksgiving Day, let us not forget that we owe something to the outer gloom, because it makes the modest domestic cheer gleam brighter by contrast! It is in this raw season that the kitchen comes into its own. I had rather sit in a farm kitchen these days than in its parlor!

For the housewife is prone to say, "Wouldn't it be nice to have roast potatoes for supper?" And the hired man, warming himself after his day of plowing, immediately stokes up until the old stove is roaring red, and everybody has to sit back from it, and open the hall door to let some of the heat get away. Then you see a great pan of potatoes in their clean jackets

popped into the oven to do their duty, and the pleasures of anticipation are yours.

Perhaps the winter pig was killed last week—oh, joy! Spare ribs or tenderloin, stuffed heart or sausage? the lady of the house enquires, and presently the enticing whiff of the meat sizzles out to greet you and make you steal yearning looks at the clock.

The youngsters have come home from school, changed into their working clothes, washed their hands and smoothed their hair, and they slip round to the old couch behind the stove where father sits with the baby, as a man delights to do, while his wife fusses over meals. “Mind you don’t get him too hot,” or “Don’t let him look back at the light, over his head that way,” she cautions at intervals, more for the sake of saying something than because it is needed. For the man makes no reply, and, indeed, pays little heed to anything but the cooing and crowing baby in his arms.

The old dog whines at the door lonesomely and the boy, after a look at his mother, opens the door and lets Rover in. He will not meddle with the sedate house cat that lies in blinking comfort near the heat. He will not intrude too closely to the pantry door. He will not get underfoot when the lady of the house is getting the supper to the table, though the smell of that roast meat does make his nostrils quiver. No, he is very mannerly, and only asks to have his head on his master’s knee and feel the hard, boyish hand now and then in a caress, however heedless.

But it is the Thanksgiving season for dogs and cats, as well as for humans. Rover and Tabby will have all they can do presently, when they get the wreckage of the spare ribs, after supper. And when the evening wears on, and the stable work is done, the mother draws a satisfied breath as she looks round her cheery kitchen and sees the children amusing themselves with the checkers, or solving a puzzle, or even holding a spelling contest for their own amusement.

Their father drowses over the paper. The hired man sits back with his mouth organ and plays softly the quaint old airs that never sound better than on a mouth organ. With one foot he beats time. His eyes are half-closed and he is supremely happy. The baby, immaculate in his white nightgown, has a warm and rosy and altogether delectable appearance. He has had his romp, and is resigned to the idea of going to sleep and leaving this delightful company for a time. He lets his head droop against his mother and thoughtfully shuts one eye only, for fear that he might give up too soon. One must go shut—he cannot help it, but he will keep the other open yet awhile.

But he forgets which one he means to keep open, and presently both are shut. Good night, baby!

A feeling of genuine thankfulness swells the heart of the woman who regards this scene. Her home may be plain and unpretentious—it usually is—but it contains her dear ones, safe and contented. When night comes, she knows where they are. The allure of the movie is distant. They are ready for sleep after a day in the keen air, and soon darkness covers the warm little house. Thanksgiving? Ah, surely, for the material comforts which mean so much to all of us; for assurance of work that will bring in at least a living, and usually a fairly ample one; for decent surroundings and the opportunity to improve oneself; for the companionship of family and friends; for the gifts of the whole nation which are to be had for the taking; for the ambitions that stir the heart and will not sanction anything less than the best; for clean, wholesome, exhilarating exercise, and for quiet nights and peaceful slumber—for these and many other unrecognized blessings let us indeed glow with gratitude.

JOHNNY'S SO LONG AT THE FAIR

THOSE who simply go to Fairs, do not, after all, get the most out of them. 'Struth, I felt as if our school fair were my school fair this year, and I believe there were a good many more who had that same exalted sense of proprietorship regarding it. Other years, we attended; this year we participated, and that is a mild word for our activities.

Our teacher, being full of that elusive quality known as pep, inspired the school children with the same, so that they were ready to do anything she suggested. She had them writing, and hunting choice grain, and catching beetle-bugs, caterpillars, grasshoppers, butterflies—bugs, slugs and insects; she had them sorting out garden stuff, corn, pears and so on. They took her bits of wood to be named and mounted, and they gathered weeds and weed seeds until she must have been tired of looking at them.

About this stage of the game, the parents and grandparents began to show signs of enlightenment. You might see a man stop his car, or his horse and buggy, out on the road, climb your fence, secure something, and depart in triumph. Would you pursue him, shrieking "Stop, thief?" Certainly not—you would understand easily that he only desired a good sample of ragweed for the glory of his son William's exhibit at the school fair, and you wish him luck.

Some time ago our boy persuaded his grandmother—Heaven bless the grandmothers!—to buy him what he calls a coping saw. This good lady in earlier days presented him with nails, a hammer, a hatchet, an axe, a pocket knife and a red lantern. Therefore it was just and fitting that he should tackle her for a coping saw. This is a frail-looking little implement, but, oh boy! how it can wriggle through a nice smooth board! He cut out cats and rabbits, and owls, and camels, making a great deal of whittling, and amputating head and legs recklessly, until at last he acquired more skill and—a new bundle of shingles.

I wanted some of those shingles, earlier in the season, to patch up the little duck-house where I set my hens. But it seemed they were an extra special kind, and very necessary to the roof of the pig pen, and I didn't take them. The boy took them, and made stiff-legged pigs and elephants out of them. That's the rising generation!

Just a day or so before the school Fair, where the work was to be exhibited, our lad broke the blade of his saw. Such consternation as there was in this household! We sent to Galt with a neighbor who was going there, and we sent to Hamilton with another city-going friend, for extra blades. Each man brought him a dozen! School Fair, you know!

Now, of course, our interest lay in his undertakings, but there is no doubt that when you get children interested you get the whole community interested, and other parents were as deeply involved as we were. When the great day came and we journeyed out to Rockton, no one could doubt the nature of the attraction. There were fathers in their funeral best, with their children's exhibits overflowing in their arms. I saw a man carrying the biggest, roundest, yellowest pumpkin that a man could carry. His face was purple; his bowler hat rocked on his head; the seams of his coat creaked, and moisture stood out on his countenance. But such a smile! Such an intent, complacent joy! His little son ran behind, before, between and among him, crying out, "Daddy, don't drop my pumpkin! Mind my pumpkin!" And the father stumbled bravely along, encouraged by the lady of the party, who clutched his sleeve and asked him where he supposed she had better put the wheat, and would there be many others showing potatoes, and did he remember to bring the corn?

There were old folks, full of importance, putting exhibits on the wrong tables, asking if there would be any class for writing for primer pupils, asking when the races would begin, asking who would judge the various classes? There were school teachers, tall, short, stout, or clipper-built, armed with papers, pencils, lists, and impressiveness, and surrounded by their "children", in every stage of riotous excitement.

Then there were, inevitably, the school trustees, who eyed the whole affair with distrust, wondering what "our" school would get out of it, and gloomily agreeing that "our" school didn't have half a chance because it was so far for the youngsters to come and bring cattle or colts, and these other schools had such advanced pupils, such large attendance, but, still, quality had it over quantity, and "our" school could score there!

