

CHAPTER I

Manitou — 1896

WHEN I WROTE THE LAST SENTENCE OF "CLEARING in the West" in 1935, I had every intention of continuing the story, as soon as we were settled in our new home at Lantern Lane, six miles from Victoria. But the new life, in this quiet neighborhood, with its delights of field and flower, its mellow climate, and the long season for sowing and reaping, its new trees and flowers, and the easy pace of living fascinated me, so instead of writing about the past, I wrote two books about this pleasant habitation of the blessed. I knew I had a story to tell of other days, a story of Canada and its march of progress, but the days were golden with sunshine and full of lark song, and the drone of bees. The lotus flower had cast its spell upon me, and I was sure that there would always be time to write. I was like the beauty parlor operator, at whose hands I once received a check-over, lasting two or three hours, during which time we discussed many problems of this world and the next. She had given me a fascinating picture of her matrimonial adventures, three all told, with another one pending, with interesting pictures of the many jobs she had held in between. When I was leaving she asked me if I would mind telling her how I made my living—if it was a fair question. I considered it was a fair question and told her I was a writer. She expressed an eager interest, and said she wished she had known, "for you know", she said wistfully, "that's