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HE RAN AS FAST AS HE COULD TO REACH THE BRIDGE.

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A HOME. IN THE NORTH-WEST;

BEING
A RECORD OF EXPERIENCE.

BY
ANNE MERCIER AND VIOLET WATT.

"We have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come."—HEB. xiii. 14 (R.V.).

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TO
EDITH ROBERTS,
OF BELMONT, CAERLEON.





A HOME IN THE NORTH-WEST.

CHAPTER I.

IT was one o'clock, on a cold and gloomy morning, when the train from Halifax ran into Montreal. It was a freight or luggage-train, with one car for unlucky passengers who had missed the previous train, and who, in consequence, had had a slow, miserable journey, nine hours longer than it should have been. Among the few who alighted were a young English lady and a boy of fifteen, Ada and Rupert Stacey, looking somewhat strange and melancholy in this dreary station. Only

one hotel-tout was on the platform. He came up, and, in imperfect English, announced that his hotel was open and very comfortable. The girl, a bright-eyed, capable-looking person with fair curly hair, looked somewhat doubtfully at the man.

"What do you think, Rupert?" she said. "Do you know any of the hotels here?"

"Better go with this man, I suppose," he answered. "It's sure to be all right, and we can't stay in the street."

In a few minutes the two were following their conductor, who was wheeling their worldly goods on a hand-barrow down one or two broad streets; then he turned down a small side street and stopped before a door flanked by some barred windows.

"I think he is bringing us to the gaol," said Rupert, cheerfully, while his sister clung involuntarily to her juvenile protector.

"Oh, Rupert!" she cried, "I can never go in there."

"Nonsense, Ada!" replied the boy, the more brave as she grew more timid. "It's all right; they won't hurt us. Here's a mild little slavey

enough," he added, as the door partly opened, and an untidy but meek and timid head was put forth, thrown out in strong relief on a background of shadow by the light of a candle which she shaded with her hand.

"Come in, please, miss," she said in a voice calculated to reassure the most nervous; but Ada saw her slatternly dress and the dirty hall and stairs with great disfavour. There was nothing to be done but to go in, however, and the door was shut and barred behind them. An ill-favoured woman came out of a side room and scowled on the pair—a dark woman with a strong colour and high cheek-bones, who greeted them in an outlandish jargon meant for English.

"She's a Finn, I know," whispered Rupert, who had been out before, and knew some of the various races that people our American province.

"Can you kindly let us have some supper and two nice bedrooms?" asked Ada, putting a good face on it.

"There's good rooms all ready; too late for supper," growled the woman, taking up a lamp

and preceding the pair upstairs, while a male head, no more agreeable than hers, appeared in the background.

"Oh, come, I say, Ada, we can't go to bed without supper," remonstrated Rupert; but Ada, who now felt thoroughly uncomfortable, whispered to him that he must put up with the remaining sandwiches in her basket, and followed the ungainly hostess.

Things were no better when the young people were alone in their rooms. Such rooms! no London slum was ever dirtier. Ada had never seen such dirt; the rooms did not seem to be of the same genus as her dainty white-curtained chamber left behind in England. Nor would the door lock—the key was broken, and would not turn. In much trepidation she summoned her brother.

"You must not leave me, Rupert," she said; "I am so frightened. What horrid people these are! It seems a perfect den of robbers. We have so much money about us; and if they know or guess it we should really not be safe. Have you your pistol?"

"Yes, here it is, all ready primed. Don't be

in a funk, Ada; I'll come and take care of you," said the boy, looking very brave. "It's all right; they're not handsome, but I don't believe they're such a bad lot. Just let me get my rug and slippers, and you get those sandwiches out; I'll come back, and we'll eat them and sit up together. You can't lie down in *that* bed; it's worse than robbers."

"I'll write letters home," said Ada. "Do be quick, Rupert. The door won't lock."

"Never mind; we'll barricade it. It will be all right, you'll see," he added, and in a few minutes the brother and sister were safe, though miserable enough; sleepy, but not daring to sleep, the chest of drawers barricading the door, Rupert's chair tilted against it, and his pistol handy, for he felt less assured than he seemed, and certain sounds of stealthy treadings and low voices in the corridor were far from reassuring.

The hours crept on. The sandwiches were finished, Rupert was nodding, and the scratching of Ada's pen was the only sound within, though there seemed to be always some one lurking without. These furtive steps had ceased, how-

ever, at last, and all was still. A neighbouring clock struck three, when a low tapping was heard at the door. Rupert started up, and the front legs of his chair came to the floor with a bang.

"Hullo!" he cried, and Ada grew pale and looked up, startled.

"What can they want at this time of night?" she whispered. "They want to see if we are awake."

"All right, then; we'll let them know it," answered Rupert, and began to whistle vivaciously.

Presently the little tap came again.

"I don't think they would go on like that if they wanted to rob and murder us," said Rupert, in a loud and cheerful voice.

"Oh hush, Rupert!" said Ada. "We can't tell; we don't know."

"No, certainly, we don't know how it feels to want to give people warning that we are going to murder them," answered Rupert, who now felt very brave, and full of the spirit of Mark Tapleyism.

A whisper here came through the keyhole.

"Please let me in. It's me—Harriet!"

"I believe it's the slavey," said Rupert; "I'll just peep."

He gently moved the drawers, and opening the door an inch wide, peeped through the chink. Yes, there was the poor little servant's pale face and rough hair.

"Shall I let her in, Ada?" he asked. "She may be a decoy duck."

"Yes; let her in, Rupert. She could not do us any harm, I am sure."

So in she came, and the door was again barricaded.

"What do you want, my good girl?" asked Ada.

"Oh please, miss, I saw the label on your wraps, and I thought, perhaps, are you an English lady?"

At these magic words Ada Stacey's dread vanished.

"Certainly I am; and are you an English girl?"

"Yes; I wish I was in England now," said the poor little creature. "I didn't like my places, and the ladies made such a fuss if you went

a-walking with any one. And now I've come to this, and I daren't go away because I ain't got no friends, and I thought if you was an English lady, maybe you'd help me."

She spoke with an unmistakable Cockney accent, and she was as unmistakably anxious and afraid.

"What is your name, and where do you come from?" asked Ada.

"Harriet Simons is my name, and I comes from Vauxhall. Oh, miss, it is such a hole of a place here! Not fit for you, I'm sure."

"Are the people honest?" asked Rupert.

The girl pursed up her lips. "H'm!" she said. "Not so bad as you'd think from the looks of them, perhaps; but bad enough. It ain't a place for a decent girl, and if you *could* help me to a better, miss."

"Well, my poor girl," said Ada, "we are going to our father at Calgary, and we do not know what we can do. We are strangers here, or rather, I am; for my brother came out with my father, and returned for me. But I will give you the address—here it is—and if you really need a friend, we cannot refuse to do our

best for you: Why do you not get a better place?"

"Can't, miss. They owes me my wages, and keeps me without a penny, and gives me a bit of clothes now and then, and says I'm in their debt. No one knows what a poor girl has to put up with in a strange land if she gets a hard place. You'll get out of here as soon as you can, won't you?"

"Certainly we shall. Which is the best hotel?"

The girl told them.

