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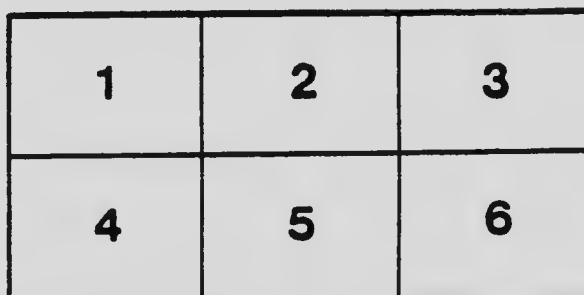
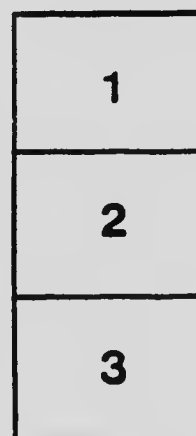
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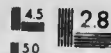
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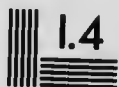
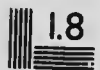
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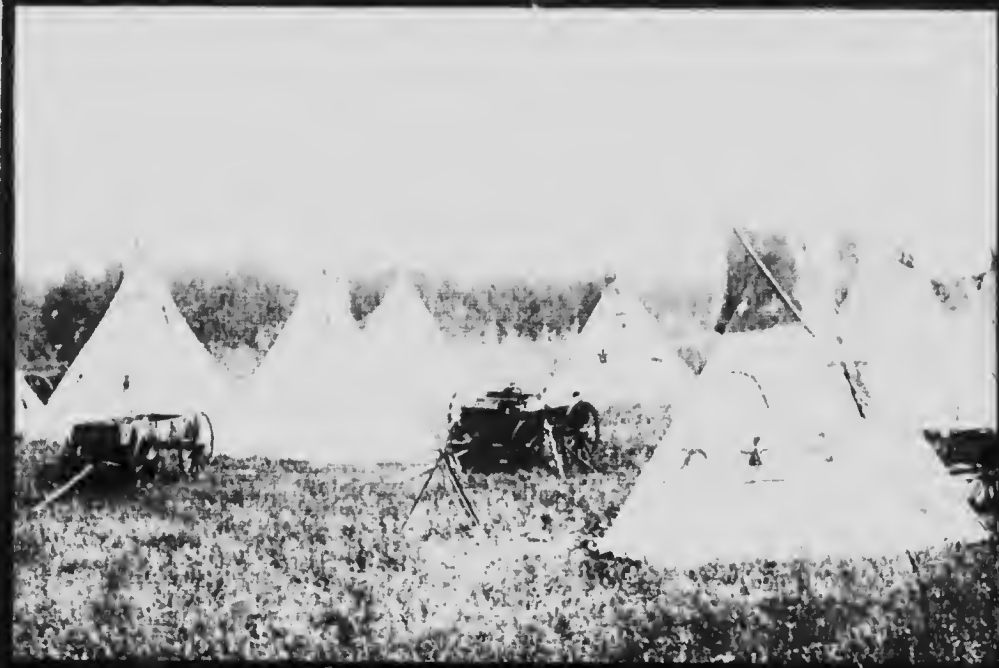


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COMRADES TWO

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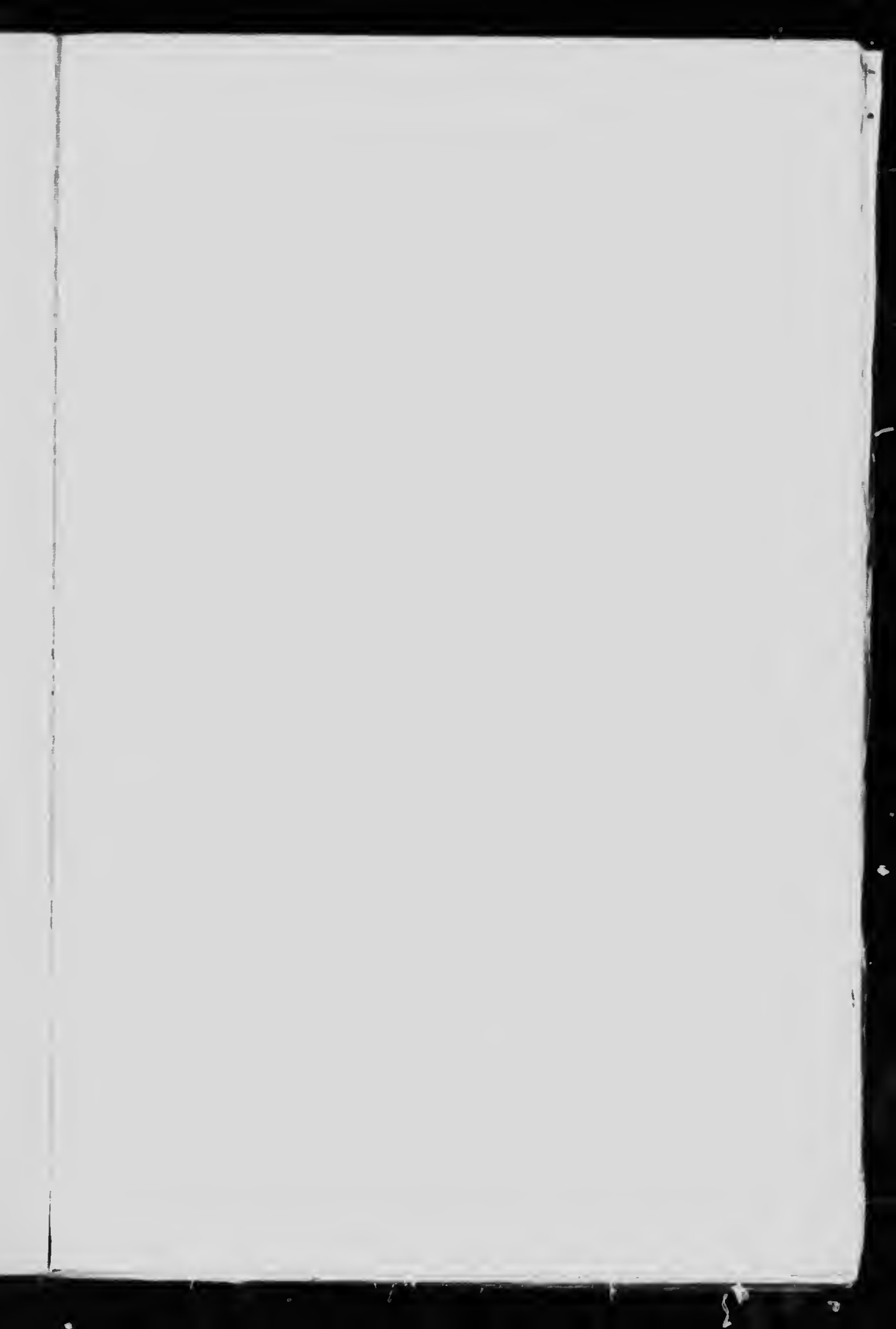




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COMRADES TWO

BY

ELIZABETH FREMANTLE

WITH PORTRAIT



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COMRADES TWO

I

I MUST write things down, I simply must. Making a diary is a time-worn scheme, yet it is easy to see why people do it, for surely it is a simple way of relieving a surcharged heart or mind, or both, especially in this country, the very air of which dispels tranquillity and promotes in one a certain restless desire. But there one pauses. Desire for what? In a woman certainly not the desire to grow wheat or raise cattle, nor (the Saints be praised) do many of the women out here suffer from restlessness at all. Most of them are fine, sturdy, brave creatures who do what they have to do, eat when they ought to eat, and sleep sensibly when sleep-time comes. Good luck to them!

I said that a diary seems an easy way of

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emptying the mind, and yet I begin to wonder if it really is, for if one owns to a sneaking liking for decent English in other people's work, the mere fact of lifting the pen to chronicle thoughts and events plunges the person who is not a perfect fool, into something like despair. Vistas of difficulty open before one ; phrasing, punctuation, originality in expressing thought, and the art with which it is imperative to clothe the natural. These essentials unfold and bewilder like those long views one gets at the Academy in dear old London, where the eye, crossing room upon room, rests on the wall at the far end where perhaps is revealed something worth the long, tiring journey.

This is the fifth start I have made ; the other four beginnings are fluttering about in little pieces on the wind, but now and then a few come eddying to my feet as a sort of gentle reminder. English and the other things must go, because I have much to say ; and though I cannot see from here the picture at the far end, still I desire to be working towards it, and will nego-

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tiate the rooms in between as best I can.

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Many events both glad and sad have marked the years of my life on these great prairies, the saddest—indeed yes—being the death of my darling mother just two years ago. The gladdest? Well, I do not quite know ; it is difficult to choose, the past having been a pretty blending of sun and shadow, checkered like the shade beneath a summer oak. An enthusiastic, impulsive temperament never creates for itself a uniform atmosphere in which to live, consequently it fades and blossoms by fits and starts. Does not enthusiasm, of necessity, invariably and deliberately attack the phlegmatic? And does it not, nine times out of ten, retire dulled and bruised? Also impulse, however finely born, courts the criticism of cold logic. Hence I, with others of the same kind, suffer perhaps more than we enjoy, and it is worth it. The nice, cow-like people who slowly chew the cud of an even, low-level existence, untroubled alike by assertive faculties or teething ambitions, are after all not really to be

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envied. They drift through life, not worrying much about anything, but just taking things as they come, to some bourne beyond where such unaspiring virtue assuredly meets with a corresponding reward—safe as a two-and-a-half-per-cent investment—but slow. Such beings remind one of Mr. Kipling's Tomlinson, whose soul was not quite white enough for heaven and not quite black enough for hell, so that it had to live all the time between the worlds, and one gathers from the relation of Tomlinson's experiences that the wind which blows there is very cold. That brings me back, for the wind which is now playing games with my four previous attempts, here in the Qu'appelle Valley this April day, is quite delicious, softly assertive, and proud with the vaunt of spring.

This beautiful valley, which literally gashes the prairies between Winnipeg and Regina, runs almost due east and west. While driving or riding on the seemingly unending trail, the edge of the valley is suddenly attained; there is no warning, owing to the undulations of the prairies



THE RIVER GLEAMS LIKE A TWISTED SILVER RIBBON



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thereabout. Surprise and delight wrestle for the mastery. Adown the steep slopes are beautiful trees and rich undergrowth, while far below in a verdant bed a gentle river gleams like a twisted silver ribbon. The far west of Canada in Spring! I wish I could express it worthily. Sitting alone in the "bluffs," which is a prairie word for the little poplar woods that dot the vast expanse (being also applied to the more imposing timbers of the valley), one feels a passionate desire to paint a vivid word-picture of the pleasure experienced. The wood-smells, the wood-noises, and the deep suggestion in the air of coming summer joys, of things that are being born, permeate the senses. One thrills as it were with an ecstasy of response. After long months of cold, white snow, feet deep on the level, of fierce winds that seem to cut the skin of the face like sharp knives, causing the tears to freeze on the lashes, a day such as this, relenting and tender, brings with it a sense of intoxication. The brain and body are elated beyond verbal expression,

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and away up through the young, tender blue of the sky the spirit stretches arms of gratitude to God, to the beautiful God who made this exquisite world. This is worship.

Listen, and one can surely hear the life-beats of the mounting sap in the maple-trees—sugar-maples they are—ready to yield their sweetness to the first Indian who wounds them.

With the April of first youth resting quietly behind me, with this new era stretching out before, with spring on earth and in the air, no wonder that the clicking of these budding maple-boughs, as yet un-leaved, sounds like a telegraphic message of great happenings near at hand. And yet I am unconscious of anything immense impending. The greatest event that could come would be my marriage, and I have been quietly expecting that for some time. But I do not want to write of that to-day, because—oh, well, there is an excellent reason: just—“*because.*”

I want to revel a little longer in the delights of this good hour, this sun,

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these stirring creatures and bursting buds. Some one said once that the greatest poets have been those of the voiceless army, those of dumb tongues and incapable pens, who found human language too feeble a thing and yet too difficult to use, owing to its miserable limitations. That is a hard statement to contradict and an easy one to understand. The voice of God alone could express this day !

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I am staying with some friends in this beautiful valley, which is situated twenty miles to the north of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Right on the railway itself is the little settlement where we have lived since bidding good-bye to England eight years ago. There my dear mother died, seeming just too tired to live any longer. Yet the village is something like home to me still, because of the many good and true friends who abide there.

The name of this valley farm (I ask a thousand pardons ! I should say "ranch") is Sleepy Hollow, and the names of the two dear creatures who own it are Theo and

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Marie ; surnames are a nuisance. These two people are cronies of mine, and their wedding two years ago was the jolliest function of the kind I ever had the pleasure to attend. And it was funny too, for at the church door the good Theo suddenly got gun-shy—or should I say rice-shy ? It is much the same thing, for the torrents of rice that descended on him must have sounded and felt like small guns banging against his big, sensible spectacles that would do admirably for motor-work. Down went Theo's head ; he forgot about his bride and flew with a loud wail to the shelter of the covered " rig," which is the Western equivalent for a carriage, with apologies to the latter elegant article. Also at the ensuing breakfast, a nice, unsophisticated lady who did not know champagne from fizzy lemonade, soon found out the difference. That also was funny. She herself must have found the situation humorous I fancy ; anyway, she laughed for a solid hour.

Marie's fowls, owing perhaps to the atmosphere of Sleepy Hollow, have grown

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casual ; they have in fact been playing the fool with their eggs, just laying them in any odd place. The consequence is that Theo says she is a bad hen-wife, which accusation seems a trifle unfair. Also it sounds old and frumpy to be called a "hen-wife," especially with the memory of that wonderful wedding still fresh in people's minds. Marie got as mad as Marie can, which is not saying a great deal, she being the best-natured creature in the world, and she came to me this morning to help her out, my duties being to haunt the adjacent bluffs all the morning on the watch for errant hens. I have been watching a musk-rat prospecting the stream after his winter slumbers ; I have bored a hole in a maple-tree with my hat-pin to see if I could get out the sweet-stuff like the squaws do, and I have found three pasque-flowers in the yellow prairie grass of last year, but not a single old fowl have I heard or seen. If I did see one, I should hate to interfere with its plans, for Marie's fowls are terrible creatures with beaks like iron that they

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do not hesitate to use, and perpetually outraged eyes; their features go up for nothing at all, and they make nasty noises at you in their throats. Marie simply shakes when she has to turn a "sitty hen" off eggs that ought not to be sat upon. She really does try to be a "hen-wife," and she wears thick buckskin gaiters when force is required to frustrate a fox's mistaken maternal instincts. And yet some people will tell you that English girls do not make good wives for farmers out here! They do; they will make bread, butter, cakes, pies, and stews, all the morning, and sing or play to you all the evening; and if these accomplishments do not go to the making of an ideal wife for a farmer, or a tinker or tailor for the matter of that, I should like to know what qualifications would suffice. Being an English girl myself, I resent the attitude of the Canadian faculty, who, while criticising us, are themselves, nine times out of ten, creatures compounded merely of cook-books and darning-cotton. I dislike human matter that lacks mind.

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Even the Indians and their squaws go in for "parlour-tricks" as well as mere physical labour, and it is fine to hear a squaw singing a quaint evening song to her papoose. In spite of the sneering attitude the white man adopts towards his red brother—and his face is a study when one refers to such a relationship—I, personally, have found the prairie Indian a most entertaining companion, with moreover a distinct sense of humour. Of course they do not bathe at all, and as for good old Fenimore Cooper's Indians who used to plunge into the river and swim like ducks, well—perhaps they used to, but I have never seen an Indian who would not rather walk miles to find a bridge or fallen tree across a creek, than even wet the soles of his moccasins. Probably civilisation has spoilt them, and given them this queer dislike of water. By the way, I have met many white people who share it in a more or less degree, judging from the looks of them, and they are worse than the Indians because they show it more.

When Marie sent me out this morning, I

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was glad, for I have been watching an opportunity to begin to write for some time, but something has always prevented it. This morning conditions were favourable, and I seized pen and pad and crept quietly round the corner of the verandah, fearful of cheerful and loquacious companionship. A voice, Marie's voice, thin with distance, caught me up just in the middle of the horse corral.

"If you wait a moment until I just fetch baby's bonnet——" Oh, help!—My speed was instantly accelerated. Baby is all right, but not just this one morning, and it came out with its mother and me yesterday. It is a year old, and in expansive moments I can even pet it; but yesterday, when I was longing to anticipate the spring and realise to the full that the tedious snow was really gone, and perhaps to scribble about it, there was baby all over me—baby in the tantrums, baby in the talk, and finally, with a squeal, baby in the stream. Then they had to go home, and I could have petted the stream! However, after such a shock, I could not settle

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to think, so at the idea of baby again to-day—I ran. I prefer fowls.

The air is exquisite, positively effulgent. To-morrow I am going to spend the day—three days in fact—with the Indians; they have a camp close by in a maple-grove. I shall return to the farm to sleep because (I must put it once again) just—“because.”

I am going to watch the squaws performing a big household duty, namely the making of maple-sugar. They have been catching the sap in various vessels, principally made of birch-bark, for days. The sap trickles slowly from deep, rather cruel gashes in the tree-trunks; of this they collect a great quantity, and then comes three days of boiling, on a par with our marmalade or jam-making periods. (I think, next to stoning raisins at Christmas, that cutting up oranges for marmalade is the most tedious and obnoxious task imaginable.)

It will be nice to know how to make maple-sugar properly, and some day, after a certain event, Somebody and self will

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go out camping together in a maple-grove and have a nice little sugar-boiling all to ourselves. Without trying to be funny, that strikes me as a good way of spending a honeymoon. So we will choose the right season of the year and go sugar-making—that is to say, in his own words, if I can bring myself to “be sensible and see things in the proper light.” I never feel quite so impressed as I should when that remark is made to me, because lights differ according to temperament. Of course, I hold that I am sensible. Our points of view are frequently very opposed, and consequently the light in which we each see things must of necessity be different. It is all so difficult to explain, and I did not mean to touch upon it this morning; it interferes with my delight in the exodus of spring; I am sorry to have to admit it, but it does. I am in a cathedral now, with the sky overhead as a great blue dome, aisles of moss, and no carved oaken screen ever equalled in beauty these interlaced maple-boughs, or harboured such sweet-voiced

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choristers. One should pen an anthem instead of puzzling over a problem. However, nothing now remains but an attempt to explain myself.

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The One with Expectations—so called because things are entailed on him, poor dear!—is a fine specimen of an English gentleman, and he lives out here because his allowance goes farther and he gets more fun for his money, which does not amount to much yet.

He is very big, very blue-eyed, and very large-nosed, with a neat moustache that looks up like the Kaiser's, and he always calls me "Child." He wears a cow-boy hat and rides horses that do bad things; in fact, he has become a real cow-boy and does it well. His hair is fair and curly, and he really *is* working now on a ranch farther west. I miss him, but as is the way with a thing that is absolutely your own, sometimes you want it and sometimes you do not.

The One adores magazines, is splendid at mending clocks, watches, and anything with wheels or works that go wrong, and has

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been known, when busy on some horrible mechanical contraption, to actually forget all about me for hours. I loathe clocks, watches, magazines, and locks on doors ; a broken lock will completely entrance him ; it bores me. Keats, Tennyson, bits about George Bernard Shaw, Browning (when he doesn't make you want to break a chair, or stand on your head), Meredith, and heaps of others that I love, bore him ; but he likes among the poets Bret Harte, Lindsay Gordon, and, of course, Shakespeare. I like Shakespeare too, in certain moods and in little doses, but dramatic poetry does not appeal to me so much as does the lyric. I once read two little verses, exquisitely written, about a White Violet that grew richly on the banks of the River of Life. The River of Life flows, we are told, before the Throne of God. I prefer letting my mind revel in the purity and fragrance of that little violet and to think on the perfection of its existence than to read in Shakespeare how a man bet his friend a large sum that he would go and kiss the marriage-ring

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from the finger of that friend's wife. Queer taste on my part no doubt, but I confess to it. The One laughs heartily at my ideas, and generally ends up by kissing me. He really is very sweet, but these moments of tender non-comprehension are trying. Probably I am merely a sentimental idiot; he certainly is not, and we meet on one point with immense mutual sympathy. He is exceedingly musical, more truly so than I am, I fear, and he certainly plays a great deal better. But though we both adore music, still the difference of temperament again steps in. We had a tremendous argument once and it lasted for two whole days, interrupted only by meals and certain unavoidable duties. Unwisely I raised the question as to whether Melody or Harmony constituted the soul of Music. It was a silly thing to do, because after all they cannot be compared; however, any one can easily guess, by what has been already said, as to who supported which. A man who dotes on machinery, if he is musical as well as mechanical, would of course declare Harmony

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to be the soul of Music (he would adore Bach), and The One was aggravating enough to go further still and say that Harmony was really the only thing that mattered at all, whereas a limp dreamer like me, with an abhorrence of whirling wheels and a passion for flowers, one who prefers reading two verses about a certain White Violet to an immoral play by the Immortal Bard, would of course vehemently uphold the rights of Melody. The One grew cross and slangy, and condemned my ideas as "washy rot," so I retorted by declaring his to be nothing but "mechanical arithmetic," and we parted without saying good-night. We started in again the next day as soon as possible, both of us nicely repentant for having lost our tempers, determined not to do so again, yet equally determined each to convince the other. We argued, of course with intervals, every now and then cooling down and reminding each other that it was "only a discussion." Towards evening, and after about his twentieth cigarette, The One grew sweeping and final.

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"Neither is perfect without the other," he said, and stretched himself. He looked as if he would go in a minute, so I spoke quickly because I wanted to get it out before he left the room:

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"The song of the nightingale is perfection; it is also pure melody in that there is frequently a sequence of notes."

He stared for a moment in deep thought, and yet again for another moment, and—yielded. I loved him for it, and of course grew generous too.

"When twenty nightingales are singing together," I said, "that is best of all, because Harmony is present, and so, old dear, we agree, don't we?"

Bless The One! I wish—oh, such a heap of things!

I can hear a papoose crying, and a cur barking away off in the Indian Camp. I can hear the snipe belling in the marshes below these woods, and a wild duck sucking in the river mud somewhere near.

The Indians have peeled the bark from a silver-birch near by, and some of it is lying

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at my feet curled into crisp, neat rolls. When the maple leaves are spread, this spot will be like a beautiful green tent, and outside, the prairie land that forms the flat of the valley will be one sheet of exquisite mauve, the tender hue of the pasque-flower, miscalled the prairie crocus. It is really of the anemone tribe, with pale, dark-veined petals, and soft, grey furry corolla. If God had created only this one beautiful flower, He should be worshipped for that alone.

Mauve is the colour of spring on the prairies, mauve, flecked here and there with a yellow splash when the lupin appears. Later still—but I must wait, for I can tell of it all so much better when the summer actually changes its dresses. It must be luncheon-time, judging by the sun and the inner woman !

II

The same day, evening time.—Early this afternoon, with a blithe farewell to me and kindly advice as to taking care of myself, Marie and Theo drove off to the settlement to purchase the monthly stores. Baby went too, and the house has been my own, to say nothing of the woods and the haystack, and I divided my time pleasantly between the three. Since the happy trio cannot return to-night, I shall be all alone with the German girl who acts as servant here, for the farm hands return to their own homes at night—nice, cosy little log houses they have too, since Jack is as good as his master in this country, and frequently he thinks himself a great deal better. When Jack is of Canadian extraction, this attitude of equality is not at all unpleasant or aggressive, but when a horrid English emigrant adopts this free-and-easy manner he becomes altogether obnoxious and abominable. The

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lower-class Canadian is a pleasant, jolly "hail-fellow" sort of person, who never by any accident drops his "h's" or fails to remove his pipe from his mouth when he passes a woman in the street. But it is also a significant fact that he *raises* his hat even to the wife of his employer: it would never occur to him to touch it after the respectful manner of the poorer classes at home in England. For instance, the Barnardo boys who come to Canada, speedily learn this somewhat surprising method of salutation, and whisk off their hats and say "How do?" with great style, an insolent grin illuminating their faces the while. They are not Canadians, and they cannot grace these actions at all. Such people jar our English sensibilities; they upset our sense of the fitness of things. The English in the Canadian North-West deeply realise the wisdom of the upper classes in England who decree that Jack is by no means as good as his master, and who also insist that, whatever the said Jack's ideas on the subject may be, he keeps them to himself. In short, he must

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touch his hat and not lift it. Marie's German servant is a great character, and after the manner of all labouring classes of all nations, the English excepted, she can be talked to and treated in a friendly manner without becoming familiar.

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VALLEY*

To-night I supped alone. I ate a snipe that Theo shot, the last I expect, for the close season commences in two days. It was such a plump little bird that it seemed quite enough—with its toast. I spoke to Lina the maid about it beforehand, and requested her not to remove its little internal arrangements. She stared at me in horrified amazement, but obeyed. Later, on viewing the clean-picked bones, she eyed me with intense disfavour and spoke.

“Ach! I could not eat it! I should efen die! But den dere is no killing you foreign beobles.”

Now what English servant could have said the same thing without giving dire offence?

I have spent the evening with Marie's piano, not a bad one for here, and I think

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we rather enjoyed each other. Now it is late, and my bed calls to me in a cosy, tempting voice. To-morrow night, when my friends return from the settlement, they may bring with them a letter from The One ; I want one so ; it is a month since the last letter came. His father is sending him some money, and with this and his allowance he will be able to start a store down here, or buy cattle or something. Anyway, he says that directly he receives the money he is coming down to me and—ah ! well, we shall see. I assure you that he is quite a man to be proud of if that is what one requires, for he can ride any horse that eats hay, and rope any steer that ever had a mother, but—he ought, I am sure, to have been an engineer. My bed is shouting louder and louder.

