SASKATCHEWAN

(AND ELSEWHERE)

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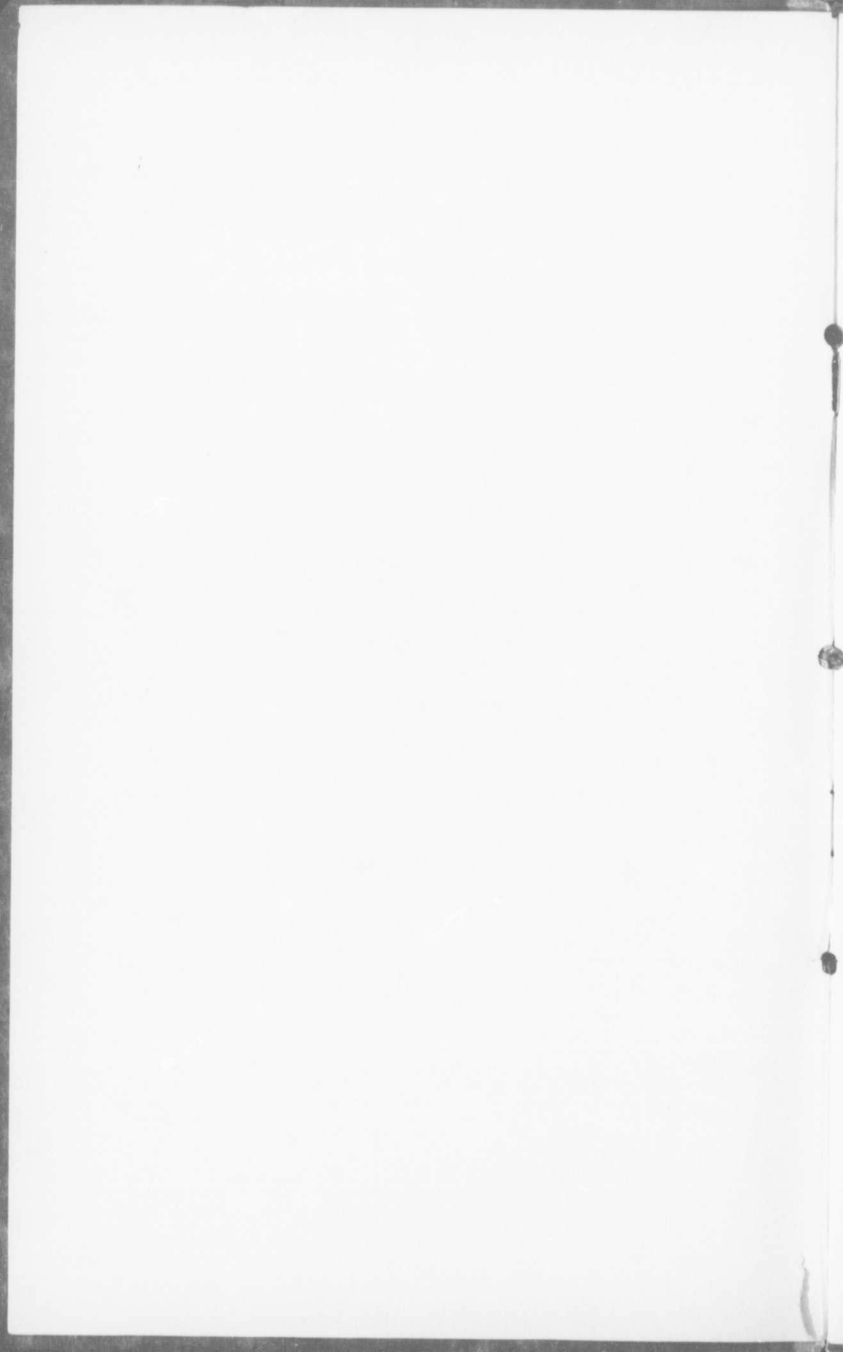

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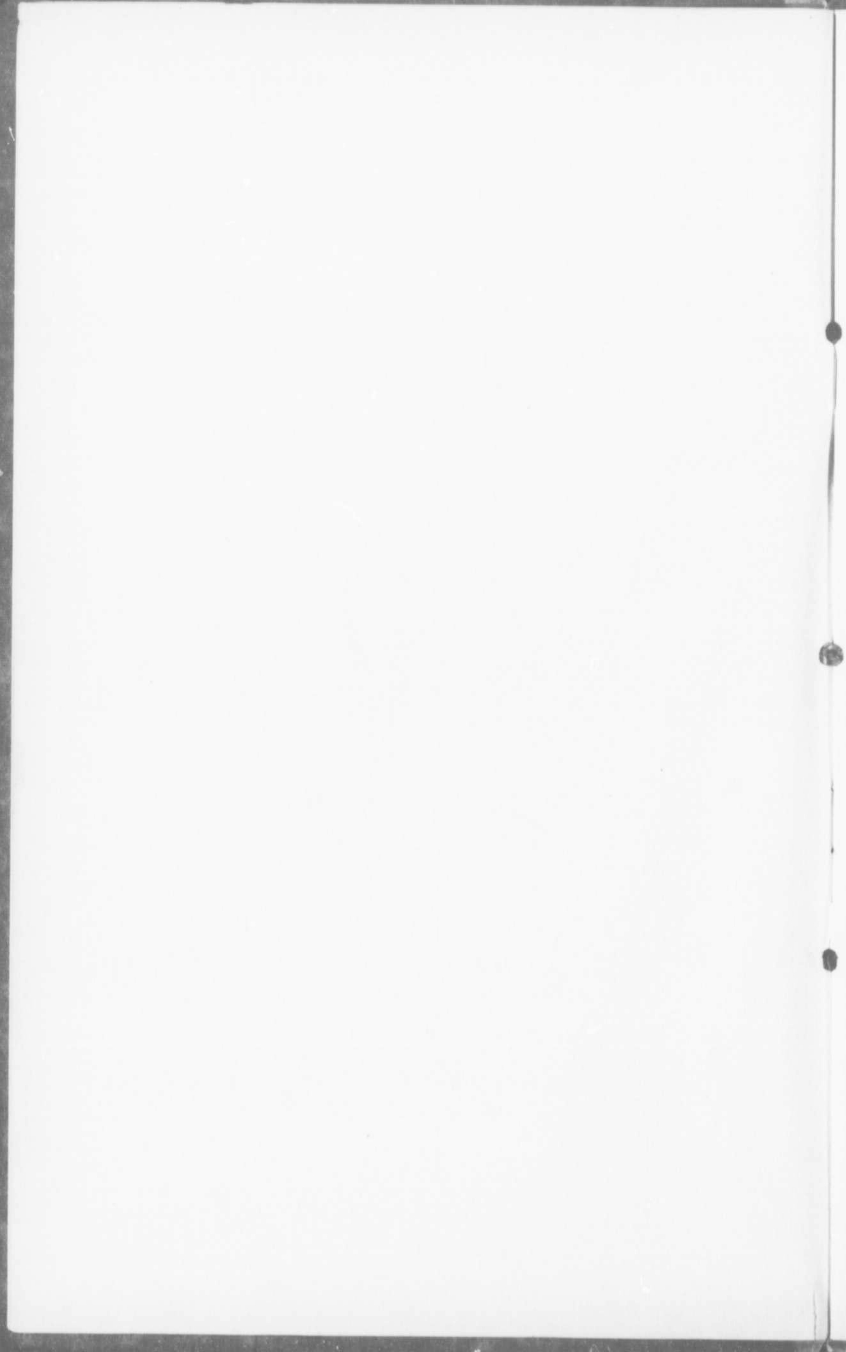


SASKATCHEWAN (and ELSEWHERE)

ON THE WAY

The trip from Boston to Winnipeg was uneventful, except that I learned certain facts about railroad construction and maintenance of way from two gentlemen in the employ of the road over which I travelled. The first of the two was Superintendent of Telegraph Construction. I found him seated on a camp stool on the rear platform of the train when I went out to get a breath of air. He was to all appearances doing nothing more important than counting telegraph poles and making notes in a small leather-bound note book. He looked bored. I began to ask questions. After a few minutes, he said: "How do you think I can talk to you and do half a dozen other things at the same time?"

