

AN APE AND AN IDYL

By JEAN BLEWETT, Author of "Heart Songs,"
"The Cornflower," etc.

"THE best laid schemes o' mice and (married) men
gang aft a-gley.

"For a whole year Jack has planned to take
you on this canoe trip, and
now—"

"You needn't whack the in-
stitution of matrimony with my
sprained ankle," interrupted
Marion from the lounge.

"And now he will proceed to
put canoeing out of his mind to
haunt verandah chairs, and ham-
mocks swung in the shade, to
read magazines and story books.
Not exactly the holiday a young
lawyer hankers after—eh, sis?"
West leaned back in his chair and
smiled pityingly.

"Nor the holiday my young
lawyer is to have," said Marion,
rising to the occasion. "Jack is
under bonds to take fun enough
out of the trip for both of us.
Yes, you are," in answer to an
exclamation, half protest, half
relief, from the delighted Jack.
"As for me I am going to try
an experiment."

"A lonely summer at the
homestead," Jack's tone of com-
miseration was real. "It's
tough luck, Marion."

"Oh, I'll not be alone," with
a gay smile.

"Sit up and take notice, young
man," admonished West.

"No, the city mission has
found two children for me, nice
little things whose world up to
this has been the grounds of the
worthy institution which spells
home to them. I'll give them
the old garden and the orchard,
the lane and the wood for a
playground. Won't I have a
time watching their antics,
and seeing them grow fat on Sally Beach's curds and
cream!"

"Drop it, Marion," growled West. When she shook
her head he laid aside his cigar and began an argument
which trailed off into an expostulation. She should be
more considerate of the brother, poor old Allan, at the
homestead. The idea of turning two whining mis-
chievous youngsters loose to break up the quiet of the
place! Marion ought to be ashamed of herself. Op-
position from this well-groomed self-satisfied half brother
being the one thing needed to strengthen her determi-
nation, she continued to shake her head, and, on West
subsiding with an air of sullenness, proceeded to draw
pictures of two wails watching flowers grow, and birds
nest, plucking ripe red fruit in God's own sunshine for
the first time in their lonely little lives, until Jack, who,
between his pride in her and his joy in the prospect of
his long, lone holiday, was over-elated, cried, "Hip,
hurrah!" and patted the convalescing ankle with an
ardour which made the owner of it wince.

"At Allan's age—" began West, but Marion inter-
rupted him.

"There you go harping on the usual line. Allan is
no Methusaleh even if he did and does act a father's
part to the rest of us. We're all selfish pigs where he's
concerned, letting him be the stand-by, shifting all
sorts of responsibilities on him, instead of trying to
pull him out of his shell. We could make him realize
that there's a lot of life ahead of him. He had me to
look after when mother married the second time, and
after her early death he added you to the household.
The two of us kept him too occupied to allow of his
falling in love and marrying. But there's no reason in
the world he shouldn't do it now. Fifty isn't old for a
man, I don't care what you say, and he's the hand-
somest of the bunch."

"Don't be a fool," said West, sourly, and walked
away.

Marion sat up among the cushions and laughed.
"He's afraid of his life Allan will make any chance. A
rich bachelor brother is a nice thing to have when one
likes the good things of life but
is too lazy to work for them.
West thinks he knows it all. I
detest a cocksure person, don't
you?"

Jack was in no mood to argue
the question. "Right you are,"
he assented meekly.

Marion and her experiment, or
rather the materials for her ex-
periment, left Union Station one
glad summer day, arriving with-
out mishap at her destination,
after a two hours' ride by train
and fifty minutes by trolley
through some of the loveliest
country in Ontario.

In the twilight of the second
day Mary Beach, the old house-
keeper, sat with Marion and
Allan on the porch and aired her
views. "I hope fruit's as healthy
as the faddists make out," she
said, "for the way they do gorge
it is a caution. Ain't they
queer? Bet's a regular lamb,
fat, white, frisky an' scared of
everything. As for the boy—"
glancing over her shoulder and
dropping her voice—"what with
his weazened face, long arms, an'
his tree an' roof climbin', he
minds me of an ape, in fact he's
the apiest human I've come
across."

"We've started quite a Zoo,"
volunteered Allan, and while they
laughed Mary held up a hand and
cried, "Hark to that!"

No need to listen. A person
would have to be very deaf in-
deed not to hear the clam-
our which of a sudden filled

the air—shrill entreaties to be let alone, protests,
threats; then a long drawn wail followed by a gasp of
fear, ending up in a gurgling of delight.

"No more yelpin' or down you go, Bet," the boy was
evidently having the best of it. "Hang tight an' shut
your eyes. Now we're off!"

They were indeed. Up to this time only the birds
and squirrels had occupied the big oak at the foot of
the garden, but the Ape had come into his own. In the
very heart of it he had made a nest of strong green
boughs lined thickly with foliage, a nest which the mo-
tion of his bare feet sent swaying and swinging straight
over the low growing quinces. Into it he had per-
suaded—over-persuaded—Bet to enter. He knew she
would enjoy the novelty of it once she was launched, so
was deaf to all she cried out in her first fear of things.

"I'll put you asleep," they heard him say; "hang
tight, Bet!"

"To her last sleep," ejaculated Sally, "those limbs
won't stand it, they're creakin' now."

Allan rose in haste, but Marion detained him.
"They've had so little risky fun in their lives," she
urged. Isn't that a gay little vesper they're
chanting?

"Rock-a-by baby in the tree top,

When the wind blows the cradle will rock—
rock—rock."

Twilight deepened. The homestead was a world shut
in by hill and wood, a world of warm shadows and
delicious scents which nestled down under a gorgeous
coverlet of grey and purple, cross-barred with rose and
gold and saffron, like the robe of a Persian princess. To
and fro swung the nest of boughs, to and fro with
swishings and surrings and ominous creakings, to the
disturbance of a whole colony of birds waiting to settle
down for the night.

"When the wind blows the cradle will rock—
rock—rock."



"Where's Bet's Bed," asked the Ape.