

far better than he. Keeping only an easy pressure on the bit, he chattered once or twice until she came to the full measure of her speed, then left the rest to the horse.

And what a speed it was! It seemed a hundred times to Loring that nothing could save them from catastrophe. They went down the steepest, rockiest hills at top speed; they turned, it seemed, all the corners on two wheels. The rattle of the loose-spoked buggy over the stony road became a roar.

Good fifteen miles it was to Culver's Cross-Roads; and every second was counting in the balance for a woman's life!

The ruddy glare ahead of him grew plainer for a time, then began to fade; the fire was burning itself out. Then as he approached a house he saw a light in the window. A quarter-mile farther on a big lantern set upon a porch lighted a hundred yards of the roadway. At the next house there were two small lanterns out, and as he passed, an old man shouted, "God bless ye!"

Then Loring realized what was happening. The telephone-line, winding on from farmhouse to farmhouse, was speeding along ahead of him all the way to Culver's Cross-Roads the news that they were coming—the white mare and he. And all the world from Marseilles to Culver's Cross-Roads was listening for the sound of the white mare's hoofs, watching for the sight of his shadowy figure, and speeding them on.

Far ahead he saw a light flash out from a dark house, then a shouting. The mare did not slacken. As they came up, Loring saw a team hurried out of the road into the dooryard to make way for him.

"All right, doc!" a big voice cried from somewhere. "Let her out! The road's clear!"

Once or twice after that he passed teams, but they were always warned, and left him a clear track. Once, at a blind turn, far from a house, he found a silent woman standing with a shawl on her head and a big lantern in her hand, making the right way plain. And the white mare kept on fearlessly in the night with speed unslackened. Loring knew her sides were heaving now and the sweaty lather pouring down them. But she only stretched out her neck a little farther and the steady pound of her feet never faltered.

Somehow, out of it all, the quick aid and sympathy of the people, the faithful and courageous striving of the beast, came something that swept away all Loring's black discouragement, all his lack of understanding, his sense of failure.

"They're giving me my chance," he thought, "and they're all helping. They're doing their share—they and the mare. Now it's for me to do mine." He leaned forward as if to help the mare, and pursed his lips to speak to her; but he did not. It seemed insulting when they both knew she was doing every inch of her best.

Smash! A stone from a flying hoof had struck the lantern. Loring wondered vaguely why it had not happened earlier in that wild drive. But more stars were coming out now, and the faint, glowing rim of a late moon peeped over the dark line of the eastern hill. Houses were far apart, but people were still astir and watching for him.

Once a man stood at the roadside, at the head of a harnessed horse. He cried, as Loring came near, "Here's a fresh horse, doctor, if you need one!"

"No—all right—thanks!" and the ready aid was left behind.

"Perhaps it was bad judgment," Loring thought to himself, "but it can't be much farther—and I know Nancy wants to finish the job. Go on, you great old girl!" he murmured to her. "You—"

and he ran on, with incoherent, endearing phrases that spelled mainly the high pitch of his own emotion.

Then, all at once, they swung round a bend—and the glow of the dying fire was just ahead. Then the sound of running feet toward him, a cluster of lanterns, voices: "Here he is!" "Hold up, doc!" "Whoa, there, Nancy!"

The mare came to a reluctant halt. But before she stopped, the doctor was up, medicine-case in hand, and springing out of the buggy. Every nerve and faculty was alert for his test. "Which way?" and he took the steps at a stride.

It was mid-afternoon before Loring left the house; but his work was done then, for the time, and well done. Only he knew how near a thing it had been for Sarah Culver's life and how much the white mare's speed had meant to her. But Brazier, when he came some hours afterward, guessed, and the rough, red-faced old fellow told.

"There ain't a thing for me to do!" he growled. "What'd ye get me off up here for, anyway, when you've got an Al man right in Marseilles? I tell you, he and the white mare, they're a team! The mare brought him here in an hour and twenty minutes from the call, you say; but that wouldn't have been much good if he hadn't had the whole bagful of tricks when he got here—and known how to play 'em!" And the old "G. P." rumbled honestly on, making the situation very plain indeed to all within hearing.

Loring got a couple of hours' sleep, and then leaving his patient safe and as comfortable as might be, drove slowly home in the twilight. He would have stayed for the night; but two or three calls had been repeated from the house, and he thought he could answer them.

It was a pleasant evening; the heat was broken, and for all his weariness, it seemed to Loring that he had never enjoyed a drive so much. The white mare was fresh and rested; he could hardly believe it possible. But she trotted on nimbly, almost gaily, pre-



Mount Stephen and Field and Kicking Horse River, B.C.

tending to shy at roadside rocks, stopping to rest at the bottoms of hills, then "larking" up them. She knew the difference between play and work!