"Nobody asked you to talk to me," I answered. "I'll do the talking, and all you have to do is to say yes or no." He was silent for a few seconds, and then said, squinting one eye toward the rocky ledges on each side of the track, "Fine farming land this." "Really," I answered, "that isn't what we call it in Massachusetts." Ominous silence again, and then he went in to get his "dust coat." It was certainly very dirty on that rear platform, and the sun was very hot. When he returned he was trying to pull on his linen duster over his serge coat.

"Why do you wear both coats when it is so very hot?" I asked, solemnly. "There are so many things that I want to use in the pockets of the cloth coat," he answered.

"I suppose you couldn't possibly transfer the things from one coat to the other?" I ventured.

"That ain't a bad one," he answered, brightening ever so little,—and immediately the suggested transfer took place,—pencils, notebooks, pipes, tobacco, wallet,—handkerchief,—everything useful and otherwise except Savings Bank Insurance literature. And thereupon he settled down to smoke contentedly and to answer all my questions, and parenthetically to make further notes in the little leather-bound note book. Before the day was over he had become so far humanized that he insisted on gathering specimens of wild flowers for me every time the train stopped.

Or if I happened to be in the Pullman when we were approaching an interesting bit of scenery, he would come and notify me of that fact and suggest that I come out to enjoy it. He had travelled the road for sixteen years and knew every inch of track. I told him I should think he would have pet names for all the telegraph poles. So we became good friends. He introduced me to the Superintendent of Bridges when the latter boarded the train, and from him I learned some things about concrete bridge construction that I hadn't known before. In fact, what I don't know about concrete bridge construction would take a long time to tell.

In passing through one of the little French villages East of Port Arthur, we crossed what appeared to me to be an insignificant stream, but the men told me of a speckled trout caught in that stream last summer by a Miss Clay of Chicago, said to weigh not less than seven pounds and fourteen ounces.

At Winnipeg I found that owing to the fact that the day was July first, and therefore Dominion Day, and therefore a holiday, everybody who could possibly do so had gone or was going on a picnic. As I attempted to pass through a certain gate at the station, the attendant inquired: "Are you going to the picnic?" This seemed a wee bit abrupt, even for a Canadian, but I didn't want to offend him, so I merely said: "I haven't been invited," and retraced my steps. Owing to the holiday, it looked very much as if I were not going to have my trunk transferred from one station to the other, so I spent most of the afternoon holding hands with the baggage agent, and finally persuaded him to send it over "specially" for me, somewhat to the surprise and chagrin of some other ladies who had been my travelling companions en route, and who were equally solicitous about their own baggage, but had given up in despair while I stayed on the job.

From Winnipeg to Saskatoon is a fourteen-hour run, but I enjoyed it thoroughly. Leaving Winnipeg at six in the afternoon I sat in the dining car and ate a very good supper as we travelled toward the sunset. But the sun didn't set until 8.30, and when I went to bed at 9.30 it was still daylight. Somewhere about one o'clock in the morning we crossed the Saskatchewan boundary, and at 8.30 o'clock we arrived at Saskatoon. The little station appeared to be set down in the middle of a barren waste. Nevertheless, there were five barges and two automobiles to meet the train, all of which were immediately filled with passengers. I was still

solicitous about my precious trunk, and was careful to see it deposited on a transfer truck before I climbed into one of the barges.

From the Grand Trunk Pacific Station to the town of Saskatoon is a stretch of a mile and a half of unoccupied prairie, and as we jolted and bumped over the rough road, I turned to the man who sat beside me and said, "Why in the world didn't they build the station somewhere near the town?" "Oh," he answered, "the town refused to give the Railroad Company the bonus it wanted, and so it refused to lay its tracks where the town wanted them." I asked the lady who sat opposite me what was the best hotel in the place, and she said she guessed the King George was, so as I was to have a stop-over of seven hours, I decided to go to the King George. However, when the gentleman who sat beside me, and with whom I had entered into conversation, left the barge at the Empress Hotel, I distinctly heard him tell the driver to "let the lady off at Flanagan's Hotel." So at Flanagan's I was deposited, in spite of my previous resolve to patronize the King George, and found very comfortable accommodations during the short period of my stay.

I think they told me that Saskatoon had 28000 people. Anyway, it impressed me as being a very enterprising and busy place, with automobiles darting hither and thither like so many ants. I had the heels of my shoes tapped at a cobbler's, and sat comfortably in my stocking feet while the work was being done, chatting with the cobbler the while. Then I bought a pair of silk gloves at a department store. I also visited an optician and talked with him while he tightened the rivet on the bridge of my glasses. Then I espied the post office, and as everybody appeared to be going to the post-office, thither went also A. H. G. and stood in line at the "G" window until I was reached in turn. The accommodating clerk shuffled the "G" letters, but found none for "Alice H." However, there were two letters for "John Grady." Would I take those? On reflection I decided not to take John Grady's letters, preferring rather to bear the ills I had than fly to others that I knew not of.

At 3.40 o'clock I started on the final stage of my journey. The prairie is not at all flat and uninteresting, as some people have represented it to be. It is undulating, and sometimes there are low hills which hide the view; but for the most part the eye can travel for miles over great areas of territory in which lie dormant possibilities of untold wealth. Thousands of acres are now

under cultivation, and all along the line we saw the traction engines busily at work in the fields. A gentleman who sat opposite me in the dining car said: "I have seen no finer farms anywhere, and I feel as though it is a species of presumption for me to come up here to tell these people how to farm." From which I inferred that he was one of the Government lecturers sent out by the Dominion to teach the people how to cultivate the land in the most scientific manner. Another man told me that about 7000 acres were given by the Canadian Government to the Railroad Company for every mile of road built. The Railroad Company holds it for a time and then sells it to would-be farmers for prices ranging from $20.00 per acre upwards. Also many farmers hold their lands by virtue of "homestead" rights; that is, a man pays the Government the munificent sum of ten dollars, and receives a tentative grant of 160 acres. On this land he must build within twelve months a house costing not less than $300. He must also live there at least six months each year for three successive years. He must also plough a certain number of acres the first year, so many more the second year, and so on. At the end of the third year, if he has fulfilled all the conditions, he is given full title to the land, and the "homestead" is his. My informant gave me distinctly to understand that for lonesomeness pure and clear this particular kind of life had every other kind "skun a mile," as he knew from sad experience. Finding me an interested listener, he proceeded to state his own case in some detail. He was a bachelor from Ontario, had come to Saskatchewan originally for his health,—which happily he had found,—but of what earthly use was health if a fellow had no one to talk to? I really hadn't said much, but I had a sneaking suspicion that he looked upon me as being something of a talker myself. I endeavored, however, to dismiss that thought promptly as being unworthy of a good Canadian, and listened sympathetically while he told me how the Insane Asylum at Regina was filled to the extent of 80 per cent. of its inmates with "homesteaders" who had been unable to withstand the effect of solitude.

