The Pioneers

BY KATHARINE SUSANNAH PRICHARD

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CHAPTER XL.—(Cont'd.)

"It's great times we've had together, my darling, isn't it?" the Schoolmaster asked. "I don't like going without you, but it's better. It's great times we've had together . . and now I'm an old blind devil that wouldn't be able to look after you properly in the town. It's not a nice place for a girl to be going about in, and I'd be no good to look after you—no more than a burden. Pete here'll be my guide and take me by the track round the swamp to Melbourne. He says he couldn't do the short cut across the swamp, but he knows the roundabout track all right. We'll have to be careful on Davey's account then. You'll be a good wife to Davey, won't you, darling? And happy as the day's long when he gets back. But you do love me, too, don't you, darling blackhead? For God's sake say you love me!"

His voice broke.

Deirdre flung her arms about him, reckless of all but that some trouble within had forced that cry. There was a bitter undertone in his words that she could not understand, although she associated them in some way with Davey's mother and the disturbance and restitution into which Davey's arrest had put him.

"I love you," she cried, "more than all the world—more than Davey, more than anyone or anything in it."

He stooped and kissed her.

"What a jealous brute I am," he murmured, "to have taken that from you."

"There's nothing you haven't told me?" she asked, searching his face.

"No," he replied, turning his face from her and burying it in her hair.

"You haven't told me anything at all of what you're going to do to get Davey off," she said sharply.

"Oh, well," he parried, "I don't know . . I haven't decided . . it will depend upon circumstances."

He recognized the anxiety of her voice.

"You aren't going to try and get him off by putting yourself in his place, are you?" she asked, doubtfully. "You've really been less in the thing than he has, and he's young and strong and . . ."

"Oh, no," the Schoolmaster laughed lightly. "I wouldn't try to do that."

He went out to the stable-yard. When the Kangaroo was saddled, he took Deirdre in his arms again.

She watched him canter down the road on the great raking grey, towards the inland plains, Pete McColl on one of Steve's horses, a few yards behind him. The thought of that cry of his troubled her. Why had he said: "For God's sake, say you love me!"

The flood of her love for him rose and filled her, the love of all those early years, when he had been mother, brother and playfellow. Little pictures of his tenderness, of his gay good-fellowship, of his care, flitted before her. Because for years it had moved so tranquilly, she had scarcely realized the depth and power of that passionate affection; but now that he had called for it, showed his need of it, as he had never done even in the old days, it surged tempestuously.

CHAPTER XLI.

"So the Schoolmaster's swearin' young Davey Cameron was no more than a hired drover to him," said McNab.

He was talking to Steve.

"What's that you're saying?"

Deirdre came to the doorway.

McNab had just arrived. A skinny, raw-boned boy from the Wirree was taking his horse and cart to the stables. She had seen it draw up a few minutes before and wondered why McNab had come. She had heard Steve's greeting to him and McNab's reply.

"Oh, there you are, Deirdre," he said, shuffling towards her and holding out his hand. She disregarded it, looking into his eyes.

McNab was in a good temper. The smile wrinkling the skin about his mouth told that he had some secret cause for being well pleased with himself and the world at large. He could afford to forgive her.

"What's that you were saying about father?" she asked.

"Haven't you heard? Why it's out of the world you are here, Steve. It's the talk of Wirreeford this business of young Davey duffin'! And the Schoolmaster says it's none of Davey Cameron's business, but his. I wasn't sure Farrel was in it meself, before—had me suspicions of course—but nothing to go on. Conal's business I knew it was; but the devil who gave him long legs knows where he is. He knew when to leave. Smells a sinking ship like a rat at sea, Conal does."

Neither Deirdre nor Steve spoke. McNab's eyes wandered from one to the other of them. He continued, chuckling, as though enjoying the joke:

"He's saying—the Schoolmaster—that Young Davey was a good stockman, and when he quarrelled with his father he gave him a job and was paying him wages, re'lar, till he got something else to do, or went home again. And there was no more to it than that. Davey, of course, tried to bluff things out at first; but there was an information out, signed by Cameron, so the story wouldn't wash that he was on D.C.'s business."

