

as at the thought of having her friend settled close to her. They soon came in sight of the Ryan place and Tom took the baby from his wife, while Bert helped her, and then Carrie, to get out of the wagon. Bob Ryan came out to help Tom with the horses and the other three went on to the house. There were already some half dozen girls and boys from the neighboring farms, which, with their own family, Peggy and her cousin Barney, and the Wests and Carries, almost filled the kitchen. The only other room, which opened out of it and was usually used as a bedroom, was cleared out ready for dancing, the beds being put out of the way in the low parlor which ran over the two rooms. Mrs. Ryan and Peggy were laying the supper in the inner room upon a table made out of two doors, which had been put together across some boxes and covered with a tablecloth for the occasion. The half dozen chairs which they had were supplemented by three or four stools and a plank supported by two of the stools. There was plenty of fun and laughter going on and Emmie noticed that Barney was running about and making himself generally useful, bringing various things which Peggy required. There was a tableful of good things, among which a great piece of roast pork at one end of the table and a boiled ham at the other occupied prominent places; pies of various kinds, plates of bread and butter and cake occupied every available place, and there was only just room for the great bowl of potatoes that Barney brought in, when all but himself and Peggy were seated. Peggy was busy filling out and handing round the cups of tea, and in a few minutes all the first quarter of an hour not much was said except an occasional request for more tea, or something else, that was required, but as the heavier tables were disposed of,

while Carry, who had got the baby to sleep, had found time, first to wonder and then to feel vexed, at his continued absence, so that when he came up to them she answered him very coldly and quietly when he spoke to them. This vexed him in return, and when, after an interval of half an hour, Miss Peggy found her way round to Mrs. West's side, he was quite as ready as she to rattle and talk, while Carrie sat by scarcely speaking to anyone. The dancing began again and continued till nearly four o'clock, when Bert went outside for a breath of fresh air. Barney had been moodily watching Peggy for some time. She had been dancing more than once with Bert, and now, when he had gone out, Barney followed her into the kitchen.

"Peggy, me darlint," he cried, as he caught hold of her hand, "you are not going to throw me over for that spalpeen; you shall not."

"Indeed, this, it's meself that is not going to be ordered by you, Barney Kennedy," said she, snatching her hand from him with a toss of her pretty head.

"Ah! Peggy avick, it's me heart's blood you're treading under yer feet," said he, earnestly; but Peggy only tossed her head again and went back into the room to her sister.

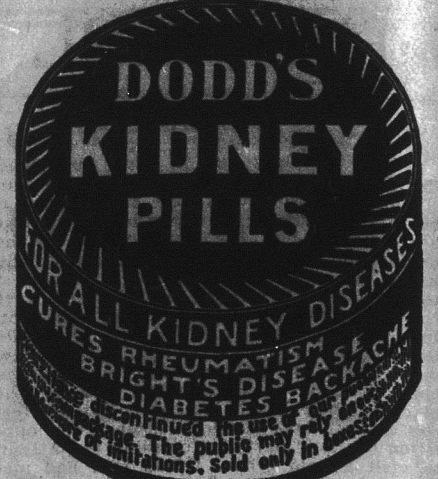
He stood there a minute, looking silently after her, and then he strode out through the open door into the fresh air. The moon was just setting, and in the shadow of the barn stood Bert West, enjoying the cool morning air after the heated rooms, and planning how to make his peace with Carrie on the morrow. Suddenly he heard a step behind him, something came down upon his head with a crash and a shower of sparks seem-

ing that Peggy's box was packed ready for him to drive her into Somerton in the morning in time for the train to the junction, where she would change for the town in Manitoba where her father lived.

It was some days before Bert felt quite himself again and two or three weeks before the cut healed up on his head. By that time he and Carrie had come to an understanding and he had got his answer and arranged about the land, and when he parted from them it was under a promise to return early in the spring, when they would be married.

CHAPTER III.

The time went on pretty quietly at the Wests after the thrilling events of the party. Mrs. West was looking well and strong again, and was busy initiating Carrie into all the mysteries of churning, baking, etc., in which Carrie proved herself an apt scholar. Household work and sewing she had all her life been used to at home, but



proved to be from Peggy to her sister, telling her how Barney, who had never been

RESIDENCE OF ALFRED WILLERTON, NEAR NEEPAWA.

conversation became general over the cake and biscuits, and lots of jokes were cracked at one and then another of the guest's expense. Peggy and Barney had been kept too busy handing things round to have their own supper and had to have theirs after in the kitchen, while the boys were clearing the room of the tables; and that, of course, brought on more jokes about them being like young married folks, having their first meal in their own house, at which Peggy blushed fiery red and then looked vexed; while Barney, who seemed to take it all in good part, tried hard to get hold of her hand under the table. Then Mrs. Ryan and two of the other married women came into the kitchen to wash up the dishes and hurried the two out into the other room, where Tom West was already playing a waltz on his mouth organ. One of the other boys had brought a melodeon, so there was no lack of music. Carrie and Bert were already dancing and of course Barney and Peggy followed their example, and all who could dance were soon whirling round the room. After a few dances somebody proposed some games and the fun went on until ten o'clock, when lemonade and cakes were handed round and everybody had a rest. One or two couples went out into the moonlight, and their example was followed by Carrie and Bert, who were soon joined, however, by Peggy, who had succeeded in giving Barney the slip. Totally ignoring the adage that "two are company while three are not," she stood there chattering to Bert, and now and then addressing a remark to Carrie, until the latter, seeing Emmie at the window, went in to release her of the baby for a while. Then Peggy, seeing Barney making towards the door out of the kitchen, in search of her, proposed to Bert to go and see how pretty the little stream that ran near the barn looked in the moonlight. Of course, Bert did not like to say no, though he was longing to get rid of Peggy's chatter and follow Carrie into the house. So when Barney got to the door he was just in time to see them going round the corner of the barn. A heavy scowl disfigured his usually merry, good tempered face, and with a muttered curse, he turned back into the house. It must have been nearly half an hour after that Bert re-entered the kitchen, having left Peggy talking to her sister, Mrs. Ryan, who was coming out to lock for her. Mean-

ed to fly from his eyes. He fell and lay there motionless, as one that was dead. One moment Barney stood there, looking at him, then flinging down the heavy stick with which he had struck the blow he vanished into the shadow beyond the barn.

