POOR DOCUMENT

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THE CHOICE

By E. R. PUNSHON

CHAPTER XIV.

Nickolas' Oath.

But as for Annie, she did not weep or utter the least moan, though she now understood that there was no possible escape for her from this situation which a little before had seemed beyond human endurance, but which now she was forced to face and meet as best she could. Alone in the drawing room, she sat silently before the fire, gazing intently into its glowing depths as if she saw the future written there. When at last Misha came somewhat timidly back into the room, she even greeted him with a smile. But there was no answering smile in the boy's eyes, which remained serious and grave, and even a little frightened.

"Did he say what he would do?" he asked with anxiety, as he saw that Annie noticed him and was not angry at his presence.

"Oh, yes," said Annie; and she smiled again, looking into the glowing depths of the fire.

"He and you must be very careful in your actions," said Misha. "What have you decided on, then? The greatest care will be needed."

"But, you see, he is doing nothing at all," Annie told him, "so that will be all right."

Misha looked at her, puckering his brows and evidently a good deal puzzled.

"But he must do something," he said. "I mean, what are you and he going to do together? You understand?"

"I mean that, too," Annie answered. "He is going to do nothing—nothing."

Misha looked at her in silence for some time, while she went on intently, regarding the glowing recesses of the fire. Her expression was forlorn, but instead of the intense pallor she had shown before, her cheeks were now slightly flushed. Misha crossed himself.

"Eh! but that is dreadful," he said in a choked voice; "quite dreadful."

Annie nodded her head several times, as if agreeing with him, but she did not say anything.

"Well, by Heaven, he shall not," Misha cried out, suddenly. "No, that is not fair. How can he have such an idea? It is inconceivable. Lord! Lord! that is too bad altogether. It is not to be permitted. No; now he has done for himself, that is certain. I will tell Ivanovitch who he is, at once, and the old man will very soon polish him off."

The boy was walking up and down the room, his face contorted, his arms jerking, as he snapped out these angry and disconnected sentences in his native tongue. He had rather the appearance of a puppet controlled by wires which some one was pulling quickly and violently. Annie looked at him now and again with an air of pity, and when he had exhausted himself, he came to a standstill before her.

"Yes, I will tell old Ivan Ivanovitch all about it," he declared, "and then this fellow won't humbug you any more. That will teach him a lesson."

He nodded with a satisfied air; but Annie shook her head slightly and, putting out her hand took hold of his.

"No, no, Misha," she said; "don't you see that would never do? Don't you see that is just exactly what he wants?"

"Indeed, no, he doesn't," declared Misha, with an excited laugh. "It is the very last thing he thinks of. But it is going to happen, all the same.

"And make me my husband's murderer?" she asked.

"Eh? wha-at?" said Misha, taken by surprise. "What is that?"

"I have been thinking," she went on slowly; "and now I have found out, and I am sure he only wants to drive me on. Oh, how hard he is, how hard. Yes, yes; he would drive me on if he could, but he shall not—I will not. You must help me, Misha, help me to save him."

"I don't quite understand," said Misha slowly.

"But I do," declared Annie; "I understand just exactly what is in his mind—better than he does himself, I expect. He will not lift a finger to help me, because already he is feeling sorry underneath his bitterness, and he is feeling that he, too, has been very much to blame, and has done wrong. And he is saying to himself that I will do worse and worse things. Then he would hate all women for my sake, and all life, and even his art; and if he came to his end through me, he would just say, 'Well, I am not the first man a woman has betrayed to his death,' and he would almost be content then—because, you see, if all that happened, then he would no longer feel obliged to love me."

"As for me, I understand nothing of all this," said Misha, shaking his head.

"But I understand exactly," returned Annie, "because, you see, I love him, too."

"Well, well," said Misha, rubbing his head hard, "but what is to be done, then?"

"Oh, I shall take a leaf out of his book," Annie answered. "I shall do nothing."

"Ah, no," said Misha quickly, "that will not do; you have forgotten Nickolas, you see."