Deirdre clenched her hands as McNab giggled; there was a malicious, slow glimmer in his eyes as they rested on her.

"When Cameron got a suspicion someone was liftin' cattle from the back hills, he was busy enough givin' information—keen enough to catch the moonlighters! But he didn't reck'n on his boy being taken in charge of a mob.

"Troopers in Melbourne didn't believe Davey's yarn about being his father's son, seein' they'd got Donald Cameron's written word against mobs coming from the South to the markets thereabouts. Farrel's story is a good 'un. He says he struck a bargain with Donald Cameron, as agent for Maitland & Co., stock and store dealers, of Coolima, New South Wales, a couple of years ago. These beasts were to have gone over the border when next some of Maitland's stockmen were in the South; but the rivers were down, the stock rollin' fat, and prices up, so he thought it a pity to lose the market, and sent young Davey with 'm round the swamp to Melbourne yards, not telling him details of the deal. Davey havin' had a difference with his father was glad of the job; it's a sort of challenge to Cameron. Clever of the Schoolmaster! I wonder what D. C.'ll do about it. He can see it's a let-off for Davey, if he stands to it, a let-off for the Schoolmaster too. If he doesn't—well, I think Davey, 'n your father, my dear, 'll spend a bit of time on the roads.

"The queer part of the business is that though half a dozen men's beasts may be in the mob, the brands 've been so neatly faked, no one can swear to 'em. All the clear skins 've got Maitland's brand on. So the charge of cattle-stealin' 'll stand or fall be what Cameron says—or does. A couple of white-faced cows with D.C. on 'm are the only give-aways in the lot!"

"He won't put his own son away," blurted Steve.

"P'raps! P'raps not!"

McNab fidgeted.

"Hardly likely!" Deirdre cried.

"Mick Ross 'n Bud Morrison were in here, couple of nights ago," Steve went on. "And they said they'd swear blind none of their beasts were in the lot. All the hill settlers 'd be prepared to do the same, they said—rather than put Davey or the Schoolmaster in a fix."

"Y—es," snarled McNab, "so I'm told!"

Deirdre laughed. His disgust and disappointment delighted her.

"You didn't reckon on that, did you, Mr. McNab?" she said.

She went off down the road to the paddock where Steve's two milking cows were, and presently, drove them, one swinging before the other, into the yard at the back of the shanty. She was easier in her mind than she had been since the Schoolmaster had gone—even since Davey rode out of Narrow Valley. But the sight of McNab disturbed her. She bailed and leg-roped the cows. Wondering why he had come, as she milked, and the milk fell with a gentle swish into the pail between her knees, she could not believe that it was merely to bring them the good news that Davey and the Schoolmaster were likely to get off.

She turned the cows into the paddock beside the bails and took the pail of warm, sweet-smelling milk indoors.

When she went into the kitchen McNab was sitting in the big chair by the fire. He looked up at her. The firelight showed his face and the smile that glimmered on it. He seemed to be remembering, and with triumph, that other night when he had sat there.

Steve, crouched on the bench opposite him, was shivering and sobbing.

Deirdre put the milk in its place.

"What's the matter? What have you done to him?" she fried, facing McNab.

He took a heavy chain from his pocket. It clanked with a dull, slow sound.

Steve started from his chair.

"Oh, send him away, Deirdre, send him away!" he sobbed.

Deirdre knew the meaning of the trick. She had heard it often. It was an old dodge to discover escaped convicts, this clanking of a chain near them. A man who had worn irons never forgot the sound they made, and whenever he heard it would start and tremble. The rage that burned to a white heat kept her silent a moment.

"You'd never 've thought it, would you, Deirdre? Him a lag, and you a lag's daughter?" McNab chuckled.

