



HERE is a wrong kind of optimism, the kind in which a man thinks that the thing will come right without his doing it.

Winning the Wilderness

(Continued from last week.)

"If the world needs men anywhere, it is on the prairies," Thaine declared, and the doctor continued: "I have found my future already. I shall not leave China again. Grass River may miss me as a friend but not as a doctor of medicine. Doctors are plentiful there. My place is here henceforth, and I'm still young. I came to the Philippines to be with Thaine"—Horace Carey's voice was low, and the same old winning smile was on his face—"because I love the boy and because I wanted to protect him if it should be my fortune to do it. I saved him from the waters of the Rio Grande and helped to pull him out of the hospital at Manila. He doesn't need me now, for he goes to do a big work, and I stay here to do a big work."

"Out of love for me alone?" Thaine asked affectionately. "No, not you alone," Carey answered frankly, "but because something in your face always reminds me of a face I loved long ago. Of one for whose sake I have cared for you here. You are going home a brave man. I believe your life will be full of service and of happiness."

The silence that followed was broken by Pryor Gimes saying: "All this time—such a tragical time—I have forgotten, Thaine, that I have a message for you. A little package that reached here late last May. It was sent to me because the sender thought you were coming to China soon, and I was asked to keep it for you. You didn't come, and mails ceased to leave Peking—and then came the siege, the struggle to keep up the defenses, the sickness, the starvation, the deaths, the constant attacks, the final flight of Old Glory on the outer walls, and your triumphant entry through the sewer. You see why I forgot."

He took a little package from his writing desk and gave it into Thaine Aydelot's hand. The young soldier tried to open it with steady fingers, for the address was in a handwriting he knew well. Inside a flat little box was a card bearing the words:

"To Prince Qui pi, Beyond the Purple Notches."

And underneath that lay a withered little yellow snuffer.

Two evenings later as the three men sat together, Horace Carey suddenly gripped Thaine's hand in his, then sank back in his chair with eyes that seemed looking straight into eternal peace; and the same smile that had won men to him seemed winning the hearts to his own. He turned toward, in the midst of his busy, useful years his big work was done.

The Sunflowers were just beginning to blossom along the Old Grass River Trail. The line of timber following every stream was in the full leafage of May. The wheat lay like a yellow-

green sea over all the wide prairies. The breeze came singing down the valley, a morning song of gladness.

Leigh Shirley had come up early to the Sunflower Ranch to spend the day and night with Virginia Aydelot, while Asher and her uncle Jim took a two days' business trip to Big Wolf with Darley Changers. Jim had brought Virginia a big bunch of exquisite roses which nobody but Jim Shirley could ever have grown to such perfection.



This large and attractive home is on the farm of Mr. Harry Grainger, Huron Co., Ont. There is no lack of space in this home and the spacious lawn makes an ideal spot for social gatherings. The illustration herewith was snapped by our household editor this summer while spending a few days of her vacation on this farm.

Virginia went into the house to find the tall cut-glass vase Doctor Carey had sent to her when he started West, while Leigh went to the gate of the side lot to get a purple bell colt that he had bought.

"You beautiful Junco!" she cried, patting the creature's nose. "Mrs. Aydelot says you are as graceful and well-bred as all your grandmothers were since the time a Junco long ago followed a prairie schooner down the old Grass River Trail to a little sod shack on a treeless claim in the wilderness. This is too fine a morning to go indoors," she added as she came back to the front lawn to the seat under the fragrant white honeysuckle.

"She was as sweet as a blossom herself this morning, with her soft brown-gold hair waving back from her face, and her blue eyes full of light."

Somebody had turned from the road and was coming up the walk with a springing step. Leigh turned her head to see who it might be, as she reached for a spray of the fragrant honeysuckle, and found Thaine Aydelot standing before her.

"With a glad cry, she dropped the blossoms sprang to her feet. "Prince Qui pi couldn't come nor write, as he sent me. Will I do for an-

swer, Leighie? I was coming back to the blessed old prairies, anyhow; to my father and mother and the life of a farmer. I have come to see at last through Asher Aydelot's eyes that wars in any cause are short-lived, and, even with a Christian soldier, very brutal; that after the wars come the empire-makers, who really conquer, and that the man who practically wins from the soldier's hundredfold of increase may be a king among men. I can see such big things to be done here, but, oh, Leigh, are you sure you want me here?"

"Thaine was holding her hands in a gentle grip, looking with love-hungry eyes down into her face.