"No," said Annie, rather surprised, "I did not forget him at all; but he will make no difference. Things must just go on as they are. Indeed, I have no choice. I cannot abandon my father and Catherine, and if I did try to run away now, these Revolutionary people would at once revenge themselves on them. Above all, everything must be done to prevent any risk of Fred being identified."

"This is all very well," said Misha, beginning to grumble; "but it seems to me you think of your father, and you think of your husband, and you think of yourself, and of everyone—but of Nickolas you never think at all."

"Well," said Annie indignantly, "I can't help that. He has nothing to do with me at all."

"He loves you," said Misha; "anyone can see it."

"He doesn't," declared Annie, "and if he did, am I to blame for every stupid man who chooses to look like a sheep and imagine himself in love? Really, Misha, I didn't think you would be unkind to me."

"I don't want to be," said Misha; "but I don't want you to be unkind to Nickolas."

"Oh, no; I shall not be that," declared Annie eagerly. "I shall be as nice as possible. I shall tell him I like him very much indeed, and that the only thing I ask of him is that he should never see me again; and I shall say that when he is a great man in Russia, I shall often think of him, and that I hope he will think of me sometimes, too," and Annie sighed, and thought to herself that that would be rather nice.

But, somehow, Misha did not appear thoroughly satisfied.

"It seems to me he gets all the kicks," he observed; "besides, you do not know Nickolas. He is a terrible man. When he wants anything very badly, he always gets it. You will not find it so easy to satisfy him."

But Annie was supremely confident in her own feminine strength.

"I shall just tell him I can never care for him, and say how sorry I am," she answered. "That will be all."

"It will not be all," said Misha gloomily; "it will only be the very beginning. How unfortunate it is he should be so fond of you! I never thought he would ever care for any girl," and Misha's tone indicated considerable disappointment.

"You care for me, don't you?" asked Annie, a little piqued, but the next moment lost the feeling. "Don't look so serious," she said with light confidence. Misha's forebodings did not in the least affect her, for she had seen the big man tremble in every fibre of his huge body, once when she laid her finger lightly on his breast, and she had not forgotten either how he invariably obeyed the least word or even look she gave him. "You will see, it will be all right," she said.

"You don't know Nickolas," Misha persisted moodily. "If he gets to know the truth he will almost certainly kill Rounds, he will be so angry but I think even that would be better than letting him continue to pay court to you. One does not know what will happen then."

"You wouldn't betray me, Misha?" Annie asked doubtfully.

He looked at her so reproachfully that she was ashamed.

"Forgive me," she said hastily.

"I am only a boy," Misha said gravely, "but I have kept many secrets which, if I had told them, would have sent a great number of people to prison and to Siberia. I will keep yours, too, but I am afraid."

"Oh, you will see it will be all right," declared Annie confidently. "I shall manage very well."

She was indeed quite confident in her own power over Nickolas, and she was also determined that the secret of Fred's identity must be kept at all costs and risks. It was not only on account of the actual risk to his life, the reality of which she perhaps hardly appreciated, but because she felt that if through any fault or failure of hers his identity was known, he would at once, in his present state of mind, assume that she had betrayed him wilfully, and take from her the love she very well knew that in spite of all his efforts to extirpate it he still had towards her. She supposed, too, that Nickolas would be quite easily dismissed with a few words of gratitude and regret; just as, she remembered, a youth in Moscow—a young doctor trained in Berlin—had retired in confusion when she had gently refused his offer.

She took, therefore, the first opportunity to be alone with Nickolas, and he was radiant indeed when she asked him to show her some book he had mentioned to her.

"Yes, I have it in my room; I will get it at once," he said, starting off immediately.

"I will wait in the breakfast-room," she called after him, and her sense of power increased as she saw how this big man ran up the stairs like a schoolboy to do her will.

"I have only to tell him plainly and very kindly, poor fellow," she said to herself, "and it will be all right."