"It's a lie!"

"Is it? You ask—Uncle Steve. It's been a puzzle to me, more'n eighteen years, why two chaps from the Island never came for the help that was promised 'm, and they with a reward out against them. I knew they'd got safe up the river because a boat was found on the bank, beyond where M'Laughlin is now. I meant to touch a bit of that reward, too, but it's never too late to mend, as they say."

"You'd never send us back to the Island?" Steve cried. "You'd never do that, McNab?"

"Wouldn't I?"

McNab laughed softly. He was enjoying the spectacle of Steve's whimpering, the trembling of his withered limbs—the sense of power that it gave him.

"You——" Deirdre gasped; but anger choked her.

"There, now," he interrupted. "I wouldn't be calling me names, if I were you, Deirdre. After the pretty way you treated me a month or two ago, too. Would you be forgettin', my dear? It would be a pity to make an enemy of me, as I said once before. It's a bad enemy I make, they say, and a nasty temper I've got when I'm roused. But there's nothing I wouldn't do for you, Deirdre. You can twist me round your little finger if you like."

The firelight was in his eyes.

(To be continued.)

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About the House

Entertainment for the Child.

It is not the purpose of this article to teach you to entertain your child, but rather to tell you how to teach your child to entertain himself. His older brothers and sisters are at school and it is often a problem to find some clean and healthy amusements for the little tot.

I do not agree with many mothers who think their child should be taught to be a paragon of neatness and cleanliness. While the rudiments of order and tidiness must be impressed on the plastic minds of our children, we can not expect them to be contented and happy if never allowed to indulge in any of the amusements dear to the hearts of the little folks, such as blowing soap bubbles or cutting papers. Of course, it makes mothers more work but it does not make a disagreeable litter to sweep up and either amusement is clean. They both help to develop the child's imagination and love of creation, that is a natural trait in any normal child.

We save all the scraps of wrapping paper and now that the older children are in school, our little tot spends many happy hours making scrap books. He cuts the paper the right size and with twine and darning needle, sews the sheets together. In these books he pastes bright pictures which he cuts from seed catalogs or magazines. After the little fellow becomes tired of this amusement, he is told that it is now time to gather up the scrap papers. He thinks he is helping and is certainly not having the idea instilled in his mind that he is to be waited on, but rather, that he must do his part.

If the child is inclined toward a liking for books he should be given every opportunity to develop along this line. It is the early training that forms a good foundation for his school training. He will spend many busy hours making himself acquainted with the characters of his picture book that will help in forming his early impressions.

Half a dozen potatoes and a handful of burned matches may be employed in making another hour pass happily. A whole circus of potato animals may be made and with the help of a box of building blocks the little folks may have a regular "Noah's Ark."

The old-fashioned spool knitting is a favorite with little folks and teaches patience. If bits of bright-colored strings are saved, tied together and used for this purpose, much more interest will be taken.

Some children will enjoy half an hour's play each day for the entire winter, with a box of toothpicks. I would not advise this, however, if the child can not be taught to gather up the toothpicks after playing with them each time. Farms may be laid out, fences built, and even a house and barn added by the use of these little sticks. If you happen to have dye mixed for some other purpose and will dip a few of the toothpicks in the dye fluid, it will add wonderfully to the attractiveness of them for the children's playthings, as it is natural for children to love bright objects.

Mother's clothespins may also be used in the same way. If the fences and buildings are made of these and cows and horses furnished in the form of empty spools, the child's enjoyment can hardly be over-estimated.

A little girl is never so happy as when "helping mother," even though her help is a bother. My mother used to give me a bit of her bread dough whenever she baked and I was allowed to care for the dough and then make it out into a tiny loaf when she made hers out, and when it was baked it was my bread for supper. I know it was a great help to me in making me observant of the methods used in housework, and I was more willing to help mother when I was old enough to really be of service.—Nellie Porter.

How to Make Bread With a Mixer.

