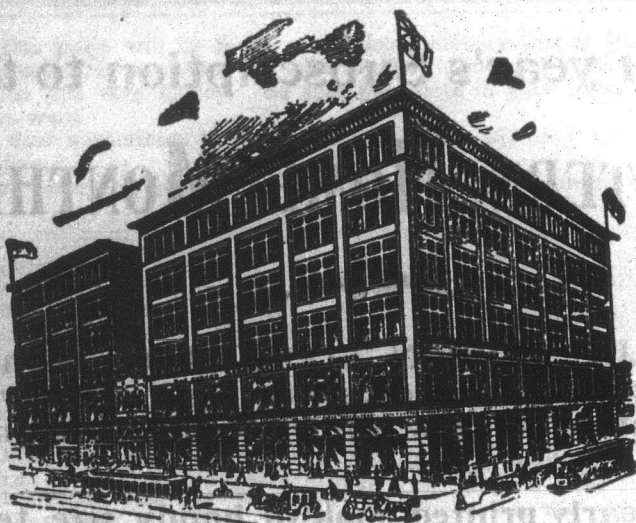


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THE ROBERT **SIMPSON** COMPANY LIMITED
TORONTO, CANADA



that we had had our daughter brought up in the country; there was no need, Melinda said, for her to know that she wasn't our very own.

"It's a wicked shame," the woman went on. "She's been dosed to keep her quiet. She's a screamer, as like as not, when she's awake."

I looked at Melinda—Melinda averted her eyes. A screamer! Mrs. Priddam also looked at Melinda inquisitively.

"Is it?" she said, with a simple directness that made Melinda's cheeks flame.

"I—I haven't seen much of her lately," she faltered. "She's been away in the country—for her health."

Mrs. Priddam sniffed. She evidently didn't think much of Melinda, and I was rather sorry for Elaine when I saw the gentle plan the nurse adopted to arouse that slumbering babe.

She shook it energetically first; then laid it on its back and slapped its poor little feet with a hand the size of a small shoulder of mutton; and at last, seeing that all these simple methods failed, she turned to Melinda and asked for strong coffee.

"Coffee?" cried my wife in horror. "Surely a little new milk—?"

"Milk!" echoed Mrs. Priddam, contemptuously. "This child won't want feeding for hours and hours. It's got to be waked up first."

The coffee, however, was no good when it did come. The orphan flatly refused to swallow; so in despair the nurse dressed it in outdoor things, and we went down to our cottage in Sussex.

It was one o'clock in the morning when the orphan awoke, and the room in which it slept with Mrs. Priddam was divided from ours by a lath-and-plaster partition merely, so we heard its voice at once. It howled all night; and although Melinda insisted on going in to see what it was like when its eyes were open—as if it had been a puppy or a kitten—I noticed that she didn't stay and offer to comfort it.



CHIEF SIENOTIA AND SON, CHIEF OF A TRIBE OF INDIANS LOCATED 10 MILES NORTH OF LONDON

I believe it was quiet for a little while after the nurse had taken the trouble to get up and give it a good meal of Somebody's Food for infants and invalids—she said it was,—and in the morning it was quite cheerful and jolly. I was not. After being kept awake half the night I was in no mood to appreciate any condescension of the wretched infant at breakfast-time. Melinda, of course, was in raptures, and she made a perfect fool of herself over the thing's ridiculous pink toes. I am bound to confess that the change of garments had worked wonders. It looked quite an aristocratic personage in its white fluffy frocks and frills, and Melinda gushed and talked unintelligible gibberish to it, in spite of Mrs. Priddam's critical and disapproving eye.

I went for a walk in the lowest possible spirits, wondering how long this state of things would last, and fearing that our peaceful, irresponsible life had come to a sudden and most disastrous end. Was it not possible even yet, I asked myself, to bribe the real owner to come back and insist upon its instantaneous restoration to her loving and repentant arms?

"It's too late," I muttered gloomily. "She will sail on Monday with her husband to some region unknown. I wonder if he too is leaving England in a hurry. The orphan is a fixture. She has come to stay."

Never in my life have I met a living creature with such lungs, and after two more sleepless nights my nerves were worn to fiddlestrings. Melinda didn't mind it so much—at least she said she didn't—but I think she must have been lying. Mrs. Priddam stood it all unmoved—I suppose she was accustomed to screamers—and on Monday evening I shocked her very much by saying that I didn't wonder at the sleeping draught, and only wished it had been a little stronger.

On Tuesday I took Melinda to Hastings for the day, and we dozed on the beach for several hours, to make up a