

Prissie's Venture.

(Continued from last month).

After watching for awhile the crowd out to do their Saturday night shopping, Prissie returned to her room and in a short time was in a sound sleep.

The next evening the church bells reminded her that she ought to go to church if she wanted to begin a night in her new life. She looked out of her window and from every point saw people streaming, coming and going in all directions, and remembering she had heard it remarked that Winnipeg's population was a church-going one, and that every Sunday evening the majority was to be found in one or other of the many places of worship, she started off and soon found herself in one, and settled in a seat in the gallery where she could see everything. What struck her most was the comparative youth of the congregation, very few old people, more middle aged people and a great many young men.

Prissie thought of the church in the little country town at home where pew after pew was occupied by grey haired heads of families, their joints stiffened and their faces wrinkled by the hard road they had hewed for themselves through the forests of Ontario, and whose fire-side circles had in many cases been broken to help form the pioneers of the Prairie Province, and said to herself "There is, there must be a glorious future in store for this new country with its wealth of young ardent lives filled with hope and golden dreams of the future." Service began and Prissie listened while the pastor prayed for "the stranger within our gates," and besought that "the many souls deprived of the safeguards of home might be strengthened in the right way," and she realised that there were battles to be fought and hard places to go through, no matter where one's lot was cast.

The next day Prissie said to herself that the first thing to be done was to secure a boarding-house, so getting a few addresses from the morning paper, as soon as breakfast was over she sallied forth. Oh, the weary work she had. One place was too big and noisy, another too small, here she could get board but no room, and there a room but must get her meals outside. The distinguishing feature of another place was six small children and a strong smell of onions, and it was not overly clean to boot, at the next place every room was arranged with mathematical precision and at the door a mathematically arranged landlady (all angles), requested her in an acidulated voice to "wipe her feet on the mat" and wanted so much money for her room that Prissie felt it was beyond her purse. All morning she tramped around, and after dinner began again. It seemed to her that all the places she did not like were ready to have her, and all the places she cared to go to had been filled by some one before her or she was told that gentlemen boarders were preferred. The latter was the case so often that at last she asked one old lady who had quite taken her fancy, and who had replied in that way, "Why do you prefer gentlemen to occupy your rooms? Do you think because I am a girl that I am more likely to run off with your spoons, to ruin your furniture, to corrupt your servants

or to disgrace your house in any way than if I was a young man? I have always been under the impression that the reverse was the case." The old lady looked quietly at her for a moment, and replied with a smile: "My dear, the only girl boarder I ever had was always around the house, and would even hunt me up in the kitchen if she got tired of her own company; had a gentleman friend who came to see her at least three nights a week, when they monopolised the parlor, and she was always musing around in her bedroom washing handkerchiefs, lace, etc. that she would forget to send to the laundry with the rest of her washing, and then borrowing my flat irons to do them up, so I came to the conclusion I would rent my two rooms to gentlemen only." Prissie wished with all her heart she could stay, as it was to her the most homelike place she had come to, so she began to explain that she hoped after awhile to be too busy to gossip, that she would endeavour not to offend in the matter of washing, and as for the lover, here she smiled and said: "I will be perfectly satisfied that my stay with you will not soon be cut short if you will agree to take me until you see symptoms, of something of the sort." The old lady smiled and wavered. Prissie told where she came from and what she wanted to do, with such earnestness that at last it melted her heart and arrangements were made and Prissie went back to the hotel tired, but victorious. Next evening saw her installed in her little box of a room, not much space to spare but everything neat and clean, and even pretty with snowy curtains at the window. The next morning she arose, went down to breakfast and was introduced to her fellow boarder Mr. Currie by name, and then about nine o'clock after having again scanned the advertising columns of the morning paper, started out to seek her fortune. The first place of business she went to was a dry goods store, where a clerk for the glove counter was wanted. The first question "Have you had any experience?" debarred her from that place. The next was a stationery store, where the wages were so small and the proprietor so pompous, that Prissie thought to herself that he would soon be asking his employees for money for letting them have the honor of working for him, instead of paying them for their services. Then she found herself in a large office full of clerks, she felt a great desire to become one of such a busy and apparently flourishing establishment, but her inability to write shorthand was the barrier this time. The last address she had on her list took her to a smart office on the first flat of a large building on Main street. She went in the door and at once started back in amazement. The office was full, sitting, standing, propping themselves up against the wall there, all sorts and sizes of girls, pretty and plain, ladylike and vulgar, well dressed and shabby, and seated at his desk, leaning back in his chair, talking to a red checked girl with a quid of gum in her mouth, sat the manager, very suave, rather handsome, a trifle amused, and from time to time casting a glance around the room with the air of an eastern Prince in his harem. Prissie counted the girls, made them ten and could see another coming and deciding there was not much chance for her, stopped out and went home to lunch,

tired in body and mind. There is no need to tell of the days following of which this was a sample. When every day she went out and every night returned no nearer, apparently, to the desired end. Weeks passed and one day she came back in the afternoon and sat down in her room and began to wonder if after all she had made a mistake, and if she had better go home and acknowledge that her venture had failed. Home—she said the word over softly to herself and it conjured up happy carefree days, dear familiar faces, her father's grave, why she could hear the meadow lark whistling and the bees humming around their hives in the old garden, could smell the clover fields and see the trees in her favorite nook bending their tops to the caresses of the wind. How she wished she was there. It was a little cove sheltered by giant beeches, one particular tree grew out so far and so low over the water that many a time she had clambered out with the book and sat there sending leaves floating on the current, or silently watching the minnows darting in and out. There grew brown rushes and great white spotless water lilies, whose golden hearts glowed and gleamed in the summer sun, and sadly she wondered how often the flowers would bud and grow into beauty and fall, how many summer days that sunny brook would dimple and splash over its pebbly bed, how many times the birds would build their nests, rear their broods and fly southward before she might be there again, and came to herself with a start to realize that the tears were chasing one another down her cheeks, that her head ached and her heart felt heavy, that in short she was homo-sick. Then she cried and felt better after the manner of womankind, bathed her face and sat down to scold herself. She thought: "Now Prissie Strong, what is the matter with you? You expected difficulties, you have had your expectations realized. You did not hope to find a situation waiting for you around the first corner you turned and you have not yet turned the corner to it, you have a nice boarding house, you like the place, you have made a few friends, you mean to succeed and what are you crying about?" and setting her lips firmly as was her habit, she went down to tea. Mr. Currie was at the table. He looked at her as she came in and noted with a sympathetic eye the tired face, the slightly reddened eyelids and the fixed lips. He was a quiet young man but a keen observer, and although he had not spoken very many words to her he felt interested in the result of her quest for employment, which the landlady had told him of. He saw that this evening she was a little discouraged, and wondered if he could help her any. At last he said with a sigh: "I have to go back to the office to-night. We are very busy. I think the old man will have to get a copyist." A light leaped into Prissie's face as she asked quietly: "Where is your office?" He told her, and you may be sure the next morning found her in the manager's room waiting to speak with him. In a few words she stated her business. He was a little abrupt old man, who looked at her with his sharp grey eyes and then said: "Hump, so I want a copyist, do I. Well supposing I do, what makes you think you'll suit? All girls' brains are made for, so far as I can see, is to think about