Farmers sitting on the porch in after-supper idleness waved their hands at him or called a greeting. One or two covered their friendly impulse to speak with an inquiry as to his patient or the mare. Hired men crossing the road with foaming pails from the cow-tie nodded awkwardly. Boys, getting in the night's wood, or playing I-spy about the barns, called, "Hello, doc!" Sometimes a housewife greeted him shyly—as often as not with tears in her eyes, of sympathy or recollection.

And when he came back to the village, although it was then dark, everybody seemed to know of his return. There were hails from dim figures at the roadside, new tones in the inquiring voices. Rodney Evans came out to halt him in front of the store.

"Hello!" he called, cheerily. "Pretty hard ride last night, wa'n't it? Nancy seems to have stood it all right,"—he patted the mare's neck, then stepped along to the side of the buggy—"and you stood it all right, too, I hear." He held out his big hand in the darkness—Rodney was a very demonstrative man for Marseilles. "Take care of yourself this hot weather."

From the hilltop John Loring gazed back at the village lights and drew a long breath of contentment. These were his people, after all, and the white mare had led him to them.

The Aftermath

By Jessie Wright Whitcomb

SHE was stooping to put a pan of gingerbread into the oven. The door to the main room was ajar. She knew her husband was sitting in there on one side of the stove and her son on the other, and she could see the pleasant light the lamp cast on the neatly set supper table.

A curious tremor seized her as her son began to speak. Nothing but habit enabled her to close the oven door. She still kept her kneeling position by the stove, her whole heart intent on what her son was saying.

He was telling his father what he had already half told her earlier in the day.

"I'm going to get married," he said bluntly. "Next week. I'm old enough. It's rather sudden, I know. I didn't feel like mentioning it any sooner than I had to because you are sure to think I'm too young. But I own my team. I make enough hauling to get along."

As he stopped speaking the silence seemed almost ominous.

The ticking of the clock became oppressive.

blondness and his slowness that had drawn her, birdlike, happy little creature that she was, able really to live only in sunshine and kindness. How she had fluttered around him and tried and tried to please him, and worked until she trembled with weariness to win a word of praise from him, and how she had beaten herself to pieces against the wall of his unresponsiveness and his moodiness! Utterly baffled, she had withdrawn into herself, nerving herself to meet demands and no more; taking rebuffs silently, striving only to obliterate herself, and to save her shivering soul from unnecessary hurts.

Just a series of blinding pictures. Clearest of all was the day, within a year from her marriage, when she rose before daylight, washed and ironed her prettiest dress that he might be proud of her; picked and cleaned and fried two chickens; made cake and biscuit and packed the lunch baskets with deft precision that he might seem pleased before all the relatives who would be at the picnic. That she had not made her preparations, before was due not only to crowding work, but to his refusal, until the last minute, to agree to go. She laid out all his clean things in the little bedroom, blew the horn for breakfast and tired but smiling waited for him at the door. He ate in silence.

"The lunch is all packed and your things are laid out," she said cheerfully. He grunted. When he pushed back his chair and started out the kitchen door she spoke up in quick alarm: "John! You haven't forgotten the picnic, have you? Everything is all ready."

"We're not going to any picnic," he said, and strode on to the barn.

As often as the scene came back to her it occasioned a sort of nausea; she felt it now, kneeling by the stove, and clasped her hands tightly on her breast to quiet herself.

Would the silence last forever in that other room, so pleasant in the lamplight? Would her husband never speak? Would the clock tick always?

She had never again asked for anything she cared about. She had quite withdrawn into herself; and it seemed so long—so long—that gray stretch of years. She had made the most of the fact that her husband was a man respected in the community; she had compared herself favorably with others. But for a nature created for warmth and sunshine and happiness, the years looked long, dull, and full of weariness.

Again came the tremor through her whole spare frame.

A slight preliminary clearing of the throat broke the numbing silence.

With straining ears she was conscious of nothing but the two in there by the stove, and that her husband was speaking. His heavy voice was slow and measured.

"You'd ought to think considerable before you take a step like this, son. It's not for a week, or a month, it's for years—for all your life. What can this girl of yours do to help pull? How old is she?"

"Twenty."

"Twenty is old enough, if she's put her time to good use. Your mother wasn't but nineteen. Right from the start she could keep a clean house, and wash and iron and work with the best. Can your girl?"

"Not like mother."

"When your mother hadn't been married a month she had a bunch of my relatives to dinner, and fifteen of us sat down to the finest meal you ever ate—every bit of it her own cooking and serving. Could your girl do that?"

"No."

"And how about you, son? Can you forget yourself once in awhile? Can you think how your wife feels once in awhile? How about you? I think you're more like me than your mother. Mebbe there's enough of her in you to save you, but I doubt it. You better think a spell. You don't know what misery you'll lay up for yourself. You don't know what nights you'll lay