"And I mustn't stay, for if they found me here, *she'd* half kill me, and they're always a-prowling about. You won't forget me, miss?" she said pleadingly, at the same time making for the door, which Rupert cautiously opened for her.

"No, Harriet, I'll not forget. Here is a little money for you—keep it for a time of need. Good night," said Ada.

The next morning early saw the brother and sister in better quarters—Rupert amused by his experience, and inclined to boast of his prowess among sturdy thieves; Ada thankful that she had given a gleam of hope to the poor little girl,

and feeling the strength of the wonderful tie which makes a network of kindness over all the globe, the bond of a common nationality and a common womanhood.





CHAPTER-II.

AT last the journey was over. A nondescript vehicle, known as a "buck-board," containing Ada, Rupert, and their father, was driving up to the door of the new home—a big "frame" house, looking much like a barn, with six square windows below and six above; no garden, no courtyard; a wire fence enclosing a space of some twenty yards square before the house; the river running in wide rapids close under the wooden wall on one side; prairie—prairie all round the building, covered with long and brown "withered bents" in tufts. A quarter of a mile away, the prairie rises gradually to a low plateau, known as "bench land," and, beyond, the snowy, jagged peaks of the Rockies: across the river, low hills clothed in

scrub, now in all the glories of the "fall," reds and yellows glowing in the sunset.

Ada had been lost in wonder and admiration of that sunset as she came along—a wonder that made her silent, while Rupert was chattering incessantly to his father with affectionate boyish frankness—a deep *lapis lazuli* blue overhead, lapsing through delicate green and lilac to a rich golden red behind the Rockies, the snow on their peaks reflecting the colours like a dying dolphin.

At last the carriage drew up at the door, and the father called out, "Here we are, children! Welcome to the new home! Here, Olga, come and help my daughter."

The last words were addressed to a tall, fair girl, with a bright complexion and sweet face. Her hair hung to her waist in one long plait; her dress, a black skirt and orange bodice—no cap or apron.

"What a picturesque girl!" whispered Ada to her father. "Is this your Icelandic servant, papa?"

"Yes, dear, this is Olga, our 'help,' and a good one she is. You are the envy of the neighbourhood because I have secured her for you, Ada."

Olga came forward with a cheerful grace and caught the parcels that Mr. Stacey handed or threw to her with a merry laugh. It was more the manner of a friend of the family than a servant.

On the threshold, Ada turned, threw her arms round her father's neck and kissed him.

"It is a *dear* home. I know we shall be so happy here, father," she said.

"I hope so, little one," he answered affectionately, leading her in with his arm laid on her shoulder. "There will be troubles and difficulties, but we will get through them together, please God."

They entered the hall, a room about eighteen feet square, with bare plastered walls and wooden floor with a few skins thrown on it; two deck chairs and a table. Ada saw it in her mind's eye beautified with her water-colour sketches and plenty of flowers.

"Here is your drawing-room, Ada," said her father, laughingly leading the way into a room, larger but almost as bare, with six wooden chairs and a coverless table. There was one beautiful object, an old inlaid sideboard.

"*That* looks rather like a fish out of water," said Rupert, pointing to it.

"Oh, the dear old sideboard. How nice it looks!" cried Ada.

"It was the only good thing I brought from the old home," said Mr. Stacey. "Your poor mother was so fond of it. We can manage to smarten the place up a little for you now you are come, Ada; but you know life is very primitive here. And now Olga wants to show you her domain."

The kitchen was as large as the drawing-room, also plastered, with a big iron stove with a pipe running up through the ceiling. A dresser, tables, forms, a carpenter's bench, serving (besides its own purposes) as a sideboard or extra table, and a bookcase with a fair array of well-bound books.

"Hooray! this *is* jolly," cried Rupert. "I say, Olga, we shan't leave you alone here much!"

Olga smiled broadly, showing all her nice teeth, but was not sure enough of her slow English to reply.

"It is all very nice, dear father," said Ada; "but I feel so untidy and tired. May I go to my room now?"

"I fear you will find little but necessaries there,"

said her father ; and as Olga took her up the steep bare stairs into the light airy room, containing only a mattress on the floor and a few packing-cases made to serve the various purposes of the toilette, Ada's heart *did* sink a little, for her pretty bedroom had been her delight and refuge in England.

. All the old life in England seemed far away now. It was past for ever ; and a busy life, utterly new in its very atmosphere, was to commence. Ada was glad of it ; she was glad the change was so complete. The history of the matter was this. Mr. Stacey had lost his wife two years before, after a long and agonizing illness of which he had kept the knowledge as far as possible from his children ; but the remembrance of those terrible paroxysms from which he was unable to save his beloved wife had saddened and altered him. They seemed to haunt him. When left a widower, he placed his children with an aunt near Bath, and travelled in order to drive away the haunting recollections of the past ; but in vain. His nerves and health were so painfully affected that his doctor at length ordered a complete change of scene and occupation, and transferring to his partner his share in

his business (he was a lawyer), he went out with Rupert to the North-West territory of Canada, and eventually took up a "homestead" under Government, and after six months spent most uncomfortably in a log-and-mud hut, called a "shack," he had put up an excellent house and sent Rupert to fetch his daughter to make her home in that far country.

When Ada had laid off her travelling dress and bathed her face, she did not come down. Olga brought her up some tea, and Rupert came hammering at the door and shouting—

"Pater says you are to stay there and have a good rest. I'm going out with him."

So she lay down on the mattress, wrapped in her dressing-gown, with her little Bible in her hand—her mother's Bible, marked here and there, and recalling the happy days of childhood, when she read the sacred volume at that mother's knee. A flower of the beautiful blue geranium, dried, its azure leaves silvery with age, fell out from between the leaves. The connection of ideas brought tears to Ada's eyes; she remembered how those blue geraniums grew by the hedge beside the meadow-sweet, and how she and her dear mother used to

bring home bunches to adorn the house. And here all, even the wild flowers, was strange and new, and a new life, new responsibilities, were opening before her. She was mistress of this new home; she must take on her young shoulders the burden of the household duties and the comfort of her dear father. Her chief aim was to make her father happy and bring back joy to his life.

Tired as she was, back and limbs stiff, head aching, Ada felt as if she could not sleep. Her thoughts went over and over again the same ground: doubts as to her capability, fears lest her inexperience should cause trouble to her father. Her heart beat and fluttered with nervous fears. Then she opened the little Bible. Her eyes fell on a marked passage.

“Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.

“Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

“I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.”

The words soothed her as it had been her mother's voice speaking. Yes, trouble had come,

and loss, and the corn and wine of worldly good had ceased. But God could give her peace; "He giveth His beloved sleep." These words seemed to be whispered softly in her ear, and calm came down upon her tired spirit and jaded nerves, and she slept a long and dreamless and restful sleep.





CHAPTER III.

