

The Robin's Nest.

"I Weave My Nest of Odds and Ends," BARBARA.

"Here where the pale green twilights brood, On snow and silent pine; With no word but God's solitude, Between His face and mine." —Stringer.

It was a grey day. There had been no crimsoning gleam at sunrise, there was no hint of sunset glory now—nothing but a grey world creeping out to meet a greyer sky. The hills to the right, which yesterday had been wrapped in silver sheen and warm blue mist, were a wall of greyness, the willows bordering the river a procession of nuns, grey-faced, grey-robed, grey-veiled. The world along which the wagon creaked wearily was but a grey ribbon untangling itself from wide stretches of grey prairie.

"It is starting to rain," said Walter Preston, letting down the curtain of the covered wagon, "and we've a mile or so yet to cover."

"A little rain isn't going to hurt you," said his wife of three weeks, saucily.

"I'm not thinking of myself." They looked at each other and smiled. The smile told the story. Then his arm slipped about her waist. "Nearly home, my girl—adding as an afterthought, "though there's no home till we make it."

"Isn't it a still world?" she said, at length. "We seem to be wrapped up in silence, curtained off with it, covered over with it. Are you lonely, Walter?" A vigorous shake of the head. "I have you. Adam didn't do much pining because there was only one person in Eden to keep him company, and do the bossing. He wasn't dead anxious to give a garden party, eh?"

They both laughed. What did they care that the little lakes dotting the landscape were but sombre grey eyes staring miserably up at a greyer sky; that the gulls flying lonesomely homeward were grey, the wild ducks swimming among reeds and rushes were grey; that the rain itself was grey; that the grey land stretched itself out so desolately in the dusk it would seem that God must have made it, and then forgotten it, and left it to its loneliness, its virgin strength, and its awful stillness.

"Here we are!" The covered wagon drew up at the foot of a small hill. The man jumped out, and assisted the woman in her somewhat perilous descent over the front wheel. "Welcome to the garden. Our house will stand on the hill. We'll have it up this day week if all goes well."

She was tall, with a softly rounded figure. The eyes she turned on her surroundings were blue, and very beautiful. He watched her with some anxiety. Would she regret, ever so little, leaving home, kindred—the friends of a lifetime, for this lone place—and him. As if reading his thoughts, she said:

"I'm to be architect, remember. You're only the builder. It must stand a little cornerwise."

"Why not facing the road squarely?" "There, you are interfering with the architect's plans already. I want it cornerwise, so that I can look from any one of its four windows and watch you at your work. Just the two of us, Walter!"

"Just the two of us, darling," with a tremor in his voice. She was such a brick, this blue-eyed wife of his.

She broke into a peal of laughter—surely the sweetest sound that had ever stirred the grass and sage. "I'm thinking of father's 'Lost, a pair of lunatics," she explained.

"Your friends were all against you coming out to this new land," he said, "but we'll show them. I know what they said: 'Two young fools, with only love and poverty and inexperience to begin with.' But we'll thrive here, I feel it. Ten years from now we'll have exchanged our inexperience for wisdom and our poverty for a competence."

"And our love for the friendly indifference so many married people entertain for each other, eh?" That "eh?"

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on her red lips was a challenge. He kissed her then and there.

"Our love for nothing, under heaven." He meant it. Time would change the face of nature, buildings would rise, fields of grain wave in the breeze, cattle herd in the pasture land, but his love for this woman, and her love for him, would remain the perfect thing it was forever and a day.

"I don't suppose Eve broke in on Adam's meditations with the request that he set the coal oil stove going, but—"

"Of course," he cried, beginning to bustle around. "All ready, your ladyship."

While she fried the ham, and made the coffee, he went about the task of attending to the team. He whistled a catchy air, and more than once she found herself crooning snatches of the same as she prepared the supper. They ate by the light of the lantern, after which Walter unstrapped a bundle, drew from it a pair of blankets, a comforter, a pillow, and proceeded, with Barbara's help, to make the bed in the rear of the wagon. Then he took a little Bible from his coat-pocket.

"Might as well begin right, eh?" he said.

She nodded. "Yes. Somehow I feel that we're just two little children here alone, and that the Lord is all the father, mother or friend we have—or want."

It seemed but natural for him to choose that particular Psalm, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." The strong voice dwelt on the assurance lingeringly:

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Ay, the pastures of hope and love are green and satisfying.

"He leadeth me beside the still waters." Home and hearth, the prattle of children, the life well lived—all this the still waters mirrored to him. Earth was very near to heaven, and if he mixed things temporal with things eternal, who shall blame him? His eyes, warm with youth and love, could not read the words in their full significance and grandeur. It takes tears to clear the vision. He was to come into his dower of faith in God, as many another man has come into his, by a weary way of loss, and failure, and self-abasement. But to-night he did not dream of it.

After they had kneeled side by side, he took the lantern and went to tether the horses securely. Barbara was in bed when he returned. He flashed the light over her. The red-brown hair, loosed from the bonds of comb and pins, rioted on the pillow, the pure face smiled up at him. How sweet she was!

"If you feel nervous of the dark and strangeness, I'll leave the lantern burning," he said gently.

"Put out the light and come to bed," she returned sleepily. "Do you suppose Eve cried for a lantern that first night in the garden?"

Without—a dark, wide world, and a wind which wailed when it found sighing too monotonous, sage and grass too damp to rustle, a drizzle of rain playing dreary marches on the canvas cover of the wagon.

Within—warmth, tenderness, and a wonder happiness.

Love is to the heart what spring is to the year. To-morrow would bring the two men and the loaded wagons from Edmonton, but to-night they had their Eden to themselves.

It is a day in August, ten years later. A golden day. Golden now, when the dawn signals so loudly, that the earth—dewy, and dreamy, and fairer than at any other hour, must wake and welcome. It will be golden at noonday, golden and languorous, and heavy with sweetness, golden still when the stars creep out in a saffron sky, and night comes lingeringly over the land with a harvest moon to light her way.

As far as the eye can reach on either hand are wheat fields ripening for the harvest. As the morning breeze stirs it, a faint line of green mingles with the bronze, and the bronze, in turn, loses itself in the deep yellow. This great stretch of grain is a sea of gold with ripples running to some far-off shore. There is a glamor in the air. The turbid river has golden lights on its bosom; a little craft shooting out from shore has cloth of gold for sails. Oh, the

(Continued on next page.)

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