

A SUMMER
ON THE
CANADIAN PRAIRIE

BY
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THE joy of earth is yours, O Wanderers!
The only joy of the old earth, to wake
As each new dawn is patiently renewed,
With foreheads fresh against a fresh young sky.
To be a little further on the road,
A little nearer somewhere, some few steps
Advanced into the future, and removed
By some few counted milestones from the past;
God gives you this good gift, the only gift
That God, being repentant, has to give.

Wanderers, you have the sunrise and the stars;
And we, beneath our comfortable roof,
Lamplight, and daily fire upon the hearth,
And four walls of a prison, and sure food.
But God has given you freedom, Wanderers."

TO

MY FATHER

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A SUMMER ON THE CANADIAN PRAIRIE

CHAPTER I

FELLOW-PASSENGERS

"BUT interesting people never come to Canada," asserted the ordinary-looking man with the alert pale eyes. "If you come across any entertaining specimens out there—take my word for it—they have been sent."

"Out of their country for their country's good," I quoted despondingly. "But there was a man at dinner last night——"

"Twenty-two," he interrupted, "and sixteen ladies. The list, however, reads twenty-eight and thirty-six. Your charming sex will be in the minority only for a day or so."

"The man at dinner," I explained, "sat at the end of the table in front of mine, alone. He was walking the deck just now. A very tall man—quite interesting. He was wearing grey flannels and a greenish-grey tie."

"Tall chap—green tie," he reflected, long after quite a

feminine intelligence had dawned in the alert pale eyes. "Oh, ah! I know! Big brute—looks like a prize-fighter."

"We are obviously not on the same line," I replied. "He looks chivalrous, and I noticed him being particularly kind to a steerage passenger who had lost her baggage."

"He had better drop that, or he will spoil his game."

"You said——?" I inquired.

"That I don't think Dering's loneliness will bring him any enviable attention after to-night. He is quite a family man this trip. There must be almost a dozen of them. Mrs. Dering and the little chap, her mother, half a dozen sisters, a cousin, and a friend. You see he is remarkably well protected with feminine belongings—not to say closed in! However——"

"There is tea at last!" I interrupted icily. "I promised to take my sister's to the stateroom."

"Miss Hilaria is on the bridge-deck talking to the captain. Now, if you will allow me to move your chair just a shade more out of the sun——"

"The stewardess was taking tea to your stateroom as I came up," suggested the deck-steward, who was anything but ordinary looking, and prompt to take in a situation at a glance. "But, of course, if you prefer to take it here——"

I smiled my thanks and flew.

It was quite true, allowing a fair margin for exaggeration. But they didn't all appear that night, nor indeed for days. Only Mrs. Dering, with a sister and the friend. Mrs. Dering was quite a pretty woman, the sister reasonably so. The friend wore with submission the uncharitable

definition of the ordinary-looking man—"an elderly girl, plain and prim."

Nanny and Antony appeared at breakfast quite early the next morning. I had booked my bath for seven o'clock, and was already repentant.

"So far I have not caught sight of any particular reason to lengthen the next eight or nine days," observed Hilaria, as she returned from her nine o'clock and none other battle with the bathroom steward, which she had fought to a successful issue with the fine discretion of the selfish. On our first morning I returned from the bathroom to find my tea cold, her cup empty, her curtain drawn, and every indication that she had deliberately returned to the land of dreams, including a small bit of paper pinned to the curtain suggesting that I should dress very quickly indeed, as she had a headache—an ailment unknown with Hilaria!

So that Antony's smile was just in time to dissipate a sense of wrong which threatened me that morning. I had completely lost my heart to him before luncheon, and he gave me every reason to believe that his affection was absolutely and entirely mine long before the arrival of the chicken-broth and crackers, an intervening meal which evidently appealed to him, although it lacked the crowning allurements of tea-time—ginger biscuits! At four o'clock Antony simply abandoned himself to his besetting frailty of the flesh, the love of ginger "bickies." He cajoled them from the deck-steward in battalions. I offered my own share and many another daily at the shrine of my conqueror, and before the end of the voyage there was hardly a passenger who had not dipped freely

into ginger "bickies" solely on his account; for the sun had hidden a beam of its own shining self in Antony's love-reviving smile.

It was on a very stormy Sunday that I missed him first from among the many missing. Throughout the morning a heavy sea washed empty decks, but after lunch the wind went down, the sheltering canvas was fully rigged, and half a score or so of passengers dropped along. I had drawn a chair towards the opening by the deck ladder, and was deep in *The Garden of Allah* when I was suddenly aware that my eyes had been drawn back over my left shoulder to a wee white pathetic face looking ever so sorry for itself amid the rugs and wrappings of Nanny and her deck-chair.

"A bad time?" I inquired of Nanny.

She nodded expressively.

"I couldn't eat no breakfas', nor no dinner, not even a banana, an' I've been smilin' an' smilin' at you all the time," accused Antony, with deep reproach.

I blew him my dearest kiss, with the suggestion that his favourite time of tea could not be so very far off, and that a wandering seagull had asked me to tell him that ginger "bickies" made quite the finest feast after a prolonged fast.

In a twinkling his dear small fingers were stroking my face, and his irresistible fun-loving eyes were gazing into mine.

"There's lots of room for me to come an' be comfy in that chair 'long with you, isn't there?" he coaxed.

We talked at first with sympathy and complete confidence of the woes of *mal de mer*; but as the great ship

pitched headlong into the deep to rise again at the bidding of the oncoming wave, the spirit of the stormy sea cried out to us both, and Antony's swift imagination leaped to its challenge. Many were the tales I listened to on that restless Sabbath afternoon. We had come to the last. A ship in flames of fire, tossed on hungry white-capped waves—a particularly long and perplexingly helpless woman who bore a well-intended likeness to myself—a dashing admiral of five and a half, armed with a gun and a carving-knife—a tiny raft—a giant tin of ginger bickies and a very small jug of milk revealed the potential hero who lies awaiting his great occasion in the heart of one small boy. Suddenly the flame of the incense to the gods died out of his eyes, and there shone in its place more human interest.

"There's my Uncle Stephen," he announced. "You can always tell him by his looks."

The long, lean, well-groomed figure had halted at the far end of the deck to fill his pipe. The wind checked his purpose. Strongly marked beetle brows almost closed together, and a flash of wrath shot from his eyes.

"Isn't he nice!" exclaimed Antony on the true note of hero-worship. "But he's not nicer'n my daddy. He writes for his living about soldiers and battles an' parliaments—big bloody kinds of things. Not about fairies an' children's writing. An' sometimes, when he's tired, he fishes an' cuts down trees instead. My daddy raises horses and wheat. What do you do for a livin'? Just a minute! I must go and watch those ladies dancin' down there."

The arrows of the sun at last had pierced the heavy

clouds. A party of girls who had come out in the charge of a lady matron on their way to work in the North-West were endeavouring to skip themselves into semblance of its warmth. Antony burst the bonds of the rug and perched himself at the head of the gangway.

"I hope the little chap doesn't bother you," said "Uncle Stephen," collecting books and things which had dropped around at the somewhat sudden exit.

Being English, we deplored the unfriendliness of the weather, being less so we passed on to Antony and the surface of ship's gossip, then being merely two persons who "wrote for a livin'," we fell back on ourselves and our own world, with the tribute of an occasional silence.

He had done work for my first editor whom I did not know in the flesh, but who had permitted unusual kindness to escape him which had served me well. We acknowledged a mutual friend in an interesting and delightful woman, whose earliest work, however, he pulled to pieces with about as much mercy as a child dissects a daisy. As his ruthless criticism passed from point to point, I watched his most fascinating hands—refined, understanding, even tender hands, the long nervous fingers charged with life but tipped with cruelty. I remembered having read his own war articles, and the joy of that same woman in the fleeting fame which their power had brought him,—vivid, brilliant, through the clean-cut phrases sabre and sword had gleamed, and the scarlet flame of the battles of the veldt had licked its way through the London fog; but there had been no hint of drip nor smell of human blood.

I watched his green eyes beneath their beetle brows

flash yellow lights at the horizon. It seemed to me that neither sun, cloud, nor sea escaped their criticism; but I noticed that the lashes curled like a child's, and when he turned suddenly towards me I saw that the green eyes of the yellow lights were dark and deep as the sea itself, with a hint of its own inalienable melancholy. It was then that I remembered I had only heard the woman's side of the story.

"Do you know that you are unwise to have left Europe just now?" he said. "The book-market is fed up with Canada. You may get good copy out of life on a homestead. But why bother about copy at all? Better to have waited within the inspiration of the towers of Westminster a little longer, and fought out the battle of your own idea. It's the hardest fight and the longest wait, I know. But when all's done, the only joy of a writer's life worth having is to have won life and light for one's own idea."

"The day of the period of rejected MS. can be too prolonged," I answered. "My work would have been refused by my agent for the third time if it hadn't been for the words of praise your friend and my first editor dropped upon it, fortunately in writing. After many blank months, New York sent me quite a tall cheque for quite a short story. I came to the conclusion that England wanted neither me nor my MS. So I am bound for New York *via* Canada."

"You have chosen the longest route."

"It is the easier way to my destination. In finding out exactly what a father's capital has accomplished on a brother's homestead I earn my fare."

"You will hate New York."

"Shall I? I hope to adore it," I said: "Once a man told me that New York was like Paris without a soul. But no place without a soul can possibly be like Paris."

"So you are going to seek the soul of New York?" he asked, whilst the mocking green and yellow lights flashed again, but well within the boundary of a friendly smile.

"I didn't find the soul of Paris until I was quite poor," I answered, remembering the crushing disappointment of my first visit. "I missed the joy you know, and I was so afraid something must be wrong with *me*. The people I went with were wealthy, and ever so keen that I should see everything to which money plays showman. More was spent in three days in showing me the glories of Paris than I have used in three months when making home there."

"But you can't live cheaply in New York."

"There should be no need. Unless my cheque was a clerical error, work commands a high price. I mean to live—not starve—on my pen."

"If you do, you will profane it."

"Never!"

"Ah! you never know. Not until you have run the gamut of the temptations, and success is its dominant," he said, with a touch of bitterness. "However, you appear to be a most dangerous optimist. There goes the second bell! Dinner will rob you of an inspiring sunset. But the setting of the sun is always an inspiration in the prairie."

"It can heal the hurt of 'dagger days' in spite of fog at Westminster," I said. "I always hope that some day an earthquake will swallow up Queen Anne's Mansions, so that the west door of the Abbey can come into its own again."

"I am afraid your memory is apt to cradle the sun in borrowed plumes," he said. "Be careful. The real is always jealous of the ideal. And you are leaving the fascination of Europe for the force of America."

"Well! What then?" I asked.

"Better get back quickly," he said, "or some day you may find that in exchanging the environment of the ideal for the trail of the real, you have wandered into the bankruptcy court of illusion. And illusion is the lamp of life."

"Why separate the real and the ideal?" I asked. "It may take the very essence of the real to produce the ideal, but oil and flame are one. And if the light is only illusion after all, I don't care. The great thing is to be a bit of it, in spite of things."

"It is a pity," he said, "that you and I may not share our *illusion perdue* of lost soup side by side."

"In matters mundane and at table I expect it is wiser to learn of Canada from the Canadians," I replied.

"You had better take care, or you will be getting talked about," said Hilaria, who was vainly endeavouring to fasten herself into the prettiest of back-fastening blue blouses. I went to the rescue, and waited for more.

"After literally and most deliberately turning your back on everybody day in day out, you suddenly spend

hours *tête-à-tête* with a man who lost every cent he has at bridge last night—and more!”

“Hilaria,” I said, “you have been listening to gossip.”

“And what else is one to listen to on a ship, I should like to know? Of course it is quite too bad if he is amusing, but really he has no sort of reputation. He crosses about twice a year—usually by New York. Never has any money! Never pretends to have any! Although he makes any amount on papers and things when he chooses. But he loses everything—gambling, chiefly bridge.”

“This shade of blue is too lovely, and suits you better than anything. Why don’t you wear it every night?” I suggested.

“I really think I must,” she assented, swallowing the bait with an approving glance at the charming picture in the glass. “Oh, the steward filled in the question you omitted to answer on that declaration form.”

I smiled. The steward and I had a difference of opinion on the subject of one’s age being a matter of either special or general concern. I had met the question many times before in places where its answer may always be safely confided to the chivalry of Monsieur. As usual, I had politely but firmly refused the required information.

“Then I must, miss,” said he; and I had forgotten the matter.

“What was his debit?” I inquired.

“Twenty-three and nineteen.”

“I will never again say that chivalry cannot breathe in a British bosom,” I vowed.

"No, indeed! Quite nice of him, wasn't it? Besides, you can't afford to run down the English when you are among colonials. They are very inclined to be swollen-headed as it is. But fancy thinking you were only four years older than me!"

"Hard lines! It's nearly double that, isn't it? Never mind—I will pay the whole of the tip he has certainly earned. Don't go until you have fastened my gown!" I pleaded.

"Very well—only hurry up. The Canadians get the best of everything at lunch because it is their principal meal, and the best of everything at dinner because it isn't. Last night I swallowed my soup without once opening my mouth, and did without fish altogether. But it was no good! They had finished the asparagus and the best of the fruit long before I had caught up."

Hilaria had "caught up," and was eating asparagus in triumph as I dropped into my chair by her side.

"Yes, it was my first trip, and I don't care if it is my last," our neighbour, a Canadian youth, was saying. "I ain't struck on Paris. I was just remarking to your sister," he continued, "that the meals on this ship are the best I've struck since I quit Montreal."

"But you told me you had been in Paris all the time!" I exclaimed.

"I guess that's right. Twelve weeks and three days."

"But in Paris one gets a meal fit for a god from a franc upwards."

"I guess the gods are more easily satisfied than a Canadian. Wait till you see a twenty-five cent meal in

Canada! Soup and meat and vegetables, pudding and pie, tea or coffee, and biscuits, bread-and-butter, and pickles all in."

"And what about the pastry?" I inquired. It would have been affectation on the part of his table neighbour to appear blind to his leaning towards that section of the menu. "There's no pastry in the world like the pastry of Paris. At Julien's, for instance! I do think you might raise a spark of enthusiasm to the memory of Julien."

~~"I took all my meals at the boarding-house,"~~ he explained. "The business that took me over kept me employed most of the time. I guess the goldsmiths of Paris can teach us some, and you bet I was looking all the time. But Paris is never going to compete successfully with Canada over an apple pie."

"Never indeed!" I agreed. "The comparative degree doesn't exist for Paris—that's a part of the charm."

"Paris is all right, I guess, when you come to know your own way round," said the charmingly pretty Canadian girl who had been a victim of weather for three days, and continued to look the lovelier in spite of the experience. "Just as we were beginning to take interest, it was time to leave. We left Montreal three months to-morrow, and we have done England, France and Italy, Scotland and Ireland. We were doing the British Islands first, but it rained in England all the time when we first came over, and you couldn't see anything but the smuts on your face for fog."

"You were glad to get to the Riviera, I expect. Did you go to Monte Carlo?" I asked.

"Only for the day. Pop didn't think it was much of a place to reside in. Such foolish people losing their money all the time. What's the use to bother and make money and go and lose it all? And my! the painting! You'll never see anything like that in Canada."

I said I was afraid that I hadn't even discovered there was a collection.

"It's the women in the gambling place she means," explained her mother. "I guess they were mostly French and German; English ladies wouldn't paint or play for money."

"We liked Cannes better than any city," continued Miss Canada. "Pop was took sick, and we stayed there three weeks. Then we went on to Rome. We stayed a day and a night in Rome. I guess we saw all there was to see in that city. My! Weren't we tired? I could have cried! We had to take some of the cities two a day to leave room for Scotland and Ireland. Pass the pickles, pop."

"Going back to your corner on deck, I guess?" said her pretty, prosperous-looking mother, without a touch of guile. "See you later."

"Going back to your corner on deck?" inquired the well-intentioned but over-anxious British mother of an only son, as she arranged herself deliberately and most comfortably on my end of the hospitable lounge by the gangway, which he and I had taken to share in silence during the after-dinner hour of music, merely because we each understood that the other came for the music.

"No," I answered; "I am going to climb to my own

corner of my own stateroom. Life can be so inexpressibly tedious at sea, can't it? Don't be in the least distressed at having taken my seat. Good-night."

It was the only occasion on which I saw a smile threaten the lips of that rich young man.

CHAPTER II

A PHILOSOPHER AND A COMRADE

It was the day of the charades, and the last but one of the trip. All the lady-passengers were discussing costumes in the saloon, and most of the men were gossiping in various snug corners of the ship. The deck-steward had drawn my chair towards the head of the gangway, and I had planned the insurance of solitude with an open book.

The interesting man of "no sort of reputation" dropped as easily into the neighbouring chair as though it had been five hours instead of five days since we had talked as friends together. If it was my duty as a self-respecting female to snub him, I certainly failed of it, and in making him distinctly welcome I was rewarded in finding in his smile a kind of relief.

"Omar." He stroked the binding of pale violet with the caressing touch of a book-lover, and lightly turned its pages.

"Ah! but it's not the right edition. And such a perfect binding! You miss the sea verse, which must never be missed at sea. Oh, but you *must* know it! One minute, I'll fetch my copy."

He returned with a small volume in the softest of

tobacco-tinted leather: on the face of it was ironed a device wherein a crescent moon and inquisitive stars were drawing perilously near the fatal attraction of the philosophy of the flagon.

"I like the binding better than any I have seen," I said. "It's so in touch."

"I thought I liked it best until I saw yours," he answered. "But I am a slave to the colour violet. I think its appreciation is one of the few sweet gifts our dull generation has bestowed upon us. Just think! Our grandmothers could only conceive it with ceremony, or at least respect. It had to be purple, mauve, lavender, or lilac. We have it in every shade of its lovely hue, defined, and here and there, thank God, indefinable — those delicate subtle shades that haven't the shop-window of a name you know, so make home for themselves in one's memory."