Later.—I cannot sleep though I felt so sleepy when I came to bed ; it must be owing to the moon which is so brilliant that I am able to write by its light. For some time I lay hesitating whether to get out and pull down the blind, or to write down all my worries. The former would

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have been the more sensible course to pursue, therefore I decided on the latter.

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VALLEY*

England! I wonder when I shall set eyes on the shores of England again? If I become "sensible and see things in the proper light," I think it will probably be many years before the quay at Liverpool will feel the affectionate pressure of my friendly foot. For being sensible will mean settling down to the everyday of Western life until Fate sends The One across the ocean to take his place in his father's shoes. One thing is certain, and that is that we shall not be able to keep a servant for a long time to come, so I shall spend my time flourishing the dish-cloth and playing hide-and-seek with the eternal dust-pan, both of which horrid articles ought to be kept in Davy Jones's locker; also, such occupations are much too "sensible" for my taste. I have the pleasure of knowing a very delightful and clever woman in England, a writer of high reputation, one who possesses both a large brain and a large heart—an unusual

*IN THE
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combination! Once in a letter she asked me how I spent my days in the far North West. I replied fully, not forgetting to mention such pretty details as wash-tubs, floor-scrubbing, and the making of fifty pies at once when the odious threshing-gang pay their annual visit and eat up everything you can put before them, like locusts. It being near threshing time when I received her letter, the chance of a delicious grumble, with the knowledge of such a sympathetic listener, quite delighted me. In replying she said, "Child, what a life! Is it not a pity to have to clean out a pipe with a £5 note when a straw would do as well?" Bless her! That remark made me very happy. It was not the happiness of fed conceit, but a comfortable knowledge of being for once understood and apparently appreciated. In return I pointed out to her that in spite of this being a wheat-growing country, straws of the kind she referred to were unavailable, and a £5 note, being handy, was consequently used instead. My dear mother was like unto a £100 note, and

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—she used herself nobly and without a murmur!

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VALLEY

To return. In thinking it over I have come to the conclusion that only *infatuation* can make one content, may even eager to marry in comparative poverty, and thus couple with connubial bliss the elevating companionship of saucepans and potato-peelings. If I were only a little mercenary, things would be easier, for there is not a single girl in our settlement, or in any settlement, but would snap up The One in a moment if she had the chance, not only because he is such a dear, but because some day he would be able to give her carriages and jewels and things that women seem to want so much. Love without infatuation is a strange thing; it apparently tends to make one dainty, and yet surely this should not be the case. I must give up this analysis, or there will be trouble; I must let love-talk alone if I can, anyway for the present.

I would like to work for a while, head-work instead of body-work. Faculties that

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decline, like fretful babies, to be put to sleep, torment me always. I would like to go to England for a time, and later, return to The One and wed him, bringing pennies with me, and perhaps something of a name that my mind had made. There is the rub. I cannot rest, for the desire to achieve stings like a little, sharp whip. Marriage after marriage takes place in the settlement. Ruddy youths and glad, be-ribboned maidens join hands at the altar and go forth in gladness, content to work much, rest a little, and in fulness of time to die, having stolidly fulfilled all the functions of nature. I suppose that is very right and proper, but one might as well be an earwig or a moth! Even this day and these woods are merely intensifying my desire to be and do more than these people. I wish the spring would do for me what it did for Tennyson's young man—make me "*lightly* turn to thoughts of Love!" Then how easy everything would become, and how awfully "sensible" The One would find me when he comes out of the west with marriage in his eye! But such

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days as this has been only make me want to try and write of them exquisitely, to send forth a living, fragrant word-picture, acceptable to the senses of many an unknown affinity. They make me want to stretch out delicate, sensitive fingers of thought that would reach beyond the seas, and touch with delight the hearts of such as would enjoy them as I do. Alas! How high-flown I am! This stirring of the spirit is, I believe, after all only the work of some malicious and mischievous sprite whose desire is merely to torment, for—*cui bono?* There is no time to indulge in or develop artistic instincts in this country, for the physical part of one gets so tired at the end of each day's work that it simply lies down and goes to sleep.

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APPELLE
VALLEY

A cloud is nearing the horizon, even as another kind of a cloud seems to have enveloped me, and the last few minutes I have suffered. I almost hope to-morrow it will blow and rain, so that I shall be forced to stay in the house and learn more domestication. "Baby" will help to that

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nically by continually flinging away a bitten crust and yelling for it back again, trick it frequently indulges in.

The night is dimmed, so now I will try to sleep.

Evening of the next day.—In this country every one is delightfully vague about dates, and in Sleepy Hollow this seems to be especially the case. In the settlement one counts up the date according to the last edition of the weekly paper. There being no paper here one cannot count up, and after all it does not matter. I know it is somewhere in the middle of April, and that to-day has been just as fair as yesterday. The maple-buds had swollen perceptibly during the night, and everything seemed to have grown a whole inch when I went out in the morning.

I have spent the day with the Indians as arranged. They made me welcome in their own undemonstrative way, and let me help to keep the fires going, and now and then stir the boiling sap. Between times I wandered round looking at things.

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There were carpets of moss spread out to dry in the sun ; they pack the papooses in it when carrying them on their backs in little, mummy-like cases. I went into one tepee, which is the circular tent they live in, made up of canvas or skins with poles to support it, and there found five jack-rabbit skins and a wolf-hide hanging up to dry. These, coupled with the natural odour of warm Indian and *ka-nick-ka-nick* (the dried inner bark of the red willow which they use as tobacco when unable to obtain the white man's kind) gave the place a peculiar, yet curiously enough, not altogether unpleasant odour. Afterwards, the clean forest air outside, and the faint, sweet smell of the boiling sap came to me as a new joy. All day we boiled, to-morrow we boil, and the third day, like all events in fairy tales, will appear the brown sugar-crystals. The papooses were all free and as full of fun and play as white babies. There was one I would have given twenty-five dollars for if I had anywhere to keep it—such eyes, and such a little, little mouth, just like a wet, red rose-bud. My especial

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friend Wabash-Wan (the Jack-rabbit) is its father. I believe the squaws think me very silly to be so interested in everything, for they nudge each other and giggle just like school-girls. One asked me for my blouse and another for my ring ; I was sorry I could not oblige them.

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Later.—At moonrise I went along the trail to meet Theo and Marie. The trail runs along the foot of the hills on the north side of the valley, and sometimes it climbs a little way up and then again descends. Two or three prairie wolves were yapping and howling in the distance, doubtless rejoicing in the mixed delights of moonlight and a cow's carcass. A pale gleam at the side of the trail caught my eye, and I stooped to it. It was another anemone, tightly folded for the night, and I could not pick it for thinking of its gladness at sunrise to-morrow.

What a wonderful thing is night on the prairies ! As I walked I pictured the limitless flats beyond the boundaries of

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the Valley ; the many coyotes (the Indian word for wolf here universally used) that prowled and howled, moving in their silent, sneaking way like grey, sinuous shadows ; the badgers and gophers busy in their earths. Far off, like a little yellow eye, would glimmer the light of a settler's shack. How of the earth earthy that small gleam would at first appear under the swimming splendour of the moon ; I have often seen it and noticed. The moon is always a marvel, always a new pleasure, but is there not something in the small flame of an earthly lamp or fire, especially when it shines far across the vast night of the prairies, that appeals to the heart, even while the glory of the heavens uplifts the mind? Perhaps it is that the boundless, overwhelming impression of a prairie night causes one to welcome limited effort. To me the home-light of the settler is as attractive as the night-lights God has provided ; the one does not in reality lose in comparison with the other. Thinking on these things as I walked, I found that though one can never imitate the Eternal

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APFELLE
VALLEY*

Magnificence worthily, one can add to it humbly.

Such a soft, unseasonable night it was, stolen from the coming summer, that one almost expected to catch the glint of a fire-fly in the air, but it is yet too early. With a rumble of wheels and a clattering of hoofs, the rig rounded the corner. Hailing my friends, I clambered in at the back, took a seat on the grocery boxes, and so home.

III

The next day.—There was a letter from The One; I felt there would be. It was a real letter too and not a mere note, such as he usually indulges in. If the dear boy only knew how nice and “sensibly” inclined I feel after reading a letter like this one, he would be sending me such tonics through the post every day, I believe. Perhaps not though, because he finds letter writing such a business—I believe he really hates it; so, as can be easily imagined, I have plenty of time for relapses in between, which is a pity. I have actually seen him eat nearly the half of a five-cent pen-holder in the agony of trying to think what to say to some one in a letter, and how to say it. He seems to have a mania for condensing his thoughts on paper, and judging from his adoration of Bacon’s essays, which he is always holding up to me as the perfection of literary style, I

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VALLEY*

should imagine that he tries to get as near to that ideal as possible whenever he puts pen to paper. But this letter is different ; my boy has actually forgotten to prune his phrases until only a stick of fact is left. He simply rambled delightfully about our "by-and-bye," and being caught by the spirit of his writing, I sped into the bluffs alone after breakfast, there to ramble back in reply, also delightfully I hope. The letter will please him, and it goes in by the man on Friday. Already I begin to wonder if I have done quite wisely in replying at once, and without taking two or three days in which to cool off and regain my balance . yet I think I have done well. This I know, that if The One wooed me like that, warmly and often, soon I would give in. It may be peculiar to think and write down such things as this when one is actually engaged to a man, but being engaged seems so utterly different to being married.

The women in the settlement are very fond of telling me that The One is too good for me, and though I detest hearing it (in the

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same way that one always detests home-truths), yet I smile and agree—for it is quite true. At the same time he is also ever so much too good for any of them, only if I turned round and told them so in return they would simply snort with rage. One has to be like the parrot and think a lot.

Yes, he is indeed too good for me ; he is too gentle, too sweetly yielding to my self-will. But what a brave man ! Physically and morally and utterly brave ! I have seen him ride the most awful horses, horses that one moment stand on their heads and the next on their tails, and between times seem to go up in the air like the hills of the Psalmist, while The One just sits there, smiling and swearing cheerfully. Also, he once made a man swallow his front teeth like pills, for something horrid he said about a l. and I do not believe she was more than a mere acquaintance of The One's at best. Then, too, he has often come to me and apologised for being cross, when perhaps I was the one to blame all the time. Certainly he is brave. If he

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APPELLE
VALLEY*

were just brave enough, or rough enough, to take me by my ear to the parson, I would squeal, but—go! There it is in a nut-shell. He is too good for me, but I have a desire to thump the people who say so.

A kind and sweet friend, one of those dear things who pride themselves on "plain English," once told me that I should have lived in the stone age when it was the fashion for a man to first fell his lady-love with a club and then drag her off by the hair of her head! Thanks! that is a shade too peremptory even for me, and I fancy that I also would have "got busy" just about then, and there would have been two clubs at work.

My dreams of achievement are faint and far away to-day, in fact I am glad to record that they scarcely bother me at all, though the weather continues to be quite perfect. After luncheon, I picked up a song-folio belonging to Marie and came across the song "Douglas, Douglas tender and true." Strangely enough I had never seen it before, though I knew it to be as old as

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the hills. I have never encouraged the average ballad, as they are most of them so feeble, and badly written. But after reading The One's unusual and most tender letter, this song affected me so that my voice wobbled terribly, and presently the tears came fast and ran down into my lap. Luckily Marie was busy putting Baby to sleep somewhere, for she would have thought me either ill or crazy. I knew that if anything happened to The One away in the West, I would feel just like that girl did who had written about her Douglas. And that mood still holds me, making more tears feel very near the surface. Is it a thousand, thousand pities that he is not here now? Perhaps it is. "Sensible" is not the word for my feelings; but he is safe and well, thank God, and the woods are perfect in the late afternoon sun. I will swallow this lump in my throat and think quietly for a while.

IN THE
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APPELLE
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An early and energetic squirrel, frisky from his winter's nap, ran up a near tree

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with a metallic squeak. It positively startled me. It is a powerful noise for such a small person to make, and he seems to do it with his tail, for that bushy member jerks violently every time. I have eaten squirrel as a change from bacon on many a long camping trip, but if I was camping now and had no food, I do not think I could shoot this one, for he has such cheeky eyes, and is sitting on a bough quite near ; it is very jolly of him to trust me so.

I have thought and I know. I know there is that in me which will not be quelled or thrust aside—a proud determination to do and be, by power of mind and gift of inspiration. Yet this proud Something bows its head and weeps with my body in gentle recognition of my strong affection for The One. Then it softly but firmly withdraws and awaits the composure of my body. Now I am looking It in the eyes, and we understand each other. If there is such a condition as a heaven on earth, I could realise it, did The One but possess also this Spirit-lord and

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enjoy and suffer from It as I do, or did he even become conscious of and intimate with mine. If I could only make him understand! But he knows no such subtle slavery, is troubled—so far as I can see—with no ambition whatever, and so is frankly puzzled in his essentially masculine mind by my mental vagaries. I am to him merely a dear, long, lovable enigma; in short, as he frequently says, “Child, you’re the Very Dickens!” Being this kind of a dickens, is, though privately sufficing, not quite so simple as it sounds. However, perhaps when I marry The One and so tie myself down to mere bread-and-butter making, etc., I can knead into those mundane necessities all these out-of-place desires that torment me now. Why are people so fond of saying “Oh, yes! he or she is married and done for”? I begin to think I see a reason.

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VALLEY*

Another period of thought, bringing forth this:—Am I selfish, egotistical? Do I think I can do and be more than I really

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could, if given a fair chance? Do I? That suspicion disturbed me very much. Then, suddenly, I again caught the eye of my Spirit-lord, and Its steadfastness mocked my anxiety.

I must go into the house and be among people, for continually fighting this same battle makes one very weary. Being a dickens is not so very jolly when there is mere man to be reckoned with as well.

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Two days later.—In the settlement there lives a man ; he shall be called The Sage. He is English and a doctor, and no one knows quite how old or how young he is, but he is very wise—on occasion.

Once a Canadian Pacific Railway engine ran off the track near the station and tipped itself into a sort of ditch ; after that it refused to budge, but just lay there making horrid noises. The Sage was out all night showing the C.P.R. break-down gang how to put it on again. The gang, by the way, spend all their time doing these little odd jobs, and they were curiously

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ungrateful to The Sage for his gratuitous advice and help—in fact, I believe they even swore at him. He is very deaf. Now I think being deaf, though of course dreadfully annoying sometimes, has also its compensations. For instance, The Sage couldn't hear those men swearing at him, so his feelings could not have been hurt at all.

He shoots well, has a rather bald head, keeps black dogs, and lives alone in a house he built for himself ever so many years ago, for The Sage is an "old-timer" and came to the settlement when it was quite a baby place, with only about half-a-dozen buildings to constitute the main street; he is now an Institution. If he gets an idea into his really clever head, it would take a very bad scare from an archangel to drive it out, and even then I believe, the tail-end of it would stay behind. He argues too, and if one is lucky enough to ever corner him in an argument, he spreads out the palms of his hands most righteously, snaps his eyes at you, and replies promptly: "*That's* what I say!"

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VALLEY

leaving you weak with amazement, while he trots off apparently victorious and immensely satisfied. Now that is a perfectly awful thing to do, and makes one grind one's teeth with rage. I am not sure whether he does it on purpose or not: one must remember that he is a Sage, and it may be merely his sagacious way of getting out of a tight place. He has a big, warm heart underneath it all, and we are all awfully fond of him.

Not long ago my father was married for the second time, and The Sage kindly lent his house for the married pair to return to after their short honeymoon until they could find a suitable one for themselves. Of course all that should have been arranged beforehand, but Daddy is Irish. He is nicknamed The Pippin by his respectful progeny, because, having served many years in India with his regiment, he seems to have crinkled up rather—with the heat, I suppose—and now looks like a jolly little winter apple. He and his wife are with The Sage now, and I am supposed to be there too, only this visit

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has intervened. Next week I must return to them and keep house while they hunt house. The Pippin is deaf too, so I expect The Step-mother is having a lively time.

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VALLEY*

Oh, but the wedding was funny! and in spite of a heartache when I imagined my father's long-ago wedding-day with my beautiful mother, I had to see the humorous side of this later event. The snow was deep on the ground and the whole North-West was ice-bound. Not having any money to speak of, I could not afford to send away to Winnipeg for flowers, so I did the best I could. I cut a big, white picture-flower out of the seed-catalogue and pinned it in his coat, where it crackled diabolically with every movement. But The Pippin did not mind, in fact he was beautifully unconcerned all through the ceremony.

I had known the lady he was to marry all my life, she being an old friend of the family—in fact, a sort of connection—and they were married in a friend's house, because the paper flower

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VALLEY

would not have looked well in a church—at least, that reason suffices. A sheet was spread on the parlour-floor, and a pillow placed invitingly for each of them to kneel on. Outside the sun glittered on the snow-fields, and inside the room we all whispered impressively while we waited for the bride. Even then I felt I must laugh or die ; but when the bride entered the room, and The Pippin, looking up over his spectacles, gave vent to a long-drawn “Ah-h ! *Poor dear !*” I simply stuffed my handkerchief into my mouth and suffered horribly. The bride being a good sort, possessing a sense of humour, and also having under the belt of her travelling-dress a whole glass of port wine—winked at me ! We stood and we knelt in the usual way (and I, not being of sufficient importance to be given a pillow, found the floor most unsympathetic) until the knot was tied and new relationships established. Then The Pippin groaned again, it being a funny little way of his to groan plentifully when particularly happy. After driving into the settlement to a nice

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little tea at Linnet's home (we shall come to Linnet presently), the pair went off on the west-bound express, Dad's bald head gleaming prettily in the western light as he saluted the send-off from the car steps. That was the last of them for a time. Then, one fine day, they came back and with me took up their abode in the house of The Sage. The very next day the irrepressible Pippin wanted to go off out and see all his old-time friends, having previous to his marriage been absent from the settlement for some time. It is here necessary that I tell of the three antipathies of my father; they are lawyers, a cold climate, and Popery. Poor dear! he really has suffered a good deal from the first two, but I can never quite fathom his intense horror of Popery, since it appears harmless enough if you let it alone. But The Pippin fights a candle in a church like a pup at a pig. He grew so bigoted once that he took to going to a Union Baptist Chapel, and I heard that his Amens and groans were most convincing. I put him off the chapel

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however in quite a simple way, for one Sunday afternoon, as he dozed in his arm-chair, I gathered up the lonely tuft of hair that he then possessed on the top of his head and rolled it neatly into a curl-paper, easily succeeded in making him forget about it, and packed him off to his chapel in a hurry. Of course the choir, where daddy was wont to bleat, was convulsed, and he thinking them very rude, and of course failing to see anything unusual in his appearance, promptly retired again into the more polite bosom of the English Church.

Well, when I heard The Pippin say that he was off out to see people, I protested strongly, impressing upon him that custom demanded that he should wait until his old friends had first called on his wife in her new position, and this I told him they would not do until he and she had been to church together and attended a public service. That was enough. He flew into a violent rage and quite took my breath away; he shouted so that even The Sage could hear.

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“Not another word, my dear ; I say, not another *word* ! I shall go where I like and see whom I choose. I tell you it is Rome ! Rome ! and it leads to Rome ! Such rubbishing Popery makes me very angry ! Once for all, I tell you, *I refuse to be churched* !” The Sage flung up his hands and collapsed ; I rolled helplessly on the sofa, while the irate Pippin glared at us fiercely, wondering what he had said, and looking just like Captain Kettle in a tight corner.

“Tell him !” I cried, in The Sage’s ear, “*do* tell him ; don’t let him say that to any one else !” and fled.

When next I saw The Pippin, he grinned like a schoolboy and groaned like himself. Then I whispered loudly that I was just as far from desiring a churching as he was, and received a box on the ear for my pains. Thinking on these humorous happenings is a good scheme as it takes one’s mind off one’s self. I wrote home to a friend and told her the above joke against Dad. She was quite shocked ; her letter, in reply, was really starchy in tone all the way through, and yet at the end this dear lady asked

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me if I had read "The Visits of Elizabeth," and would I like her to send a copy out! I have read it, and everybody is talking about it here; at the same time I do not think my story about The Pippin is half as shocking as that bit about the glove in the book referred to. How differently people look at things!

Evening of the next day.—The squaws have given me a huge piece of maple-sugar. I shall keep half of it in case I ever go to England again, as it would be quite a novelty there, especially when one could say one had helped the Indians to make it. The papooses' chubby faces are all sticky with the stuff; the Indians say it is good for them and makes "one great, big, heap-fat papoose!"

Theo is so comical, he always sees a joke to-morrow. Last night at supper I told him that I had made an arrangement with my friend Wabash-Wan to go out with him at moon-rise to shoot musk-rats, and I asked Theo if he had done much that way himself. He said he had, so, not wanting to appear ignorant as to the

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hunting of musk-rats when I went with Wabash, I asked Theo how one could get near the creatures.

IN THE
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APPELLA
VALLEY

"You must not talk at all," he said; "you will both sit quietly on the river-bank and go like this——" and pursing up his lips he made a squeaky noise with them, the sort of noise that silly women make to babies; it also sounded very much like the honest, unsubtle kiss a Mary-Jane would give the grocer's man. Theo said that noise attracts the musk-rats and they swim to the shore to see what it is, and of course get shot. But the idea of sitting on the river-bank with Wabash-Wan, the Indian—who looks as if he never brushed his teeth or his hair—and making that noise, suggested itself to me as quite impossible, or rather I pretended it did, just to see what Theo would say. I held my head high and spoke mincingly.

"Under those conditions I do *not* think I will go ϵ -hunting musk-rats with Wabash," I said. Marie laughed.

"I should think not," she said, "if that

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APPELLE
VALLEY

is the sort of game you are expected to play !”

The worthy Theo turned to her in mild surprise. “Why not, my bird?” he asked. When Theo does so call Marie a hen-wife he calls her his bird.

“Theo, you are dense,” the bird replied.

“Not at all; I can see a joke easily enough when there is one.”

Evidently he was ruffled, so he changed the subject.

We went to the river and we squeaked and we got six rats—poor little curious things. Wabash is going to tan the skins for me with wood-ashes, and they will make mitts and a muff for next winter.

This morning at breakfast, with his mouth full of egg and bacon, Theo suddenly began to laugh; he heaved and shook and enjoyed himself immensely. After a good deal of coaxing we drew from him the fact that he had just seen the reason why I had raised an objection to going out with Wabash the night before, and I think it amused him till luncheon time.

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I feel less "sentimental" to-day—perhaps more like a mother might feel to 'The One than anything else—and it is quite a rest. If he came into the room now, he would probably be told to "wipe his boots" (all mothers say these things), or to "take off his thick coat in the house or he would not feel the benefit of it when he went out again," only that one is not needing any coat at all this weather.

This mood is what I should be pleased to term "sensible," though I am certain 'The One would not agree with me. Of course if I were sufficiently rash and imprudent to read his letter over again, this peace of mind might spread its wings and fly. I really do want to read again what he said about his father, but, on the whole, I think I will not.

I found a silly, solitary egg this morning during my wanderings; nearly a week's quest (?) rewarded by one egg!

"Where there is one, there are more," said Marie when I took it in; "go and hunt properly." I am tired of fowls and hen-talk, and I really think that now I

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am alone out here it is perhaps my duty to refresh my mind as to what he said about his father, for some day the dear old gentleman will probably become a relative of mine, and—oh, well, I know what I mean.

Here we are :—

“The Gov. says he is feeling better since his trip to France, which is a good thing ; he was there two months, dear, at Étretat. He tells me the money he is sending will reach here about the middle of next month ” (that seems a long time yet to wait) “ and then, hey presto ! for the little old settlement and my perverse and cussed darling ! ”

Here I shall skip a bit, but this is interesting :—

“Child, think what a stunning time we shall have some day ! Up here on the Cochrane ranch they have a motor-car—awfully jolly ! Now just you listen while I whisper to you. Some day you and I will keep a motor-car, not in this country, I fear, but we will have one, sure thing, we will ; a big, long, evil-looking car, Child, but with only seats for *two*, and all the

COMRADES TWO

rest of it devoted to machinery! Think of the 'works' and 'wheels' there will be for me to play with! Ah, I can see you frown at that, and I said it merely to tease you."

*IN THE
QU'
APPELLE
VALLEY*

Stuff! He meant it, I know. If he falls in love with the inside of a watch, he will, to use a Western expression, go perfectly "batty" over the internal, infernal machinery of a motor-car! "Batty" being translated, means that he will get bats in his belfry, and this latter needs no explanation. We shall never be able to get to any place at all, because I know The One will always be wanting to "see the wheels go round." But I like his idea of buying a car some day. Ah, me! I can see the picture at the end now, I think. We shall simply exist out here until he comes into his own—The One raising cattle and me raising the dickens—then we shall go home to England and lead the usual sort of comfortable town-and-country life just like everybody else. Gradually (and mark the terrible subtlety of gradation!) my higher ideals and

COMRADES TWO

*IN THE
OUP
APPELLE
VALLEY*

desires will grow thin and fade into nothing, while my body will grow fat and flourish. Gradually the physical will kill the spiritual. But wait! Must it be so? Where then would be my strength of mind and purpose? Where this vaunted inner personality that declares itself strong to accomplish something great and pure before it passes from the body? I am ashamed. Surely a life of ease and peace should but provide the thoughtful period I long for, one in which I might experience "the leisures of the Spirit," one from which the dish-cloth and dust-pan element would be for ever banished. Would it not give me the chance I grumble for now—time in which to create, mature, and project one poem, one song, or one book that should leave tired humanity happier and purer for having heard or read it? But I am afraid—so afraid—that I may be weak and not strong in prosperity; that I might learn to love—magazines, because they are easy to read; grow desultory in thought and lax in mental discipline; that a fat body will breed in me a fat mind. Will the

COMRADES TWO

dear, brave, tender, lazy One help me to be strong? Will he encourage me to try and do one thing worth the doing, or will he tempt me to sit by the fire with him, or on the lawn, or in the car—anywhere so long as all activity is comfortably suppressed—and let life slide by like an unruffled, pretty dream? Which? Again I am ashamed. Surely I should be strong enough to work alone and resist influences that may be antagonistic to endeavour. Assuredly it will rest with me, and I—I am afraid of myself.