Bless their hearts, I loved them all, big and little, old and young, so eager, so anxious for each other, so proud of their dear ones, so glad for their triumphs, so kindly sympathetic for their defeats! Aunties and uncles in their most "posh" attire glowed in the reflected glory of their nieces and nephews. Just let me tell about the tug-of-war. There were five boys in each team, and the supervisor of sports tossed a coin for their choice of north or south on the rope, and the boys laid themselves out on that rope most manfully. So evenly matched they were, so hard they gritted their teeth, so long they strained and strove for the advantage, that I, watching at the edge of the intent crowd, heard a strangled, half-sort cry of distress—and found it was my own! My heart heaved for them, my hands clenched, and as I looked for a moment at the men and women beside me, I could hear their gasps of sympathy, see the unconscious fling of the shoulders as they sent all their mental vitality out to the support of their own team. Oh, I tell you, it was great!

Presently, when all the schools had taken their turn at it, the winners condescended to mingle with the crowd and show their burned hands and receive congratulations. Then in a twinkling they were off to take part in something else. The teachers raced, and the trustees raced, and you may be sure the children enjoyed that!

And now I haven't told you a word about the boys' driving contest, or the judging of the cattle and sheep and pigs. I have never said a word about the public-speaking contest, where little lads, not yet in their teens, got up and spoke clearly, briefly and sensibly, in a way that fairly made my eyes water. For the other night at church I heard the minister say something like this:

"Now, my friends, if I may be permitted—h'm—and surely it is not asking too much of you—seeing that the subject—h'm—is one of such importance, and considering the needs of our daily lives—I would like, h'm—to discuss for a few moments—not very long, because we have very little time at our disposal, but I would wish to draw your attention this evening, as doubtless it has often been drawn before——."

That's what you call breaking it gently. I never found out what he was drawing our attention to. Neither did anybody else. But these lads had something to say, and they said it. Every word had value. It was good training, I felt very proud of every one of them.

Let everyone watch these school fairs. They are going to do something amazing for rural Ontario.

THE STORM

ALL night it raged across the world, blotting out the struggling stars, smothering the trees, turning the fences into mere ridges, like long graves. Roads were obliterated, and ancient landmarks were so altered that they must have been bewildered themselves, and wondered what had happened to them. The Frost-King gave the temperature a business-like pinch and reduced it to the lowest dimensions called for by the specifications. Snow, snow, everywhere, whirled by the relentless driving wind; tossed hither and thither into corners and out again; swept down the long, bare, shuddering slope of the hill; beaten into strange tortured shapes; pounded into rock-like firmness; ground into needles!

The houses in town huddled together for comfort and protection. Heat from a thousand furnaces fought back the piercing cold. White eyes of electric light shone palely upon the shifting Arctic shroud. But in the country each little farm place stood alone against the blast, crouching under its lash, waiting for the day. The windows frosted from top to bottom. Geraniums in their tin cans drooped and wilted at the nip of the chilly fingers. The maple knots that should have lived till morning, traitorously capitulated and roared up the chimney and away, to join the shrieking spirits of the air.

For there are spirits of the air; when storms race across the world they carry with them the untiring spirits of all the storms of Time, gathered from the far northern whiteness, or plucked from the steaming cauldron of the equator. They roar together in frenzied remembrance of other triumphs, whistling in at keyholes, tapping upon windows, with voice and fingers centuries old, daring the shrinking sons of men to battle in the open.

"Hide now, coward!" they cry mockingly. "Sooner or later, by frost, sleet, hail, snow, flood or thunderbolt, we shall bring you out from cover!"

We fear the tameless ferocity of Nature, yet behind the blustering, the threatening, the punishment, is a tremendous magnet force that draws some hearts irresistibly to her. Have you ever noticed how children respond to storm voices? How boisterous and excited they become in response to the noise and action in Nature? When they grow older, they learn to fear the

power they cannot understand, but as years go by and the twilight darkens down again, the fear passes, leaving a great sense of harmony and understanding.

When the morning came the scene was desolation. Snow had boldly entered the houses and lay unashamed on windowsills, under doors, and in the trail of keyholes. Pumpkins, cherished for Winter pies, were as hard as cannon balls—and I shudder to think of the crock of eggs packed in water-glass! The jar of yeast was like the famous mirror of Shalott—"cracked from side to side"—and any lady might have been excused for saying, "The curse is come upon me!" It is very difficult to combat long-continued storms when the cold is so intense. Think of the discouragement when the milk freezes in a pitcher on the dining-room table, not six feet from a highly-recommended stove; when the bread freezes in the bread tin, and the brown sugar becomes as stiff as the crags upon the rocky road to Dublin.

As a matter of course, pumps and cisterns always "go solid," like a Conservative riding at election time, but one hardly expects the alarm clock to take a dry pleurisy and cease to be. The pans of milk in the cellar, which is like the sheltered valley where comes not hail nor frost nor any snow—alas! They were like miniature skating rinks, and refused to be skimmed of their cream as aforetime. Presently the fires began to affect the icy atmosphere of the house, and one gained courage to go out of doors and consult the thermometer. Not much comfort in it. Within a radius of two miles the temperature ranged twenty degrees, which shows not only the inclemency of the weather, but the boundless imagination of people, who can be more accurate when it is a question of a quarter of a cent.

The most cheerful citizens were the small boys, and they were full of joy. For one thing, they did not have to go to school, and that is cause for happiness any day. The snow, in its extraordinary shapes, its beaten hardness and tremendous depths, offered possibilities for snow forts, sleigh rides, and so many diversions that the day was quite too short to try them all.

Of course, it is a nuisance when a fellow has a day home from school that his father makes him help with the chores; but, then, it is rather fun, too, after such a storm to go into the stable and see the frosty steam-like moss above the walls; see the snow in a drift by the door, or lying upon the backs of the cattle as though premature old age had smitten their red coats. Up in the barn it is simply a fairyland! The fine snow has filtered through the cracks, and lies like a veil over straw and hay. The dim light of day makes caverns in the shadows, where hoary monsters stand immovable, and if a child has any imagination at all, surely the storm must stir it!

SIGNS OF COLD WEATHER

VILLAGES belong to the hibernators. With the approach of cold weather they proceed to dig themselves in. There is no need to look at the red head of the oak tree or the gay patchwork of the maple to tell what time of year it is. Just roll your eye towards old Bob Hedges working with great steam and puffing that can be heard a block, taking out the very last of his garden stuff. He has only a small bit of ground, but he raises on it, he declares, everything that can be riz. And he leaves in the ground all that can be left there, as long as it is safe to leave it.

Saves a lot of bother and handling. He trundles off to market every week with such a load in his little democrat that it surprises even himself, and his old roan horse, roanier with each passing season, never gets over looking back at frequent intervals, to see whether Bob and the garden truck are still a-coming. Bob squints and puckers the corner of his mouth as he states that although he takes his stuff up in the democrat, he can fetch back in his pocket all that it amounts to on the market.

So seeing Bob pulling out all the freezables from the garden tells us Winter is on the way. Some folk might go observing groundhogs and rabbits and squirrels for prophecies of the sort of Winter we might expect, but villagers do not bother. Indeed, I rather fancy the observing is the other way. If you could see how the crows behave! They sit up in a tree and watch Jimmy Gahagan at his wood pile and then after much consultation decide to prepare for a long, hard, stormy Winter, with deep snow, blizzards and severe frosts.