She awaited his return in the breakfast-room without any feeling of uneasiness. She felt a little sorry for Nickolas, but had no doubt he would soon get over it. She felt she liked him very much, and tried to think if there was any girl among her friends who would make him a good wife, but could think of none nice enough. At the same time she was quite determined to make him understand thoroughly how entirely hopeless was his suit. With her pity and sympathy for him there was, perhaps, also mingled a certain natural girlish satisfaction. Certainly Nickolas was a very distinguished, handsome looking man to receive an offer from. It is possible she was not altogether sorry that Fred knew of Nickolas' hopes.

"Oh, thank you so much!" she said when he brought her the book. "I am so much obliged, but there was something I wanted to say to you."

"Yes," he breathed softly and eagerly as she paused.

"It is about," she began, feeling now more embarrassment than she had anticipated, and wishing he would look another way. "It is about what you were saying to me when Misha came in this afternoon."

"Yes, it was too bad; how angry I was!" he said. "If it had not been for you perhaps I should have done something I should have been sorry for afterwards. And he is such a good boy and very reliable—more so than many men. I beg your own pardon, too, for showing my anger in your presence."

"Oh, I did not mean that," she said, raising her eyes and looking full at him. "I only wished to tell you that what you asked me—well, that it is quite impossible—quite impossible," she reapeated firmly.

To her surprise he smiled at her. Nothing could have surprised her more, and she was even a little annoyed.

"Utterly impossible!" she repeated, more firmly than before.

"You know," he said, "I never hoped to win you easily."

"What do you mean?" she said sharply. "I tell you it is impossible."

"Impossible,"—he waved the word away with his hand— "there is nothing impossible. Of course, one does not expect to pick up diamonds in the dust, or to find gold on the house-tops, but all the same diamonds and gold are to be obtained. You will refuse me twice, three times, perhaps, but in the end you will accept me."

He spoke so confidently that she became afraid. Her previous assurance entirely deserted her. She sat down upon a chair near and looked at him blankly, moistening her lips with the tip of her tongue.

"Do not be troubled," he said softly. "It may be long, it may be hard, but in the end I shall win you. I know it, though I know you and know myself. You have made me very humble these last days, Anna Paolovna. I used to be proud of myself; I used to say when I saw a crowd of men, 'Well, there you go. But which among you could do what I have done?' For I started at the very bottom, and it is the lowest steps are always the most difficult. Blindfolded, I had to learn to see; with my hands tied I had to win liberty; with chains on my feet I had to run as swiftly as any; men who thought of me as the dirt under their feet I had to show I was master. And I was proud, and proud of being proud; but you have taught me to be humble, Anna Paolovna. Yet even when I was proud I should never have had the presumption to imagine that I had only to put out my hand for you to fall into it like a ripe apple. No, no, I know better than that," he said, "and I will wait as long as you choose to make me."

"But what I have told you," she protested with dry lips, "is for always."

"But you will change," he answered with a smiling confidence that was very dreadful to her, "as surely as the spring flowers follow the snows of winter you shall change, Anna Paolovna." He flung out his great arms in a wide embrace she knew trembled to enclose her to hold her. "Sooner or later," he said, "you will come here to rest."

"Never!" she screamed at him, distracted. "Oh, I would die first!"

"You fear my love already," he said with a tender and a gentle look. "That is right—a maiden must fear her lover first. It is nature. How great is my love!" His ardent eyes devoured her like a flame, yet a flame of worship. "When you understand how much I love you, you will yield," he went on. "I do not know very much of women, but I know no woman can resist such a power and strength of love as is mine."

"I can—I will!" she murmured; but he went on unheedingly—it was as if she had but breathed a whisper against the rushing wind of heaven.

"How can you; it is not possible? It is the part of a woman to be loved. That is Nature, and Nature is God, and who can fight against God? God is with me, or He would not have given me such strength to love that has come to me and filled my heart so suddenly."

"Please be silent," she implored. "You do not know how terrible all this is to me."

"That is because it is so true," he answered with triumph.

