

Tales of the Road



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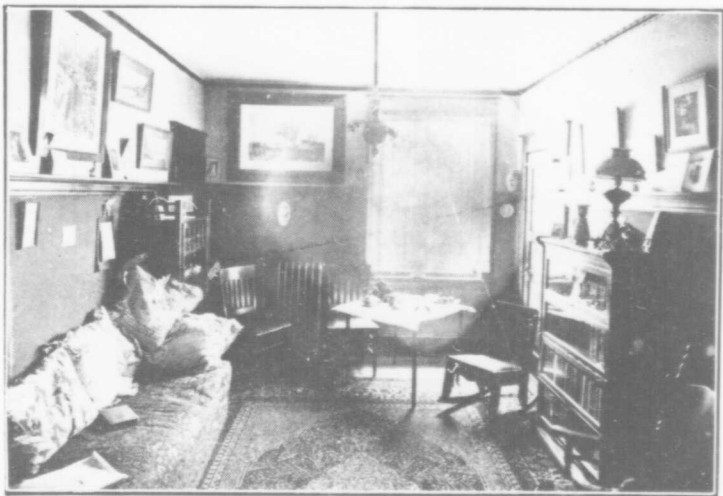


AT Christmas 1907 I remembered my friends with "Tales of the Road," and since then I have had a number of requests for more. I hope my friends will find "Tales of the Road" Number Two as interesting, and I wish for them all, the old, old wish. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

E. CORA HIND

*34 Preston Court,
Langside Street,
Winnipeg, Man. December, 1911*





"The Cup That Cheers," at 31 Preston Court.

Tales of the Road

NUMBER TWO

*"What is so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, come perfect days;
Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays."*

The Road in June

There has never been a year in the Canadian West when Lowell's famous lines were so true as the June of 1911. Through southern Manitoba in a motor car in June is a memory never to be effaced. The whole country was luxuriantly green and radiant with blossom—a veritable mass of bloom and fount of sweetness. Indeed, as you spun along over the country roads the whole air was full of perfume, dashed at intervals, as evening approached, with the pungent whiffs of smoke from many a smudge fire, where the cows were being milked.

The red lilies were out, and scores of other flowers—many the faces of old friends—many names unknown to the ordinary passerby. Stretched far on either side of the flowery roadways and trails were fields of grain, in varying shades of green, wheat, oats and barley, undulating in the gentle breeze, and whispering of coming millions of bread-stuffs. Most beautiful of all, the flax fields with their mile-long rows of feathery green plants, just breaking into seas of blue. It was a goodly and beautiful land, and I was glad that Coronation Day found me in the country and at the little old town of Morden, lying among the rich green fields, where every home has its garden and its shelter of trees, the first district in the West to prove the possibilities of growing roses; and here masses of Persian yellow, great trees of June roses with the bees buzzing at their hearts, white roses and crimson were seen in abundance. They were to be found in every garden,

and were used to grace the platform from which the Coronation speeches were delivered. Down the quiet streets came the sound of music, and as the car swung round a corner we came face to face with the children on their way to the fair grounds, where the day's outing was to be celebrated. The town schools had been joined by the ones in the immediate country, and six hundred children were in the procession, every one with a sash of red, white and blue, a red or blue cap, and a flag. The Boy Scouts were out in force, forming a guard of honor for Britannia, tall and stately, draped in a flag, with a golden helmet, spear and trident, attended by England, Ireland, Scotland and Canada, all in appropriate costume. Even the tiny tots just able to walk were in that procession. We followed to the fair grounds, and were delighted with the fresh young voices in the good old patriotic songs. The "Red, White and Blue" was accompanied by the most graceful flag-waving I have ever seen, and my heart went out sympathetically to a sturdy farmer standing on my right who found it needful to frequently blow his nose and mutter: "This is good enough for me."

On from Morden in the late afternoon sunshine, through Manitou and down the famous La Riviere Hill in the softening twilight of the June evening. As we sped along the way we met party after party of returning holiday-makers, and the very air was gay with the old songs, "Rule Britannia," "The Red White and Blue," "The Maple Leaf," "Our Dominion For Ever," and many, many others. Shortly after dark we reached Pilot Mound, and ended the first day on the road.

