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from the flame-lit sky; and even the dusky willows on its brink seemed ruddier than before. And soon that lingering roseate flush crept slowly over the stubble fields, and up the slope of the hill, to settle lovingly on Caroline's face, and with it's coming came also a warmer glow at her heart. "Oh! he'll come; I know he'll come," she whispered joyously.

"Quack! Quack!" came from a pair of mallards, as they settled on the slough. "Caw! Caw!" cried a couple of benighted crows, flying past.

"Croak! Croak!" said the frogs, beginning to tune up for their evening's entertainment.

Not cheerful sounds, you may think, but on that sunlit evening, they one and all sang to her waiting heart peals of hope, and joy—and spring.

Then joy upon joy, a meadow-lark (the first that year) stood up on a nearby bush, and trilled gaily forth a dulcet even-song of love.

"He'll come! I know he'll come," she murmured again, and fell once more to dreaming.

Just a year before, they had parted on this very hill; and then the hardy little crocus had nodded at them from every side.

"But you'll never do anything on that old place," she had told him scathingly, "your father never has, and he's been there for twenty years; and your mother worked and slaved to make ends meet, till she died of it—and now you want me to go there and do the same thing over again, I suppose. You know very well I like you better than anyone else, Will, but if that's all the ambition you have for yourself, and me, I guess I'm better off where I am."

A hurt look came over the young man's face.

"You know I'd do the best I could for you Caro," he protested, "and—and new methods—you know—"

"New methods," she scoffed, "get something to try your new methods on. Your father did the best he could, too, but what did it amount to? I tell you, Will, there isn't a living thing on that farm; and anyone else will tell you the same thing."

"But what else can I do?" asked her lover, doggedly, "I want to farm. I'm not one of those guys that are crazy to get into the city. I'd rather farm than do anything else, and I haven't any money to buy better land."

"And never will have, if you stay there," said his sweetheart, shortly.

"You mean—homestead?"

"No, I don't mean you to homestead—that takes too long; and most of the good homesteads nowadays are too far from the railroad. I mean, get out and work. There's lots of ways in this country that a smart young man can earn money in a short time."

Will didn't look very hopeful; but he was made of good stuff, and he saw that Caroline was right, as far as her side of the matter was concerned; therefore, he said goodbye to her, fully determined to try his luck in other scenes.

"And if I get along, why, you'll see me back again—maybe when the crocus comes out, next spring," and he swung away through the springing purple flowers, keeping his back resolutely turned towards the stone where Caroline—determined, ambitious Caroline—was crying her heart out in the fear that he would never, never come back.

"Carline! Carline!" she heard her father's voice in the distance. He had evidently come out of the haze of smoke and reminiscence, and wanted Caroline to come and do the polite by the well-to-do neighbor who had come to woo.

But Caroline could snap her fingers at them tonight, for the promise of spring was in her veins, and she remained on the hill until Mr. Hicks had gone grumpily down the road towards his prosperous looking farm.

"I say! What do you mean by traipsin' off that way when neighbor Hicks comes over to call on you?" asked the Captain sharply, when she appeared in the doorway.

"Why, he seemed to be pretty well entertained when I left," said Caroline, innocently.

"Now, none of your pretendin' Miss," said her father, looking rather sheepish, nevertheless; "you know, right well, I

was only talkin' till you got them dishes finished, and could come and give us a few toons on the organ. I don't know what you have against Hicks. In my young days a girl would 'a' jumped at a chance like that—all that land, and a first-class house and all."

"But he's so old, father; and a widower with grown children, doesn't look very attractive to me."

"Old," roared the Captain, "why he's ten years younger than I be; and I feel as young as ever I did; and grown-up children's easier to manage than young ones. I suppose you're still hankering after that good-fer-nothing Will Winters. None of that lot ever was any good and he's the worst of the lot, going off to the dear knows where—and good riddance too."

"But," Caroline, interposed to stop this abuse of her absent lover, "what could you do, father, if I left? You don't care much for cooking." Caroline had a shrewd suspicion that the Captain had his eye on a comely widow, near town; but she also knew that as he would not like to mention this fact, he would have no argument to offer in refutation of her last remark.

To his relief, Jim, the hired man, came in from the barn at that moment, and put an end to the conversation for the time being.

The next evening was grey and dull, but Caroline hurried through her work, and ran up the hill to look for crocuses.

Grey and dull was the evening; and grey and dull the sky; while the spring wind of Saskatchewan howled dismally through the dusky willows that bordered the slough; where the waters lashed the shore in agitated gloom, which left no smallest surface, smooth and fair, where searching willow shadows might find rest.

Down on the ground crouched Caroline, and see, at last the furry feathery buds of the crocus, had pushed intrepidly through the chilly ground. But ah! tonight they brought no joy to her waiting heart. They, like the eve, appeared so grey; no hint of color spoke of blossoms soon to cheer the hillside with their bloom.

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