I have used a bread mixer since six years ago last fall. I have a family of eight to cook for, mostly boys, and honestly, I don't know how I would manage without it. I bake twice a week, making seven loaves and two pans of plain buns each time.

I have a measure for the liquids and a scale to weigh the flour. Of course, there is a difference in flour, but one can soon tell how much to use. If the dough looks sticky add a little more flour and knead again.

Bread recipe—At dinner time, save one quart of potato water, put two tablespoons each of sugar and salt in a gallon crock and pour on the hot potato water. Mash real fine a good cupful of potatoes and add to liquid. When lukewarm add a cake of softened yeast foam and flour to make a nice pancake batter. Cover and let rise.

Just before bedtime put one tablespoon of lard in your mixer and pour on it one quart of boiling milk. When lard has melted put in one quart of water, cool enough to make milk lukewarm, then add yeast mixture and ten pounds of flour. Now put on your kneading rod and turn the crank until flour is all mixed in. If dough sticks to finger add a little more flour and knead again until dough is nice and smooth and does not stick to side of mixer. There is a great difference in flour and some you use more of than others.

Cover the mixer with a cloth, put on cover, and either set in a warm place or cover warmly for over night. In the morning knead down well then put in pans. Let rise as usual, and bake.

This makes nine loaves. One can divide the recipe.—Mrs. J. L.

Household Helps.

With the hens laying well and the cows freshening, and with the sales over, I have quite a bit more money than at any other time in the year. So I buy one thing that will lighten my work. Last year it was a butter worker and bread mixer, this year a cake mixer and pressure cooker. I also buy as many extra staples such as rice, soap, spice, and cornstarch as I can afford. When summer with its extra expenses comes, I have some things ahead.

Another thing I have is two pairs of curtains for each window downstairs. How often we know we should wash the curtains but there is so much to do that we just put it off and then like a bomb, we get a letter that a carload of in-laws and some of their friends are coming for the week-end. Think of the relief of having clean curtains to slip on the poles.

When I have a lot of hemming to do I sew the ends of the different articles so that when I begin I have a continuous seam. This does away with the little notch at the beginning of each article.

I always read the daily paper, no matter how busy I am, and I always spend fifteen minutes with my music. Let's keep from being farm drudges as some seem to think we are.—M. M.

The New Spelling.

"Oh, mamma," exclaimed little Gertrude, "I can spell 'nothing,' and that's a big word, isn't it?"

"A pretty big one for a little maid your age," replied her mother. "How do you spell nothing?"

"Z. X. M."

"Why, darling, that isn't right."

"Yes, it is," said Gertrude, emphatically. "I said to grandma, 'What does Z. X. M. spell?" and she said 'Nothing.' "

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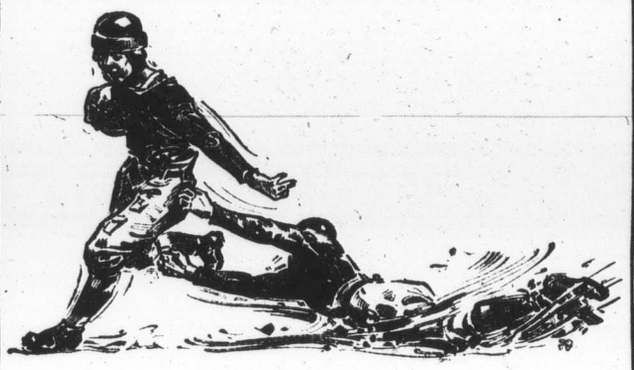

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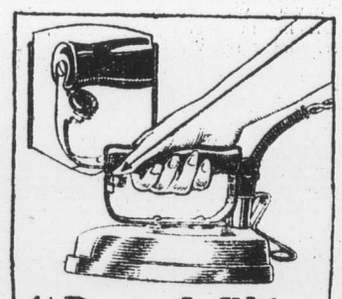

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