For Jimmy is sawing up all sorts of stuff and chucking it into the wood shed. He has made kindling of the old yellow armchair that stood on his back porch unmolested year after year. He's mad at it, he says between whacks of the axe. Some mean folk relate that a splinter on the seat of it caught on his Sunday trousers as he was sitting resting up for church, Harvest Home night. He dashed forth in a gallant hurry when he spied Melia Griggs starting off to service—and the splintery old chair ruined his romance. They say Melia won't even speak to him, now. But what is the use of smashing up the chair, I'd like to know?

There was an ancient home-made sofa that he cut up, too. Too much trash "cumulating on a man's premisizes", he told his sister when she ventured to protest against this violence towards old and inoffensive bits of furniture. Many's the time she would have enjoyed sitting on that old sofa while she sewed carpet rags or darned socks, but she never did get round to it because the sofa stood out under the apple tree in the yard, and it was always too much to haul her boxes and baskets out there. And now she'll never have the chance at all. That's a man for you.

Mercy Hall, down the back street, is getting her storm windows on. She always has Tuke Symes to do this for her. Folk say she could do it herself if she had a mind to, but that she does so love bossing a man; she hires Tuke, Spring and Fall to see about her storm windows and bring a little pleasure into her life. For she's bossy, is Mercy Hall. She gave her husband such a life of it that he left her, about thirty years ago, and built himself a little log house away back "north" in some vague remoteness.

Peter Blinn rakes his leaves and burns them with admirable zeal. If he would only wait until they are all down and then burn the lot, nobody would greatly mind. But he has nothing to do since he sold his farm and moved into the village, except mow his lawn and after that make himself a nuisance.

He takes up his geraniums, for instance, and at once insists that each neighbor must have a slip of each variety. And some of them are already loaded down with geraniums of their own.

He gets a batch of little kittens wished on him by his son who lives on the farm now—and Peter at once proceeds to pass these out among the neighbors. When they see him coming they say, "Well, for the land's sake, what's he bringing this time?"

Poor Peter! He finds something he likes in the paper, and trots across the road to show it to Maggie Hawes, who is very fat and very deaf and has a thunderous laugh. The neighbors never can feel quite comfortable while this is going on, for he has to shout so at her, and she laughs so shatteringly that there is always more or less uneasiness for fear one or other of them may not stand the strain successfully.

When all else fails he goes forth and burns the half dozen leaves that have fallen since the last burning. Sometimes he adds a bone or an old sock or a few rubber jar rings or part of a world-weary cabbage to liven things up. And to every person that passes while he is thus diligently occupied Peter announces, "Soon be Winter now, he-he!"

The school girls show symptoms of noting the changed climate. They no longer wear their Summer furs, but with plain coat collars turned up and standing open, Winter-weight powder and hail-proof vanishing cream, they prepare for the coming severity. They have eyes of scorn and smiles of secret amusement for the stout old ladies and lean old men, who in front of the post-office or round the stove in the corner grocery, tell about their flannels, new and old; and when they put them on, and what a difference they feel from the grey to the red; and what they said to their son's wife—not that she paid any attention—and what the doctor always told them about how sensible they were and what a pity young folks don't wear proper clothes any more such as we used to wear in our young days.

But the crowning touch is that Mrs. Hodd, who lives in the big stone house beyond the post-office and has barrels of money and no very handy way of spending it—Mrs. Hodd has brought out her goloshes. They are black, and large, and of a great height. Her nephew, who lives with her and has in mind a good many ways of spending quantities of money if he should ever secure it, has always to adjust these to her somewhat heavy feet whene'er she takes her walks abroad, which is several times a day. He also has to kneel and remove them from her when she comes in from these rambles, while she breathes noisily and tells how her heart is acting to-day.

The goloshes went down the street to-day, and now we know for certain that Winter is imminent. When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder is in the shock and Mrs. Hodd fetches out her perennial, imperishable goloshes the chipmunks start an extra crop of fur growing. They understand at last that they will need it.

WHITE FROST

WHITE frost this morning. Cedars fringed with it—fences delicately etched—telephone wires like silver threads. Every bare twig on the big old apple trees carries its frostly duplicate on its back. Horses laboring up the hill, send forth their white plumes with each breath, building themselves strange and glittering and enormous coats of hoary and ancient aspect.

It is a day of magic. The sun is shrouded and dully red. Now and then he thrusts forth a dazzling spear of glory that turns all our still whiteness to radiant beauty. Fine flakes of the frost then show themselves sifting through the air—but even as one catches the breath in awe, the sun is masked once more—the splendor fades!

Old people shake their heads. A storm is coming—never knew it to fail after a white frost like this. Fearful storm—we've had such lovely days, lately! Well then, let it come, say we! If we have the good days first, why should we grudge to pay for them? Ho! Ho! Storms are but storms! Something of the spirit of our great ancestors swells within us to meet the assaults of wind and frost and all the terrors of the air!

Let the north wind roar his way from the fastnesses of the Pole! Let the snow ride with him, casting its burial wreaths as it comes! Let the frost, sharpened to javelin keenness, stab at us if it will—we accept the challenge, hurl our defiance, laugh in the very face of Winter! It but stings the blood to swifter action, lashes the taint of softness from the body, whips cobwebs from the brain.

Do not shirk the encounter—that way lies defeat! We northerners dare not let ourselves cringe before the menace of the cold—we must meet it, snatch its treasure of fierce delights, conquer it in all its panoply of turbulence and cold. Then when we go indoors and build a roaring fire of logs the wintry tempest has felled for us and close the heavy doors on night and storm, and light the lamps on table and at window, it will be, not a retreat, but a triumph!

LITTLE COUNTRY FAIRS

These first crisp frosts of Autumn,
Call back the simple joys,
Of other days, far distant,
When you and I were boys.
Coon hunts—corn roasts—ripe apples!
Melons and plums and pears!
And all the golden glamour
Of little country fairs!

What crowds of friends and neighbors!
What curious sights we saw!
We heard the loud band playing
Old “Turkey in the Straw”.
We bought a bag of peanuts
And chewed a stick of gum,
We felt we owned the fairground—
Let everybody come!

Oh, wouldn’t it be pleasant
When fair day next comes round
If we could go, light hearted,
Out to the old fair ground.
Turn back the rolling seasons
The world of toiling men,
Drop all your years and worries
And just be boys again!

We’d perch on pine stump fences,
And talk to pretty girls,
With button boots, and dimples,
With ribbons, smiles and curls.
We’d look at all the people—
The most we ever saw—
And hear again the old band
Play “Turkey in the Straw”.

THE VILLAGE BEGINS ITS DAY

THE first chore of the day appears to be the carrying out of the ashes. I never noticed this in other years, but now as I look out of this window that commands a fair view of the village, I notice again and again that ash piles are mounting—coal piles dwindling to match, probably. The women are the usual performers. Some of them wear colored aprons that flap as they trudge along. Lilac aprons—red aprons—blue aprons—worn to keep the little swirls of grey ash from demoralizing wool house dresses—for women who empty ashes are sensible about Winter dresses.

They wear a cap of their husband's with the peak well above their eyes. "If he won't carry out ashes, his cap will do its share," this always announces. Usually they sport one of his coats, or sweaters, too long in the sleeves, buttoning the wrong way, sagging at pockets, frayed at the left elbow, where he has rested his arm on the door of the car in driving.