ADA, being a sensible girl, soon fell into her new life, and having used the curtains, pictures, and few knickknacks she had brought out to adorn the so-called drawing-room, she found the simplicity of her surroundings so much in harmony with the daily existence, that she ceased to regret the luxuries and prettinesses of her English home. The days passed quickly, and, as a rule, somewhat in this manner. She rose at six, and while Olga was sweeping the rooms, Ada prepared the porridge and coffee for breakfast, which took place at seven. Rupert, having already been out for an hour or more with the "chore-boy,"* was

* "Chore-boy" = boy or man of all work. *Chore* is an old English word for odd jobs; hence "chorewoman" (charwoman).

ravenously hungry, and consumed a prodigious amount of porridge and syrup. The morning passed in domestic work with Olga, the most hard-working, cheerful of girls; washing, baking, churning, all having to be done at home. The churning was the most trying of all these operations, as the butter was at times extremely uncivil and refused to "come," though Ada should turn and turn the little dasher churn in the most appealing manner. In the middle of the day there was a cold lunch, and Ada instituted a very cosy afternoon tea in the hall; but the great meal was the eight-o'clock supper-dinner; when, the day's labours over, the men changed their coats, Ada put on a fresh pretty dress with some attempt at simple decoration—a ribbon or a flower—and all sat down to enjoy the rest and refreshment of the evening meal—Olga, too, of course. The "help" is one of the family in those primitive parts. But Olga's manners were so good and respectful, withal full of so much true *self*-respect, that her presence was in no wise offensive; her pretty costume added a picturesque touch to the scene. On warm evenings, dinner was served in the hall; but as the evenings grew chilly, all were

glad to sit round the large table in the warm clean kitchen. It simplified matters, too, as regarded service, for it was easier for any one to get up and fetch the bread or milk, or take the hot dish from Olga. Ada soon found that her lady neighbours, who had American or English "helps," had far more to complain of than she in the unity of family life, as the self-assertion of the girl who was uncomfortable to find herself on a level with her superiors, was lacking in the simple refinement of the Icelander.

As to the chore-boy, he (in spite of his odd title) was a gentleman; a pupil, or colleague, or partner of her father's; one of the young men who are so freely advertised for in the papers; but with this difference, that he was rather as teacher than as learner with Mr. Stacey, being a Canadian born and bred. Charlie Muir was a tall, broad-shouldered, fair-haired young fellow of five and twenty, silent and reserved, and extremely shy of Ada. She regarded him as a part of the establishment, as useful and necessary, and nearly as speechless, as the big kitchen table. Rupert and he got on capitally, however, and often indulged in those friendly pummellings with which boys

treat their particular friends who are bigger than themselves.

The evenings were happy times, for then Mr. Stacey read Dickens or Scott as the girls sewed or knitted, and Rupert and Charlie Muir cut shavings for the fires. Even if the horrid butter had refused to "come," Charlie would generally lend a hand at the churn, which seldom failed of success; unless (as happened more than once) Rupert had surreptitiously taken off the lid to abstract cream, when the first turn sent the whole contents splashing over the floor, and the evening was spent in "cleaning-up." Sunday was the strangest day of the seven. One of Ada's first questions had been, "Where do you go to church?" and her father answered, "I fear you will think us too much like the old heathens, Ada; the roof of our temple is the blue sky, and its floor is the green earth."

She looked up inquiringly.

"In fact," he continued, "we do *not* go to church, as there is none to go to within ten miles. The Methodists have a prayer-meeting occasionally, and that is all."

"Oh, how sad!" cried Ada, but Rupert did not

seem to see it in the same light. In fact, the danger of emigration is that, away from the tender ties of home, one so soon ceases to feel the need of the holy habits that early piety has taught. The Sunday was so far a day of rest, that no *extra* work was done; no washing or baking within doors; no thrashing or teaming without; and that was all. The daily routine in house and farm went on; there was a better dinner than usual, which entailed more cooking, and after it the men lingered about in pleasant ease, and read or smoked or dozed. Ada timidly asked her father on the second Sunday evening, "Shall we not read the psalms and lessons?"

He did not refuse. Charlie looked up surprised, but with a pleased expression, and Prayer-books and Bibles were found. Mr. Stacey took the part of the parson in the psalms, the rest joining in the alternate verses as a congregation; and Ada read the lessons at her father's request, in a voice that trembled at first, but grew steady towards the end.

Ada was a girl who had simple but strong ideas of duty. When once a thing appeared to her as right to be done, she was uneasy till she had at

least tried to do it. Little enough was this that she had done now, yet it had cost her an effort, and it was at least a sign that the day was the Lord's. Olga stood by her.

"That was good, Ada," she said, simply; but her face said more.





CHAPTER IV.

SO things went on quietly enough for some weeks. Visits in that part are rare, but when they occur they last some hours. A doctor, who lived no more than ten miles off, and was therefore most handy in case of sickness, brought his wife to see Ada. They arrived about eleven, and stayed till four. Cheerful little Mrs. Brent had brought her thimble, and sat with Ada darning the socks, which filled a big basket, and were Ada's nightmare. Meanwhile she gave her the benefit of her experience both on housekeeping and social intercourse; the last being very useful for a motherless girl, as it seems so free, and for that very reason needs certain lines of conduct to be even more strictly drawn than in England.

At last a great event was announced—a farewell dance to a bachelor, Arthur Wylde, who had been five years in the province of Alberta, but had not made a fortune by any means; as, indeed, few young men do who go out to the North-West. He was now going home to his family. The dance was to be given by Mr. Wylde and his friends in a log “shack,” their common abode.

This primitive house consisted of one room, twenty feet by eighteen, with a lean-to at the back. It was made of rough logs, morticed together in a simple fashion, the chinks filled up with mud, with a roof of wooden shingles. A stove with a pipe running through the roof acted as fireplace and chimney. The floor was pretty good, and made it possible to have a dance there.

The bachelors had dressed the building with sprays of kinick-kinick—a plant something like box, with red berries, which grows freely on the ground.

In this homely ball-room about twenty guests assembled from a circuit of ten miles round. Ada was very anxious to see the ladies of the

neighbourhood. She found them rather a mixed assemblage, and dressed in various styles—some in plain high dresses, with a little adornment of an extra lace or ribbon; others, like herself, in pretty half toilette.

She took a particular fancy to Mrs. Campbell, a Scotch-Canadian of simple and friendly manners. This lady spoke very kindly to Ada at once, begging her to make use of her help if it was ever required; and Ada felt such aid might indeed be valuable.

The ladies took it in turn to play on the old piano, the bachelors' treasure, so that all could have their share of dancing. There were three new dances Ada much liked—the "Military Schottische," the "Jersey," and the "Ripple," each of which she easily learned. Most of the men danced well, and the girls, though not very good dancers, made it up by their evident enjoyment. At twelve o'clock the hosts had a most enticing supper ready, to which all did justice. A few more dances closed the evening, and at two a.m. most of the guests were leaving.

Only about two miles from the house there was a deep *coulée*, or dip between two hills, which was

full of mud. Owing to the dark night, Rupert, who had got the reins, drove into it; the horses stuck, and nothing would induce them to try to draw the waggon out. They were ill-broken, and became what is there called "baulky," that is, overcome by a dismal despair which seems to render them quite incapable of effort. Mr. Stacey, Charlie, and Rupert tugged and pulled, flogged and encouraged, but all in vain. Ada at first was frightened, then amused; finally she began to see that there would be no beds for any of the party that night. The wheels were stuck in the mud up to the axles. Ada had to get out; and although her father lifted her a little way from the scene of disaster, it was still swampy and muddy enough to spoil her light dress and to soak her thin shoes. The men took off theirs, and went to work bare-legged.