"It is not," she declared positively. She wished to assert her old authority and right of command she had thought she had over him. "You must never say anything like this to me again," she declared. Remembering how once he had shaken, and trembled, and been abashed when she had touched him on the breast with her finger, she did it now, stretching out her hand. "Obey me, Nickolas Andrevitch," she said in Russian. "Obey me and leave me."

"I obey you to the death," he said with passionate earnestness, "except when you tell me to leave you, for then you tell me to be someone else, and not Nickolas Kamff at all."

"It is better to tell the truth," she said, still in Russian; "it will for ever be quite impossible for me to think of you."

"You think so now, but some day you will think otherwise," he replied with undiminished confidence. "Nothing can ever avail to turn me aside—not even in death; even in death I shall love you still. If indeed it had been God's will that I should not meet you until you have become married to someone else, then I should have known He had sent my love to me as a punishment and not as a blessing, but nothing else could or shall separate us, in the name of God," he said, and made the sign of the cross as if he swore it.

CHAPTER XV.

Tea in the Kitchen.

I... it was as well that downstairs Bassett and the cook were too interested in their own affairs to pay as much attention to the business of their employers as they would probably have done under normal circumstances. But even as it was they noticed and commented on the constant and marked attentions Nickolas was now paying to Annie, and indeed the relation in which this supposed wife and husband stood to each other was so obviously and strikingly artificial that the spreading of gossip abroad—which was the one thing old Ivan Ivanovitch, at least, dreaded above all others—would almost certainly have happened had not the old man taken pains to provide a plausible explanation.

"Give people some explanation," he used to say, "and they are satisfied, but, let them invent one for themselves and no story is too wild for them—sometimes they even hit on the truth."

He, therefore, let it be known by a judicious observation or two dropped in Bassett's hearing, by a letter left lying about as if forgotten, and by one or two other devices, that since their marriage Annie had begun to suspect that Nickolas had married her partly for her money, and was therefore punishing him by her present attitude of aloofness, while he for his part was trying hard to placate her indignation by his constant attention and offerings.

This was accepted in the kitchen as a satisfactory explanation, especially as Fred, for his own ends, gave it his support. Both the cook and Bassett sympathized very much with Nickolas, whom they agreed was a most pleasant-spoken gentleman, and very handsome, and, if a foreigner, scarcely to be distinguished from a real Englishman.

Bassett, who was putting on flesh rapidly as a result of the good living she was enjoying, used Nickolas' preseverance as an agreement to urge the cook to continue showing similar pertinacity.

"Like a block of ice she is to him," said Bassett, "and like a block of the same is he to you, but both of you keep it up and they are sure to melt in the end—simply can't help it," argued Bassett.

"All the same," grumbled cook, "the way he shuts himself up in that there pantry is distinctly trying to a loving soul."

"Why not have a cleaning day?" suggested Bassett with sudden inspiration.

"Lor', what a thing it is to have a head," said the cook admiringly; "the very thing, my dear."

A cleaning day they had accordingly, and Fred found his pantry choked with step-ladders and pails of hot water, while bits of soap lay about everywhere till even to put foot to the ground was a danger. And the number of times the oil-cloth appeared to require scrubbing, or the walls rubbing down, was really marvellous. He had to abandon the pantry altogether and go to sit in the kitchen instead.

But though so far their manoeuvre had proved brilliantly successful, cook did not find herself much further forward. For Fred remained apparently almost unconscious of her presence, and even when in the fits of high spirits that alternated with his usual sombre and saturnine watchfulness he joked and laughed with her or Bassett, it was only too obvious that he cared nothing who it was composed his audience.

"Beats me," said the cook despairingly to Bassett on one occasion after he had ignored several advances she had made to him, "clean beats me what I ever loved him for—but I was always like that, a loving and a tender heart having been, since childhood, my betty nore, as the French say!"

Bassett was somewhat staggered. By virtue of her position as house-parlourmaid, she laid down to a superior refinement and a knowledge of the world above that possessed by one the whole sphere of whose duties lay in the kitchen. This supremacy was valuable to her, too, as lending weight to her continued encouragement of the cook's hopes, and she now felt it challenged. She sniffed contemptuously.