Early the next morning I paid a visit to the garden of Dr. Speechley, whose love for flowers is only second to his love for humanity. He and his colleague, Dr. Grenfell of Labrador, are widely separated in their life work, but I wonder if Dr. Speechley is not doing as truly missionary a work as the other, though peradventure in a less laborious field. The garden lay in the morning sunlight, one blaze of flowers, and yet, as you studied it from the roadway, it was easy to distinguish how carefully, though apparently carelessly, the colors had been blended. To walk for half an hour in that garden was to be at peace with all the world, and to feel that in the

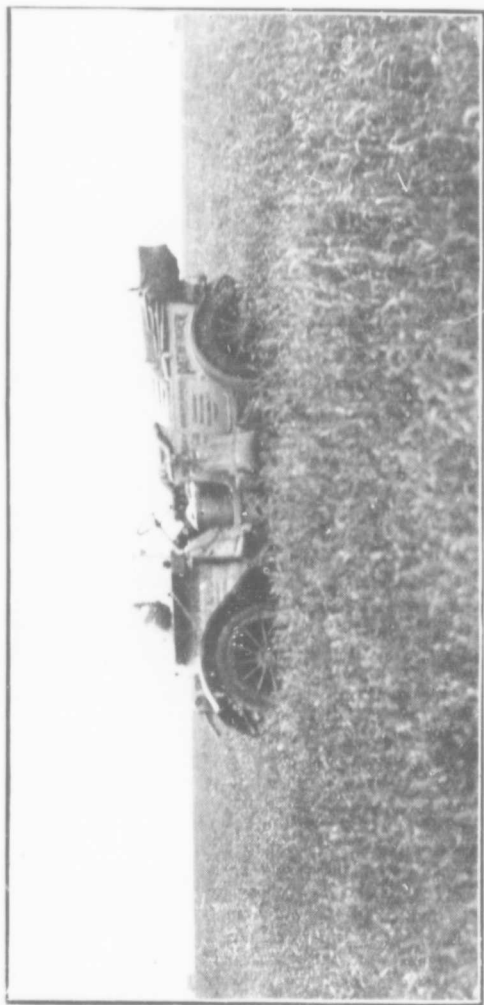
flowers there was healing for both body and mind.

On again through the June sun-shine, the broad fields, the flowers, to Killarney, where the lake, embowered in trees, glistened like an immense sapphire in the sun.

* * * *

The Car Maud

Knowledge of motor cars grows rapidly when you hire a fresh one in every town, and if perchance you ride in a car of a different make every day in the week you are sure to learn at the end of your day, that that is the only model of car which is worth considering for a moment. I met "Maud" at Estevan. Her owner drove me over fifty miles of the worst roads I have ever seen. It was just after a heavy rain, and some "dam galoot" had "swiped" one of Maud's chains, and she had only one, on the left hind wheel. So, to quote her driver again, "it was not really the old girl's fault" when she skidded badly going downhill, where the ditches on either side were full of water. The galoot had evidently "swiped" the water can also, and when, from much running at low speed, the water was exhausted, Maud could not have a drink until we reached a farmhouse. All this time Maud's engines were frying the oil and dispersing the vilest odors on the sweet prairie air. However, I was assured that Maud never took anyone out into the country and left them there, and I must admit that, in due course, I arrived once more in Estevan, very muddy, very tired, very much bumped, but vastly amused. The driver of Maud was an American, possibly twenty-five, certainly no older. He had been making his own living since he was thirteen, had worked in carshops on the American side and put his nerves "all on the hummer." So he had thrown up a "mighty good job" to come to this country to drive motor cars, because it took him out in the fresh air. His nerves were all right now, "you bet!" Yes, he had bought a little land, and some day he was going to work it. He had an idea about a motor for running agricultural implements, and if he could make that go he was going to "put it over" everything else in sight. In the meantime, in addition to the land, he had acquired two cars for his livery; as he was busy



"MAUD" We Pause to See How Crop is Rooted.

every day, and judging by the extent of my own bill, I should say he was on the direct road to make money. He was a wholesome young fellow, in spite of his slang and his conceit, and no doubt he will make good.

