

---

## THE HOMESTEADERS

---

They sat for some minutes, gazing dreamily across the broad sheet of silver.

"And so you are going to Manitoba?" she said at length.

"Yes. There are possibilities there. It's a gamble, and that is why I didn't want to share it with you—at first. I thought I would spend a year; locate a homestead; get some kind of a house built; perhaps break some land. Then I would come back."

"And you weren't going to give me a word in all those preparations for our future? You have a lot to learn yet, John. You won't find it in that folder, either."

He laughed lightly—a happy, boyish laugh. For weeks the determination to seek his fortune in the then almost unknown Canadian West had been growing upon him, and as it grew he shrank more and more from disclosing his plans to his *fiancee*. Had she been one of the country girls of the neighbourhood, a daughter of the sturdy backwoods pioneers, bred to hard work in field and barnyard, he would have hesitated less. But she was sprung from gentler stock. It seemed almost profane to think of her in the lonely life of a homesteader on the bleak, unsettled plains—to see her in the monotony and drudgery of the pioneer life. He had been steeling himself for the ordeal; schooling himself with arguments; fortressing his resolve, unconsciously, perhaps,