There was sufficient moonlight to make these operations visible, but success did not attend them; and at length the refractory horses had to be unharnessed, and Charlie and Rupert took charge of them, walking up and down on dry ground. The moon was setting, and it was hopeless to try to do more till daybreak. Mr.

Stacey lifted Ada into the waggon, and got in himself.

“Take off your wet shoes and stockings, child,” he said, “and wrap your feet in this rug. There, now; lean on me and get a nap.”

Ada thanked her father, and nestled down beside him; but sleep would not come. The boys were whistling and singing to pass the time; but it was not their noise only that kept her awake—it was the sense of strangeness, the vastness and desolate gloom of the prairie. The wind came sighing and moaning through the grass, and in the intervals of the songs it sounded like the wild undertone of an Æolian harp. The tall grass, mixed with Michaelmas daisies and yellow marguerites, waved and flickered in the last gleams of the moon now sinking behind the Rockies, and edging them with silver. No trees, no natural features of any sort broke the great expanse. There was a sense of width and freedom, more powerful than ever in this dim light, which filled Ada's heart with peace and satisfaction. Then the moon dropped, the light on the snowy mountains died away, and all the land was dark, and all was still but for the howl of a coyote, or prairie wolf.

Perhaps Ada slept a little, for by-and-by she became aware that a keener air was blowing on her cheek, though her father had protected her well by a fur covering, and when she opened her eyes there was a premonitory glow over the low hills of the "bench-land." The boys' figures, sitting heavily on the horses, stood out but dimly against the sky. Her father was asleep. Ada lay lazily looking across the space of grass which now was much like a sea.

Suddenly she was aware of a moving spot at some distance. It seemed to advance slowly, hesitatingly stopping now and then. She thought at first it was a stray animal; but soon it seemed to take human form, and when it was some fifty yards from the waggon Ada saw that it was a woman. Ada touched her father on the arm and woke him.

"Look, father," she said, "there is some one who must be lost in the prairie."

At this moment the boys, too, opened their sleepy eyes and sighted the figure.

"Hullo!" cried Charlie. "Who's there? Come on; we're friends!" As the stranger seemed to hesitate and even to turn away, they struck their

heels into their horses' sides and galloped up to the new-comer, who was now seen to be a small girlish thing carrying a heavy bundle. Father and daughter watched with curiosity as the boys approached and held a parley; then they wheeled round again, just as the red ball of a sun rose up from the horizon, and they came galloping to the verge of the mud-hole.

"Hullo! Ada!" cried Rupert. "Here's your Montreal friend, Harriet Simons. I say, what a lark!"

Ada sprang to her feet and soon perceived, indeed, a pale but widely smiling countenance beside her brother's horse.

"Why, Harriet," cried Ada, "is it you? How did you get here?"

"Oh, miss," returned Harriet, also in a loud voice, from the safe edge of the mud, "how thankful I am it's you! I thought it was Indians or robbers."

"Have you run away from that horrid place?" asked Ada.

Harriet nodded. "I got to the town by train, and started to walk to you, and got lost, miss."

"And here you find us stuck in a mud-hole," said Ada, bursting into laughter, which the rest echoed.

Harriet stood solemnly regarding the stuck waggon. "Why don't you block up the wheels?" she asked of Rupert, presently.

"What do you mean?" he inquired.

"Why don't you stick some wood or something under the wheels, and then pull at the cart altogether?"

"Hooray! My girl, you've got a bright idea," cried Rupert, and repeated it to Charlie, who got down from his horse, gave the bridle to Rupert, and came up to the waggon.

"I say," he began to Mr. Stacey, "this girl has a good idea. I wonder we didn't think of it. There are some boxes in the waggon. Let's put them under the hind wheels and haul away."

No sooner said than done. Ada having pulled on her shoes, was lifted out again to the side of her visitor, and cemented the friendship with a hearty kiss, which brought a rush of sudden tears to Harriet's eyes.

"Oh, miss, I be glad to see you," she said, clasping Ada's hand. "I thought I should have

died out in this long grass when it got so cold."

"Never mind; we shall soon be at home, and you shall have all you want. I am glad you came to us," said Ada. And, at this moment, with a long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull all together, the waggon ran up the "tongue" of dry land on to *terra firma*; the horses were put to, and now—perhaps tired of their long fit of the sulks—drew the whole party merrily home.

As they approached the door, a strange thing happened. For Ada, looking due east, where was nothing but low bench-land, saw, to her astonishment, a range of high snow-peaked sunlit mountains. She rubbed her eyes, but it was no dream. There stood the lovely forms. She seized her father's hand.

"Look, father!" she cried. "What is that? Those are not clouds; they are mountains. How do they come there?"

Her father looked.

"That is a mirage," he said; "the reflection of the Rockies. I am glad you have seen that sight. It is a phenomenon that is very seldom seen.

We have all had an adventurous night, this little maid most of all. Now in and to breakfast, and then you girls go to bed, and we will make Harriet's acquaintance when she is well rested."





CHAPTER V.

“**T**HAT’S a sharp girl of yours, Ada,” said her father the next day. “But for her, it seems to me we might be in the mud-hole at the present moment; and why the idea did not occur to *us*, I can’t make out. I like a girl who has her wits about her. What do you mean to do with her?”

“I really don’t know, father, dear. I was going to ask your advice. She has been telling me a sad story of her life in that horrid inn, and how, when she got part of her wages paid, she ran away.”

“How was it she found you out in the middle of the night? It seems like a fairy-tale.”

“She was afraid that inquiries might be made

about her, and so she dared not ask at the station for any means of being conveyed to our house. She left her box at the station, asked her way when out of the town, and then lost it. She was dreadfully afraid of Indians, and thought we were an encampment, and yet she was so anxious to know her way that she kept hovering about till at last she was satisfied we were harmless."

"You can keep her for a time, if you like, till she has learned our ways out here," said Mr. Stacey. "Plenty of ladies would be glad of the girl if she is respectable. I will have a talk to her myself."

He did so, and was satisfied that Harriet was no worse than a silly girl who, to escape proper restraint in England, had come out to the North-West to find herself undergoing far severer restraint and heavier trial than any English servant who has a mind to do her work well need ever know. Olga was rather suspicious of her at first, but was willing to help her if she could, she said.

Ada called Harriet to a private interview and told her her father's decision. Somewhat to her surprise, the girl—who had a would-be showy air, such as one sees in a London lodging-house servant—suddenly burst into tears.

"Oh, miss," she said, "I *be* thankful to you and your father. No one knows what it is to be without a home till they've tried it. If girls in England knew their own comforts, they would never come out to this God-forgotten land to better theirselves. I've never once had time to go to a place of worship; Sunday's no day of rest here; a girl hasn't even time to clean herself. Oh, it *will* be nice to be with an English family again. I'll work for you night and day, if you'll keep me."

"We can't keep you long, Harriet," answered Ada. "My father does not want two 'helps,' as you know we call servants here. He expects me to assist, as all ladies do in this country, and I like the work very much. But you shall stay here for a time, and if you are a sensible girl, you will learn all you can of Olga, who is a capital worker—there isn't one like her within ten miles. And then we are sure to find you some nice situation; servants are very scarce, and here in the country they have a great many privileges. What made you think of coming to the town, or of coming out at all?"

