

# The "Lure o' the West"

By LIZETTE POMEROY

THE great, roomy kitchen looked very pleasant indeed, as the afternoon sun streamed through the large-paned west windows. A big, shiny tea-kettle hummed merrily on the big, shiny range and the vast expanse of clean, yellow-painted floor gleamed like burnished gold in the sun's rays.

A good-natured-looking Doukhobor girl with big, bare arms, stood mixing biscuits at the up-to-date kitchen cabinet, and a sleek, grey maltese cat slumbered purring in a comfortable chintz-covered rocking chair.

Wafted across the wide yards that separated the bungalow from the immense barns came the mellow tones of a rich tenor voice,

"Heed no more the falling rain,  
Morning brings the light again,  
Time will bring you roses."

And as she listened a smile came to the red lips of the bonny young woman arranging the daintily-appointed table.

Presently the owner of the tenor voice came sauntering in for the evening meal. He was a big, handsome Englishman, a scion of an old but somewhat impoverished family, who had invested his patrimony in this western ranch, firmly believing, if half the stories told him by the English agent were true, that he had acquired a treasure beside which "King Solomon's mines" would fade into insignificance.

Three years before our story begins he had landed in Quebec and, desiring to see something of the eastern part of the great Dominion before starting for his ranch, he had come on to Ottawa, where he remained for some time, the guest of English friends.

During his stay in that delightful city he met and fell head over heels in love with the daughter of a wealthy and aristocratic barrister. A fashionable wedding soon followed, and with blithe hearts the young couple commenced their long journey toward the golden land of promise.

From Port Arthur the rocky, scrubby woodlands, veined with turbulent rivers and studded with rock-bound lakes, was traversed and Winnipeg was reached. Then followed the monotonous trip over the apparently endless prairies. Short stops were made at Regina, Moose Jaw and Medicine Hat, that town which Rudyard Kipling said "was born lucky." Then on and ever on until they approached the "Foot-Hills," overlooked by the white-capped Rockies, where the great farm was situated, which was the mecca of their hopes.

The first glimpse was enough to appal the stoutest hearts, but the indomitable pluck of the man, inherited from a long line of dogged English forbears, stood him in good stead, and the buoyant courage of his pretty girl-wife inspired him to doughty deeds.

Before many months had passed the "wilderness and the solitary places were made glad," for the desert had literally "blossomed as the rose."

Two years of perfect happiness followed, but as the serpent entered Eden with his ingenious sophistry, so this western pocket edition of that delectable Valhalla did not escape his specious reasoning.

A FEW weeks before, Tom Arnold and his wife had taken their first holiday, and as they sat at dinner in the "Queen's Hotel," on the night of their arrival in Calgary, Tom noticed for the first time a cloud on his wife's bright face.

"What's the matter, Lulu," he asked, bending tenderly toward his idol. "Isn't your soup all right?"

"Oh, the soup is good enough," she replied, abstractedly. "But, Tom—it's us!"

"Lulu, what do you mean?" asked the puzzled husband. "What's us?"

"Why look around you, Tom, and you can see for yourself," his wife replied, with just a touch of impatience in her tone.

Tom obediently looked around and then turned to his wife more in the dark than ever. "Well, Lulu," he said, "perhaps you know what you are talking about, but I'm blessed if I do. I am aware



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that I am thoroughly enjoying my dinner, but as far as I can judge from a casual survey, everyone in the room is in the same fix. You're sure the sun didn't affect your head to-day," he added, solicitously.

"You're awfully provoking, Tom, or else very stupid. Look at the cut of the men's suits and the style of the women's dresses, especially the skirts."

Like a well trained husband Tom looked again.

"Why, the men's suits seem all right to me, Lulu. They appear to be a very decent sort, take them all round. As for the women's skirts, I can't make much of them as they are mostly hidden by the tables," Tom answered, with exasperating cheerfulness.

Mrs. Tom deigned no reply and the dinner proceeded in peace. But as they were leaving the dining-room she grasped her husband by the arm and whispered, "Now, Tom, look, the skirts and the sleeves are all so different from mine."

"Well, well, so they are, that's a fact. What a shame! Do you suppose all those women had their dresses made in the same shop, and that the dress-maker spoiled 'em all? Looks to me as if there hadn't been goods enough or something."

