

## Guardian Pro Tem

Written for The Western Home Monthly By Gertrude E. Forth

**O**f course, you must go," said Madge, with an emphatic nod of her daintily-poised head as her sister re-read the one brief sentence on the ominous slip of yellow paper.

"Aunt Mary very ill. Come at once."

"If Jack were not off on that hunting trip," objected Mrs. Masson, "— and the twins with all their sweet lovable ways are such a handful to manage."

"Oh, they're perfect dears and we shall get along beautifully," returned Madge confidently, for already the plump prettiness of the six-year-old twins had completely won her heart.

Mrs. Masson with an immaculate Bobby and Betty, comfortably ensconced in the back cushions of the big car met her at the depot that afternoon, and as she felt the embrace of pink dimpled arms around her neck she mentally voted her little nephew and niece the prettiest, most adorable morsels of humanity in the whole world.

"Why I love them half to death already," she continued as Mrs. Masson still hesitated.

"We're going to have a perfectly splendid time, I brought my brushes and oils along so we can plan delightful little excursions to the woods."

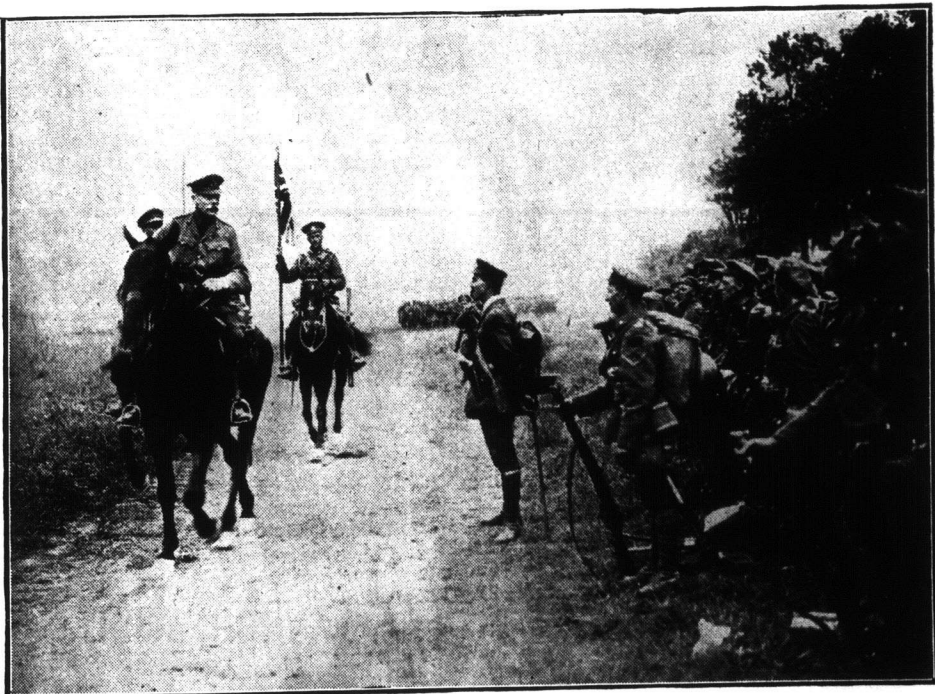
"But the twins need such constant

agricultural ambitions. She only knew that it was "some place" in the country, which to her spelled isolation, isolation from everything that meant life, gay sparkling life. She would never forget the hurt look in his eyes and as his tall form swung slowly down the street she half regretted her wilfulness but pride kept her stubbornly silent; and now she had run away from operas and dances for two whole weeks. It was almost too good to be true.

"Oh, Auntie Madge, look at those nice, white flowers, I want some," piped Bobby from the depths of the back cushions, and as Madge looked across the flower-decked woodland her own beauty-loving soul was charmed by the wealth of bloom that met her gaze, and she was quite as enthusiastic as her young nephew to gather the red and white trilliums that reared their gay heads here and there. Had she after all painted the country in false colors to suit her own selfish ideas?

Almost unconsciously she acted on Bobby's proposal to gather the "nice white flowers," and it was not until the early dusk of evening settled down upon the landscape that they started homeward laden with various trophies of the woods.

"We've had the best time," reflected Betty happily as she compared her huge bunch of trilliums with Bobby's equally generous one.



Marshal Sir Douglas Haig is here seen congratulating the victorious Canadian troops on the Western front, on their splendid work in smashing through the German lines.

supervision," demurred the devoted mother.

"They are to be reared according to a carefully chosen set of hygienic rules which you will find in a grey book on the chiffonier."

"It's sweet of you to undertake the management of everything, Madge," she added, beginning to pack her suitcase.

An hour later she was kissing two rosy faces good-bye, and giving a few parting injunctions to her pretty young sister.

"See that the malted milk is exactly the temperature the book states, and don't let Bobby eat orange pulp, just juice. If they show any symptoms of illness send for the doctor immediately," and with "use the car all you like" and a wave of farewell she was gone.

As Madge steered the big "seven-passenger" down the homeward road she began to think for the first time that perhaps after all she had assumed a tremendous responsibility, but a glance at the two little figures sitting demurely in the back seat promptly dispelled such an idea as preposterous.

Why, they looked perfectly angelic in their white summery suits and they were meekly obedient to her slightest wish.

She was glad at the prospect of two weeks in the quiet, green country. It would give her time to think. Perhaps she had been too hasty in declaring that she would never bury herself alive in some out-of-the-way nook, and that she decidedly preferred to remain in the city and devote her life to art.

It had all ended so abruptly in one foolish quarrel. She had not even inquired the particular location of Harry's

"Please tell us a fairy story," begged the twins when precisely at eight o'clock they were tucked in their little white beds, but before the gallant young prince had rescued the beautiful princess from a horrible fate, two pairs of eyes were closed and two curly heads lay still upon the pillow.

Madge had had no opportunity to consult the grey book, the doctrines of which she was to follow religiously with unquestioning obedience. To her dismay she found that bedtime stories were in high disfavor. It even hinted at their disastrous effect on the nerves in after life.

"So there's blunder number one," said Madge. "I wonder what theory it advances next."

"The pulp of an orange is exceedingly indigestible, children should be given only the juice," she read, accordingly the next morning when two sweet freshly-clad twins sat down to a carefully prepared breakfast they were gently cautioned to take only the juice of their orange, but Bobby, with the perversity of childhood, much preferred the pulp, and his efforts to evade his aunt's pretty brown eyes were fairly successful.

"Let's play Noah's ark," he suggested to Betty, who was always his admiring follower.

Madge consulted her books of directions and learned that the hours between nine and eleven were to be set apart for recreation. So she promptly despatched them to the upstairs playroom to enjoy life as only children can.

"How could Mrs. Stanton misjudge them so in declaring them the most mischievous young imps in the neighborhood!" exclaimed Madge, indignantly.

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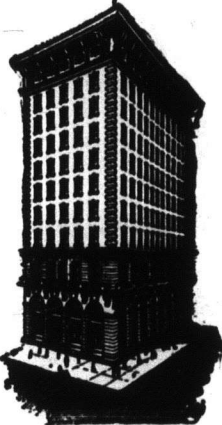
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