* * * *

A Tidy Set of Bones

Nine miles north of Regina and we strike the Hill Crest farm, famous for its Clydesdale horses and its wheat. We stop for a moment to see some new importations, and find the owner is away. In his stead is a Scotch stud groom, newly imported, with the mares. We walk through the paddock, lush with brome, and have a look at the foals, nine in number, shaggy and leggy, as Clydesdale colts are wont to be, but giving manifest promise of quality and beauty later on. We enquire about some native-bred foals, but the newly arrived Scot assures us that "Oh, aye, they're vera weel. Maybe in time Canada'll produce Clydesdales." This is somewhat crushing, and we refrain from further enquiry, but venture later to admire the foals from the imported mares—stately creatures, who stand about and look at us with soft eyes, docile enough as long as we keep our hands off the foals, but approaching with rather a menacing air the moment a hand is laid on one of them. After listening to our words of admiration for some time in absolute silence, the Scotchman informs us, "Oh, aye, they hae a tidy set o' banes." This is such a damning with faint praise that we are rendered speechless. Not so, however, the sturdy four-year-old whom we have taken with us, and who is demanding a ride. He looks at the Scot and says, "What's banes?" He receives no answer to this query, but, as a great concession, is lifted to the back of one foal, and, while the stud groom keeps an eye on the mother of the thus burdened youngster, the foal is led up and down, much to the delight of the small boy, and much to the surprise of the said foal.

Off again, through the Travorga district and down through the beautiful Lumsden Valley. Here, to save time, we take the small stream at high speed, rushing up the banks on the further side, the water splashing in all directions, much to the edification of our small boy, who demands, at every succeeding

mile, that the driver do it again. At Lumsden we pause for half an hour at the beautiful home of Alex. Mutch, and consume scandalous quantities of tea and the most delicious Scotch cakes; then on through the famous Cottonwood country, the first of the large districts of Saskatchewan to be settled. Here are big stone farmhouses, splendid shelter belts of trees, great areas of wheat broken at intervals by equally lush pastures with groups of foals and mares strolling about. This is an area where diversified agriculture has been practised for twenty years, and is one of the very best advertisements for that form of farming to be found in the whole west.

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Holiday Haunts

It was August, and day after day I had driven through wheat and wheat and more wheat, when one evening I reached Dauphin and a friend asked me to go out to the lake. We went along the Ridge Road, past a few fine farms, and then suddenly turning to the right and having negotiated a western gate, constructed of barbed wire, poles and profanity, we were in the woods. The Ridge Road is just wide enough for a motor and has as many windings as the La Salle River, and each bend and turn is a fresh delight. The going was good, and we did an easy thirty miles an hour, and every mile was bordered with masses of Michaelmas daisies, sunflowers, golden rod, milkweed, wild bergamot; while the dark red of choke cherries and the vivid scarlet of cranberries and rosehaws mingled with the varied green of poplar and oak. As we reached Lake Dauphin the sun was nearing the horizon and the picture was an exquisite one. The beautiful crescent of white sand which forms the shore line runs steeply up into the woods, where, on a high ridge, are the cottages of the summer colony. The water in-shore was a deep violet, running into shades of lavender until it reached the point where the rays of the sun caught it, and from there to the horizon it deepened from the palest mauve to crimson and gold. The water was like glass when we first saw it, but as the sun dipped lower a baby breeze sprang up, and in a moment it seemed as if myriads of opals were being tossed on the surface of the lake. The sailboats shot out from shore, the



Lake Ninette, in "The Good Old Summer Time."

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canoe stole up with hardly the sound of a paddle, and you felt as if you must not speak or it would disappear as magically as it seemed to have come. Darkness fell, jolly campfires were lighted, and round them were grouped people young and old. From some came the sound of guitars and banjos, with the sweet mingling of male and female voices. At half past ten we started once more for Dauphin, our lamps streaming a path of light ahead that made fairy land of the Ridge Road.

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**Another Day
and Another
Lake.
Ninette**

It was a hot afternoon, and we came round the bend suddenly upon the lake, sparkling in the sunshine, tiny whitecaps chasing each other to the shore. In the old days this was known as Pelican Lake. It is surrounded by a circle of beautifully treed hills, and it is possible to have a thirty-mile sail. That evening, when the sun was down, we rowed across the lake to the little piers on the other side, were transferred to a motor boat, and chugged rapidly down to the far end of the lake. By this time the sun had set and the moon had risen. The engine was turned off, a sail hoisted, and back we came in the evening breeze. From the camps at different points of the lake came the sound of singing, of laughter and of happy chatter. Canoes glided slowly by, and every few minutes the moonlight caught the sail of some passing boat. The sound of the wind through the trees on the banks, and the lapping of the waters on the sands and the stones of the shore added to the quiet beauty of the night. Here, nestling among the hills, is the sanatorium for consumptives, and surely no more delightful place could be found.

