

MADGE



MACBETH

THERE is a story in the family annals which asserts that at the age of three, a precocious child dictated a revision of the Bible to her patient grandmother. I don't remember it—but it looks well in print and I tell it shamelessly.

Since I could hold a pencil I have written, probably as every child writes—diaries, heart out-pourings and deathless memories which one hopes will strike callous hearts dumb, when a sweet young life is cut in its prime. (I burned these memoirs when neither sweet nor young).

At Hellmuth College we published a jolly good little paper, the Editor-in-chief's post falling to me.

Prize competitions always held a lure, especially as my stories—many of them revised from compositions done at school—brought in five or ten dollar bills. Days of stark necessity compelled me to think of some means of making living, so I grabbed a pen and wrote—three short stories which were immediately accepted by the Smith Publications people. I drew a long breath and thought "this making-a-living business is only child's play, after all. Don't see why women make such fuss about it. Whenever the baby doesn't need me, or I have nothing particular to do, I'll just run into my room and dash off a little story or two."

I paid some bills and wrote another story. It was returned. So was the next and the next. For one mortal year I never sold a story! I got up at daylight and wrote. I sat up till daylight and wrote. No use! And the pressure was pretty heavy, for my baby was never well a day. For two years or more, I never knew in the morning whether he would be alive at night or not. That is why I did not get a position of some sort. I muddled along somehow, just breaking my head every time the postman came to the door with one of my little white doves—homing pigeons, I might call them.

Then one night, with a pot of coffee beside me to keep me awake, I began what might be called the story of my life. I wrote all the hardships and the anguish and the sobs and chokings that I had endured. I wrote about the pinch for funds, about the death of my husband and the illness of my baby. I put a love story into it and called it "THE CHANGELING" and sent it to "CANADA MONTHLY."

They accepted it and paid sixty dollars for it. I paid some more bills and set to work grimly. I learned my lesson—that writing for a living is done from the soul, with heart-ache; that cold feet and a hot head are needed to produce anything worth while; that joy in work means—when sifted right down to bed rock

—the agony of creation. I remembered that lesson. From then the Canadian weeklies, *The Courier*, *Saturday Night*, Montreal papers, *Adventure*,

Between Ourselves

WHEN Mrs. Madge Macbeth handed us her delightful one-act play for children—"How Christmas Came to Nina" appearing in this Issue, and her equally charming Christmas story to be published in December, it occurred to us that you would appreciate a few facts about herself. So we asked her, in that off-hand manner (you know)—"Tell us something of yourself, Mrs. Macbeth." And one of us retreated to a corner of the room where she would not see us, and with pencil and pad captured a bit of her life history.

We present it herewith. We hope she will forgive our duplicity, but we just could not resist passing it on.

—The Editors.

Field and Stream, and a whole lot more that I can't remember, took things in rapid succession. I could count on an income.

I did every sort of work, from articles in *Field and Stream* to Parliamentary notes. I am the only woman



Mrs. Macbeth's two children, taken in the costume as worn at the last Fancy Dress Ball, given at Government House, Ottawa.

except Sara Jeanette Duncan ever admitted to the Press Gallery. There I wrote two years for the Montreal Mirror. All the time I have been father and mother, writing with an eye on the tomato pickles and an ear for a child crying. I am sure that often there was too much spice in the story and too much sob in the pickles. I drifted back to things dramatic and to the Presidency of the Drama League. Of my success in that line, I need not tell you. Although I would rather act, it has fallen to my lot to produce, especially the work of the children, which I look upon as the best education they can receive.

I CANNOT tell you how many playlets I have arranged for patriotic purposes. I have devoted months and months to the work. But it is such a pleasure! The children enter into the spirit of the thing whole-heartedly, and they are surprisingly quick to learn.

The plays have been staged in theatres, at garden parties, in the halls of public institutions. Everywhere they have been successful and, I am glad to say, have netted much for patriotic endeavour.

These dramas have been witnessed by those whom we are pleased to call the elite. More, they have come under the eye of critics, and I hope, met their approval.

H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught when here as Governor General, the late Duchess and the Princess Patricia took great interest in the work of the children.