"I've always been sure I wanted you," Leigh said softly, "and I've always hoped you would come back here to the prairies again. But, Thaine, I'm so proud of you, too, for all the heroic things you have helped to do in the Philippines and in China. I am glad now you did go for a while. You have been a part of a history-making that shall change all the future years."

Thaine put his arm about her and drew her close to him as he said: "Then we'll go and build a house on the Purple Notches, a purple velvet house with gold knobs, and all that yellow prairie away to the west that was only grass land four years ago we'll turn to wheat fields like Asher Aydelot's here. John Jacobs was holding that ground for somebody

"You are right, Thaine. I was so unhappy about it all. For since I first came to Uncle Jim's I knew I ought not have Miss Jane's love and the farm that you would have had if she knew you."

"You've known this all these years and never told even me. You silent little sub-soiler!" Thaine exclaimed.

"It grew in my mind from an almost babyhood impression to a woman's principles," Leigh declared. "I never thought of telling anybody. But there was another thing that kept me arm that day on the Purple Notches. Years ago, when I was a girl, I remember dimly seeing two men in a awful fight one night just at dusk down on the railroad track by Clover Creek in Ohio. I thought one of them was my father. Miss Jane would never tell me anything about it, and made me promise never to speak of it. So I grew up sure that my father had committed some dreadful crime, and Thaine, until I know better, I couldn't shake the risk of disgracing your name, the proud name of Aydelot."

"Oh, Leigh, it is no matter what our forefathers do—their sins are all a lot if we go back far enough. It's what we do that counts. It's what I do as Thaine Aydelot, not as Asher Aydelot's son, that I must stand or fall by. It's how far we win our wilderness, little girl, not the wilderness our fathers won or lost."

Thaine was sitting beside Leigh now, under the perfumy white honeysuckle blossoms.

"But, Thaine, the bans are all lifted now."

Leigh sat with face aglow. "Your grandfather wouldn't let his property go to a child of Virginia Aydelot, so Miss Jane couldn't give it to you. She left it to me—all her property, provided, or hoping, I would—you should—she hesitated.

"Yes, we should, and we will," Thaine finished the sentence. "Bless her good soul, she never could swim, and so that burden is lifted. But, Thaine, will you want to go back to Ohio to the Aydelot homestead? I could sell it for a club house to the Cleveland County Club, but I waited till you should come, to know what to do."

"There was just a little quaver in Leigh's voice.

"Do you want to go back to Ohio?" Thaine inquired. "Unless you do, the country clubbers may have the place. There is no homestead there for me. This is my homestead. I want what open ranch-land beyond the Purple Notches. But, Leigh, if my father as administrator and trustee for John Jacobs' estate can't set me ground under your inheritance from John Jacobs, let me do after all! It is what is there left for me to do after all! I want to take favors and give none. I'll run away and enlist with the Regulars first."

"A rustic look came over his face now, and behind the words Leigh read a determined will.

"The real thing is left to you," she replied, "the biggest work of all. You must go out and make it. My father bought his first quarter with money his father had left him by will, but he had no inheritance to buy all the other quarters that make the big Aydelot wheat fields of the Sunflower Ranch. If every acre of the prairie was covered with a layer of eastern capital, borrowed or inherited, it would not make a difference. I will grow nor ripen one ear of corn. But you may turn up the soil with your plow and find silver dollars in the furrows. You may herd cattle on the plains, and the sun hides gold in your cloth-of-gold. You may seed the brown fields with alfalfa, and it will

(Continued on page 17.)

like you and me. We'll buy it of his estate. We'll show the fathers what the sons can do."

A thrill of happiness lighted Leigh's face for a moment, then a shadow fell over it as she said:

"That Darley Changers and I have kept a secret for a year."

"You kept it 'danged' well. What was it?" Thaine asked gaily.

"Jane Aydelot, who died last year, left me all her property," Leigh began.

"Good for Jennie," Thaine broke in, but Leigh hurried on.

"I always knew she meant to do it, and that was one reason why I sent you away. I wouldn't have your money and I felt if you knew you wouldn't ask me for fear I'd think—Oh, money you don't earn or inherit squarely is such a grief," Leigh paused.

"So you wouldn't let me have any hope because of this junk in Ohio that you were afraid you'd get and I'd seem to be wanting if I married you, and you thought I ought to have as much as you'd seem to be marrying me to get. If I ever have an estate, I'll leave it to foreign missions. I'd like to make trouble for the ones that got me at the Rio Grande. Money might do it," Thaine declared.

Leigh did not laugh.