While we were yet some miles from my destination, we ran into a heavy storm of wind and rain. As I looked toward the West, the sky seemed hung with a perpendicular curtain of lead color, punctured by an occasional flash of lightning. But in the train it was cosy enough. We had a good supper of broiled sirloin steak with mushrooms, some strawberries and cream, and some very good coffee.

ARRIVAL

The end of my journey was reached at 9.30 P.M. The rain had ceased, but heavy black clouds were driving across the sky, while off in the West was a line of brilliant silver light that marked the afterglow from the setting sun. About twenty people were on the station platform, a few of whom carried lanterns. In the dim light I saw no one whom I recognized, but suddenly I was grabbed from behind by a pair of strong arms that belonged to no woman, and—but why should I here record what happened next? It was dark, anyway. Joe took my trunk check, but assured me that it was impossible for love or money to get the trunk delivered that night,—that no one ever thought of working after six o'clock in this country. In vain I endeavored to make it clear to him that no normally minded teamster would consider it "work" to deliver a trunk for me, provided I might have a minute's private conference with him. My entreaties were powerless against the local standard concerning working hours. I was bundled into a tiny rig that stood waiting, and we started at a lively clip down a very dark and very muddy road. The next thing that happened was that the wind lifted my Panama hat from my head and gently deposited it in the mud about twenty feet away. Joe obligingly jumped out after it, and returned it to me with instructions to "nail it on."

A drive of three-quarters of a mile brought us to the foot of the hill on which Margaret's house stands,—and there she was in the doorway! When I was really inside the house, I expressed the modest wish to go to the bathroom and wash up. Margaret looked at me reproachfully. "My child, there isn't a bathroom in the whole town. The only people who really get baths worthy of the name are the boys and horses who go swimming in the reservoir!" I was duly shocked into silence, and she added: "Why, there isn't even a kitchen sink in town. There's a hardware dealer here who hasn't a sink in the kitchen of his own house!" That settled it, of course, and I made a very satisfactory toilet with a generous basin of water, a cake of Pears soap, and one of Margaret's soft white towels. At home I never cared for Pears soap, but Margaret tells me it is the only kind that lathers well in the Kindersley water. Tea was ready in the sitting room, with graham muffins made by Margaret, who explained to me modestly that she was so far from the town that it wasn't

convenient for her to get baker's bread, so she made all her own muffins. "But when you feel hungry for some baker's bread, just let me know, and we'll get some for a change." I tasted one of the muffins, and then tasted it again, just to make sure that I wasn't dreaming, and then I told her I'd let her know when I got hungry for baker's bread. How good the tea and the raspberries tasted! And how welcome the warmth from the stove! But there was something lacking. I asked for M. A. C., and was told she was asleep. Thereupon we all became very hilarious, and made as much noise as we decently could and not let it be too obvious to each other that we were doing it on purpose. In a few minutes we had our reward. From across the hall came a voice: "Did Aunty Allus tum?" And I am sure that in all the world and through all time there never was a sweeter note of music sounded than came to me in the tones of that self-same voice. Margaret went into another room, and emerged therefrom folding in her arms a length of white nightgown, at the top of which was a broad grin bounded East and West by the rosiest cheeks that I have ever seen, South by a very saucy chin, and North by a bit of a nose, and two dark eyes fairly dancing with mischief, and the whole surrounded by something that looked like a halo of spun gold. She came to me at once. "Did you tum on the twain?" she asked. "Yes," I answered. Then silence for the space of about three seconds. Then: "How do you like daddy's bown socks?" I was saved from answering categorically by Margaret interjecting an inquiry as to whether I'd have another muffin. There could be only one answer to that so long as the muffins lasted, and that answer was made by me with enthusiasm. Supper over, little Margaret settled down quite comfortably into my lap, looked up into my face, and asked: "Did you have a nice wide on the twain?" "I certainly did," I answered. She looked at me for a second as if sizing me up, and then said: "Tell Mawgut about the little dirl who had a little turl." So I repeated the entire rhyme, and finished off with what seemed to me particularly fine emphasis on the last line,—"When she was bad she was horrid!" Quick as a flash she puckered up her mouth, and solemnly rejoined, "She was punk!" Just as I had recovered from the shock of this, and was talking with her daddy about homesteaders, or some other topic equally uninteresting to her, she put up a tiny finger to the deep perpendicular line between my eyes, and said, with much concern: "Aunty Allus, your face is dust a little bit bent!"

Some time after midnight somebody ventured to say something about bedtime. I told Margaret that I had become so accustomed to the limited accommodations of a sleeping car that she must not be surprised if she found me going to bed first and disrobing afterwards. I can't record what time we did go to bed that night, but I have proof positive that go we did from the fact that when I waked up in the morning I was in the most comfortable bed my poor tired body had known for a long time. And it was a feather bed, too. Moreover, I was snuggled down under four wool blankets, and a cool wind was sweeping across the prairie and through the room at the rate of twenty miles an hour. Margaret came into the room for a second and whispered "Don't open your eyes unless you're ready to get up." The next instant there was a soft voice at the door, "Is Aunty Allus asleep?" "Yes, I think so, her eyes are shut. Don't disturb her." Then the voice was nearer the bed, and there was a plaintive note in it: "Mawgut's dust lonesome, I dess." A pause. Then: "I wonner what's the matter with Mawgut? She's dust lonesome, dat's all." Then my eyes flew open, and found themselves looking straight into the most mischievous pair of eyes ever owned by a three-year-old girl. But she came to me very gently, patted my cheek with fingers of velvet, and said: "Did you have a dood sleep?" "Yes," I answered. "Are you rested, dear?" was the next question. "Quite rested, thank you," I returned, wondering what would come next. She went to the window, and said, in a meditative voice: "Mawgut is looking out of the window." I fell. "What do you see, little girl?" I asked. She looked away across the prairie, and sang, in a voice scarcely above a whisper: "Oh, I see the flowers bright, pink and yellow, blue and white, And the bees humming o'er them, dear mamma."

Before I had time to make any further contribution to this interesting dialogue, she came to me and said, "What does 'dear mamma' mean?" "Well, what does it mean?" I asked. "It means dear mother," she answered with a nod of great satisfaction, at having given me a very important bit of information. Then she became very personal.

"Have you a nightgown like mother's?" "Yes."

"What tuller is the wibbon?" "Pink."

"What tuller is your hair?" "Brown," I ventured, suddenly becoming painfully conscious of the gray, and wondering whether she'd notice the omission, and comment thereon.

"How many eyes have you?" "Two."

She repeated each answer after me as if to fix it firmly in her memory forever, and little did I think I was to undergo the same catechism every day during the term of my visit. She continued:—

"How many eyes has Mawgut?" "Two."

"How many ears has Mawgut?" "Two."

"How many teeth has Mawgut?" I was caught at last. "I don't know. How many?" "Twenty." Then suddenly, as if this were to be the real test of my intelligence: "How many pipes has daddy?" But here I was providentially saved from exposing my ignorance by her mother calling to her. She was back again in a minute, however, and asked:

"Do you like muffins?" "Indeed I do," I said. "Do you?" "You bet!" she unexpectedly rejoined, as she flew back to her mother.

I was somewhat surprised to find that we had strawberries for breakfast, and inquired whether they were native to the place. "No, they were shipped from somewhere East of here,—probably Saskatoon." I inquired the price. "Thirty cents a box."

"How much are bananas?" I asked. "Fifty cents a dozen."

"Oranges?" "Fifty cents."

"Peaches?" "Sixty cents."

"Plums?" "Twenty-five cents a dozen."

"Cucumbers?" "Twenty-five cents each."