"Of course," she observed, "manners are much more free now than in the past, as the judge said in the divorce court the other day, in the case of the gentleman who went into a young lady's room and threw brushes at her in bed. All the same, French expressions of that nature are hardly fit to be used between two ladies, in my opinion."

"Why, there's no harm in betty nore," said the cook, just a trifle alarmed; "it only means my little bit of bad luck, you know."

"I should prefer, if it's all the same to you, Mrs. Jones," said Bassett primly, not to discuss its exact meaning—me being an unmarried single lady am naturally more particular than a widow."

"I'm not ashamed of being a widow!" said the cook hotly, relieved at seeing a chance to turn the conversation, "when my first died——"

She paused in some confusion, and Bassett pounced on the word like a cat on a mouse.

"Your first!" she cried. "Have you been married twice then?"

The cook looked uncomfortable.

"Maybe I have and maybe I haven't," she said. "Don't you fret your head about my affairs."

"I wasn't," said Bassett with great amiability. "I was only wondering if Mr. Rounds knew."

"If you go and tell him," said the cook hotly, "I'll never speak to you again."

"It's a rum thing I've often noticed," Bassett continued unheedingly, "that a lady what's a widow has a big pull over us single, unmarried ladies; but a lady what's a double widow, so to speak, has got no earthly chance at all. I suppose the men are afraid being a widow has got to be a kind of a habit with her."

"If you are going to tell him," said the cook with the calm of desperation, "do it—don't sit there grinning like a Cheshire cat."

"Tell me all about it," Bassett suggested. "I never was the least bit curious, but I do like to know things about all my friends and acquaintances, I must confess."

"There ain't much to tell," said the cook reluctantly, "though I suppose it's the tender recollection of my second has brought me here. My first—that was Jones—was as good a man as ever stepped, my dear, except for the violence of his temper, and being so ready with his hand, and the way he had of always grumbling at everything, and one or two other points like that. After a merciful and blessed providence gathered him to its bosom with pewmania, him swearing till the very last minute, poor dear, I took to having lodgers, most of which was foreigners. Foreigners not being bad for lodgers, because you can always say that's the English way of doing things when they grumble, and them they don't understand about the change so well, neither."

"And did you marry one of them?" Bassett inquired, much interested.

"I did," admitted the cook; "but he would answer me back—lor', I thought sometimes his tongue was as long as my own. But what brought things to a head, so to say, was when he wanted cabbage soup. Did you ever hear of such a thing? I put my foot down pretty hard I can tell you—I said a respectable English lady had to draw the line somewhere and I drew it at cabbage soup."

"So I should think," said Bassett, with indignant sympathy; "wanted snails next, I suppose?"

"Well, he cleared off then," explained the cook, "leaving a letter he had drowned himself. Even that he done in a low underhand way in the sea or somewhere where the body couldn't be recovered, so that, though I identified two or three drowned corpses, the insurance company never would pay up on not a single one of them. What I says is—drown yourself if you wish, but do it like a man."

"Perhaps," suggested Bassett, "he did'nt do it at all, though. He might turn up still."

"Shouldn't care if he did," the cook observed; it's more than seven years ago, and seven years' absence counts as a divorce as everyone knows."

Bassett agreed to this, with a grave nod as convinced as the cook, and nothing could have persuaded either of them to the contrary, that after seven years' separation from her husband a woman was free to marry again.

"What sort of a foreigner was he?" she inquired.

"Same as these—that's why I came here," the cook answered. "It stirred my heart with tender thoughts of the past when I heard a Russian gent wanted a cook. Besides, I understood at first he was a bachelor, and you never know your luck, me having had one of their lot already, though unsatisfactory."

"Well, I do call that interesting, exactly like a novel," said Bassett enthusiastically. Then she asked casually: "What was you thinking of having for tea this evening?"

"Nothing extra," said the cook morosely. "Feed him on dry bread, and he wouldn't know the difference, seemingly."