It was about half an hour after that one of the men, going out to the barn to harness up his team to go home, came upon the body of Bert West with the blood stained stick lying beside him. An alarm was quickly raised, and he was carried into the house and laid upon some blankets which Mrs. Ryan and Peggy, white and trembling, had brought down for him. Mrs. West was sobbing and Carrie's tears were running fast down her face. Tom West's eyes travelled round the room and remarked the absence of Barney. "This is some of your work," he cried, looking sternly at Peggy. "Where is Barney?" Everyone took up the cry; but, though search was made, Barney could not be found.

Meantime someone had opened Bert's vest and discovered that his heart still beat feebly. Restoratives were applied, and, after some time, he opened his eyes. "Lie still, me boy," said Bob Ryan, as Bert feebly tried to lift his head up. "Lie still, and Biddy, do ye wet his lips with the brandy again, while I try to stoph the bleeding," for the blood was beginning to flow afresh from an ugly cut on the back of his head. Bob succeeded in staunching it, and, after covering him up and making him comfortable, they left Mrs. West and Carrie to watch him while he slept. The party broke up at once, and all went home but the Wests, who stayed for breakfast, while Bert was sleeping off the effects of the blow.

"He'll be all right if he can sleep three or four hours, I think," said Bob. "It's lucky he did not strike any harder, and it's yerself that'll be going home to yer father bright and early the morn, me gurl," said he to Peggy. "I'll have no such deins in my house."

And he made his words good, too, for, after Bert had wakened, free from pain though weak from loss of blood, and he had seen him laid comfortably on some rugs at the bottom of the Wests' wagon, with his head on Carrie's lap, while Mrs. West sat with Tom on the seat, he turned back into the house and told his wife to

she had hitherto had no experience in farm work. However, she seemed to learn everything almost at once, having the inclination to do so being at least one-half of the battle. Then she and Emmie had to pay repeated visits to the town to procure several mysterious goods which had to be "made up" ready for the wedding. Tom also was very busy. He had to draw out several loads of timber and to assist Mr. Ryan, who was a very fair carpenter, to put up a house ready for his brother. Finally, on the third Monday in March, Bert West drove down from Somerton in his new wagon, with a load of furniture for the new house. A merry time was spent the

day after by Carrie and her friend arranging things, with occasional help from Bert, who was looking after them and his own horses and the two cows he had brought down with him; he was also looking after the chores in place of Tom, the latter having gone into town for provisions of different kinds in readiness for the wedding and certain mysterious parcels which he had to call for on behalf of Bert.

When night came on everything was in order, and Bert drove them back to Tom's place, where they found Tom himself, who had just returned and lit the fire in readiness for supper.

Thursday was fixed for the wedding day. They were all to go into Somerton, and Mrs. Ryan was coming over to get things ready at the Wests' for a great supper party, to which all those neighbors who had been at the dance were invited.

The day seemed to come almost too quickly for all the things which had to be done, and before six in the morning they were all off to town to the minister's house. In the meantime, Mrs. Ryan had got a great fire on in the stove, and pies and cakes of different kinds were in course of preparation. Her two boys were running in and out with wood for the stove and water for the kettle on the cooking stove. About three o'clock the company began to come and there was a merry crowd assembled, when somebody cried out "They are coming!" and a minute after the Wests' wagon drove up and Bert and Carrie got out. Of course all the girls and women got hold of Carrie and hurried her into the house, and between kisses and handshakings, she was almost breathless. Then came Mrs. West with the baby, which came in for a great share of the attention among the girls. As for Bert, he was getting it pretty strong, too, among the fellows outside, some shaking hands with him and wishing him joy, and some giving him hearty slaps on the back. Then they all sat down to supper, and everybody was ready to do full justice to the good things. After supper there was dancing till about ten o'clock, when some of them began to talk of going home. Just then Tom West suddenly remembered, and pulling a letter out of his pocket, handed it to Mrs. Ryan, saying, "I quite forgot, I brought you this from town." Mrs. Ryan tore it open, and, after reading it, handed it over to her husband, telling him to read it out to the company. It



MR. WILLERTON'S BARN.

seen since the night he struck Bert West, had turned up at their house to bid her family good-bye before he sailed for South Africa, where he was going with a friend to make a fresh start. He was under the impression that he had killed Bert and had kept out of the way expecting every day that there would be a warrant out for his arrest. He could not resist coming to see them before he went, however, and his relief may be imagined when he learned that the hasty blow given in his jealous passion had not resulted in anything worse than a day or two's pain and annoyance. When the time came for saying farewell the giddy, but warm-hearted, Peggy broke down, and, clinging to him, begged him not to go and leave her for ever. It turned out that Barney's friend had to undertake the voyage by himself, and Peggy had become Mrs. Kennedy the day before she wrote to her sister. They were going to live at her father's, as her only remaining sister had married some time before. Great was the interest with which the letter was listened to, and many the remarks passed upon the news it contained. Then Bert brought the wagon round to the door for Carrie, and, as soon as they had departed for her new home, the rest of the company dispersed, and the Wests were left in the quietude of their own home.

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