IN THE
DU
APPELLE
VALLEY

And all this fresh fuss—simply because I wanted to see what he said about his father!

IV

*STILL
WITH
MARIE
AND
THEO*

TO-MORROW is my last day in this beautiful valley, and I intend doing a very unsociable thing. Across the river and the flats away on the south side is an Indian village, and the huts, built of rough-hewn logs, are quite clean and nice. The Indians live in these little houses in the winter, but in the summer they leave them and live in their tepees. I shall get up with the sun and spend the day and the evening in the deserted village, and it will be quite delightful, for then, alone with the spirit of the land, I can write of the pleasures of a lonely camp, and tell of the things one does and sees and thinks. Marie and Theo do not in the least understand why I want to go, but neither do they object, which is very nice of them; explanation is a waste of energy and rarely does any good.

Marie said: "Do what you like, dear, and go where you like! this is Liberty Hall, remember; besides, you people who write"

COMRADES TWO

(how I hugged myself at that) "are always wanting to do queer things."

Theo offered to lend me his gun and his fishing-rod, and I shall take them both, for they are necessary if one is going to play at being an Indian for even one day.

Tea, sugar, bread, salt, a kettle, and a cup I can get from the maid Lina, and other food I shall get for myself from the river and the woods—that is, with any luck, for without luck the Indian goes hungry. In this big country one is allowed to fish and shoot during the close season if one can afterwards prove that food was a necessity and not obtainable any other way. I think to-morrow it will be a necessity for me, and one must chance the rest.

Between here and the village is a big *muskeg*, which is the Indian word for bog; The One and I were once caught there when driving across, and the horses went in up to their knees. The rig was smashed badly, and we got the horses out only after a great deal of difficulty; it seems that we took a wrong turning off the trail, and the

STILL
WITH
MARIE
AND
THEO

COMRADES TWO

*STILL
WITH
MARIE
AND
THEO*

little experience has made me remember the safe path across.

One uses a spoon-bait for the pike and pickerel that abound in the river, and often The One and myself have fished the long reach by the village. The Pippin and we two stayed for a month in one of the huts one summer, and enjoyed every day of it. The river flows into Crooked Lake, such a delightful piece of water about two miles wide, which there seems to fill the bed of the valley, and is about a mile and a half east of the Indian Camp.

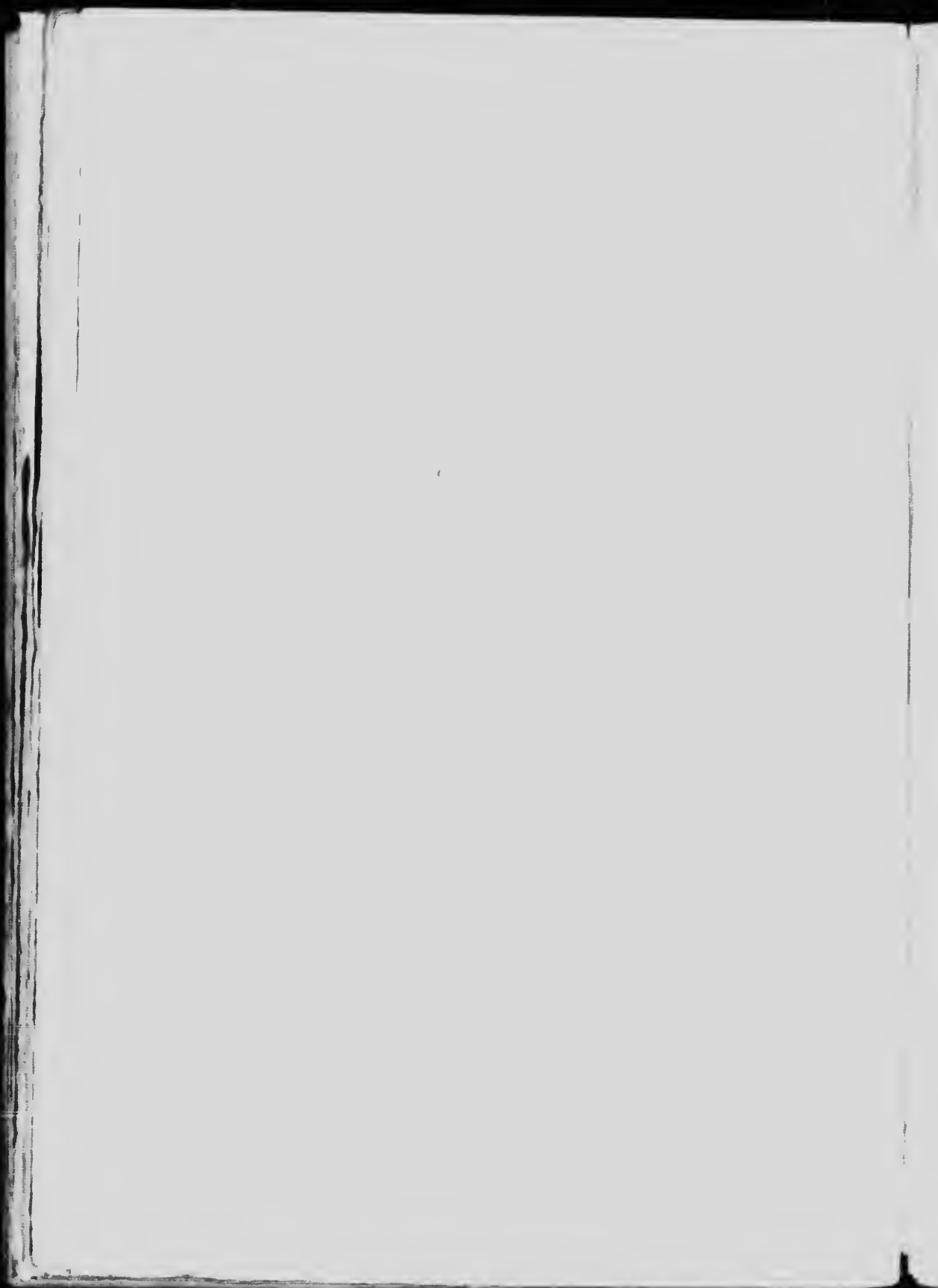
There will be so much house-life after all this is left behind that I intend to make the most of my day.

The winds that blow, and the things that grow
Are sufficient unto me.

I forget who sang thus, but he or she must
have been nice to know.



THE RIVER FLOWS INTO CROOKED LAKE



V

Moss feet deep round a bubbling spring ;
 A short-songed bird on a gorgeous wing.
 Creatures a-buzz on the affluent air,
 Tree-trunks hoary with lichens rare.
 Wood-smoke curling its way to the sky,
 And young things learning to crawl or fly.
 Myriads here in the sun-flecked wood,
 Unconsciously lauding the Central Good.

Evening. By the light of the camp-fire.—
 Those lines came to me in the middle
 of the morning's enjoyment ; such a glad,
 singing, golden world it was then, with
 full-toned hours ; such a soft, dark, silent
 land it is now, and only a lonely bittern
 calls from the marshes.

STILL
 WITH
 MARIE
 AND
 THEO

I arose at five of the clock and crept loaded
 from Sleepy Hollow. It would need the pen
 of a Wordsworth or a Tennyson to describe
 the birth of this April day in the Qu'appelle
 Valley, this sudden furrow of delight that
 astonishes the traveller of the prairies.

As I followed the trail across the muskeg,
 the sun, red with rapture, rose over the
 hills to the south-east, and flashed on the

COMRADES TWO

*STILL
WITH
MAKIE
AND
THEO*

dewdrops that elung to the dead, sweet grasses of last year. More than once I paused abruptly, believing I beheld a hanging ruby ; anon, as the sun yellowed, I saw that they were diamonds. The grasses rustled in the pure fresh breeze, and so strongly did the wine of the Western morning affect the senses that I felt if there was no beautiful beyond to this gem-strewn morning world, merely to turn again to earth and yield one prairie bloom, would be sufficient reward for the pains and tears of life. The trail was firm beneath the feet, but snipe were busy in the many pools around. On over the muskeg without a mishap, across the Indian bridge of logs, and so into the little deserted camp, calling itself a village. It was there—just outside the hut of old Chief Fell-in-the-Fire, that The One and I came to an understanding a long time ago. And things have drifted on ever since as I knew they would ; it is more my fault than his—but here my thoughts turned elsewhere, for breakfast became important and breakfast must be caught.

COMRADES TWO

Outside our hut a fire was soon blazing merrily and the kettle hung by means of two green forked sticks and a supporting rod. Thence to the river, for fish is best when put straight on the coals.

*STILL
WITH
MARIE
AND
THEO*

The spoon-bait spun giddily ; one or two mosquitoes came from nowhere and bit sharply, and when a big jack snapped up the spoon, I nearly shrieked with excitement. The One had hitherto always been there to help me land a fish, but this one must perforce be landed by me alone, and it seemed that I either had to go in or the fish come out. I gave him plenty of line ; up and down he tore, and across and across ; my heart was in my mouth, for I am not a good fisher, and I was afraid of breaking Theo's rod. However, I think finally I nearly drowned him, for on descending the bank with the landing-net it was fairly easy to land the creature. A hard rap with a willow stick on the pointed nose ended the troubles of both of us. Nothing could have excelled the excellence of that fish-steak, and the embers of the fire were just in the right condition

COMRADES TWO

*STILL
WITH
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THEO*

for grilling. To-night I shall take that fish back to Theo, for people never believe fishing stories unless they have proof, and my little breakfast did not seem to make the creature look any smaller. It is tied to a log in the sedge to keep it fresh. My plate—merely a flat piece of wood—the kettle, and the cup cleansed, and the rest of the simple stores concealed in the hut, there arose the delightful question of what to do with the rest of the day. The answer was simple and immediate; let it come and go as it would, and as the spirit moved me so would I act. Certain it was that I should need no mid-day meal, and so for a while I sat in the sun on or near the spot where The One had proposed. How sweet and funny he had been—we both must have been, in fact! He proposed, I tell him, in the subjunctive, a would-you-if-I-were sort of thing, and I answered in like vein—what-would-you-say-if-I-did! And that is about all that was said, I believe. Even then I tried to impress upon him the strength of my other desires, dreams, and hopes, that had

COMRADES TWO

nothing to do with matrimony, but he became airy and full of comfortable assurance.

*STILL
WITH
MARIE
AND
THEO*

“All that rubbish will blow away some day,” he said, and in the novelty and interest of the proceedings I half believed him. Anyway, we kissed and squeezed hands and ran off to play in the woods. We have, I think, been playing in the woods ever since, but the rubbish has not blown away!

The camp-fire smouldered and the smoke curled up and up in blue wreaths to the bluer sky. How many other camp-fires had smouldered in this little lonely village, watched by sombre, brooding Indians, whose hearts, though they dare not show it, are hot against the white man? How many poor, feeble, old red men had closed their eyes, dimmed by the smoke of many fires, behind the log walls of these huts—closed them for ever to their beloved prairies—and with a last sigh and the faith of a child, have, with freed souls sped forth from here in search of other and happier hunting-grounds where the white man is

*STILL
WITH
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AND
THEO*

not, and the buffalo abounds? Poor old men and women, dying alone and uncared for, forsaken by the healthy, younger members of the band; brave old men and women, going forth uncomforted into the land of the unknown, yet trusting implicitly in the power and tenderness of their Mighty Manitou, whose hand will assuredly clasp theirs in the darkness and lead them into the light. How different is the death-bed of an Indian, stretched brown and brave on his spruce-boughs, to the cringing exit of many an educated, soft-swathed pale-face! Some charred fish-bones sent forth a pungent odour; the sun was high and I remembered that my day was advancing. Slipping a couple of cartridges into the gun, and with a further supply in case of need I left the camp with its romantic suggestions and dipped into the woods, heading towards the blue lake. Every step was familiar, and every square inch of the black forest earth seemed alive with something. In and out among the trees, over fallen logs, until a good mile lay between me and the camp, and then I knew yet once



HOW GOOD TO BE ALIVE AND ALONE WITH NATURE

COMRADES TWO

again how good it is to be alive and alone with nature. Yet, instinctively, a little sigh came as I remembered other days with The One.

*STILL
WITH
MARIE
AND
THEO*

Resting awhile against a sturdy poplar I grew meek and submissive, almost ready to marry The One and the dust-pan and pass half my life in their society, not to mention that of cloaks, locks, and over-harmonised music. Once he had played me that little hackneyed song, "Sweet Marie," which I had always thought a most tender melody in spite of its commonness, and I hardly recognised the air through the thousand and one harmonies he introduced. I was distressed and overwhelmed, and because I said so he very nearly became cross! This morning I smiled at the memory, for the noon-hush seemed to equalise everything and banish the shade of trouble.

A bush-rabbit skipped forward, and sitting up on his bit of a tail rubbed his nose; with his sudden appearance the word "supper" flashed into my mind, yet I had no heart to raise the gun. Some

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*STILL
WITH
MARIE
AND
THEO*

ether-wave must have communicated my instinct to the rabbit, for it fled instantly, and almost at once came the "cuk-cuk" of a grouse close at hand. Now a grouse, otherwise a prairie-chicken, is a very conceited person, and when he says "cuk-cuk" in that tone of voice, he means to be insulting.

Not being at all a good shot and only killing when hungry, I have found it always more expedient to be still and let a creature look for me, so that when it shows its head it is easy to shoot it off at once with no danger of only wounding. A grouse will always come to have a look at you if you keep still enough, nor was this chicken any exception to the rule. He was a fine cock-bird, and came strutting and chuckling through the undergrowth. We saw each other at the same moment, and all his neck-feathers were ruffled with resentment or alarm. I potted him unblushingly, and he never knew what hit him. Knowing the game-laws, my conscience made me think that gun might have made less noise, but three and a half drachms

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of black powder behind a good charge of No. 6 shot does not exactly whisper when you pull the trigger.

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WITH
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AND
THEO*

On again, and then a short descent brought me out upon the shore of the great blue lake. Some pelicans, away out upon a sand-bank, looked like snow-balls on the rim of the water. I paddled and caught ten little cray-fish and the eleventh caught me, which was not so funny.

So cold was the lake water that I presently lay on the shore and warmed my feet in the sun, being tired with the strenuous walk through the wild and tangled woods. One cannot travel through Canadian bush in the easy way that one ambles through the forest in sweet England, where every tiny stick of wood is carefully picked up and sold. Here fallen trees, in all stages of decay, form barriers across what little trails the Indians or the deer may have made, and the tangled undergrowth often hides these fallen timbers, so frequently to measure one's length on mother earth is only part of the business. What a droning, drowsy noon it was, and I slept—

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*STILL
WITH
MARIE
AND
THEO*

dreamlessly at first, and then it seemed that The One came with his arm in a sling. He said, "You have hurt me; why did you shoot me? I have never hurt you, child!" and I awoke with a gasp of relief.

Sleep had stolen my precious hours, and the sun was slipping down towards the hills; a great sense of loneliness and chill dictated immediate action. The joy of the morning had left the air, and there was no sound but the ceaseless lapping of the little grey waves. Evening was imminent, and in the north a heavy bank of clouds arose from behind the hills. How deserted, how lonely and different it all was! Gathering up my spoils I went quickly through the dim woods, now sinister in their silence. At the camp the dead ashes of the fire whirled about whitely in the evening breeze, but with a new fire would come warmth and comfort once more.

Can anywhere be found a greater friend or more terrible enemy than fire? On the prairies, where your camp-fire is, there, for the time, is your home. Every one wants

COMRADES TWO

the friendship of a fire everywhere. Take even the British workman ; does not he ever make a little fire on the least provocation? I have seen these workmen's fires all along the dear, old, far-away Strand, and who shall say that they are only built of necessity? But I suppose the London County Council would say so, or know the reason why. All the same, I really believe that any man, if he put on rough clothes, tied up his trousers under the knees with a red handkerchief or a piece of twine, and began to pick up the pavement of a London street, could do it without interference so long as he had the sense to light a little fire in a tin thing with holes in it! Of course if he had a canvas tent to hide in, and a short, black pipe with which to pass the time, he would be still more natural-looking, and could watch with intense satisfaction the care with which the traffic would avoid that sacred spot.

And again, the good old garden bonfire of our childhood ; the potatoes that went in and hardly ever came out again, save here and there a charred something that, because

*STILL
WITH
MARIE
AND
THEO*

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STILL
WITH
MARIE
AND
THEO

it was cooked by other means than the kitchen stove, was devoured with intense relish. Primitive man still asserts himself in us all at times. Alone in the deep, mystic twilight of the valley, I smiled over these thoughts as I gathered wood to feed yet another fire.

The preparation of the grouse was a short process, because I skinned it, and it was soon frizzling fast over the fire on a green stick. The night closed in, and made walls of darkness on every side, so that my little camp seemed indeed a homely, cheery spot. An owl hooted away up on the hillside, and the bittern in the marshes continued to give forth his dismal note, as, leaning back against the door-jamb of the hut, I watched the grilling bird, conscious of a wonderful hunger.

Suddenly, what seemed like a chorus of wolves broke upon the soft stillness of the night, but experience had taught me that two coyotes can sound like twenty when they are really in good voice, and musically inclined. These were a long way off—they

COMRADES TWO

always are, in fact, and one can rarely get near enough for a shot. It would sound peculiar to the people in the Old Country if one there spoke or wrote so casually of "wolves," but these creatures that live on the prairies do not deserve the dignity of the name, they being cowardly, sneaking little brutes, about on a par with the Indian jackal, and not one whit higher in the scale of creation. Only in very severe winters have they ever been known to travel in packs. They will pull down a weak and sickly calf, rob the settler's hen-houses, or pick clean the bones of a luckless man frozen to death in a treacherous blizzard, but there their prowess ends. These now made bad sounds in the night behind me, but only succeeded in adding a weird charm to the lonely hour I was enjoying.

The stars came out like jewels in the infinite heights above.

Sleepy Hollow once more.—After writing the above I lay awhile on the ground by the fire and watched the stars. Thus occupied it struck me forcibly

STILL
WITH
MARIE
AND
THEO

STILL
WITH
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AND
THEO

how impossible it was for any human being with a grain of sense to doubt the existence of a Living God. Yet some do or say they do, and I would that such a one had been there with me then. Theological, and, I fear, even logical argument is beyond me ; my argument would have taken the form of one sharp, short question, namely to point to the glittering, wonderful sky and ask "Who did *that*?" No answer save one is possible.

We become as accustomed to the stars as we do to the eyes we see them with. One must be alone in the wilderness, having a clean heart and an open mind, to even begin to realise something of the marvellous mystery of the universe. Towns, gatherings of people, house-life, and association with people who live for little things alone, blind and obscure the eyes of the mind and paralyse the spirit ; they degrade and finally kill the best in one. Yet towns, and cities, and communities are necessary to the state of man as he now is ; but if those people, ever busy with their poor muck-rakes, would once and a while with-

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draw alone into the night and look up, surely something of reverence and healthy awe would elevate and purify their souls, for there is God in us all somewhere.

*STILL
WITH
MARIE
AND
THEO*

I arose—exalted, humbled, gladdened, and saddened. Exalted, because of a certain intimate and splendid Whisper from above ; saddened, because of the frailty and meanness of the body. The fire had fallen ; the time had come for me to depart.

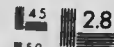
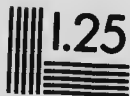
The path across the muskeg, encrusted as it was with alkali, shone white and clear ahead. From behind the northern hills, the dim outlines of which were just discernible in the night, there presently shot up spears of trembling, rainbow light, flickering high and dying low, anon waving again across the sky like gigantic and beautiful spirit arms. Such are the Northern Lights—lovely, weird companions of the night trail.

Inside the house everything looked very small and ordinary, and Theo weighed my fish. It was just eight-and-a-half pounds.



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*IN THE
SETTLE-
MENT*

I HAVE been back in the settlement for a week. The Pippin is jubilant, The Sage argumentative (this inundation must be tiresome to a bachelor of long-standing) and The Step-mother—bless her ! just herself. My grandfather was a diplomat.

In consideration of the Chinese washerman's heinous crimes with the clothes, I undertook to do the washing last Monday. There had been a heavy shower of rain, and though the sun shone when I carried my basket-load into the garden, a few drops still fell brightly and the wind was very strong. The house of The Sage is close to the Vicarage, where dwells the very nicest Shepherd that ever herded naughty sheep, and he and his wife are good friends of mine since we became accustomed to each other's little ways. The Sage possessed no clothes-pegs, and, as previously remarked, the wind was high. Three dusters and two tea-towels took themselves off,

high in air, in the direction of Athabasca, but The Step-mother's underneath trousseau was the most tiresome of all the things I wrestled with. Garments that must be nameless flopped with diabolical persistence into the puddles on the lawn, which was bald in places. No sooner did I replace them than they came down again, and, of course, sat in the dirtiest spot they could find. After the fourth descent the flesh failed me, and, as Mother would have said, I "ceased to be a lady."

IN THE
SETTLE-
MENT

"Confound the things!" I cried. "Now may the divil take them!" and dreadful as it may sound, I felt better for the words.

"Good morning," said a gentle masculine voice over the fence. "Can I be of any assistance to you?"

It was the parson! Then I knew how a candle feels when it hangs itself over, all limp in the sun, but I straightened myself with a jerk and stood upon the offending garments.

"Little man," I cried (he is quite large really), "did you hear what I said? Little man, did you *see* anything?"

IN THE
SETTLE-
MENT

"Peace, my ehild," was the sweet response, "I never believe things that I hear, and only *half* that I see." (What could he mean? and a parson too!)

"Then go right away and fetch me the Viearage clothes-pegs, if you would save a soul alive!"

While he sped on this most unnsual errand of merey, I grabbed the soiled garments and plnged them again vieiously into the soap-suds. When the Viear returned with his bag of pegs and once more offered to help me, I let him, because there was nothing to mind, and ereeping out later by thievish corners, I completed my task. Life in the Far West is quaint sometimes.

Next week I shall have a birthday, and of course another letter. Letters like the last one, spontaneous letters, that do not suggest bitten pen-holders and ornamented blotting-paper, are good. I consider it is time I had another.

The One tells me that the nearest post-office to the ranch where he is working is several miles away to the west across valleys and hills as the crow flies. I like

COMRADES TWO

to think of him riding away into the sunset to fetch my letters, or post one to me; it would be fun to be able to hide behind a boulder and pop out and surprise him.

*IN THE
SETTLE-
MENT*

Being house-keeper here, I naturally endeavour to practise the strictest economy; it is such good training for the probable future.

The Sage every morning fetches a pail (known as the Pail Dreadful) of odds and ends from the butcher's store with which to feed his black dogs. Yesterday I saw four nice, big pig's feet sticking out from the débris in the Pail. Such waste seemed to me quite scandalous, so I took them out, scalded and washed them thoroughly. At supper every one thought the stewed pig's feet quite delicious until I told them that they came from the Pail Dreadful! The Step-mother laid down her knife and fork, a sickly expression overspreading her face, but since she had already disposed of the best part of a foot, that did not matter very much. The Pippin was far too engrossed in applauding Kensit's recent

*IN THE
SETTLE-
MENT*

attack on Popery to care one whit as to the origin of the food he was absently eating, and The Sage, being a Sage, behaved philosophically, but this morning, when he came in with his Pail Dreadful, he remarked sapiently,

“There is nothing there worth worrying about to-day, and I have ordered a leg of lamb for dinner!”

This reference to the meat-store reminds me of an incident connected with The One. It occurred before my family fersook England for Western Canada, but the recollection of it was still fresh in the minds of the settlement-folk when we took up our abode among them.

It seems that in those days The One was living on a farm three miles south of the town on the main trail. He and another young Englishman rented the place together and thought they were farming, and both receiving a plump allowance from home, they managed to put in a fairly good time—The One especially enjoying himself with wicked horses, broken ploughs, or, I suspect, hitches in the threshing machinery.

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The extent or success of their wheat-growing seems to have been a matter of indifference to these jolly farmers.

*IN THE
SETTLE-
MENT*

In the settlement there lived another young man, a great friend of the two already mentioned. He was the son of an English Rector, and, though by nature very far removed from that especial calling, had told himself that he ought to be a butcher. The manufacture of sausages proved to be his strong point, and into those bags of mystery he managed to infuse such a divine flavour that his creations were eagerly bought by one and all. Not content to rest upon his laurels, Billy desired to puff himself, and over his store there one day appeared a flamboyant notice which read—
“Sonbell’s Choice A1 Sausages.” Underneath was a row of strong hooks whereon to hang his wares. People were immensely impressed, and for a time the A1’s boomed. To return to our farmers. They had started life on the farm with two cats. Shortly there were eight, and more shortly still fourteen, and so on, after the custom peculiar to domestic cats. The One swore,

IN THE
SETTLE-
MENT

and his friend swore, also likewise the fat man-eook, but neither did anything to check the rapidly rising population.

Upon an afternoon in mid-winter, when no work of importance was on hand, The One was seized in the clutches of a sudden resolve, which must by the way have given him quite a shock, since they generally came to him more gradually. He stalked into the comfortable cedar-lined sitting-room where his friend was dozing by the glowing stove, and startled him into life with the remark—

“There are too jolly many cats on this estate, Jack! I counted twenty-five in the granary just now, and all as thin as rakes; get your gun and come on; we must dispose of twenty-three.”