There is a resentment in their very walk. I don't suppose they strive daily with their menfolks as to which shall look after the stove, but one has no doubt that they have their opinion of a man who fails to attend to such a duty, leaving it to his poor, unfortunate, weak and weary wife to handle! But very often I know quite well that she does it because she insists on managing everything. He would not shake the stove properly, or he would raise too much dust, or he would spill ashes on the floor, or he wouldn't do it when she wanted it done. So she does it herself and everything is lovely. She even has a splendid, long-enduring grievance out of it!

Our village has plenty of water. Nineteen flowing wells one can think of without trouble, and pumps "forbye". So, next to the rite of the ash pan, comes the ceremony of the water pail. This is usually a man-size job. What a wealth of house slippers is yearly ruined in the to-and-fro of the water pail and pump! But then a man sees his acquaintances at this same task. He has a chance to shout across snowy lawns and "pass the time o' day" and exchange comments on roads and weather. The water pail has a dignity that is far from the lowly ash pan.

With regard to snow, labor is divided. The women sweep verandahs, the men shovel paths. I often think village men are grateful for frequent heavy

falls of snow, for the sake of the employment thus provided. Most of them are retired farmers who have left the labor of their acres as years and prosperity overtook them. Son got married and took over the farm—let him run it, they say. The old folks don't want to be shut off in two rooms, and held there in durance vile while younger hands experiment with treasure it has taken years of hard work to gather.

No—the old folks come to live in a little house in the village with perhaps a little stable for the horse, and pasture for a dozen hens. But the curse of idle hours falls like a millstone about the neck of the man who has all his life been longing for the time when he might be free of work! He isn't like a woman—he can't sit down and knit or make pieced quilts in intricate patterns for church bazaars, or occupy himself with the care of the house.

His wife finds herself hard put to it, quite often, to fill in the long days. She has been accustomed to a steady and crowding routine—days never long enough. I sometimes think she assumes the care of the ash-pan because she hungers for something to test her strength against. You know how a cat will go out and try her claws on the trunk of a tree?

But women can always put in time. Somebody always has little folks that need a place to visit, and be safe while their mother goes to the dentist or to the city on business. Or there are grandchildren to look after or to fit with dresses and coats made with all the skill of hands that love to do such work. Or there are neighbors to visit, to exchange recipes with, or to consult with on points of deep interest to the housewife.

And a woman has a lot of fun with committees. Lots of things she could manage splendidly by herself she shares with her committee. It gives the other women the feeling of usefulness and responsibility she craves, herself, and as they in turn invite her to work on their committees, it is a paying generosity. So you see, a woman is much better off for occupation, when she leaves the farm behind, than is her husband.

Men are less adaptable, anyway. They must be doing something. If they would only accept the tasks their wives devise for them, it would not be such a bad thing. But will they take pride in dusting table legs or putting quaint touches on lamp shades? Their morning chore is to get the mail, and they spin that out to its fullest extent, taking short steps to make it seem as if they were walking very fast—yet they are not getting back too quickly, you understand!

There is always the chance that the son or his wife or the daughter and her husband may drop in for dinner. Dear help us, what an excitement that

makes. “Dad—here’s Mary Ellen and John, and the babies! Now, you just go right down to Mack’s and get a pound of steak—or no. A pound of steak would never do it. Get me two pounds of liver. I’ve got cabbage and canned peas and the pies I made yesterday! Sakes, it’s a mercy they came! My pies’d have been wasted, only you and me to eat them! But don’t you get candy for the youngsters—mind. Mary Ellen won’t allow ’em candy.”

Sometimes I fancy this last is more of a reminder than a prohibition. It seems to work that way, for when you see one of our village grandfathers in haste after meat for such an occasion, you may know by his satisfied and guilty look that he has spread himself on forbidden sweets, at the same time. Can you blame him?

THE STORMY DAY

The kitchen is dark, though it is early in the afternoon. Dark, with an ominous and dreary grey cast, that would be utterly depressing but for the fact that it is merely an expression of old Mother Nature in one of her wintry tantrums. Soft snow, sweeping past the window in ragged swirls, clots against the pane, to slide reluctantly down as the interior heat reaches out to repulse it. Sometimes a wet wall of it piles up to quite a height on the pane before its own weight breaks it down again. No wonder the kitchen is dark—no brightness in air or sky!

At the big table in the middle of the gloomy room the woman of the house stands in front of her bake-board. "It seems light enough!" she sniffs at the deep bread pail which she is tipping over the floured board. "A bit chilly—but who could wonder! With the wind simply spearing in at every crack and keyhole——."

The great ball of dough slowly heaves out from its hold on the sides of the pail. With swift floury hand she gathers the clinging shreds and adds them to the main mass. Her arms, bare to the elbows, her spotless white apron, her intent face, all testify to the importance of the work in hand.

"Bake up a few buns, Jane," suggests the old lady in the squeaky rocking chair by the east window. Bless these old ladies, anyway! They think of the best things. "Mix 'em first, so they'll bake first. A few raisins, you know—never mind adding sugar or lard or such. The plain bread dough is good enough for anything—forbye it'll raise quicker."

The woman at the table is flopping back a portion of the mass into the pail again. "That's for the brown bread. Yes—I'll mix the buns first. Such a hungry tribe after school!"

She tears off a great wad of dough and briskly kneads it. Smooth and responsive, it yields to her hands, and upon her face there grows the absorbed and joyous look belonging only to the woman who sees that the work she is undertaking for her household is about to do her credit.

Raisins—and a long, wide, shallow pan—and presently a whole array of small white cushions smelling, yeastily, to be shrouded for their final rising

before going into the oven. “I do always like baking day,” murmurs Aunt Caroline, her needles deftly clicking out another perfect heel. “And I like a farm kitchen on a stormy day—I do so.”

The other woman asks no explanation. She is shaping loaves now, six round puffs to fit into the deep pan—two long narrow ones for the oblong tin. She knows the same enjoyment of baking day and stormy weather. Never analyzed, never weighed, she knows the pleasure is there. So why question it?

There is a stamping of feet in the woodshed that protects the west door, and then a man enters in a great swirl of snow and chilly air, a big shaggy collie insinuating himself cannily into the room at the same time.

“Baking, eh?” says the hearty, booming voice. “Some storm, some storm! Well, I’m taking the team out to the village, and I’ll come back by the school for the youngsters. Want anything?”

“Don’t forget coal oil,” says the woman at the baking table, her eyes warm with inner light as she looks at him.

“Get me another hank of that yarn and I’ll foot up your socks for you,” offers Aunt Caroline. “I’m pretty well finished on these new ones.”

“How about your pep’mints? Got plenty?”

“Never mind no pep’mints. You mind and get that yarn. I’m as well knittin’ socks and footin’ ’em as sittin’ idle, ain’t I?”

He chuckles as he struggles into an immense overcoat, over top of innumerable smock, sweater, waistcoat and shirt layers of garments. “Ask me that!” He crams a great peaked ear-flapper cap down to meet the collar of the coat, and shoves his hands into mittens that are like caves. “Come along, Jep, you old scamp! ’Bye folks!”

The door opens to let in a shriek from the storm—closes to shut out wind and snow again. Presently sleigh bells jingle past—the team, the long low sleigh, the leaping, excited dog, the upright figure of the muffled driver—all sliding ghostlike from view behind the screen of the smothering downfall of snow, the bowed and weighted cedars.