"Violet won't make home anywhere," I said; "it never forgets its fine quality of delicate aloofness, does it? I confess I love blue. Blue has the brightness of youth and the kindness of understanding. It may not be subtle, but it's eternal. Besides, in a weary world blue can be so physically reviving. A blue room, blue flowers, a blue gown, make all the difference. I believe that we come into the world with the love of blue hid in our hearts 'for remembrance,' and that we learn to love all the other hues through association. Violet, for instance, is the colour of love."

"No; the colour of the soul, perhaps. The colour of love is only to be found in the eyes of love. Although I once caught a glimpse of it in a woman's hair."

"Red-gold?"

"Hardly," he answered. "It was too young to be imprisoned even in a beautiful word—it was just soft and sunny, and did as it pleased, like a child's. She was altogether beautiful—the sort of face that insists upon shining out of the darkness of the most far-away patch of one's memory, you know, and she had kept the smile of a little child, too, in spite of things. She married one of those cold-blooded brutes who aren't even sufficiently human to treat a woman badly. He broke her heart. She died before she was thirty—of whisky."

"Don't!" I cried out; for the brutal truth had seemed to deal the man's own tenderness a blow between the eyes.

"Did I startle you? I'm sorry," he said. "You know the day when we cease to suffer comes to us all sooner or later."

"But not the day when we cease to remember we have suffered."

"Perhaps you are right. But if philosophy's no match for love, yet with philosophy we can deprive fate of the charm of the knowledge of victory, can't we? And here is its quintessence in a gem of its many editions. You will read the preface, won't you? I heard him speak it—it is a genuine scrap of the man. . . . This is the verse that you will never again leave behind you when you go to sea. It won't need a place in the corner of your baggage, it will find room in a corner of your heart."

"Read it," I suggested. His voice was one of his several fascinations.

“Will you have it alone, or with the context?”

“With the context first, then alone.”

“Up, from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
And many a Knot unravel'd by the Road,
But not the Master Knot of Human Fate.

There was the Door to which I found no key;
There was the Veil through which I might not see:
Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee
There was—and then no more of Thee and Me.

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing purple of their Lord forlorn;
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his signs reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.

Then of the Thee in Me who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
A Lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard
As from without—‘The Me within Thee blind.’”

The sea seemed so entirely at one with its lines that afternoon, the beautiful voice at one with both. Again he read the verse alone, as I had asked him. I held out my hand for the book.

On its blank pages and margins was scattered verse and other matter in the fine unconventional handwriting that associates itself with the vital mind.

“I'm sorry, I didn't know it was so intimate a friend,” I said, and closed it, remembering that self-expression is never more clearly cut than in the marked passages of another's thought.

“There is nothing that you may not see,” he said. “One can't carry a library round the world, and we both know that there are some thoughts of others which help

us to unravel our own, don't we? And there are others, too, which in forgetting one would lose too much."

Many of those fragments were proof in themselves of the high place they had found in the memory of Stephen Dering. Much was there from Meredith—verses from the "Hymn to Colour"—passages from "Modern Love"—glowing fragments from the "Reading of Earth." There, too, I found the spirit of great desire sobbing for life on threads of gold in the sonnets drawn from the heart of Wilde's "Rosa Mystica." Sad, sweet songs from Baudelaire. Dowson's "Impenitentia Ultima." On the last page of all was Mrs. Browning's sonnet, "A Man and a Woman."

The arrival of tea broke the spell of silence cast by song. My Englishman resumed the typical rôle of his race.

"One never gets decent tea on board after the first day out," he grumbled.

"Try it without sugar," I suggested. "It gives it a foreign flavour. One forgets that it has ever been the cup of consolation."

"But I never take sugar."

"Then, on the same principle, try it with sugar, or throw it overboard and do without."

"Whose dull bones are you investing with life and grace to-night?" he asked.

"My own, as usual," I replied. "I am not taking part in the charades. Luckily there are more lady-passengers than parts. I lent some frocks, and escaped with a blessing."

"What luck!" said he, with envy.

"You speak with feeling," I remarked. "For whom are you standing—Bluebeard or Jack among the Maidens?"

"That's the first malicious thing I have heard you say," he said, with reproach. "Do you know that I had to summon all my courage to come and talk to you this afternoon?"

"All!" I protested.

"Well. You see . . . you know——"

"Please don't explain. I can see and know all I want when I care to think, but I never do. I have a watch-word—it isn't mine, I borrowed it of Disraeli. But because it wasn't mine I was unusually keen about keeping up. Now it's a bit of me."

"May one know the word?"

"Never explain—never complain."

"Is that Disraeli? It should carry you over the ninety-nine. Mightn't it cost you the one?"

"It didn't cost me the one this afternoon—did it?"

"Are you a Conservative?"

"I might be if I lived on a desert island," I acknowledged. "As it is, I always hope that my Liberalism is sufficiently strong to stand the test of wealth. But perhaps it is as well that the day of temptation defers itself."

"Wealth is the supreme test," he agreed. "It lets loose the dogs of war, and few come out whole from the tussle. Poverty invites the message of the gods—but oh, the everlasting grind! Do you remember Shelley's definition?"

"It's overstrained," I answered, "and especially coming from Shelley. 'Foul self-contempt' is a term to be reserved for Judas, and one hopes that he continued to crawl through it. There are some things poverty can't do: it can't rob us of ourselves—wealth can. Poverty gave us Carlyle and Meredith—wealth robs us of Deberioz."

"He is matchless."

"He is brilliant," I agreed. "But it is easy to be brilliant floating down-stream on a rose-strewn barge, clad in sables, with one's eyes on the stars. Your matchless man was no good at the helm, although he can lead our islands by the ear, and make the world stop to listen on the rare occasions when he condescends to 'drop words' upon men. If he had been baptized in the everlasting grind I believe he would have been the great force of his generation; as it is, in spite of the attractive mantle of disinterestedness—and one is never quite sure whether he would be sufficiently strong to yield up the great possessions which it clothes so gracefully—he is merely the great failure. No, wealth in the nature of things is fatal to true development. It can and it does bind genius itself in its chains."

"It is a bit throttling. Shall I pray that you may escape?"

"Better reserve that force for your own emergency," I advised.

"Oh, I belong to the same strain as the little chap in the nursery-yarn who was beset with a strong desire to possess a whole half-crown. An unctuous uncle bestowed upon him three several threepenny-bits, with the promise that if one was spent with judgment, the desired half-crown

should reward the wisdom of wealth. However, each threepenny-bit was faithfully dissipated in accordance with the character of the boy. Natural disaster followed a superabundance of green apples, toffee, and marbles in turn, and the half-dollar remained in the pocket of the unctuous uncle. I always dissipate my threepenny-bits, and I am sure you do."

"You are wrong," I said. "Bitter experience has taught me to demand value for money."

"I shouldn't have credited you with the wisdom of wealth. Confess it was not equal to the windfall of that tall cheque."

"The gods begrudged me even that," I said. "The letter sought me in vain, and at last discovered me one Saturday evening in Paris, where I chanced to be economising in the Quartier Latin. I lunched and dined for a day or two, instead of lunching or dining. On Sunday I sat in the most expensive seats in Notre-Dame and St. Germain des Pres, and on Monday before it was too late I crossed the Seine to pay my dressmaker, and ordered two new gowns."

"I told you so!" he said in triumph.

"Not at all!" I answered. "I believe in lunching and dining when one can afford it, and I got infinite pleasure out of the gowns."

"And what of the seats of the mighty within the holy place?"

"Your fine phrase signifies elbow-room in listening to really beautiful music,—a right held sacred to those who are prepared to pay for it," I answered as I prepared for departure.

"Just a moment," he said. "To-morrow there will be ships and icebergs and a crowd on deck. . . . I wonder if you would let me give you this book?" He looked down on his Omar a little wistfully.

"I couldn't," I answered. "I am sure that it is hurt at the very thought of being given. But if you will, you may write the sea verse in the Saturn margin of mine. And if you will trust me with it for a while, I would like to make a note of the preface."

"There is one other matter," he said, as he carefully examined his achievement and his pen. "After all, we are comrades of the pen, aren't we? I should like to give you a note of introduction to a man in New York who may be of service to you if you really carry out your plan of putting in a winter there. But don't fall back on newspaper work if you can keep out of it—and in New York of all places! I do know what I am talking about, and it isn't a game that I have failed at either. As a matter of fact, it gives me about the best it has to give. But in my saner moments I can only remember that it robbed me of myself. Newspaper work in any country is the old story over again to a writer—the pottage of Jacob buys the birthright of Esau. But in New York the pottage is drugged!"

"I am not likely to forget your warning or the verse," I said; "and for the introduction—thank you."

CHAPTER III

THE YELLOW SHIP—QUEBEC—"ALL ASHORE"

"GREAT excitement!" cried Hilaria, putting her head into our stateroom. "The doctor's ship! He doesn't examine us. Only second-class passengers and steerage. Neither icebergs nor the first sight of land were in it. Come along!"

On deck every one was gathered in a lump that suspended itself over the deck-rail. The interest of the saloon passengers had fastened on the visit of the doctor with much the same enthusiasm as children on the sea-shore dash to the rare delight of a Punch and Judy show. I hung over the rail with the rest, and chatted with my neighbour who had only been able to leave her stateroom the day before. She looked remarkably flourishing—her eyes were bright with health and some excitement. I notice that the victims of *mal de mer* almost invariably enjoy the compensation of their distressing condition towards the end of a week at sea.

Our attention was caught and held, as one by one a family of eight children ranging in age from about two months to eleven years was hustled from the liner into the doctor's ship *en route* for quarantine quarters in the yellow ship, a floating hospital which lies in wait for

victims of contagious complaints just off Quebec. The baby had measles, and, in consequence, the mother and all the small brothers and sisters went into bond. The father was permitted to proceed on his way to his destination, which he told me was one hundred and sixty acres of land lying about sixty miles west of Regina and four hundred miles west of Winnipeg. His mate had gone over the year before, and had secured him the adjoining quarter-section. Two other sorry-looking individuals, male and obviously unattached, followed the family; but the family held the centre of the stage, and was profoundly impressed with the importance of the situation, from the eldest girl down to the baby, who would have drowned the band if it hadn't been let off duty to look on. As tea was being served I heard a chorus of sympathetic ejaculations, chiefly in the female voice; and a man was only restrained by the brute force of his fellows from involuntarily following his unfortunate teacup into the sea.

"How distressing! She's quite pretty."

"Who? Where? Do show me!" I appealed to my neighbour.

"That girl just going on to the doctor's ship. Evidently a lady! She has caught something in her eyes and may be months in quarantine. There's the father—dear old thing, isn't he? And the brothers, so handsome! Is she crying? No. Her eyes are quite lovely."

"And her teeth," I added. "I expect she will manage to get through her leave-taking with a smile." And she did. But the poor old father was distressingly cut up.

We were already at dinner when some one shouted,

"Quebec!" Hilaria dashed from her oysters to the deck with some half-dozen of the less enthusiastic diners. It was in my first impression of Quebec that the term *sérène* suggested itself in relation to Canada. It wanted a few minutes of eight o'clock. Through the exquisitely clear and delicate atmosphere, between opalescent-tint of firmament cooling towards twilight, and the blue of water already deepening to its evening shade, there came from a convent on the left shore the clear, sweet note of the evening bell. One heard in it the echo of England's curfew, and for a brief moment seemed suddenly far from home; but the same May moon, with Venus still in attendance, smiled down to reassure one that distance was only a move in the great game of illusion after all.

"I had much rather look on Quebec from the deck than examine her in the darkness. Besides, I particularly wish to watch the disembarkation of the emigrants," I told Hilaria, after we had dropped anchor in the dock.

"How absurd! You were looking at them all the afternoon. Everybody is going ashore. Do come! Although, if you don't care about it, there are a dozen who will be delighted to take me."

That decided the matter. I went; and in spite of a threat of headache was glad that I did go, although the only bit of Quebec we really saw by the last faint glow of daylight was Dufferin Terrace, from the Hotel de Château Frontenac.

This lovely home for travellers finds itself at the east end of Dufferin Terrace, on the throne of a perfect site, and in command of a view of an expanse of natural

scenery where hills, river-bed, verdure, and distance are charmed by colour into one lifelong breath of inspiration,—a veritable altar of beauty, and stamped with associations which bear the glorious seal of dauntless, deathless, effectual moments in our imperial history, when we English knew how to fight for causes, for truth and honour and justice, with our eyes on the hills, and not in the bread-basket.

I have stayed at few hotels in Canada, and do not know if many or any of them are contrived on the same delightful plan as is the Château Fronténac; but I have been told that just as the magnificent English hotels are fashioned after Continental palaces, Canada models her latest hotels on the lines of an English home. Certainly at the Frontenac this idea suggested itself in the furniture, the carpets,—Irish carpets,—the pictures, the chintzes, the air of fragrant, home-like comfort; but the appearance of the officials, their accent, their manner, the entire absence of punctilio, proclaimed the fact that we were within a changed environment.

We had dismissed the *cocher* in the courtyard of the hotel, having decided to walk back to the ship. In the inward curve of a street steep as a lane of North Devon, we turned into a small shop and bought a supply of chocolates which were expensive, and post cards which were cheap. At the foot of the street we found the pavement in its first stage of repair, and as we drew near the particular section of the Empire which lies between the foot of the hill and the dock, it ceased altogether. Hilaria's shoes were worthy of any occasion, and her power of expression did not fall short of her

sense of wrong. It will be a great day for colonials, travellers and emigrants and all, when the side-walks of our colonies are made to play their part in the great cause of Imperialism. But it is the day beyond the reach of imagination, unless perhaps in New Zealand. We are told that there is everything in New Zealand, which is only fair, because distance has the strongest claim on imagination, since imagination owes almost every joy to distance.

The greater number of emigrants had already left the ship, but we did not move on towards Montreal until some hours after midnight. I looked in at the emigration shed, wherein a mass of excited humanity discussed the particular urgency of their situation in divers tongues. Many emigrants, who hesitate to take the sea voyage as steerage passengers, are glad to save several pounds of their capital by making the long land journey on the far side in the colonist trains at emigrant fares; and in consequence many classes of English people were represented in the crowd. Little children lay sleeping here and there, on the benches, the tables, and the floor. The tender kindness of the rough men to these little ones was good to see; but those who prate of the sentiment of sex, and would sacrifice to its illusion unpopular efforts towards the amelioration of conditions, should contrive to lose themselves for one brief half-hour in a crowd so representative as a shipload of disembarked emigrants.

"Keep your tongue between your teeth, or I'll damn well knock it down your throat, curse you!" quoth a Benedict well under thirty.

"Is that wot you take from 'im, my dear?" inquired

a friend of the voyage. "'Tis a pity you 'adn't left his ugly face at the bottom of the Thames!"

"Ah, well, men's men, an' wot could a woman do without a man over 'ere?"

My attention was arrested by three brilliantly turned-out ladies, grouped directly under the light. From a short distance, and in the precincts of a New York liner, one might have mistaken them for saloon passengers of the fortune-favoured division, who can afford to travel in the privacy of their own suite. Diamonds and sables fairly caught one's breath, and the feathers beggared description.

"Lovely stones, ain't they, dear? 'E let me 'ave them for 'arf-a-crown an' threw in a feather."

The gentleman in attendance presided over a paper bag of candies, which he passed round graciously to the ladies, after having served himself from bag to mouth. When it was empty, he kissed one of them in the exuberance of his spirits.

"Stow that!" threatened the younger of the other two. I concluded she was his wife.

"Are yer jealous?" he demanded. "Well, 'ere goes, then. Serve yer all alike." But diamond-bedecked knuckles checked the proffered salutation.

There was some little difficulty in making one's way through the crowd, and I caught a last remark.

"'My dear,' I sez to 'er, 'you was quite right, an' I admire yer for leavin' 'im. 'E couldn't 'a treated yer wuss if 'e 'ad been yer own 'usband." And at the bottom of the words there was neither tragedy nor comedy, but merely matter-of-fact, everyday conviction.

I had never been one with an East End of London crowd before that night. In England the East End is always on the other side. Under the roof of the emigrant shed in Canada each and all of us represented England. In the main the women took care of the men, but the men seemed kinder to the little ill-trained, frightened children than the mothers; all of it, the general lack of consideration among families, the absence of mutual respect, the grotesque attire, the noisy helplessness, the murdered language of the mother-country, the squalid degradation, was a bit of oneself. The vaunted strength and chivalry of England, to which every British member of that crowd had birthright, would have been conspicuous in any solitary member of it—never was symbol so far removed from tradition. Is it a wonder that Canada fights with all her fine, fresh strength against class distinction, since she looks upon the unhappy condition of the majority of our emigrants as its direct result? Or turning to the members of our upper classes, who, many of them, leave our country for our country's good, can she be expected to find justification? Is that all you have to show for the other? she asks. Is that your sample of the class that England fosters at the cost of the physical, moral, and mental degradation of your under-grown, ill-speaking, half-starved battalions? We are always hearing that the future strength of the mother-country will be vested in her colonies. Surely it is wisdom to keep this in mind in the rearing and education of her colonist class. If the difficulties over here are insurmountable, why not adopt the suggestion which has been already put forward in the interest of the mental and physical evolution of our

children, and arrange to ship English babies to Canada, where there is at least fresh air, wholesome food, and an education that gives each and all a chance to grasp the opportunities of life?

We walked through a train that was getting ready to start. An official informed me that it was no easy matter getting them off, as they were usually rather helpless through excitement. The family, men and women, as a rule did as they were told, and were grateful; but expressions of discontent occasionally hailed from the unattached division. The officials were good-tempered, patient, and silent. It is man to man with the Canadian official, whether he is directing the English duke, or the emaciated, disheartened Englishman with the weary wife and long line of dependent little people, who, if they only knew it, in the very act of landing on Canadian soil, have undergone the process of transmutation from incubus into asset. The question of the wisdom of state-emigration is altogether too complex to warrant the expression of individual opinion; but there is no man or woman who of their better fate has helped a single member of our unfortunate, long-suffering, poverty-stricken, and outraged lower classes to Canada but has served Humanity.