By the time the evening sun had turned the snow-fields red, a pitiful row of lean black-and-tabby bodies lay beside the haystack, and the men paused to roll their cigarettes. Suddenly The One began to laugh; he burnt his fingers with the match, but, curiously enough, continued to laugh.

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“Sonbell!”—he gasped. “Sonbell’s Choice Air Sausages—cats underneath—to-night!”

*IN THE
SETTLE-
MENT*

For a moment Jack stared, then, suddenly comprehending, he capered with glee.

“What a lark! What a supreme lark!”

His voice quivered with ecstasy.

“Every one will see them in the morning! And Billy! Oh, Billy!—he will be scratching dust thirty feet high, with rage!”

When the moon was low, the men sped northward to the town behind a smart little team of greys. The sleigh-bells jingled an accompaniment to sudden, irresistible chuckles of delight, as the friends thought on the depth of their plan and its security from discovery. The hard snow of the trail flew beneath the horses’ feet, and under the seat of the sleigh were ten big dead cats, one for every hook below the sign.

The street was deserted, for all decent folk were abed. The One mounted the steps of the store; little Jack mounted the shoulders of The One, and in a twinkling

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ten stark and frozen cats, their hind legs bound firmly together, hung from the hooks where the famous A1's were wont to dangle gracefully.

"In the morning; in the glad, bright morning!" sighed Jaek as he scrambled into the sleigh.

The One gathered up the reins with a satisfied grin, after having carefully obliterated their tracks in the snow.

"Cute dog," said Jaek, "I should never have thought of that;" whereby calling forth a trite remark from The One to the effect that if his friend had as much in his head as he had in his boots, he would be quite a sharp little chap.

After the cold drive the cheerful glowing logs, whiskies-and-sodas, cigarettes and laughter kept the "farmers" up until the early hours of the morning.

The next day being Saturday, they made the usual trip to town in order to lay in stores for the coming week. The lamb-like expression of innocence on the two men's faces could not have been excelled when they entered the meat-store that

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morning, without even a glance at the hooks above the door.

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The little store was crowded with Germans, half-breeds, and two or three English people, one and all laughing at Billy's expense; but Billy sawed, cut, and weighed with stolid indifference. They ordered a noble roast, and a generous supply of the inimitable A1's, departing thence on other business, satisfied that no suspicion attached itself to them.

Sunday on the farm was always taken very easily, Billy usually riding out in the afternoon to tea and to spend the evening.

"Brunch" was the first meal of the day, so called because being partaken of between the hours of 10 p.m. and mid-day, it became both breakfast and lunch in one.

Jack the active, had already reached the marmalade stage when The One appeared, fresh from his tub, doubtless very blue-eyed and hungry. He attacked the A1's with gusto, but a few minutes later his face contracted into an expression of physical pain.

"Confound that ass Billy," he said, speak-

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ing jerkily, "he's been sticking pins or tacks into these things! We must inform him—Oh! damn it!—that they are going off."

With a delicate finger and thumb he removed the offending article and laid it on the edge of his plate, only to spring to his feet with a yell of horror. Jack said afterwards that The One's eyes stuck out like the knobs on a hat-rack, and that you could have fairly knocked them off with a stick!

"Man, it's a *cat's claw!*" he shouted. "That beast Billy has made us eat *Cat!* I'll kill him!—I'll kill the little beast!"

Jack instantly fled from the room and I am told that the poor One followed him very quickly. Afterwards they agreed on silence, and wisely too, seeing that the wrong end of the stick is apt to be the muddy one.

When Billy arrived on his usual visit, he was amiably received by two quiet and rather pale young men. Something like conversation was maintained until tea-time, when Billy, with the rashness of success,

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unwisely mewed for more milk. Then indeed pandemonium reigned, and from underneath the big, vengeful body of The One, Billy bawled for mercy.

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"I stuck them in after," he howled, "I swear I did, by the Episcopal Beard of my father, I swear it! Let me up! Lord, you've killed me!"

Then they cried quits.

After my father and his new wife are settled into a house of their own, I am going to stay with my friends Linnet and Biff until The One comes from the west, for they have, with their usual delightful hospitality, requested me to make their house my headquarters—my home in fact, until such time as I get one of my own, I suppose. They are English people and Linnet was a very great pet of my Mother's, being a woman after her own heart—after any one's own heart, I should think. Here she is! Splendidly built, of medium height, brown-skinned, eyes of the colour of a newly ploughed field when the setting sun is red on it—I have never seen such

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eyes in any one else's head. Though quite young, her hair is like so much spun silver, exquisitely soft to the touch, and wavy all over. She says that silver hair runs in the family; I wish it ran in mine, for mine is more like newly-made mustard. Apart from their wonderful colour, Linnet's eyes are so very expressive, and if you watch them, you can always know exactly what she is thinking and feeling, and she has at times a way of opening them very wide, and then one notices how blue the whites are. She can do anything, I believe, and also she does everything.

Biff, her husband, is quite a dear man, and his face wears the expression of a kind, handsome cat continually before the fire, but in reality he spends his days making mineral water and does it quite nicely, though I do not think there can be a great deal of money in the business, as most of the men out here seem to prefer their whisky neat. Linnet and I drink a good deal of Biff's concoctions in the summer, and though we do not pay for it, still it looks well.

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Biff has rather sad blue-grey eyes and spatulate hands, which means, I tell him, according to palmistry, that he will some day commit suicide. Forewarned is forearmed of course, but Biff does not seem to sufficiently appreciate my warning.

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Linnet has one fearful habit, which I imagine springs from another, the latter being an excess of early rising; she will go to sleep all the evening. That she has pints of Irish blood in her I am convinced, for one evening, some time ago when I was staying with her, she brought the kitchen clock into the sitting-room and put it on a little table near the divan, which is her usual place of repose at odd moments. In an ordinary person this would have been an ordinary action, but Linnet is different. She wound the clock most carefully—goodness knows why—and voiced a hope in an anxious tone (Linnet is always anxious) that the thing was somewhere near the correct time, replacing it on the table with its back to the divan. Such friends as Linnet and myself waive all ceremony. She cuddled down into the

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cushions with her back towards the back of the clock, and, in a voice that the dormouse might have envied, informed me that these precautions were to enable her to avoid over sleeping bed-time! What small amount of logic I possess swam in a topsy-turvy haze of wonder, but argument was out of the question, for my friend slept. Reading aloud to Linnet is most distracting work, for in spite of faithful promises to the contrary, very soon down goes the silver head on a handy cushion, the heavy lids droop over the brown eyes, and it is only by bringing out the last word of every sentence with a shout like the Crack of Doom—a very fatiguing exercise—that the lady can be kept from entirely drifting off into the land of dreams. She says the continued drone of the voice is to blame. I tell her that these little idiosyncrasies of hers, such as the clock episode and sleeping fits, belong by right only to people who suffer from that quality known as genius, whereby receiving in reply a spirited statement to the effect that the making of one load of wood go as far as

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three when the outside temperature is somewhere about twenty degrees below zero positively *is* the work of genius only. Linnet has to do that with the wood every winter—we all have to in fact—because it becomes more scarce on the prairies every year, being, of course, more quickly burnt than grown. Soon every one will have to use coal, and pay heavily for it too, owing to the expense of freight in this country, and the long distance that such supplies have to travel.

The dear English ladies of the North-West, how fine and brave they are, coming as many of them do from a life of comparative ease and comfort to one of bodily fatigue and strenuous economy, and this, perhaps, because of a tender affection for a man, a younger son may be, with a younger son's usual portion and fond ideals of the Far West. The Linnet of to-day, up to her elbows in dough, with flour on her nose and the frenzy of bread-making in her eyes, must be a contrast indeed to the former Linnet, faultlessly dressed, bowling along the English lanes in a smart

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dog-cart, dreaming nothing of the coming labours of colonial life. The Linnet of last winter, grudgingly giving yet one more stick of the precious wood to a refractory kitchen stove—what a difference to the Linnet of former days who basked before the cosy fire, drinking tea that she had not brewed, and eating fairy-cakes that somehow must have made themselves!

There is therefore a strong freemasonry among the English in a Canadian settlement; each helps the other, and sympathy and practical assistance are freely given to the newcomer by those whose apprenticeship to colonial life is already served. Linnet's broad brow and intelligent eyes fit her for a life of art and thought, yet are they now used for the purpose of making five cents go as far as ten, which accomplishment it must be admitted needs the finest and sharpest of wits.

This dear woman, and other brave women like her, make me feel shame for myself, for their desires and ambitions (and who knows if not more keen and lofty ones than mine) are for the time being grandly

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merged in duty and diligence. Such women are cheered by the knowledge of their own inner resources and strengthened by the bond which binds us all, namely, the cheerful thought of that "Someday" when the cakes will again make and bake themselves, and the clothes stretched on the line, fluttering "clean but ridiculous" in the breezes, will have been washed by other and more accustomed hands.

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Plucky, silver-haired Linnet, and patient, fizzy-water-making Biff; I can only hope The One and The Dickens will make as good a pair when double harness is put on them by the parson.

The Sidar of the Settlement should assuredly have been introduced before now, since here he is It, as our Yankee cousins say. After long years of labour he has made the settlement what it is, namely the nicest and prettiest little village anywhere between Winnipeg and Vancouver. He is a man of many parts, full of fun, business, and mischief.

When Biff and Linnet have a small differ-

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ence of opinion as to the diminishing size of the wood-pile, The Sidar gets up on a chair and hisses the one on at the other. Biff has on such occasions a quaint habit of opening his mouth until it is as square as the entrance of a mouse-trap, and talking more or less harmlessly as hard as he can lay tongue to it ; it is a perfunctory sort of business and quite amusing to listen to. Linnet opens her eyes to their very fullest extent, like an indignant child, and always comes off second best, because, when excited, she stammers and cannot keep up with her lord. When the wicked Sidar can by any twist of the conversation lead up to the much-vexed wood question, he invariably does so, and having fairly started the couple laughs till the tears stream down his cheeks. The One and The Sidar are inseparable friends, having lived together in the old days before The Sidar took unto himself a wife. The Wife and Mother is rather little, fair-haired, pink of cheek, and blue of eye. Her chief delight is writing poetical plays for children, and some of her work is most dainty and delightful.

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She is first a Wife and then a Mother (hence her nickname), and last, but not least, an excellent friend.

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The Sidar lives on his horse, wears riding breeches that are always made in London, and I have never seen him look anything but smart, whether grooming his favourite horse or mowing the tennis-lawn. Being a Sidar, a Mayor, a Churchwarden, and a Sheriff he is bound to have his lordly moments, but they do not last long. If, however, The Wife and Mother or myself do sometimes fail in making It smile when something has annoyed It in the village—Lady Diana never fails. She is the younger of The Sidar's two little daughters, a perfect rose of a child, with eyes really like sapphires, teeth really like pearls, and little curling red lips like the petals of a flower. I adore her. Her voice suggests rather the richness of gold than the thinness of silver. She has seen and glorified in five flower-filled prairie summers. We call her The Lady Diana because at the age of four she rode as if she were part of her pony.

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When The Sidar rides home from the village and enters the door of his house, two rapturous voices ring out—

“Di!”

“Dad!”—the one a man’s voice vibrant with love, the other the clear, golden tones of a delightful child.

The elder child is ten years old, clever, quiet, and beautifully self-effacing. With soft eyes filled with love and sometimes a tiny suspicion of wistfulness, she watches and sympathises with the adoration that exists between The Sidar and his baby. In all her sweet life, however old she may live to be, she will never be able to experience the sensation of jealousy; she helps, and loves—is loved in return, in silence and content.

These four people are known in the Settlement as The Happy Family, and I have a picture of them mounted and ready for a happy ride; when I look at it the words, “God bless them!” come as a matter of course.

VII

THE complement of the Settlement Clique is nearing completion, but there is yet one other person to introduce. She is curly-headed, sweet-voiced, and daintily made, though withal the mother of five rollicking children—I am not sure if it is not six, for she is fond of surprising you with another at odd times. We call her The Newsmen. The Sidar christened her thus because she generally knows everything that is going on, and if you coax long enough, you can know too, and no one minds the name, least of all The Newsmen herself. She loves music and poetry, and banishes babies when you go into her house, and this is in itself alone a most praiseworthy action, for when mothers do not, both they and the babies become a nuisance. But The Newsmen greets you with “How lovely of you to come, and *do* stay a long time! Now, children, off you go at once into the kitchen and stay there, and tell Nina to bring in tea. Now, my dear, you

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shall talk to me and sing me some songs I have not heard before," and so on, all of which goes to prove 'The Newsman's store of good sense and good taste. Most people, after hearing a song, say, "Yes, very pretty! Now sing something I *know*!"

The Newsman really is most refreshing, and when she and Biff and Linnet and 'The Happy Family and 'The One and myself all get together, we manage to have a fairly good time, though 'The Newsman and 'The Sidar fight rather, and the feathers are apt to fly, he being a born tease. Outsiders who are not in the game look on the doings of the Clique with a scandalised eye, so in the old days we styled ourselves 'The Sinners' Club as opposed to the Saints who looked askance.

The Saints did not have a very good time to judge by their faces, some of which were severe enough to stop a clock. They chiefly belonged to the Ladies' Guild, and used to meet one afternoon a week at another Saint's house and sew petticoats and things, and look down their noses while one of them read about Father Damian or Sister

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Somebody-else. I attended the Guild just once to see what it was like, and offered to read to them because sewing always gives me cramp all over. I had taken a book with me, and without disclosing the title read to them the first four chapters of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles." The atmosphere presently grew intense, quite electric in fact; they were breathlessly interested and most horribly shocked after the approved style of saints in general. I was never requested to amuse the Guild again, but I found out after, that every blessed Saint finished that book on the quiet.

All those doings however, and many more, were in the old days, and most of us have grown older and perhaps wiser; and now the Saints and the Sinners mix amiably, with, I doubt not, mutual benefit.

The people born in the country do not seem to get half the amusement out of life that we English manage to derive, though not by any means to the manner born and feeling so often tired and dispirited. The Canadians plough and sow and reap with praiseworthy singleness of purpose, conse-

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quently they make money, and because they have made it, keep it. Their dissipation consists of a wild time with Moody and Sankey's hymns on Sunday evenings, when they break loose on the "organ" (here pronounced "argon"), or as we more properly name that abomination, the harmonium. This, and an occasional barbaric dance in the big kitchen of (for choice) a neighbour's farm, where tea and sandwiches are passed round out of buckets and clothes-baskets, constitute the sole recreations of the genuine sons of the prairie. It would take a charge of dynamite to blow a joke into such heads as these, and another one to blow it out before the poor thing was worn threadbare.

There is no doubt that the English settlers, in spite of much uncongenial work and often weary bodies, manage to infuse into the life an element of humour and jollity that keeps the heart young, and, often in good-natured expense of each other, the risible muscles in good working order. Take The Pippin for instance; his especial little joke is falling down the cellar, and

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endeavouring to show how neatly it can be done without damage to himself. The first time he did it the humour of the thing was not superficially apparent, and we were, in fact, rather alarmed, but subsequent harmless dives on The Pippin part have reduced us to merely an amused "there-he-goes-again" attitude.

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The cellar at the old home on the south trail was placed right in the middle of the hall floor. It was twelve feet deep, and a steep ladder formed a plan of descent to its cool, dark depths, but never The Pippin's plan, for he dearly loves doing things in an original way.

In the fall of the year when the potatoes are dug, it is customary to tie them up in sacks and tumble them down the cellar, no one appearing to mind in the least about bruising them; but perhaps this again is a carelessness peculiar to the English farmer only. I have never watched a Canadian store his winter's potatoes, but I should imagine he would carry them down one by one because they become expensive by the spring. One afternoon early in an autumn when my

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own dear mother was still with us, The One and myself were busy writing home-letters in the sitting-room off the hall. The sun was blazing outside, and we had last seen The Pippin, his dear old bald head scarlet with sunburn—for he never will wear a hat—busy weeding his precious asparagus bed. I was describing in a letter a dance given by the cricket-team in the Masonic Hall the week before, and how a gloomy-looking individual had craved an introduction to me. On obtaining it he had led me forth upon the floor, and, proceeding to revolve around me solemnly, had informed me that he was a traveller in tomb-stones, and asked in a ghoulish tone if I could enlighten him as to any recent deaths hereabouts. The letter had just reached this sepulchral stage when Bang! Bump!! Wallop!!!

I laid down my pen, and in the ensuing silence looked inquiringly at The One.

“Potatoes—already!” I said.

A deep groan boomed out beneath the floor. The One sprang to his feet.

“*That's* not potatoes!” he said, and

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dashed from the room, myself at his heels. We found the poor little Pippin head downwards in an empty apple-barrel; his legs waved feebly and it was quite a business to get him out.

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The One helped him up the cellar steps, and all the time the plucky Pippin was lecturing him in a jerky little voice on how to fall so as to avoid hurting yourself. "Never—oh dear!—try to—protect yourself! Always—uu—m! ah!—let yourself *go!*"

The One protested that he really would far rather not, and endeavoured to make The Pippin stop talking so that he could get his breath back, but no one ever having succeeded in that direction, the advice was continued until Mother appeared, in a condition of infinite distress, her long hair floating behind her, and the brush she had been using still in her hand.

The Pippin, thoroughly shaken and terribly short of wind, was supported, still talking, to the sitting-room sofa. He informed us that at least two ribs were broken, a statement which sent Mother flying from the room

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with a shriek, as we naturally thought, for brandy or some restorative.

The One and I debated as to the advisability of riding into the settlement for the doctor, because The Pippin really looked very bad, his face being quite white and his nose a curious shade of blue. In a shorter space of time than afterwards seemed possible, Mother reappeared, bearing in her hands an enormous *pudding-basin and a spoon!*

She spoke to The One.

"Go at once for the doctor, Philip; I have porridge here, and he shall eat it all to stuff out his ribs in the proper position until the doctor arrives," and with that she advanced on Dad.

When he opened his mouth to protest, down with a gulp went the first spoonful, and the poor little man simply could not utter a word, because the moment he tried to speak his mouth was again stopped with porridge. He just waved his arms and gulped and spluttered, Mother standing over him with her pudding-bowl like a long-haired Nemesis. At first The One and I stared in utter and blank astonishment, then—we simply held

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on to each other and roeked with laughter. That was just too much for Mother in her over-wrought state, and though vehemently continuing the lalling process, she fixed us with a stern eye and her tone was terrible with sarcasm.

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"It is certainly *very* funny, is it not? Only you see I happen to be such a dullard that the humour escapes me."

She straightened herself suddenly.

"I am surprised at you both, and especially you, Philip! Go at once for the doctor!"

The One fled. The slight pause however had given The Pippin time to assert himself; he snapped his eyes viciously and pushed the basin away in a manner that showed distinct signs of returning vigour.

"Take that confounded stuff away, Kate! Take it away, I say! By Gad! Kate, you've nearly killed me! Fifty broken ribs are better than that damned stuff on such a day as this!" and he mopped his poor head despairingly.

When the doctor came, he found no break-ages at all, but he gave The Pippin something to ease him of a violent attack of

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indigestion, for the pudding-basin had been nearly emptied!

Poor Mother had herself left the lid off the cellar, and Dad, entering the house in his usual headlong manner, had, owing to the outside glare, failed to see the pit at his feet. But he has done the same thing several times since, and not very long ago he landed on the back of a man who was harmlessly engaged in boarding the cellar-floor. Again I heard the well-known sounds, and rushing out, this time found The Pippin quietly resting on a chair. The workman—an Italian emigrant—seemed to be resting too. I scolded him roundly for leaving the cellar unprotected, thinking he had probably been absent for a moment to fetch something. “Yon must not do that again,” I said, “for my father has fallen down that hole.” The man looked hurt rather than penitent, and his gesticulations partook of the nature of indignation.

“I know eet, Mees, I know eet!” he replied explosively; “I wass onderneath!” And so it goes on, and really The Pippin is a shocking responsibility; no wonder

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he groaned and said "Poor dear!" when he married The Step-mother.

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The One has not written again since that delightful letter I received while staying in the valley with Marie and Theo; perhaps he has been too busy to ride over the hills for the mail lately.

Over the hills and far away
Into their utmost purple rim.

I always think of those lines when I picture him on those lonely rides to the little shack in the foot-hills, that he tells me serves as a post-office; however I will be sure to have a letter for my birthday.

A week later.—The Pippin and his wife have found a house at last, and are going into it at once. It is in the country, about three miles out on the south trail, to the eastward and within sight of the dear old home where we all lived for so long—the home that was broken up when Mother died. How often it happens that when the mother goes, everything worth having

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seems to go too ; when that tired, worn link breaks, then the chain is severed indeed past all mending, and things are never the same again. There is no one any longer to note or care when one is glad or sad or "flushed"—Mother always used to say "How flushed you are, dear ; do rest and be quiet now for a little while." A small and bitter laugh comes to me when I remember that, for now I might flush green without any one troubling to remark upon it, unless to say how ugly I looked ! How little mothers receive, and how very, very much they give !

The Pippin is pleased with the prospect of living so near to his old home, for the house having remained vacant since we left it, he will be free to prow! around the over-grown asparagus bed, and survey with sweet melancholy the ruins of his pet cucumber-frames. Not long ago I visited the old place and returned to the settlement with a severe and lasting attack of "the blues." But the dear little Pippin revels in retrospect, and all his life he

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has been infinitely happier in every past to any present.

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My plans have changed somewhat and tomorrow I have to again travel the well-known south trail. Some friends of ours, who also live within a mile of the old house in a south-westerly direction, want me to go to them for a week or so, and it is rather a good idea, because I shall be thus enabled to render some assistance to my Pippin and Step-mother, who will be busy settling into their new home. It will be nice to be with these friends for a while, for besides being very dear to me they knew and loved my own Mother, and the dear, familiar country, every tree and shrub of which is connected with the old days, will cease to hurt after a while. When out there last, the trails and little worn paths seemed all the time to remind me of Mother's feet, and I imagined I still saw her funny old garden-hat, the shape of an inverted saucer, bobbing up and down between the saskatoon bushes. All mothers seem to wear the same kind of garden hat, more or less hideous but all made in the

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same shape—our late Queen's headgear when touring the lanes in her bath-chair, must, I think, have set the fashion.

How Mother loved her garden! I am anxious to see if the yellow flowering creeper that smelt like honey, and that she planted, is still romping over the front porch.

When The One comes to see me and I have possibly grown "sensible" enough to let The Parson marry us, I mean to whisper to him a cherished scheme. It is that we go and live in the old home together, and I think that if he can find suitable employment in the settlement he will like to live out of the town. Three miles is only a short drive, and every evening I can meet him at the pasture-gate after the approved style. I forget whether I mentioned that the house is the very one where the cats were shot; my people took it from the two men when we came out from England. The One was always riding out to fetch something he had left behind, usually going away without it and so having to come again the following day. When I went to

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stay with The Sidar and his wife, then he was always leaving things there, and so we soon got to know each other. I like recalling those nice little tricks of his, it makes me feel less visionary and more "sensible." Spring is in full swing now ; the birds are nesting, and the prairies are one sheet of lilac with the bloom of the pasque-flower. North, south, east, and west, as far as the eye can see in every direction, stretches this lilac carpet, especially brilliant where the prairie fires of last fall burnt away the grass, for there one sees also the tender and wonderful green of the new growth, studded thickly with flower-faces. Spring, as an accomplished fact, does not now give rise to that painful emotion I endured at its birth in the valley. The myriads of flowers, each little cluster a pale poem in colour and shape, now seem neighbours good to live near for ever.

Every time I look westward for forty and more uninterrupted miles, and note the bristling telegraph poles along the Canadian Pacific Railway that with distance assume the proportion of pins, I am re-

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minded that some evening the express will bring The One out of the west along that very line. I like thinking of these things, and yet I know that the flowers will fade and the winter snows will come and cover the prairies; still, cooking, cleaning, and dish-washing will seem more bearable if they can be done in the old home where mother used to faithfully carry on her labour of love, and there will always be the evenings to look forward to.

On Sunday afternoons the congenial ones of the settlement will come riding out to us for tea, helter-skelter, and full of fun and laughter. The Sidar being a churchwarden, we shall in all probability depart with him at six of the clock, meek of face and of a becoming demeanour, for far across the prairies the one groggy little church bell will be hailing us to evening service, and The One, when bored with the sermon, will as usual ornament my prayer-book with pigs drawn with his eyes shut.

Dreams, all dreams, but ones that seem likely enough to come true.

VIII

The South Farm, May 6th.—It is three days since my birthday—I took good care to note when the 3rd came along and also to be sure that others noted it too, so I received some nice presents, and had a tea-party out here, just like a spoiled child, which all my settlement friends attended. The Sidar wrapped up a ridiculous pair of blue spectacles in a five-dollar bill, as a hint, I suppose, that if I go on getting old so quickly I will soon need them. The Newsman always gives lavish presents; she can no more help bestowing than breathing; she gave me a huge cut-glass, silver-mounted bottle for my dressing-table. Linnet and Biff gave me a gold brooch, and many other presents came from many other people. The Pippin gave his blessing, and groaned.

There came another letter from The One, which he commenced by a bald statement regarding my age: "You are now—so and so," I prefer to omit the last words; one

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SOUTH
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grows nicely reticent as to the number of their years on this earth after the twenty-third is passed. He went on to say that it was high time I "quitted" being a Miss (really his vocabulary is becoming very Western), and when I read that I felt as if I had taken a Turkish-bath, hot and cold and clean and sensitive; also in need of rest and thought, except that with me the two do not go well together.

I expect when The One comes down here, his speech will be a mixture of cow-boy, prospector, and lumber-jack, and the Saints of the settlement will have ten fits when they hear him, and come out of them to go into forty more. I have met prospectors and lumber-jacks, to say nothing of cow-boys, so I know.

