

You may go to the house door in a dressing-gown to look out on the snowy prairie, and the *chinook* blowing over you feels like a warm bath. It seems miraculous. All living things are revived and gladdened. Horses and cattle move slowly towards the sunny slopes, leaving long shining furrows behind them in the smooth snow, and there they stand or lie down, basking in the soft air. It is a kind of brief summer. Even those spiritless things the hens will come out of their house under the bank, where they have been sitting like so many motionless humps of feathers, and scratch about for a while in the sun, as though life had still something to offer in place of the toes they lost in the last frost. The snow-buntings will *whir* past your face in a cloud, with a flashing of little white wings. I am told that snow-buntings, if you get enough of them, are excellent in a pie; but I think they are more excellent in the sunlight. This may be a still *chinook* that has come, a soft warmth in which the snow melts away with extraordinary rapidity, while the sky wears all kinds of transparent lovely hues like an Irish sky; and if you take a ten-minutes' ride to the top of the nearest hill, you may see to the west a whole range of the Rockies, magnificent, exultant—based on earth and piled against the sky like mountain altars, the snow-smoke rising from their dazzling slopes and melting away in the blue, as if the reek of some mighty sacrifice purer than human were ascending on high.

But sometimes the *chinook* is far from still; it blows with soft, steady force, and then the snow, instead of melting, blows away. A most curious sight it is when first the wind sets it moving; it

flies along the ground as fast as flowing water, with a kind of rippling motion, breaking into sudden eddies and puffs of white, the sunshine sifting through it and powdering the whole with sparks of light. Where all this snow blows to is a mystery to me still. I never see it blow *up* from the earth; I suppose it can hardly blow *out*, like the flame of a candle: all I know is, it blows *away*. And then the prairie lies bare, brown and tawny in colour, with stretches of pale sunlit gold; and all life is safe and warm and comforted till the north wind gets his turn again.

It is very reviving to have the tyranny of winter broken through every now and again by the *chinook*. But it is better still when spring comes—not the fleeting but the abiding spring. Some day you see duck flying up the creek, or you hear the weird cry of geese float down from very high overhead. Perhaps some one remarks that the creeks are running, and very soon not only the creeks are full of rushing dark-brown water, but every hill-top is a watershed sending streams of melted snow down into the valleys. Snow-birds vanish, and instead you may see "the hawk spread her wings to the south," whistling over the bare bluffs where by-and-bye a hawk's nest will be. Gophers wake up underground, and stick their smooth heads out of their holes again, with last year's familiar piping; and down by the water-side, where willows are covered with their silver-grey buds, you can watch little blue-tits feeding on them, generally upside down in their own fascinating manner. As soon as frosts cease to bind the earth at night, the longed-for grass

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