



THE sun was shining hot and strong on an August afternoon as two riders, well mounted, walked their steeds along one of the great government roads that opened up Western Canada to the immigrant, and formed almost the only means of communication between the inhabitants of distant sections of the country, excepting perhaps the waterways availed of alike by Indian and settler before Nature had arranged her works interfered with and her arrangement disarranged by the axeman and lumberer. The travellers were ascending the watershed of one of our rivers that had received its historic name, not from its own past, but from another river upon whose banks had for ages dwelt the Norse and Danish forefathers of the settlers who had christened the new river in loving memory of the old. As the horsemen ascended, the scene around grew more beautiful and luxuriant. Bushy woods of apparently unlimited extent reached to the horizon on every hand, but they also gave loving shelter to many a little clearing with its rough log shanty and plentiful, if unkempt, domestic surroundings; and to not unfrequent sweeps of beautiful, well tilled farm land, whose larger homesteads, extensive orchards and fine meadows, where lay a head or two of good cattle, chewing the cud, spoke of prosperity.

The air was full of the smell of new wheat, the resounding flail could be heard from under the rough sheds than flanked rough out-buildings where the cattle were housed during the keen winters, and the draught-oxen reposed in summer; and the cry of the field labourer, likely enough to be the farm proprietor himself, his son, or even his wife or daughter, as the oxen drew the rough wooden share that "broke" new land into winter fallow. The "cheep-cheep" of birds came faintly from the woods, for it was not "the time of the singing," gorgeous flowers in great clumps adorned the banks and tussocks by the wayside, and over them fluttered butterflies scarcely less gorgeous; and a quick accustomed eye caught occasionally a glimpse of the tiny, ruby-throated humming bird as it hovered over some honey-lipped blossom.

"By George, you are right, Evan, it is a country with a future. I question if England herself looked more tempting when Knut the Dane first set foot upon our paternal acres," exclaimed one of the riders whose seat and bearing spoke of the cavalry.

"And since they are no longer your paternal acres, my dear fellow, you can do no better than avail yourself of the government offer of cheap lands and settle down as a gentleman farmer in Western Canada."

"Turn my sword into a ploughshare, and my carbine into a—"

"Into a fowling-piece if it is capable of such a transmutation. Ned, my old musket has served me well enough in such capacity on lakes and rivers where fowl are so plentiful as to render selection of your shot difficult."

"And what about moose, caribou, reindeer and the stag you fellows are always boasting of?"

"For reindeer, my Ned, you must travel to the 'frozen Labrador'; for caribou you will have to travel a few

hundred miles north over the frozen snow—but it is worth it, I assure you;—for moose a shorter journey will suffice, and there is not a juicier, more savoury *morceau* in the whole library of cookery than a bit of broiled moosesteak; and for deer, you can shoot them by the dozen anywhere."

"Can't be much fun in getting them if they are so plentiful—must be like shooting at a barn-door."

"Not a bit of it! In the first place you don't get at them so easily among our thick bush, and in the second, dogs are few, while next and last, our deer take to water like ducks, and—there is lots of water."

"Oh! then there must be some fun in it after all. But, by George, Evan, look there!"

As he spoke, Ned, or as he was known in society, Captain Edward Jervis, reined up his horse and stood still, to the utter discomfiture of his friend, Evan Howel, whose horse nearly threw him in the vain endeavour to go on while his companion threw his long bay body half across his path.

"Confound it, Ned, do be steady, Bess don't stand this sort of thing."

"Oh, hang Bess! Who is that Juno of a girl under that shed, and what is she doing?"

"How do I know who the girl is, you donkey? She is, however, heckling flax."

"Well, I know what heckling flax is, for I have seen old Gundred do it in Durham many a time for my respected great-great aunt, who had a strong contempt for gins or jennies. See, the girl has observed us. Ye gods and little fishes, but she's a beauty!"