I stayed once in a Rocky-Mountain coal-town with a brother (I own several terrible brothers) who, expecting shortly to be married to a girl who was coming from England, took a house and asked me to go up and help him arrange it. Something prevented his lady-love from coming so soon as we expected, and I was quite a long

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time in the west with him. Now a coal-town is all right if taken in small doses, but one should occasionally go away out into the mountains and camp for a time, so as to have a chance of clean air and be able to remove the top coating of coal dust. The Pippin, with many groans, had been made to go west with me, as a change of air and scene was then deemed advisable for him.

I well remember one trip that he and I and a nice coal-town girl took together in order to get away from the coke-oven-and-hell-fire atmosphere of that town, which we will call the Infernal City. We only went about five miles out, because there are bears and things to be reckoned with in the Rockies and we did not want our Pippin eaten up; he would be sure to try and pat a bear if he saw one. We took a great deal of food and many blankets, and as the packs were too heavy to carry on our backs we made love to the conductor of the Great Northern Express, and induced him to stop the train for us at the fifth mile-post, and put us off. Afterwards we found labels tied on to the packs with

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the polite reminder: "Dump the bunch at the fifth post!" "The bunch" meant us and the bundles; and we were dumped. It was really great fun, and quite an experience for The Pippin, who is good sport when you get him out alone.

I had particularly impressed upon the conductor the fact that the spot of our desires lay a good quarter of a mile beyond the fifth post, and also not to forget to throw off the bundles or we would be left in the tall timber at night (for the G.N. Express starts from the Infernal City at 10 p.m.) five miles from home, without food or covering. Well I remember the start. There is so much to think of when collecting materials for a long camp that little things sometimes escape the memory until the bundles are all tied up.

When at last we three (to say nothing of the dog, a bumptious, busy little person in a frightful state of excitement) stood on the platform of the rear car, The Kid carried a lantern, a fishing-rod and creel—the latter filled with candles, butter, and some odd onions—while down the leg of

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her brown stocking reposed my fountain-pen, a tooth brush, a box of tooth-powder, and an extra cake of T. and B. tobacco in case The Pippin ran short ; he always omits to take enough and then is miserable. All our pockets bulged. I carried a bottle of ink, purloined at the last moment from the station-agent, a roll of foolscap, and a box of new-laid eggs, which last I felt would not stand the dumping process.

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A trusty six-shooter was hard yet comforting in my belt. A rifle is so heavy, and besides I did not expect to have to kill anything except perhaps a bush-grouse, and on the sitting-still plan I can always get them with my revolver. The Pippin wore a white and tired linen hat, an Inverness cape and a large smile, being delighted with the idea of starting for the big woods at night-time.

Anxiously we watched the passing of the mile-posts. The conductor swung his lantern outwards at the fifth, as a signal to the engine-driver. I pleaded with him to go just a little farther, as I had located the camp we desired to reach and knew

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it to be further on, but the deed was done, and the train stopped for about five seconds. The Pippin dived as usual and of course landed unhurt, while I sat on the railway rather more hurriedly than was pleasant, and remained there for a moment watching the vanishing tail-lights of the friendly train. Then we found the obnoxious baggage and faced the problem of how to get those enormous and heavy packs along to the spot I had fixed upon.

About every mile along the railway track is a construction camp, used by the gang when building the railway two or three years ago. The buildings are in ruins, but they afford shelter in case of rain, and I object to tents as they are the most stuffy things in the world, and one cannot see the night-sky or feel the wind and dew. To the construction camp we had to get somehow, so we each grabbed a bundle, the lightest weighing about forty pounds, only to drop them speedily and wonder what on earth to do. The Pippin snatched off his weak linen hat and rubbed his bald head excitedly.

"By hookey, they're heavy!" he said.

"By George, they are," said The Kid.

"We agree," said I.

Then The Pippin to his joy espied a wheelbarrow, evidently one left by the section men after removing a recent landslide which had covered the track. He made a dive for it and dragged it on to the line which, by the way, is the most primitive affair imaginable, being covered with big loose stones, and yet the only place where one can walk at all, there being no paths in the virgin forests. I smelt trouble for The Pippin. He carefully packed the impossible bundles, any one of which would have been enough of a load at once, on the barrow, and lifted the handles; the packs promptly rolled off and plunged down the embankment amid a shower of loose earth and stones.

"Damn!" said The Pippin, who was really getting very excited; it never takes much to make him simply hop with rage. I once saw him break a golf club across his knee and dance on the pieces.

The moon came up and, in time, so did

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the packs, and in spite of my advice to the contrary, The Pippin tackled the barrow problem again, placing the bundles differently. This time they stood the upheaval of the handles, but the barrow refused to budge, its narrow wheel being jammed against a big stone. Then The Pippin lost the last of his self-control, and setting his gums (you can't say teeth, because he declines to wear any), put down his head and rushed the thing. Away went wheelbarrow, bundles, and Dad, all of them down the embankment this time; the flaps of the Inverness cape spread out like bats' wings in the descent, and the linen hat, ornamented by fishing flies, floated aloft on the night breeze.

It was really awful! From below came a series of excited squeaks, The Pippin having apparently run *amok* like the elephants do in India; perhaps because he was born there.

The little man came up the embankment like a whirlwind, his rage having lent him such strength that each hand grasped a refractory pack, and he simply seemed to

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split the wind as he made off along the line, shaking the things as if they were rats. The Kid and I rescued the remaining bundle and carried it between us, holding on to both it and our laughter as best we could.

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So we came to the construction buildings, and in the moonlight hunted for a good place in which to eat and sleep. We chose the old log smithy, a building consisting merely of a roof supported on rough-hewn logs, and protected from the weather on one side only by a wall of spruce-bark. A water-barrel stood at one corner to catch the rain from the roof, and there was a nice square log forge; this proved delightfully useful and saved one the labour of stooping over a ground-fire.

I petted The Pippin and called him clever and strong, until the smiles came back once more. We made coffee, toasted cheese and bread, and laughed and sang in the night. Then we cut spruce-boughs in the moonlight, and made three good beds. The wonders of the sky and earth became fully apparent when finally the fire died

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down and only the glow of 'The Pippin's pipe, where he lay on his boughs, illuminated the darkness beneath the shelter.

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Outside the moon glorified the eternal mountains and enhanced the magnificence of the stately trees. The night-wind was good on the face, the spruce-boughs fragrant and springy, and the blankets warm. From where I lay awaiting delightful sleep I could see some tall, dead spruce-trees like masts tapering up to the sky. On the fine point of one a beautiful, blazing star seemed to rest lightly; it was the Wand of the Night.

The river murmured and gurgled and the breezes sighed themselves to death in the deep gloom of the tall trees. I remember thinking how like was the sound to the sob of the sea. Late as it was, a small lemon-coloured patch on the border of the Mantle of Night, hanging low over the mountains, marked the spot where the sun had fallen.

The fire, suddenly blazing afresh, snapped

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and cracked, echoing far into the depths of the forest, and the burning cedar-bark smelled like incense. Here and there a feathery cluster of cedar branches caught the camp-light, which finely enhanced the graceful droop and upward curve of each delicate bough. The scent and suggestion of things seemed overpoweringly sweet; then the Wand danced before my closing eyes and I ceased to feel the fragrant breath of the night on my face.

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I was aroused by a terrible din; The Kid's fox-terrier seemed to be indulging in violent hysterics, The Kid herself holding him with one hand and pounding me with the other, at the same time bawling to me to "Wake up for goodness sake!"

"A man! A man! Look! over there by the water-barrel. Oh! *do* do something quickly!"

"A man! Bosh!" I said; "not out here in a place like this."

Having been warned that bears were down from the hills after the millions of wild

raspberries, I thought perhaps The Kid saw one now standing up on its hind legs. I longed for the rifle, but grabbed the revolver, which, wrapped in a tea-towel, had formed my somewhat hard though safe pillow, and sat up quickly. A voice came out of the darkness, a careless, easy-going sort of voice.

"It's all right, gells! Now don't get rattled! I'm just lost—plain lost; tired out—wet through from wading that blamed river—and in fact don't feel worth a snow-ball in hell at this present moment! I see a spark from your fire as I come through that gol-darned thick bush behind there, and made for it right quick, yew bet yew! Keep that blamed dog in, and drop that gun over there! Think I couldn't hear the click o' yer hammer when you cocked 'un? We don't want no gun play here, gells!"

"Put yours down then," I said boldly, "you are sure to have one."

He laughed and apparently obeyed, for I heard a gentle tap as of something laid against the hollow water-barrel.

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We hastily blew the embers of the fire into a blaze, thereby illuminating a tall figure topped by a black slouch hat, roughly dressed and very weary looking. His face was tanned the colour of an Indian's and a quid of tobacco bulged in his right cheek. Coming forward into the circle of light he spat on the earth floor.

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"Look out!" I said, "mind my Dad!"

"Good Lord! Is that a man? Thought it was a baby monkey!"

I looked and found that the dear Pippin was only blinking his eyes and bristling his moustache in an effort to wake up and understand things. Afterwards I discovered that our visitor had no intention of being rude, it was only his western freedom of speech; but I could not pass over anything that savoured of unkindness to such a dear, mild, and great-hearted gentleman as my Pippin.

"It is well that my father is deaf," I said loftily.

"Shucks!" responded our visitor. "I didn't mean nothing. Go ahead and

sleep, daddy," he added. "I only want to dry out after playing the mermaid in that twenty-nine-adjectived river! The gells here will see after me."

"How did you know we were girls in the darkness?" I asked.

He laughed loudly. "Heard you'se voicees, and anyway would have knowed by the blamed row you'se kicked up—just like a beggerin' rooks' nest," he replied.

It turned out that this wet, brown, western person had walked thirty miles that day over the mountains, thinking to strike the coal-town by night. He was a prospector and lumber-jack by turns. A lumber-jaek is a man who works in the forest lumber-camps and prepares the mighty timbers of British Columbia for the mill.

"Them blamed great trees up ther keeps a fellow from seein' the stars," he exclaimed. "Give me the North Star and I can get to Kingdom Come easy enough. Then I hits that ther very wet river and as I had ter git over it and as the Lord ain't give me no wings as yet, I had just to walk it; it come up to my waist.

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Then I thinks I'd better lay down an' sleep till daylight, but no, sir! my blamed teeth went to work and chattered like hell so's I couldn't even hear meself swearin', and that was the greatest hardship o' the lot! Well, gells, this is pretty lucky! No! I don't want no coffee, don't you'se fash yerselves fer me. I'll set right here by the fire and dry out." He laughed again heartily.

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"Say! Your house ain't got no front door, so I jest tapped on that ther water-bar'l with the butt o' me rifle, and Lord! didn't you'se raise partienlar Cain? 'A man! A man!'" and he imitated The Kid's voice most killingly. Then The Kid rounded.

"I made a mistake," she said with her nose in the air. "It was a bear after all!" Here The Pippin at last arose and asserted himself.

"By gad, sir!" he began explosively, but our friend held up his brown hand.

"Now go to bed, daddy, go to bed like a good old boy, and don't you know it is injur'ous for you to excite yourself? Jest

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get back to your cot and dream of butter-cups and daisies."

The Pippin, blinking and speechless, fell back on his blankets and took refuge in a pipe, which he smoked fiercely.

We made coffee and fried sausages and fed our tame lumber-jack, ourselves now only moved by astonished amusement not unmixed with horror at his lumber-camp talk. He crooned on between mouthfuls.

"Daddy's deaf, ain't he? Waal, jest let him know from me that I'm as comfortable and warm as if the Lord had me in His right-hand coat-pocket!"

I gasped, but he continued gently:

"Shucks! I don't mean no harm; yew looks kind o' scairt! I reckon the Lord knows I don't bear no grudge, 'n' don't mean nothin' personal! Now, yew'se all is going to have good Indian names given to yew'se. That little 'un, she's Maud-fry-the-sausages; and t'other long gal, she's Kate-no-wake-him-up because she took such a lot of hammering to make her open her big eyes. Thet ther on its blankets is just Daddy, and I am Jack-tap-the-bar'l.

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'Them's 'cute names, yew bet! Now we's established I think, and pretty good friends. Gorrermighty! but kan't a feller get hungry in twenty-four hours!'

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Silence reigned for a few minutes save for the clamping of the strong brown jaws on the opposite side of the fire. The Kid and I looked at each other in perplexity. Apart from his weakness for blasphemy Jack-tap-the-barrel seemed a good enough sort, but what to do with him became a question of some importance, and I was getting sleepy again. The whole adventure, taking place long past midnight, seemed so funny; the man himself was so very funny and so quite at home that I found myself, owing to fatigue, I suppose, and interrupted sleep, becoming gradually idiotic and inclined for weak laughter. I saw the dawn of the same desire in The Kid's eyes. I said to the man, "Are you dry yet?"

"Pretty near, thanks, Kate," he replied cheerfully; and again a little later, after we had ourselves partaken of coffee and felt better and more hospitable, I said—

"Now you must go over there and sleep on

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my bed ; there is room for me with my friend ; you can have that grey blanket, and by the morning you will be quite rested."

It took a good deal of persuasion to make him comply with my request, but at last he went, and once more the fire died down and silence reigned, or should have reigned had I not suddenly begun to shake and wobble with laughter. The Kid felt me because her arm was round me, and that set her off too. We tried to be quiet as it seemed rude to behave thus. Suddenly a voice startled us—

"Kate ! Maud ! what in hell are you two gells laughing at ? Let it out and don't bust up like that ! Yew make a fellow think he's struck a blamed soda-water manufactory !"

I explained things as well as possible when there was nothing to explain, for I could not tell him that it was so funny to think that there was a man tossing and grunting with fatigue, and chewing tobacco on my precions spruce-boughs, that I had arranged so carefully with all the stalks the right

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way! The Kid shook herself and made a vow, inelegant but expressive.

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"Now I'm going to sleep, and I'll eat my hat if I laugh any more."

Again the voice—

"I guess then that ther'll be a chewing contest right away," it said; but there was not, because we slept, and it seemed only a very little while before the sun awoke us and the voice said,

"Morning, gells! how's you'se all? I ain't slep a darned wink; my busted leg bin givin me particular jyp! Got it busted in four places two year ago in a bear-trap; blamed thing mistook me and fell; you'se thinking 'No wonder,' eh, Maud?" and he chuckled. "Now which of you is going to put on a fire and bile the kettle, Maud-fry-the-sausages or Kate-no-wake-him-up? Sorry I kan't, but my boots ain't dry yet. Maud, will you oblige by handing me my terbaccer-pouch out o' thet ther coat-pocket and I'll roll a pill: I chews, the Lord knows I chews, but I also smokes a leetle cigarette before brekfast, only He's promised not to tell,

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so don't you'se whisper it to the birds, mind."

We were now quite accustomed to him. We put his boots to dry and carried to him hot coffee and fried eggs and bacon. His grateful astonishment at being thus waited on took the form of—

"Gee-Whittaker, almighty jumping Peter and Paul!" he cried, roaring with laughter and bowing as low as he could while in a reclining posture; "wait till I tell the boys away back in, how I was waited on by the two best-looking gals in British Columbia! Jest wait till I tell 'em how the fair Maud and Kate appeared to me when I was lost in the big timber, and heered me say me prayers at night—tucked me in and sung me ter sleep; brought me butterflies' wings on toast, and sliced kisses fried in smiles, fer breakfast in the mornin'! Ther's only one boy in the band as 'ull believe it, and that's Jack-tap-the-bar'l himself. Strike me pink, that's right!"

After breakfast he shook hands cordially—The Pippin even condescending to give him an amiable grin—and with a cheerful—

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"Wull, s'long, gells! be good and the Lord be with you as I kan't," took himself off along the railway track in the direction of the Infernal City, there I suppose to spend his savings in whisky, and after that to once more go "away back in" and make more money to be spent the same way. Such is the life of the average lumber-jack.

At the bend of the track by the landslide the sun glinted on his rifle-barrel as he waved it aloft in a last adieu.

Interesting as had been the experience we felt we could do without any more lost lumber-jacks for the rest of our time in camp, and the remaining days and nights passed peacefully enough.

Oh, the young morning in a mountain forest! I have watched it from its rosy birth, through golden youth to high noon-tide, lying on a bed of boughs beneath the tall, straight trees.

The sharp, sweet snell of the garments of Nature, as, dew-soaked and fragrant, she frees herself from the gentle embraces of night and yields sweetly to the growing ardour of the bold, young sun whose

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beams glow red on the dead wood and tender yellow on the green and shining undergrowth. Broad avenues of slanting glory cleave the sombre depths of the wood, and in these paths of light the long grey lichens pendent from the boughs of the stern old trees appear as maids' floating gold hair. The immovable hush of the bright-leaved undergrowth; the silent, dignified assent of the whole law-abiding forest! To open the eyes to such a scene, to feel the body renewed and the mind refreshed by that unrivalled open-air sleep, that natural, dreamless unconsciousness that drifts to one with the lightness of thistle-down and continues sweetly through the mystical hours of the forest night, is to some lucky people a physical and spiritual tonic that knows no equal and has no substitute. These untarnished morning woods, crossed by corridors of golden glory, down which innumerable light-winged creatures float and dance, are indeed Gardens of Paradise, whose virginal existence is as yet unsullied by the habits and dwellings of man.

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Away through a rift in the trees can be seen the towering walls of the eternal mountains wreathed in tender, sheeny mist; the deep purple dimple of a far ravine, and the soft dark furrows of undulating forest.

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Later, as the sun climbs to his mid-day throne, puffy, smoke-gold clouds roll up from behind the hills and across the blue, telling a tale of vast forest fires, perhaps a hundred miles away, whose destructive force but enables the enduring, persistent earth to some time produce new and younger Gardens of Paradise.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

Such is the solemn, eternal refrain of the sighing, lichen-hung mountain forests.

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I BELIEVE I was saying that we shall probably find The One very western in speech and manner when he returns to us after having lived for so many months with western men. I, for one, shall not mind if such is the case, for it will be something of a relief to the hyper-Englishisms of this funny little place, and, I suspect, of many small colonial towns where the people grow to look upon England and English ways as the acme of everything desirable. That is, of course, natural and right, but we are apt to frequently over-step the mark and become unpleasantly critical of people whose desires and habits are less conservative.

People out here, especially the men, are wont to prate of the freedom of the country. In a sense there is freedom, for one can certainly ride over the trails without meeting any such objectionable printed remarks as "Keep off the grass," or "Trespassers will be," etc. ; but where lies any real

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freedom of action when it is known all over the settlement how many breaths So-and-So draws to the minute, or at what hour Mrs. B.'s sitting-room light is extinguished to give place to a glow in the room above? Verily the freedom of the country does not include freedom from type. In every settlement there dwells the Unclaimed Treasure of unknown age who watches her neighbours' doings through the lace curtains of her parlour window. She has a marvellous gift of unhealthy suggestion, and the vinegar of her nature communicates itself to her tongue when telling such things as she may have seen from behind that lacy barricade. Were it not for such sour nourishment the weeds of scandal would not flourish as they do. The thoughtless babbler—as often as not a member of the sterner sex—and the tittering, fluffy-minded women who chatter of their neighbours' doings merely for the pleasure of hearing their own voices or from a desire to shine as wits, have not the poisonous influence of her of deliberate suggestion.

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This reference to a certain type reminds me of another, common enough in England and not infrequently met with even in a North-West settlement—namely, the dear lady who (whether married or single matters little) plunges into parish work, frenziedly attends every service that is held, and who devoutly worships (?) the Almighty in the church of the bachelor parson. If the bachelor parson be of the enterprising order and has obtained for his church stained-glass windows with beautiful red and blue people on them, and a real pipe-organ (as distinguished from the obnoxious "argon" previously mentioned), this lady's hours of worship become positive rapture; she experiences an uplifting of her little soul that is beyond words. It would be impossible for her to revel in such exaltation were the church windows merely plain glass, or did the front pew contain the parson's wife and six children. Music, emotion, colour, and that subtle power emanating from the person of the unattached priest, bring God so near to this lady.

There is just one other type worthy of

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mention in this list of feminine failings, and it is easy to see why it migrated to this country where men are so plentiful—it is also a very aggravating type—the woman who is responsive and expansive to men alone; who exhibits intense sympathy for and interest in the troubles and joys of her male friends, but makes bored eyes and turns a careless shoulder to the appealing distress of one of her own sex. She may be frequently heard to remark that she “dislikes women because she cannot trust them,” a most unoriginal speech, and one invariably arising from utter lack of any trustworthy quality in herself.

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Let be; the rustling prairie grass and the swaying poplar trees with their white-lined leaves are more profitable things to think of and write about.

The country around the old homestead where my sweet-minded Mother lived is perfection just now. Where the prairie fires of last fall had created wastes of blackened turf, now stretch generous acres of young, vivid green, starred with flower-

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faces and tuneful with the voice of the prairie lark. His breast is flecked with yellow ; he sits on a weather-beaten boulder and sings his small, complete song :—



I have tried many a time to find half-a-dozen words sufficiently full of beauty and meaning to apply to those notes, but in vain. This prairie lark in no way resembles his rapturous English cousin, for he is much larger, his flight is ordinary, and his song more a tender love-chant than a bursting benediction. The notes vary somewhat as the summer ripens, but always he adheres to that tuneful octave as he sits on his stone and regards the traveller with a full and trusting eye. He arouses one at dawn and warbles a late lullaby at night. A prairie summer night is never still. There are always the wolves, and many classically minded frogs in the shallow sloughs ; there is the insistent hum of a thousand mosquitoes on the window netting, and the

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neighing of teased horses in the pasture, together with the occasional lonely pipe of a lark who has dreamed it is morning. These sounds, coupled with the hot, heavy atmosphere and the constant flicker of lightning on a far horizon, lend a weird charm to hours that are too hot for sleep. The influence of the prairie night charms the senses and sends the mind afloat upon a sea of romance.

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The season is early this year, and though it is only May these summer sounds now abound at night-time; the mauve of the pasque-flower has faded and given place to yellow and red, the hot colours of the wild sunflower and the tiger-lily.

This morning, while walking in the bluffs, I saw the most lovely bird imaginable, a Golden Oriole, and it is the colour of flame. I saw MRS. Oriole too, but she is not quite so splendid as her husband. They have a nest somewhere near, and I spent three hours trying to find it, for I should like a little Oriole in a cage to look at always; if taken quite young

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it would not feel the restraint of cage-life. The nests are difficult to find, for the birds conceal them so cleverly, hanging their little bag-like houses in the midst of a thick cluster of leaves on some high branch. These two birds haunt the bluffs like twin flames, and as they fly they give vent to shrill, unmusical cries. Nature is usually fair enough in the bestowal of her favours, after giving a beautiful voice to an object, as a sort of compensation; and yet is not always so, I suppose, for a good many people, and especially The One, think I really sing rather nicely. One is not necessarily vain, you know, because one writes down a thing like that; the sentence merely conveys two items of pleasant information.

The Pippin and his wife have gone in for a great piece of extravagance. Finding the well-water at their new house very chemical and full of alkali, as so much of the prairie water is, they have invested in a barrel of stout. Stout on the prairies, drinkable stout, is almost as precious as water in the Sahara; it has to come from

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afar, and as The Pippin turns up his nose at anything but the best of everything, the excitement as regards this barrel of stout is terrific. It is to be driven out from the settlement to this house to-night, and the two dears are to call for it with a wheelbarrow. Dad simply dotes on wheelbarrows, providing they are not those nasty western ones with narrow wheels that decline to carry packs. He once bought fifty, thinking it a good investment—that was the sort of thing that Ally Sloper might have done when out for a holiday—and we had the time of our lives trying to find fifty friends each kind enough to accept one; I never felt like canvassing for votes after that weary experience. It is a marvel to me that The Pippin did not tootle his wife off in a wheelbarrow for the honeymoon.

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After supper.—I am sitting up on a little hill beside the bluff so that I can see the trail and catch the first sight of the wagon that brings the sacred stout, for even though I should not particularly care to

partake of it, stout being at best both black and bitter, yet I thrill with interest on behalf of my progenitor.

What an evening it is! one of those red and black summer evenings that mean things, when the leaves of the trees and the wings of a passing bird look white against the heavy, lowering sky. I think this one means a big storm, for the thunder rumbles and growls in the south behind a bank of lurid, rolling clouds; also the mosquitoes are particularly insistent, and make spiteful dives at one—they are always worse before a storm. Some wild ducks are quacking and feeding in the slough below, diving for the succulent root of the water-celery, which, I suppose, the birds are aware gives them a particularly fine flavour; but one never seems to bother with them much, the men having so much work to do on the farm. However, sometimes on a Sunday afternoon they creep down to the edge of the big slough and blaze into the brown. I myself got three ducks that way last Sunday, a pin-tail and two fine mallards.

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As I look around me now to the north and the south and the red, red west, the fascination of the land is strong upon me. What is this prairie influence? It is extraordinarily powerful to-night; the warm air, the red and black sky, the rustling acres of young wheat, the pending storm, and the distant, busy ducks—these all combine to make a fascinating and unique whole. It is—it must be, surely—"The Call of the Wild"—that is the voice I hear. England is most dear to me, but to-night thoughts of the laburnum-calm of English lawns, of the wistaria-covered walls of English houses, seem to have lost something of their usual charm and attractiveness. It is only a phase, I suppose, promoted by the weirdness of the evening, and I shall hark back again with renewed longing to the joys of an English existence, but to-night the mystery and romance of the prairies, an unaccountable yearning towards the uncovered, unfathomable West, and the strange excitement of the brewing storm—the electrical disturbance of which is, in this country, always very apparent

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beforehand—have a strong hold upon me. In some peculiar way The One seems mixed up in it all, for it was this country that gave us to each other, and in these unique surroundings that I first met him. In my thoughts I can never connect him with old-world, rose-strewn gardens, green-shaded billiard-rooms, or finicking English stables. He seems one with the prairies, the fire-flies, bronchos, banjos, and camp-fires. This is a good mood, and I am close to him. I wonder when the money will arrive from his father, so that he can come to me?

