

# The Broad Highway

Jeffery Farnol

"Which We Call Life"

(Continued from yesterday.)

"Instead of eating my words and staring the poor moon out of countenance? Come," and, with the word, she turned and led the way to the cottage. And behold, the candles were lighted, the table was spread with a snowy cloth, and a pot simmered under the hob; a pot that gave forth an odor delectable, and over which Charmian bent forthwith, and into which she gazed with an anxious brow and thrust an inquiring fork.

"I think it's all right!"

"I'm sure of it," said I, inhaling the appetizing aroma—"but, pray, where did you get it?"

"A man sold it to me—he had a lot of them."

"Hum!" said I, "probably poached." "I bought this for sixpence—out of the old shoe."

"Sixpence?—then they certainly were poached. These are the Cambrune Woods, and everything upon them—fish, flesh, or fowl, living or dead—belongs to the Lady Sophia seton of Cambrune."

"Then—perhaps you had better not eat it," said she, glancing at me over her shoulder—but, meeting my eye she laughed. And so we presently sat down to supper and, poached though it may have been, that rabbit made a truly noble end, notwithstanding.

## CHAPTER IX

Which Relates Somewhat of Charmian Brown.

We were sitting in the moonlight. "Now," said Charmian, staring at the luminous heaven, "let us talk."

"Willingly," I answered; "let us talk of stars."

"No—let us talk of ourselves."

"As you please."

"Very well, you begin."

"Well—I am a blacksmith."

"Yes, you told me so before."

"And I make horseshoes."

"He is a blacksmith, and makes horseshoes!" said Charmian, nodding at the moon.

"And I live here, in this solitude, very contentedly; so that it is only reasonable to suppose that I shall continue to live here, and make horseshoes—though, really, I broke off, letting my eyes wander from my companion's upturned face back to the glowing sky, once more, 'there is little I could tell you about, so common-place a person as myself that is likely to interest you.'"

"No," said Charmian, "evidently not!" Here my gaze came down to her face again so quickly that I fancied I detected the ghost of a smile upon her lips.

"Then," said I, "by all means let us talk of something else."

"Yes," she agreed; "let us talk of the woman Charmian—Charmian—Brown."

"A tress of hair had come loose, and hung low above her brow, and in its shadow her eyes seemed more elusive, more mocking than ever, and while our glances met, she put up a hand and began to wind this glossy tress round and round her finger."

"Well!" said she.

"Well," said I, "supposing you begin."

"But is she likely to interest you?"

"I think so—yes."

"Aren't you sure, then?"

"Quite sure—certainly."

"Then why don't you say so?"

"I thought you would take that for granted."

"A woman should take nothing for granted, sir."

"Then," said I, "supposing you begin."

"I've half a mind not to," she retorted, curling the tress of hair again, and then, suddenly: "What do you think of Charmian Brown?"

"I think of her as little as I can."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Indeed," said I.

"And why, pray?"

"Because," said I, knocking the ashes from my pipe, "because the more I think about her the more incomprehensible she becomes."

"Have you known many women?"

"Very few," I confessed, "but—"

"But?"

"I am not altogether unfamiliar with the sex—I have known a great number—in books."

"Our blacksmith," said Charmian, addressing the moon again, "has known many women—in books! His knowledge is, therefore, profound!" and she laughed.

"May I ask you to laugh at me?"

"Oh!" said she, "don't you know that women in books and women out of books are no more the same than day and night, or summer and winter?"

"And yet there are thousands of women who exist for us in books only, Laura, Beatrice, Trojan Helen, Aspasia, the glorious Phryne, and hosts of others," I demurred.

"Yes; but they exist for us only as their historians permit them, as their biographers saw, or imagined them. Would Petrarch ever have permitted Laura to do an ungracious act, or anything which, to his masculine understanding, seemed unfeminine, and would Dante have mentioned it had Beatrice been guilty of one? A man can no more understand a woman from the reading of books than he can learn Latin or Greek from staring at the sky."

