

and there are three daughters between. An important question as to the future of the eldest son is the subject of unusual interest in the family council to-day.

This eldest son, a youth of twenty-two, evidently reproduces, as is common with sons, the mental characteristics of his mother, though resembling his father in physique. Instability of character or purpose is, at present, his main defect, but it contains the promise and potency of many other defects amid favourable surroundings. His educational opportunities, which have been of the best, have not been greatly appreciated. The result is that though he has received a kind of passive culture, which will no doubt cling to him through life and express itself spontaneously, yet he has obtained little that can be called his own, or over which he can exert an executive command. He has the national interest in out-door sports, especially field sports, and has a strong relish for adventure, but little interest in anything that promises too regular or painstaking a line of effort. His father had hoped that he would enter one of the professions, and when that hope was no longer tenable he had expected that at least he might follow his own line of business—that of a draper or dry-goods merchant. But Percy Briggs has none of his father's business qualities, he takes no interest in the trade, and finds the restraint of the shop irksome.

A school friend of his, of somewhat similar disposition and tastes, had lately gone out to the far western lands of Canada. He had gone to study ranching in Alberta, under the tutelage of a city gentleman of fairly good family but of decayed fortunes, who had not been able to make a living by the practice of law, and who was induced to believe that the place for him was a new country where competition was not so fierce, and where the struggle for existence was unknown. Percy had received a couple of letters from his friend since his location in Alberta, and though they contained little relative to ranching, yet they gave glowing accounts of hunting expeditions among the foot-hills. There were descriptions involving great slaughter of chicken, partridge, geese, ducks and rabbits; also some rather vague references to deer and mountain sheep stalking, and a still more vague account of an encounter with a grizzly bear of unusual size. The bear, however, appeared to have had the good fortune to escape with its life. There was mention also of frequent trips to a town called Calgary, where many other young Englishmen from the district were to be met, and where much fun, of a character not specified, was to be had.

Percy was not long in discovering that ranching was, beyond all question, the occupation for which nature had fitted him, and he had no doubt what-

ever of making a brilliant success of it. The elder Briggs discounted very liberally the enthusiasm and confidence of his son, especially as the son could give no account of what was implied in ranching, except that it had something to do with cattle, and involved riding horses, slaughtering game, and having fun in Calgary. This naturally appeared to the father as a rather uncertain basis of prosperity, so that, while still dubious what to make of his son, he steadily declined to entertain the idea of a ranching career.

Mrs. Briggs, though at first alarmed at the thought of her son taking his departure into such a far country, yet in the end succumbed to the arguments of the ardent Percy, and finally in this matter, as in many others of lesser importance in the past, became the advocate of her son's cause. Of course she interpreted his ranching career in her own way, and where there were so few facts to be respected, she had little difficulty in making to her own mind a very admirable thing of it. Similarly the younger members of the family, filling in details according to their own reading and fancy, joined the optimistic party, and the father soon found himself in a minority of one in support of the critical or pessimistic position.

Matters were in this tentative condition when it was announced that, on invitation from Sir J. Waltham, a neighbouring baronet, the High Commissioner of Canada would give a lecture on the resources of that colony in the town hall at an early date. This was accepted by Percy's parents as a kind of providential opportunity to settle the question as to a possible colonial career for their son.

The date arrived and with it the High Commissioner. He spoke with the dignity and solemnity which becomes a man conscious at once of his own greatness and of the exalted nature of the office which he fills. He disclosed the unparalleled resources of the Canadian colony with a confidence so calm and righteous that it banished scepticism. By plain facts and statistics, furnished from sources in which he had every confidence, he demonstrated the marvellous growth of the colony, and established beyond a doubt the remarkable foresight and wisdom of those who had governed the country. He showed how the judicious and economic expenditure of the public money had provided for the development of the country's natural resources and had placed it in the path of prosperity for all time.

Mr. Briggs, as he listened to such encouraging statements, uttered with an air of sincerity and deep conviction, felt his scepticism dissolving, and when the lecture was finished he required only some special bits of information about ranching in Alberta and its suitability for persons like his son, to convince him that, after all, this new country was the best place