All this Drama League work is done gratuitously. It actually costs me money to put on these plays. There are those who think I get something out of it, but the most I ever got was nervous prostration.

I WOULD rather write a great play than anything in the world. Next to that, I would rather produce one. Next to that I would like to write a novel like Walpole's "Fortitude" or Mrs. Deland's "Iron Woman." I have not given up hope of doing it, either, if I can find sufficient freedom from domestic distractions to devote my whole thought to it. My recent novel "Kleath" is being so kindly received that I am encouraged beyond the telling.

My horoscope says, however, that short stories are my forte!

I am not a bookworm in the least—keen about every sort of sport except cock-fighting and bull-baiting. I can do a few stunts at swimming, tennis, etc., myself. I hate not to be able to do things. I am greedy to know.

PROMOTION AND MYRTLE

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when the jingle of your accoutrements is music and the rhythmic beat of your broncho's hoofs like the accompaniment to a song? Ah, sonny, you don't know everything yet.

That was how I felt next morning when Latreille and Porter and I swung out of the barrack gates and turned our horses' heads to the western hills. We were none of us in love with the job on hand, but a fellow has to tune his strings to the note of the morning, and our hearts were light enough. So we laughed and sang and rode gaily out to meet our troubles, as meet them we surely did before another sun rose. You cannot always tell when you start on a flying patrol how you will get back to quarters; and that's a fact.

When we dropped into a walk after the first breather I pulled my orders out and carefully re-read them. They stated that the "Blackfoot Indians were wanted" in Macleod for cattle-lifting and attempted murder; that a sergeant and three constables had gone into the reservation with a warrant for their arrest; but that they had threatened resistance, and, matters in the tribe looking ugly, the sergeant had deemed it advisable to ride back for reinforcements. When they returned the three culprits had escaped, in full war-paint, which always means mischief. They had been seen and chased north of Lethbridge but managed to get away among the rolling hills. Scouting parties from the western detachments were out after them and the boundary posts had been warned. They were well armed with Winchester rifles and bore a reputation for great cunning and audacity; bad Indians, in short. There was a bounty on their heads. It was imperative, both in the interests of law and order and for the prestige of the Mounted Police, that they be taken without delay *alive or dead*.

I rested my hands on the horn of my saddle and looked long and thoughtfully across the level plain to the faint line of hills. It was the first time I had held authority to kill a man. Since that day I have seen men slain in action by squads and companies and thought but little of it; but this was my introduction to the great sport of man-hunting. It was gun to gun and heaven help the one who fired last. Gabe Latreille, the French half-breed scout, I knew could be trusted. Fifteen years attached to the Police force, he had proved his mettle in a thousand ways. Crafty as a fox and fearless as a grizzly, he would work his way through the gates of Erebus; with black eyes glittering and laughing teeth, were the orders given. I was not so certain of young Porter. He was a Manitoba lad, tall and muscular, cheerful under hardship, willing and good natured, but it was hard to tell how he would act if called on to face the black-ringed barrels of death. Nor was I quite sure of my own nerve. I could strip off my stable-jacket and take or give a licking behind the haystack with the best of them—*mais, parbleu! c'la n'est pas la guerre*.

I turned my eyes somewhat doubtfully on Porter's well-set figure, as he rode a little ahead of me, and wished they had sent an older hand. This was stiff work for a youngster.

"You look ver' serious, my fren," said Gabe, in his breed-English. "Wot you tink about to make you so tam quiet?"

"Oh nothing, old man," I replied with a laugh. "I was just wondering whether we shall catch these chaps."

"We catch 'em all right, Corporal," he answered confidently. "Mais, oui; if we track 'em to de Nor' Pole first. I get me some dat bounty money, by gar."

He grinned merrily and bit off a big chew of tobacco. Light-hearted fellows, these half-breed scouts.

"Well, Gabe," I said, "we'll follow the trail until we are across Duggan's Flat and then we'll take to the low hills. We shall hardly meet them to-day. For my own part, I don't think they'd be so crazy as to come near the barracks by daylight."

"Not ver' likely," said the scout. "Where you calc'late to camp tonight, Corporal?"

"McNulty's ranch at Beaver Coulee," I answered rather guiltily. "That's far enough for one day."

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