The room is darkening steadily. The loaves are all in their pans now, heaving up roundly under their sheltering towels. The woman lifts a stove lid—and what a ruddy glow shines forth! Splashing its primitive color on the low ceiling, leaping to touch gleaming knobs on the tall old dresser in the corner, picking out the burnished metal of the hanging lamp in the centre

of the room, caressing the elfin figure of little old Aunt Caroline in her stiff old chair, her eyes shining in the glow, and lighting up the thoughtful, motherface of the woman who stares so deeply into its heart!

"What a blessing to have plenty of good fuel!" She thrusts in a straight piece of maple, and covers the fire again. "I'll light a lamp. Wouldn't it be fine if we could only have electricity here! I never polish a lamp glass without thinking of that!"

"Huh!" says the old lady, sitting suddenly erect. "And what about them that has it? Burning candles again—making their expensivest lamps out of pickle bottles, and old brown stone crocks! Wantin' 'em to represent lanterns—old iron things, like what laid out on the junk heap years ago, nobody wantin' the likes."

But the other woman strikes a match and carefully watches the yellow gleam steady itself as she adjusts the chimney and shoves the whole thing up high enough to be safe, there above the table. The circle of prisms twinkles in the mild radiance. She clears away traces of her baking, looks into the oven to inspect her buns, and then, head to one side, listens intently.

"There they are!" She pulls the door open to admit the snowy, puffing, eager youngsters, home from school.

"The grandest storm!" cries one. "Buns for supper!" whoops another. "I'm first in my class this time!" exults the third. There is a shaking of coats, a raid on the water pail, a sweeping out of snow.

Aunt Caroline watches with enjoyment. "Dunno how it is, but I always did like baking day—and when it comes to a storm—no place can beat a farm kitchen, if I do say it!"

THE VILLAGE STREET

It is delightful to live on a hill, but there are times when I stay on top because it is so wearisome to climb back after going down. Yet it is not such a very steep hill, neither is it so very long—but hills are best avoided if one has engine trouble, and no prospect of repairs. I have lived in Hamilton, and have known how to adjust myself to having strangers make their coffee and fry their onions and have their scenes just on the other side of a slight partition. In one house we had three rooms. An English family lived above. Their parrot cackled loud enough for us to recognize its tone. Their very valuable dog had a way of bouncing down off something to the floor with a resounding whack. They had a last meal at night just about the time I was getting squared away for bed.

The woman next door had a fearful time getting her boy up in the morning to go to school. She called and called. “Now Reggie, Reggie, do you hear me? Get right down here this instant, Reggie! You’ll be late for school, and you know what your teacher’ll do to you! Reggie! Reggie! I’m coming right up! Come and have your breakfast at once Reggie! Now here comes your father, and I’ll just tell him! Reggie, you bad boy!”

I used to listen in great anxiety for Reggie’s father, but as there was never anything further about him than the threat, I figured that he must be a man of business, not likely to turn up and discipline young Reggie very often at that time of day. I never learned any more about Reggie. I never cared, indeed. But I was discreet in the matter of broadcasting family stuff, knowing that it could be heard so readily by those on the other side of the wall.

After a while we moved to a little, low house, on which towering neighbors looked down. I did get slightly acquainted to the point of nodding casually here and there. But the law of the city held good—circumstances might throw me in the way of those who lived beside me, but otherwise it was most unlikely that I would ever know a thing about them.

Now, here in this village, things are different. I do not know everybody, by any means, and even if I did, a new hat changes the appearance so that a nearsighted person like myself must be forgiven for doubting, occasionally.

But when I go down the street I can nod to anybody and feel no likelihood of a rebuff. A village is a friendly sort of place.

Happy, the hired man, has laboriously trimmed the shaggy grass from the face of the hill by the gate, making it possible for me to step out and stand on the slope, and look away to the South, to the railway bridge, straight down the white road.

I call it my view, for if enjoyment of it establishes a claim, there can be no contesting of my title. Happy also put the Winter's accumulation of clinkers in the little footpath, and even in a rainy time, the walking is fairly good. There is one spot to be careful of—just at the foot of the telephone pole, where a stone pokes itself up boldly, and the path twists to accommodate it.

We have a sort of weed along our roadsides, called locally, graveyard moss. Legend hath it that some minister's wife brought it, to set out in the cemetery as an ornamental border. It is overrunning the place now.

No doubt the Horticultural Society will deal with it presently. And talking of societies—people say to me, "But what is there going on in a little place like that? Don't you find things awfully dull?" Going on! Oh, what is there! I believe one might have as lively a time here as in any large city, only that there would be no street cars to collide with, and only one place to buy ice cream.

But these limitations are part of the charm. When I go to Toronto to shop, I don't know a single shop girl. I am only a stranger among thousands of strangers. I like it, mind you—I like rubbing shoulders with humanity, and it is as good as a tonic to see the smart clothes, and the brisk faces and the latest, indescribable suggestions of novelties of all kinds. I enjoy the rush and the clatter and the whirl of activity that characterizes a big city, but I can come home contentedly to village life again, and find that it suffices.

It is good and pleasant to walk leisurely down the narrow street, past houses where people live whom I know and like. One little old lady sits at her window quite a lot. She nods cheerfully drawing back her pretty curtain to give me the benefit of her cordial smile. Her husband, eighty-three yesterday, working in his garden. Across the road lives another little lady that I must visit soon. She is much shut in with the care of an invalid sister, but once in a while is so kind as to send me some of her lovely flowers with Madge and Betty as they pass.

We have a new baby on our street, they tell me, although I have my doubts. I never hear it cry, and surely, with open doors and windows, some sort of protest from infant lungs would reach the street. But as yet it is only a very tiny baby, so we must not expect too much.

Our baker lives on this street, and he must be a lover of music, for it is always issuing from that house. If I had not laid down the law so firmly to the girls about loitering on the street, there are times when I would be tempted to stand and listen and enjoy the concourse of sweet sounds, for it is excellent music, and happy in its message.

Yonder stands the church behind its row of shrubs. I have attended many churches, and have found something in each to draw and help me. I am no sectarian. The church that is nearest is my church if it will have me, and when the familiar hymns ring out, and the familiar scripture is read, there is no sense of strange, or alien surroundings—I am at home.

Here is the telephone office, next the corner. The church—the telephone—could one get along without the other?

At the corner is the little memorial park, and as I passed it, the flowers were blooming and nodding in their places behind the cenotaph. The beds are to be renewed presently with slips and plants. I noticed a woman walking among the flowers, looking to see what they needed done to them. Everybody seems to feel a responsibility about the park.

As this is a village with many flowing wells and good pressure, we have a drinking fountain at this corner, bubbling its untiring invitation. This is the corner where Dundas Street enters the village, on its way from Toronto to London—the longest street in the world. Old Dan Jackson's Wagon Shop faces it squarely. It is one of those old-time places that has emerged from the careful methods of pioneer days to the speed and deftness of this. Now, Dan is making a play wagon for our young Jack, and if he has to answer as many questions about that wagon as I have, he might well get excited.

We wanted a real wagon, with a fairly high box, and as we have a dog harness and a good dog, it seemed a good idea to have shafts as well as a tongue to use on it. It ought to be a remarkable wagon, and I am just wondering if Jack will want to course down the hill to the peril of his little neck.