Throughout the colonist cars came expressions of genuine satisfaction and wonder; grumbling doubtless had its innings before the journey's end. The sleeping accommodation is really good. The sleepers are arranged on the same plan as in Pullman cars. At the end of each car is convenience for boiling water and cooking food. Plenty of good drinking water is provided, and although I have been told that the ablutional water has

been known to run short, the Canadian officials who preside over the disembarkation of our steerage emigrants probably do not consider it necessary to apologise for that temporary inconvenience. I never lost an opportunity in Canada of inquiring into and examining the conditions of immigrants from the authorities, different points of their organisation, and the testimony of the people themselves; and from first to last in her reception and dealings with English immigrants Canada has bound the mother-country to her with "a hook of steel."

On that last Sunday there was no church service on board. The great question of the morning was lunch aboard or lunch ashore. But whenever there is a doubt on this point I notice the ship always lurches towards the responsibility. I remember being dragged out of bed to a six-o'clock breakfast one morning off Plymouth. It was Christmas Eve, and the great point was to get off to Cherbourg and back to Southampton, so that the staff could get home for Christmas Day. A cup of tea would have been a godsend—breakfast was an insult! But the modern liner has evidently borrowed the watchword of the wise wife of the happy man, and loses no opportunity of feeding the brute.

In the vanity of moments, and at the call of charades, Hilaria had unpacked more receptacles than her cabin-trunk; and so had I. Neither of us being strong in the fine art of packing, the urgency of getting in what had been so easily got out took up half the morning. Then, after Hilaria had successfully contrived to turn the last key whilst I sat on the trunk, things cropped up in every corner, the *pièce de résistance* being the eider-down.

"Oh, leave it behind!" she suggested.

"It's a scrap of blue, and a lovely scrap," I reasoned. "No bedroom could be quite hideous, no sleep quite bare of consolation, under that eider-down."

"Then stuff it in the hold-all. Roll the rugs round the lot, and we can pack it properly in the hotel, where one may hope that there will be sufficient room to swing a cat," she said most ungratefully, considering that we had been allotted the best stateroom on board, owing to the fact that some be-ribboned high-and-mightiness had objected to sleep within earshot of the saloon.

My head had been aching all the morning, but I forgot its woe in sheer delight when a Canadian woman, whom I had regarded superciliously as a pretty frump, appeared on deck in a deep blue gown that could have been achieved only by Doucet. One can't always avoid being shabby, but how a woman to whom Doucet was possible could desecrate the short moment of youth and beauty by being unbecomingly gowned at all was beyond my understanding. And she had lived day in day out in a maroon jersey which might have been the legacy of an Early Victorian maiden aunt!

Our visit to the custom-house promised well. The officer was helpful and polite. He explained the system of checks. He watched us fulfil our responsibility in tying them on, and took my word about everything else after diving into a solitary hat-box; then he waited most patiently until every-belonging had turned up but one—the hold-all. Hilaria went back to the ship, but found that it had been transferred in due course, and there seemed nothing to do but to wait until it turned up.

The waiting game was not without interest through the first hour. In the stress and excitement of the custom-house, people are so entirely themselves. The interesting man had driven straight away, without even bidding me a polite and casual farewell; nor had my promised editorial introduction come to me, although I had not failed to send his Omar back to his stateroom. But there are so few people one *can* like, that one should always insist upon liking the people one likes—it's so life-sweetening. So I allowed my bitterness to flow over on to a prim-looking woman who had been rude to me one morning on board, and who was now chasing her belongings from one end of the building to the other, a brown paper parcel in one hand and a shabby hat-box in the other, her hat at an indiscreet angle, her gown short in front and dipping behind. I hoped it would be her fate to carry brown paper parcels in a badly hung gown for ever and ever, and said so to Hilaria.

But Hilaria, who was growing disagreeably tired of the search, took her part viciously.

"Better lose the baggage than your temper," I suggested. "Let the thing go to Hades, and we will go on to the hotel and chance its turning up."

"But my dressing-gown! And what about the eider-down you were gushing over this morning?"

"All right," I acquiesced. "Let us sit on the saddle-box and watch the world pass by."

We saw the ordinary-looking man drive off with a German-looking trunk: his rug was neatly folded over his arm, his umbrella and walking-stick were neatly enveloped in white holland.

"What a spinster!" said Hilaria with disparagement.

"He was exceedingly kind to you," I reminded her.

An Englishwoman who had brightened some dull hours with a beautiful and perfectly trained voice, that had given cause for much discussion as to her probable profession, suddenly collapsed in tears amid her chiffons, which a heartless official was strewing in every direction.

"I told her so," said Hilaria. "But she wouldn't listen. She would insist that it was illegal for our colonies to make us pay duty. Seventeen perfectly new gowns! She showed them to me. I begged her to sandwich them here and there, instead of collecting them into one huge dress-basket—or at least to pack uninteresting things on top. But she wouldn't be warned. She has to pay over ten pounds already, and she is terrified of what she may have to pay yet over a perfectly exquisite dessert service packed by the Army and Navy Stores in one of their own boxes. But I notice the officials don't care about over-exerting themselves. I doubt if they will take the trouble to raise the nails of the lid. Ten pounds!—although the frocks are most of them light and airy, and she said she made them herself, which I didn't believe. Do you see that boy in Harris tweed with a carpet-bag? He comes every year, and makes enough on a farm out West to pay his return fare and eke out life in England through the winter. He won quite a lot at bridge last night, dear thing!"

A score of people, women as well as men, stopped to pet Hilaria from time to time. At first I appropriated a share of the compliment, until a particularly forbidding

female glared at me through her pince-nez with the obvious intention to ignore.

"How unmistakably British!" I remarked to Hilaria.

"What can you expect?" she said. "You were quite the most unfriendly person on board yourself!"

"I never feel well at sea, although I don't make a fuss, and the first law of selection is to 'avoid well,'" I answered. "But you were sufficiently Imperialist to make up for any shortcomings of mine. The Irishman at the head of our table, half a dozen Canadians, two Yankees, all the Englishmen but one, and last but not least that canny old Scot—all in tow of your smile, Hilaria! Yet to-day in this chamber of annoyance you observe we are both of us looking after our own baggage."

"I am not above liking people to like me," she retorted with spirit. "If one waited to like men until they looked like gods or behaved like angels, one might miss a good deal. Most men are selfish about baggage, yet seven at least have begged me to let them look up that hateful thing. But I should be sorry to let any man I know look up a hold-all that you had put together."

"After that, I refuse to wait another moment," I answered. "You unpacked a great many more unnecessary things than I did, and you know that you unfastened the hold-all after I had finished with it, to put in your dressing-gown. You can wait here for it as long as you please. I am going."

All the heavy baggage was checked through to our destination, so that our open cab was not over-laden. We halted for a moment at the entrance to the landing-

stage. From a street on the opposite side a familiar figure, easily distinguishable in any sort of crowd, came quickly towards us.

"What luck!" he said. "I hoped to get in my people in time to get back and help you through with your baggage. But a wire from New York delayed me. I had to send off various messages in reply. They told me that you had not yet arrived at the Windsor, and I was afraid you might have changed your mind and gone elsewhere. However, I met Lessing, who said you had lost something, and were still in the customs. Have you found it? Can I do anything?"

"Everything is quite all right, thank you," said Hilaria; "the heavy baggage has of course gone on."

"I wanted so much to give you this letter of introduction to Livingstone. You'll be sure to like him, he is such a good sort, and will put you on a right line if you ever should be sufficiently foolish to take up newspaper work in New York. I am ordered off on a special commission to Japan--Yes, it is great! But I have to leave for New York by the Granville Express, so that I have exactly five-and-twenty minutes to get things in line and catch my train."

"Then don't let us keep you, if we may not give you a lift," I said. "Thank you ever so much. Good-bye."

"I never say Good-bye," he answered. "It meant well, but it has grown sad. Canada is to mean every good thing for you, and you are going to tell me all about it--soon or some day."

"There is no doubt about it, he is disgustingly good-looking, and he has the nicest way with him," said

Hilaria. "But if half the stories that were afloat about him are true he is a very bad hat, and in any case I consider him most dangerous!"

"Dangerous?" I inquired a little coldly of my very much younger sister.

"The sort of man, you know, that can make one forget that there are others," she explained. "Pass the Baedeker. They say Montreal cabbies are merciless. You had better let me pay."

"What is the fare?" she demanded firmly, as we stood in the vestibule of the hotel.

"That is for Mademoiselle to say," answered the cabby sweetly, with a bow that lacked no hint of delicate suggestion.

"Brute!" said Hilaria. "Of course I had to give him an extra shilling."

CHAPTER IV

MONTREAL

“AND whatever you do, don't forget to tip the head waiter!” The echo of this golden rule floated to me from across the years, and drifted into the imperturbable expression of the head waiter whom I had forgotten to tip, as he stood sphinx-like a yard or so within the door of the dining-hall of the Windsor Hotel. It had been uttered on one fog-bound English morning on the foot-board of the Dover-Calais Express at Charing Cross, by the husband of the woman who had bestowed upon me in one short sweet season the enduring grace of the beauty of the Mediterranean and its flower-fragrant shore. To the strength of the credit of my sex in its reputedly weakest link, it is to be written down that she never did forget; neither would I have been sufficiently short-sighted to have omitted my tribute to Cæsar on that first night in Canada, but for the acute pain in my head, which Hilaria insisted dinner would relieve.

She selected my menu with discretion, and her own with curiosity. To our disgust, the table waiter appeared with a huge tray of solemn-looking silver dishes, which he plumped down one after the other on our table.

Soup, fish, chicken, entrées, sweetbread, potatoes, green peas, asparagus. There they were, all in a lump together.

"Take everything but the soup back to the kitchen to be kept hot," commanded Hilaria. "We are English!"

The man, a French-Canadian, obeyed with an injured air, and resentful eyes on the clock, which already pointed to the after-dinner hour. Glancing round, I observed an Englishman and his wife who were being served at a near table with the attractive leisure of the European custom. The supreme moment of the choice of wine had arrived. The head waiter advanced to offer the usual delicate attention of inquiry—suggestion—felicitation, and retired with the hall-mark of that gracious bow which conveys the precise degree at which self-respect is set and should be maintained, together with the assurance that a friend is within the courtyard of Lucullus, so that henceforth one will "sup at the table of Apollo."

I repaired my omission at the first opportunity. A basket of strawberries marked the event on the breakfast-table. Cool and contemplative in a petticoat of their own green leaves, they might have been gathered at sunrise in an English garden; but neither the fruit, nor even the fire, which subsequently nearly wiped out the Windsor, could efface from one's memory the dark spot of that first meal served *en masse*.

A great number of business men make a practice of taking their meals at the various hotels and restaurants in the cities of America, and in consequence food is usually excellent, and even luxurious in the big hotels, but not always so daintily served as it might be, which

is in strong contrast to the home detail of Canadian life, when the last slice from an expiring ham-bone would, in nine houses out of ten, be served with as much care as one would set a dish of plovers' eggs before a king.

We paid about fifteen shillings a day each for our bedroom and board. The bedroom was on the fourth floor, and at the back; but the lift was near at hand, and the room was large and airy. No bathroom was attached: there was, however, a constant supply of hot and cold water laid on in connection with the convenient and capacious hand-basin, and the general bathroom was within a few yards of our door.

Green in my memory of one's impression of Montreal are the lawns and gardens of the dwelling-houses. Trim and well kept, they run down to the edge of the public street, and there lie side by side with the slovenly sidewalks, without fence or any other barrier between. Particularly verdant and beautiful was this turf within the precincts of the park which skirts Mount Royal. To our shame be it acknowledged that neither of us made the ascent to Mount Royal, although we were in the neighbourhood of the mountain elevator several times during the day. But after a week or ten days at sea the first day on land is usually very tiring, and when one has only a few hours to spend in a city of so many claims to interest, it is wisdom, I think, to try and feel the whole, rather than to attempt to examine its parts.

A symbol of Woman's Work in Montreal commands one's warmest admiration,—the Hôtel Dieu, founded in the seventeenth century by two French ladies, Mademoiselle Manée and Madame de Ballin. A great

number of patients are treated there annually, and it is very sweet to remember, amidst all those magnificent buildings which stamp Montreal a wealthy city of the nation whose sum of wealth is still undreamed of, that the Hôtel Dieu was there first, and that it must have yielded a bigger "turn-over" and a higher "net profit" than any of the rest, that it has endured for over two hundred years, and was thought into life not by millionaires or mayors and corporations, but by two women. One is inclined to wonder if they had to approach the Ministers of State for their gracious permission to build, and if so, how many weary miles of red tape guarded the place and the hour in which they received permission to bestow this blessing on their city, which yet endures for the relief of human suffering and to the honour of Woman.

It was in St. Catherine Street that Hilaria stopped suddenly before a window and gasped—

"A dollar! They must be mad! Why, the embroidery is by hand, and look at the cut!"

In the window of a big store were displayed about twenty muslin blouses in the palest tint of champagne. They were perfectly cut, and it was a fact that many of them were embroidered by hand.

"They are marvellous value," I agreed, "and blouses last. One really feels inclined to buy the lot."

"It would be an excellent investment," encouraged Hilaria. "I am rather short of blouses, and in any case one can always do with them. Besides, these would make charming presents. It would be a sin to miss them!"

“L’Occasion. Mardi à neuf heures. One dollar,” I quoted. “Now what do you suppose ‘Mardi à neuf heures’ signifies? That they can’t be bought to-day?”

“Certainly not. Of course they can be bought to-day. They are in the window. Let us go in and get some now, and try them on comfortably at the hotel. If they are really as well cut as they appear to be, we will come back after lunch and get some more. If not, we will save them for presents. Every one respects hand-needlework.”

We entered the shop and demanded a closer inspection of the blouses.

Closer inspection proved them more fascinating, *bien coupée*, and altogether of even more marvellous value for the price than they had appeared through the window.

“I shall take three with me,” Hilaria said softly, “and chance their fitting.”

We ordered six.

“Ah! But Mademoiselle must be here to-morrow morning early—nine o’clock—in good time! One blouse only will be delivered one customer. They are *genuine* an’ very great occasion, mademoiselle!”

“But we are leaving for the West to-night,” entreated Hilaria; “surely you could let us have two! We are English,” she added in the stress and innocence of the moment. “We have only yesterday landed in Montreal, and we must leave again to-night.”

“Mademoiselle, gladly would I mysel’ let you have many—plenty—all! But only these few are in the store—the others will not arrive until late to-night.

Before nine o'clock Tuesday morning we dare not oblige for to sell. It is not the custom."

"Shall we stay?" suggested Hilaria, as we turned into Dominion Square and crossed towards the Windsor.

"I don't think it would be altogether advisable," I answered. "Lal is certain to be wanting to get on to his land. It is nearly June now, and I don't expect we shall get a crop this year if we are much later, although I believe everything is supposed to grow in five minutes over here. If we go over Lake Superior, we can't possibly get to Winnipeg before Friday, and he says there we must lay in stores. And there is still another three hundred miles to get over between Winnipeg and Lipton."

"You must have noticed the blouses were short in the back," accused Hilaria.

"Don't be silly! I suppose I know clothes. That embroidery was worth half a dozen new backs. But if we stay another night, remember we *only* get one each, so that they will cost us not one dollar but four and a half. Also we shall probably have to stay in Winnipeg over Sunday."

"True," agreed Hilaria regretfully; "but I shall never forget those blouses." And she didn't. Nor did I.

It was after four o'clock when we turned into Notre-Dame. Just as never within the limit of time and space can there ever be another Paris, so can there be but one Notre-Dame. Monstrous, material, strange-featured, familiar, unlovely, most lovable, grand yet so near, it is as futile to attempt to reproduce the form of "Our Mother of Paris" by the mere placing of stone

on stone as it is to attempt to copy the indefinable beauty and dignity which time, grief, and love have bestowed upon her within her walls. Colour like love gives itself, it is not bought; and who may borrow the likeness of peace? The tears of sorrowing men and women of all nations and all creeds have contributed to the mystery of her beauty, the spell of the charm which is so peculiarly and incomparably her own, and which neither kindred nor strange nation can wrest from her. Never had she seemed so far off, or so dear, as on that afternoon when one sat in the church that had been built in her image—"remembering Zion." Not until that hour did I realise what one owes to the encircling arms of European environment. How from ideas, example, culture, charm, from the wealth of beauty in the works of men who are with us, as well as those who have passed out, one breathes in inspiration, strength, and the courage of life. "You are leaving the fascination of Europe for the force of America. Better go home." The echo of the words of a man who I knew in my heart, had failed of himself was in the air. I felt a sudden misgiving that I had no strength to attract, was armed with no weapon to resist the force of America. I had an unutterable longing to turn tail and go home.

CHAPTER V

FORT WILLIAM—BY THE LAKE ROUTE TO WINNIPEG

"ARE you quite certain that the cabin-trunk is all right?" I asked Hilaria. "You know the lock is broken. It seems a little casual to leave it lying round. Besides, the sheets are at the bottom, and we should be so utterly miserable without sheets."

"I asked the hotel porter twice. He said it would be quite all right. Surely he knows!"

"One would suppose so," I agreed. "Still, it looks a little forlorn on the platform, doesn't it? And I know I saw something very special in Baedeker about checks."

"Oh, that merely refers to the registration of heavy baggage. Personal paraphernalia goes along in the ordinary way, as it does everywhere. It is quite an hour before the train starts. No one else has arrived yet, and I am dog-tired! Shall we toss for the lower berth? What a pity we hadn't reserved two! If I have to mount, I had better take the dressing-case, hadn't I? Do you suppose those coloured gentlemen loaf round all night?"