There was quite a big flash of lightning then, but the storm is not yet ripe, for I know the signs. The mosquitoes are simply awful, and lo! I hear a rumble as of wheels. Yes, it is the return of the farm wagon with its precious freight, it is the Chariot of the Stout, for I see it rounding the bend of the trail. Also The Pippin, his wife, and barrow are coming up through the pasture; one could hear their excited voices a mile away.

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It is dark and the lightning is incessant. Big moths, flies, and mosquitoes are beating themselves against the wire netting that covers my bedroom window. How I hope that the Transit of the Stout was safely accomplished and that they are home by now, for already the rain is falling in large, sullen drops.

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I am weak with laughter! The Pippin met the wagon with vast dignity in front of the house, accompanied by The Stepmother. A most saucy and Frenchy trousseau hat, with streaming feathers, ornamented her head, and her skirts flipped behind her in the wind. I suppose she felt that being a bride one might as well look like one even on a farm! Goodness—I'll never forget it! Had there been a good wagon trail from one house to the other there would have been no need for the wheelbarrow, but there is not. The stout was hoisted on to the barrow, and the last I saw of my respected relatives was The Pippin, bald - and - bare - headed—having ornamented the stout-barrel with an always-obnoxious hat—with bent back, shoving

his precious load up the steep incline leading to the pasture gate. The Step-mother was harnessed by ropes to the front of the wobbly vehicle, her French hat clinging desperately to one ear, and a grim determination in the bend of her back and the grip of her feet.

There simply must be a sketch of the procession, and it shall be called "*En route* for home and hilarity!" There was nothing to be done, since they were simply bent on homing the stout this night. They have four barbed-wire fences to get under somehow, and I shake with apprehension for the fate of that hat and those pretty skirts. The Stout is all right, for both of them would rather lie down and die beside it than forsake their treasure after the many good dollars it cost. Here comes the storm in dead earnest.

X

Joy! I found the Orioles' nest at six o'clock this morning, while the prairie grasses were yet heavy with dew and the sun bathed the earth in golden glory. The humming-birds were busy at the one little nasturtium bed (which is the light of my hostess's eyes) when I passed through the small garden and out into the bluffs. I found their tree at last, a very tall tree, sparsely branched below but easy higher up, and once I thought that I should fall and break something; however, I proved that a miss is as good as a—mister at climbing trees, when occasion demands. Such a squealing, squeaking dnet went on as I neared the home of the birds, such a flashing of dazzling flame-coloured wings, as if the pair were endeavouring to make me loose my hold from sheer giddiness. Carefully I inserted a gentle finger in their front door and was rewarded by feeling the warm, wriggling movement of young birds, as yet too young to be moved. In a week I will go again. A prairie lark and an

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Oriole will be wonderful possessions, for one will then see and hear things of beauty all the time.

I had a bad night, and I do not feel nice this morning. Dreams came, restless, disturbing dreams, too vague to describe, yet sufficiently real to leave an unpleasant and lasting impression.

If I were unselfish enough to go into the house and lend a hand with the house-work—either clean the lamps or make the beds—this attack of the blues would perhaps depart, and afterwards I would feel glad to have been of use to some one. But I won't; I simply will *not*! I loathe and detest house-work; the handling of gritty potatoes, the wiping of black, smelly lamp-wicks, and the making of other people's beds is loathly work. *C'est l'abomination de désolation!* That is an expressive phrase; you can roll it out so viciously. There will be enough of all those house labours by-and-bye I expect, unless—Well, well, I suppose I am in what The One would call one of my "moods." They are certainly a nuisance,

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yet I can discover no lasting cure for them ; even finding that bird's nest only cheered me for a little time.

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Where is now the fascination and attraction of this awful land of eternal labour? Fancy my having been so absurd about it last night just because the west was red and the south was black and Daddy had got some stout ! I simply feel too out-of-joint with everything and everybody to go on writing much more now, even though a good old grumble is often refreshing.

The storm which ought to have cleared the air seems instead to have done just the opposite, for the heat is insufferable and I feel as limp as a boot-lace. The extremes of heat and cold in this country are most trying, even to very strong people, and the longer you are out here the more you feel the cold, because each year the blood becomes thinner. I have seen men just out from England chopping wood in their shirt-sleeves out of doors, with the thermometer standing at five degrees below zero ; for when the atmosphere is still, it is difficult to realise

the extreme of the cold until suddenly you find your nose or ears utterly devoid of feeling—frost-bitten and white. After that, when the thawing process has taken place, comes fierce, tingling pain, and after that very large and ornamental blisters as from a severe burn. One is bound to be blistered out here, either by the sun in summer or the frost in winter. But I think the time of my life was when I awoke one winter's morning to find my chin and cheek frozen to the sheet by the dampness of my breath, and the hot-water bottle, that had been an acceptable companion the night before, frozen solid under the clothes at the foot of the bed. It seems funny to be grumbling at that cold in this heat, and next winter it will seem equally queer to me that I grumbled at this heat in that cold. And so it goes on. The temperate climate of England is the most pleasant subject for thought just now, when even the shade in the bluffs feels like the inside of a dark oven, and the hot wind puffs in from the wide, baking world outside. One hasn't the strength of a mouse!

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What good *are* mosquitoes? Some people will tell you they take away the bad blood; my belief is that they just go for the very first blood they can find. I have killed forty-nine in twenty minutes, all on me.

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Evening time.—Much has happened, not in deed but in intent. I am going to break off my engagement, not perhaps at once, because—well, because of many reasons; but the climax has come, as for many days I have felt it to be coming, and this afternoon quite decided me. As I have said nothing about it I can change my mind twenty times if I like, but as yet I have not felt inclined to change it once.

It was all the fault of the piano they have here, a piano with bass notes like the boom of a big golden bumble-bee, and a treble like the tinkle of mountain rills when, in full summer, they are small and dainty. It is of Canadian make, but strangely deep and soft, and full of wonderful possibilities. Instead of obeying the small voice of conscience and going to help my friend do the work, I went to the piano

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and foolishly let the thing whisper to me (from beneath fingers the intense longing of which sometimes makes up for a woeful lack of execution) of nearly everything that it is most unwise for me to think of under the circumstances—of cool English meadows strewn with king-cups; of the barriers of may-bloom that, like perfumed snow-banks, form the hedges of the lanes in that exquisite little island of Jersey thousands of miles away; also of the waving acres of narcissi and gladioli, wherewith that little gem of the sea is even now made fragrant; of jutting rocks and sea-smells, of poverty, freedom, and mind-work in a congenial land. I thought nothing of mountain forests, nothing of ancient buffalo trails, or northern lights; only my heart was sick for the bent, heavy heads of the yellow wild daffodils, and the pale refreshing gleam of beaming primroses. Playing on I made a song; it was like the disjointed raptures of an English thrush, and the bird said, "Must you, must you, must you? Don't do it, don't do it, don't do it!"

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Too late then to stop, for the old pain of the homeland was upon me, threaded sharply through with the aching desire of a restless, unsatisfied spirit.

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Must I, would I exist in this country instead of living in that other? No! Ten thousand times—no!

I fled from the confinement of the house, through the kitchen where my hostess with anxious, heated face was basting the half-cooked joint, out and away across the flower-strewn pasture in the bland Canadian sunshine. There, strange, alien flowers lifted their unwelcome faces to the hot blue of the sky. To me, then, they seemed not so much flowers as foolish paper creations made for the pleasuring of the mindless children of the land. In an access of wicked rage I trod their heads through the tough turf down deep into the rich, black mould; they were the products of a land that gripped and held one fast in its aimless clutches. About that time, I think, I must have been just a little mad, or nearly so, for I remember how difficult it was to get my breath, and how my head seemed

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bursting with thoughts that frightened me by their spiteful intensity. This blazing expanse, what was it but a limitless prison whose very immensity defied escape? I said passionately—"Quickening faculties, spirit-labour, the higher God-born desires, are here in this awful place killed by every-day body-toil, body-fatigue, and the ever-recurring necessity to provide the body with food and clothing. The lilies of Christ! Ah, how could one live like the lilies of Christ that neither toiled nor spun, but simply grew in the sunshine and easily yielded the fragrance they created? It seemed so small a thing to ask merely to be able to rest, and create and exhale fragrant, uplifting thoughts, and so dreadful a thing to know that one must instead, and because of circumstances, spend the precious years in basting and cooking sections of slaughtered oxen—in growing, grinding, and kneading wheat into bread, and in the thousand and one other tedious tasks that belong to the primitive life of the country.

"Why do it, do it, do it?" The words

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had followed me, and I fell to the hot earth in floods of tears. Of course that did me good, and afterwards I sat up and wondered drearily "What next?" To break the engagement seemed the only thing, to cut myself adrift from The One who (I owned it), because of *my* queer temperament and precious, troublesome desires, was uncongenial to me. That word seems hard, but I take all the blame of it on myself.

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And so the case stands now, and yet things must drift awhile, for I have not the heart to write a letter that will send him home across the purple hills with agony in his heart. He will assuredly go for the mail, and so there must be letters for him from me, but they must be short, impersonal ones, with here and there a quiet suggestion as to my present frame of mind ; that will make it easier in the end.

The sensation of hating one's self, coupled with a stern determination to still persist in that course of action which produces this self-dislike, is very unpleasant ; it is in fact almost bewildering.

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To myself I seem a kind of restless fiend, not willingly wicked, but for some unknown reason doomed to always torment itself and others—a pleasant state indeed to be in!

I give in on one point, though I may presently again contradict myself. Ordinary people, content with an ordinary existence, nice, Sunday-evening-home-made-wine-drinking and biscuit-eating contented frumps, *are* to be envied. I do not want an Oriole, neither have I any desire towards a prairie lark—I want to possess the humdrum instincts of a conscientious housemaid and so find rest for a while.

I believe I have already remarked that my decision *re* the breaking of my engagement is not absolutely final. If I did not, I meant to; anyway, as nobody knows about it, it is nobody's business.

I do not think I have ever felt more miserable in my life. . . .

My father's house. A week later.—Until this morning there has been no heart in me or life in my pen ; I simply could not write. The Step-mother cannot make out why I am such poor company these days. The Pippin does not notice it ; he is busy making a new asparagus bed, and works himself into violent tempers three times a day over the stony state of the soil hereabouts, and the unpractical shape of Canadian spades ; but he has his wheelbarrow, and when I left the garden this afternoon he was busy filling it with all kinds of stones, from mere pebbles to boulders double the size of your head. The Pippin is always struggling against the most terrific odds, poor dear ! he seems to be able to raise a difficulty at any time of the day or night, and it is apparently a craze of his to make everything he has to do as hard as possible. For instance, he will smoke a heavy meerschaum pipe, one of the bent-down kind with a big bowl,

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while he is working in the garden, just because it is so difficult to hold in his mouth, with no teeth. Twenty times a day he drops it, yet it never breaks, and he picks it up with an angry squeal.

"By gad, now! Look at that! It's not the *pipe* I object to, it's the *opposition!*" leaving you with the impression that if you had not been there the thing would not have happened at all. He certainly is a most excitable little man, and he says it is because he had four black nurses from the day he was born until he was sent home to England at the age of five.

Even when I first knew my grandmother she was quite a high-stepping old lady, and used to dye and curl her hair and tint her cheeks and sing songs to the guitar—in a sweet old voice certainly—and she was always surrounded by young and adoring men; I expect the reason being that she gave them such good dinners. So I can quite believe that when out in India, being young and very beautiful, she handed over her first-born to the entire charge of those black nurses, so as to have a real good

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time herself and forget that she was a mother at all, which seems a very dreadful thing to do.

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The dear little Pippin always reminds me of Nathaniel, and I cannot bring myself to believe that he also drew this sweet guilelessness from those black nurses, for from all accounts they seem to be the opposite of guileless. But The Pippin has never been known to think or speak evil of any living soul, and he would cheerfully bestow his last coin or garment on the first person who asked him for it.

Mother and I always took care of The Pippin, because he never dreamed that there were any wicked people in the world from whom we needed protection !

One day when we were all out, a thin Indian came along and finding Dad in charge of the house, played so cleverly upon his tender heart, that, having no coin handy, he gave him the silver tea-pot, and it was only when Mother came home that The Pippin began to regret having done so. Bless him ! he would give his dear old head away if it was not fixed on.

To-day something of vitality and interest in life has returned to me; I feel refreshed and more hopeful. No, I have not received another letter since the birthday one, but during this last week I have been trying to get out of myself, as it were, by helping The Step-mother, who has no maid, and by making little pet dishes for the peppery and dainty Pippin—nice, soft, tasty things, such as minced chicken, etc., that do not require very much biting. In consequence, when I awoke to thought again to-day, I discovered something. I saw quite plainly that if my decision of last week was a right and proper one, the way out will be made plain to me. If the decision is a wrong one, if my whole standpoint and the "light" in which I "see things" is mistaken and foolish, then again—I rest assured of it—that fact will in some way be proved to me before long. I am ready to acknowledge my error if I find I have erred, and will do all in my power to make up for it. We shall see. This new trust and confidence in the power of a controlling Intelligence came

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this morning when I awoke, and brought with it much comfort, so much indeed that I am now happier and more at rest than I have been for a long time, and feel free to let my thoughts again play with pleasant, beautiful, or humorous subjects. It is a wonderful relief; humble prayer is a wonderful thing (and therein is a silent admission), but the devil of rebellion has to die before humility and prayer can enter and soothe the heart. I know things are going to be made simple and plain before long; the mode of solution is all that is now hidden from me. Because I desire to do good and be good, I will be shown how to accomplish both these ambitions, and that because they are pure ones and do not aim at all at mere worldly advancement or aggrandisement.

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Out here on the flats one can see the sky. It is evening on the prairies, a large and blazing evening. Everything is on an immense scale and the sky is stained to the zenith with colour, faint overhead and deepening passionately to the horizon,

where in the west the colour-scheme defies description. I am sure that nowhere else in the whole world can be found sunset-skies to surpass in extravagant beauty these of this western land. And this new sense of peace that has come seems to make them doubly beautiful.

A solitary Indian on a thin pony gives the finishing touch to the scene, and he is riding straight into the sunset, his red blanket making a blot just two shades darker than the sky. The one feather that adorns his head sticks out sideways, and I have sketched him as he rides.

A great pity for this vanishing race comes to me ; their lands, their game, their very lives it seems, are absorbed by the mighty, advancing tide of white men. But forty, nay, thirty years ago, the Indians were the lords of the rolling prairies, sinewy, fighting braves who said with pride that their fathers "were born in the Morning of the World." Where these few remaining children of the sunset (alas, no longer Sons of the Morning !) now rapidly decay and die before the march of civilisation,

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there were, but those few short years ago, lusty, galloping hordes, hot on the war-trail or as hot on the trail of the snorting buffalo. A white, crumbling skull, short-horned, with staring, empty eye-sockets, lying a little way from me in the sunburnt, yellowing grass, and that lonely dignified figure, walking his lean pony into the west, are typical of the vanished millions of buffalo and the departing glories of the red man. Where is now the heat and passion of the chase, the brute pride in hoof and horn, or the savage delight in the singing, accurate arrow? Where indeed? The old chiefs still tell tales round the dying camp-fires, tales of glory and blood, of much gain and many scalps, till their dim and sunken eyes glow again with the fervour and fierceness of savage youth. Poor old chiefs! The hearts of their sons and grandsons are half and three-quarters white; the younger men wear the accursed trousers and cover their heads with the hats of the white men.

The voices of the old warriors sink away, the fire dies from their eyes; with bitter-

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ness they close their thin-lipped mouths and check the eloquence of their murderous tongues. Of what use to talk to these pale-hearted sons of the days that were? Let them follow the plough, breed cattle, and sow grain, and presently die of the diseases that the white man brings to them.

The Indian who still prefers a feather to a hat is lost in the west; the hues of the wonderful upper world are fading, and the night-wind drifts by like a long, sad sigh. The finality of all earthly existence is peculiarly patent in this evening hour.

Change and decay in all around I see.

Surely to the truly wise the line that follows must be the *summum bonum* both of logical and instinctive desire—

O Thou, Who changest not, abide with me.

*Two days later. Same trouble with the date—towards the end of May.—*The Pippin has received a new name; he is now The Peep, and I love him more

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than ever because he sees the fun of it, and answers to it like a little man. The name originated thus:—He took a slight chill yesterday owing to getting overheated—I forget whether in an argument or from physical exertion, but I think it is more likely to be due to the former cause, because after all he only lifts one stone per hour into the wheelbarrow, being too busy catching his pipe to do more. The poor little fellow was really quite seedy, and of course thought he was going to die. The Step-mother and I put our heads together to try and recall remedies for chills. She suggested a hot toddy and I followed it up with a flannel night-shirt. The toddy was easy enough, but the flannel night-shirt was another proposition, Dad's being all cotton abominations; I know that for a fact because not long ago I saw him killing a snake in the verandah in the very early morning, having spotted it from his bedroom window. The house is a bungalow, so I saw everything quite easily!

How simply *awful* a man looks in a

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night-shirt! I believe only old men still wear them, and if they knew what they looked like in such short, horrid garments, with those little slits up the sides, they would assuredly take to the more decent and becoming pyjamas.

As I was saying, there was no flannel night-gear for The Pippin, so I did the only thing there was to do, lent him one of mine, a stripy pink affair with full frills and a lot of lace at the neck and wrists. I did not say anything because I wanted to surprise my Step-mamma. When he was safely tucked up, with a steaming toddy beside him, I called her in. She is not fond of nursing at all, in fact she dislikes anything to do with sickness, and I do not mind it.

She came into the room. There was the suffering Pippin, reclining luxuriously on his pillows, that huge, smelly-looking meerschaum pipe dangling lovingly from his mouth, and from out the pink frills at his neck rose the little, round, bald head. He regarded us happily, and then turned admiring eyes on the frills at his

wrists. Of course the exceeding tan of his dear old gardening hands rather took from the artistic effect that he might otherwise have produced, but all the same I felt quite proud of him. The Step-mother, who was also a bride, stared for a moment in a horrified sort of way, and then buried her face in her hands.

"What a—what a—*Prehistoric Peep!*" she gasped. "Oh! how *could* you dress him up like that?"

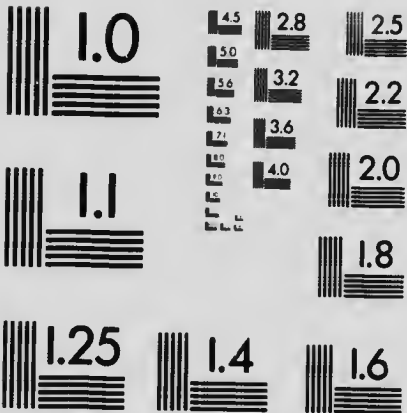
I really felt quite hurt, but presently Dad's comfortable groans reassured her. He was well enough next day, but that night The Step-mother brought her pillow into my room, as she said the sight of a man in frills made her feel ill. Since then The Pippin is a Pippin no longer; he is a Peep, and sometimes when he does especially queer things we think him an Extensive View.

I received another letter from The One this morning, telling me that his capital is on the way out and that we may now expect him any day. Then my heart jumped up into my throat and seemed to



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stay there for quite a long time. After it went back, I sat down to try and think out the reason why it had so suddenly seemed to forsake its natural position. This proceeding led to the re-opening of a sore subject, and I hastily decided to leave my heart and its peculiarities alone. I believe there is a saying anent the wisdom of a child that knows its own father; there is probably truth in it too, since one has to take a great deal on trust these days; but I think the wisdom of a maiden that absolutely knows her own heart, can detect and obey its dictation through a whirlwind of conflicting emotions and in despite of the clash of circumstance, exhibits by far the greater wisdom of the two. I am certain enough of the fact of my legal relationship to *The Pippin* for instance, but where my ridiculous barometer of a heart is concerned I confess to being absolutely at sea. There are many harbours, however, and I shall sight one soon.

In a few days I am going into the settlement to stay with *The Happy Family* until

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The One arrives ; then I give place to him so that he may be with his beloved Sidar, who can only accommodate one guest at a time. I shall go to my ever-hospitable Linnet on a long-deferred visit, and she lives but a stone's throw from The Sidar's house. Farther ahead than this I cannot see ; it is sometimes a good thing that the future is wrapt in conjecture. Whatever happens when The One comes, I mean to be good and not quarrel. We used to have rather serious tiffs sometimes, and I do not much like remembering them now when he is so far away. Later, when he may perhaps be farther away still, and there may be no future meeting to look forward to, I want to have no cross words to remember or anything that will make the days to come more miserable than need be, for it is natural to expect that, in the event of the worst happening, one will be very miserable for a time ; he is such a dear old chum that life without him will at first seem very dreadful. When the pain wears off, perhaps congenial work will bring consolation. I think that to

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live alone and try to write—but again I am going too far ahead.

Talking about quarrelling reminds me of a little plan I made a long time ago in order to minimise active differences of opinion between The One and myself. It really worked splendidly, and perhaps others may find it useful when tempted to argue—shall we say?—with more than necessary vehemence.

I bought a little book, tied a pencil to it with a piece of string, and labelled it "The Quarrel Book." It hung on a nail over the top shelf of the pantry which was not a pantry, being merely a sort of cupboard off the kitchen with a tiny window for ventilation.

I made the rules of the game, and we both swore adherence to them. It was quite a solemn ceremony, as we took oaths and things over Mother's big prayer-book. We arranged that, no matter which of us was in the wrong, we should take it in turns to apologise and make up, and we tossed up for the first time so as to make it fair. I won the toss, so The One was

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to apologise on the occasion of the first quarrel, and then of course he was to write his name and the date in the little book, so that no mistake could occur as to whose turn it was the next time.

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The scheme worked like a charm. It was wonderful and most pathetic to note how gentle, how beautifully forbearing and long-suffering was the one whose turn it was to apologise, did a real quarrel arise. All that, of course, prevented many small differences of opinion from coming to a head; and when, as sometimes happened, the fear of The Book went down before an all-conquering sensation of irritability, and a tiff took place (in spite of heroic efforts on the part of the one who had the pill of apology to swallow), a saving element of humour was introduced when you noticed the undignified rush with which the peace-maker made for the pantry shelf, there to inscribe his or her name. On such occasions I simply could not see The One's heels for dust! Then, like lightning, the shoes changed feet, the aggressor became lamb-like and wretched

in amiable smiles, ready to swear that the moon was really green, ready to take anything and everything in silence, rather than step into a position that would call for the next apology. I still think it is a splendid idea.

One day I thought The One was actually going to forswear himself and defy the rules, as he had already referred once or twice with more or less contempt to "that confounded little book-business!"

It was that most dangerous hour just before a meal when a man is not a man. The One's so sweet and sunny temperament never, as a rule, depended on food stimulus for the maintenance of good temper, but just this once, and in spite of his knowing it was his turn to apologise, he was deliberately and distinctly cranky. So was I, and also very hot and tired from severe kitchen labours, whereas he had been out kicking up his heels in the hay-field all the morning. When dinner was served, I addressed the crowd, unfortunately yet naturally turning my gaze upon The One. I said :

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"I wish one of you men would dig some potatoes of a morning before going out to the hayfield ; I really have enough to do in the house without digging the potatoes as well as cooking them !"

And I felt justified in my remark, but to my astonishment The One jumped on me with both feet as it were.

"It would be delightful to come in to grub sometimes without getting grumbled at for one's shortcomings," he said. "You have always got a pet grievance about something or other !"

I went cold all over with the shock of it, for The One had always declared that his "childie," though undoubtedly "the very dickens" in many ways, was the jolliest and funniest creature in the world to be with. I forgot my manners completely.

"Mean pig !" I said ; "that is about the horriest thing you have ever said to me ; besides, you know very well it is not true."

The One, scorning further reply in front of the others, tackled his dinner in fierce silence. My eyes smarted with tears that

might not be permitted to flow. I poured out the tea for my father and brothers, swallowed a cup myself, and unable to eat a morsel retired to the kitchen. The One always had the pull over me in such cases, being quite able to put away a very good meal on the top of a big row; it never seemed in the least to affect his appetite.

When Dad and the boys had again gone forth to the haying, a most important season in the north-west, all hands turning out to help, I went to the dining-room to remove the remains of the feast and generally clean up for the afternoon. There was The One, standing staring out of the window; he did not turn or speak, but I was glad that he had not gone out with the rest.

In the kitchen I silently began the obnoxious task of washing-up. Then he came out, and I caught my breath and nearly dropped a soup-plate; but his desires were merely towards the kitchen clock, whose alarm had recently ceased to fulfil its duty. I might have known that under the circumstances he would want to pick

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something to pieces—he always did when “outs” with me—and all the time he would whistle little tunes and appear perfectly happy and contented. I found it most irritating.

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The dishes finished and the kitchen-table vacant and spotless, The One, still frostily silent, spread a newspaper and commenced operations on the clock. I pared the potatoes for the evening meal, not only that they might be ready, but more because I desired something to do in that vicinity. He bent his fair head over his work ; even the top of it seemed to bristle with obstinacy, and I did not know which I wanted to do most, thump him or kiss him, so I did neither, but with diligence and scrupulous care pared and removed every little eye in the potatoes. they seemed getting done too soon.

In The One's right eye was a horrid-looking little jeweller's glass which he used to peer into the inner recesses of the clock. Nothing happened until he began to whistle, quite unconsciously, a well-known air from a well-known musical

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One finally ended its existence by throwing a riding-boot at it for awakening him at three o'clock one morning.