Now how did I come to miss telling about the blacksmith shop? These are growing rare in the province. Master blacksmiths of an older date lament the neglect of this ancient and honorable calling. I can tell you of a

blacksmith who was deft enough to mend a woman's false teeth for her. You should have seen the way he bound my grandmother's chopping bowl with a metal band, for me, when it split, as those wooden bowls were so inclined to do. He was proud of his craft.

It is heartsome to hear the clink of good metal, and to "watch the flaming sparks that fly like chaff from a threshing floor". Teams stand waiting their turn. A few young lads toss horseshoes for a pastime.

Now we arrive at the stores, for although some of them are on other streets, most of them line up right here. We nod to the busy grocer and his pretty young assistant; we take a glance into the barber shop, for it is rather a famous rendezvous.

The hardware store; the grocery where the bus waiting room is to be found; the tinsmith's shop; the drug store up its little stair—each has something to hold our friendly interest and claim our thoughts. The baby that belongs to the hardware people is not very well, I hear. John was in there this morning, and the lady told him she was using granulated sugar in the milk and water mixture she gave. John very gravely recommended that she try brown sugar instead. Poor baby—such an anxiety when the little ones do not thrive.

All this time the street has been gently going down hill. Here is the post office with the Memorial Hall above it, and the library behind. A fine hall it is, where many and various kinds of gatherings are held, and the library is very satisfactory.

There is the grist-mill; the garage to the west; further on, the schools and one of the milk factories. Above all, and pervading it to a harmony of friendly content, is the atmosphere of neighborly good-will that makes the long street with its arching trees more than ever beautiful, and touches the distant hills with kindness.

THE SCHOOL-MEETIN’

On the morning of the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year’s, man had a formality to face—the School-Meetin’. I do not know whether it was the British North America Act or Magna Charta that instituted this day and its duties. It is an unmistakably democratic affair, and very masculine in all its details.

The school is open on that day, though it comes during the holidays. A raging fire reddens the top of the big old cast iron stove, and when the door of it is opened for investigation, a glow and a heat rush forth in a way to assure the casual ratepayer that at least the children are always warm enough, no matter what the weather.

It does not often occur to a mere man that though the children who sit back near the stove may be warm enough, or sickeningly too warm, those up at the frosty front, near the teacher’s desert island of a desk, may have another story to tell.

The turn-out at School-Meetin’ is never very heavy. I never heard of an occasion when any who desired admittance were turned away for lack of accommodation. On the contrary! The attendance is generally so slim that it just misses a default for want of a quorum. Last year’s trustees are on hand to answer for their sins, and to see that some other fellow gets roped in to take the place of the retiring man. They feel gloomy. This business of looking after the school, “hiring” a teacher who will be low in salary and high in everything else, keeping the caretaker up to the mark, seeing that there is plenty of fuel, and that it is not too lavishly used, scolding over every knife and pencil and chalk mark on the premises, spending money enough to placate the inspector, who seems to think rural sections are regular little gold mines, and curtailing expenses sufficiently to soothe the ratepayers—this is not what a man hankers for, as a pastime.

“Let some other fellow do it,” he grumbles to his wife, when he is struggling into his coat, preparatory for the long, cold walk to the Meetin’. “It’s nothing but a lot of work, and take everybody’s blame. I don’t want the job, I’m sure.”

His wife uses all the old arguments on him; tells him that he has been made trustee because folks had such a high opinion of him, and that he must stay with it for the sake of the children who need their schooling; that a good school in the section puts up the price of the farms, and makes it a better place to live—gives the children something to be proud of. And if he still grunts, she fetches forth her final, most crushing argument.

“Well, would you want to put in a woman, then?”

And with that ringing in his ears, he marches off to his Meetin’.

He looks round at the other men in the school room, with that idea at the back of his mind; suppose one of them—or two—happened to be women? Where then would be the masculine ease of feet upon a desk, chair tilted back and the latest yarn from the blacksmith shop to regale the others with? Let a woman get her spendthrift hands on the school purse and what would happen? School nurses, dental inspection, hot lunches, manual training, and what not—all the fads of modern woman, financed by the shuddering section!

Taxes are heavy enough now, as it is! What would they be if women ran the school as they seem to think it should be run? He resolves to be a martyr to the cause. He goes to the School-Meetin’ armed with courage. He listens to the report of the last Meetin’, and passes upon the auditor’s report and all the business in hand, telling himself that it is his duty as a citizen to assist in public affairs. A woman trustee! No—not at any price. How would a woman know what kind of firewood to get, or where to get it, or what to pay for it? His gaze wanders to the idle clock, the shiny blackboard, the rows of desks, so much nicer in every detail than the pompless circumstances of his own educational years. . . .

Someone is moving an adjournment. Feet shuffle, caps are retrieved, coats buttoned, mitts drawn on. “Well, that’s over for another year,” the men tell each other, as they straggle out, greatly relieved over having this duty accomplished. The School-Meetin’ is ended.

TO THE MUSIC OF SLEIGH BELLS

This has been a real Winter, the sort we describe to cousins in India as a typical Ontario Winter. It has been cold enough to let us mention with pride those degrees below zero which sound so impressive to a person who has probably never even experienced freezing point. And then the snow! Glittering in all the splendor of a northern sun, piling its soft whiteness into caps for the gateposts and smothering quilts for the little houses that seem to snuggle down into its embrace; whirling into fantastic drifts that make the roads into tunnels and sheds into caves; sifting in through cracks at windows and doors, creeping softly to fill paths and shroud familiar objects in the chill of mystery; flying like a wall of spume from ocean's breast, a deadening blanket to cover the defenceless valley; or still and cold and frozen below the pallor of the winter moon—snow, the glory of the Winter, rich in its legends and pastimes.

Did you ever see a snow snake? The Indians, we are told, used to have a great deal of amusement from racing them. Composed of something with a phosphorescent value, these long, slender, snake-shaped toys were sent at speed down specially constructed runways on a snowy slope. Rumor only ventures to tell us of them, but it is very probable that within a few years the pastime of snow-snake racing will be a rival to skiing or snowshoeing.

Did you ever have a sleigh ride? That sounds a silly question, but remember there is a generation growing up amongst us who have never sat behind a horse in any sort of vehicle. In another score of years it will be easier to get a driver for an aeroplane than for a team of horses. To-morrow's child is heir to many a strange and novel thrill—but will he ever know the tingling excitement that goes with sound, active horseflesh?

There is something about a sleigh ride—really, there is something. People who would not show a flicker of interest in any other sort of expedition will respond at the bare mention of this. Is it the music of the bells, tinkling gaily as the horses trot along? Is it the clean, crisp air that whips red blood to the cheeks and puts a diamond sparkle into the eyes? Is it

the measureless might of Winter, rousing all our resistance, stirring us to put forth the power that is in us to meet and conquer it?

Or is it the glamor of old romance that clings to the track of the runners, the creak of harness, from the days when these were the sole link in all the desolation of pioneer distances, to keep the scattered homes from utter isolation?

