

Home Magazine

"Wherever you stay or wherever you roam,
In the day while you live in clover,
You should gather your honey and bring it home,
Because the winter will surely come,
When the summer life is over."

Lashed to the Topmast.

Stranger to Canada, I think you said? First visit to Ontario? Well, you're heartily welcome to Indian Creek. Take a chair on the piazza till dinner's ready—we dine early in these New World parts.

Fine farm? Well, yes; Indian Creek is a nice place, if I do own it. All, as far as you can see—grass-land, corn-fields, woods and creeks—all belong to it. Stock, too—they call it the best-stocked farm in Ontario, I believe, and I dare say they're right. All mine, and yet I came to Canada twelve years ago, without even the traditional half-crown in my trousers' pocket. You look surprised. Would you like to hear the story? There's a good half-hour to dinner-time yet, and it's a story I never tire of telling, somehow.

I began life as the son of a village carpenter in the south of England. You know that class pretty well, I dare say, and what a gulf was fixed between me and the vicar of the parish. And yet—and yet—from the time she was seven years old and I eleven, and she fell down in the dusty road outside the carpenter shop, and cried, and I picked her up and smoothed the little crumpled pinafore, and kissed the dust out of her golden curls, I loved but one girl in the world, and that was the vicar's daughter, Winnie Branscome.

Madness, you say. Well, perhaps so, and yet a man is but a man, and a woman a woman; and love comes, whatever one may do. There's no class distinction recognized by childhood, and we were playmates and friends till she went to boarding school. If Miss Winnie had had a mother, no doubt things would have been very different; but we were alike in never having known a mother's care, and the old vicar was blind to everything but his theological treatise.

But when she came back from London boarding school, a beautiful young lady, all smiles and laces and little lovely ways—then I knew. I had tried my best to study and work and make myself more like the men she would meet, but what can a lad in an English village do? I just had enough education to make every other lad in the place hate me, and beside the men of her world I suppose I cut rather an astonishing figure. Yet the love of her was so beyond all else in me, that mad, hopeless as I felt it, I had no power over myself, and the first time I caught her alone in the woods—she avoided me, I saw, and I had to wait for a chance—I told her the whole story, and waited for her answer. She grew scarlet—a rush of color that dyed her fair sweet face—then deathly white.

"Dick," she said, and she was trembling from head to foot. "You know it can never, never be. You know you are wrong even to dream of such a thing. Some girls would think it an insult. I know you better. But if my father heard of this he would say you had abused his kindness to you. He would never forgive you. Forget your madness." And she ran from me.

I let her go. I had seen the blush and the tremor, and I guessed that if I had been Mr. Loftus, the young squire, instead of Dick Hawtry, the carpenter's son, her answer might have been different. A great resolve sprang up in my soul, and I took a solemn vow in those June woods. That very night I sold the old shop (my father was dead, and I had taken to the business), and with the money I bought an outfit, and started straight for Canada. It was pretty rough work at first, but I worked like a galley slave—starved and pinched and saved, and never spent a penny on myself, except for the books I sat up half the night to read and study. Well, in this country the man who works and doesn't drink is sure to get on, and I had a mighty purpose in my head. By-and-bye, I bought some land dirt cheap, and sold it for three times what I gave for it. Then I began to make money fast. I should call my luck wonderful if I believed in luck and didn't prefer to think I was helped by a power far abler than my own. At last, ten years to the very day after I had set foot on Canadian soil, I bought Indian Creek Farm, and began to build this house. All the neighbors thought my good fortune had turned my brain, for I fitted it up and furnished it for a lady, down to the little rocking-chair by my study table and a workbasket with a tiny gold thimble in it. And

when all that was finished, I took the first ship for Liverpool.

Ten years builds a city over here. It doesn't make much change in a Devonshire village. The gates were still half off their hinges, as I left them, only the people were a little older and a trifle more stupid, and there was a new vicar. Old Mr. Branscome had been dead six months. Died very poor, they told me. There was nothing left for Miss Winnie. My heart gave one great leap when I heard that. And Miss Winnie? Oh, she had gone governessing with some people who were just off to Canada, and the ship sailed to-morrow from Liverpool.