"I was thinking," observed Bassett, speaking with closed eyes, "of stewed eels and mashed potatoes again. You must persevere."

"Too expensive," said the cook shortly; "not to mention the trouble."

Bassett shook her head with gentle reproach.

"Don't you expect to win and woo a loving husband without no trouble, or grudging a copper here and there," she remarked.

The cook only grunted, and Bassett smiled still more sweetly.

"Just fancy," she observed, "if Mr. Rounds had been listening at that there door and heard everything you said: or suppose my tongue was to slip, I should never forgive myself."

"Um," said the cook, looking doubtful, "Well, it might run to crumpets," she said reluctantly.

"Shall I toast 'em for you" asked Basset pleasantly. "There's nothing I like better nor crumpets for a second course after stewed eels."

"Stewed eels," said the cook angrily, "is nothing more or less than blackmail and bribery."

"Of course," said Bassett rising with dignity, "if you use language of that kind to me, I will consider myself free to take my own course in the true interests of all parties. And I remember being told once," she mused, "of how when a man finds one lady is not what he thought, he almost always turns to another lady for comfort. I trust I myself, should the need arise, would be able to administer balm to a broken heart."

The cook appeared to swallow something in her throat.

"Stewed eels it shall be," she said.

"I thought you would come to agree with me in time," exclaimed Bassett, beaming. "There's nothing melts a man's heart sooner than stewed eels—and I'm partial to 'em myself."

"So I supposed," said the cook shortly.

"But the stewed eels failed to melt Fred's heart, perhaps for the reason that he refused to taste them. Apparently, he was in one of his gloomy moods. He drank a good deal of tea, but refused all food, and sat in almost absolute silence, staring straight in front of him with eyes which seemed to see nothing. Bassett, as he did not want them, kindly volunteered to eat up his share of the eels and did so, while the cook looked on with thoughts too deep for words.

"I'm sorry your appetite is so bad, Mr. Rounds," Bassett remarked when she had finished, leaning back with a luxurious sigh; "but perhaps you don't care for stewed eels?"

"No, I don't," said Fred shortly. "I told you that some time ago, I think."

"Ah, I must have forgotten." said Bassett, while the cook gurgled in her throat in her effort to repress the burning words rising to her lips. "But perhaps you prefer tripe?" Bassett continued. "It is tripe for tea tomorrow, Mrs. Jones, ma'am, is it not?"

"I suppose so," said the cook, trying hard to swallow her wrath in a drink of tea and nearly choking herself in the process.

The situation was becoming strained, but, fortunately, at that moment the door bell rang, and Fred rose to answer it; while Bassett, not caring to be alone with the cook just then, remembered something needing attention upstairs and went out with him.

It was old Ivanovitch who had rung; and Fred, having admitted him, was returning through the hall, when Misha stepped out of the shadow of the stairs and called to him softly.

"I want to speak to you—she is so unhappy," he said, nodding towards the drawing-room door. "It is very hard on her," he said again, as Fred only looked at him without answering.

"What do you mean?" Fred asked, watching this boy who gazed at him with such a grave and serious look in his eyes. "Who is 'she'?"

"You know," Misha answered quietly. "And I know who you are," he continued: "I think you are very hard and unfair," he went on, gathering courage as Fred did not reply. "I should not have supposed any man could have behaved as you have. You see, if she didn't love you, it would be nothing; but because she loves you you make her suffer. That is not the action of a man."

"Hold your tongue," said Fred roughly. "What do you know about it? Don't meddle with what doesn't concern you, or you may get yourself hurt, my boy."

"I am not meddling," said Misha; "only I think perhaps you don't quite understand. And I cannot bear to see her so unhappy. That is all."

(To be continued.)

GIRL WOKE SLEEPER

Dragged Horace Wade from Burning Bed.

(Boston Globe.)