"Of that," said I, shaking my head, "of that I am not so sure."

"Then—personally—you know very little concerning women?" she inquired.

"I have always been too busy," said I. Here Charmian turned to look at me again.

"Too busy?" she repeated, as though she had not heard aright; "too busy?"

"Much too busy!" Now, when I said this, she laughed, and then she frowned, and then she laughed again.

"You would much rather make a horseshoe than talk with a woman, perhaps?"

"Yes, I think I would."

"Oh!" said Charmian, frowning again, but this time she did not look at me.

"You see," I explained, turning my empty pipe over and over, rather aimlessly, "when I make a horseshoe I take a piece of iron and, having heated it, I bend and shape it, and with every hammer-stroke I see it growing into what I would have it—I am sure of it, from start to finish; now, with a woman it is—different."

"You mean that you cannot bend, and shape her, like your horseshoe?"

"I mean that—I fear I should never be quite sure of a woman, as I am of my horseshoe."

"Why, you see," said Charmian, beginning to braid the tress of hair, "a woman cannot, at any time, be said to resemble a horseshoe—very much, can she?"

"Surely," said I, "surely you know what I mean?"

"There are Laura and Beatrice and Helen and Aspasia and Phryne, and hosts of others," said Charmian, nodding to the moon again. "Oh, yes—our blacksmith has read of so many women in books that he has no more idea of women out of books than I of Sanscrit."

And, in a little while, seeing I was silent, she condensed to glance towards me:

"Then I suppose under the circumstances, you have never been in love?"

"In love?" I repeated, and dropped my pipe.

"In love."

"The Lord forbid!"

"Because Love is a disease—a mad—"

ness, coming between a man and his life's work. Love! said I. "It is a calamity!"

"Never having been in love myself, our blacksmith, very naturally, knows all about it!" said Charmian to the moon.

"I speak only of such things as I have read—!" I began.

"More books!" she sighed.

"—words of men, much wiser than I—poets and philosophers, written—"

"When they were old and gray-headed," Charmian broke in; "when they were quite incapable of judging the matter—though many a grave philosopher loved, now didn't he?"

"Dionysius Lambeuse, I think, says somewhere that a woman with a big mouth is infinitely sweeter in the kissing—and—"

"Do you suppose he read that in a book?" she inquired, glancing at me sideways.

"Why, as to that," I answered, "a philosopher may love, but not for the mere sake of loving."

"For whose sake then, I wonder?"

"A man who esteems trifles for their own sake is a trifler, but one who values them, rather, for the deductions that may be drawn from them—he is a philosopher."

Charmian rose, and stood looking at me very strangely.

"So!" said she, throwing back her head, "so, throned in lofty might, superior Mr. Smith thinks Love a trifle does he?"

"My name is Vibart, as I think you know," said I, stung by her look or her tone, or both.

"Yes," she answered, seeming to look down at me from an immeasurable attitude, "but I prefer to know a philosopher."

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him, just now, as Superior Mr. Smith."

"As you will," said I, and rose also; but, even then, though she led to look up to me, I had the same inward conviction that her eyes were regarding me from a great height; wherefore I attempted—quite unsuccessfully—to light my pipe.

And after I had struck flint and steel vainly, perhaps a dozen times, Charmian took the box from me, and, ignoring the tinder, held it for me while I lighted my tobacco.

"Thank you!" said I, as she returned the box, and then I saw that she was smiling. "Talking of Charmian Brown—!" I began.

(Continued tomorrow.)

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## A Column Which Be Of Interest

Herein are Related Facts Activities of Individuals Home, Fashions and

**NEWS OF WOMEN'S CLUBS.**  
We are always pleased to receive any news of Women's Societies, fashion notes, new or tried recipes, etc., which may be of interest to our readers. And we will publish same when suitable. All communications for these columns to have name and address (not for publication), and to be addressed to the Editor, Women's Column, The St. John Standard, St. John.