Whatever it is, the attraction of a sleigh ride is undeniable, and we admit it emphatically. What fun it was, in the dear dead days beyond recall, to participate in the annual Sunday school sleigh ride, when willing farmers brought teams and sleighs and all the suddenly enlarged membership was given a merry ride with a supper after it! As soon as day school was out the youngsters scampered to the appointed rendezvous. Never any mistake about it—they might forget what history they were supposed to learn, or make a slight error when sent to the grocer's for household supplies, but when it came to being on the spot for this sort of thing they knew exactly where to go and what to do.

And there were the sleighs, bedded with clean crisp straw, and provided with a blanket or two. The horses tossed their lordly heads, and pawed the snow impatiently, jingling their mellow bells with every movement of their muscles. The Bible class and the intermediate classes and the primary and the Sunbeams and the Willing Workers and the Busy Bees, marshalled by anxious lady teachers, encouraged by the secretary, the librarian, the organist, the superintendent, and various ladies of the congregation armed with heavy patchwork quilts to "hap" up the wriggling passengers, finally were packed into sleighs in unbelievable numbers, and the procession started in a burst of song, led by the courageous members of the choir who were sharing the enjoyment of this yearly adventure.

Out along the old York road—because it had fewest hills—shrieking at every snowdrift, blowing horns that survived from the Christmas concert, ringing dinner-bells, singing, whooping with all the childish delight in noise for the sake of being noisy; boys forever getting out to run and warm themselves, and firing a few casual snowballs in the intervals before jumping in again with snowy feet to elicit protests from those who had not joined in their mad adventure; young men getting out to walk, now and then, to make it easier for the horses, and young ladies immediately doing the same because they were really becoming very cramped with sitting on the floor of the old sleigh box; jingle-jingle of the sleigh bells, horses becoming very tame after the first half-mile of it; and presently a curve and a turn and

the whole cavalcade on its way back to the remarkably good hot supper prepared by the ladies of the congregation—bless their hearts!

Are there places in Ontario where these treats are still observed for the pleasure of the children? The older people seemed to take a certain enjoyment out of them, too, but as years passed something came over the horse-owners, and it became increasingly difficult to muster enough sleighs for such affairs. Time also became more precious. Where now could we find men to give several hours for the mere purpose of taking youngsters for a sleigh ride? Yet it was fun, and good fun, when we were unsophisticated and did not realize how slow and hum-drum it was!

Think of the horse-and-cutter courtships of days gone by! Horse trotting briskly in a steam of his own making, that wafted back to freeze on his coat and make him a horse out of a fairy tale, white and fringed and monstrous! Waxy moon remote and pallid—somewhere—not too bright. And cheeks so cold and smooth—lips so quick and warm! Robes forever needing to be tucked in around the most precious person in the world—eyes shining in the light of the stars on the wide stretches of snow—bump-bump of the cutter over pitch-holes, the sagacious horse piloting himself very efficiently.

Yes, there is something about the music of those bells that stirs us unaccountably. We know it is not safe practice for children to run and hook their little handsleighs on behind some big bob sleigh—but wouldn’t we do it ourselves if it were not for what the neighbors would say?

ACCORDING TO THE BOOK

In the good old days of ignorance and bliss, when houses were small and families were correspondingly large, mothers did not study so much out of books about raising children. In the words of the old colored mammy, they raised them with a barrel stave—and raised them frequent! Now we know better than to try anything on the infant until we first write to the baby department of our favorite magazine and ask the specialist in charge whether we may or not.

Thus we discover that we must never rock a child. It addles their brains. Some grown folks I know could stand a bit more addling without attracting the attention of the general public, but who wants to start rocking them just for that? We are simply to lay our infant down on his bed, come away and leave him, closing the door to give him that sense of privacy so desirable for restful slumber.

He will probably roar to all distraction, and if you have near neighbors, they will come tapping on your door to say, “Oh, Mrs. Blank, your baby is crying—did you know?” That is one reason some of us never had our babies sleeping out of doors. The neighbors could not stand it.

But about this clamor—you go in and see that he is not being stabbed by a pin (but really there should be no pins in his harness!) and that he is not being stung by a bee nor bitten by the family cat or dog. No—he is merely the victim of a trifling pain, or possibly a flash of that temper of his. He is so like his father!

After a while he goes to sleep, all wound up in his blankets, with his head under his wing like a little robin. The book says he should lie first on one side and then on the other—as though he were training for politics—and his limbs should be relaxed and extended. But he has never read the book, so he lies on his face with knees drawn up under his chin, and his arms everywhere that his legs are not. If you have the courage that goes with first babies you straighten him out—and he will either waken up in his wrath or tangle himself even more completely again, as soon as you let go of him.

Maybe he fights his nap, and instead of sleeping profoundly from three to five, according to rules, wrangles peevishly until four-twenty and then drops off, forgetting important engagements at five. Babies do not play fair. Mothers observe the rules, but they defy them, and still expect us to keep on playing the game.

There is some satisfaction in rocking a baby to sleep. He knows what to expect, and when away from his accustomed cot and solitude will lie down in someone's arms and resign himself to slumber. I do not know that it is good for a child to be rattled in a jolting cradle until from sheer weariness he falls asleep, but some stubborn part of me clings to the idea of soothing the weary child in loving arms.

Whether it is good for the baby or not it is undeniably good for the mother. She folds him close, his silky head against her breast, in the crook of her arm, and his soft little hand stretches up to find a resting place at her throat, her cheek—somewhere that the touch of her will carry its assurance into the land of dreams. She sings softly, and the tune recalls her own mother in other days, pressed with work, yet finding time to hush her babies off to sleep.

The lids droop, breath comes lightly, regularly, as the warm little body gives itself up to drowsiness. What plans, what loving ambitions, what hopes, what fears come to the mother as she watches the babe in her arms! She is carried far from the toil and privations of the daily round. As she finally lays her sleeping burden in his cot she is renewed, strengthened for the work that awaits her. Rocking may not be what the baby needs—it is what she needs!

As the child grows older the stern laws of the book decree that he must have his own bed and sleep in no other. Particularly is he barred from sleeping with his parents. It is supposed to be hard on him. Has anybody ever paused to consider how hard it may be on them? Try an active youngster for a partner some night and see how you like it. You may start off with him in his own department, head on the pillow and feet pointed south, but inside of an hour he will turn over eleven times and take a different covering with him each time. He winds the sheet around his neck and the blanket he consigns to the floor. The white spread is a thing he despises, so after trampling it thoroughly with his windmill feet he lets you have it, except for one corner which he lies on very firmly, thus achieving a conventional pattern on the surface of himself.

Now here is the advantage of having him sleep in his own bed. He does all that kicking and squirming on purpose—enjoys it, and finds our still slumbers very tame in comparison. When he awakens after his night alone he will scramble out of his cot and come stumbling over to your bed, sleepily demanding to be taken in "wif mudder". And any mother who says, "No, go back to your own bed," deserves to have him go. That's all. She ought to get right up and read her book of rules.

The day will come, and very soon, when the little fellow will be past all that dear intimacy. He will soon be too big to get into his mother's bed, to cuddle down happily in the smooth warmth of her sheets, wrapped about by her arms. But when he goes into the world he wants to carry with him that sense of her nearness. It will come to him his first night in a strange city as he tries to go to sleep, full of the problems of youth and environment. Suddenly there will come to him the realization of her encircling love and his safety in it.

