

visit to her only brother in Calgary. He and his wife doted upon her and she longed for the peace of their home.

She selected a magazine from a pile of periodicals by her side and began to turn its pages. It was a periodical she liked and always took time to read, but it could not hold her attention today. Her fellow-passengers were few and uninteresting, for it was not yet the season for travel East.

It was after a short stop at a way-station that the sleeping-car conductor, followed by a man with a small satchel and a gun-case, entered the car. They paused at the section opposite hers.

"You can have this," said the conductor.

The man was young and of athletic build, tall and with a back that lacked perfect straightness because of the muscles across the shoulders. He wore a suit of dark gray and wore it well. His rather lean face expressed strength and kindness of character. Unconsciously the girl leaned forward and gazed at him eagerly. She recognized him at once. He was the "man whom she could love."

He lifted his satchel and gun and placed them securely in the rack above. "He hasn't an ounce of superfluous flesh," she thought. "He is lean."

He removed his soft felt hat and light spring overcoat and hung them up. Then he ran his fingers carelessly through his thick light-brown hair, leaving it rather rough. The other man kept his carefully brushed. Throwing himself into the seat, he found the sun in his face and pulled down the shade, when, turning, he met a pair of big blue eyes gazing eagerly into his. At this he experienced what was for him a strange sensation. It was indescribable. Perhaps it was a thrill. At any rate, it was a disturbance in the region of his heart.

The girl sank back into her seat with heightened color. Shameful! She, an unchaperoned young woman, had been caught staring boldly into the face of a stranger! What would he think of her? In her distress she stole a glance at him. He was leaning back comfortably with his hands in his pockets, his eyes fixed gravely on the toes of his shoes. The strength and force of his face seen squarely were softened in the profile. His forehead next to his hair was very white. There was a suggestion of a keen sense of humor in the shading about the mouth and eyes. The latter were dark gray and set under strong brows. She drew a long breath. She had dreamed of such a face.

Suddenly he looked up and met her eyes again, whereupon she buried herself in her book in an agony of confusion.

The stranger began surreptitiously to observe her. He saw at once that she was a lady. Everything about her bespoke refinement—her little well-shod foot peeping from under her long cloak, her small white hands, and the proud carriage of her head upon her shoulders. Her face was turned away, but he could catch a glimpse of a pink cheek, the curve of a sensitive mouth, and an adorable little nose.

"She thought she knew me," he decided—then with another glance, "I wish she did."

He began to think of another woman, perhaps because this one was now in her various phases of loveliness so unlike her. He admired the other so much that he had been thinking seriously of asking her to marry him. He shut his eyes and could see her—strong and lithe, with red cheeks and wind-blown hair, "brazzing" a ball across the links; beautiful and vivacious, surrounded by admirers in a ballroom; atop of a thoroughbred horse, laughing, radiant, flying before the wind—always brilliant, self-possessed, capable, queenly—what a woman to help a man in his career!—a woman besieged by admirers, and inclined, perhaps, to smile—a little—on him. Yet presently he stole another glance at the girl across the aisle who was now apparently absorbed in her book.

"What a little creature she is!" he thought. "What a dear little girl for a man to come home to at night after a hard day's work!"

On the seat opposite was her small

satchel, and pasted on the end of it, overlooked by its owner, was plainly to be discerned the mischievous label of a Winnipeg hotel where she had stopped on a trip East the previous summer. Observing this, he at once assumed that she lived in the East, where she was probably returning after a visit West. He was conscious of a feeling of disappointment.

"She looks like an Easterner," he thought—then—"A little girl like that will be swallowed up in the city of Winnipeg and I shall never see her again."

A moment later he laughed at himself for a sentimental fool.

Presently the train conductor came in for his ticket. "Well," he said, "what sport did you have, sir?"

"Oh, pretty fair," was the answer. "What a pleasant voice!" she thought. "I have quite a string of birds in the baggage-car."

"Glad to hear it," said the conductor as he punched the ticket. "I guess you'll find things pretty lively when you get back East." And he passed on.

So he was going to the East! And she would get off at Calgary! Just a few hours and she would in all probability never see him again. Their paths had merged for a little space, but in the future they would lie far apart. "This is fate," she thought bitterly, and felt its shadow lie heavy on her heart.

The sun had disappeared beneath a leaden sky and the man raised the shade. As he did so she noticed his hands, which were large and brown—strong hands, she decided, capable of a good hearty grip. Outside the prospect was not cheerful, for it still had the cold, raw look of early spring. "Now," he thought whimsically, "if that little girl over there were only sitting here close by my side, and we could talk together while she looked up at me with those big blue eyes, and smiled on me with that sweet little mouth—by George!" And his heart bounded at the thought.

Silently he began to anathematize the conventions of good society. Here he was, a gentleman, as the world understands the term, longing to speak to, and, if possible, to serve, the dearest, sweetest, most lovable little woman in the world, yet were he to presume to address her without an excellent excuse she would feel herself insulted, and justly so. The very respect and admiration she inspired, he told himself, precluded the idea. No, he must sit inane, helplessly by while this pearl among women, the only one whom he had ever felt that he could really love, went on her way to Winnipeg—while he got off at Calgary!

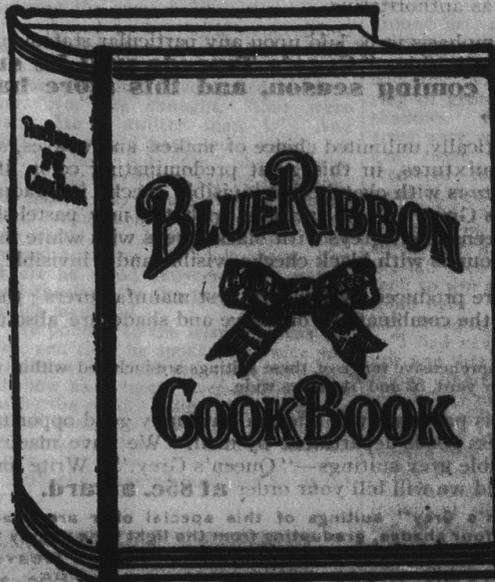
The train-boy, noisy and persuasive, came along with his arms full of Easter magazines. As the man selected one from the number the girl peeped at him from the corner of her eye. She experienced a decided sensation of pleasure when she observed that he chose the very magazine that she had been reading. She took it up from her lap with renewed interest, whereupon the man, his attention attracted by the movement, looked across and saw also that they were reading the same book. Each could not but see that the other saw.

"Our tastes are the same," he thought, and he, too, was pleased.

The morning passed as mornings do on board a train. The other passengers read or slept or gazed wearily from the windows. There were but two who felt no sense of drowsiness, and for whom the day did not drag. They wished it would never end, for they had done that foolish thing which, as it happened, each had many times in the past denounced as impossible for a man or woman of any sense or strength of character to do—they had fallen in love at first sight.

After luncheon, of which each partook somewhat sparingly in the dining-car, the man sat for half an hour in the smoking apartment and tried to reason with himself out of what he felt to be the absurd frame of mind in which he found himself. Heretofore, sentiment had played little part in his life, as college, the hard work of his early manhood, and later the interests of a successful career, had absorbed his time and energies. The feeling inspired by this little girl whom he did

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