At that moment one of them approached with a ladder. Hilaria drew the upper berth, and made the ascent with

ease, but unrobed with much grumbling. I heard her thank the powers that it was only for one night, and the last sound I was conscious of bore the information from above that the next night there would be no draw, because if we couldn't secure two lower berths, it would be my turn upstairs! As a matter of fact, I never sleep better than on the Trans-Continental express, whether I happen to be located upstairs or down.

We arrived at Toronto at about seven o'clock in the morning of the 24th of May. We had slept until the last moment, but found that there was no occasion to hurry off the train, as it was not leaving for some time. So, on the advice of a fellow-traveller, we merely got into our garments, and postponed the details of toilet until we arrived at Toronto, and the commodious and most convenient women's dressing-room attached to the depot.

We took breakfast at a tiny meal-parlour on the station. It was run most successfully by two women. Fried trout, good toast, excellent coffee, and strawberries and cream was the menu, and fifty cents was the charge.

I was paying the bill with a compliment, when Hilaria appeared in the doorway with the symptoms of haste.

"Hurry up!" she commanded, "or we shall miss the train."

"That can't be," I protested. "We have sufficient time to drive round the Harbour and through the principal streets, and still get down to Owen Sound in time to catch the boat. It is but a three hours' journey."

"The train moves out in three minutes. I have asked twice. There is a terrific crush. I didn't think there

were as many people in Canada. Excursionists teem! I doubt if we shall get seats."

"But there will be plenty of room in the Pullman."

"There is no Pullman. Do come along!"

"Have you sighted my cabin-trunk?" I demanded, as we passed the barrier and prepared to force our passage along the crowded platform to the car.

"No, but it was fully labelled, and your name is on it in full. It is sure to be all right! This is our car—the two end seats. We should have had to stand if it hadn't been for me. It is evident that one has to look after oneself in Canada."

That short journey is not to be forgotten. There were seventy-six people in our car. It seemed to me unjust to charge several pounds more for a first than a second-class ticket, and still stow passengers all in a car together like wheat in a sack. Rebellion gradually gave place to rage. I inquired for the accommodation due to the many dollars' difference which we had paid on our tickets.

"It's Victoria Day!" announced the conductor.

To my shame I answered, "What?"

"It's Victoria Day—Queen Victoria's birthday. Public holiday over here same as it is in the old country, I guess. Excursions start to-day. I reckon you might make this journey three hundred and sixty-four days in the year and not guess there was such a crowd through Ontario."

"Every one must give way to a special occasion," I allowed grudgingly—the heat was intolerable, all the people talked at once, and there were many babies and

two mouth-organs in our car. "In England," I explained, "this Lake route to the West is quoted as being one of the few *perfectly* arranged journeys in Europe or America."

"Going on to Fort William, are you? Then you should have waited for the boat special—dining-car, parlour-car—only one stop. My, but it was a pity you didn't inquire!"

"I asked the only two porters I could see on the station," said Hilaria, "and both the women in the breakfast-parlour."

"Well, now! And you didn't observe the bureau of information, I guess."

"It seems to me that the privileges of first-class passengers are very limited," I said, "considering the very considerable difference between first and second class fares."

"It was planned in the early days that there should be only one class. But it didn't altogether work out, I guess. Some passengers want all they can get in the way of comfort, and I reckon they don't trouble about what they're called upon to pay. Others just want to get to their destination for as few dollars as will take them. First-class in this country means the general car. A first-class passenger has the privilege of paying extra to travel Pullman by day or night. A second-class passenger has not that same privilege, but the dining-car is open to all alike. It's a real shame you didn't wait for that boat-train; I guess you would have better appreciated the trip."

At Owen Sound we watched the unloading of the baggage

with hope tinged with alarm. The trunk was not among the few. I spoke of my anxiety to the purser of the boat which was waiting alongside. He said if it had arrived in Toronto, and was labelled so explicitly, it would be quite certain to arrive by the boat-train.

Having seen our hand-baggage safely placed in one of the dainty little staterooms which opened out of the saloon, we set out to wander around Owen Sound.

The brilliant sunshine, blue sky, and shining water, together with the vivid green of the maple trees, which lined a restful-looking road bordering towards picturesque dwelling-houses, has left a delightful impression of Owen Sound; although the town itself is ordinary-featured, and not particularly interesting to travellers. We lunched, bought post cards and dispatched them, then awaited the arrival of the boat-train from the deck of the steamer.

"Look at those jolly basket-chairs and think how we came down!" said Hilaria, as the train came leisurely along towards the pier. "Shall you ever forget that crush? And not a dozen in the Pullman all told! But I don't see your trunk."

Nor did I. The purser, who was kindness itself from the first moment in which he took part in quest of that trunk, approached us with concern.

"I can see nothing labelled or directed according to your description," he said. "Let me see your check."

"The check!" gasped Hilaria.

"I told you so," said I.

"You failed to check it at Montreal!" exclaimed the purser. "Then it is certain that I can do nothing for you

but wire full description to the baggage department at Montreal, and direct them to dispatch it by overland route to Lipton."

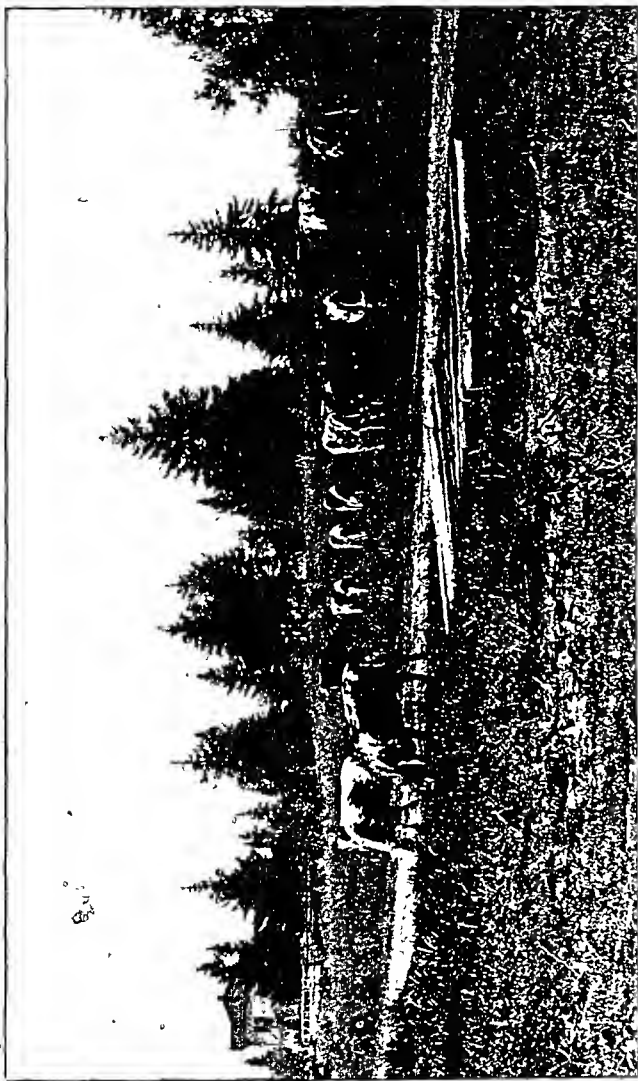
"I suppose we should have made more careful inquiry about the check system, as it is entirely new to us," said Hilaria. "But it will be most inconvenient to be without that trunk in Winnipeg. Is there no way of getting it there before us? I thought the Lake route took over a day longer. Won't that give the trunk time to catch up?"

"If it is labelled Lipton, better have it sent straight away there," advised the purser. "It will prevent confusion, and it certainly will not reach Winnipeg in time to be of service to you. We all get tied up in the check system when we first come over. But it is a fine arrangement! The railway company accepts the responsibility of the baggage, but it expects its owner to take the trouble to see it checked and to look after the voucher."

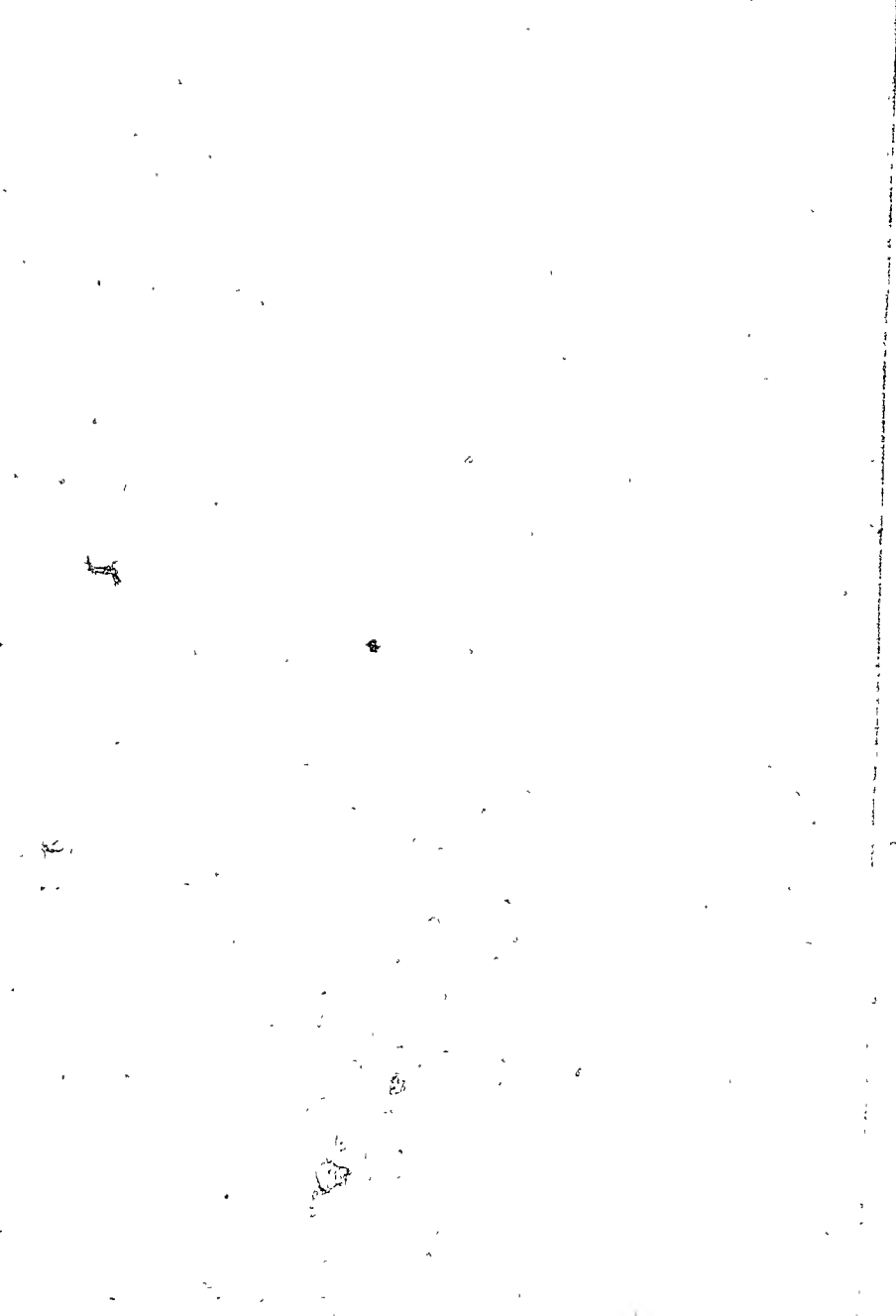
After that first afternoon the sun withdrew behind a dull grey sheet of cloud, and we found the crossing distinctly disappointing and a little dull. To appreciate the Lake route to the West one should not make the trip before the end of June. By the time we made the passage of the locks at Sault-Ste-Marie, and passed into Lake Superior, the weather had turned bitterly cold. Also, deprived of the glamour of the sun, the scenery in crossing this Lake is disappointing. In places it is one hundred and sixty miles in width, and one might as well be on the high seas as far as the coast-line is concerned. It chanced that just before I left London I had fallen

across two charming impressionist sketches "On Lake Superior." Light and of the fantastic quality of dreams, I was wide-awake for the delight of passing through so romantic and unusual a blending of land- and sea-
scape. Towards the end of a long, cold grey day, I felt I had been sold. But there is no doubt that one loses something of the beauty of land and water effect in journeying by water. I never found the Rhine so enchanting again as on the autumn afternoon when it first flashed past one's vision through the windows of the railway-car; and on a subsequent rail-journey around the coast-line of Lake Superior, I came ~~to see~~ and understand the beauty of which the artist had given hint in his sketch. It was winter then, a day in late December; the sky was so brightly blue that had it not been for the hard quality in its brilliance, one might have dreamed it summer-time; but the breath of winter had passed over the great inland sea, and it lay arrested in its ice-sheet, hard and impenetrable as the rocks which in June-time lend grace of dazzling foam to its waves. It is a land unearthly bright, without a sign of life, yet in its utter loneliness victoriously, magnetically alive, as though charged with the quick breath of unseen hosts flashing suggestion against the dull understanding of those who pass by. It is a land of vivid life and rest. Amid those jagged, scornful peaks there gleamed in the brilliance of a yellow sun white lawns of silence, where one would gladly have dropped lightly from the dark monster crawling back towards the dulness and din of civilisation, and been content to dwell for evermore.

Justly noted for the excellence of their appointments



A CATTLE FARM IN ONTARIO



are the boats which work the passage of the Lakes. The staterooms are equal to those of a first-class liner, the cooking excellent, the food simple but always fresh and of the best quality: the noted white fish of the Lake usually forms an item in the menu of at least one meal during the day. Our fellow-travellers were for the most part holiday-making Canadians, who viewed us with a distant air. I don't think even Hilaria made friends on that section of the journey, except with the babies who were adorable, and our friend the purser, a Scotchman, clever and kind. The stewardess eyed us sourly at first, because whenever things became too dull or too cold, we took a hot bath by way of diversion.

"Three hot baths in one day!" she exclaimed acidly.

"That need not trouble you, if you would leave me a key of the bathroom," I replied.

"A nice place I should have if everybody could get in! I hope you won't forget the stewardess?"

I scorned the suggestion.

"Ah, well, a good many passengers do. You're English, I guess. My! but the English can hustle some! But it's always round other folk. They don't do much themselves."

The bathroom also opened directly out of the saloon, and I wondered if a friendly Canadian, who gave me a hint concerning the—in Europe—inevitable system of tipping, had overheard our exchange of sentiments. His information certainly threw a light on the resentful manner of the stewardess.

He guessed I didn't know that it was not the custom to give tips in Canada. Officials and others get good pay

from their respective employers, who do not look to the general public to pay their hired people.

I thanked him, and said it must save the Canadian public a good deal.

"I guess it's in a great measure owing to that tipping business that so many Englishmen find it pretty hard to behave as man to man. Guess you could keep a few of them without their pay altogether, if you tipped them pretty frequent to forget it."

This frank summing up, and a note in the tone in which it was uttered, was as a douche of cold water down one's back. With whatever significance of accent one may permit oneself to make use of the distinguishing adjective "English," it had never even occurred to me that people of a kindred nation could utter it without burning incense at the altar of the people of the mother-country.

During the process of the transfer of our hand-baggage from the boat to the railway-car, which was waiting to run us up the siding to the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, I passed on my newly acquired information to Hilaria.

"Do you mean to tell me that you are just going to bid good-day to the man who has collected all our belongings, and is putting them into the car, without giving him anything?" inquired Hilaria.

"It is the custom of the country."

"All right! Only please don't look as though you belonged to me."

"You don't understand," I said. "They are awfully well paid, and resent tips just as you or I would."

"Speak for yourself," she retorted, "and do as you

please. But if you allowed me to collect all our paraphernalia, to stagger under dressing-bags and rugs, and a luncheon-basket, and even books, from the boat to the platform without giving me a tip, I should throw the lot in front of the engine under your nose."

"Please don't speak as though I begrudged the tip," I requested. "I told you what a Canadian told me, and I must say I like the principle of the thing, and I think it would be a very good thing if one insisted on decent wages, and despised tips in England. However, perhaps it will be better to begin in a less difficult place. I'll give the man half a dollar. Only I hope he won't refuse it. One would feel so awkward."

"Show me the railway official who would refuse a tip," challenged Hilaria; and a Canadian bird in the air must have picked up the glove, for within a few hours, to her astonishment and my embarrassment, we had met the man.

At Fort William we had to wait for several hours for the Trans-Continental Express. The day was not of the brightest, and heavy rain had made havoc of the roads. We walked along the sidewalks, and examined with criticism, not untinged with disdain, the embryonic city which is already the chief point of transport of the Canadian wheat market, and doubtless bids fair to become one of the wealthiest cities of the world. But we knew little of the laws of the world's commerce, and could not appreciate the fine point of vantage that Fort William enjoys as a trading city, and also having no knowledge of wheat elevators, the Fort William monsters were only among the uglier features of a modern, colonial, commercial town.

"Did you ever see such an untidy, miserable, one-sided hole?" inquired Hilaria, as we sat on the side of the railway trail about a mile from the station and watched the cocks and hens strut in and out of the stray back-gardens on the outskirts of the town.

"I think the sun makes all the difference to Canada, as it does to most places," I answered; "but the town is an abomination. Everything is so tiresomely new, the church, the houses, the shops—even the sidewalks. And although it's prim, it's untidy too. Do you think that Lipton can be as unprepossessing as this?"

"I don't think any other place in the world could be," she answered. "Just those huge elevators, and the hotel which looks as though no one lived in it, and the church which is like a chapel in the suburbs of a provincial town, and you've finished. All the rest consists of wood sidewalks, and straight rows of little prim wood houses. That scrap of mountain is the only redeeming feature; but you know it is much farther off than it appears to be, and I am not sure that it doesn't give one the hump."