Nevertheless, I have found some one of these expensive foods on the table every day, and when I asked Margaret how she reconciled this with her ideas of economy, she answered: "Joe says it's very important that we should have the things we really like, no matter what they cost. But we can have all the fresh milk we want at ten cents a quart, and butter at thirty cents a pound, and all the buttermilk or skimmed milk we want for the trouble of going after it."

Our walk led us away from the house and along the bank of the ravine.

AT KINDERSLEY

Breakfast over and the dishes washed, we went for a walk on the prairie. The gophers interested me very much. They seemed to be everywhere,—very saucy and very timid, dodging into their holes when we came near. I don't know to what family the gopher belongs, but he appears to me to be a sort of compromise between a rat and a squirrel. Anyway, he's very cunning when he stands up on his hind legs, claps his fore feet together, and opens his mouth to scold. I asked M. A. C. what the gopher was saying, and she promptly replied: "He says,—Mawgut stop that noise!"

Margaret tells me that the gopher is such a pest to the farmers that the Canadian Government offers a bounty for their destruction, and furnishes a poison free of charge. The little rascals also make miserable the lives of the mother birds on the prairie. The nests are built in the ground, of course, as there is no other where to build them, and if the mother bird is absent from the nest for ever so short a time, the gopher is after the young birds. Several times I have seen the parent birds attack the gopher and successfully drive him away,—coward that he is.

Our walk led us away from the house and along the bank of the ravine,—now converted into a reservoir,—and we had a chance to observe a brood of three young wild ducklings following hastily in the wake of their mother, who had been startled by our approach. Margaret has watched the affairs of this particular duck family ever since the parent birds alighted here in the early spring on their way North.

The banks of the reservoir are studded with wild flowers of many varieties, one of the most beautiful of which is the wild geranium,—of a sort of pink-orange color, with five petals, and measuring an inch from tip to tip. The fragrance is very sweet and spicy. Then there are what I call wild marigolds, but one of the little girls native to the place tells me they call them "Brown Eyed Betties." They have big brown centres and yellow petals. Then there are dainty little bluebells, and the wild flax, which is also blue. And when Mr. Donald McTavish, the Town Treasurer, came to call the other day, he wore in his button-hole an immense pink thistle, and carried in his hand a yellow cactus blossom, which he gave to me. He had fitted into the stem a tiny wooden handle so that it could be carried easily. There is

a cactus plant not far from Margaret's house, and I have been interested to see how it hugs the ground. One has to hunt carefully in order to find it. Having found it, however, we placed some stones beside it so as to mark the place for future visitations. The blossom is remarkably beautiful and delicate. There is also a purple flower on a stalk which I am told is called wild vetch; then there is the curious grass called "fox-tail," wonderfully beautiful and graceful as it waves responsive to every breeze. Of course there is a profusion of sage-brush, and it fills the air with a spicy fragrance which is delicious.

The reservoir is a place of endless joy to little Margaret. She amuses herself by throwing stones into the water to see the "splash" until it would seem as if the mud bottom of the ravine must have been transformed into a rocky bed. The slightest intimation on my part, however, that I am ready to return to the house is met with, "Don't do home, Aunty Allus! Mawgut wants to frow some more stones!" Or, if it is her mother who is with her: "Dear little mother, Mawgut *must* frow some more stones, betaws, don't you see, she likes to!" With which conclusive logic she prevails upon us to stay and "frow stones." Indeed, she appears to persuade most of the persons with whom she comes in contact to do whatever she happens at the moment to want to do. Sometimes, however, she finds obstacles in the way, in spite of her most beguiling arguments, and then she is very apt to find relief in tears, in which event her mother tells her to go into the bedroom and have her cry out. Under these circumstances it is amusing to observe her hunt for a handkerchief so that she may take it with her, and then come back to ask her mother, "Shall I shut the door?" Being answered in the affirmative, she proceeds to the bedroom, carefully closes the door, and then begins that ceremony which she herself describes as "howling." When she has finished, out she comes saying: "Ty's all don. Mawgut has some tears." And sure enough, there usually are a few, which must of course be wiped away. Sometimes if the occasion has been a very sorrowful one, she is heard to say while in seclusion, "Poor little dairl! Daddy's little daughter! Poor little Kiddo!"

Her restless energy amazes me. From the minute her eyes open in the morning until she is tucked into her down puff at 7.30, the little feet are tireless in their activity, and if Aunty Allus or mother begs for a minute's rest, she urges in the most wheedling voice, "Oh, tum on! Be a sport!"

Mawgut must frow some more stones!

The mischief which she perpetrates is so original that preventive measures seem to be impossible. For instance, the other day she watched her mother prepare some strawberries for supper, which preparation consisted of hulling the berries and then washing them. Later in the day we were sitting on the porch when little Margaret came to us with her hands wet, saying, "Mawgut is washing the sherries!" We followed her to the storeroom and found that she had got hold of a large bowl of stewed cherries, had carefully removed the fruit from the syrup and laid the cherries in rows on a nearby trunk, and was cheerfully washing her tiny hands in the syrup!

At another time, while her mother was in the midst of her work, M. A. C. came dancing to her saying: "See, mother, Mawgut washed her hair!" We looked, and sure enough,—the top of her head was wet, and down her face were streaks of dirty water, through which two very bright eyes were shining with the light of accomplishment. We followed her lead to the scene of the deluge, and found that she had discovered and made use of a pail of very dirty water with which her mother had just finished washing the kitchen floor. Her selection of bath water of this nature seems hardly consistent with her rather conspicuous love for cleanliness. Even a tiny spot on her gown causes her great concern, and she distinctly does not like to use a table napkin the second time. She very soon discovered that the guest was receiving a fresh napkin at each meal, and we found to our amusement that a quiet little visit to the table just before we sat down to meals was made by a certain young lady of three years, and the fresh napkin transferred to her place!

Nevertheless, she claims to be very fond of her Aunty Allus, and is at my bedside each morning before my eyes are opened, waiting for an invitation to "Jump in!" If the sun is shining, she goes to the window and exclaims, "My, but it's a dlorious day!" And she invariably inquires with great apparent concern, "Did you have a dood sleep, dear?" After I have assured her, "I certainly did," she says, "Don't do to sleep aden, will you?"

She is particularly partial to hairpins as playthings, and unless I'm very careful, I'm apt to have a race for each one before I have a chance to use it. The same with brush and comb and toothbrush and nail-file. After the last hairpin has been taken from her tight little fist, she says: "What do you s'pose is the matter with Mawgut?" Curiosity being aroused, I answer, "Well, what

is the matter with Margaret?" "I dess she's dust a little bit hungry." So we go in to one of Margaret's wonderful breakfasts. If this is pioneer life, then civilization has little attraction for me. We sit down to corn flakes and milk, bacon and eggs, stewed plums or sliced oranges, golden coffee with real cream; and graham or wheat muffins that fairly melt in your mouth. And when lunch time comes, there's French toast with maple syrup or honey, and fresh strawberries with cream. And so it goes. Her cooking is a revelation to me. At this very minute there's a lemon pie in the store-room with a white mountain of egg frosting on it that is simply tantalizing to behold. Close beside it is a "marble" cake, which I am given to understand is made by putting in the pan alternate spoonfuls of light-colored and dark-colored batter. This much I comprehend. But how to get the various batters at the right consistency, and how to know that the oven is at the proper temperature to make that cake rise above the top of the pan, expanding itself to four times its original size, and take on that inviting brown crispness, is what puzzles me. And then the chocolate pudding with nuts in it! But the only way to treat of the things which Margaret has accomplished in the culinary art is to make an alphabetical index of them. I'm only sorry I can't be here to have some part of the wonderful turkeys I hear about. But then, Mr. McLeod, the Clerk of Court at Kindersley, says that if I stayed through September I'd never go back East, I'd be so enamoured of the ideal climate here. The fact is, Margaret tells me, that turkeys were about the only fresh meat to be had last winter, so she became quite expert in preparing them for the table. And the most wonderful part of it all is that she has done it all with a two-burner gasolene stove which most housekeepers in Massachusetts would sell for old junk at the first opportunity. Most of her housekeeping paraphernalia is still in storage in Toronto, and she had only a very few dishes here, not having expected to keep house, as it was supposed that their residence in Kindersley would be for a very short time only. Margaret tells with much enjoyment how she went to town on a little shopping expedition on a certain day, and with her purchases there were handed to her two small yellow checks. She inquired what they were for, and was told that they entitled her to two guesses as to how many beans there were in the glass jar then on exhibition in the front window of the store. She looked at the jar, and in a spirit of fun put down a number on each check. A week later she was astonished to receive formal

Oh, tum on! Be a sport!

notification of the interesting fact that she had won the third prize in the "Guessing Contest," and was entitled to a set of ninety-six pieces of china.