Harriet coloured and looked shy. "It was a

young man in our street, miss. Him and me had kept company over six months, and then he said times was bad in England, and a man who was stopping at the public had told him a lot about the north-west of Canada, and how grandly a fellow could get on. So he came away to make a home for me, he said. But he never wrote, nor nothing, and after a bit I got that anxious, nothing would serve but I must come, too. My aunt, she persuaded me against it, and said if he meant anything serious he would come back for me, or write at the least. But I thought some harm had happened to him, and if I got over here I should find out."

"And did you?"

"No; I've never heard a word of Jem Hopkins. I don't know how to set about hearing of him," she added, looking up pitifully. "Perhaps your father could help me, miss."

"You shall tell me all about him, Harriet, and we will make inquiries. But I fear he, like many others, was deceived. My father has come here more to get rid of sorrow and depression by a thorough change, than in order to make a fortune. But why gentlemen should come and work like

slaves in order to earn a labourer's wage, and often lose all by a fire, I cannot possibly see. Perhaps Jem has gone to Vancouver, where men really may get on, they say, and where the country is far pleasanter to live in."

Ada repeated the conversation to her father, and obtained his ready promise to make such inquiries as were feasible about Harriet's "young man," though he inclined to the aunt's opinion that, had he been faithful, he would have written to her.

"And you must not wonder, Ada," he said, "that people come here. It is a natural impulse to come westward. It always has been so. The nations follow the sun. In the earliest ages the great migration of the nations was from east to west. It is God's plan for cultivating and peopling His world, and while these vast tracts are awaiting hands to till them, He will send labourers to the harvest. Even though they suffer and seem to toil in vain, they will come; partly from the natural instinct of migration, and partly to escape the trammels of civilization, which lie heavy on the young. There is a use for all men in God's universe, and the wild and idle lads, who have run

through their patrimony in England and seem so useless there, are perhaps fulfilling a necessary law in laying the foundations of a new state."

"But it would be better if they behaved more like Christians and gentlemen, father," said Ada, for the reports she had heard of the idle and dissolute young English settlers of the middle and upper classes grieved her soul.

"Yes, dear ; every man who lives in opposition to God's commands is doing his best to thwart the designs of Providence. But he will not be allowed to do it. The designs of Providence *will* be carried out in man's despite. And certainly it behoves us all to do our best to reform and sweeten this rough and wild society, so far as our humble efforts can do it."





CHAPTER VI.

HAVING Harriet Simons as an extra help, Ada resolved with her father's leave to give a little party, to which she invited Mrs. Campbell with her husband and little daughter Isabel, aged twelve; some of the young men who had combined to give the bachelors' dance; and a large family of boys and girls named Roberts, escorted by their aunt, Miss Alcock. The preparations, though simple, took some time, as Ada was bent on making her rooms very pretty. She collected a great number of autumn leaves from the low shrubs on a little island in the river; more kinick-kinick, and some silver leaves, much like those which we import from South Africa. With these

she made a large "Welcome!" to hang in the hall, and wreathed the rest in festoons round the drawing-room and kitchen, besides making table decorations.

Mrs. Campbell and Isabel arrived early in the morning, when, pies and joints being ready in the larder, the final touches were being put to the decorations, and fancy dishes and cakes of various sorts had still to be made. They were soon busy, aprons on and sleeves turned up. Mrs. Campbell was a most kind and experienced helper, and chatted away gaily while turning out dainty batches of cake and pie.

"It is all very nice to be doing this for your own friends, Ada," she said; "but how should you like to be in the place of one of us mistresses of a real American specimen of help when she announces her intention of giving a party? I was rather aghast the first time mine told me she had invited a few friends for the next day, and proceeded to make cakes and pies out of my stores."

"I should think so!" cried Ada. "And where did you and Mr. Campbell go during her party?"

"That *was* the difficulty. We put a good face on it, and greeted the guests with a smiling coun-

tenance, but we had nothing for it but to retire to our bedroom after that; though I am bound to say the help would have made us kindly welcome."

As she said the last words Ada gave a little shriek, for, peeping in at the door, was the head of an Indian. His long, stiff, black hair hung down in plaits on his shoulders, a few feathers stood upright as a decoration in the rim of an old straw hat which formed his headgear, his brown face was smeared with vermilion and ochre, and as he drew nearer, Ada saw that he was wrapped in a blanket beneath which appeared an old torn pair of trousers and feet clad in the genuine Indian shoes, called mocassins. Her heart beat fast, and she turned pale, laying her hand on Mrs. Campbell's arm; for in Ada's ideas, gathered from stories of the Wild West, Indians came only to burn and scalp and slay.

To her great relief and surprise, however, Mrs. Campbell, turning to the door, greeted the newcomer very warmly.

"Well, Long-Stocking," said she, "it is a long time since we saw you. How are you?"

The Indian grinned and answered in his own

tongue. From beneath the blanket he produced a couple of prairie chickens and a basket of berries.

"Expersuiā * (nice)!" cried Mrs. Campbell, clapping her hands. "Just what you want for your supper, Ada. Long-Stocking is a good old fellow; he wants to trade with you. What do you want for them, Long-Stocking?" she asked, as she poured the berries into a dish and gave back the basket to its owner.

"Næpicu; tobak," answered the Indian, still grinning amiably.

"He wants bread (that is 'næpicu' in their language) and tobacco, Ada. Give me the bread-pan; I will show you how much to give him."

In spite of his good qualities it seemed that Long-Stocking knew how to drive a bargain, for he was not very easily satisfied. All was satisfactorily settled at last, however, and Ada brought him a cup of milk with a timid smile, adding one of the golden-brown cakes fresh from the oven.

"Expersuia!" cried the Indian, in their usual term of admiration. He seemed to have taken a fancy to Ada, for he kept watching her with a beaming smile on his quaint but not ugly face.

* The spelling of the Indian words is purely phonetic.—V. W.

"Mistaput, mistaput (go away)," cried Mrs. Campbell at last, good-naturedly waving her hands towards him to enforce her words; and he withdrew with a dignified salutation.

"Are the Indians all as peaceful as that?" asked Ada.

"Yes, about here. They are all Sarcees and Blackfeet. And they are cleaner than low English, and more honest, too, in their little bargains."

"Do they live in the prairie?"

"They live in the Reserve, as it is called—a piece of the country allotted them by Government; and very good land it is, as indeed it ought to be, for we settlers have robbed them of their country. Not many of them are left now. Government pays them a sum called Treaty Money every spring and fall."

So, chatting, the day passed quickly and the preparations were well over by the time the guests arrived. The little party was quite a success, and Ada introduced some games such as are played in England at juvenile Christmas parties, and they were voted a pleasant change from the received amusements of gossip and dancing.

Mindful of her promise to Harriet, Ada took

the opportunity of a quiet chat with Miss Alcock, to inquire if she had ever heard of an Englishman named Jem Hopkins, who had come out to the North-West some twelve months before.

"Hopkins? No, dear; I don't recall the name. Do you, Tom?" she asked of her nephew, Tom Roberts.