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That afternoon we spent a happy time together down by the creek catching trout for supper, and he even baited my hook for me with the grasshoppers one uses ; I cannot bear doing it myself

A quarrel book is a good thing, and a certain air out of *The Belle of New York* is undoubtedly good too ; if whistled just at the right moment, it should always act like a charm.

I am looking forward to my visit to The Happy Family ; we are all such chums. The Lady Diana has two broken dolls' cradles, a toy piano that has gone wrong everywhere, and a nasty, buzzy mechanical toy shaped like a bee, and which now declines to move or buzz. These things are carefully put aside, pending the coming of The One. Many a toy he has mended for the two children, restoring speech to the dumb, eyes to the blind, and movement to those suffering from paralysis. Lady

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Di's voice will ring out with glee when that odious bee begins to buzz, her delight waxing supreme when I, three parts in play and one part in earnest, gather up my skirts and fly round the room to get away from it. It looks so very large and real, and even its wings quiver as it flops along the floor.

I seem to have been away from the settlement such a long time, though it is really only two or three weeks. Luckily the little old place always remains the same, there being too many English people there to permit of change or commercial advancement. Linnet goes on working all day, cleaning her spotless house, and feeding Biff on the puff pastry he adores, and sleeping all the evening. The Sage feeds his dogs, digs his garden, airs his views, and makes nasty physic for stray patients. The Newsman makes her own pretty dresses and pretty speeches, the former miraculously manufactured in a day, the latter on sight.

The Happy Family ride and love each other all day, and The Sidar makes roads

and keeps order in the town as well. There are little teas given by every one, and little talks go on at the little teas, causing sometimes more than a little trouble. The Newsmen is always in it, but owing to her sweet and innocent face, gets out of it quite easily, gives her feathers a little shake as it were, and starts afresh. She is lucky, and manages to extract a deal of amusement from life. I am not nearly so lucky, for, as The Sidar says, I never "open my mouth without putting my foot into it!" and getting it out again seems a very difficult matter.

Taking it all round, this particular and somewhat exclusive little settlement, that owes its existence to and draws its supplies and news of the outside world from that great iron artery the Canadian Pacific Railway, is the nicest little place to live in for a time that I know of in the whole of Canada. It has been my lot to occasionally sample a few other prairie and mountain towns, and to return to the settlement where my Mother lived, to feel again the pleasant good-comradeship of its in-

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habitants is always a fine relief. After a short absence even the funny little squabbles they indulge in among themselves are amusing to listen to, especially when one knows that in spite of lofty and vehement assertions to the contrary, one is expected to take up the cudgels on behalf of the injured crony, and to snub severely the offending party, who may, alas! happen to be a crony too! But such little tea-cup tempests soon blow over, and the least said the better, for the next time you may return to find those parties who were "outs" with each other simply bosom friends, and sweetly unconscious of ever having had a tiff at all.

It is safer, therefore, to observe a strictly impersonal attitude when squabbles arise, since one never knows how things are going to turn out. As the Yankees say, "You can't always tell from where you sit." Their sayings, though slangy, are very expressive.

XII

Still with The Feep.—And so, if it cannot be the Dear Home Land, it must be the prairies with their fresh breezes for me, and the little settlement with its complement of welcome faces ; the wide arch of the heavens that after all gives room both for the clumsy wings of young thought and the calmer, more confident sweep of maturer ideas. I will not again, I think, become hysterical, and imagine the prairies to be a prison ; one attack like that lasts a long time, and is quite sufficient. It is only when the face is set towards years of weary house-work here, of banishment from the sweet refinements of life (for though we do try to emulate the life at home it can easily be seen how handicapped one is) and from all intellectual intercourse, that the mind and body are revolted by the prospect. There are several intellectual people here, but how on earth can pleasant and instructive conversation be carried on, or ideas generated and exchanged, when the physical part of

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one is exhausted by dancing attendance on dough? for bread is in a delicate state of health when rising; it has to be kept warm, yet not too warm, and has to bake slowly but not too slowly; how can one think of anything or *be* anything but a Martha when one owns a house and no servant? Like poor Linnet for instance, who, when I want to talk of this or that book, picture, or song, simply goes to sleep—not that she cannot discuss such things, because she can, and by gift and education really possesses a fine, critical turn of mind; but when the day's duties face her she has no time, and when they are over she has no strength; desire fails for anything but sleep and rest.

And some day that is how it will be with me if I stay here; I know it; but whatever happens I will try to be content. All the same, I often wonder whether Martha liked being Martha, and if she would not rather have been Mary for a little time if she could have chosen, but some one had to do the work. If Mary had done it, I think certainly that would have been

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a clear case of cleaning out a pipe with a £5 note; anyway, she did not receive blame for her choice of action. I would rather try to make songs and books than pies and beds.

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It strikes me that it will take a very strong dose of something, whatever it may be, to change my nature, to take away my spots; or, shall we say, to transform me from a dreaming Mary to an active Martha; but it has not come to that yet.

This settlement once had the good fortune to be visited by a prominent pianist, who while travelling through Canada desired to learn something of prairie life. There was nothing wonderful to look at about him, except that his hair was short and neat, and he dressed like an ordinary gentleman, but when he laid his hands on the one fine instrument the place then boasted, such enjoyment and suffering came to me that I thought the man must be a god. Chopin's Nocturne (Op. 37, No. 2) hurt so that I could scarcely endure it. In St. James's Hall it had once before affected me most powerfully, but here, where perhaps years

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of time separated one from good music rendered by a true artist, that sudden awakening from the lethargy in which the prairies gradually and mercifully steep their victims caused as much pain as pleasure. It was like touching the lips of a being who was dying of thirst with a gourd of pure spring-water, and dashing it to the ground before his fading eyes. The soul that thirsts for music suffers a corresponding agony to that of a dried body thirsting for moisture. The majority of those who listened to that man's music evinced a placid enjoyment, a dreadful keep-time-with-the-head attitude that made me yearn to blot them off the face of the earth. And of course that Nocturne of Chopin's led them a dance because (thank goodness!) you cannot keep *his* time by nods, and so lots of the heads went wrong. The freaks who possessed them did not mind, however; they smiled sweetly on each other to show their appreciation and started off again vigorously when the recurrence of the exquisite and rhythmical melody gave them a chance. There was

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no painfully-sweet medley of sensations for them, nothing of that aching desire that overwhelms those (dare we say?) blessed with the musical temperament. That dash of *le feu sacré* that is at once the joy and despair of the possessor, that rouses one to passionate pleasure in a rare sunset, a golden thread of melody, or ponderous fabric of harmonious sound, is the gift of God to a few only; it is exhilaration—a momentary, god-like grasping of the (as yet) unattainable—a sure knowledge of inner power. Robert Browning knew this mind-rapture, and his words, born after desperate labour of the soul, will eternally satisfy :

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The high that was too high, the heroic for earth too
hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the
sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;
Enough that He heard it once, we shall hear it by-
and-by.

And again :

The rest may reason and welcome--'tis we
musicians know.

People of the placid, nodding genus do not

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live—they exist. The existing order of humans will exist longer than the living order will live ; also they will enrich Mother Earth more when they finally retire to her bosom, such people being mostly round and well-favoured. After all, it is something to possess even one redeeming virtue. I feel better after that.

It is a stifling afternoon. The passionate sun has wooed the green from the prairies, leaving them pale and yellow. The grass rustles beneath the feet, and the trails, that thread the far expanse like winding ribbons, are soft with fine, black dust. One is tempted to say that if this is June—and I believe it is the first of the month—we can do without July. And yet the summers are not always like this. One year there was a snowstorm during every month, the cricket eleven being driven from the field by a flurry of snow in August. The very mention of that cold stuff is refreshing now, and also carries me back to a day early in the winter of a dead year, when The One and myself were driving homewards along

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the south trail in a vehiele known as a jumper. It is a kind of low box-sleigh; a springless arrangement calling itself a seat and stretching from side to side across the front is all the accommodation it offers. The back part is useful for parcels.

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A little way out of the village we saw a huge badger on the snow, evidently taking a last sniff of fresh air before going below to wisely sleep away the winter. The One's big boar-hound spoiled the poor badger's plans and speedily ended his existence. I desired the skin, so, very obligingly, The One clambered out from the warm fur robes and rescued the body from the dog. It was too cold to skin it then and there, so he threw the creature into the back of the jumper with a laughing caution.

"Look out now, child! Badgers have a way of shamming death and coming to at unexpected moments! That's right—tuck your legs well out of danger."

I clutched my skirts and held them tightly around my ankles with a little involuntary shiver as I thought of the creature's teeth if he should be shamming. This delighted

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The Onc, so that while arranging the robes, and even after we had started again, he teasingly exhorted me to further vigilance, thereby putting an idea into my head which I, of course, proceeded to act upon. For the first half-mile I cast fearful glances behind me and once made him poke the thing with the handle of the whip, assuring him I had seen it move. Then with subtle and evil intent, my hand cunningly concealed as if still clutching my skirts, I led his thoughts gently away and we spoke of many interesting things.

That mile seemed very long, but I controlled my eagerness and made him forget that there was such a thing as a badger in the whole world. Just when the swift excitement of a steep little hill was over, I stiffened my fingers into hooks like teeth and firmly nipped the calf of his unsuspecting leg; the effect was delightful.

"*Holy Peter!*" he yelled, and shooting his legs into the air he leapt out upon the snow more quickly than I had ever seen him do anything in his life. The fur robes hung above me for a moment like heavy

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clouds, and The One clung to the reins merely from force of habit. At first I was almost too frightened to laugh, for the joke had been so very successful, but in a moment I found myself making the most extraordinary noises, like a half-stopped-up steam-valve. In a flash he understood, and his face was a study as he brushed the snow from himself, rescued the scattered robes, and again climbed in beside me. We said nothing, because there was nothing to say! We only laughed idiotically every time the agonised alarm of that yell and outward bound struck us afresh. These spasms were recurrent as such laughter always is, leaving one very feeble in the end. Whenever the subject of badgers now crops up, The One's eyes seek mine, and a large and silly grin overspreads his face, for he is awfully good-tempered, as the above episode will prove.

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Actually *two* letters came yesterday, one I suppose having been delayed; they were little ones, because he says that so soon he will be able to talk instead of writing.

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Putting aside the question of gentler emotions which naturally will arise when the advent of a great chum is at hand, I am curious to see how the sound of his voice will affect me when I hear it again. I have hopes, yes *hopes*, that it will awaken something within me that I know sleeps at present, something that no vicious pricks from my own conscience can arouse. A voice sometimes exerts a wonderful influence on one ; it can arouse sensation and vibrate richly on some long-silent heart-string ; it can stir the memory and recall many a forgotten detail or episode ; it is as potent as are certain scents to stimulate recollection. The perfume of a flower may perhaps recall a moment of wonderful joy, and the fragrance of a certain brand of cigar—that of sorrow or bliss.

The One's voice is peculiar ; not high-pitched nor profoundly basso, but resonant — curiously full of echoes ; it vibrates with sensitiveness. A girl once informed me that it sounded like a man calling down a chimney ; I know what she meant, but the simile is lacking in something. His voice

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seems to me more like that of some one speaking softly in a high, arched cave. I want to hear it again. I know that his "cooey" carries farther than any I have ever heard, and once it reached me when I was two miles away from him.

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A party of us were camping in the Qu'appelle Valley when the heat was as great as now, and we spent half our time in the river, cooling off. So much fresh-water bathing was disastrous to me, and I became weak and felt quite ill, though without knowing the cause. I longed to forsake the enervating deeps of the valley and the suffocating closeness of the big trees, and to stand again on the high lands above and be able to draw one good breath, but the valley is two miles wide and the hill long and steep. I feared to attempt it. To return to the settlement meant at least disturbing, and probably breaking up a pleasant party, the other members of which experienced none of my physical weakness; so I determined to brave it out for the week that remained.

One morning, when the usual swim had

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failed to invigorate me, and everything seemed a weariness to the flesh, I lay beneath a big tree thinking miserable things. The One most tenderly asked me to try and eat something, and questioned me as to what I would like. A spirit of mischief, that I suppose will influence even my dying moments, made me mention bananas (always a weakness of mine) as my especial desire. I knew there were not any, and I only said it to see what he would say. He said nothing, poor dear, especially as I informed him I required a whole sackful! Not long after I heard his vibrating "cooey," and leaving the shade of the trees saw him waving his cow-boy hat as his horse carried him to the foot of the long, winding hill. I questioned a friend as to where he was going and was told that he had said the horse needed exercise; I thought he might have told me as well.

Up he went, easily and steadily, to vanish over the edge of the prairies with a last cheerful call. He was more than two miles away then, and I felt rather injured

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and deserted, because he was not in the habit of doing anything without me, and if I couldn't ride, then he wouldn't. My little mare felt forsaken, too, without her stable companion, judging by the neighing and kicking that went on. I took a book and sat in the stable doorway, talked to her, and watched the hill. I watched it all day; noon passing, and then the long afternoon, oh, *so* slowly. Every one was busily engaged in sleeping, reading, and fishing, and they left me alone; I believe they found me only a bore during those weak days of mine, and no wonder. I used to weep on The One's broad shoulder, that smelt of heather tweed even when his coat was off, just for the sake of being comforted, I believe; and perhaps a little because I could not help it. When the shadows began to slant, I crept away from the camp, filled with fear that some accident might have befallen The One, and utterly unable to understand the reason of his long absence. I determined to go to the spot where I had last seen him, knowing he must return that way if

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nothing had happened. As I climbed the long, weary hill alone, the sunset reddened the earth. I felt sick and giddy, but a cautious slowness and rigid determination carried me to the top. There, the cool, consoling breath of evening that swept the flower-strewn expanse fanned the brow and braced the relaxed nerves. From above, the valley seemed a furrow of green and gold, flooded all over with a wonderful crimson light, the narrow river threading it like a scarlet vein. At my feet was the trail that led to the settlement, twenty odd miles to the south, but only visible for half a mile or so owing to the undulating nature of the prairies thereabout, and I walked to a far bend, which being on high ground gave me a view of the trail for many miles, and commenced my long vigil.

The sun disappeared and the western sky became like to a lake of wine. One by one the stars appeared on the pale blue-green background of the east, and I thought of sunsets on hot Eastern deserts, and wondered if they could at any time surpass

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in splendour the scene before me ; it seemed impossible. The breeze died down, and the mosquitoes floated up from the grass ; a gopher popped up from his burrow at my feet, only to quickly disappear again with a squeak and flirt of the tail.

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Then, in the very far distance, I thought I saw a speck on the trail, but the fading light made it difficult to determine whether it moved or not. I marked its exact position relative to a small and distant knoll on the right, and turned my eyes away to watch the moon become every moment more golden. I counted three hundred very slowly, killed four mosquitoes, and looked at the speck again. It had moved quite considerably, so I repeated the same process, and killed the same number of mosquitoes which, just because I wanted to do it quickly so as to be able to look again, wouldn't come near me, and then I saw that the speck had become quite large, each moment growing plainer to the sight, until an upward roll of the prairies hid it from view. I was certain then that

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it was The One, and skurried down the trail to meet him, full of reproach and welcome. First a cow-boy hat with its wide brim appeared over the brow of the hill, then a man and a horse rounded the steep and swept down towards me.

I knew the nerves of that horse, since I had once seen him arise upon his hind-legs in the stable during an irritable spell and cut his nose against the tin roof, so I stepped from the grass to the trail and stood in full view. The One pulled up and sprang to the ground, while the horse blew through his nose like a whale, and pretended that he thought I was the devil; but that did not matter, because The One lifted his hat and kissed me, and said something about my being an angel to come and meet him. That meeting was worth double the day's waiting, but of course I wept, held his arm as we walked along, and wept gently, not being able to say anything at all. He was so tender and clever.

"Lots of mail for my girl," he said, "nice English letters—one so thick that there

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must be a present in it—and a whole sackful of bananas! Come! No more tears, I only wanted to surprise my little one.”

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The “little one,” whose head was not a great deal below the level of his own, sniffed an attempt at cheerfulness and squeezed his arm. The surprise was of course delightful, but the man who had ridden fifty miles to provide it was the chief thing in her thoughts just then.

“You dear,” I said, “all the English mail and all the bananas in the world are not worth—not worth—oh! what *can* I say? They are not worth the clippings you leave behind in the barber’s shop!” He laughed outright.

“That reminds me,” he said, smoothing the back of his fair, wavy head with his bridle arm, the other one being out of business for the time being, “I ought to have left some hair behind to-day, but I was so keen to get back to the Girl before dark that I forgot about it.”

As we began the descent of the mile-long hill, to show my appreciation I demanded a

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banana. Behind the cantle of his Mexican saddle was secured a small and swollen sack. Obliging The One undid the raw-hide lashings that held it in place. We sat close together on a big boulder and ate some of the fruit, while the horse snuffed curiously at us. I made The One promise never to do again such a thing as he had done that day.

"Supposing," I said, "that I howled for the moon! what would you do?"

"Give you a good old-fashioned spanking," he replied, to my great astonishment, and with his mouth full of banana, "because you would only be doing it for cussedness, knowing that I could not ride and fetch it!"

The day had been bad, but I love remembering that soft, scented evening, sitting on the boulder with The One, eating bananas under the great gold moon. I believe he would do just the same for me now as he did that day if I needed something and let him off his promise.

I am beginning to wonder what I have ever done for him.

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There *are* one or two rather decent things I can remember. I sat up with him all one night when a horse had kicked his knee, and put hot flannels on the place every half-hour to ease the pain ; and one day, when we were at tea at some Canadian's house, I ate a most disgusting sandwich for him which he had taken, believing it to be edible, and was too polite to leave, because just only we two were there and it would have been noticed. The sandwich was made of some awful concoction of pounded pea-nuts and vinegar ! I nearly died of it, but I ate it, and he was really awfully grateful, though nearly bursting with r at the face I made while choking the ing down. Yes, I have done a thing or two for him, sometimes. Once I bore the blame for him, and that was a great matter, because when Mother used to get really annoyed we all shivered and shook. It was in the early days of our engagement, and The One was spending a week with us, in fact he spent half his weeks with us, because Mother was so very fond of him, and all her own sons

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were away—at least that forms part of the reason. I forget where The Peep was that day, but Mother drove into the settlement with a friend in the afternoon, and we had the house to ourselves. When we grew tired of playing the piano to each other and making tunes, we searched our minds for something interesting to do. The One was seized with a desire to cook, and we hunted the various cupboards in the hope of getting inspiration and material. I heard him routing about in the cupboard under the stairs, where I thought only lived candles and soap and a tub of cooking butter, but he emerged with a small basket of precious, new-laid eggs. Now Mother's fowls—like Marie's—were silly, speckled, busy idiots, who did everything but lay eggs properly, and were the very light of her eyes. The eggs, when they came, were counted and written upon, and I believe she would have pickled them if she could, and framed them after.

“For heaven's sake, don't touch *those*,” I said, for the basket of sacred eggs was

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dangling most carelessly from The One's brown, secular hand.

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"Meringues!" he whispered impressively.

"Ever made meringues, child? It's awfully easy, really; you pitch the yolks away and beat up the whites into a sort of froth and cook 'em in little dabs in a very hot oven. Let's do it and give the Mater a nice surprise; she won't mind when she sees my lovely meringues."

I thought that it would give the Mater a surprise, but I had my doubts about the niceness of it. If let alone, I would not have touched those eggs with a forty-foot pole, but really The One's enterprise seemed catching, and his blue eyes fairly blazed with the inspiration of the true chef. After a little preliminary difference of opinion as to how best to get the yolks unbroken from the whites, he adopted my way instead of his own, which had been to bore a hole in each end and *blow!* I let him do one, just to show him how long it took compared with my way, to say nothing of breaking the yolks, and he gave in. Then we began the beating process.

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Here again he over-ruled my suggestion of a plate or dish and a fork, saying that twelve whites would not all go on a plate, and he actually put them into the soup-tureen and went to work on them with the potato-masher! His exhortations and thumps might easily have been heard in New York, but all the same the whites would not froth at all, so once more he had to climb off his perch and try the fork and flat dish. When his arm ached, he used a big, bad word (being a cow-boy, you see), but kept on beating.

"Now she's frothing!" he cried at last.

"Great head, Girlie! you know more than I thought you did; put on some more wood and get the oven piping hot; this meringue business is ticklish work, you know—whole thing has to be done in a quarter of an hour, otherwise *they fall*."

He looked so awfully wise as he came out with this that I nearly laughed, but being as he would have said "tee-totally" ignorant on the subject of meringue manufacture, I kept a straight face and made up a roaring fire—you could hardly bear

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to touch the handle of the oven. Hope ran high, and I almost persuaded myself that Mother might be pleased.

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“They have to be stuffed with cream, dear ; is there any ?”

Obediently I skimmed the milk that was reserved for supper.

“Go ahead and beat it like I do this confounded stuff.”

I beat.

The whites of the eggs really looked very promising when sitting in neat little dabs on the bottom of a baking tin which The One had rubbed with butter. Into the oven they went, and we had time to breathe. He sat on the edge of the table and rolled a cigarette.

“I will give ’em ten minutes,” he said. Then suddenly : “Great Scott, child ! we forgot the sugar.”

“You forgot it, you mean.”

“Well, never mind who forgot it ; shove it in the cream—that is just every bit as good.”

At the end of ten minutes we peeped at them ; they were getting nicely brown, but

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The One thought they did not look quite cooked as they wobbled so frightfully when you shook the tin dish.

"They should be quite crisp," he said; "they must have another ten minutes; I can't understand that! Where did I learn to make them? I asked the cook at home years ago, and she told me; behold the blessing of a good memory."

I was quite impressed, but I remembered that he had forgotten the sugar; I did not remind him, which is one more nice little thing I have done for him.

The cream was ready and tasted very good as I had scraped some of Mother's dried tangerine peel into it.

Time was up—we opened the oven. The meringues were very brown and still wobbled a little, but The One looked pleased and said that they always "dried out" after you took them out, so we put them over on the table by the window to dry out quickly. After another cigarette, he went to inspect them and an awful groan sent me flying across the room. His tone was heart-breaking.

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"Look at that, would you! What in thunder has happened to 'em?"

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I looked, and then lifted one of the things on a hairpin in order to see it better. It was limp and wet, about the size of a two-shilling piece, and looked like a very *passé* mushroom or a piece of one of his own brown boots. I felt my face slipping and knew that in a moment I would laugh aloud, but a sound of wheels saved me.

"Here! Quick!" cried The One, and snatching up shells and yolks he tossed them into the tin with the leather things and we flew into the garden. Quick as thought his hands plunged into the first soft-looking earth we saw, and into this shallow tomb went the contents of the tin. It was sharp work, but apparently Mother was dallying in the stable yard, for we had time to conceal the plates and dishes wherewith the kitchen was literally strewn. Then she entered the room by the back way, tall and smiling.

"Good gracious, children!" (The One was twenty-six then) "what can have

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induced you to make the kitchen so hot? It is like a furnace! how very absurd on a day like this! Philip, will you go and tell that boy about not giving the horses water while they are so overheated."

The One's "Yes, Mater," was quite eager, and with a wink and a grin at me he disappeared.

I felt queer, and the spangles on Mother's bonnet began to dance and nod in the sprightly way they always did when I had done anything wrong and knew it. However, with a final despairing remark as to the terrible "heat of the place," Mother betook herself upstairs and I breathed freely, but only for a minute, for she returned and put her head in at the door.

"Since you have such a nice, hot stove, my dear," she said, with gentle sarcasm, "you may as well make some buttered eggs for supper; neither your father nor I care for meat more than once a day this weather; there is the cold joint and a salad for those who want it. The eggs are in a basket in the cupboard under the

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stairs ; use only six, because the hens are not laying well just now." (They never did.)

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I do not know what I said in reply, but Mother went off upstairs humming a little tune, or trying to. The darling had absolutely no idea of time or tune and, as The One was fond of saying, one never knew whether she was singing "God save the Weasel," or "Pop goes the King." I think she always enjoyed being chaffed about it and sometimes would sing just to make us laugh. But I was in no mood for song or joke just then, and I felt I could have slapped The One had he been there. Since there were no eggs there was nothing to do but set the supper and make the salad, and when assembled in the dining-room I knew that the climax could not be far off. The One's bright smile seemed to me palpably pinned on.

"There are not any eggs under the stairs," I said ; "at least I could not see any, so there is only the joint ; I am sorry."

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“Indeed? I put them there myself this morning,” Mother said, arching one eyebrow, “but never mind now; only, my dear, why not look more carefully sometimes instead of rushing at everything in the way you do?”

Under the table I smote the shin-bone of The One. I knew he would confess sooner or later, but that moment seemed to be the right one. He looked up at the ceiling and remarked that really fly-papers were needed the next time any one went to town. That was all.

What horrid fate was it that prompted Mother after supper to take her trowel and plant pansy-slips in the very spot where the eggs were buried? And why had The One gone—this time to water those blessed horses—and why had I not gone with him? Mother’s movements fascinated me as the figure “9” used to do when I faked a number at the Stores in London; on such occasions I could hardly stop saying the “9” when once I began.

I drew nearer and watched. Nothing

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happened, and I felt my spirits rising when suddenly up came a trowelful of egg-shells.

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“ Dear me ! What can be the meaning of this ? ”

Plunging again into that lucky-bag of earth, Mother turned up a whole heap more, for The One had used every egg and even then had said there were not enough. The shells were so very new-looking, and there were twenty-four halves that spread themselves about so that there seemed to be hundreds. I felt inclined to laugh, tried not to, and of course spluttered ; for the life of me I could not have helped it. Then Mother arose and—looked at me ! I had seen that look before, had, in fact, known it at intervals from infancy, and it used to be followed by the remark—“ What have I done, what have I possibly *done*, to be the Mother of such children ? ”

Well !—but she gave up saying that years ago ! She simply looked at me then in the way that mothers, who are undoubtedly a race, always look on such occasions, and

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my laughter seemed to take wings ; I really felt sorry.