"Oh, let us go and look for tea," I suggested, "or we shall be playing the part of Lot's wife."

We attempted tea from our luncheon-basket in the waiting-room of the railway depot, but finding there was no methylated spirit we sauntered back to the town, hoping to find a tea-shop other than the restaurant which faced the depot, and did not meet our approval.

A Chinaman stood at the door of a wooden habitation which reminded us of the proscenium of a theatre. It was labelled "Laundry," and various slips of paper pasted across the windows and face of the building announced tea and

coffee, steak and onions, pork and beans, and various other delicacies were to be found within. We ordered tea and bread-and-butter, which a second Chinaman prepared behind a screen. The cups were a quarter of an inch thick, and badly damaged; the tea, usually so good in Canada, was poor; there was no tablecloth; the bread was two inches thick, and the butter appalling. We paid a shilling each for our entertainment; but it is only fair to add that at the hotel we should have had a substantial meal, quite nicely served, for the same money. Good meals at a most reasonable charge are always to be had in a Canadian city.

"Shan't I be thankful to turn into my sleeper!" said Hilaria. "Remember it is your turn up."

"I daresay we shall be able to get two lower berths. The crowd from the ship must have passed through yesterday—those who left Montreal on Sunday the day before."

"Possibly," said Hilaria. "But after three hours of Fort William, relieved by the Chinaman's tea, I have mislaid my habit of being prepared for the best."

As we had travelled by the Lake route, we were not provided with through tickets for the parlour-car, and we omitted to take them at the depot office, being under the impression that they were usually procurable on the train.

The train was several hours late. A coloured gentleman helped us in with considerable attention. The curtains of the sleeping-car were already drawn.

I inquired for sleepers.

"Not got your tickets!" said he, with apparent dismay.

"Me can give them to you. Train very full. Sleeper tickets ten dollars each to-night."

"Ten *what!*" inquired Hilaria.

"Ten dollars each," he repeated.

"Then we will dispense with them," I said. "Four pounds is too high a figure for a night's rest, even after seven hours of deadly dulness at Fort William."

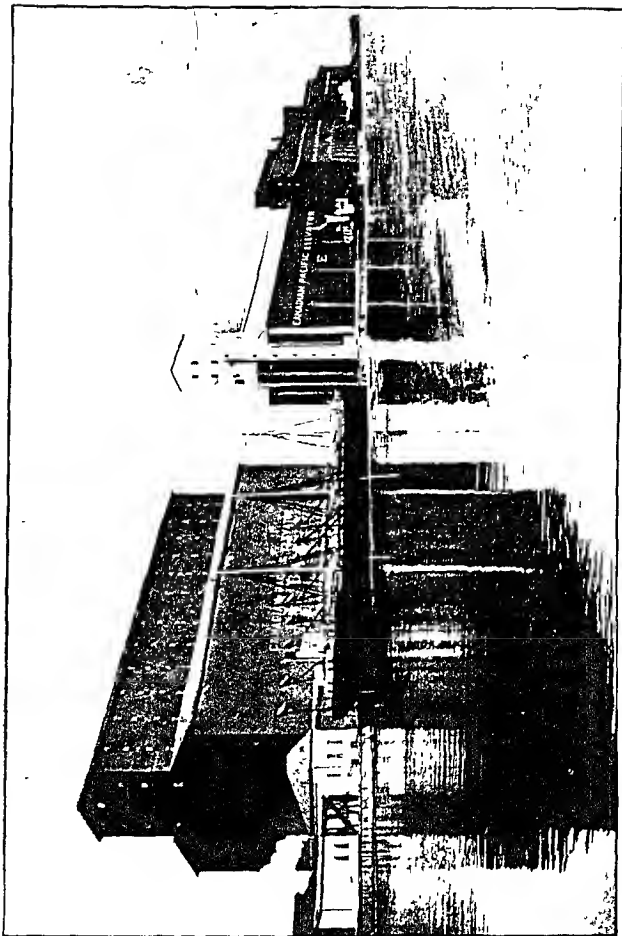
Hilaria agreed with me, and we walked through into the first-class or general car, which is designed very much on the same plan as in the *vis-à-vis* section of the London District Railway coach. It is possible for little children to sleep full length on half a section, but the constant getting in and out, the heat and the light, renders a sleeper a matter of necessity to the majority of travellers.

On that night it was past eleven o'clock before we left Fort William. Many passengers were already sleeping. By good fortune two men left the train, vacating the end half-section, which, if draughty, has the advantage that one can turn one's back on fellow-travellers.

"I do not travel colonist, Monsieur," protested the Frenchwoman in the adjoining section. "I pay my fare second-class. I will not permit that you disturb my children this night."

"The train is crowded," replied the conductor, who looked like an English Guardsman. "These passengers have first-class tickets, and they must have fair accommodation."

He insisted that she move some of her belongings to give us more room. Her family already occupied two whole sections, but the necessary change disturbed two charming and very young children who lay sleeping



C. P. R. GRAIN ELEVATORS AT FORT WILLIAM



beside her. I shall never forget her indignation—it was lurid; and yet there was something admirable about her uncontrollable expression of enraged love. I am sure those French babies will get all their fine, fierce mother can grasp for them in the new country.

For over an hour I sat there, deadly tired, cramped, stifled. There is a liberality and expansion about the Canadian method of travelling by rail only to be evaded by Pullman. Every nation of the globe seemed to be represented in those rows of gaping mouths—and heavens! how they snored! Windows were tightly shut by men and mothers, the lights were only slightly lowered. It has been my ill-luck to travel without a sleeper on more than one occasion since that night, but never in the emigrant season. The conductor, who walked through from time to time with the brakeman in the rear, never failed to inquire if we were comfortable! At 12.30 I knew that the night was not to be gone through under those conditions.

“It’s altogether unbearable,” I said in answer to the genial inquiry. “Will you inquire if there is still a sleeper left? We will make one do for us both, but I can’t get through the night under these circumstances.”

“There are three or four left,” he replied, “but, I guess they are all upper berths. I was saying you would be more comfortable in a sleeper, but the attendant said you wouldn’t have them.”

“I think the charge is exorbitant,” I said. “No matter, one must pay it.”

“Three dollars seems a good deal,” he said, “but many ladies share one berth.”

"Three!" I exclaimed. "They are demanding ten dollars a berth to-night because the train is so full."

"Asked you ten dollars! Why didn't you come to me? I will see to your sleepers at once. You prefer two? Here are the tickets, I guess. Can you point me out the porter who made that misrepresentation?"

But I couldn't. The copper-coloured faces seemed to be all equally bland, innocent, and incorruptible.

"Well, you will know another time, I guess," said the conductor. "I am glad to have heard of it. Good-night, ladies."

It was at this point that my dollar was courteously but firmly declined.

"I guess we don't need extra pay for doing our duty."

"I am so sorry," I apologised. "But we were so uncomfortable and you were so kind. Perhaps I may offer it to your subordinate."

"Please yourself. We are all well paid."

And as a matter of fact the conductor of a train has one of the best official positions in the country, and his pay represents a substantial income.

I hid my flaming face in a cool pillow. The sleeper seemed indeed a luxury after the experience in the crowded general car, and it was pleasant, too, to be travelling in a country where the conductor of the train, like the captain of a ship, behaves as a man and a gentleman.

Nothing is more delightful in the long overland journey across Canada than to lie in one's berth and watch the world slip by, but this can only be experienced in a lower

berth. I did not leave mine until nine o'clock, and found Hilaria already in the dressing-room at the far end of the car with several others in various stages of their toilet. Of necessity the convenience and dimensions of the dressing-room on a railway-car is strictly limited; indeed, it is the weakest point in the arrangements for the comfort of travellers.

By 9.30 we were really hungry, and made a breakfast worthy of the occasion. In the travelling season the catering on the Trans-Continental line leaves nothing to be desired. Everything is of the best, well cooked, fresh, and daintily served. The basket of fruit which was brought to us would have probably cost as many shillings in a fashionable London hotel as cents on the Canadian railway dining-car, where fruit was served liberally at a cost of fifteen cents to each person; but jam and marmalade is an extra, and also costs fifteen cents. The most expensive meal, like the most expensive flat, is always the best value. For from seventy cents upwards one obtains an excellent meal, for twenty-five cents tea or coffee and bread-and-butter or toast, but exactly one meagre cup is served in the pot. As a rule, afternoon tea is served gratis to Pullman passengers.

Although tipping is proverbially against the rule in Canada, and offensive to the independent spirit of the country, the tipping of the coloured porters attached to the train is an exception acknowledged by Canadians and visitors alike in the payment of the fee. These gentlemen might easily claim to be the direct descendants of the horse-leech's daughter. The way in which their velvet fingers caress dollar-bills is a hint and an invitation

to be ignored only by the determined. Yet on one occasion I received considerable attention for an inconsiderable fee from one of them.

It chanced that I took back an unusual amount of baggage, and being in a hurry travelled over New York. To my astonishment and eventual embarrassment, I had to pay several pounds sterling for over-weight. When I left Winnipeg I was practically cleared out of ready money. In making the journey from Canada to England this state of affairs is expected, but in going out the "rich Engleesh" are expected to be in form. I had turned over an open purse in my sleeper, and as I was getting into my garments the remaining coins were scattered. I had forgotten the occurrence until the increasing familiarity of the landscape reminded me of my destination—and the attendant's tip.

"Did you find any odd coins in my sleeper?" I inquired.

"Yes, mees. I find seventeen cents, I tink it was. That's all!"

"It is all!" I agreed. "All I have left. So it has to be all your tip."

"That so, lady," said he. "That all right." He brushed my apparel, collected my effects, and helped me with the gravest ceremony to take the leap which deposited me and my hand-baggage only about a hundred yards from the orthodox platform at South Qu'Appelle. Then he bade me "Adieu" with all the deference due to the claim of a well-filled and easily opened purse.

"Winnipeg next stop!" announced the conductor, who halted to express a hope that we had slept well.

Hilaria was in the highest spirits as we drew near the

great city, but I became more and more aware that I had parted with my dress-basket.

The Trans-Continental Express paused casually from time to time, long after we came within view of a solid mass in the middle of the plain which seems to reach to the Land of Evermore on every side. The smoke from tall chimneys announced the mass a city, it announced itself the city of the plains. The almost interminable express advanced towards the Chicago of Canada at about the same pace as a British farmer would drive up the steep High Street of a British country town on market-day. Finally it pulled up with an entire absence of side or ceremony to discharge its excited, wondering, throbbing human load on to the rails within more or less easy reach of the platform.

"There's Lal," said Hilaria. "Oh, *why* doesn't he look!"

"So here you are at last!" said Lal. "I have been expecting you every day since Monday. Met every train. And what do you think of the Land of Promise?"

"Where are the porters?" demanded Hilaria.

"Where indeed! In this country, Hilaria, we are our own porters, builders, boot-blacks, cooks, laundresses, and bottle-washers. And after two years of it I am completely fed up. Well, what is your impression of 'the Land'?"

"It is evidently not without the grumbling Israelite," said Hilaria. "If you will take the dressing-bag, the luncheon-basket, and the rugs, we can manage the rest. Is it safe getting over the lines in this fashion? But I suppose no engine-driver would dare run down quite such a crowd. There must be over a thousand people. Will they all get work?"

“Oh, they will get it—if they choose to take it. But it is work, mind you—bone-breaking work! Stone-breaking in England is Paradise and rest in comparison—you so very seldom see them really at it. I have engaged you a room in one of the smaller hotels—I thought you would prefer it. We will put any belongings you won't require into the baggage-room. Don't lose your checks! It's the devil and all to get your things if you do. Here's the bus. Cee-springs, ain't they? Well, girls, here you are at last, and can see what a beastly uncomfortable show it is. You will be able to tell father the truth about it, and what a terrible mistake he made in advisin' me to come!”

CHAPTER VI

WINNIPEG

WE stayed at a quiet hotel of the second division, overlooking the market-place of Winnipeg. The bedrooms were clean and comfortable, and within reasonable distance of a bathroom. One dined in the general hall on the ground floor from soup or fish, meat and sweets. A choice of each item on the menu is almost invariably offered, and three or four different puddings or pies. I heard from my brother that it was not unusual for hungry men to order and obtain the lot. It is the custom of the country to provide meals in a general way at a charge of twenty-five cents each person; this being so, it is easily understood that hotel proprietors have to look farther than their dining-room for the considerable profit which they are credited with making. The charges were based on the American and inclusive plan: the cost of bedroom, breakfast, bath, dinner, and supper only amounted to six shillings a day each person, less than half the charge made at the first-class hotel in Montreal. Both were clean and comfortable, but for the rest there was no point of comparison between them. I am told that there are many hotels in Winnipeg which offer the same simple but sufficient accommodation for as

little as a dollar (4s. 2d.) a day. At that time the Alexandra, which is looked upon as being the supreme triumph of the Canadian Pacific group, was not an accomplished fact, and I have heard that Mariaggi's, which is unique, still refuses to acknowledge a rival either in cuisine or accommodation. Mariaggi is to Winnipeg as Ciro to Monte Carlo, and it has always been a matter of regret to me that we did not stay there on the occasion of that first visit, and before we had learned the expensive lesson that a sovereign in the market-place of Europe is one aspect of twenty shillings, and five dollars in the Canadian market-place altogether another.

At that time, also, Timothy Eton's huge store was only just approaching completion, and I think that everything would have seemed very expensive had I had much experience of domestic concerns in Europe. I knew the prices of tea, coffee, chocolate, sugar, bread, milk, and the best of butter; also of New Zealand lamb in England, and veal in Paris. The curry-pot had always been the rule, and not the exception, in any *ménage* in which I had been cast for a more or less active part; and I had never failed to grasp any opportunity which presented itself to ensure to my coffee the superlative degree. Wealth may command good tea, only self can ensure one good coffee. Neither accomplishments nor experience served me to any appreciable degree in laying in stores for four persons for twelve weeks on the prairie.

After our midday meal we sat in the window-seat of our room watching the rain, which came down in floods, and I could only wonder that it didn't wash away the lovely tulips which grew in the garden of the City Hall.


Lal poured out his bitter experience of the past, and bright anticipation of a pleasanter future, from the window at the other end of the room.

The homestead, he assured us, was out of the question; as for taking *us* to such a place, he simply wouldn't do it. He had sighted a dairy-farm within a mile of Winnipeg. He had parted with the oxen, the waggon, and the implements, and bought a pony and buggy. His partner was bringing down the household goods on the buggy. Together he had planned we should take on a dairy-farm. A certain sum would have to be paid down; the balance could be settled in convenient sums, to be payable at convenient periods. It was to be a fair and square partnership. Hilaria and I, his partner and himself were to each hold an equal share. The cash trade for milk in a city like Winnipeg was beyond even the imagination of the proposed firm. He and his partner were to deliver the milk with the pony and buggy. I had to make the butter with my hand, Devonshire fashion, and to keep the books; although he thought it would be better at first to confine ourselves to the sale of pure milk, and work up a matchless reputation in that rare form of integrity. Hilaria, on the strength of having been through nine months' training in a hospital, was allotted the task of scalding and polishing the milk-pails and tins.

"You know, Hilaria, you were always writing me long yarns about the slavery you put in polishing a hundred bathroom brasses in half an hour, and that kind of thing,"

Lal reminded her.

"Who is to milk?" inquired Hilaria.



"Well, Hicks says he can, but I doubt it."

"How much capital have *you* got towards it?" I asked.

"About seventy dollars; but Hicks should have at least another fifteen dollars change from what I gave him for the journey after I sold the oxen. Then, of course, there is the pony and buggy to my credit, which is half the battle."

"The cavalry," suggested Hilaria, "should surely be permitted to score an extra point."

"How much money has Mr. Hicks?" I demanded.

"Well, at present he is drawin' on me. You see he had thirty pounds when he went up to the homestead in February, but by the time he had paid for his two cows and their winter's keep, and laid in our own stores, there wasn't much left. Then the prairie fire wiped us out of forage. He has written to his guardian for fifty pounds, and thinks with luck he is pretty certain to pull off thirty."

"But does seventy dollars entirely represent the capital which father advanced to you?" I asked.

"That and the pony," he said, with a sigh.

"You have forgotten your expectations of change from Mr. Hicks and the buggy," said Hilaria soothingly.

"Well, *entre nous*, Hilaria, the buggy ain't paid for. The chap that I bought the oxen and implements from is a very decent sort. I paid him forty dollars spot cash for Charles, the pony, but he let me have the buggy and harness on time—at eight per cent. interest, of course; that is the usual rate of deferred payment in this country. And he allowed me to bring it on down here, which he might easily have bucked at: there are no end of wrong

'uns round. Still, I always make a point of paying sooner or later."

"What's the amount?" inquired Hilaria.

"Eighty-six dollars, I think, all told. But eighty-six dollars will be nothing to us in September, if we have a real *bona fide* drive at the milk show. I assure you, girls, we shall make money hand over fist, if we only set to work in the right way. And it doesn't matter in the least what you do out here. Nobody cares about you or your calling. All they want to know is the amount you carry in your pocket, because it gives them a better chance of liftin' it into their own."

"I am ever so sorry to have to throw cold water on your enthusiasm," I said, "especially as I think there is promise in the plan. But it is simply out of the question! Father is chained to his own idea of what the Canadian land-gift should mean to Englishmen. And although I don't want to rub it in, you know you have had a considerable amount of capital advanced since you have been out here, and no matter how you may have lost it, or spent it, he sent it distinctly on the understanding that it was to convert your homestead to a farm. I have been entrusted with another hundred to see what the farm is like, and to report on its points; its progress, and its possibilities. Whatever we may decide to do in the future, we must first go to the homestead, or he will never get over it."

"But we could buy two cows and two calves with the money it will cost us to get there and back. And you can form no idea of the ghastly, lonely, hateful life! The awful people! The beastly discomfort! I give you a

week at the outside. Hicks gives you till your first mosquito-bite."