"For pity sake, Ned, ride on; our girls are no wenches to be stared at and take it pleasantly. Very likely she's the daughter of the house, and her father, not improbably, of as good birth as yourself."

"If I thought that, my excellent Evan, I'd buy a holding in this very neighbourhood at once, and woo her for my wife."

"It is more than probable she is already wooed, Ned, for Canadian girls are not as plentiful as blackberries nor are they left to hang until over-ripe."

"But such a girl as that can choose among the best in the land. Did you see the beautiful taper arms, the white shoulders, the lovely breast, the slender ankles, the little feet rising and falling from heel to toe as she drew the grey fibre through the spikes and threw back her arms to thrash it down on them again. I tell you she's a perfect Juno, and all that wealth of black hair down her back like so much silk."

"Oh come, come, Ned! your rhapsodies are ridiculous, and all about a girl you saw for ten seconds at a distance of three or four rods. I dare say she's no better looking than French Jeanne at the hotel."

"Bet you a cool hundred she's the loveliest bit of femininity in this—what do you call it—riding?"

"Suppose she is, what then?—Good day, Mr. Darby, let me introduce my friend Captain Jervis. Captain Jervis, Mr. Darby, an old friend of mine and owner of some six thousand acres of land near Lake Simcoe."

"Your servant, Captain Jervis," responded the newcomer, who, like the friends, was very well mounted, and

sat his horse like a huntsman, "it is a year or two since I saw my friend Evan Howel last, and he does not know that I have bought land and settled in this neighbourhood. At home I should be a yeoman, here I am a settler, but I farm my own land, not another's. The sun is not very high, gentlemen, and if you will spend the night with me, my wife and daughters will be pleased to make you comfortable and you can proceed on your journey as early as you wish to-morrow, should delay be inconvenient."

"What say you, Ned?" enquired Evan Howel of his friend, "I am at your service."

"If Mr. Darby will not think I am too frank in saying so I should be pleased to accept his invitation," replied Capt. Jervis, a hope having sprung up in his heart that the invitation might hold the possibility of learning more about the Juno that had captivated his imagination.

"Come then, gentlemen," cried Mr. Darby evidently well pleased, "a canter of a mile or so along the next side line will bring us to my place."

All three riders put their horses at a canter, and were soon at Mr. Darby's "place" as he called it. It was a log house that had been added to both in extent and height, until it boasted ten rooms in the two stories, but the roughness necessarily apparent in this sort of structure was so completely hidden by Virginian ivy, hops and roses, the latter rich with the monthly array of large pink blooms, that Jervis, who had seen very little of Canada and less of its country life, started back in amazement and exclaimed: "Home again!" his heart thrilling with that nameless happiness called joy.

Having seen to their horses with their own hands, their host having as he explained no stable boy and the only hired man being still in the field, the gentlemen followed to the house, when they were shown a sort of shed furnished with soap and water, boot brushes, and a comb; but before they could avail themselves of the last, a little girl appeared and whispered to Mr. Darby, who at once offered to show his guests to a chamber where they might conclude their toilet.

This the friends declined, since each carried his own comb, like the travellers they had long been.

Re-entering the house they passed into a large apartment, evidently the kitchen, and living-room of the family, for a cradle occupied one corner of the room, and near it stood a spinning-wheel with the distaff filled, and on another side were a dresser with dishes, and an ironing-table. Passing through, they entered a small room in which stood a high four-poster bed, and through this went into a large sunny room, where a large square mahogany table, some very high-backed chairs, two old-fashioned card tables and several standard screens, showed that it was the parlour of the house. Here they found Mrs. Darby, a stout, good-looking lady, dressed plainly in homespun, but carrying herself with the ease and dignity that bespoke culture. Making them welcome she soon excused herself to prepare supper, and immediately a stout, rough girl entered, and proceeded to lay the cloth, the guests evidently being honoured by special arrangements. From a cupboard, covered by glass and set on the opposite side of the room to a beautiful carved bookcase, filled with books, partially hidden by curtains, the girl