The Making of 'Val' Pierce

By CONRAD RICHTER.

VI.

One morning Davey did not appear at the log-littered swamp until after the others.

"I guess you can get along without me all right," he said to Val with averted eyes when he came.

"I don't understand, Davey," said Val.

"Mol and me are going to Rockville to try to get jobs," he stammered.

"Why, you've got a job here on your own timber!" reproached Val.

The boy tried to answer, faltered, broke down, and confessed wretchedly that he and Mol were leaving only to keep up their mother's table.

"We haven't eaten up your mother's money, Davey!" protested Val, aghast.

"There wasn't much—only—"

"Not your school money, Davey!" And at the boy's hasty disavowal of consequence: "Lord! I never figured how much three hungry woodchoppers could eat. Wait till I talk to Barney. You and Mol can't go to Rockville, that's certain." He hurriedly sought out his partner, who whistled blankly when informed of the disaster.

"Barney," said Val doggedly, "we've got to sell what timber we have over the mountain. And you're the one who's got to do it."

"Me!" exclaimed Barney. "Why me?"

"I don't have the gift of gab, Barney," faltered Val. "Besides— Be a sport and go, Barney! Don't ask why."

With evident reluctance and misgivings, Barney took the seven dollars and went over Sunset mountain. He came back the fourth day with a dollar and fifteen cents, and no success except that at the hotel in Millersville he had found a party of trout fishermen from the city, one of whom was a lumber buyer. He and another were coming over to fish Beaver creek the next day, and would try to find time to look at the timber.

Early the following morning Val, Barney and Davey started for Beaver valley. They crossed the mountain in true backwoods silence. Val's spirits fell when he saw the timber. It lay sprawled here and there where it had landed. Bushes hid it and leaves covered it, and the sawed ends of the logs bore a yellowed appearance, as if aged.

About 11 o'clock two figures in tan coats and dripping waders appeared from the stream. One was short and slight and bobbed along in nervous, uncertain fashion. The other was built on bulky lines and walked ponderously. Val's breath failed when his eyes fell on the pair. From where he stood he would have sworn one to be Angus, the head of his father's purchasing and supply department, and the other his father himself. In quick panic he begged Barney and Davey to say nothing about him, then fled to a clump of young hemlocks shading the old bunk-house spring.

The identity of the strangers proved as he had apprehended. A multitude of sensations, new, old and forgotten, crowded upon him as he peered mutely from his aromatic screen. His eyes followed his father's inimitable walk, saw him poke with familiar motions about the logs, saw him confer shortly with Barney, while Davey at a respectful distance watched with deferent eyes.

Then with characteristic abruptness, Valentine Pierce, Senior, started away from the group.

"Looks like water coming out of these young hemlocks over here," he observed. "Wait till I get a drink!"

Val's pulses stood momentarily still. He looked around wildly for retreat. His little clump of trees stood alone. Escape was impossible. A minute afterward he stood doggedly facing a heavy figure on whose duck sleeve the evergreen needles scratched audibly.

"Val!" bellowed his father. "What the devil are you doing here?" With a bearlike paw he caught the boy and administered a father's kiss, the same unfashionable greeting Val had shrunk from upon his return from college, an endearment tasting intimately of mustache, coffee and cigars.

"Please, Chancellor!" begged the boy unsteadily. "Don't tell my friends out there! I'll go along and give myself up without trouble."

"Give yourself up, fiddlesticks!" snorted the parent. "You didn't massacre anybody. Last I heard he was smoking fifty cigarettes a day."

Val's mind struggled hard to understand.

"But Lou, Chancellor. Why didn't he tell? He knew where I was all the time!"

"Guess Lou didn't stop long enough to find out your friend got well," chuckled Valentine iPerce, Senior. "I understand he chased it to Louisiana pretty sudden. Got a job with a cypress mill." His eyes swept the boy critically. "Must say you're looking fit, son. Your mother sure won't be sorry to see you. She's been anxious some. I've been worrying more about Angus. He's leaving us in the fall. Might be an opening for you, young man. This country up here ought to be pretty good groundwork for our line of business."

"I'll be much obliged for the chance, Chancellor," said Val meekly.

Three days later two men sat at the writing table of a comfortable hotel room. One of the pair, a heavy grizzly-like form, had just finished blotting a check with a fist that threatened to crack the table. The other, a sandy-haired giant, accepted the limber slip of paper, then handed it back.

"I believe you've made a mistake, Mr. Pierce."