"Tom Arnold, you are a big goose. Those skirts are the style, while mine is all out of date, old-fashioned, you know. So are your clothes, Tom. We're back numbers all right. We don't look a bit like the rest of these people."

"Thank heaven," muttered the incorrigible Tom, but as he had a saving sense of tact unusual to an Englishman, he said it so softly that his worried little wife did not hear him. Aloud, he asked, soothingly, "Well, Lulu, what's the answer? I never was any good at puzzles, you know. Can we go and get some new clothes to-day, or shall we hike for home, where we feel as good as they make 'em? I'm game for anything, you know—except a hobble"—he added, under his breath.

"No, Tom, we couldn't go to-day and get clothes. And it isn't only the clothes. It's everything. We have been so long on the farm and have been so busy, that we haven't realized that the world doesn't stand still. People and things have moved ahead and we are just where we were two years ago."

"Oh, come, now, that's going it some strong, I say. Don't tell me I've stood still for two years. Not on your life I haven't, and neither have you. If any one of these chaps can point to a ranch and a bungalow like ours, I'll forgive them their razor-creased trousers and even the tight skirts."

They had reached their pleasant sitting-room and Lulu settled down in a big easy-chair with a little laugh, and that most irritating last shot in a woman's defence, "Oh, well, we won't argue, but I know what I'm talking about all right."

Her husband had grace enough to join in the

laugh and the subject was dropped.

That evening Calgary was more lively than usual. For the first time the city that had produced Kathleen Parlow was to hear the greatest singer that ever came from Australia. Hundreds of Calgary folk had paid top prices for the best seats to hear the wonderful diva who was making her first transcontinental trip across Canada. Here, again, fashion was at its height. Carriages and cabs and automobiles came clattering and spluttering up to the opera house. Elegantly gowned women and crush-hatted men that might have belonged to the Four Hundred at the Metropolitan Opera House, filled the best seats in the theatre. Tom and Lulu had great difficulty getting seats, far under the gallery, from where they could see the brave little show of fine people.

Tom noticed a cloud again cross his wife's pretty face, and leaning over her he whispered, "Forget it, Lulu, and enjoy yourself. We'll meet this hydra-headed monster and finish him off in no time, but just for to-night let us be happy."

Lulu did try and "forget it," and the rest of the evening passed in unalloyed enjoyment of Melba's remarkable trills and runs.

They had been too busy to again refer to the question of fashions after their return to the ranch, but Lulu still worried over the thought that she and her beloved husband were no longer on the "firing-line," but back with those whose duty it was to "stay by the stuff."

SO that evening as they sat at their cosy tea-table, Lulu opened the subject again by remarking,

"Say, Tom, I got a letter from mother to-day, and she and the girls think it very strange we have never visited Ontario since we were married. They are beginning to feel quite hurt. It was so nice of them all to come out the first year we were here, that I think we should go home for a long visit now, don't you?"

"Well, well, it is strange, now you come to mention it," Tom declared, heartily. "I've been a selfish beggar, I'm afraid, but my dear child, you knew you were welcome to go home whenever you wished."

"But I couldn't go alone, Tom, and you always seemed so busy I didn't like to mention it. I have felt for a long time that we needed something to wake us up. We are really forgetting, you know, how to act and talk as cultured people do. I sometimes get fairly desperate to feel myself part of civilization again."

"Why, Lulu, I had no idea you felt like that," her husband answered, slowly. "To me, this western country is the freest, grandest spot on God's great earth. But women are different, I suppose. They need the trimmings to make life complete. You know I could not leave the ranch long enough to go to Ontario, but there is no reason on earth why you should not go. Get some new duds here, or at Winnipeg on your way, but for heaven's sake do not give the West a black eye by letting the folks see the bride returning to her father's house without all the fixings necessary. Get whatever you wish and make as long a visit as you like. I've been very blind I'm afraid."

At first Lulu refused to consider the suggestion that she take the trip alone, but after much persuasion on Tom's part and half-hearted protest on hers, the matter was decided.

Two weeks later, as the Eastern Express steamed out of Calgary, a sweet-faced girl, in a neat, grey suit, stood on the rear platform waving a diminutive white handkerchief, while the pretty blue eyes under the kindly veil were dimmed with tears, as she watched the fast-receding station and the broad-shouldered figure silhouetted against its grey walls.

Tom's heart was very heavy indeed as he returned to his lonely ranch. He felt, for the first time, a doubt as to whether Lulu was entirely happy in

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