She broke the news to Joe that evening when they were sitting on the porch. She did it as gently as possible, but Joe has a man's dislike for work when it comes to packing dishes. His consternation was tragic.

"Good God, Toots!" he exclaimed, "What'll we ever do with ninety-six pieces of junk in this bit of a house?" But Margaret was equal to the occasion. She made a little visit to the storekeeper, and explained that she really didn't care for a whole dinner set, but would be glad to make a selection of such dishes as she wanted to the value of the prize awarded her, which request was readily granted, so that she now has a very good selection of serviceable dishes and cooking utensils.

One of Joe's pet theories is, "If you own more of anything than you can use, it owns you." Which sentiment Margaret endorses, but also adds slyly, "But if I let Joe wash the dishes once in a while, we'll soon not own any more dishes than we can use!"

JOE AND MARGARET

Joe has very clearly-defined ideas about house-furnishing. One of them is that there should be nothing on the sitting-room table other than a box of matches, an ash tray, a package of tobacco, and two or three pipes. Occasionally he may concede in addition a pair of compasses and a tape-line. Joe also has ideas about the family washing. It secretly troubles him that Margaret has to do her own washing, owing to the fact that there is no wash-woman in town, and he confided to me that he didn't understand where Margaret found so many clothes to wash. "Why," he said, "there's nothing for me but a couple of little union suits that you could hold in one hand, two or three pairs of hose, and a few handkerchiefs. My shirts and collars go to the Chinamen. And yet there are lines and lines of clothes out there that suggest clothing for a family of ten persons."

This confidence having been communicated to Margaret, she replied cheerfully, "Joe forgets that he also uses sheets and pillow-slips, and towels and table napkins, and that the dishes must be dried with towels which also must be washed, and that women and little girls use more washable under-linen than men do." She on her part confided to me as a great secret that, on the whole, she rather enjoyed wash-day. It was such splendid exercise!

There is a cellar under the house, reached by a trap-door in the floor of the store-room. This was built as a refuge in time of hurricane or cyclone. I asked Margaret whether she thought she would be likely to see the storm coming while it was yet far enough away so that she would have time to repair to this refuge. She answered that she herself had asked Mr. McLeod this question, and he had replied, "When you see a heavy black cloud coming toward you, with telegraph poles and various kinds of animals in it, and travelling at the rate of ninety miles an hour, then you may reasonably conclude that it is time to go into the cellar!"

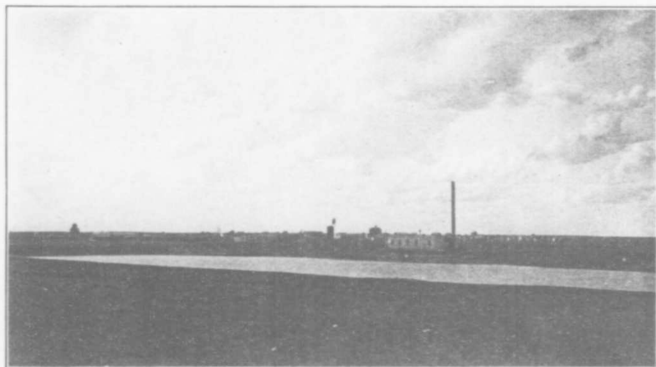
We haven't had a cyclone yet, but we have had two fine rainy days which have given me leisure to write my letters and diary, and to enjoy the wonderful cloud effects, which the open sky of the prairie affords unlimited opportunity for doing. The ladies who come to call appear not to understand me when in answer to their inquiry "How do you like the stormy day?" I say, "I love it." They look at me as if doubtful of my sincerity.

What'll we ever do with ninety-six pieces of junk in this bit of a house?

Margaret's house is quite a rendezvous for the townspeople who have time to make calls. The young unmarried men come, I secretly suspect, because of a sneaking fondness for Margaret's muffins and other things, and also for a romp with little Margaret, and a smoke with Joe.

Every other person you meet in Kindersley has the prefix "Mc" to his name. What wonder, then, that little Margaret has got the impression that it is a title of courtesy, so that Miss Jean Cairns, the nearest neighbor to the South of us, is called by her "McJean." She walked with me to Jean's house the other day to get some milk, the trip being rendered necessary by the interesting fact that two tiny mice had found a milky grave in our nice sweet milk during the previous night. Jean gave us the milk, and also a jug of nice fresh buttermilk, as she had just made butter that morning. Jean has reached the mature age of nineteen, and keeps house for her two brothers, a cousin, and a hired man. She does it beautifully, too. I asked her whether she ever got lonesome, and she said no, she was too busy, which I am quite ready to believe. She does the washing, ironing, cooking and general housekeeping and mending for the four men and herself. She took us out to see the baby colt, whose name is "Pride," so I "snapped" a picture of him and Jean together.

The buttermilk was delicious. But that is only one of the delicious drinks we have. Lime juice, raspberry vinegar, lemonade, ginger ale, grape juice, tea, coffee, cocoa, and sweet milk all form a part of our diet, and I have hardly been aware of the fact that there was no decent drinking water available. I have gone with Margaret and Joe several times to the Reservoir to get water, which they carry in pails to the house. Every drop used by Margaret for cooking purposes is strained by her three times through a cotton cloth, and the water used for making our various drinks is first boiled and then cooled. Of course as soon as the pumping station is in active operation, this individual carriage of water will be unnecessary, and Joe tells me there is a fine filtration system in connection with and a part of the plant. It is this pumping station and the electric light plant which Joe is here for the purpose of installing. It has already cost the little city $110,000, which is a lot of money for a small community of eight hundred people to raise. In his official capacity as resident engineer for the John Galt Engineering Company, Joe attends all of the meetings of the City Council, which are held weekly on Monday evenings.



The Kindersley Pumping Station and Electric Light Plant,
as seen from the porch of Margaret's house

Joe is really a very good manager. He likes to find someone waiting up for him when he comes home late at night, and as the Council meetings frequently detain him until nearly midnight, he soon hit upon the expedient of bringing home ice cream on his return from these meetings; and as the ice cream is really very good, it would be contrary to Margaret's ideas of economy to have it go to waste. But with all his good management, Joe isn't clever enough to prevent Margaret and M. A. C. from going to Edmonton with me. We're really going next week, and Joe has suddenly become terribly affectionate. They're spooning now, in this very room, utterly regardless of my presence, and in spite of my threat to talk about it in my diary. Joe says he thinks I'm very selfish to write so much to myself, and not anything to anybody else. He also said he often wondered how it was, Margaret and I being sisters, that I was so very cold while she was so affectionate and responsive. I replied somewhat tartly that it was no part of his business to know whether I was affectionate or not. With which he subsided, and I supposed he had been suppressed, but I hear him and Margaret giggling about it over in the corner, so I suspect the attack will be renewed later on.