"No mistake," assured the other gruffly. "That bonus is for seeing the boy into a timber job on his own hook. Best thing could have happened him."

"But I didn't do that," explained the sandy-haired man. "He worked into it himself—after he saw you under that pitch pine on Black mountain. All I did was plant myself on the job, saw that he didn't hurt himself or get away, and mail you your reports."

"Doesn't matter," waved the big man testily. "I gave that young Lou Baron an extra check for pulling off his stunt, and his moving-picture friend another for dying so darn real from a blank cartridge. You had a longer siege than any of them. Now I got more work for you. The boy says I've got to give you a decent job and send those Millian kids to college, or he will. I'm not objecting particularly, providing you never give this thing away to the boy. But his mother isn't exactly anxious to see him get tangled up with that girl—"

"Nothing doing, Mr. Pierce," said the sandy-haired man abruptly, getting to his feet. "I'm through."

"No offence, Barney," assured the big man placidly, proffering a dark cigar. "I just wanted to tell Mrs. Pierce that I tried my darnedest, and fell down. Fact is, between you and me, Barney, I'd like to see him marry the girl."

(The End.)

Woman's Interests

Women and Household Machinery.

It has happened somewhat frequently that men who have provided their wives with one of the new inventions in household machinery have observed that after the "labor saver" has been used a few times it found its way to the shed or the attic, there to languish out its dusty days. Such incidents have led to the assertion that "women do not take to machinery." Women are natural conservers of old ways, but the fact that they are not unalterably averse to machinery is proved by the willingness of every woman who sews to use a sewing machine. Nevertheless, it is true that many of the women who most need the labor-saving contrivances—the women on the farms, in the villages, the women everywhere who have mountains of housework to do, and who are busy from sunup to sundown—are the very ones who appear most loath to adopt time savers and strength savers. They are perhaps more reasons than one for their disinclination.

First, although machinery unquestionably does the work more quickly, more thoroughly and more cheaply than human labor, it often calls for an excessive output of energy in a short time, and women are not used to that; nor are all women constituted for it. The washing machine, the cake mixers and the bread-kneading machines will do the work in one-sixth of the time that is required by the old methods, but a delicate woman may not be able to keep up the pace for even that short period. She finds it easier to rub clothes on a board for two hours than to turn the handle of a patent washer for twenty minutes. Where power from electricity, gasoline or any other source is available the problem is solved, of course; but, lacking that, a woman should plan to work the machine from one to three minutes at a time, and do something else between the periods of work. In that way she will save time and get more work done with less fatigue.

In the second place, not all machines suit every woman, for different makes often tax different sets of muscles. For example, there is a little vacuum washer on the market, small and inexpensive, that will do the work of one of the big, costly contrivances. A woman with strong abdomen muscles could not choose a better machine; but one who has not that advantage should select a machine that exercises different muscles.

It is the same with the heated laundry mangle that quickly presses all flat pieces with a beautiful finish, but that requires strength of arm and shoulder. There are so many different makes of nearly all the labor-saving machines that women should be able to make an intelligent investigation and select those that they can use with the most comfort.

In general, it may be said that the machine that calls for the downward push rather than the upward pull, or for the motion that throws the weight away from the worker rather than draws it toward her, the machine that can be set at such a height that the operator can use it without bending her back, the one that does not require raising the upper arm to turn a wheel or pull a lever, will be the easiest to run.

Third, many women are blinded to the advantage of some contrivance by considering not so much what the machine will do as what it will not do.

The vacuum cleaner will not pick up threads or ravelings, but it will clean carpets and rugs better than the most vigorous hand sweeping, and if used every week will do away with the need in spring and fall of tearing up floor coverings and of beating rugs, pillows and draperies free from the dust of months. It is one of the most sanitary as well as one of the most efficient machines.

Then there are the family dishwashers that require a great deal more hot water than would be needed in a dish pan. But the dishes are washed in one quarter of the time, or less, and the cost of the hot water can easily be balanced by using a fireless cooker and so saving more fuel than the dishwasher requires.

There is also an ice-cream freezer that does not need to be turned. The ice cream is not quite so smooth and velvety as the kind made in the old-fashioned freezer, but time and strength are saved, and the ability to enjoy a cool, refreshing dessert every summer day should more than compensate for a slight lack of fineness in texture.