That a 14-year-old girl can be a heroine was proven early yesterday afternoon by Elizabeth Shepard, who notwithstanding fire and smoke were pouring from his windows ran up to the room of Horace Wade on the third floor of the lodging house, 84 Cortes st. South End, and aroused him from sleep.

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According to inmates of the house, Wade has been accustomed to smoke after going to bed, and yesterday had fallen asleep before finishing a cigarette, which ignited the bedclothes. Although the bed coverings were well nigh destroyed, his mustache singed, and the flames were about taking hold of the woodwork the fire did not awaken him. A previous fire in his room is said to have originated in the same way.

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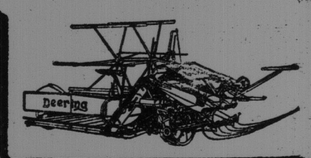

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PROPOSES A SUMMER SCHOOL FOR PREACHERS

Rev. Hunter Boyd Has an Interesting Plan to Enable Ministers to Make a Practical Study of Rural Conditions.

Eastern Canada has problems to solve that are as great, and as urgent, as those which confront the West. But they are different. The West has helped to create some of our perplexities, but no matter how they have originated, they have to be faced. There are not wanting those who have contracted the habit of blaming the West, or the United States for adverse conditions of every kind. There are farmers who continually find fault with the weather, but the weather is still with us, and it will be long ere either the West or the States are absorbed into the provinces by the sea. The average natural increase per 1,000 population in 1901, for the combined provinces by the sea, was almost up to the normal point for the entire Dominion, which is 12.70 per cent. but if we examine the figures for the past 20 years it will be found that the combined population in 1881 was about 871,000, for 1891 about 881,000, and for 1901, 894,000.

On the other hand, if we consider the increase for Canada, we find it is 11.14 per cent. and New Brunswick, 3.06; Nova Scotia, 2.04, and Prince Edward Island, minus 5.34. These figures merit careful inquiry, and, in the judgment of many, it would seem that the time has arrived when a careful attempt should be made to appraise the social and economic forces that are operating in the older provinces.

It is possible for even ministers to become fatalistic, through dwelling too much on these materialistic factors, and many will admit they are discouraged as they see signs of depopulation.

Some have fled to the West or to the South to escape paralysis, and some who once entertained hopes of becoming pastors of self-supporting charges have relinquished sanguine hopes. This spirit has not been confined to those who have labored long, but it has affected the choice of vocation or location on the part of youthful aspirants.

II.—THE CHEERFUL VIEW.

There are others who feel that obligation rests upon them to care for the old folk who have remained; and courageously tend the boys and girls they scarcely hope to retain for effective citizenship. They rejoice to think that thousands have passed on to other parts to work for the cause of God, under the same flag, or it may be another. These men are patriotic, but they are also humanitarian.

Another and increasing section of the cheerful ones are confident that the tide will turn. They believe that the wheat system alone will not produce genuine homesteads, they look for improved methods in every branch of industry in the East, and anticipate, ere long, that these provinces will claim a share of the home-seekers who pass through our portals. They are firmly convinced, also, that no branch of industry here has yet had its full opportunity, and they contend that the chief need of the farms in the provinces by the sea is better farming.

III.—MARITIME ADVANTAGES.

The alternation of hill and dale, the abundant water and wood, climatic conditions, and shipping facilities appeal strongly to thoughtful men, and they regret exceedingly that so many children have been early inoculated with "Western fever."

The accounts of distribution of seed grain this spring remind them that not all is gold that glitters, and instances of over-cropping here point to the inevitable effects that will be produced there unless mixed farming is adopted.

The proximity to ocean steamers, the increased cold storage facilities, and the special advantages for certain branches of husbandry are good assets amid the discouraging items of depleted farms, and a new hope is springing up in the East.

IV.—THE OUTLOOK OF THE CLERGY.

All these matters are of deep interest to the ministers of all denominations. There are some preachers who have been so deeply affected by the economic problems that they have become strong advocates for church union. But a desire to secure coalition in order to reduce expense is indicative rather of parochialism than of a broad catholicity. There would rarely be found either too many churches or too many ministers if our farms could be reduced in size, and better work accomplished upon them.