“ I did it, Mammy dear ; he did not really want to, but I made him, because I thought it would be so jolly to give you home-made meringues for supper, they are so—er—cool this weather ; you won’t scold him, will you ? though I know you would rather we had roasted dollar-bills ! The meringues simply sat down and died in such a silly way, and the only decent thing to do was to bury them.”

I kissed and coaxed her, assuring her that I had to sulk for half an hour before I could persuade The One to do cooking on such a hot day, until I saw the corners of her dear mouth going up ; but a rebuke had to come as a matter of principle.

“ So that was the meaning of the hot kitchen ! No . . . er the meringues sat down.” Here she could not resist a touch of instruction. “ They need a *very* cool oven and take a long time to do. It was very wrong of Philip to countenance an action that he must

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have known would not meet with my approval."

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I hugged her and tore off to the stables to inform The One that it was all over. We squeezed hands, and he said that the Mater was really an awfully good sort, and boasted about having told me that she would not mind! Some day I must tell him what I did for him, and how no'ly I played the scapegoat, that is to say if——

XIII

STILL
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June 3rd.—This afternoon I had visitors, such an attractive pair, namely The Sidar on his big bay and The Lady Di—plucky little pet—on the tiniest of white ponies. Imagine the babe in a sweet white habit and small black velvet jockey-cap, her tumbled hair like a halo of gold, and no leading rein! She laughed with delight at the enterprise, showed all her tiny teeth, and tossed the curls that gleamed like spun silk in the sun. Had I dared, I could have snatched up this bewildering creature and run with her to the ends of the earth, have hidden her, worked for her, and adored her. Every time I see her I fear I break the tenth commandment with all my heart and soul; and no wonder the keen eyes of the big, dark Sidar rest always on his baby with such melting tenderness.

They had ridden out to ask when my visit to them was to take place, and whether I could manage to tear myself away from the alluring society of The Peep and The Step-

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mother—that is how the teasing Sidar expressed himself. It is settled for Monday, and as this is Friday the day will soon come. It seems like the beginning of things, or the end—which? The Sidar was really quite tiresomely playful to-day and knocked off my hat with his crop in his own little way, and just for friendship's sake as it were.

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“What has happened to you, dear Beast?” he asked, that being a gentle and affectionate name he bestowed upon me in the riotous old days, because I had smoothed his hair with mashed potato in return for his having forced me more than once to eat a “tit-bit,” the said “tit-bit” being perhaps a horrid mixture of jam, salad-oil, mustard, and cayenne pepper, all loaded on to a small piece of bread. I simply had to eat these frightful things sometimes to save a hand-to-hand struggle. On such occasions, The Wife and Mother forgot friendship, and mounting a chair so as to be well out of the way, cheered on her lord, until a Saint who lived close by could hear sounds as of Bedlam let loose.

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“What’s up, dear Beast?” he said again, as I had not yet been able to manufacture a suitable reply. “You appear to have actually grown up in a few weeks, metaphorically I mean, for the saints forbid that your physical length should extend. But joking apart, why such a serious face? Days like these are meant for laughter and riding, aren’t they, my Baby?” and he turned to his little daughter who proved it at once.

The Sidar continued, “Dear Beast, go and change your face and put on the old one, or when He comes He will assuredly prefer to make love to the blacksmith’s daughter.”

I squeezed a laugh somehow and put on my hat only to have it promptly knocked off again. With shouts of laughter and scornful rejections of tea, the two wheeled their horses for home, throwing back over their shoulders reminders to me to be early on Monday! “In time for luncheon,” “In time for breakfast,” and “Get up early for once, now do!”

Those two cannot stay away from the other

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two for any length of time. How happy they are, how awfully happy ! I watched them through the pasture-gate, to lose them among the yellow waves of the rolling prairies. Such people weigh like gold in the scales of friendship.

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I am wearying for the companionship of Linnet and Biff, the large, gentle-looking, melancholy Biff, and his clear-eyed, silver-haired, little wife. I am going to read her a book I love called "Eben Holden" when I stay there next, and to keep her conscious while I do it, I mean to tie a piece of strong string to her big toe and time the tugs by the clock, but I suppose the rhythmical reminders of the string would only soothe my dormouse friend to calmer, deeper slumber.

Getting up early is really a shocking habit. The "lady" dwellers in the Infernal City, that coal-town in the mountains previously referred to, never speak of "getting up"; they are either too refined or not refined enough to take such a liberty with the English language, for they speak with pursed lips of "rising" and "retiring,"

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and the effect of such words on a person of less punctilious habits of speech is very freezing. The mind seems forbidden to travel beyond the sacred portals of their bedroom doors. Dare any one venture to imagine the lady who "retires" brushing her teeth, for instance, or doing anything so low as to take off her clothes? The Canadian lady who "retires" really intends to infuse into that word the idea that she is a kind of goddess, and one wonders how she can ever bring herself to climb into such a vulgar-sounding thing as a bed. Neither, in the Infernal City, or for that matter anywhere among a certain class of Canadian society, must you say "leg"; it should be "limb," for thus are their tender blushes spared. Yet the same lady who invariably conforms to these rigid, if unwritten, laws of etiquette, will tell you pathetically, and as an excuse for not partaking of a certain kind of cake at tea, that she was "so sick at the stummiel yesterday." Now I would rather say "bed" twenty times and "leg" fifty, than confess to anything so disgusting as

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having been "sick at the stummick," thereby probably proving my utter English lack of refinement (*vide* Infernal opinions, *passim*).

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For the present I suppose my days with The Peep and his wife are numbered, and when next I stay with them in this pretty house in the bluffs, something definite will have happened, or, at any rate, have been arranged. What will it be?

Shall I return to them single still and awfully lonely, merely the bride of my own ambitions, or repentant and humble and "sensible," about to espouse The One and the land? If I had not already frequently referred to my sex, and mentioned hairpins and skirts, any one could easily see that a woman has written all this from the way things are said and taken back and said again. True it is that a most marvellous amount of love for some one seems necessary in order to render one anxious to put one's self in the position of being a wife, housekeeper, cook, and charwoman in one! Who was it said that

Man's work ends with the setting sun,
A woman's work is never done?

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Mother and myself—she more than I, I fear—learned the deep truth of that remark. Here my mind harks back to that question of love and its vast differences of quality. I think it must be because we are so woe-fully more physical than spiritual that we experience such degree and quality in the attribute of loving, for surely, when the body, like an old garment, is flung aside, a clearer, truer understanding of real love, which is the very breath of God, will come to us, and as the violent lightning renders every detail distinct while yet it dazzles the eyes, so will that spirit-love suddenly make everything that is now difficult, easy to understand.

But I have a body to reckon with at present and want to try and understand the undeniable and different phases of body-love.

We will begin with a very elemental and orrid kind. Take old Herrick ; he sang thus :—

Let me be warm, let me be fully fed,
Luxurious love by wealth is nourished.

And he was a fat man ! Those lines

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sound like the song of a very fat man, and I do not like them at all. I think the love that Herrick there refers to is a kind that should always be spelt with a small "l"; there can be in it no attribute demanding the higher merit of a capital letter. That love would become offensively demonstrative after a good dinner! So I can quite well imagine certain people, gifted with that Herrick-love, marrying contentedly out here even without the wealth, for, if driven to it, such natures would probably not object to the labour necessary to provide the good dinner that would afterwards console, satisfy, and promote complacent desire. Faugh! The idea is nauseating, and comes nearer to making one "sick at the stummick" than anything I have thought of for a long time. Yet it is called love, without the sincere apology to the beautiful word that should be forthcoming.

There is another kind of love that seems to make people cheerfully marry into poverty, though whether its delicate colour would fade in the wash of every-day life

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is a great question. This kind might perhaps be spelled with a capital letter, for its elements are powerful and enslaving—for a time. It is the sort that drives the bride of the labourer to the garden gate every evening to welcome her unshaven, toil-stained lord; it sends the young wife to the station to meet the city bank-clerk. The words "bride" and "young wife" are purposely adopted because later on— Ah, well—poor dears! it is easily understood! Still, that first, great, beautiful sentiment is one of the fascinating robes that nature dons in defence of the race, and she assuredly fulfils her purpose in the end. Ask the wife of the bank-clerk about that, who, by-and-bye, has to make an impossible salary feed a preposterous family.

But the Love one instinctively yearns to give and receive is something other than the above, something higher, and infinitely more wonderful; and yet, because it can visit and remain with the body, it is not yet a purely spiritual attribute. The body must truly be reckoned with, but made

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merely the horse to the soul, to be fed,
groomed, exercised, and trained to obey.
At times I sometimes catch a distant gleam
of the white and shining wings of this
best Love of all, but always it is poised
just above and beyond me, and I think
that is why—I suffer.

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The Settlement. Thursday.—The Sidar and Linnet are in the garden playing tennis with The Newsman and the new bank-manager. In spite of the heat they are all as lively as crickets; it seems to me as if such terrible exercise ought to make them melt into nothing. The Little Mother and I have just been having a talk, and I fear I allowed her to see more plainly my state of mind than was either wise or nice. The One would not have spoken so of his feelings to any living soul. The Little Mother assumed a most unsympathetic attitude—I believe she called me a fool, and wound up by saying that I ought to have my ears boxed! I begged her to go ahead and box them, but she only stalked off and left me. If I could have a letter saying something definite about his movements, things would seem better, but the strain of inaction and waiting is becoming unbearable. I try to remember how he dislikes letter-

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writing, and tell myself that he will in all probability just send a telegram at the last moment to announce his arrival, but these thoughts do not bring much comfort. I need badly, right at this very moment, another long, spontaneous letter-talk like that well-remembered one I received while staying with Marie and Theo in the valley. If such a one came now, when I admit being hungry for it, the future might be altogether altered. I feel like the middle of the rope must feel in a tug-o'-war, and I really sympathise with the end that has only The One on it, and yet he won't pull hard enough; also, like the rope, I cannot speak and tell him so. How amazed he would look if I did, and how very wide his blue eyes would open. He wrote to The Sidar, and there certainly was a little "dear-old-girl" enclosure for me, but not by any means the kind that my instinct tells me I am now especially needing. He said he had received his capital and would be with us in a few days when one or two affairs in the west were satisfactorily settled, and went on to say that he wanted a long talk

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with The Sidar as regards using his money to open a store in some new and rising place—I forget the name. Of course all that is very necessary talk, and in my letter he certainly did say that he was awfully keen on the moment when he would step off the car and see my face again, but that only made me feel awful. It was just a little extra tug on the rope without being enough to pull the other side over and make it for ever hold its peace.

I wonder what the effect on me would be if some interfering person really did come along and box my ears? I feel I would burst with rage or relief, and that something would snap and the strain cease.

There goes a train, but it is only a lumbering old freight-train, ringing its gloomy bell and coming out of the west just as if it were the real thing; it is to me, in this mood, a big and silly fraud.

There is no work to do here as The Sidar keeps a capable servant, and my hands are already beginning to lose their roughness and look like hands again.

I am keeping my tussore silk blouse with

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the shrimp-pink sailor collar for—till—oh, well, any one can guess what for ; and also I want to say that I positively prefer inconsistency to horrid commonplace sense. No ! I have not been posing all the time, I have meant all that I have said, and I can no more account for this unexpected excitement of mind than I can fly. I have been honest with myself all along, doubtless a good deal too honest.

I feel distinctly cross ; the heat makes one cross, and that is what must be the matter with The Little Mother. I can see her now from between the green ribs of the closed shutters, sitting on a seat and pretending to watch the game, but really loving The Sidar with her eyes all the time. How nice it must be to feel like that. I suppose from her point of view she feels justified in wanting to box my ears, because I know she thinks the world of The One, being in fact one of those who are fond of informing me how much too good he is for me. She says that, next to The Sidar, he is the most lovable man she ever met. And so he is of course, he is more lovable than any one ;

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but—it is not that exactly—Oh ! I believe I will burn all this twaddle soon.

It—it—the telegram ! I have got it ! He is coming to-night on the express ! Why not have written and given me more time to—oh ! I don't know. Fancy to-night ! No time to write now, only just to scribble the news, because the tussore blouse is crumpled and must be pressed. The telegram came this evening during dinner, and no one ate anything at all after that—at least I forgot to look if the others did.

I will be able to write quietly when I go to bed to-night, but now I feel like the needle of a ship's compass that goes round and round when it ought not to. I squealed when the maid brought in the telegram, and again when I read it. It was sent from Moose Jaw, and said :

“ Meet to-night's express. Hooray ! ”

The Little Mother hugged me, and said something about “ There you are ! you see what I told you, you Glad Goose ! ”

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which there was really no time to reply to. The Sidar pulled my hair and said,

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“Cheer—Oh! dear Bride-Beast, you will soon be done for now, and be a good old married frump like the rest of us,” which there really was no leisure to be upset by. Presently I know things will calm down and I shall be just as I was before, but I am living (for once, wise!) in this hour, and it is really a most delightful thing to do. I am thoroughly enjoying myself, and soon I shall see my pal.

The train arrives in an hour and there is the blouse to do, but the irons are not yet quite hot. The Sidar has gone to fetch Linnet and Biff so as to make a jolly welcome, and we shall be quite the “cliqueiest” bit of the clique. Everything seems upside down and inside out! I wonder if I look all right?

Linnet's house. Midnight.—Well! well! I suppose this is how people feel who have really been married and the fuss and excitement is all over—just tired out completely.

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The Sidar went to the station alone ; I preferred to wait half-way along the trail and not let every eye witness our meeting ; he is such a pal, and it is easy to see how lonely one has been all this long time. About half an hour before the train was due, we all watched for the head-light of the engine from The Sidar's window. Presently, in the west, there twinkled a small yellow eye, becoming larger as it crept nearer, slow and sure, across the wide prairies.

I remembered how I used to think of this night and look forward to it in spite of everything. Linnet said how nice my hair looked, and that the blouse was charming. On came the big light, and the grip of metal on metal roared in the distance. Nearer—nearer, and I prepared to leave the house and follow the train by the trail that leads to the station, when, as it lumbered past the house, we saw it was but yet another freight-train, and knew that the express must be a long distance behind. The Sidar returned from the station, quite as disgusted as we were,

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to say that the east-bound express was reported two hours late, but might possibly make up an hour before reaching the settlement. I sank into a chair, and felt that of all imaginable shocks this was surely the worst. One felt quite limp.

Interest revived shortly however, and later we all took our stand by the window to again watch the west. Presently another eye, this time white and decided ; I ought to have remembered that the express always carries an electric head-light. Soon a trembling walk alone down the trail, under the red and rising lamp of the moon. Immense and surging emotions obtained the mastery, and I fell on my knees in the grass beside the trail and looked up.

"God ! O God ! I know this surface joy for what it is ! Help me now ; make me sound throughout in the name of Thy Christ."

There was no choice of words ; God and I knew the meaning of them, and again peace, like a night-dew, fell on me.

Then once more I saw The One.

He was carrying a travelling bag and the

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broad brim of his Stetsen hat hid his face. He wore a dark blue serge coat and white flannel trousers, and I wondered if he had remembered my liking for that mixture.

I cannot say more about the actual moment of our meeting than that I felt most awfully glad to be able to see and touch him again, and that The Sidar took his bag from him and went on ahead. We followed, at first without words, in the old way of the old days, like two loving boys, each with an arm about the other's shoulders ; I had to reach up just a little.

Then he whispered :

“ Child ! are you glad ? ”

“ Yes, indeed ! ”

And I was glad and content. I knew I would like to have been quite speechless with glowing joy. Instead, the sense of rest and affection was such as the touch of Mother's dear, long-absent hand have produced. The steadfast truth and sweetness of The One gripped my heart, making it yearn towards him. And it was good, yes, very good, and things are well with me now, save that I feel a little

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over-tired. Everything is lulled. I have no desire to break the engagement. I sleep, yet with conscious pleasure in the act. I believe that God is going to be so good as to let me sleep on always, unless this is the way every one feels when the wedding day comes near ; perhaps it is, only it is a little different to what I had thought. I will marry him, take and mean solemn vows before the altar, and do my duty until I die. So help me God !

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The evening, or what there was left of it, passed cosily. The One was rapturously greeted at the house by The Little Mother and Linnet and Biff, the two children, who had been brought from their beds, looking beamy-eyed and sweet in their pretty dressing-gowns. He kissed me again right out in front of them all, and it was delightful of him to do that because as a rule he reserves such attentions until no one is looking ; and there was a roar of laughter because they said I blushed. Every one said how bonny and well he looked, and he has not become in the least western in

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speech or appearance. His eyes are bluer than ever, quite like forget-me-nots, his nose just as big and powerful, and the little moustache still kicks up like the Kaiser's, without being *quite* so aggressive looking. The outdoor life has tanned him tremendously—I like blue eyes in a brown face.

Though never uproarious, he seemed almost quieter than usual to-night and had a bit of a headache, but two nights and a day on those stuffy trains at this time of the year are enough to give a nigger a headache! When Linnet began to yawn surreptitiously, having been all the evening without a snooze, I rose to go.

The One and I said good-night in the porch. He held me close, and it seemed wonderfully comforting after—everything!

“How soon, Girlie: Think of all the years! How soon, dear?”

I smiled, quite undisturbed.

“Just whenever you like, old man,” I said —“is your head better?”

“Sweetheart! How awfully glad you have made me! Lately I have been rather

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troubled about you. I hated the delay, and being away from you so long seemed awful."

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He brushed his hand carelessly across his forehead.

"My head? Yes—no—it's nothing, dear; how can I bother about my head now? I will be as fit as anything in the morning and we will arrange nice things such as when it is to be, and where, and all that, eh? Just get married in a travelling dress, Girlie dear—you know the kind, blue or green, or any old colour—and come off with me to Banff for a week or two! After that, good honest work for us both, sweetheart, for a time, with sure hopes of another and lasting holiday later on."

So it is to be a travelling dress—"blue or green, or any old colour!"

And now I will not write any more, since this is, of course, the end.

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THE end, did I say? Would to heaven had been! Can it be only four days since he came to me out of the west? He is ill! The One is ill! God only knows he is not dying! To-day the doctor says it is typhoid fever. My boy, my precious boy! I would suffer anything instead of him—give anything to be able to take his place. I am awake now, tell you I am horribly, grandly alive and awake! What can I do? What can another one do? May the long-suffering patient God, supreme in His might, now be merciful to me, for already it is enough! I am awake, and it is enough!

The One *ill*—dangerously ill! It seems unbelievable! Never in all the years I have known him has he even been a little ill before.

To-day a man's voice in the garden says to The Sidar, "These strong fellows you know, that is the worst of them"

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with typhoid fever they seem to snuff out like a candle."

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I heard him say those awful words and crammed my handkerchief into my mouth to stifle the shriek that nearly came, that would have so frightened him upstairs.

The Sage is kind and is doing his best, but I spent all last night on my knees beseeching the Great Physician to hear me and heal my boy. Christ did such wonderful things when on earth, and surely His power and His kind Heart are as great and tender now as then, for of Himself He said "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

I will believe that, I will fix my soul upon it; it is fact, and I believe it; but the instinct of the tiger-mother is tearing my heart to pieces, for Death is such a terrible, intangible foe that all human power is unavailing. We can only do our feeble, yearning best, and wait, and pray.

The house is given up to the doctor and the nurse, The Sidar and his family having gone to the hotel. I am allowed to stay

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here in the house provided I do not go near his room unless sent for. And there is work to do, thank God there is work. I can cook and clean and do everything that is necessary below stairs, quietly, very quietly so as not to disturb him, and see to the ice; I carry two pails of it from the creamery every day. But the agony of it all—since even to touch his hot, brown hand is forbidden me.

Now and then I may see him, being ordered beforehand to smile and look cheerful! Always I can hear him calling and calling for me, and oh! if I might but go and take the place of that calm, clean nurse!

In the long hours of each dreadful listening night thoughts of misery, visions of black and hopeless despair, torture the mind, for if—— but no! The God who has said He is a God of Infinite Love could not hit me so hard as that. Soon, surely very soon, He will see that it is already enough and stay the hand of punishment. I did not intend to be evil—I had no desire to sin— But now to my selfish soul and body I cry “Oh, Blind Fool! not to have

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known and seen before that 'The One is *everything!*' He is, to me, all there can be—lover, mother, brother, exquisite chum—he is the other larger and finer half of me, and existence without him is a horror that my mind cannot, dare not fathom. Oh, I am so frightened! I wonder if this has happened to any wicked girl before?

The One, that tender creature, who sympathised so deeply with every little foolish frequent ache and pain of mine, now lies upstairs in the shadow of the dreadful wings of Death, and I can do nothing to help him. O Thou most patient God, listen to me once more and heal him! Only let my dearest get well again and life will not be long enough nor will there be sufficient opportunity for all that I desire to do for him and be to him. Work—hard, grinding, bodily labour—will be the sweetest pleasure if by it I can add to his comfort ever so little; to make our home clean and beautiful shall be hereafter my sole object. To see him well again, and gladness and content shining in the brave, blue eyes

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will be so infinitely much more than I deserve.

This helpless agony now—this is what I deserve ; but already it is enough, and I know. May the punishment be lifted soon, before it is too much !

Here is now the grave of puling discontent, the burial-place of Self, with its weak and contemptible desires. I trample on it in scorn and disgust, and lo ! from the threshed earth miraculously springs the sweet flower of Everlasting Service.

Two more long, awful days have passed, crowded with brief hopes and crushing fears, morning thanksgiving and nightly despair.

While creeping from room to silent room, or walking at evening time on the wide, dim prairies, whispered prayer has become a dogged habit. The muscles of the body obey the will and work, but those that controlled the smile have lost their power. The Great Physician seems cruelly deaf ; as yet there is no healing touch in His Hand.

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The Church, the whole settlement, are pleading for the life of The One; I wonder how much God desires to be asked? I said I would remember and believe about His being "The same yesterday, to-day, and forever." I do.

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This morning I saw my dear for a few moments, and though the dear brown face was terribly thin and keen, he spoke to me in his own tender voice, that voice so curiously like some one speaking in a high, quiet cave. He said,

"Poor little Childie, I am a sick boy this go! But cheer up, dear, you may be sure I mean to do my best, only stay with me, child, stay with me." *And I—might—not!*

I had been forbidden ever to cry in his presence or to fold my arms about him, on penalty of being instantly sent from the house. Of course they are right; but to-day I knelt for a moment by the bed and laid my face on his breast and looked into his eyes silently. The intensity of that look made my eyes hurt and burn:

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they felt like bursting. He understood, for a radiance flashed into his face like the sun rising over the Rockies. Then I was quietly put outside the room.

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I am learning, I think, the lesson of my life. After this there can be nothing left to learn of agony; no pain can ever hurt me any more.

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XVI

After many days.—The One! The One!
Imagine my *utter* joy! He is convalescent!
Also deliciously cranky, terribly fussy,
utterly spoilt, and perfectly adorable!
Listen! I have caught the Big White
Love that I used to dream of; He came to
me in those hours of torture—I lifted my
face and He came, and the great, soft wings
of Him fold me from head to foot. I be-
lieve that all the time He hovered in the
clear blue, just above the mists of Self,
only waiting to be called down, and the
extraordinary part is that I found all the
other different kinds of love tucked away
under His wings. And now everything
is quite simple to understand. Even the
Herrick-love seems to have perched upon
The One, for—dinners! Why, he simply
eats everything he can possibly get hold
of, and sometimes I believe he would eat
me if he could, judging by the way he
looks at me! It is all so very wonderful;
I am so *new*, and so frightfully happy, in

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spite of being the long, gaunt shadow of a thing that the mirror showed me when yesterday I suddenly thought of looking, with great, glad eyes and white, thin cheeks.

Just imagine ! The One has to learn to walk all over again, and sometimes his poor knees give way and he falls down, and I fly to pick him up, while we both laugh like anything, and because he is really a cowboy his laughter is mixed up with certain most expressive and really peculiar remarks about the hardness of floors in general and that one in particular, the awkwardness of a door-step, and the why and the wherefore of them at all.

Yesterday I caught him climbing on all fours up the two or three steps that lead to the larder, intent on thieving forbidden things. He said,

“Child, being so hungry is positively the devil,” so I stole a little round cake for him and watched him eat it, and surely enjoyed it as much and more than he did. He sleeps downstairs now, because mounting to the room above is as yet impossible.

COMRADES TWO

Every little thing is a joy to me now ; I suppose this is how children feel. Ah ! how careful I will be of him, for I love him, *how* I love him, and life is so fascinating !

IN THE
SETTLE-
MENT

Soon The Happy Family are coming back, and soon after that—but wait ! I must collect myself and finish properly before he wakes from the sleep I am watching.

This diary shall be kept always ; it is a Monument of Folly wheron is written a Tale of Vanity. He shall read it every word, and therein learn a little of how I love him. The first and last words will, I think, show things plainly as they were and are. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Resolved that—

XVII

*THE
SWEET-
EST SPOT
ON EARTH*

—deep-toned pianos with bass notes like bees' wings, musicians, books and the making of books, poems, pictures, songs and the making of songs, artistic sensibilities, and everything to do with England, are all very well and may possibly suffice and delight some people; but they are not to be mentioned in the same breath with such things as house-cleaning, bread-making, scrubbing-brushes, dust-pans, and frying-pans; in short—the North-Western prairies of Canada and -The One.

Printed by Haedel, Watson & Viny, Ltd., London and Aylesbury.

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