"Yes, aunt," said Tom; "I think that was the name of the fellow we called Moly Jem, because he had three moles on the left side of his face. He was taken ill last fall down at Wylde's, and then John Saunders took him to Vancouver, when he got better. He was a willing fellow, but not strong enough to winter in the North-West territory."

Eagerly, Ada asked leave to report the story to Harriet, Tom Roberts good-naturedly accompanying her to the kitchen to endorse it; and in effect it was found, to every one's delight, to Harriet's in particular, that the three moles were a true guide, and it was indeed *her* Jem who was in question. Whether Jem were faithful to his old love still remained doubtful, and Ada counselled patience, promising to inquire through Miss

Alcock of more particulars concerning Jem's present welfare.

A nice supper was served at ten, the prairie chickens, stuffed with potatoes, onions, and bread-crumbs, being an honoured dish.

Just as the visitors were leaving, Ada noticed a bright red glow in the sky, and exclaimed, "Oh, how lovely the northern lights are to-night!" not noticing that the glow was in the west. But one of the men exclaimed—

"By Jove! that's a prairie fire; and coming pretty quick, too."

Ada and the women at once ran to the house and collected sacks, which they soaked in pails of water. They also put on good thick boots, and prepared to help. The men tore off with the pails and sacks, and then Ada prepared to follow. She was delighted at the picturesque effect of the fire. Great rolling clouds of smoke came by, and then down the "bench" little rills of fire crept, here and there fanned by the wind into flames where the grass was longer than usual. It looked very like the illuminated beds at the Botanical Gardens when lit up at night, or like the lights on the Thames Embankment when seen at a distance.

The men were hard at work by now, each, a few yards from the other, holding one corner of his wet sack and beating out the flames with it, till at last all was a black, smouldering, charred mass. Ada felt sorry for the damage done, but was not sorry to have seen a real prairie fire, though there was none of the romance attached to it that she had imagined from reading stories of prairie life. Presently all quieted down and retired to rest. Ada, however, could not sleep, partly from the excitement, and partly from fatigue.

Suddenly she started up. "Surely that can't be the sun, and I have been asleep after all! No!"

She rushed to the window, and then saw that the wind must have changed, and the fire had broken out afresh, and was rushing down wildly towards the house. She threw on her dressing-gown, and roused the boys and Olga. In an incredibly short space of time they were ready, and Ada had got into her riding habit, as being the most practical attire, and was getting the sacks ready again. Rupert shouted to her to go and turn out the horses, so rather in fear and trembling she ran to the stable with Olga. The heat was awful, but they managed to untie the

horses and turn them into the pasture, which was close to the river. Then, running back to the house, Ada joined Charlie and Rupert, who were working their hardest. But it seemed of no avail; she could smell their clothes scorching, and see the blisters rising on their faces. How thankful she was to see some horsemen rushing down the incline towards the house; foremost of all, though on foot, was the Indian, Long-Stocking, the others being some settlers from the creek.

They were dismounted in a second, and set to work, simply turning their horses loose. Water was thrown on the house to keep it from scorching, and suddenly Charlie rushed by with two oil cans in his hand. Ada was thankful to see them go, as she had been wondering what would happen if the fire got at the oil. She thought, as she could not assist, she would go and see if the horses were safe. Yes; there they were, tearing about wildly, but inside the fence. She did not notice that the flames were coming from another quarter, and suddenly, to her horror, she found herself surrounded. It was not as bad really as she imagined, but she did not know what to do. She heard a voice call out, "Lie down, and keep your face covered!" She

(did so, but the heat was getting more and more stifling, and she dared not look up. In another minute, however, she felt herself lifted up in a pair of strong arms, and Charlie's voice saying, "Now, keep your face close to my shoulder, and keep as quiet as you can." She obeyed, and he ran as fast as he could through the fire, not, however, without getting badly burnt. He put her down on the other side of the barrier of flame, and the men loudly cheered him. Ada was pale, but otherwise quite unhurt.

Mr. Stacey caught her in his arms and, as he bent over her and hid his face in her hair, she heard him say, with something like a sob, "Thank God, child! Oh, I *could* not have lost you both!"

Ada trembled at the touch of his emotion. He wrung Charlie's hand, and she began to stammer forth her thanks. But with a short laugh to cover his shyness, Muir turned away, murmuring that he had only been too glad to have done anything for her. And he really looked as if he meant it.

Before retiring, Ada made some strong coffee, and insisted on the neighbours who had come to

their aid, coming in to share a supper before going home. Mr. Stacey thanked them heartily for their help, adding that the best wish he could give them was that he might never have to help them in a similar danger.





CHAPTER VII.

THE winter came on, fierce and strong. There was at first little wind, and Ada enjoyed the bright dry cold. The snow began in October, but did not become permanent till after Christmas. The prairie was one sparkling glare, trying to the eyes; the river, frozen, ceased its rushing bass; the Rockies alone knew no change. Their pure and steadfast forms were still rosy in the sunset, silver beneath the moon. The sky was softened by a mist, the sun often surrounded by a halo called a "sun-dog," and the waggon-wheels might be heard ringing along the hard road for a mile or more. People went about in sleighs, and the new experience was very charming to Ada.

But by-and-by came the north wind in terrible power, and then she found it impossible to go out. Her strength was not great, and the cold and wind combined took away what she had. Her bright spirit seemed to leave her, and she did her household duties wrapped in shawls, and with a pathetic look of weakness and fatigue. Olga was very good to her, and Charlie kept the fires well supplied with wood. He was not as silent as of old; they often held conversations of a monosyllabic sort, in which they seemed to understand one another without the trouble of saying everything that was in their minds. He was so kind, so like a brother, and did so many little unobtrusive services, that she felt as if he were an elder brother indeed.

At last came Christmas. Preparations had been made for a pleasant gathering at Mrs. Campbell's, and Ada had hoped that she and her father could go to Caalgary for the morning service, and return by Mrs. Campbell's, where the rest could meet them in the afternoon. They had accomplished the twelve miles to the town on a few Sunday mornings, and the doctor or clergyman had entertained them at lunch.

It was a neat little wooden church, capable of holding about a hundred and fifty, and Ada had looked forward to a happy day of prayer and friendship. But, alas! just as the sleigh was coming to the door, about half-past nine, a bleak cutting wind came rushing down the valley, and in a few seconds she could hardly see the fence for driving snow. A "blizzard" had come on. It was as if a vast hand were hurling handfuls of sharp white dust. The horses struggled, turned round, and made a rush for the stable. A black object came hurling by; it was the "buckboard," or light chaise, which had been placed in the yard, and the hurricane drove it on like a toy. Mr. Stacey drew Ada in, and had to exert all his force to shut the door.

"No going out to-day, my girl," he said; and reluctantly Ada took off her furs.

It was a dreary, disappointing day. Ada had so looked forward to something like an English Christmas, and to a Christmas-tree at her dear Mrs. Campbell's, for which she had long been preparing her little gifts. No church now, no merry visit, no Christmas-tree—all was hurry and confusion for a time; the boys bringing in wood and

water in plenty, so as to avoid doing so during the remainder of the blizzard, which might last three days, or might possibly be over in one. Charlie also brought in a big turkey, and Olga and Ada had at once to put on cooking-aprons, and begin to prepare such a feast as the short notice permitted. Puddings and mincemeat were of course already provided.