"No matter how long we stay, the point is that we are bound to go. Don't you agree with me, Hilaria?" I asked.

"Oh, I suppose so; but I wish we were going home *via* New York. Still, if we are going to the homestead, let us go at once and get it over, or we may not have money enough left to get home at all. I wish that I had taken a return ticket. After all, on your own place, Lal, we shall at least know where we are."

"You will indeed," said Lal. "I did hope that I had turned my back on that hateful prairie for ever. But I suppose I must make the best of it, as usual. Only don't say I didn't warn you that it is throwing your money into the gutter. It will cost us pounds to get there! However, if you *will* have your own way, let us get off to-morrow. We shall soon be back again. The rain's stopped. Hadn't we better go out and see about getting the stores?"

"Flour, bacon, oatmeal, sugar, lard, and bulky goods you had better get at Lipton," he advised, "because you will have to pay freight charges on anything and everything that can't be exactly defined as personal baggage—clothes, that means. By the way, did you bring me over any? These are all I have left. I wore out all the rest on that *darned* plough. Not our plough, but the one belonging to the old farmer I worked for when I first came out."

"All!" exclaimed Hilaria,—“and you had stacks! By the way, I had to make tender inquiries for your last

dress-suit. Did you wear out that too? Why, you only stayed a month."

"All but a month, to be strictly correct, Hilaria. Not content with getting fourteen hours' work out of me day in day out, I caught him alterin' the clock, so I cleared out. No, my dress-suit was not included in the sacrifice to his plough. I sold it last winter for wood. It fetched twenty-two dollars fifty cents. A Yankee bought it. The dollars were indispensable—dress-clothes ain't. I don't mind telling you without exaggeration that stroke of business saved my life. Heavens, what a winter! Never in a million lives can I forget it! I shifted snow, sawed wood, worked on the railway; I even put in half a day's work at diggin' drains, and finished the winter bottle and dish-washing. Oh, Canada is El Dorado! If only father could have shared my experience! He may thank his stars that it is his good luck to get no nearer his 'Land of Promise' than the Pisgahian height of his imagination. This is the shop for pots and pans. I'll wait outside."

"But surely the pots and pans you have been using will do for us!" protested Hilaria.

"Well, there is a very good kettle. But Hicks has the frying-pan and the saucepan with him on the buggy. Oh, and the broom! I remember seeing it stick out in the rear. You see, if we miss Hicks, who can tell when we shall get them together again? Then things are more than double the price in prairie towns, and you can pack tea and coffee and soap and things in them."

I bought milk-pans, strainer, skimmer, butter-bowl, and methylated spirit. In the light of future events it was

one of life's little ironies that all my purchases bore indirect relation to the cows of Mr. Hicks. Hilaria bought a flat-iron, and some oilcloth and nails.

"Oilcloth certainly is the thing," commended Lal. "Nail a bit on to a packing-case, and it is always safe to make bread on the kitchen table. Now there is one bit of bad news. I sold the stove—for the same money as it cost! I would have sent along another, but I hoped to persuade you to remain here. So we must order one, and trust to its turning up before we leave again. Seems a '*divi!*' of a speculation! and you can't sell them again every day in the week."

However, we ordered the stove, getting one quite sufficient for our requirements for the sum of ten dollars. The storekeeper gave us his solemn promise that it should leave that night, and we hoped that we might sight it at Kirkella.

"If it turns up in a week's time it will be a miracle," said Lal. "It will be a jolly good thing for the C.P.R. and everybody else when the Grand Trunk Pacific is on the carpet. You can rely on nothing and nobody but yourself in this country, and there's nothing so good for the public as a little competition among its caterers."

"We have forgotten the fruit and things, and the people are shutting their shops," said Hilaria.

"Six o'clock—you bet they are!" Lal answered. "But we shall have plenty of time to-morrow. Be sure you get as much as you can possibly stow away. For instance, there is that big hat-box, Hilaria. Hats will only be in your way on the prairie. But when one has to live on salt bacon and dough puddings, dried apples and sultanas

and raisins and apricots and things make all the difference to nothing in particular."

Hilaria and I finished our shopping in the morning, and strolling through the streets tried to feel duly impressed with the magnificent buildings which occurred only here and there, like historical events. The long, busy, dusty main street, disfigured with the inevitable tram-line, we found neither interesting nor beautiful, but Portage Avenue will probably be some day one of the finest streets of the West. The shops were fairly good, but quite expensive. The Hudson Bay Store is very far up, almost on the outskirts of the city itself, and it does not condescend to much display in the way of window-dressing. The advent of Eton's great store in Winnipeg brought about not only a revolution in the prices of the vendor, but in the ideas of the buyer; and two and a half years after my first visit to the city I found a marked improvement in the value for money displayed in shop-windows.

On that occasion we did not make our way across the river, where there are already handsome dwellings set amid well-kept lawns and lovely gardens, the property in the main of those settlers who planted themselves and their belief in Winnipeg about twenty years ago, with or without the proverbial dollar. The appointments of many of these houses are already elegant and artistic. Canadians have not yet had time to become great travellers. At present they are a people of ant-like tendencies, bent on producing population and wealth within wholesome social conditions. The treasures of art and the rarer crafts, which genius drops from time

to time into the lap of the world to create an atmosphere of beauty for lovers of the beautiful, are not yet claimed by Canada. But the Canadian woman is scrupulously dainty and clean in her household arrangements; also common sense is always to be found at the root of her ideas; so that in the appointments of the well-to-do, and others, comfort is always to be found, and not infrequently elegance and charm. The national habit of waiting on oneself will bar the term luxurious as descriptive of any condition of Canadian domestic life, until the great difficulty of obtaining female hired help is met by increased female immigration; but wholesome and comfortable it is in every phase, and I should doubt if any nation under the sun were endowed with a more effective intelligence in combining comfort with simplicity of life. And this, it is to be remembered, is in spite of, not because of, climatic conditions.

The absence of contrast between the conditions of employer and employed is very striking to the English observer. The tendency in England is to keep down the working classes, the tendency in Canada is to encourage them to rise. The vitality and strength of this condition is not only visible in the bright, happy, hopeful aspect of the employed, but in the higher quality of the work in the homes of the employer. The advantages of evolution over revolution are happily remarkable in this particular phase of social life in Canada.

In examining the conditions for working women in Canada, I found in their foundation a painstaking and effective gift for organisation, sweetened with a frank and genuine kindness, entirely untainted by self-

consciousness. The men and the women of Canada are vitally interesting, because they are each the vehicle of their own idea. They are free of the incubus of self-consciousness, because they know the onlooker has only sufficient time to spare to scan result, and their process is unwatched. The enforced activity of daily life absorbs their energy; as yet, they are not highly cultured, although excellently well-educated. Imagination is still in its embryonic condition; but they are helpful, inspiring, strong, and generous. The Canadian woman is already a woman of power, cherished by her husband, respected by her children, thoroughly appreciated by her comrade Man, and loyally supported by her fellow-woman. She has never yet posed or been shelved on a pedestal, and it is safe to predict that she will never be buffeted in her streets.

One has to live in a country and among its people to feel their qualities. I did not catch a hint of that wholesome vitality of Winnipeg on my first, nor indeed on my second visit. The character of the Canadian is not yet a matter of tradition, but is deducible from conditions, and already commands a high and deep respect. Yet on the occasion of my first visit, I must own, I heard the shout of "All aboard!" to which we were growing familiar, with a sigh of disappointment lightened with relief.

From Winnipeg to Elkhorn we no longer travelled Pullman. We were timed to arrive at Elkhorn at 2 a.m., and Hilaria agreed that the privilege of being cut off from sleep and turned on to a cold platform in the middle of the night was distinctly not worth six dollars. My brother was altogether superior to the sleeper.

"When a fellow has been roasted and frozen and starved in turn through two years of life in Canada, he doesn't chuck his dollars at the C.P.R.," he said scornfully. So we all made for the general car.

The obsequiousness of the coloured attendant at this point came to an end. So far their insignificance had knelt at the feet of the illusion of our English wealth. The position was changed with the travelling-coach, and the mantle of insignificance was tossed our way. The attendant, who had been apparently anxious to prostrate himself before us in the morning, assumed both the word and the demeanour of command.

"No want sleepers? Don't come in here. You mus' check through your baggage. Dat they will not check. Send express."

"Dat" stood for my collapsible writing-table, from which I had declined to be parted at Montreal, where the officials had refused to check it through as personal effects. With the legs tucked under in its canvas envelope, it fitted easily in the floor of the section, and inconvenienced none. The remaining hand-baggage consisted of my dressing-bag, which contained all our ready money, banker's draft, etc., and the luncheon-basket.

I held on to my dressing-case, and was prepared to do battle for the retention of the table.

"For goodness' sake don't make a row," dictated my brother. "They will only laugh at you."

I observed that in that case it was certainly not the time or the place to part company with the talisman which will see one safely through most situations and all countries—English gold. My brother said that was the

worst of women, they were never happy unless they could drag all their belongings into the railway-car. For his part, he never bothered about anything but his pipe, which was the *only* way to travel.

Hilaria and I smothered a smile when he vanished at about eight o'clock in quest of the luncheon-basket, but scored openly in the discovery that the bottle of brandy had been withdrawn from its niche. Father had bestowed it upon us with much information concerning its age and superlative quality, accompanied with the strictest injunction that it was to be reserved for service in extreme emergency. Only the straw envelope remained to hint that it had ever been in occupation.

Lal's face was a study. He munched crackers and *pâté de foie gras* with a wistful, wrathful eye on the place where the bottle was not.

"If only it had been prussic acid, one wouldn't have cared!" he exclaimed bitterly. "But that '73 brandy—noctar! Father gave me a bottle of it when I came out. I had more sense than to run the risk of getting it bagged. I sampled it on the train, and finished it on the ship. After all, anything does when you're seedy and can't tell cheese from eggs. And to think that it will be swallowed by a nigger! It makes me positively ill! A luncheon-basket should always be fitted with a lock and key, especially in this country. Did you say there was a pine-apple, Hilaria?"

"Why not tell the superintendent?" I suggested. "He will make them give it up."

"Give it up! The bottle is probably in a thousand pieces fifty miles behind, and the stuff the '*devil*' knows

where! Besides, they would only laugh at you. Hilaria, do you mind havin' a look round for my pipe?"

It must have been towards 1 a.m. when I saw him coming up the car. Hilaria was sleeping under a motor-veil as soundly as if she had been comfortably tucked into her sleeper. I was passing the time with a book. He took the seat opposite me with a countenance distinctly crestfallen, and an air of *bona fide* regret.

"I am really most awfully sorry," he said. "But of course we shan't have the slightest difficulty in gettin' it again."

"You don't mean the table!" I said, without any attempt to hold in a note of accusation.

"I really am most awfully sorry," he answered, "but you see the train divided at Brandon, and the table went on with the other division. But it is quite all right. The conductor is going to wire at the next stop. We shall hear at Elkhorn that it has been sighted, and shall have it back to take on with us on Monday morning."

"Very well," I answered. "Only please understand that I don't mind in the least being laughed at, and that I intend to look after my own belongings in my own way."

Half an hour later, we turned out of the over-heated car into the keen air of the Canadian night. The depot-master was all sympathy over our loss. He discussed the matter with the superintendent of the train, and we understood that a half-dollar message was at once dispatched, and were encouraged to hope that the table would soon be with us again. We were then packed into the public-democrat *en route* for the inn, with

more attention than is usually bestowed on travellers in Canada. But as we drove off a titter and the murmur "green English" was distinctly audible; and although my writing-table was labelled with English labels, ship's labels, and Canadian labels in every available space, although it remained a painful subject of correspondence between me and the C.P.R. for many a day, although I sighed for it in wrath and yearned for it in despair, I looked upon it—never again!

CHAPTER VII

THE "BRITISH WORKMAN"

It was on the Elkhorn Sunday that Hilaria and I first met the "British Workman." He stood in no relation whatever to the type. As a matter of fact he was the not entirely impecunious member of an English family of some distinction and great wealth, and had been brought up in orthodox fashion at Charterhouse and elsewhere. Not finding work of any kind particularly lucrative or congenial in England, he had gone out to Canada about the same time as my brother, in the days when the illusion that the gods hovered over Canada to drop fortunes at the feet of the immigrant induced Englishmen to forsake, not only the somewhat uncomfortable office stool, but highly remunerative posts that were difficult to find and easy to hold.

Oddly enough, it was a hard-working Canadian farmer who bestowed on Lionel de Courcy Hicks the sobriquet of the "British Workman," and in all sincerity. My brother annexed it as an exquisite jest, and Hilaria adopted it at first in smiling sarcasm, which in process of life and event on the prairie became occasionally tinged with bitterness.

"Did you meet Hicks?" inquired Lal, as I sat down

beside him on the hotel verandah, and watched the Indian children, who had bawled the Anglican hymns with such enthusiasm at morning service, fall in to the line of march home. "He's here. He put up at the immigrant shed last night. You will ask him to feed with us, won't you? He is reduced to dry bread and the staler end of a polony. Did you meet any one outside, Hilaria?" he asked, as she joined us.

"Only one solitary soul," answered Hilaria. "He looked like the blacksmith of the forsaken village."

"Was he wearing blue serge clothes and a red tie?"

"I didn't notice his clothes," she said; "but he had a beard, and a slouchy hat, and boots with holes in them, half a collar, and dirty hands."

"That sounds like Hicks. I hope they ain't my boots! I think I'll have a look round."

Hicks it was. One of those Englishmen perfectly content with life as they live it in Canada. He shared our meals served to us in the general dining-room of the hotel, which is usually the boarding-house of the local store clerks. His account of things in general was a happier edition of my brother's, and we found him both cheering and amusing. We agreed to go across to the prairie later on, and make the acquaintance of Charles, the pony. It was on our way there that Lal took us to call on the Canadian farmer, so that we might see for ourselves that even years of successful farming in Canada meant nothing but hard work and life in a cottage after all.

"I have a fine respect for that partner of yours. He is a *man!*" observed the farmer.

Surprise, caution, and curiosity contended for a second or so in my brother's eye.

"One of the best," he agreed in a tone of discretion and encouragement.

"Sure thing!" attested the farmer. "Now he's a fine sample, I guess, of the British Workman."

There was nothing in the least indefinite about the "What!" that escaped my brother; but the farmer's attention was absorbed in the relighting of his pipe, and he missed the amazement which his startling definition of Mr. Hicks had called forth.

"Yesterday forenoon he came to me. 'Mr. Evans,' says he, 'I'm on the trail to Winnipeg and camping here over Sunday, as my pony is a bit played out. Can you give me a job and a shakedown for the night?' I'm used to such remarks, so I said, 'Sure thing! There's the immigrant shed just built for your purpose, and I'm wanting a man to dig the well to complete its outfit. I guess the job's yours, if a dollar will pay you.' I guessed that would send him up trail again right there. But no, sir! He off with his coat and dug that well a fine piece. 'If the old country would send us out a few more hustlers like yon feller, I guess more ice would get broke,' I said to my missus. And before sundown I paid him the dollar."

Lal was looking distinctly anxious.

"Mr. Evans, can I have a look at that well?" he asked.

"Sure thing," replied the farmer; "come right now!"

We crossed the railway-line, and halted by the immigrant shed to examine the supreme—Hilaria always referred to it as the unique—achievement of Mr. Hicks. It was a deep pit about four feet square, and when I saw

it for myself I resolved on the postscript to a letter to my father which was leaving that night. It was designed to soothe his deeply rooted objection to partners, and reading it again through the clear light of time and event, I must acknowledge it was all too optimistic: "About the partnership, I don't think Lal would have stayed on the prairie a month alone. It seems impossible to get through the arduous work single-handed, and labour is not to be hired in remote districts for love or money. We met Mr. Hicks to-day. He is a gentleman and a pleasant acquaintance, but *quite hard-working*. He doesn't despise immigrant sheds, and is always glad to dig a well for a dollar. More I cannot yet say."

Hilaria and I turned into the shack to examine the hospitality within. I fear at the time we elevated British noses at accommodation of which we were to both think and speak with wistful regret before a week had passed. It was a lumber building about twenty-six feet square, divided into two sections. It was fitted with a good stove and conveniences for cooking, a kitchen table, two chairs, and I am not quite clear in my memory as to whether there were bedsteads, but certainly there were several mattresses. All guests were expected to provide their own pillows.

Here the farmer bade us "Good-day," and Lal, whose expression since he gazed into the new well had betrayed some grave anxiety, hurried us along to the camping-ground of Hicks and his outfit.

"I might have known it when I saw the dead end of that polony," he said bitterly. "If Hicks dug that well, he must have got through every cent of the thirty-five

dollars we decided that he had better have on him in case of emergency. I'll lay any odds you like to name that he has done himself well all the time. Slept at stoppin'-houses instead of pitchin' the tent. Swallowed three meals a day, and a flask when he could get it. His good intentions lasted until he smelt something cooking, and the stale bread and that polony is all that is left of them. I know Hicks! And I'll never believe that he dug a well in a century of Sundays unless it was a case of food. There's Charles! See!—just there, behind the bluff."

On that Sunday Charles wore a tired air and the undisturbed dust of a ten days' journey over the prairie; but he had his points, although speed was not one of them, and a startling intelligence, which was not always on our side, was; indeed, before the rains of June were over, Hilaria and I had found balm for indignation in rechristening him "Charles Edward."

In the rear was the buggy which had been purchased on that system of deferred payment at high interest which is so costly although convenient to the Canadian farmer in his early days. For cash down I could have doubtless obtained it for sixty dollars, in place of the eighty-six falling due in September. It was always a rather sore point with me, because among all sorts and conditions of awkward and eccentric vehicles which one encounters on the Canadian prairie, in competition ours would most certainly have drawn off the booby prize.