Besides the larger appliances there are dozens of small and handy aids to housework that no woman should be without, but that should be chosen with intelligent regard to individual needs. A good food chopper can be used for all sorts of foods. It is likely to be in frequent use, for it saves time and labor and is easily cleaned. A mayonnaise mixer, on the other hand, may be needed only occasionally, and can be used only to make mayonnaise; and it takes time to clean it. In buying any of the household conveniences it is well to consider: (1) whether the article is likely to be in everyday use; (2) whether it has a wide range of usefulness; (3) whether it is easy to clean and care for.

Apple Butter.

One peck tart apples, two quarts cider, three pounds granulated sugar or less, one and one-half teaspoonfuls each of ground allspice and cinnamon, one-half teaspoonful ground cloves.

Wash, slice and cut apples, place in preserving kettle with cider and cook until very tender, then press through strainer to remove skins, cores and seeds. Return pulp to fire and boil quickly for a half hour, add sugar and spices and cook until thick, stirring frequently. Can be stored in sterilized jars or crocks.

Training Little Children.

The mother of small children who does not live within reach of a kindergarten need not feel compelled to deprive her little ones of the pleasures and benefits of systematic training. It is true that the stimulus of co-operative work and play, so vital a feature of the kindergarten, is not so apt to be found in the smaller group at home and is entirely lacking in the case of the only child. Nevertheless, many of the activities provided in kindergarten can be carried on not only by the small group but by the lonely child as well.

"Come let us live with our children!" is the old familiar Froebelian slogan. We might paraphrase it by saying, "Come, let us sing with our children!"

Why shouldn't children sing morning greetings to father and mother as well as to teacher? Even 2-year-olds that I know can sing them and delight in doing so. The good morning songs to various members of the family, to the new days, to sun or clouds, sung while dressing, do much to create a sunny morning atmosphere. There are songs to accompany many of the home duties, besides a wealth of nature songs. At bedtime the devotional spirit of the evening prayer may be enhanced by the singing of a child's hymn. Songs such as these can be found in "Games and Music of Froebel's Mother Play" and in other kindergarten song books. Any good library would have some of these, or it would be possible to buy copies through a bookstore.

A kindergarten calendar may easily be made at home. For this purpose a sheet of white cardboard is ruled off into a sufficient number of blank squares for the days of the month. The children mark the calendar each day with a suitable emblem. Yellow circles should be provided for sunny days and gray for cloudy. Tiny umbrellas denote rain; a gray circle partly covered with white indicates snow. Advertisements furnish pictures for special occasions—a little church, a toy, a birthday cake, a Christmas tree, etc. The particular emblem is less important to the children than the pleasure they take in attending to the calendar regularly, and the fact that they are being helped to a realization of divisions of time. The card should be large enough to allow for a suitable picture for the month to be mounted outside of the ruled portion. Landseer's "Squirrel and Pair of Nutcrackers" may be used for the October sheet. Correggio's "Holy Night" for December. Queen Victoria's portrait for May.

Games train the senses at the same time that they afford keen pleasure. A mother can play many games with her child without interrupting her work. Dramatization is a wonderful stimulus to the imagination, and numberless stories lend themselves to this form of reproduction.

The kindergarten, aiming as it does, to relate the limited world of the small person to the larger world about him, to quicken his appreciation of parents and all world-workers, to deepen his wonder and reverence for natural phenomena, is much more than a mere place of amusement. The home can be made more than this also.

The Right Time.

The new chaplain very much wanted to amuse as well as instruct his men, and, accordingly, on one occasion, arranged for an illustrated lecture on Bible scenes and incidents.

One seaman who possessed a phonograph was detailed to discourse appropriate music between pictures. The first of these represented Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The sailor cudgeled his brains and ran through his list, but he could think of no music exactly appropriate to the picture.

"Please play up!" whispered the chaplain.

Then an inspiration came to the seaman, and, to the consternation of the chaplain and the delight of the audience, the phonograph ground out, "There's only one girl in this world for me!"

A Tea College.

A business college, a college of law or medicine, even a college of agriculture, yes!—but did you ever hear of a tea college? They are going to have one in China. This is because Ceylon and India have taken away nearly all China's foreign commerce in tea, and the intelligent men of the wise country have decided to form a college to study how to get this commerce back again, and also how to produce a better product.

Confidence is the very basis of all achievement. There is a tremendous power in the conviction that we can do a thing.

Among the many new kinds of money that have come as a result of the war, light, clean, inexpensive porcelain coins, if experiments in making them are so successful as to warrant a large issue, will be perhaps the most convenient. A porcelain factory in Dresden, at the suggestion of the Ministry of Finance, is investigating methods of making large quantities of two-mark and five-mark "chinas."