It was while preparing the stuffing for the turkey, in a rather doleful mood, that a thought suddenly entered Ada's mind.

"If I am so dull in a comfortable home with all these good things about me, what must it be to-day for the lonely ones—the young men who have no sisters, no women to make a home of their log shacks, and no church near enough to go to without an amount of exertion and arrangement for which real zeal is necessary? If there were but a church at the Creek, only three miles away, what a blessing it would be! And to have a clergyman—a real friend—within call; one who could help Rupert, now of an age for confirmation, but by no means growing more inclined towards it, the rough outdoor life seeming to raise his boyish animal spirits to a dangerous extent."

These ideas seemed to take possession of her, and went with her in all her work that day, so that she 'did it as in a dream. It might almost be a premonition, for that day a strange thing happened, and she always looked upon the blizzard as a gift from heaven, preventing her absence from home and the loss of the happy meeting that took place.

It was six o'clock. The horses had been fed and been made comfortable for the night; the last rush of cold wind from an opening door was over, and all was warm and bright within. The men were in their rooms making some extra toilette in honour of the day, and Olga in her full costume, black with silver chains and head-dress, and Ada in a delicate blue with a dainty muslin apron, were putting the last touches to the table. The kitchen looked its best; though the closed iron stove was no good substitute for the English yule log in cheer and brightness, it was much warmer, and a glow suffused the air. Rupert came in rubbing his hands.

"Hullo, this *is* jolly!" he said. "I'd rather be here than at Campbell's in this blizzard. I say, I don't envy any one that's out in it."

"I should think no one is out in it," said Ada.

"What's that, then?" cried Rupert. "Sleigh bells!"

They listened. Yes, a low tinkle seemed to sound. At once all the men rushed to the door, huddling on their wraps, and the women put a light in the window and lit a lantern to take to the stable when the strangers should arrive.

"Some one lost in the blizzard," said Mr. Stacey. "They are coming up from the Creck."

The sound of the bells drew nearer, and as the door was opened they were distinctly heard. The cold air and snow rushed in for a moment, but the boys took out the lantern, and the door was closed behind them. Charlie Muir raised his voice repeatedly in a heroic shout, and in a short time an answering voice responded. Very shortly Ada heard a stamping outside, and opened the door to admit two snow-covered figures completely wrapped up.

Olga and Ada helped Mr. Stacey to disencumber the travellers of their snowy garments. One was a middle-aged man, stalwart and hearty, with a pleasant, staunch, genial face; the other a fair, athletic young fellow. That they were English

gentlemen was apparent from their first sentence of thanks and relief to find themselves in such hospitable quarters. It was also clear from his dress that the elder was a clergyman.

"I fear we disturb you sadly in your family festival," he said. "You were just sitting down to your Christmas dinner, and we must be very unwelcome intruders. Arthur, can you help to put up the sleigh, if our kind friend here can really let us pass the night by his fire? We have been too nearly lost in the blizzard to think with courage of turning out again."

"We could not dream of letting you do it," answered Mr. Stacey. "We are very glad of your company, for the snow has prevented our spending the day with friends. We shall be glad now that it was so," he added courteously.

The other received his kind remark with a dignified bow and pleasant smile.

"Then let me introduce my young friend, Arthur Winwright, to our kind host; and as for me, I may possibly be known to you by the name I go by in these parts—Saskatchewan Jack."

"The Bishop!" cried Mr. Stacey; for by that name the unceremonious Canadians called their

brave and beloved bishop, one who understood them and whom they could trust—the very man for the post.

“This is indeed an honour,” said Mr. Stacey. “We are more indebted to the storm than we had any idea of.”

“I have been to the Creek to see a dying woman who had expressed a strong wish for my ministrations,” the bishop answered. “My young friend, Arthur Winwright, here, whose family I know at home, drove me over after the morning service in the town where I have been for a few days past.”

Arthur, after his introduction, had slipped out to see to the comfort of his horses with Charlie and Rupert. Before long, the whole party were comfortably seated in the warm kitchen round the dinner which Olga had carefully kept hot.

The bishop was a delightful guest, and Charlie and the young Englishman were good friends at once. The dinner over, all moved into the drawing-room for dessert and coffee, the young folks returning to help Olga for a short time; for on all occasions, especially on such a day as Christmas, the family in this free and independent

country lend their assistance to the "helps." And then came such a happy evening of chat and song and games as none of the party had enjoyed since leaving England—a true Christmas evening, ending with a short service read by the bishop, and a few quiet words of exposition of the lesson from Holy Scripture. All lifted up their voices in the dear old hymns, "Hark! the herald-angels sing," and "While shepherds watched their flocks by night."

At last there came a quiet hour, when the lads were amusing themselves in the hall, the bishop and Mr. Stacey enjoying a quiet pipe in the kitchen, the smoking-room of the establishment. Ada came and sat down on a stool by the fire and listened to their talk.

"The greatest deprivation for colonists," her father was saying, "is the distance from a church."

"Yes, a church is not only a centre of spiritual life, it is a centre of civilization too. I find the unity, the good feeling, the mutual worship circling round a church are the greatest boon to a whole neighbourhood." So spake the bishop. "Those poor folks at the Creek are quite outcasts, they have not seen a clergyman for a year. I had a

touching message from the woman I have been to see; she was a regular attendant at church in England, and she could not die happy till she had seen me. It seems it had been her wish for years. If only some one had told me before, she should have had such comfort as I could bring her long ago, poor soul!"

Mr. Stacey made some reply, but Ada did not hear it. Her heart beat fast. The idea of a church there had seized on her so strongly, and now the good bishop came to impress the need more forcibly still. Timidly, and with blushes, she said—

"Could we not help to build a church here, father? It would be such a blessing to have something to work for, and to leave behind us when we go back to England."

The bishop smiled kindly at her enthusiasm. "You have a willing daughter, my friend," he said, "and it may be God has put this in her heart."

"I have thought of it all the morning," she said, turning a pleading, earnest look on her father.

"I am willing to do what I can, my lord," he

said, "if you make any plans and estimate, and will let me see them."

"No sooner said than done," was the answer; and the bishop drew out a pencil and notebook, and at once began to sketch both ground-plan and elevation of a simple and neat wooden structure, with a bell-turret and chancel.

"I should estimate the cost of such a building as this at about £250," he said. "Now, may I, without taking advantage of your kindness, ask if I might look for any help from you towards it?"

Ada held her breath to listen for her father's response, and she put up a little prayer that it might be a liberal one. It was. After a short pause, he answered—

"I will undertake to find £50 by one means or another, if the rest is forthcoming."

"It shall be," said the bishop, leaning forward and holding out his hand, which Mr. Stacey grasped cordially. "Our hands upon it, it shall be done. And we shall have you to thank, my dear, for the suggestion," he said kindly to Ada.

She slept very sweetly that night. She dreamed of the little church, a prophetic dream. For, in

after years, and, indeed, ere many years were over, she saw that modest house of God in the wilderness, and the gospel was preached there, and many souls were drawn heavenward. But not in the good bishop's lifetime. Ere a sod was turned he had passed to a better world, cut off in the prime of life, from the effects of hard toil in his Master's service. Yet his influence lived on, and often did Ada think of that blessed Christmas night when he sat with them, and prayed with them, and preached to them by his loving genial look as much as by his voice.