The Liverpool express never seemed to crawl so slowly before. I got there to find every berth taken on board the Antarctic, and the captain raging at the non-appearance of two of the crew. Without a second's pause I offered for one of the vacant places. I was strong as a horse, and active enough, and though the captain eyed me rather askance—I had been to a fashionable tailor on my way through London—he was too glad to get me to ask any questions. So I sailed on the ship with my girl, little as she knew it. I saw her the first day or two, looking so pale and thin that she was like the ghost of her old self, and yet sweeter to my eyes than ever before. The children she had charge of were troublesome little creatures, who worried and badgered her till I longed to cuff them well. But there was a gentleness and a patience about her quite new to my idea of Miss Winnie, and I loved her the more for it. After the second day out, the wind freshened, and I saw no more of her.

We had an awful passage. It was late in November, an early winter, and the cold was intense. It blew one continuous gale, and some of our machinery was broken, the screw damaged, and we could not keep our course. As we drew near this side of the Atlantic, we got more and more out of our bearings, and at last the fogs told us we were somewhere off the banks of Newfoundland, but where, no one was quite sure. It seemed to me it had all happened before, or I had read it or dreamed it. At all events, it was hardly a surprise to me, when on the tenth night, just after midnight, the awful crash and shock took place—a sensation which no one who has not felt it can imagine in the least—and we knew that the Antarctic had struck.

It's a fearful thing, if you come to think of it—a great steamer filled with living souls in the full flow of life and health, and in one moment the call coming to each of them to die. Before you could have struck a match the whole ship was in a panic—cries, terror, confusion, agony. O, it was awful! I trust never to see such a scene again. I made my way through it all as if I had neither eyes nor ears, and got to the stateroom I had long ago found out belonged to my girl. I knocked at the door with a heavy hand. Even at that awful moment a thrill ran through me at the thought of standing face to face with her again.

"Winnie!" I cried, "come out! Make haste! There is not a moment to lose!"

The door opened as I spoke, and she stood just within, ready dressed, even to her little black hat. The cabin light had been left burning, by the doctor's orders, and it fell full on me as I stood there in my sailor's jersey and cap. I wondered if she should know me. I forgot the danger we were in, forgot that death was waiting close at hand, forgot that the world held anyone but just her and me.

"Dick!" she cried, "oh, Dick, Dick!" and she fell forward in a dead faint on my shoulder.

All my senses came back then, and I threw her over my arm and ran for the deck. A great fur-lined cloak had been dropped by the door of the ladies' cabin. There was no light now, but I stumbled over it as I ran. I snatched it up and carried it with me.

Up above, all was in the wildest chaos; the boats overfilled and pushing off, the ship settling rapidly people shouting, crying, swearing. One hears tales of calmness and courage often enough at such times, which makes one's heart glow as one reads them, but there was not much heroism shown in the wreck of the Antarctic. The captain behaved splendidly, and so did some of the passengers, but the majority of them and the crew were mad with terror, and lost their heads altogether.

I saw there was not a chance for the overcrowded boats in that sea, and I sprang for the rigging. I was not a second too soon. A score of others followed my example, and with my precious burden I should not have had a chance two minutes later. As it was, I scrambled to the topmast, and got a firm hold there. Winnie was just coming to herself. I had wrapped her round like a baby in the fur cloak, and with my teeth I opened my knife to cut a rope which hung loose within reach. With this I lashed her to me, and fastened us both to the topmast. The ship sank gradually. She did not keel over, or I should not be telling you this story now. She settled down, just her deck above water, but the great seas washed over it every second and swept it clean. The boats had gone!

One or two of the crew, floating on loose spars, were picked up afterwards—no more. The rigging was pretty full, at least in the upper part; down below, the sea was too strong. The captain was near me. I felt glad to think he had been saved. He was no coward, like some of the others.