Cromwell is reported to have said, "Trust in God and keep your powder dry." The leader of today might well say, "Put soul into your soil," or "Spray as well as pray." A minister is performing his duty if he urges his people to select the best seed: to make judicious use of good feed, and trains the children under his care to recognize a weed and encourages them to ensure its extermination.

Ministers would find it to be a great advantage everyway if they help to create a strong sentiment in favor of the Fruit Marks act, and urge the extinction of the small yield cows.

Many church finance problems would be solved if the people used business methods all the week. There are chances lost every year, by families in all branches of the church, which do not reflect the credit of Christian character. Two hundred thousand dollars were lost this season by careless packing of apples in Nova Scotia. Is Prince Edward Island where it formerly stood in its reputation for horses? The cows of these provinces do not yield one-half what they should.

It might be a healthy tonic if the people of these provinces, who have been blaming climate and weather, and government and fiscal systems, and everything but poor management, would get information on the progress in many branches of industry in Quebec, and still more if they would read exhaustively on the movements in Denmark and Japan. The farmer is too individualistic, and the social instincts must be cultivated right early, and restore prosperity by intelligently conducted, persistent co-operation.

V. WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Other countries have passed through our phases. The clergy in Denmark, led by Bishop Grundtvig, have turned the tide back to the country. Cannot the clergy of all denominations attempt work just as necessary, just as useful. Let them make a united effort to achieve this end. There is no thought here of so-called church union, or, rather, the churches are united, and there is no need for rigid uniformity. We have rigidity enough. We need a new springtide when the angularities shall disappear only to reappear in living verdure. Let our rural clergy search for records of the life and work of John Francis Oberlin and emulate his spirit. There is no need to attempt his work, for there is not a place in the provinces where his congregations are typified.

When art became conventional in England it was necessary to return to nature. Many eminently good men have been vainly endeavoring to perpetuate ideals of method that are well enough in a highly complex, well ordered, long established community, and their youths have been slipping past them all the time. If we cannot detain their bodies in these provinces, we have little scope for affecting their spiritual nature.

VI. "BACK TO THE FARM!"

Probably the majority of ministers of all the churches in these provinces were raised on the farms, and therein is found no small merit for the old order of things. But possibly the clergy need to modify plans as rapidly as the people amid whom they labor. If they are to justify their continuance as a separate order, it must be partly because they fill a function. Public worship is an indispensable part of life in the community, but religion and worship, as these terms are ordinarily understood, are not synonymous. They are contributory.

Sacredness does not reside in the profession as things now are, but in the spirit in which the work of the profession is conducted.

Someone has said, "It is better to pound an anvil and make a good horseshoe, than to pound a pulpit and make a poor sermon." Most of the Old Testament prophets and writers were farmers; and the Bible is permeated with the spirit of devout husbandry. Would it not be well if all the rural clergy of the provinces could gather at the Agricultural college, in Truro, this summer, and hold such a school as the clergy of Massachusetts and Rhode Island have arranged for at Amherst, Mass.? Not the least certain note that is being sounded in these provinces comes from the institute workers who are influencing our youth. Would it not be well to mingle with these men who indirectly inculcate ethics, morality and patriotism: The education of more than half of our population requires modification and the clergy should have a clear and uniform message to parents, trustees and educators. We need a federation of all rural forces for a general educational uplift, and surely it's the function of the church to be inspirational if not institutional.—Rev. Hunter Boyd in the Maritime Farmer.

Fredericton Man Chosen Manager.

Wolfville, N. S., April 10.—G. Holland Lounsbury, of Fredericton, has been elected business manager of the Acadia track team, which will take part in the college sports at Moncton on the 22nd of May.

A. Thorndike, Me. farmer, recently secured his year's supply of firewood by clearing a small piece of swamp and upland. He then discovered in his woodpile the following varieties; Cedar, spruce, pine, hemlock, fir, juniper, white maple, birch, willow, alder, cherry and ash.

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