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**Yet Another
Day and Yet
Another Lake**

It is hot, and we have been driving all morning. Near noon we round the top of a great swell of land, and suddenly to our ears comes the sound of the cool wash of water on a sandy beach. A moment later and the Big Quill lies before us, bright and blue, with its fringe of dark evergreens on its southeastern shore,

and in the distance Wynyard. There is a wonderful beach for bathing, the water so impregnated with salts that it is almost impossible to sink in it. Some day the Big Quill is going to be a health resort. Just now it is a beauty spot, where a few wise ones go yearly to camp. We rested our horses for a brief time, sat upon the hillside and gazed over the beautiful lake, and then took up once more the burden of everyday business, with all afternoon in our ears the cool wash of water on the shore.

* * * *

The Retort Uncourteous

It was the winter fair, that great gathering of horsemen from all over the west. It was the first day, and we sauntered through the great stables, looking at the splendid horses and listening to the exchange of courtesies between the grooms of the various studs. Much caustic wit, by the way, is to be heard at any such gathering. Presently we ventured the enquiry as to where was Uncle John, head stud groom for one of the big horse-breeding establishments. Geordie, the second in command, assured us that Uncle John had gone to get married. Our interest was instantly aroused, and we asked if the lady in question were a certain gay blonde who had lavished many blandishments upon Uncle John at a gathering of horsemen the previous summer. Geordie admitted that that was the lady, but informed us, with a giggle, that she had turned Uncle John down at the last minute. He had just gone to Ontario by himself to "see the boys." Later in the day Uncle John appeared, and no rejoicing bridegroom could have been more gorgeously appareled. He sported a suit of tweeds that literally "smote your eye," and whose emphatic stripes of green and red had a brown ground. His crimson cravat was fastened with a glittering horse-shoe pin. His fur-lined overcoat had a collar of richest otter. His stiff felt hat was startlingly new, and there was a white carnation in his buttonhole. But Geordie, probably in revenge for many snubs, had circulated the story of Uncle John's jilting and of his cunning statement that he had "just been down to Ontario to see the boys. A little travel was good for your health." He was hailed upon all



Where the Big Quill Washes on a Sandy Shore.

sides with jibes about his jilting that were certainly more notable for their force than their elegance. Uncle John held his own pretty well, but from an occasional glance at Geordie, the subordinate, it was not difficult to imagine that he was nursing his wrath to keep it warm. In the afternoon his moment came. The judging was going on in the big arena, and Geordie, extremely proud, led forth a promising colt with an air of "Wha's like us?" and marched to the head of the class. The colt was a beauty, but the keen-eyed judges, after a glance at its feet, motioned Geordie to a lower place down the line. In the "trying out" that followed Geordie was moved lower and lower, and when the ribbons were finally placed he was standing fifth, very red in the face, very angry. When the green ribbon was handed to him, instead of putting it on the colt's head he rammed it hastily in his pocket. Whether the committee who decided on green ribbons for fifth place realized that that color means "forsaken" would be a nice question, but certain it is that, although it brings a colt "within the money," it is a color hated of all exhibitors. It is very bad form to put your ribbon in your pocket instead of on your horse, and it was a sure indication that Geordie's wrath was at boiling point. Just before the class was dismissed Uncle John strolled leisurely across the arena, his thumbs in the arms of his waistcoat, his hat at an acute angle, the white carnation very much in evidence. He looked at Geordie. He looked at the colt. And in a high voice he said: "Geordie, my mon, if ye'd peyed as much attention to that colt's hoofs as ye did to ma matrimonial affairs, ye wadna be whaur ye are the day," and he carelessly strolled back again. Geordie was speechless with wrath, but honors were certainly even. Apparently Uncle John considered them so, for an hour after he was to be seen, his gorgeous tweeds covered from sight by blue overalls, the stiff hat replaced by a cloth cap, helping the disconsolate Geordie to get the horses in shape for the next classes.