On that Sunday much of the radiance of its glory was mercifully concealed. Only here and there could a glimpse of maroon and silver be seen flashing through the load of pots, cups and kettles, the tent with its pole and

pegs and fittings, a portmanteau, a battered tin box, light coats, heavy coats, golf-sticks, a saddle, and last but not least, Mr. Hicks' fur coat, which had arrived at the degree of distance in the history of its devolution at which only a fur coat can arrive and survive.

My brother at once attacked the grooming of Charles. He shared the strong point which many Englishmen carry overseas, an honest care and consideration of one's comrade the horse. He started military fashion on the ears, and went thoroughly through the business, without once dropping the thread of a string of explosive and condemnatory remarks on his comrade the man for "his utter laziness and criminal neglect." The "British Workman" strolled up towards the finish, and took all hits with a good-natured, easy-going smile.

We discussed our plan of travel. It was decided that the "British Workman" should return with Charles by the beaten track. He considered that he might be with us in about eight days. I thought that he might feel some embarrassment at the situation, as I was under the impression that starvation had driven him with my brother from their homesteads, and assured him that if he cared to share the very simple circumstance of our summer-life on the prairie, he would be most welcome.

I overheard my brother in remonstrance about the rash dissipation of funds, and impressing the stern necessity for economy, as he doled out more dollars against the possible emergency of the return journey; but the "British Workman" assured him that it was quite all right, as he had written to his guardian and told him that unless fifty pounds could be mailed out by return, the heavy

work of his homestead duties would be brought to a standstill; and if this occurred, the Canadian Government would undoubtedly cancel the land-gift.

Before we started I entrusted him with five dollars for the purchase of five laying hens and a cockerel, as I learned that in a newly settled district they are not only expensive but usually most difficult to find. Although it was cumbersome rather than burdensome, the load of Charles would not have permitted of this addition but that we had relieved it of the tent and its fittings, the box, and a good deal of the detached wardrobe.

"They will call us at five o'clock sharp," my brother warned us at the foot of the staircase. "The train moves out at six. No breakfast! They don't give breakfast here till seven."

"What a country!" murmured Hilaria, already half asleep. "Six-o'clock high tea on the very longest Sunday evening I have ever dragged through in my life, and then to turn us out again at daybreak, without even a cup of tea!"

"Never mind!" I consoled; "we will make some tea."

"Perhaps," she answered. "But if the train leaves at six o'clock, I expect we shall leave without tea."

And we did.

CHAPTER VIII

A JOURNEY BY RAIL ON A NEWLY OPENED BRANCH

THE Kirkella branch line was only in process, and we made the journey of 140 miles from Elkhorn to Lipton in one crowded coach of three compartments at the end of the very longest freight-train imaginable. It made the journey on alternate days only, and there was no choice in the matter of anything in connection with it; but by the opening of this branch line, my brother's land became but twenty-three miles distant from the railroad, instead of the original fifty-five miles.

There was nothing exclusive about the gathering assembled at the little station. It consisted of ourselves, a Yankee and a Canadian—both commercial travellers, and a typical emigrant crowd of English and French folk, Germans, Austrians and Norwegians, Poles, Dukaboors, Galicians, and two Chinamen. Under these conditions we set out on the last phase of our journey to the North-West, precisely one hour behind advertised time, and, as Hilaria wrathfully remarked, just on the stroke of the hotel breakfast-hour. The journey was advertised for accomplishment in thirteen hours; it

extended itself to fifteen and a half, exclusive of the hour lost at the start; but then, on its preceding journey, we heard that it had taken twenty hours.

We stopped so many times between Elkhorn and Kirkella, a distance of sixteen miles, that when within a stone's throw of the junction we pulled up with a more emphatic jar than usual, neither of us bothered to put our head out of the window in search of the cause.

"Stop here for breakfast!" shouted a voice from below.

Simultaneously my brother came in from the smoking car with a distinctly cheerful air.

"Breakfast!" he said. "Hurry up! It is in that tiny shack over yonder, and if you don't get there quickly, we shall have to wait for the second division."

We sent him on in front to secure places, and Hilaria and I precipitated ourselves from the platform of the train directly on the prairie, hungry and curious, and really longing to say something nice about the delightful morning, and keen, sweet Canadian air, which is at once the breath and the keynote of Canada. Canada is supremely the country of the morning, and in her breath of the morning is contained both her prophecy and fulfilment.

"Two places for you behind in the kitchen. I thought you would rather be out of the crowd," said my brother, who was attacking boiled eggs in a tiny room in which a score or so of men were already supplied with beefsteak, pork chops, eggs, and fried potatoes.

Hilaria and I were far too hungry for regrets, and

drank inferior coffee in the absence of tea without a murmur between us. It must have been a case of first come first served, and the front room scored, since no boiled eggs fell to our share; but although our portion of beef-steak was both tough and burnt, we ate it thankfully. The woman at the store was full of regret that the fried potatoes had not held out until our arrival, so she made us really delicious buttered-toast.

The number of guests on that occasion was unusually large, she told us, but had she known that Englishwomen were coming, at least she would have kept back eggs for them. Englishwomen, she guessed, didn't take beef-steak and pork chop for breakfast. But we protested that we had eaten the finest meal of our lives beneath her roof, and paid the charge of thirty-five cents a head with a sincere sense of obligation.

We returned in haste to the train, which proved to be an unnecessary exertion, as we didn't move on for a full half-hour. A few minutes before we started, the "British Workman" came jogging along the trail. Charles, as I have observed, was no flyer, but trains do not take a deal of catching over a new branch line in Canada. The "British Workman" ate dry bread and hard-boiled eggs with a superior air, whilst my brother commented on his own excellent breakfast in detail. We left him smiling, with the intention to start in half an hour.

At midday there was a further stop for dinner, but we resolved on the contents of our luncheon-basket in preference to a second edition of fried beef. Later in the day a party of emigrants from Saxony left the train at an intervening station. A band of their countrymen and

women met them, and their neat appearance in the pretty national costume was quite an interesting feature of a tedious day. After their departure there was more room, but also more noise. Every one grew very jovial, very noisy, very expectorant, as acquaintance passed into friendliness, and friendliness into intimacy; and also the small children were permitted to make a racecourse of the passage of the car. Reading became impossible; even the "Advice to Correspondents" columns of the *Gentlewoman* demand some degree of concentration, and any degree was impossible in that Bedlam.

At 6 p.m. there was a further call for supper, but as we were timed to arrive at Lipton at 6.30, and were in blissful ignorance that although we had already been nearly twelve hours on the journey, another three hours would elapse before we arrived at Lipton, we decided to wait for our meal until we reached the hotel. My brother had told us that at Lipton was one of the best camp-town hotels in the country, and I naturally included an evening meal in the prophecy implied in the information, and decided not to bother to brush up and turn out for the wayside supper, but refresh ourselves from the remnants of the contents of the luncheon-basket and oranges. The oranges of Canada are not to be connected with the merchandise of the costermonger, but with West End purveyors of beauty and luxury. Never even in Marseilles, where the oranges of these countries lie alongside, have I seen the oranges of Canada equalled. In Marseilles they are of many qualities; in Canada all are of excellent quality, the mongrel division not being worth the cost of freight.

At 7.30, as we had stopped again just outside the conventional building which marks the C.P.R. depots from East to West, my brother came along in some concern with the information that we shouldn't get in until after nine o'clock.

"Never mind!" said Hilaria, who had exhausted expletive, and fallen flat on to resignation. "At least there is a meal and a bed when we do get there!"

"A bed, perhaps—that is, if they ain't already full up," said my brother. "But I don't think for a moment they will give us supper as late as that."

"What do you mean?" I exclaimed incredulously. "How could they possibly refuse supper to travellers from a belated train?"

"They can, and they do," he answered. "You see, you had the chance of getting off and mealin' at that last railway stopping-house. You didn't take it. In this country you are supposed to look after yourself, and if you don't take the trouble to do that, but play round with off-chances, you get left."

"You might have warned us, Lal!" reproached Hilaria.

"To tell you the truth, I hadn't an idea we were so far behind time. Why, we could have walked it easily! But you have to put up with everything in this country. It isn't an atom of use exertin' yourself to make a row. Nobody cares. They only grin at you."

I said I couldn't and wouldn't believe it possible that travellers would be refused a meal in a decent hotel in a civilised country.

"Very well," said Lal. "Wait and see!"

"At any rate, they can't possibly refuse us a cup of

tea," said Hilaria. "But if they should, we are done, as I upset the methylated spirit. And in any case, there is no milk."

"They may give you a cup of tea," allowed my brother most cheerfully, "but I doubt it."

"You seem very upset about it!" said Hilaria bitingly.

"My dear Hilaria," he answered, "we are both disappointed of our supper. We are both philosophers. You are a philosopher makin' an uncertain journey towards a cup of tea, whilst I am a philosopher makin' no uncertain journey towards a whisky and soda."

He returned to the smoker with a grin, which would have been exasperating had we not been utterly weary. Hilaria dozed.

The unending line of freight-cars jerked and jolted on its way across the prairie, which towards the end of our journey became a vast plain, broken by poplar-bluffs and sloughs, that in England we should name pond or lake, according to magnitude. The sun had slipped beyond the horizon, and the twilight was fading fast, although darkness, as we understand the term in England, very seldom falls on the north-west of Canada, and we were still able to discern the landmarks in the neighbourhood of our market-town. I observed that plots of land in the process of breaking were only occasional and of limited dimensions, whilst patches of sprouting grain were rare, although even in the dim degree of light there stood out in strong contrast to their environment of unbroken prairie, which is of the tint of dust, save towards the root of the herbage, in which refuge from the blazing ray which the sun reserves for its grain-ripening process upon

the Canadian wheat-plain, tiny bits and shreds of green growth contrive to preserve a hint of the emerald complexion of their early days. Shacks, nearly all of a pattern, marked the landscape of a wheat settlement, and here and there cattle were seen in enclosures of barbed wire or fences of poplar poles.

“Lipton next stop!” shouted the conductor.

We had to wait till the morning to discover that Lipton is pitched seemingly in the centre of the level plain which extends ten miles south to the beautiful Qu’Appelle valley, and north, east, and west farther than my penetration or my ken; but if the law of distance on the flat may be learned anywhere, it may be learned at Lipton.

We passed from the prairie through the usual array of waiting freight-cars on to the lumber buildings of the little camp town, which in those days was to be seen only on one side of the track. Two massive elevators announced a brand-new city of the wheat-plains, and we pulled up at the orthodox C.P.R. depot with a jerk worthy of the occasion of our own full-stop.

My brother went straightway to secure our rooms at the hotel, which is opposite the station. The depot-master advised us to leave the affair of our checked baggage until the morning, so we took up our hand-baggage, and crossed the plot of prairie which intervenes between the depot and the hotel.

The hotel had not long been completed. From its exterior it looked like the English racecourse pavilion one sees in old-time prints. It was built of lumber and painted yellow. The roof invited another storey, which

is always unpleasing; but a tiny verandah leading out of the "women's parlour" on the first floor made atonement for much, and proved to be a fine post for the idle consideration of distance.

Lal awaited us on the doorstep.

"You can have a room to yourselves, but the place is new and the furniture isn't exactly located. However, you are better off than I am. I have to share in with two other fellows. Beastly! I would rather sleep on the sidewalk!"

"Then why don't you?" inquired Hilaria. "And what about supper?"

"You can't have it. I told you it is against the custom of the country."

"Did you ask?" I demanded.

"No. I am not going to make myself a laughing-stock for Canadians."

I walked past him to the office on the right. There sat a man with his legs crossed, a pipe in his mouth, and his eyes set towards the rear, from whence a blaze of light and a buzz of masculine voices announced the bar. I concluded he must be the proprietor, and said—

"You have a room reserved for us?"

He eyed me up and down.

"What name?" he inquired, without removing his pipe from his mouth or himself from his seat.

I gave it.

"Oh yes," he replied. "Room for two women. Your brother came in on the train and took it right now. Guess you can have it, but you were lucky to get it. It's the last. I could have let it four times over since."

"Can we have supper?"

"Supper, woman! At this time! Close on ten o'clock! The dining-room has been shut these three hours."

"Coffee, then, or tea?" I suggested.

"Where's the difference? The kitchen's shut up, and all the women have quit work. You can't have nothing of the kind here. There's a restaurant up the road; guess you can get it there. Your room is No. 9, first floor. On the left when you get to the top of the stairs."

Hilaria tittered in the rear. My brother was listening from his post in the doorway.

My head had started to ache. I was determined to find tea somewhere.

"The man says there is a restaurant. You and I will go there," I suggested to Hilaria.

"You can't possibly go to the restaurant," interfered my brother. "There's a pool-room run in connection with it. It is packed with men at this hour. Your goin' there is simply out of the question."

"Well, will you go and try and get us some methylated spirit and some milk?" suggested Hilaria.

"There is no methylated spirit in the place," he answered. "Milk is a luxury even at milkin'-time, and all the stores close at six."

"You go up to the bedroom," I said to Hilaria, "and see if there isn't sufficient spirit at the bottom of the bottle for one cup of tea each, and I will go out and see if I can find a friendly storekeeper."

"You will only get laughed at!" said my brother.

But an aching head cares nothing for a laugh, and I crossed the road on my quest. A storekeeper, who was

standing in the doorway of his shop, which was also his dwelling-house, told me that milk and methylated spirit were not to be had. But he opened his store, and supplied me with a tin of condensed milk, and as a loaf of bread seemed to be another absentee from the market, I fell back on yet another tin of the inevitable crackers.

My brother was still surveying life and Lipton from the hotel doorstep.

"Did you have any luck?" he inquired.

"I got all I wanted," I answered coldly and untruthfully, but without conviction, since there came a knock at our door just as we had abandoned the difficult task of boiling a kettle over a paraffin lamp, and he came in with half a dozen superb oranges, some lemons, and four bottles of soda-water.

"That is the nearest approach to your requirements I could get in the bar," he said, "and as it came to exactly one shillin' and fivepence halfpenny more than our three substantial suppers with tea or coffee would have cost, I leave it to your British intelligence to arrive at the reason why the dinin'-room shuts on time in Canada."

CHAPTER IX

LIPTON—THE PRAIRIE

IN spite of the blindless condition of the bedroom, we slept until the first call for breakfast. Although the hotel furniture was ample, at that time it was not located: the sheets were new, and had not been laundered before entering upon the fulfilment of their calling, and the floors cried aloud for the carpets which looked on grimly in neat rolls. The furniture was of the usual sample of average Canadian furniture as used in the North-West; common sense was in its favour, economy of labour in the workmanship, and an eye-blistering varnish over all. But it is cheap. For thirty-two shillings one can obtain a dressing-table and washstand put together in the fashion of an English ten-guinea suite. It is naturally rough in the fittings and cheap in the finish; but a really good looking-glass is in the place of honour, and the drawers are designed to contain an average wardrobe. Canadian furniture, in fact, is made according to the requirements of the majority: for those who can pay high prices there is a fair choice, but a visit to some of our London furniture firms would be a revelation in the possibilities of design, wood, and workmanship to even the wealthiest of Canadians.

"I have bargained with a man to send us along in his waggon for six dollars," announced my brother at breakfast. "You had better go and order the rest of the stores," he added, "and I will take your checks and collect the baggage, as we should not be later in starting than ten o'clock. Be sure not to forget anything, as Heaven only knows when Hicks will turn up with Charles and the buggy, and we are nine miles' distance across the prairie from Macdonald Hills, our nearest store. Of course it is a good deal dearer than Lipton, bein' a hundred miles from nowhere in particular."

"Flour, potatoes, oatmeal, lard, suet, and bread will see us through, won't it?" I asked. "Butter and eggs surely we can get from the neighbours. Besides, we have a host of things in the grub-box. Not flour and potatoes, of course, but jam, potted meats, and all sorts and conditions of travelling comestibles."

"And there's a cooked ham," added Hilaria. "Mother sent it on at the last moment especially for you, Lal; I expect it hadn't occurred to her that you had been living on it for the greater part of your time in 'the Land.'"

"Ham is ham anywhere; and bacon, which is altogether another story and what I have been livin' on, is very salt pork in Canada. I hope it is a York ham?" said Lal.

"Where is it?" I asked.

"It was too big to go in the luncheon-basket, and the grub-box was full up, so I packed it at the bottom of your hat-box."

"Hilaria!" I gasped.

"Oh, it's quite all right. All packed up in millions of wrappings, and that kind of thing, you know. At least,

I mean the hats are all right, and we must hope that all's well with the ham."

"You go and help Lal with the baggage-checks," I suggested. "I can manage the stores."

I had executed my commissions, and was walking leisurely across to the station, when Hilaria came running towards me with a perturbed air. Lal followed her with an expression of grave anxiety.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"A bad loss!" she answered.

"The worst possible!" cried Lal.

"My hat-box!" I said. "I knew it!"

"Worse than that!" said Hilaria.

"Worse indeed!" echoed Lal. "It's the grub-box, and if we ever set eyes on it again, it will be empty."

"But you have the check," I reminded him. "If it doesn't turn up, they will have to pay."

"I am not at all sure that they would pay on that kind of thing—I doubt it. Confiscation. And only too glad of the chance in this country."

"Has my cabin-trunk arrived?" I questioned.

"Of course it hasn't! If you see that in a month, you will be lucky. The chances are that you will never see it at all, as it isn't checked. The C.P.R. do fine business over their sales of lost property, but one very seldom meets any one who has ever recovered anything they've had the bad luck to lose on the train."

"Although you were so positively certain that it would be 'quite all right' with my table," I said bitterly,—“the only scrap of furniture that we have between us, I have no doubt.”

"That it is, or rather was," acknowledged my brother. "Even the stove hasn't turned up. We shall have to cook outside until Heaven only knows when, and I am not at all sure that the weather isn't going to change. Anyway, 'the rains of June' are just in front of us. Oh, you'll find life on the prairie well worth livin'. Cheer up!"

