

CHAPTER II

Humble Beginnings

A COUPLE OF WEEKS AFTER OUR MARRIAGE A FIRST-class salesman came to town carrying an impressive attaché bag, in which reposed the prospectus of a new magazine. He was a pleasant, engaging young fellow who would have done for a Charles Dana Gibson model. The new magazine about to break over our quiet lives was called *Town and Country*, and it would carry each month pictures and sketches of the leading people in one of the more important country towns. Manitou had been chosen for Volume 1, Number 1, and the young man had been advised to see me and enlist my services; the company, he said, was anxious to use native writers. . . .

I liked the sound of that. I never had been called a native writer before. It had a patriotic appeal, and I even subscribed for the magazine. Someone must show faith in the venture. Five dollars was the subscription price. The young man was apologetic about taking a subscription from me, though he told me everyone taking part must subscribe. It was a pure formality, he said. there would be expenses to be met . . . He was glad I was willing to undertake the assignment—that's what he called it. He said writers were the great interpreters of a country. What Dickens did for London, and Scott for Scotland, he believed I could do for southern Manitoba. "We want you to hold a mirror up to this country; or perhaps a microscope", he said, "and you must feel free