A day among stud grooms is a liberal education in the matter of scandal. If we are to believe men, women are the only ones who revel in the destruction of the reputation of a rival; but the most mali-

cious woman alive could not invent more scandalous stories of her neighbors than you hear about a horse ring, when competition is keen and blood is running high. Just admire a certain horse, and you will be told: "Oh, yes, he's lookin' fine. He ought to; he's had a bottle of whisky and a dose of strychnine just before he went into the ring. He's feelin' mighty good." Or from the other side you learn that still another horse, the property of the man, no doubt, who told you the last story, is suffering from side bones, or has a bog spavin—in fact, is heir to every unsoundness possible to horseflesh. Yet at the close of the judging the owners of these classes will shake hands with and congratulate each other on the wisdom of the judges, and each will depreciate his own horse while he praises that of the other; and no high society dame could do this in more dulcet tones. A horse ring is a good place in which to study human nature.

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Concerning Rattlesnakes

We had been motoring all afternoon over a rather rough trail in Southern Alberta, not far from Medicine Hat, when, suddenly, remarking the absence of gophers, which in other districts had been almost a plague, I was casually told that the rattlesnakes kept them down. My companion was an old-timer who dearly loves to jolly the newcomer, and I thought for a moment he had forgotten I was an old-timer too, and was in western parlance "giving me a yarn," for it so happened I had never seen a rattler and did not know they were to be found in southern Alberta. Nothing further was said, but a mile or two further on we passed the bodies of three snakes dangling over a wire fence where the cowboys had hung them, and I learned that in that particular section and near the river they were found quite frequently.

Even the innocent and timid garter snake has terrors for me, and to find that there were actually snakes in what had always seemed a snakeless land was not pleasant, and made more of an impression on my mind than I was aware of at the moment.

That night, after a very hard day, fifty miles or more of motoring followed by some hours of tramp-

ing through thriving plantations of many varieties of trees that were being tested out, I went to bed, having supped not wisely but too well on the excellent cooking of the ranch Chink.

The ranch house had been painted the previous week and the intelligent artisan had shut the windows down on wet paint and none of them would open; so I was warned to fasten the screen door opening on to the verandah and leave the inside door open—which I did.

In the night I wakened suddenly—what was that?—a long, low hiss, followed by a faint rattle! Instantly my mind flew to rattlesnakes and I was sure one was coming into the room. Trembling, I found the matches on the stand beside my bed, lit the lamp and saw with relief that my slippers were on the stand by the lamp. Very cautiously I held the lamp down to the floor and peered in all directions. No sign of Mr. Snake, but the hissing continued; in fact it was worse. Still cautiously, I got out of bed and threw the light in every corner, and now, fully awake, realized that the hissing was the wind through the wire door, and going toward it found that it was unlatched—the cause of the rattle. Much relieved, I went back to bed, paraphrasing the Fakenham Ghost and saying, "Perhaps some other goblin (or snake) tales were just as true."

In the morning, Sunday, we had many jolly stories of the old cowboy days as we discussed the Chink's delicious pancakes, but I never cheeped about my snake story; it would have given too good a handle for jollying. Since then I have learned that at the midnight hour rattlers are just as liable to be asleep as ordinary mortals.

* * * *

A Convert to Canadian Ways

It was near the end of a long, hard day of alternate driving and scrambling under barb wire fences into wheat fields, and we were on the return stretch to Moose Jaw. My driver, silent for the moment, was the blatant western American type, and had talked all day long, until with the ring of his strident, cocksure voice in my ears, I thought not a little regretfully of the ex-R.N.W.M. policeman who had driven me on the

previous day, and whose long periods of silence were broken by an occasional snatch of song in a deep, musical baritone; an interesting scrap of information as to the farms we were passing, or an inquiry as to my comfort, and who never once through a long summer day obtruded himself or his personal opinions or affairs on my attention.

"Do you believe in divorce?" suddenly greeted my ears, and as I started to a realization of my surroundings, and an emphatic "No," he added: "I guess there is something in this Canadian idea of staying married. When I was a kid of ten, dad and ma quarrelled—don't know what about; there was no one else that I ever heard of—just couldn't get along, I guess, or thought they couldn't. Dad, he lit out and ma got a divorce for no support. The girls were older than me and went with mother. After the fuss was all over I was sent to dad, and we knocked around till I was 13, and then I went on my own. Appears to me I was some like a stray dog—nobody wanted me. Dad's dead now, and ma, she's married again. Married before dad died. Went to see her once, but she wasn't in any rush to have me do it again. If ever I get married, it will be in Canada, and it will be for keeps, you bet."

Somehow the expression about the stray dog brought a lump to my throat and I realized that half of his brag and cocksureness was simply the result of feeling he had not had a fair start.