How long was the longest night you ever knew? Multiply that by a thousand, and you will have some idea of that night's length. The cold was awful: the

spray froze on the sheets as it fell; the yards were slippery with ice. I stamped on Winnie's feet to keep them from freezing. Did you notice that I limp a little? I shall walk lame as long as I live. Sometimes there was a splash in the black water below, as some poor fellow's stiffened hold relaxed and he fell from his place in the rigging. There was not a breath of wind—nothing but the bitter, bitter fog.

How long could we hold out? Where were we? How long would the ship be before she broke up? Would it be by drowning or by freezing? We asked ourselves these questions again and again, but there was no answer. Death stared us in the face. We seemed to live ages of agony in every minute; and yet, will you believe me, all that seemed little in comparison to the thought that, after all the struggles and the sorrows, after all those ten weary years, I held my girl in my arms at last!

She had pulled one corner of the cloak around my neck (I stood on a level just below her), and her hand lay there with it—it was the hand that warmed me more than the cloak—and her cheek rested against my own. Often I thought its coldness was the coldness of death, and almost exulted in the thought that we should die together. And then I would catch the murmur of the prayers she was uttering for us both, and knew that life was there still, and hope lived, too.

Well, well! Why should I dwell on such horrors, except to thank the Mercy that brought us through them all? Day dawned at last, and there was the shore near by, and soon rockets were fired and ropes secured, and one by one the half-dead living were drawn from their awful suspension between sky and sea, and landed safe on shore. They had to take Winnie and me together, just as we were, and even then they had hard work to undo the clasp of my stiffened arms about her. I knew nothing then, nor for long after, and it is wonderful that Winnie was the first to recover, and that it was she who nursed me back to life and reason.

And how did I ask her to marry me? Upon my word, now you ask, I can't remember that I ever did. That seemed utterly unnecessary, somehow. Caste distinctions look small enough when you have been staring death in the face for a few hours, and words were not much needed after we had been together in the rigging that night. Somehow I was glad it was so: glad my girl had taken me, in my cap and jersey, for a common sailor, and yet loved the old Dick through it all; glad she never dreamed I was owner of Indian Creek Farm, and the richest man in this end of Ontario, and had wealth and position higher than Mr. Loftus, the young squire at home. The people she was with had all gone down on that awful night. She had no one in the world but me. We were married at Montreal—the captain of the Antarctic gave her away—and then I brought her home to Indian Creek. To see her face when she saw the rocking-chair, and the workbasket, and the thimble. Heaven bless her!

There she comes, with her baby on her shoulder. Come in to dinner, friend, and you shall see the sweetest wife in the new country or the old—the girl I won amid the ocean's surges.

Domestic Economy.

Try using a little borax in the water in which white clothes are to be washed, and you will be delighted with the clear, sparkling color thus produced.

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Frosting can be whitened with lemon juice. Cranberry will color it pink, and grated rind of an orange, strained through a cloth, will color it yellow.

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When sour milk is to be used in cooking, a few vigorous whisks with the egg-beater in the bowl or pitcher will mix the curd and whey so thoroughly that it can be poured as easily as cream, and will obviate the unpleasantness of finding the cakes or muffins interspersed with particles of curd. Soda used with sour milk should not be put into milk, but be sifted into the flour like baking-powder.

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Custard pies or puddings will require only half the usual time for baking if the milk is scalded before being stirred into the beaten eggs and sugar. Custard puddings and cup custards may be steamed instead of baked, if the oven is not in the right condition.

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To keep the yolk of an egg fresh, when only the white is to be used: Make a hole in the shell large enough for the white only to run out, then stand the egg in an egg-cup, and keep it in a cool place. The yolk will stay in color, and be good for two or three days.

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A pail of water standing in a room that has been newly-painted will quickly absorb the disagreeable odor of the paint.

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When knife-blades come out of their handles, they may be easily mended by filling the hole in the handle with powdered resin, and replacing the blade after making its shaft red-hot in the fire. When cold, the blade will be found to be firmly fixed.