Saturday. After supper this evening we were all enjoying the sunset from the porch, and Joe was sitting, as usual, with his feet on the railing. M. A. C. had tried her best to imitate his position, but the height of the railing had failed to accommodate itself to her miniature length, and she landed sprawling on the floor. Daddy was wiping away the tears and comforting the bruised places, when she had a sudden inspiration, and looking up at him, hope shining through the tears, she said: "When Mawgut's a big lady she tan put her feet on the railing, tan't she?" "Sure thing!" Daddy answered, while Mother and Aunty Allus escaped to the kitchen to wash the supper dishes and to consider possible means of correcting the defects in Daddy's educational propaganda. Her Daddy's teaching and example are reflected daily in little Margaret's vocabulary, but Joe is deaf to any suggestion of reform. For instance, the other day when something quite exciting had happened, and we were all laughing, M. A. C. looked around the circle, clapped her hands, and exclaimed, "That dets my dote!" And Daddy only laughed the more.

Margaret has tried to teach her little daughter not to interject original stories of her own manufacture into the middle of a conversation being carried on by other persons in the room. Yes-

Jean and "Pride"

terday I was attempting to tell a story for the entertainment of some people present. M. A. C. became tired of being a mere listener, and interrupted by starting to tell one of her own stories about a "dofer," as she calls the gophers. Her mother held up a warning finger, and said severely, "Darling, Auntie Alice is talking." Little Margaret stopped abruptly, looked at her mother, then at daddy, then at me for some possible encouragement, but apparently finding none, heaved a great sigh, and said solemnly, "Proceed." Needless to say, I was unable to do so immediately.

MISS MISCHIEF

Monday. I had intended to go to the village this morning to get some money at the bank, but the wind is blowing such a gale that I can't stand up against it. It's quite fun to be out in it for a few minutes, but it takes my breath away. I wish some of the people who are sweltering in the Boston heat could be here. And Margaret doesn't dare hang the clothes out on the line for fear the wind would tear them to ribbons. She showed me what sad havoc the wind had wrought with blankets and sheets and pillow slips on a certain day before she had come to understand its strength.

M. A. C. has been in mischief all morning. She slept thirteen hours last night, and so was quite ready for a very active day. Every time her mother's back is turned for a minute, the Youngest Policy Holder drops something into the washtub. It doesn't matter at all what it is. Anything will do. And this led her mother to tell me about one day last winter, when every drop of water which she used for any purpose had to be first melted from the snow and then strained. The drinking water was melted, strained three times, boiled, and strained again. On the occasion in question Margaret had just completed the final straining of a pail of water for drinking purposes, and having had a very fatiguing day had settled down for a quiet hour before getting supper. She soon became conscious that M. A. C. was entertaining herself somewhat busily in another part of the house, but gave no special thought to her until little Miss Mischief appeared in the doorway with her tiny broom in her hands and her face shining.

"See, mother, Mawgut is sweeping." The broom appeared wet and Margaret thought it the part of wisdom to follow the lead of the little feet, and tell her to proceed with her work. Gleefully she did so. Sure enough! Every sweep of the little broom was preceded by a dip into the pail of drinking water!

When Miss Mischief is very angry at being interrupted in a particularly entertaining bit of mischief, she has a naughty habit of shutting her teeth together and spreading her lips in a fierce expression of defiance. She has been warned that she must not do this, and so today when it happened, her mother called to me: "Auntie Alice, have you a needle and thread handy?" "Yes." "Very well, I wish you would sew my little girl's mouth up. She's been using it in a naughty manner."

Then there was a terrible wail, and next instant our Youngest Policy Holder was crying on her little bed as if her heart would break.

"Don't sew it up! Mawgut wants the hole there! Poor little dairl! Daddy's little daughter!" Suddenly she paused in her crying, and came to her mother saying, "Tan daddy hear me, mother, dear?" "No," answered her mother, "Daddy's over in the village." That source of possible relief cut off, she continued to cry, but very softly, and finally came to me. "Mawgut won't do it any more, Aunty Allus." "Never any more?" I asked. "No, Mawgut won't sped her teeth at her darling mother any more. What shall we do *now*, Aunty Allus?"

Whenever she reaches the end of her resources in the way of fun or mischief for a minute, she has a way of putting it up to me by "What shall we do *now?*" as though I were equal to any emergency to meet which her initiative might be lacking at the moment.

In the afternoon, the ferocity of the wind abated somewhat, and with hat securely tied under my chin, and coat tightly buttoned, I went to town. The air was really wonderful. There was nothing of chill in it, but only a delicious coolness and strength. I enjoyed the walk very much. In my enthusiasm about the wonderful breeze which sweeps across the prairie, I am afraid I may omit to mention that in the middle of the day the sun is so fiercely hot that I dare not go out of doors without a hat. And for two days during my visit we have been kept in doors until after eight P.M. by the mosquitoes. After eight o'clock in the evening, however, the air becomes so cool that the mosquitoes cease to trouble us, and we take long walks in the beautiful twilight.

When I returned from the village, I observed traces of very recent tears, and inquired, "Has the little girl been crying again?" She answered, "Mother spanked Mawgut." "What for?" I asked. A puzzled look came into the dark eyes, and she drew her brows together as if trying to remember. Then she turned to her mother. "What did you spank Mawgut for, mother, dear?" There was a suspicious tremble in Margaret's voice as she answered, "Because you ran away with mother's clothespins and hid them so that it took a long time to find them, after mother had told you again and again not to touch them." Little Margaret nodded her head in acquiescence. "Yes, Mawgut hid

mother's clothespins" (and her eyes danced at the recollection) "and it was naughty, and she won't do it aden. Aunty Allus, what tuller are your eyes?"

So Aunty Allus and the Youngest Policy Holder went for a romp out of doors to see whether we could get rid of some of that surplus energy which was causing so much sorrow indoors. That was a memorable walk. We played "tag," so that the little legs might have a chance to run until they were weary (it didn't occur to me that I should be tired first). When we were breathless with running against the wind, we just lay down and rolled! And when I was really so tired that I wanted a minute's rest, I arbitrarily changed our "play" to "hide and seek," which gave me a chance to pretend to hide while M. A. C. pretended to hunt for me. Of course there was nothing behind which to hide. Then M. A. C. must be the one to "hide," and I would have to hunt for her on all-fours, and swoop down on her with a wild flourish and "eat her up." And she must always be "eaten" with eager and audible relish. This she enjoyed very much. When I paused for breath, she would say, "Are you hundry for me?" "Indeed I am," I would answer. Then she would apparently take account of stock, and say, "Here's a nice little bit, right here," pointing to behind her ear or under her chin, or somewhere near her elbow, and needless to say, I'd make a jump for it. She asked me to sing that little classic, "Where, oh, where, has my little dog gone?" But we changed the wording slightly so that it ran, "Where, oh, where, has my little girl gone,—With her dress cut short and her hair cut long!" which caused her great glee, and she'd answer from behind an eight-inch sage bush, "Here she is!" The pink cheeks just visible at the edge of the bush were so irresistibly suggestive of wild roses that I called her my little wild rose girl. The name took her fancy, and ever since then she has been "Aunty Allus's Little Wild Wose Dairl."