* * * * *

Time passed, and springtime came, and Ada grew to love her home in the North-West. One great trial she had. Her father was seized with a severe illness from which they doubted if he would ever recover. For weeks she and the faithful Olga tended him as he hovered between life and death, and Charlie Muir was as tender with him as a woman. Mrs. Campbell came and took the nurses' place when they were worn out, and Harriet Simons, now Mrs. Campbell's help, begged leave to take her share in the labour entailed by sickness. It is at such sad times that the tie of

fellowship is most entirely felt in the colonies. The principle of "bearing one another's burdens" is more fully carried out there than in our over-civilized lands, where the nearest neighbours are often entire strangers.

The fear of death weighed heavy on Mr. Stacey ; not for himself, but for his children. What would they do left alone here? Had he done well to bring them away from England? What work at home could Rupert now take up after this break in his life? One evening, when Charlie Muir was sitting by the sick man, Ada taking needful rest to prepare for a night watch, Mr. Stacey, speaking painfully, unfolded these anxieties to his young friend. He felt that he *must* confide them to some one. And the silent Charlie proved to be a far more helpful counsellor than Mr. Stacey had supposed.

"Don't fret, sir," he said, very earnestly. "We hope you may get well ; and, if not, it will all be right. If you wish Rupert to stay out here, I will help him all I can ; and if you wish him to go back to England, I will keep near him till things are in right train for him to go."

Mr. Stacey grasped his hand. "Thank you,

Charlie, thank you. I knew you were a true loyal friend. Ada will feel it, poor child! we are very dear to each other; but my sister will be glad to have her again."

Charlie was silent, but a deep flush spread over his face and he sat nervously playing with his moustache.

"If," he began, "if Ada were willing to stay out in the North-West, and if she could care for me a little some day, would you trust me to make a home for her?"

Mr. Stacey looked full in his eyes—honest, clear, grey eyes, with no guile in them.

"I could trust you," he said, "if my girl could."

A light step interrupted them, and Ada entered in her soft blue wrapper, prepared for her night watch, and bringing on a tray her father's evening meal.

"Father, dear," she said laughing, "you are very naughty. I have heard you and Charlie talking a great deal too much. What is it all about?"

He smiled, and held out his hand and drew her down to him and kissed her cheek, but he did not tell her then, or till long after, what Charlie had said. The father was spared to his children and

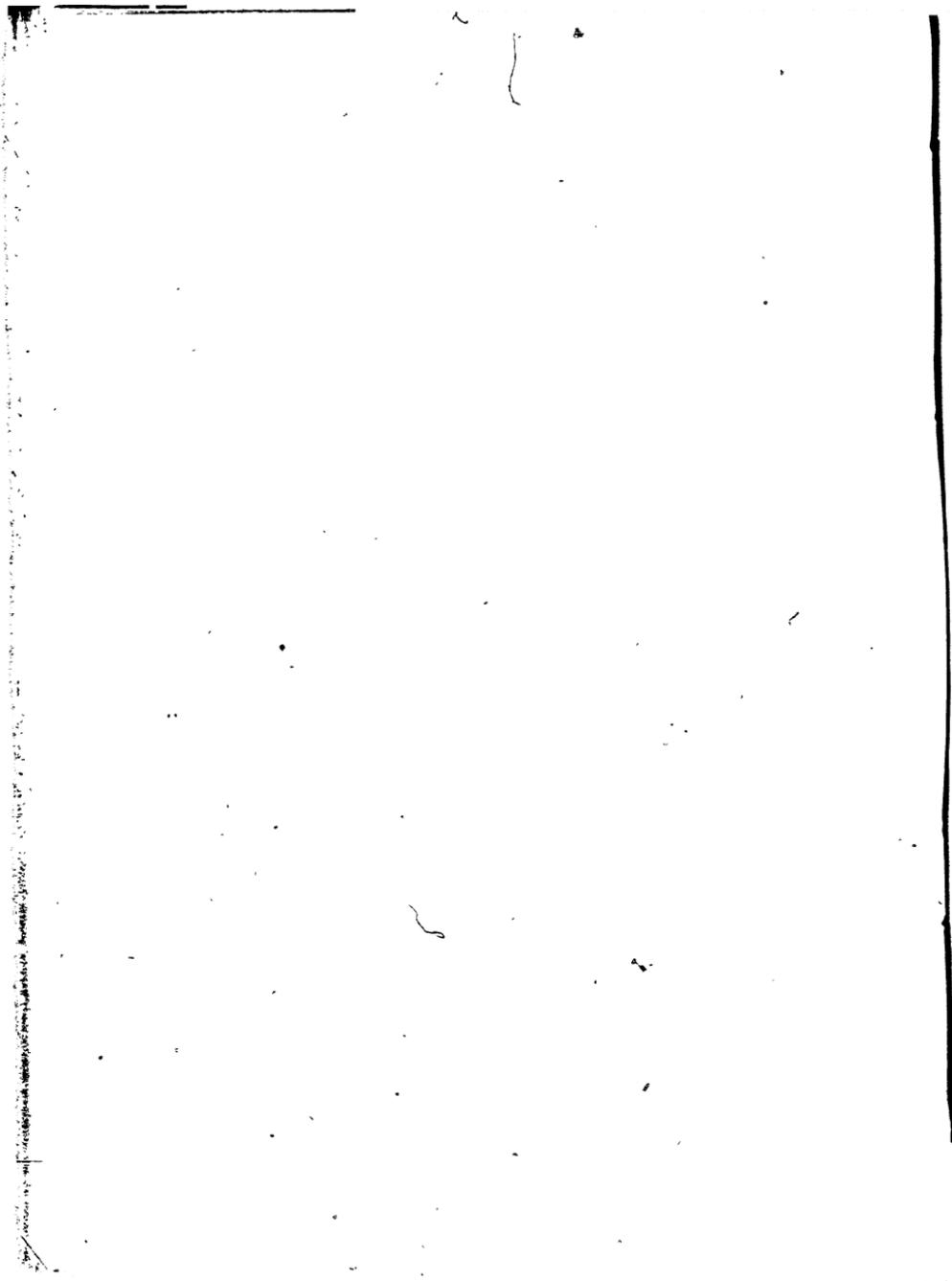
recovered strength with the lengthening days. But in the near future, he saw the young man's hopes growing brighter, and when Charlie went to his own log-house and made his own enclosure bright with something like an English flower-garden, helped by Ada's constant counsel, the fraternal kindness between them began to take a warmer tone, and it was plain that when the roses should bloom over his Canadian dwelling, it would be for the fair English girl a second home in the North-West, happier still than the first.

* * * * *

And Harriet, how did her little history end? It ended well. When time and patience and steady work had ripened her character, she was at last rewarded by finding her lover, aged prematurely by hard work and frequent sickness, but all the more thankful for the true heart that had waited for him so long; and among the rough but hearty miners on the Rocky Mountains, Jem and Harriet Hopkins are highly respected as a thrifty good couple who keep a house where men can get an honest meal for their money; and their influence is perhaps wider and deeper than they

are aware of, because they love each other and simply try to do their duty and serve their Maker without any thought that they are doing the work of teachers in their generation.

THE END.





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