It is just the little difference between the good and the best that makes the difference between the artist and the artisan.

Don't brood over the past nor dream of the future, but seize the instant and get your lesson from the hour.

Turning Seaweed to Useful Purposes.

An establishment for harvesting the vegetal products of the sea and converting them into valuable scientific and culinary commodities has just been opened at Glendale, near Los Angeles. The plant will first turn its attention to the manufacture of agar by mechanical process.

Agar, formerly coming mainly from Japan, where it is made by a hand process, is a product of seaweed having extraordinary food and medicinal value and varied scientific uses. As a preservative and solidifier in fruits and jellies, it is said to be unexcelled, and eaten with meats and cereals, is an efficient aid to digestion. Candy manufacturers use it extensively for the even, consistent body and the appearance of superior richness it gives to the highest grade confections. It is considered indispensable in the modern chemical laboratory, being utilized chiefly as a medium for the culture of bacteria because of its unsusceptibility to changes of temperature.

The harvesting of the seaweed is a slow, tedious task. The plants resemble delicate moss and are ordinarily mistaken for such. They vary from a few inches to two feet in height. The leaves are threadlike and often interwoven like finest lace. An experienced workman can gather about 200 lb., dried, in a day. Diving bells are used where the fields are below a depth of 20 feet.

The raw weed can be converted into finished product in about 2 hours, and the establishment is already turning out nearly a half ton per day, with a three-ton production as its ultimate goal.

Scarcely any handwork is used in the new process, mechanical carriers conveying the material from one machine to another. As exemplifying the improved methods, four mortars, each having a circumference of approximately 65 in. and a depth of 14 in., are sunk in a solid block of concrete. Into these the raw weeds are thrown. Four long vertical rods, or pestles, 3 in. in diameter, and driven by motor power, fit into each mortar, stirring and beating the material into a pulp. From the mortars the pulp is transferred to a washing tank and thence to a bleaching vat, after which it is sent through a powerful mechanical wringer and out upon the drying tables in the sunlight. After drying it is boiled for several hours, submitted to a filtering process, and subsequently deposited in metal trays, where it solidifies in sheets resembling transparent wax.

Spread the Contagion.

Charles Lamb said, "A laugh is worth a hundred groans any minute." Addison said, "Cheerfulness is the best promoter of health. Repinings and murmurings of the heart give imperceptible strokes to those delicate fibres of which the vital parts are composed, and wear out the machine. Cheerfulness is as friendly to the mind as to the body."

Sterne says: "I live in a constant endeavor to fence against the infirmities of ill health, and other evils of life, by mirth; being firmly persuaded that every time a man smiles, but much more when he laughs, he adds something to his fragment of life."

Haliburton says: "Cheerfulness is health; melancholy is disease."

Many persons are ushered into this life tinctured with an inherited melancholy strain. It is difficult for such persons to overcome their innate tendency to gloom and the blues; but when it is understood that all such emotions are directly traceable to a feebly acting liver, that a gradual transformation can be effected by strengthening this organ, the bile-tinged melancholic and disgruntled or silent souls will really develop hope.

In physiognomy, hope is the outward and visible sign of the liver. Laughter produces mechanical massage of this organ and promotes its activity. The late William James suggested, "The sovereign voluntary path to cheerfulness, if our spontaneous cheerfulness be lost, is to sit up cheerfully, look around cheerfully, and to act and speak as if cheerfulness were already there. If such conduct does not make you soon feel cheerful, nothing else on that occasion can. So, to feel brave, we must act as if we were brave, use all our will to that end, and a courage-fit will very likely replace the fit of fear."

Wayne Whipple, in his life of Abraham Lincoln, wrote, "This saving sense of humor was like daily dew to the drooping spirits of the careworn President, and its sustaining freshness must have had an inestimable influence in the final preservation of the union."

Fun, mirth, laughter and good cheer are potent miracle workers—they cost nothing but the will to cultivate them.

In planting for the future it is not always necessary to rake up the past. Some men are really important. Thousands merely act that way.

A government college of fisheries, like those maintained by Great Britain, Norway, Japan, and Germany, is now proposed for the city of Halifax, N.S. The school would provide instruction in seamanship, navigation, and the care of motor engines, in addition to work with improved methods of catching and curing fish and of utilizing the by-products.