How often he crept in beside her, even after his babyhood, for tooth-aches, and hurt feelings and disappointments and childish failures and childish fears drove him to her with the longing for her wordless, unquestioning sympathy. He would never admit it, of course, but there were times when he went with bursting heart to her room, and though she was not there flung himself on her bed for comfort and cried himself off to the healing sleep he could find nowhere else.

Yes, in spite of the wisdom of the books and the specialists we have to admit that once in a while it is just as well to listen to the urgings of nature. Nature taught us to hold our children closely in the days when dangers threatened the life of the race at every turn. There are still dangers, and there is still no weapon greater than the love of parents for their children, because it endures and defends, and in spite of our mistakes in the technique of training, it conquers and lives.

DAWN

Pain, you were with me in the haunted darkness,
    Withholding the slow light,
I strove with you through all the heavy hours,
    Nor conquered quite.

Then came faint day, dull glowing at my curtain,
    Across the shadows deep,
And I who through the night had fought with terrors
    Fell fast asleep!

So when our troubled night has left us broken
    From grief and care and pain,
God stretches out His hand with leaves of healing—
    Peace comes again!

O pain, who held me stricken in the darkness,
    The morn has set me free,
I shall not dread the midnight, when the dawning
    Brings Liberty!

FINIS

DURING the first years of the war, we moved from the city back to our farm, which had been leased to other people. We were so busy we gave no thought even to a daily paper. The children were small; it was Spring; work crowded on every hand. And the war clouded everything.

In Summer holidays my father came out to do a little carpentering for me, and to catch some speckled trout—a relaxation after the strenuous school term. Much to our dismay, however, he came down very startlingly with an illness that held him prisoner for weeks in our little spare bedroom.

First thing in convalescence, he yearned for his daily paper. So I took my pen in hand, and said, “Father, I’ll send and get the *Globe*. That will be a change for you.”

“No, no!” he protested, stirred to his Conservative depths. “Send for the *Mail and Empire*—it’s much the better paper.”

So I sent for it. Very soon my eye lighted upon the daily poem that used to appear on the editorial page.

“My word!” I said to my husband, “I can do as well as that!”

“Go to it, then,” was his response. Poetry was nothing in a world crying for food—food was going to win the war, you know.

I wrote my verses, had the bliss of seeing them in print, and waited patiently for the added bliss of a cheque in payment. . . . I didn’t know much, did I? But imagine how I felt, imagine how my spirit soared when I received instead a suggestion that perhaps I might send an occasional sketch of farm life and conditions, since farms were so tremendously important to the nation!

It was the beginning of a series of delights. I had enjoyed many phases of farm life—now I had a chance to pass them on. I determined to give only the wholesome pictures, the happy hours, the gentle kindnesses of rural life. So often I had been moved to futile rage over the way sordidness and ignorance had been played up in stories of farm life, that I deliberately

sought for evidences of other characteristics. Perhaps that explains some of my pleasure in the work—I was seeking beauty; and, of course, I found it.

The only other law I laid down was just that I wouldn't work on Sundays. That would have spoiled it for my mother, so I kept my Sundays clear.

What a simple, easy work it was! Just opening the door for a glimpse of cows pasturing pleasantly on a green hill; children laughing in the orchard; threshing machine coming down the lane; lonesome little English home boy playing his mouth organ softly in the dusk; old white Jakie, the goat, cornered by the geese; Christmas on the old farm; life, death, partings and meetings, furrows and young clover; stubble and Indian Summer——.

You've heard perhaps about the depression? I never even noticed it when it came. I had been in the grip of my own private depression for some time.

It began with my mother's death—the gallant comrade who had always been able to twinkle, to whistle my courage up, to understand and sympathize without need of words—ah, but she turned back on the very brink of the river to leave me one last message from her beautiful eyes, when she could no longer speak. "Have courage! Everything will be all right!"

I needed that in the days that followed. When my health went, in such a way that I knew whatever time remained to me would only be a losing struggle: When suddenly a line of work I had greatly prized was taken from me without warning or explanation: When I realized finally in sickness of mind and body, that we would have to give up the farm—I needed courage and faith, then, and the touch of the vanished hand.

People occasionally wrote or said to me—"We miss the humor that used to show in your work." "Where are the gay, whimsical touches?" I wonder!

Dogged—that's the word for whatever I did in those days. But presently I managed to get on top of things again and find that even a twisted grin is better than no grin at all. Doors opened here and there, and little opportunities beckoned. Suddenly life was no longer bleak—it was crowded, absorbing, full of stories demanding to be written.

I've always felt the closing of a story to be the best part. I like it to be triumphant, happy, natural.

So with my own story. It will soon be time to write "Finis" to the last chapter, and close the book with a happy sigh.

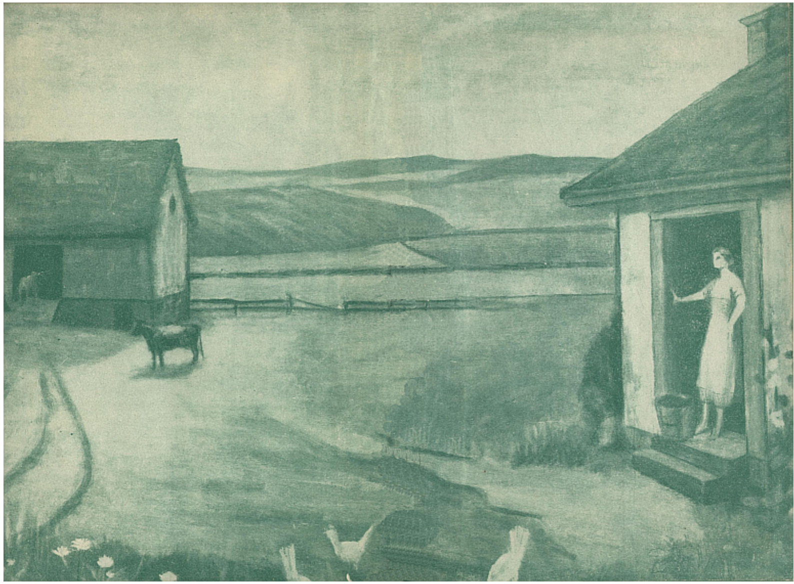
Tired now. Going home presently and leaving it all. Too near my work to be able to measure it. Have I neglected my home and children for the sake of my typewriter? I think I have loved them better because of it.

But, oh, the failures I've blundered into! And yet what kindness everywhere! Let nobody say the world is going to the dogs—the world is full of gentle kindnesses, lovingly given. There is a neighbor in the kitchen now, washing the dishes. Another sat with me yesterday, mending Jack's sweater while she sat. Somebody came in and mowed the lawn; somebody picked the pears for us. Little girls come in to show me their dolls. Boys come in and tell me about their fights and their ambitions, their own boyish affairs.

To be sure there are big things I shouldered, and must now leave, but someone else will carry them. Meantime there are little hands to bring me a cup of water; big hands to grip when pain snatches at me, and a window that looks out on tree and sky.

In spite of pain and weakness and acceptance of the inevitable. I'm more truly happy than I've been for years. Happy away down deep. So what better place could there be to write it? None better, surely.

Finis.



TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled 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.

Table of Contents has been added for the convenience of the reader.

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The illustration at the end of the book was reconstructed from images on facing pages and parts of it, adjacent to the binding, may be missing.

[The end of *The Cattle in the Stall*, by Nina Moore Jamieson.]