On the way back to the house, she was careful to announce, over and over again, that she wasn't the "least bit sleepy." During supper time, her head drooped. When she was half-undressed, her mother had occasion to leave her for a minute. In a twinkling she had gathered up her little night-gown, and was out of the door, across the porch, down the steps, and in a flash the gown was deposited in the grass about forty feet away. I saw her from the window, and when she came in, wildly excited, and asked me with eyes dancing, "Where d'you s'pose my wapper's

don?" I answered solemnly, "I'm afraid Auntie Alice couldn't go for any more walks with a little girl who would lose her nightgown on the prairie." The bait took. Immediately she was out again, the gown was recovered, and in ten minutes she was fast asleep. But not before her mother had carefully removed from the little bloomers a silver teaspoon which had been missing since just before supper, and had taken from under the down puff the miscellaneous assortment of articles which had accumulated there during the day. Her mother told me that in addition to dolls and animals, boxes and books, she not infrequently found the coal shovel or fire tongs, building blocks, clothespins, daddy's boots and pipes, etc., which had been carefully "put to bed" by the active little hands during the busy hours of the Youngest Policy Holder's very busy day.

On the journey to Edmonton, which occupied twenty-four hours, M. A. C. proved herself a good traveller, keeping perfectly good-natured always, and making friends all along the line. Once she embarrassed her mother by approaching a good-looking young man who stood beside his suit-case on the station platform, and calling in a loud voice: "There's daddy's suit-case!" much to the delight of the young man's companions. And whenever she spied a venerable looking old man with a gray beard she immediately addressed him as "Grandpa." She likes to eat in the dining car, and always makes friends with the waiters. On this trip the waiter was a fatherly sort of person, and after putting her into a very comfortable high chair, leaned forward to her and said, "What will the little girl have?" Quick as a flash she replied, with a most engaging smile, "Mawgut will dust have a finger bowl, please!" Dinner was brought, and after one quick glance at the somewhat crowded table, she addressed her mother, with some concern, "Mother, who will wash the dishes?"

AT EDMONTON

Arrived at Edmonton, we were met at the station by Talmage and Wallace with the auto, and that was a happy meeting! Albert, who had come up from Calgary on account of our visit, and whom I had not seen for nearly seven years, was shocked to see my gray hair, and Minnie was astonished to find that I had become a "heavyweight." Ethel was neither surprised nor shocked, but just obviously glad and happy to have us come, and sweetly courteous and thoughtful all through the time of our visit. I was surprised and delighted to find Emerson, only nineteen years of age, grown to a height of six feet three.

Before we had been many hours in Edmonton, we knew that we had come into the shadow of a great tragedy. Only three weeks before our arrival, there had been a drowning accident in the Saskatchewan River which involved the lives of two young men who were dearly-loved friends of Talmage and Wallace. The details of the story came to us a little at a time. On the evening of the accident, Talmage had been for a short trip up the river, and on his return to the boat-house landing, found three of his friends and their wives waiting to take the launch. He stepped out, and the six young people boarded her, he refusing their invitation to join them because he knew that Ethel was apt to be anxious when she knew that he was on the river. He saw them start off happily up-stream, but as he watched he observed that they had turned the nose of the boat down-stream. This caused him some anxiety, on account of the fact that the current is very swift, and the river is full of snags, so he put out in a smaller launch, intending to follow in order to be of assistance if anything should happen. Inside of two minutes, it was evident that trouble had already arrived, but before he could reach them, the boat had upset, and all of the occupants, save only one, had disappeared beneath the swirling waters of the river. One man only clung to the upturned launch. From him they learned that the boat had struck a "boom" and they had all become panic-stricken and had taken to the water, the men not appreciating the impossibility of swimming in the whirlpool currents at that point. It was two weeks before all of the bodies were recovered, although the river was dragged continuously day and night during all of that time. Wallace and Talmage were of the searching party. Wallace is a very strong swimmer, but even he says a man is

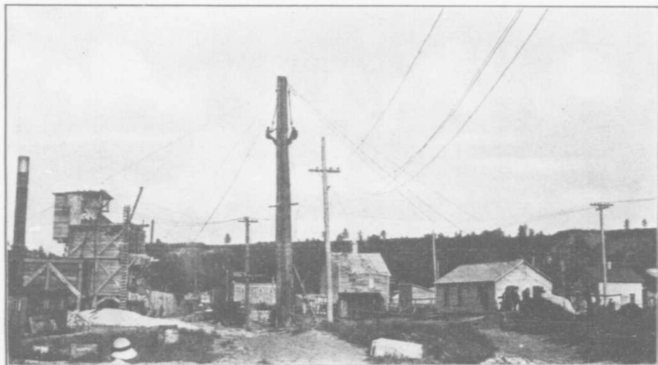
A Bend in the Saskatchewan River

powerless in the treacherous currents of this stream. During the time of the search, thinking he saw one of the bodies at a certain place, he dived for it, but when he attempted to rise to the surface of the water, found it impossible, and was carried downwards again and again by currents which made him turn complete somersaults, until in spite of his best efforts, he was almost exhausted. When he finally succeeded in regaining the surface, he was about fifty feet down stream from the place where he had entered the water. He now says that the sense of helplessness which he felt taking possession of him as he was carried down by the water to a depth of eighteen feet or more, against the utmost exertion of his strength, has taught him a lesson which he will never forget, and he has solemnly promised never to try any more diving stunts in the Saskatchewan River.

Edmonton is a rapidly growing city of about sixty-two thousand people. The boys' residence and the scene of their business operations are on the East side of the river, and Talmage took us for a short drive to the "higher level" overlooking the plant, from which we obtained a charming view of this prosperous little city, stretching its busy length along the West side of the river, and reaching out already by means of substantial bridges towards the East side.

The variety and profusion of the wild flowers here also delighted us. We found acres of wild phlox, growing two feet high, —a perfect glory of brilliant pink color. Then there were wild asters,—of a delicate lavender color,—thousands of white morning glories on the hillsides; marigolds without number; the beautiful fire-weed in great abundance; bluebells; peppermint; a pale pink flower whose name I did not learn; and here also the beautiful "fox-tail" grass.

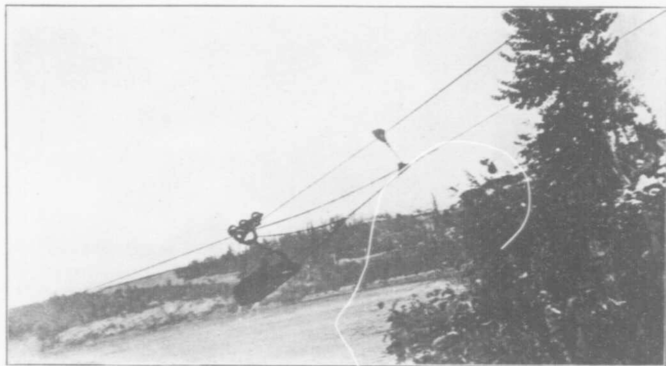
Little Margaret very quickly made friends with eight-year-old Cousin Warren, who treated her in turn with a sort of good-natured condescension, but who I think became really fond of her and her endearing ways. He confided to me one afternoon when we were out driving together, and he held little Margaret on his lap,—not because he invited her, but because she insisted on being there—"Aunt Alice, I never had anyone to love me as little Margaret does." He introduced her to Gyp, the dog, and Biddy, the horse, and to the chickens in the barnyard, and to the boys and girls next door, and she became immediately popular with them all. (NOTE:—If you want Talmage to admire your taste,



The Gin-Pole (and that 40-foot ladder)

remember that Gyp is the cleverest bird dog in Alberta; and if you want Wallace to love you, don't forget that Biddy is the prettiest horse in Edmonton.) M. A. C. and her Uncle Talmage also became great friends, and he usually took her with him in the machine when he had occasion to go up-town on business. Talmage has a somewhat discriminating eye in the matter of women's hats, and he happened not to like the hat which little Margaret was wearing. He said teasingly to her one day, "Where did you get that hat?" Not to be discovered at a loss for a reply, she rolled her eyes, drew her brows together, and answered, much to the delight of the assembled family, and greatly to her mother's embarrassment, —"I dess mother found it—in a hotel!"

