

THE PRAIRIE WIFE

gone against him. My hero was no longer a hero. I knew there had been times, of course, when that hero, being a German, had rather regarded this universe of ours as a department-store and this earth as the particular section over which the August Master had appointed him floor-walker. I had thought of him as my *Eisenfresser* and my big blond *Saebierassler*. But my eyes opened with my last marron and I suddenly sat back and stared at Theobald's handsome pink face with its Krupp-steel blue eyes and its haughtily upturned mustache-ends. He must have seen that look of appraisal on my own face, for, with all his iron-and-blood Prussianism, he clouded up like a hurt child. But he was too much of a diplomat to show his feelings. He merely became so unctuously polite that I felt like poking him in his steel-blue eye with my mint straw.

Remember, Matilda Anne, not a word was said, not one syllable about what was there in both our souls. Yet it was one of life's biggest moments, the Great Divide of a whole career—and I went on eat-