

THE NATIONAL MONTHLY OF CANADA.

VOL. IV.

TORONTO, APRIL, 1904

No. 4

"JEEMS:" A CANADIAN RURAL SKETCH

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CHAPTER I.

THE genial warmth of a cloudless June morning, together with the vision of a rural landscape, where woodland and fields commingle harmoniously, rarely fails to hearten the wayfarer to that degree of optimism which carries us aloft to the Mount Pisgahs of fancy land marks of a lifetime. Rural scenery wherever it carries unmistakable evidences of prosperity, awakens in all but the most sordid, an element of the romantic. The well-ordered aspect of a country farm makes us forget the inner adjuncts of toil and hardship belonging thereto, and quite insensibly we long for the freedom and hospitality, if not also the full participation in the kindred sympathies of a country life. Such an enchanting view did a casual tourist encounter one bright June morning, as quietly wheeling along the broad acres of two well equipped and carefully managed country farms came beneath his eye. As he passed the substantial line fence he involuntarily exclaimed: "That's grand! My! but I'd like to own all that—and live there. I wonder"—His musings, however, did not take cognizance of an episode just then occurring along the pale of that line fence, itself an expression of romantic activity, the outcome of propinquity of space, and the solar smile of a summer day. The old "line fence"—so often in many places the cause of innumerable squabbles

and law suits—becomes here the arena of an interesting introduction leading up to the appearance in local society of an exceedingly bashful young man. The sequel of the story may or may not prove the truth of the old adage, "Where there's a will there's a way."

The particular characters of this story are only two. Their respective positions were very similar. There were two adjoining farms, two prosperous owners, and an only child in each family. These were respectively, Melinda Jones and James Parker. The latter was in his own neighborhood almost a stranger. Yet he was well known in colloquial usage by the dialectically acquired and quite explicit name of "Jeems"—Miss Jones was known well and favorably as "Lindy" Jones. Both were just turned their majority. In all else they were utterly unlike each other, and almost strangers, although lifetime neighbors on adjoining farms. So it was on this morning they happened to be near together, but otherwise, if old custom prevailed—to no purpose whatever. "Jeems" was so bashful that nearness to a charming maiden conferred on him no personal favor. He was not at home with them at all.

Thus it happened on this morning "Jeems" was busy at the summer fallow in the lower field, beside the line fence. On the Jones' side, Melinda was busy taking her usual outdoor exercise by caring for a healthy looking patch of potatoes.