

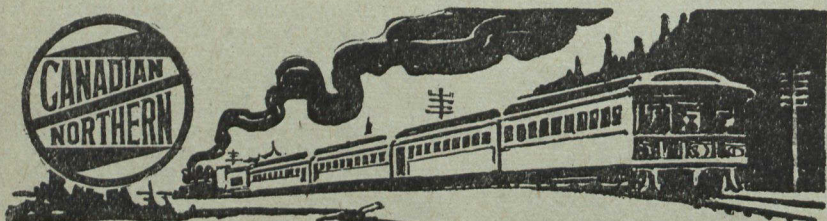
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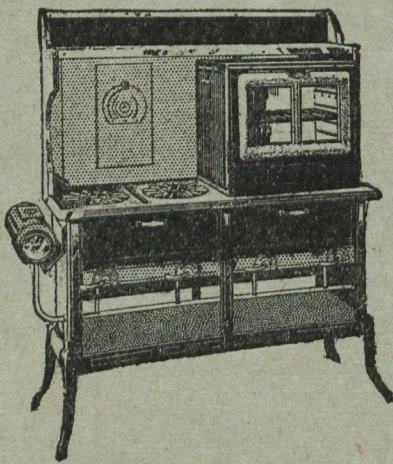
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## THE ROMANCE OF GROWING SLENDER ON THREE MEALS A DAY

(Continued from page 36)

done it! Why, girlie, we never knew you before! But I've noticed you coming, every day, this past two months, now!"

I stood before the mirror, in my room, that last night on Fairweather Farm, with shining eyes. I took all my measurements; or rather, Aunt Jessie did; and I was sorry now I had torn those other "before" measurements up. Bust, 38; waist, 25; upper arm, 11 1/4; forearm, 10 3/4; and all the rest, hips, et cetera—in proportion, too. I was another being, another body, another girl. Where had that other fat girl gone?

"But it's the way I feel, Aunt Jessie!" I exclaimed, hugging her. "I want to jump over the moon, like the cow in the Mother Goose Rhymes!"

"And you've grown strong!" she said, gasping and laughing. "You never hugged me like that before."

"Well, you've grown stronger, too," I retorted, "or you couldn't stand it the way you do. You're pounds and pounds heavier than when I came."

There was another full moon—the harvest moon now—rising on Fairweather Farm; the third that had looked into my room. And the millions of years' old man was kissing Cora Neville's profile again.

"This time to-morrow I'll be home," I said, wistfully. "I wonder what they'll say?"

"I know what they'll think," she said quietly. "I always thought you were a pretty girl, Bella. Now, I know you are beautiful. And you've made yourself so, my dear."

"You arch flatterer!" I said, patting her cheek. But I had another good stare at the new girl in the glass.

I took the afternoon train next day, because I wanted to get home unexpected and a little late, while they would be at tea. I had on a brand new navy blue fall suit, with a dashing little hat, and gloves, to match. These were Aunt Jessie's presents, for they have some really smart shops in Farmington. And Uncle Jim's parting gift was an awfully swell sport coat. I looked quite "stunning," he said, with his colossal frank wink.

But on the train, as I drew nearer home, my heart began to beat fast. I remembered how I had dreamed in the train, on the way to Farmington, nearly three months ago, of that day had kissed my hands in Harriston. Why had he not written, this past while? Did he really care—for Cora?

THERE were two silver-haired, nice looking, low voiced women in the seat ahead of me; sisters, I guessed. And somehow they reminded me of Mother and Aunt Jess.

One of them gave the other a letter, over which they laughed and whispered a good deal. And while this was going on, the newsboy came through the car and I bought a paper. Presently, as I turned the sheets, I came upon a glowing account of the recruiting work being done for the new battalion of Overseas Service in Harriston County—by Garry Miles.

I sat up, thrilling, and suddenly afraid, a hand over my heart. And as I did so, the boy came back again, with chocolates. And the two silver-haired ladies in front of me, with the letter, bought a box.

Then, as in a flash, my mind ran back, and intuitively I seemed to know. There had been an exchange of confidences, by letter, between Mother and Aunt Jessie, about me—about me and Garry Miles. And he knew why I had gone to Fairweather Farm. He had sent me that two pound box of chocolates to test my will power—to tempt me!

I felt my face suddenly on fire. Surely, surely Mother would never have let him know that—I cared?

For the rest of the train ride I couldn't read. I could hardly sit still. I could only stare at the flying autumn landscape, and think.

But as the familiar landmarks appeared, and we drew near to Harriston in the light of the late afternoon, my perturbation became merged in the excitement of just getting home—getting home to Harriston and everybody. And how my heart did beat as the train drew in, on that peerless early evening of that early autumn day!

There were old familiar faces about the platform, but none seemed to know mine. You see, they had never seen it before, nor my figure. I looked inches taller, and I carried myself in a different way.

There was no one to meet me, so Aunt Jessie hadn't given me away there, to Mother.

I checked my trunk and bag to the house, and old Tommy Martin, the baggageman, blinked at me through his glasses when I gave him the address. I simply knew that he took his glasses off and rubbed his eyes and stared after me as I walked away.

I carried out my programme and walked home; down the main street, and along the familiar avenues, which were more or less deserted now. I met a few people, all of whom I knew; but none knew me, it seemed, though they turned to look after me.

And then, just across the avenue from home, as she came up a cross street, on her way home like me—I met Cora.

"Well, Cora!" I said; and held out a gloved hand. Though she didn't look well; I saw that at a glance. Indeed, she looked wretched. There were great dark rings under her eyes, and she looked positively thin. Over-powdered, of course, and the same carmined lips.

"Too much dancing and late hours and rushing 'somebody' around," I said to myself.

She stared at me in candid amazement with widening eyes, her lips parted. And suddenly the street arc lamp above us sparked and spluttered; and in its flood of uncompromising light I saw that not all Cora's powder or art could hide the badness of her skin. (Continued on page 42)

## BUILD

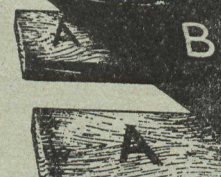
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