**Queenstown Chapter, I. O. E. E.**  
Very pretty posters are being displayed for an entertainment to be held in the City Hall on the 22nd of May by the Queenstown Chapter. The one day shows two children skipping and the following announces that they are "Shipping along to the City Hall."

To see "The Old Maids" and "The Belle of the Ball."

Each poster is different, and each one has a "poem" on it.

I know of other delightful plans for this same evening in the way of amusement and entertainment, so it may be well to secure tickets early. The Brunswick Chapter I. O. E. E. are managing this entertainment, and many rehearsals have taken place. The proceeds are for the fund to procure instruments for 140th band. This chapter have also arranged to have a day at Seaside Park early in June, probably on the birthday of our Gracious King. There will be military parades and drills, and an excellent cabaret run both afternoon and evening. The proceeds of the entire day will be for the patriotic fund.

**V. W. P. A.**  
The office of this society, room No. 44, C. P. B. building, will be open all this week from 10 till twelve each morning, and all members are asked to return their registration papers filled in.

Not nearly all the women took advantage of their right to vote in the election yesterday. Don't women care if the city they live in is managed? Surely it is most important to care, and if we care we will see to it that we choose the best men to look after affairs.

The task of counting the returns from King Albert Day was a great one and the ladies were at it hard at day. The total amount so far is over \$4,000, and there are many other places to hear from. This amount includes East St. John, \$47.61; Fairville, \$134.40; Rothesay, \$134.06; from Kingshurst to Ford factory, \$44.23; Clarendon, per Mr. McDavid, \$5.46; Ladlow St. Baptist Relief Society, \$5.00; South Bay, \$18.45; the Norton United Sunday school scholars gave the amount of their annual trest \$10.00. Many people who were overjoyed to come to Mrs. Smith and brought contributions, one gentleman handing in a large amount in this way. Altogether it was a wonderful success.

Mrs. E. Atherton Smith received last night a telephone message from Colonel Myra Sherman of the Women's Volunteer Reserve, Fredericton, stating that this organization had collected the sum of \$550.00 for Belgium. This splendid organization worked most enthusiastically and sold all the pictures and buttons, having to make extra bags.

Mrs. McElhiney desires to return thanks to all who so kindly offered to assist her to go to England. Many refused to have their gifts returned and the money has been deposited to Mrs. McElhiney's credit in the bank.

New Brunswick Women's Institute. Generous has been the response on the part of the New Brunswick Women's Institute in sending aid to the Canadian prisoners of war in Germany. A circular letter was mailed to all the institutes in February, and the results to date are:

Debec, Welford, Salmon Beach, Lower Millstream, Pomeroy Ridge, Lorneville and Queenstown are sending \$2.00 monthly to assist in supporting Canadian prisoners; Debec, Chocoma Cove and Cummings Cove, Pomeroy Ridge, Hillsborough, Lorneville and Grand Falls have sent boxes containing food and clothing; Dalhousie and Penobscot are sending \$4.00 monthly; Welford \$5.00 monthly; and donations of \$2.00 from Fair Haven, \$5.00 from Port Elgin; \$5.00 from Clifton; \$7.00 from Beersville; \$10.00 from Elgin; \$15.00 from Harcourt; \$16.00 from Gaspereau; \$20.00 from Nashvale and \$25.00 from Blackville, have been forwarded to Mrs. Rivers-Bulkeley, Prisoners of War Department, Canadian Red Cross Society, 14-16 Cockspur St., London, to be expended on food and clothing for our own detained as prisoners in Germany.

The Belgians continue to receive aid from the Women's Institutes in our province, the following donations having been sent to the proper authorities since the first of the new year:

Queenstown Chapter, I. O. E. E. \$10; Lower \$10; Salmon Beach, \$5.25; Norton, \$5.00; Welford and Port Elgin, \$5.00; Clifton, \$5.00; Fairville, \$134.40; Rothesay, \$134.06; from Kings