The ten days at Edmonton were full of new experiences for us. The boys were very busy installing a new steam shovel which it was important should be put into operation immediately if they were to take advantage of a certain contract for gravel on which they had an option. I spent a good deal of time watching the erection of the gin-pole and the installation and testing of the steam engine. I think the men on the job looked on me as a sort of encumbrance at first; but after I had climbed a forty-foot ladder in order to get a picture of the machine which screens the gravel, their regard for me appeared to alter perceptibly, and we became good friends. It was all highly interesting to me. For up to this time how was I to know that a gin-pole was not a pole with which to stir gin? Or that a steam-shovel was not an implement with which to shovel steam? I was present when the test of the pole and engine was made, and the first shovel-full of gravel hoisted from the river-bed. That was a most exciting moment, when the engine snorted, the cable pulled taut, the pole stood erect and strong, and the great shovel came into view above the surface of the water, up, and up, and up until she finally paused one breathless instant above the hopper, then neatly discharged her contents, and settled back for another trip. I had snapped three pictures during the operation, and in between times had caught glimpses of Wallace's face, and as I saw the look of satisfaction deepen thereon, and knew what it meant to him and Talmage, I could have shouted for joy. I wanted to throw my arms around somebody and give three cheers, but as there was no one conveniently handy except "Dinny," one of the men, who I happened to know was a married man, and withal somewhat bashful, I restrained myself and merely indulged in another snap-shot!



The First Shovelful

On the last day of our visit, work of every kind was suspended, and we all indulged in a real old-fashioned picnic.

Talmage assured us that if we would prolong our visit until the end of August or early September, he would take us on a hunting expedition and show us "twenty thousand wild things," —rabbits, prairie chickens, ducks, geese, and swans. He said it was no uncommon thing for him to have as many as two hundred and fifty ducks as the result of a day's hunting. In answer to my inquiry how he disposed of so many birds, he said that was a simple matter,—there were always so many people who couldn't go hunting and who liked ducks just as well as those who could; that there was no use in giving less than four ducks to any one family; so that by the time you had distributed four ducks to each of sixty families, your own problem was a very simple one!

In answer to my inquiry about the severity of the winters about which I had heard so much,—the boys also told me that although the thermometer occasionally touched 60 below zero, there was very little real suffering on account of the cold, and that during last winter they seldom had more than a few inches of snow.

HOME AGAIN

The hardest thing that came to me during all the long holiday was to say good-bye at the last, and I haven't recovered from the shock yet. The ride home was chiefly notable for the variety and abundance of car dust and cinders which I gathered to myself during the five nights and four days of travel. The heat was terrific, and my dreams (when I slept at all) were of a large pool of cool green water in which I was just about to plunge when I awoke. I had a short stop-over at Saskatoon, where I did succeed in getting a hot bath and a manicure; and at Winnipeg I had a shampoo.

The tedium of the journey was relieved somewhat by the companionship of a young man who was my fellow-traveller from Saskatoon to Chicago. He was agreeable, cheerful, and entertaining, and we became good friends, particularly after I had told him that my three brothers wore the same Masonic emblem which decorated his watch charm. We went to the dining car together, which was very pleasant for me, but when he offered to settle for my check as well as his own, I refused, persistently, and successfully. When he finally said good-bye on reaching his destination, I was sorry to see him go, in spite of the fact that his parting salutation to me was: "You are certainly the most obstinate woman I have ever met." I assured him cheerfully that that sounded like an echo of something I had heard in Boston, but of course I didn't go into particulars, because I wouldn't want anyone to get the impression that there was any foundation for such a charge; the fact being that if there is any one quality for which I am conspicuous, it is my docility. I am the most pliable thing that ever was, only people haven't found it out!

The monotony of the trip was further broken by the fact that our porter found a silver cigarette case in my berth one morning when he was shaking out the blankets. I sat in the section opposite waiting for my berth to be made up, and he handed me the case with a face absolutely devoid of expression. I gravely shook my head and assured him that it did not belong to me. He murmured something to the effect that he'd like to know how it got there. But in spite of my docile disposition, I was determined not to be the owner of that cigarette case, even to please an accommodating colored porter. In about ten minutes thereafter, I observed that the young man who occupied the berth

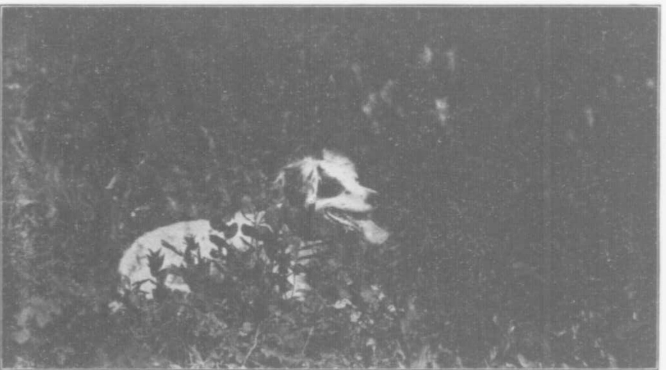
Biddy

adjoining mine was engaged in a frantic search among his blankets, which he had very recently quitted. I directed the porter to him, and the young man received the case with unmistakable signs of satisfaction. How it ever got into my berth I leave to be explained by railroad men who understand the construction of sleeping car apartments.

After a while I ran out of reading matter, and welcomed the magazine boy, from whom I purchased a new supply. I was deeply engaged in conversation with him, while I reached into the depths of my grip for my purse, so that for some seconds I was not conscious that what I had extracted as the result of my search was not my purse at all, but a box of toilet powder which I had bought at Winnipeg. The boy's face relaxed not at all when he observed my confusion, and out of gratitude to him I bought a good many more magazines than I had at first intended to buy, or than I should ever think of reading,—and then later on I left them for him to sell over again.

I have been home about thirty-six hours, and have already had four hot baths, and have slept eleven hours. Somewhere in between baths and sleeping, I found time to run down to the office and have a little talk with Mr. Brandeis before he went on his vacation. Mr. Brandeis's opinion of my ability to read time-tables effectively is represented by a small circle with a blank on either side. When I told him I had travelled over five different railroads to get home, and hadn't missed a connection, he averred solemnly that they must have "tagged" me, "like an emigrant." Even this sarcasm, however, did not operate to altogether rob me of the joy I experienced at his good news concerning New Haven-Boston and Maine matters. But I did not tell him how in the dining car I had absent-mindedly helped myself to the ice from my neighbor's tumbler and cheerfully put it in my own iced coffee, for fear he might get the idea that I was not a fit person to travel alone. This is the opinion, doubtless, of the lady whose ice I stole, but then she is of course a prejudiced witness.

Nor did I show him my letter just received from Margaret, written upon her return to the little house on the prairie, in which she says: "The town is now supplied with water, which the filters have made as clear and sparkling as if from a mountain spring;



Gyp

and as I write I can see the town all asparkle with electric lights, the electricity having been turned on tonight for the first time. M. A. C. asks for you fifty times a day and cannot understand why you do not come. Come back to the wind-swept prairie and your little wild prairie rose just as soon as you can!" Oh-h-h!

August, 1913. Alice H. Grady