

One Day.

Written for THE COLONIST.

How some lays of our lives stand out with a startling distinctness as we look backwards, days not always eventful but which are milestones on the journey of life, from which we mark the years that have gone; our first day at school, the day we won the place of honor in our class, the day we met some friend whose coming colored our lives, the day we went nutting when Will fell from the tree and broke his arm, days of mourning, days of rejoicing, we can all look backward and pick them out. But no day in one's life is remembered better than the one on which we left the old home and went out into the world with pleasant dreams of gold and fame to be gained mingled with regrets for the life we were leaving behind.

How well I remember the day when I left the old homestead, and how, as I hung over the verandah railing in the gray light of the early June morning, I wondered when and under what circumstances I would see it again. The birds were giving sleepy little chirps in the trees preparatory to their morning hymn of praise, the dewy air was heavy with the scent of new mown hay lying cut in the field below the house, the June roses, the tall lillies looking ghostly in the early morning light, the sweet old fashioned garden with its border of mignonette, its great bunches of pansies and Sweet William, the sweet peas rearing their dainty heads under my very nose as they clambered up to look over the railing, and the tinkle, tinkle of the cow-bell in the distant meadow over the hill, all brought to my mind more forcibly than ever before how much I would miss the old home life in the new western country to which I was soon to be on my way. My time for regrets was short, however, the train left in an hour, so after gathering a last bouquet I turned indoors and soon the last strap was fastened, everything was ready and all that remained was to say good-bye. As we left the house and walked down the grassy lane shaded by two rows of splendid maples, the old dog came trotting after us, and when we sent him back, whined and howled as if he knew there would be one less in the party when it returned.

At the little country station everything was musty and close, the station master was invisible, the baggage man could not be found, and when he did turn up, seemed only half awake. The only thing that was astir and seemed to know its business was the telegraph instrument, which ticked away in its little den of an office as importantly as it could have done in a large city station. Soon with a rattle the hotel busses and the only cab the town boasted of began to rush through the gateway and disgorge their loads of passengers and luggage, the truckmen began to dump trunks and boxes with the utter disregard for their safety peculiar to their class, and in a few moments I had said "good bye," had received the last handclasp and the last injunction to take care of myself, and settled in my seat with my luggage, "All aboard" was shouted, the engine bell rang out and we were fairly on our way.

I had firmly made up my mind when preparing for the journey that I would have no hand

baggage, and I would have kept my resolution if my friends had allowed me to, but one had brought a bag of fruit, another a couple of books, I had a hand bag and a parasol and at the last moment I found thrust into my hand a tall fushia in a pot which I had been indiscreet enough to admire in a friend's house a few days before. I appreciated the love which prompted the gift, but I decided on the spot that if I had to carry that pot and its tall occupant around with me for three days I would be heartily tired of it. However, I could congratulate myself that I had been able with firmness to refuse the huge feather pillow that one old lady had insisted I should take with me as likely to be useful both on the journey and after I arrived.

I glanced at the books I had, discovered one was "Lady Audley's Secret," the other "Her Marriage Vow" and deciding that I could not relish anything about secrets or vows in my present state of mind, directed my attention to my fellow passengers. First and second-class tickets were all in one car so it was pretty well occupied. The conductor made his appearance and called "Tickets," causing the usual scramble, and I was particularly struck with the distressed look of an old lady about four seats from me whom I had watched a short time previously putting her ticket elaborately away with the serene unconsciousness that she would require it again so soon. Then the conductor said "Your ticket, madam," and down dived her hand to find her pocket. Round and round her ample skirts she chased that refractory pocket and at last when the patience of the conductor was nearly exhausted, out came her handkerchief and after untying two or three knots she unrolled carefully a brown leather pocket book and triumphantly produced the necessary ticket which was duly punched and handed back to her.

On rattled the train past country villages just stirring into activity, passed fields of waving grain, passed stretches of stoney farms with flocks of sheep, and cows slowly wending their way to the barn yard, at one time a pine forest scorched and blackened with the fire last fall, the giant branches, bare and unsightly waved and tossed despairingly as if vainly trying to recall their past beauty and freshness, and now a glimpse of a cool green shady woods, and at intervals glades of velvet-like grass, magnificent trees, a little brook running past laughing and dimpling in the sunlight, a barefoot boy with a gourd twice as long as himself behind some cows. He threw up his tattered hat, balanced on one dirty brown foot and cheered as we hurried on. The train stopped at a station in the heart of a small town at nine o'clock for breakfast. As I did not wish any I sat still and amused myself watching the town folk as they passed, the school children with their bags of books, and the group of idle boys playing "top scotch" on the sidewalk. A few minutes before we started a farmer's wagon drove up with a family and a big box, little box, handbox and bundle which after a deal of worry and work they got on the train and settled themselves in the seats across from me. I learned in the course of the morning that they were on their way to a farm in Manitoba, that the eldest boy had been there and taken

up a half section and was now taking his mother, sisters and brother out, the father being dead. They had driven a long way to the station and about eleven o'clock the pangs of hunger evidently made themselves felt for from under the seat came a huge lunch basket. Shades of the hungry! I wish you could have seen that lunch, cold boiled eggs by the dozen, a whole ham, roasted chickens, loaves of sweet home made bread and pots of golden butter, bottles of cold tea, bottles of milk, sandwiches, cake, even some baked beans did that thrifty housewife produce and I heard the gentlemen behind me remark that "those folks must have thought there was a famine in the land or had laid in provisions to stand a siege."

The old lady of the ticket episode had all this time been sitting alternately dozing and gazing at the landscape, but now she bethought herself it was time to take refreshment and getting a black handbag into her lap proceeded to open it, easier said than done, the catch was too much for her and she was about to give up in despair when the brakeman passed through the car calling a station. She cried in her sweet old voice as he passed "Mr. Conductor" but he did not hear and passed to the end of the car and then turned and went back. Just as he was passing her seat my old lady held out a hand covered with a wrinkled black cotton glove and laid firm hold of his coat tails, which brought him up short. She remarked she had an orange in her bag which she wanted to eat and he smilingly opened her bag. In the seat in front of her sat a tired looking mother with a cross baby in her arms and a restless boy with a dirty face and a great faculty for asking questions. The old lady presently began to talk over the back of the seat with her and soon I saw a transfer of the baby into arms no doubt accustomed to such burdens. In a few minutes the refractory mite that had been raising din enough to disturb the whole car subsided with a delighted gurgle as he demolished a portion of his new friend's orange. The mother relieved of the care of one baby directed her attention to the other and soon his smiling face peeped over the seat a little of the dirt washed off it and one grubby hand grasping a huge apple which it was evident he meditated making an attack upon. I thought to myself here one might learn a lesson of love. If we all would but determine, both in our short journeys from place to place and in our longer journey through life, that every day some one would be brighter and better for having met us and some heart grow lighter under its unseen burden because of meeting us how much misery might at least be alleviated.

We were now in Uncle Sam's domains and at the way stations many comers and goers made things more lively. At one flag station a woman with a sleeping child about three years old in her arms got on. There was nothing remarkable about her worthy of special mention except her jaws. Up and down they went with a big mouthful of gum. There was something savage in the vigor with which she assaulted it and I grow fascinated watching her and began to wonder when she would grow dissatisfied with the gum and begin on the sleeping child in her