

prise he had in store for Ned. The "Hello" that Ned heard this time was very different from the one he had heard the night before. "Hello, Dick," he called, "What's up?" Dick gave a low laugh, and then said, "Oh! I just wanted to tell you to hustle up with your Miss Browne or I would beat you out." "Good for you," said Ned. "Thought over my proposition, eh?" "No," said Dick, "You know I didn't bother to look at my letters yesterday. I didn't feel like bothering about business, so left them until this morning, and there was a letter from my sister Belle and one from Claire. And what do you think? Claire and her little boy are coming to live with me for a while," and here he emphasized, "If I care to have them," "Hurrah!" shouted Ned. "I suppose you care to have them alright. That is the sister you call 'Goldie,' isn't it?" "Yes," said Dick. "Goldie" and mostly "Old Golden Top." You know her husband died when her boy was only two months old. Let me see, Billie must be three years old now. "When do you think she will come?" asked Ned. "The sooner the better," said Dick. "I was thinking of writing and asking her to call on Miss Browne and have them both come out together." "Fine," replied Ned. "Well! So long. I see where you and I have to 'keep moving.'" "That's no dream," laughed Dick, "Will you come over tonight?" "Yes," said Ned, and

both went off to their work with new thoughts drifting through their minds.

Five weeks later the two men were standing on the Picton Depot platform. Each man casting expectant glances toward the East and each man trying to hide the nervous fluttering of his heart. Ned felt that Miss Browne's coming had become quite an event, through the excitement of Dick's sister coming, too.

Dick who had toiled and lived so many years alone, naturally felt excited to think that he should soon, in a few minutes, see his sister—the little sister whom he had left so many years ago a little golden headed girl. And more than that during all these days of preparation (for even the new house must be fixed up if women were to inhabit it), the thoughts of "his Brownie," and Ned's "Miss Browne," kept drifting back, drifting back, all confusion. He would have liked to have told Ned, but 'twas absurd. And besides, he had never told anyone about "Brownie." "Hurrah! There they come, or rather, there the train comes," laughed Ned, and in less than five minutes, a golden haired woman and a golden curled boy and "Brownie" were walking with them toward the double-seated democrat that was to take them to Dick's home six miles away.

Surely it was "Brownie." Dick could hardly think of anything to say. But

it was absurd of course, and he shrugged his shoulders and calling himself a fool, he caught up little Billie and tossing him up, won the heart of his little nephew at once.

Ned and Miss Browne walked ahead. Miss Browne admiring the landscape and her first view of the grand old "Rockies." Ned not yet over his surprise. Miss Browne was not an old maiden lady as Ned had made himself believe, but well, probably twenty-five, and probably not. No, as he ventured another glance, he was sure she wasn't. And as he turned around to speak to Dick and Mrs. Dixon he thought, "Well! No wonder Dick calls you 'Golden Top.'" And taking Billie in his arms he gave him a hug that surprised himself as well as Billie. And Billie, wiggling himself, turned around and called "Mammy, did you say that that was uncle Dick?" "Yes dear," replied his mother. Then, looking back seriously into Ned's eyes, he said, "Is you my uncle too?" "No, Billie," said Ned. "Oh! I'm so glad," shouted Billie, "Cause I want you for my daddy," and clasping his arms tight around Ned's neck, he squeezed as hard as his little arms could.

This proved too much for Dick, and his old hearty laugh, that his sister remembered so well, rang out, and was immediately joined in by Miss Browne and Ned. Claire smiled and said, "Billie you must not talk like that. You

know Mr. Oliver, he has never been able to understand why he has not had a father like other boys," and then turning and looking across the fields, she tried to force the sadness from her face and voice. "How are the crops, Dick?" she asked. Dick told her that the fall wheat was excellent, and that if the weather kept up as it had been it would have their district in fine shape for the fall.

The ladies had declared that they did not care to go to the hotel for tea, and that they preferred going home at once. So it was not long until they were all seated around the table at Dick's.

"May I ask who made this bread, Mr. McClure?" asked Miss Browne. "Why! Dick did," laughed Ned. "And are you as proficient in all these things, Mr. Oliver," she asked. "No," laughed Ned, "and you know Miss Browne, we only have the old house yet, the one my mother lived in, but Dad and I will do all we can to make you comfortable, and I can't tell you how glad I am that you will have Mrs. Dixon so near you," then blushing and looking down at his plate for a moment, then raising his eyes, he said, "Miss Browne, it is rather hard to say it to you, because I am still wondering whatever made you think of coming out here, but you will consider yourself quite at liberty to do as you wish over at 'The Grange.'" "Thank you," said Madge, "you are very kind," and with a blush and a pretty smile, she looked straight at Ned and said, "I don't care to explain my motive in coming West just now. Will you be satisfied if, for the present, we say it was 'fate?'" "Sure he will," laughed Dick, for that smile reminded him of the smile he had seen so long ago.

"We will be friends, indeed," said Claire, coming around and slipping a hand each side of Miss Browne's neck, and turning back her face, looked down deep into the brown eyes, and pressing a little kiss on the red lips so near her own. "Won't we, Madge?" she whispered. "Yes Claire, I hope so," said Madge. And thus commenced three of the happiest months ever known on "The Grange" or on the "Lakeview" Ranches.

It was a good summer. The four, or rather five, for Billie proved to be small of proportion but not of importance, were often together and very often joined by other members of the neighborhood. Dick's dreams for some time were continually of "his Brownie" and with Madge always coming in somewhere, which had the effect to make him think of Brownie as Madge and Madge as Brownie. And it kept him busy often when Miss Browne was near to keep himself from making the mistake of calling her "Brownie."

Madge had often tried to persuade Ned's father to accompany them when they went over to "The Lakeview Ranch," and sometimes on their drives. But the old gentleman always declined saying that he rested much better at home. And often when Claire and Billie were over at "The Grange," they all joined him in his rambles around The Ranch, and Claire loved to sit on the low rocker (nursing Billie) near the old man's chair, and listen to the tales of the early settlers, which Mr. Oliver never tired of telling her. And it was thus, that Ned best loved to see her.

It was getting along in September, every farmer watching for, and dreading, the September snow storm. But at last everything was harvested and all the district preparing and looking forward to the buzz and hum of the threshing machines.

The nights were growing chilly, and all in Ned's household were settled for a comfortable evening. The old gentleman dozing by the fire. Miss Browne, seated by the small table near the light, was working some pretty embroidery, and Ned had settled down to his mail. Glancing over his letters before opening any, he noticed one of a strange handwriting, and opening it he read:

"Dear Sir,—You have, I believe, a Miss Browne staying with you. As Miss Browne is a particular friend of mine, I desire your hospitality for a few days.

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