

Scarlet Poppies

Written for The Western Home Monthly by S. Galbraith

MYRA KENNEDY paused at the brow of the hill. She suddenly realized that she was hot and tired, so she sat down on a stone by the wayside to rest. She was so lost in thought that she failed to hear approaching wheels, and started when she heard her own name.

"Won't you get in, Miss Kennedy?" the young man in the buggy was saying. "I'm going past your house."

"Thank you," said Myra. "You have a good horse," she added, when they had started.

"Oh, Prince is a very fair trotter. Why don't you drive to your school? I should think four miles each way was too far for you to walk."

Myra flushed. "My sister-in-law thinks eight miles a day is too much for a horse," she explained. "Farm work is coming on, and she wants to keep the horses in good condition."

"Well, I suppose you rest up Saturday and Sunday," John Kerr said. "Swing in the hammock and read a novel, I suppose?"

Myra laughed. "Not exactly," she said. "I have to help Elvira, and then I am studying. I don't want to teach all my life on a second-class certificate."

"Why should you teach all your life?" John Kerr asked, with an admiring glance at the girl beside him. "As for study, it

She ran to the pasture, caught the mare, and was soon on her way to the station. Explaining to the agent that Mrs. Kennedy had made a mistake, she secured the parcel, and turned homeward. When she had left the village behind her she peeped into the box. She had ordered the white leghorn, with its wreath of scarlet poppies, on a recent rare visit to the city. It had looked charming in the milliner's window, but now doubt assailed Myra. The hat looked foolish, impossible. Then she realized what was wrong. Of course the hat looked out of place in conjunction with her black alpaca dress and coarse shoes. Suddenly she straightened up.

"Get up!" she said to Dolly. "And Elvira may say what she likes." With this cryptic utterance she drove home.

After the children had gone to bed, Myra told her sister-in-law that she was going to town shopping the next day. "And after this," she continued, "I do not intend to walk to school—the neighbors are talking. If you cannot spare a horse, I shall get a boarding place near my school."

When Myra got home next evening, loaded with parcels, the children ran to meet her. She had brought them some little presents, and while they were admiring these she escaped to her room, saying she had a headache.



Close to the big firing line, where danger from the big German guns is ever present these women of France are busy cultivating the fields that their country may have a plentiful supply of food. No work is too dangerous for them so long as it is for their country. They are here shown cutting vines along the barbed wire entanglements a few yards from a battery position, and but a very short distance from the trenches that face the Hun across No Man's Land. Food is almost as important as munitions, so as their armies keep moving forward, the French women risking every hazard of war, till the fields right behind the fighting lines.

seems to me you used to beat us all at school, Myra—Miss Kennedy, I mean." "Why should you call me Miss Kennedy, John?" Myra asked. "You never did at school, I'm sure."

"But that was ten years ago," he answered, smiling.

"True enough—ten years ago, and more. Well, here I am at home. Thank you so much for the ride, Mr. Kerr."

As John drove off he found himself wondering why he had seen so little of Myra Kennedy lately. It was a pity, he thought, that she dressed so plainly; she would be a pretty girl with suitable clothes.

Myra's sister-in-law greeted her from the veranda. "So you've been driving about the country with John Kerr, while I wear myself out darning stockings," she said querulously.

"He overtook me on the road, otherwise I should not have been home for half an hour yet," Myra said shortly. "Was there an express parcel for me?"

"A parcel came with your name on it, the older woman replied. "But there had been a foolish mistake, so I sent it right back to the station."

"What kind of mistake? Wasn't it the hat I had ordered?"

"I hope not. Is it likely a woman of your age would order a white hat trimmed with scarlet poppies?"

"I don't know whether it is likely or not, but I did," Myra said, defiantly. "I'm not a grandmother, if I am twenty-eight."

"A grandmother? No, nor ever likely to be."

Myra lost her temper. "I must get the parcel before the agent sends it back to town," she said. "I shall drive Dolly to the station."

"Ready for church before breakfast?" Mrs. Kennedy exclaimed when Myra came down next morning in a pink muslin dress.

"I got this dress for school, and to wear at home," Myra explained.

"Well, I never!" Mrs. Kennedy gasped. "I should think that even if you were determined to waste all your money, you would think of poor Jim when you put on such gay colors."

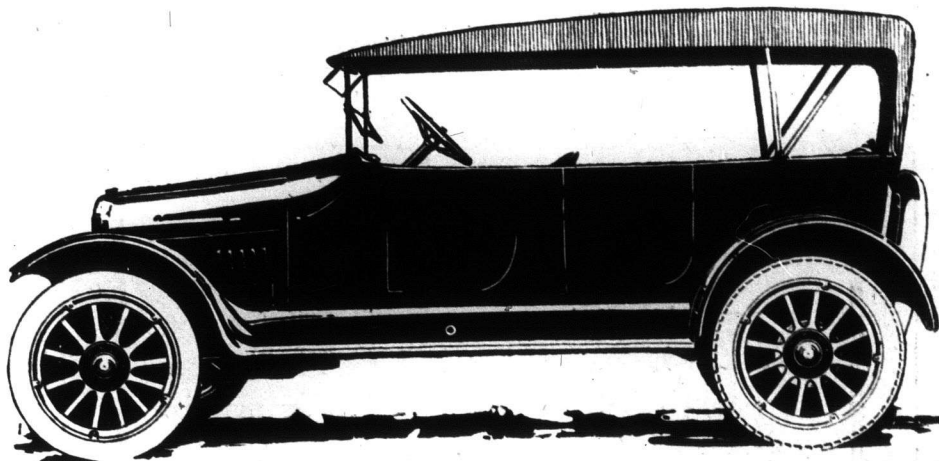
"It is more than two years since Jim died," the girl replied. "He would not have wished me to wear black clothes all my life."

After breakfast Myra washed the dishes while her sister-in-law got the children ready. When she came downstairs ready for church, there was a chorus of admiration from her small nieces. She was simply dressed in white, and wore the offending hat. Mrs. Kennedy compressed her lips, but said nothing.

There was a little flutter of interest as they walked up the aisle of the church. Myra felt it, but tried to look unconscious. It was not until the text was announced that she ventured to steal a glance at the Kerr pew, opposite her own. There was a young lady sitting beside John—a stranger, pretty and well dressed. Myra looked straight ahead and tried to fix her mind on the sermon.

After service she hurried home, but Elvira lingered to exchange gossip with her intimates.

"Lands sake!" she said, when she reached home. "you needn't have been in such a hurry. If you had waited, you might have met John Kerr's girl. She is a Miss Spencer, from the city. Seems pleasant enough, though what a farmer wants with a dressed up wife like that beats me."



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