I made my way to the depot-master. He was quite sure that the checked baggage would turn up by the next train, which unfortunately was not due to arrive until the evening of the following day. Concerning my dress-basket, he advised me to write at once to the lost property office of the C.P.R. at Montreal and Winnipeg, as between the loss of missing baggage checked and missing baggage unchecked there lurks the widest gulf of uncertainty. He gave me his faithful promise to spare no effort himself towards its recovery; but as a matter of fact he went off on his honeymoon, and forgot our existence.

I returned to the store to increase our order. It was not exactly dispatched promptly. We waited half an hour for the bacon in impatience, and three-quarters for the oatmeal in wrath. By the time the waggon came round to the hotel, fully loaded up with baggage and stores, resignation had fallen upon us, and we clambered up into our places absolutely indifferent as to what happened next.

Lal sat beside the twelve-year-old Jehu, and Hilaria and I pitched where we might, between the baggage and the stores. Quite a crowd collected around the hotel door to watch our departure. The proprietor had thawed into amiability itself. Everybody grinned, but no doubt the situation was mirth-provoking to the audience. And

when we at last really made a start, quite a number of them shouted "Good luck!"

We had passed over the railway-track at the slowest pace on record; nor was there the slightest symptom of increasing the speed when we got on the even and easy-going prairie-track. As a preliminary to a reasonable understanding about things in general, we inquired the name of the diminutive Jehu.

"Klarnz," he answered.

"Klarnz!" I exclaimed.

"Klarnz?" echoed Hilaria. "German, I suppose."

"It's Clarence he's drivin' at," said my brother.

"That's right," said the Jehu,—"Klarnz."

"Well, Klarnz, won't that fine team of yours get over the ground a bit faster?" suggested Lal. "We shan't get home by sundown."

"I guess," said Klarnz, but maintained the rate of four miles an hour.

Five miles out we turned left to the main trail, where a single telegraph-wire plays the part of traveller's guide from South Qu'Appelle, a station on the main line of the C.P.R., to Prince Albert, a town in Saskatchewan, some miles north. We had passed two farmsteads on our way, and in turning on to the telegraph-trail we noticed a substantial, neatly built farmhouse with good outbuildings, standing among trees and well-fenced land. Two miles farther on two tiny shacks stood side by side about a mile to the south-west, and at a further distance of two miles we caught sight of a well-built frame shack of considerable dimensions, with a neat-looking stable in the rear.

"That's Larcen's place," my brother informed us. "He makes a mint of money taking in stoppers. Hicks and I have often put up there. Twenty-five cents a meal. Porridge without milk, and he always happens to be out of butter; but it's twenty-five cents, mind you, all the same. And twenty-five cents for the privilege of sleepin' under your own rug on his floor. Oh, Larcen is great! He knows a thing or two. He is a Christian Scientist. Now we shan't see another sign of human habitation for the next eight miles."

"What then?" inquired Hilaria.

"Headlands post office. I'll run across and get the mail. It is only a mile north-east of the trail. Guess I can run across, double back, and meet you at the other end whilst your gees are makin' the trail, if you keep up this dangerous pace, Klarnz."

"I guess," said Klarnz.

My brother nodded at him with a grin from the rear.

"That's Canada all over. Guessin' and sittin' still, and just taking their own way, with their mouths shut. Did you ever see such a wilderness! That's how it is year in year out. Dry, bare, burnt prairie, or the never-ending snow. Never a flower! Never a bird!"

The clear, sweet voice of the Canadian lark, which had piped us a greeting all along the trail, piped at this point with ringing emphasis.

"Well, only the lark," he allowed; "and that's enough to drive a fellow melancholy mad. It has exactly the same effect on Hicks as it has on me. Gets on one's nerves. Hilaria, you needn't break your neck over the look-out. Distance is simply awful here; you seem to see into

kingdom come, and you can see all you will see for the next three months from where you are sitting. If we had a glass, you could view the shack, and for about ten miles beyond. That gets on my nerves too. Always the same melancholy landscape. Oh for a sight of dear old London! I will never grumble again at rain or pea-soup fog as long as I live!"

"Look!" exclaimed Hilaria. "Lal, how could you say there were no flowers!"

On either side of the prairie was a wide patch of fresh green violet leaves, from which tall-stemmed little mauve blossoms of Russian violet form, but pansy face, blinked at us with the brightest curiosity.

"Pouf! They don't smell."

Farther along we came across real violets; and then Hilaria fairly screamed—

"Yellow orchids! And *such* orchids, growing wild! Lal, you Goth! I must have some."

"They will be dead by the time we get home. Besides, you will have to put them in potted-meat tins—there's nothing else. You are as bad as the wife of one of the neighbours, a Scotchman. She has about a dozen kids, and they got fever or small-pox or something comin' out, and the immigration officials packed the whole outfit into quarantine, and kept them there nine weeks. When they got out again, Macfarlane went down to meet them with the waggon at South Qu'Appelle. There was no Kirkella branch then, and South Qu'Appelle is a sixty-miles waggon journey. Something went wrong with the works when they were a few miles up the trail, and they had to camp out a further few days by way of a little encouragement.

Well, when they got in sight of their place at last it was June, and 'pon my soul! if that woman didn't insist on gettin' out to pick scarlet lilies."

"Scarlet lilies growing wild!" I said. "And to say there were no flowers! Oh, Lal!"

"H'm! Well, those lilies are a bit better than the rest of things up here. But they don't last long—here to-day and gone to-morrow. Klarnz, shall I drive a bit now?"

Klarnz held on to the lines.

I don't know how long I slept. When I opened my eyes, Hilaria was sitting on the flour-bag with the brightest of smiles and a general air of supreme self-satisfaction.

"Two such nice men passed just now. One was quite dear! Lal knows them. So good-looking!"

"Really? Where?"

"Oh, quite two miles back."

"You needn't bother!" shouted Lal, who had at last succeeded in possessing himself of the lines. "Plenty more of the same sort round."

"Really! Do those two live in the neighbourhood?"

"About eight miles west. They left our country for our country's good."

"Oh!"

"Lal!"

"Quite true! Thirst. And on the rare occasions you will have the impulse to make use of your 'quite-dear' expressions, which, I hear, you haven't forgotten, Hilaria, I'll lay you any odds I can shout Thirst. Who do you think is coming over to this wilderness to play the navy unless there is something behind it, since there is precious little in front! And you girls won't stand it long, so you

needn't be superior. Three months!—three days. By Jove! that's well broken."

A wide even patch of black soil ran along the trail to our left. At the far end four horses were resting at the end of a furrow, whilst a man was attacking something in the earth with a pickaxe.

"That's Klein. He breaks for three dollars fifty an acre, but I didn't know he took out the stones for that. It is good breaking, every inch turned. Now, if I could get him to do twenty-five acres on my show, and prepare it for crop, there would be something in it."

"But surely you wouldn't get half the pleasure out of it after, if you don't put in your own work," I said.

"Pleasure be—sugared! I have had all the pleasure I want from the prairie. And you wait and see for yourself how you would like to toil like a trooper under the conditions in which new settlers have to live. Here, Klarnz, take the lines. There's the post office—see, a mile north-east. I shall make a point down on the far side, and meet you a mile farther up the trail. But don't be too cocksure about letters. If you get any a week hence, you will be lucky."

"Oh, don't be such an eternal pessimist, Lal," I entreated. "It gets on one's nerves, and of course letters always travel more quickly than people. Besides, we came over Lake Superior."

"Have your own way! That is to say, hug your illusion for another twenty minutes, but don't blame me when you land on the disappointment."

We watched him clear the prairie in the paper-chase form of the English schoolboy.

"He hasn't altered a rap," said Hilaria. "I don't exactly see him behind the plough."

"Oh, I daresay Mr. Hicks has done most of it," I answered. "Lal could always get round somebody else to do his work."

The fence, which consisted of two rows of barbed wire slung on poplar poles, ran for a mile; a heap of stones at the corner pole indicated the place of our meeting. From this point of view the foreground wore quite an air of settlement. A long shack, with a solid-looking turf stable and traces of beasts and human habitation, was within a stone's throw. Beyond was a big enclosure of well-fenced land, with a neat frame shack, and a tiny one about a mile farther on. We learned from Klarnz that we were sixteen miles from Lipton, and had a further eight to travel.

"You must really hurry up, if you mean to get there before sundown, Klarnz," said Hilaria with authority. "There is no twilight, I hear, and I am not going to even try to find supper in the dark."

"Guess we'd best have supper right here," said Klarnz.

"You guess again, and hurry up those horses," commanded Hilaria. "Well, what luck?" as Lal came swinging across the flat.

"One letter and a paper. The letter is the one you wrote me from the ship, and the paper is the *People*. The little chap that used to do odd jobs at the brewery sends it to me every week. I used to get the *Sketch* and the *Tatler* and the *Sportin' and Dramatic*, the *Idler*, and every rag under the sun when I first came out. But everybody forgets your existence in the wilderness, and

the only thing I can rely on in the way of literature is Johnny's *People*."

Hilaria and I exchanged a glance of guilt.

"Of course, if I had known you really cared about them," said Hilaria, "I would have kept it up."

"Ah!" said my brother. "See that house within the fence? That chap is the magistrate for our district. Scotchman. Owns a whole section. He's got it all fenced in. That cost him something. See that bunch of horses over yonder?—they belong to him. He is a rancher. Just breaking enough land to raise oats for feed. Now we have two miles of the most melancholy bit of the trail,—nothing but prairie and slough,—and then we come into our own settlement. From the next turn you will see quite a big house among the trees. It belongs to a man named Brown. He was a London policeman. Saved a few hundred pounds. Came out here and took up the most impossible quarter-section from a grain-raising point of view, because it offered a fine site for a house. Spent all his money on the house. Six big rooms and a fine cellar. Everybody rooked him up and down over the building. Most of the neighbours lent a hand at the highest price of labour, and he didn't even stand by to see that they put in time. The house pretty well cost him his entire capital, and he hasn't paid for the lumber yet. There isn't a stick of furniture in the place, an' now they are livin' on green peas."

"Without the inevitable crust?" mocked Hilaria.

"Well, it's hard times with them, I can tell you, and so it is with all homesteaders in this country."

A white post swung an arm towards the north-east; in

the clearness of the atmosphere it appeared to be almost within stone-throw.

"Do you see that post?" said Lal. "It is nearly two miles from us. It's the stopping-house indicator. The Sampsons keep it. They are the only people who manage to get enough to eat in the entire settlement. He was a builder in England, and commander-in-chief over the erection of Brown's house. His wife takes in stoppers—like Larcens, only there are two women, so they do them better. Still, they don't give you too much anywhere for your twenty-five cents, unless there is opposition at hand. But these people must have made a good deal. They all came in when we did a year ago, and they have a good frame house and stable, and I hear they are building a new summer kitchen. I know they hadn't much, if anything, when they first came out, but then you see the fellow is a builder by trade.

"The neighbours Hicks and I know most of," he continued, "are the Whites. White was a pastry-cook. By Jove! their buns are rippin'! They managed a confectioner's shop in the old country—somewhere in the suburbs. They came over some years ago, but got no farther than Toronto. I don't think things exactly boomed with them. Anyhow, they went home again, and saved up sufficient money to come out here and settle down with some chance of a fair start. I think they had four or five hundred pounds before they left; but a Canadian homesteader would get as much out of five hundred dollars as an English immigrant would get out of five hundred pounds, and a Hungarian or a German would lick them both into a cocked hat for economy and

good management and hard work. Hungarians and Germans like work, you know. You mayn't believe it, but it is a positive pleasure to them. Well, these White people have a good team and a waggon, a plough, disc, and harrows; two cows, pigs, and an incubator; and they have put up quite a decent little shack. But White worked like a slave until he had got a roof over their heads and had settled them in. So did the eldest boy; he is fifteen; then there is another boy, and a girl and a baby. English sovereigns got a bit played out by the time they were all fixed up, and now he is out on a cookin' job at a railway camp. Seventy dollars a month to start with, and he thinks it will be a hundred soon. But he comes home during the freeze-up, and even then they are frightfully hard-up! Live on tea and buns and bread, you know; butter is an occasional luxury. She is an awfully nice little woman. Been ever so kind to Hicks and me. You will be nice to her, won't you? Go and see her and that kind of thing. She will show you how to make bread."

"Hilaria is the cook," I said. "I have come over to rest."

"Ha ha! Well, I hope you will appreciate your restin'-place. There it is! Wake up, Hilaria, and look at my country-house. Over yonder, about a mile towards the sunset."

From the background, where the sun was passing slowly down to its rest from the crimson-shore of a purple and jasper sea, flecked with every tint remembered in the fragrant breath of roses, an odd little hut raised on an eminence leaned disconsolately towards the

right. Hilaria and I gazed at it speechless. Lal gazed at us with a grin of positive enjoyment.

"Hicks and I and another chap were our own architects; we didn't call in professional aid of any kind. Mrs. White says it looks most artistic in winter. Reminds her of a shootin'-box on a Scotch moor. She's never been in Scotland, but that's an N.B. I know what she means. From the Atlantic to the Pacific settlers' shacks are all of a pattern, like Bryant and May's match-boxes, only more so. My shack has an air of its own. It's original!"

"Oh, it's original!" I allowed.

"Original!" mocked Hilaria; "we will hope it's unique."

"I am afraid you may find it a little chilly without the stove, because during my absence the plaster will probably have fallen in, and a number of the poles are a bit wide apart. But I'll patch it all up in the morning. In my rôle of architect and builder plasterin' was my strong point. Look alive, Klarnz, or you will turn over the whole outfit, and my dwelling-house was not designed for a hospital!"

"I guess," said Klarnz. "Gee up, thar!" he encouraged, as we struck off the Touchwood trail, and jolted towards the hut on the eminence.

In dimensions the shack was fourteen by fourteen. It boasted a three by four by five pit in the middle, which did duty for a cellar, and it lacked the worst inconvenience of limited habitudes, it was not low.

Built of poplar poles knocked into the ground on end, and carefully plastered with sand and cement, these settlers' shacks can be wonderfully warm and cosy in



COMING DOWN TOUCHWOOD HILL INTO FORT
QU'APPELLE



winter, and cool in summer; but the poles of my brother's shack were wide-set, and almost the whole of the plaster, which was of mud only, had fallen in. Daylight peered in on us from the north, south, and east walls; and at the west end, not only through the gaps and chinks which defied the plaster, but from a ten inch by twelve immovably fixed window.

The roof, which was constructed of recumbent poles placed at the usual angle, and covered with blocks of turf, seemed fairly sound; but the sky gleamed through a circular space to remind us of the stove which had not arrived with us at Lipton. In one corner of the shack two collapsible, canvas-covered stretchers lay side by side; these, with the forlorn-looking hunting sketch by Basil Nightingale, were the full force of the household gods. There was a detached air of welcome about the familiar sketch, but the stretchers seemed only to accentuate the nakedness of the land.

Hilaria threatened to become hysterical, but my brother suddenly announced that he had forgotten lamp-oil and lantern-chimneys, which at once inspired her to the sensible solution of a difficult situation.

"If you want supper, Klarnz," she commanded, "just get a hustle on. Light a fire and boil the kettle at once. You can whistle dirges and admire me later on. Hold on to these hats, Lal, whilst I dive for the ham."

Lal's anxiety concerning the hats was so palpably inferior to his anxiety concerning the ham, that I promptly rescued his light but expensive burden, and, turning into the shack to deposit them on my dressing-bag, remembered that it contained the fag end of a

candle, and that a candle placed in a drip of its own wax will do its duty as brightly as if placed in a candlestick of gold.

In less than ten minutes the kettle sang gaily to a cheerful and warmth-giving blaze. The dry wood of the prairie burns with strength as well as speed, and after sundown, even in the hot months of July and August, the air is often tinged with the delicate breath of ice, when the camp-fire can be as welcome a godsend as the sun itself.

Supper was laid out on one of the stretchers. The ham, released from brown paper, tin-foil, and the inner travelling garments of the comestible, was the *pièce de résistance*, and held on to its somewhat treacherous situation in the centre of the stretcher by sheer force of *avoirdupois*. Cups, saucers, plates, and cutlery all made sliding overtures towards it from their orthodox positions upon the festal board. Hilaria sat upon the recumbent sack of flour, and Lal upon a portmanteau. I chose the more lofty but less convenient support of the hat-box. Klarnz knelt. The ham was horribly salt, but no one remarked on it. We took it thankfully with the crackers and milkless tea, and then, in loyal obedience to Hilaria, we washed up—all save Klarnz, whose hands returned to his pockets, as he watched Hilaria with admiration untinged with awe, until I, who know every sign of the times in Hilaria's deep blue eyes, promised to do Lal's share of the drying-up, if he would pitch the tent and induce Klarnz to retire.

Hilaria and I gazed silently at each other, and then at our environment. Under the clear bright light of

the moon patches of silvering water gleamed here and there from the strange but very sweet serenity of the prairie. The evening song of the poplars whispered us welcome from a neighbouring bluff. A weird bird gave us greeting on a plaintive note. Cackle, chant, and the ceaseless hum of living creatures, which awake from the habitations of ice-bound earth into the sudden joy of summer life on the Canadian prairie, echoed the Magnificat first sung in unforgotten Eden. The indefinable spirit of the prairie that leaps and yearns towards the joy of life in every leaf and flower and grass-blade of summer-time, and broods over it in sure and certain hope when it lies resting beneath the deep white pall of winter, throbbed us a welcome. And the stars came out, not only in the bewildering millions which mantle heaven in the countries of clear atmosphere, but all the dear familiar friends of home were there, peering down on us in pleased surprise; and the sword of Orion was on guard when I fastened the door of the shack and said good-night.

CHAPTER X

EARLY DAYS—"THE STAFF OF LIFE"— HUNGARIAN SETTLERS

HILARIA stood at the doorway of the shack in a pale blue wrapper, with her blue eyes reflecting the rapture of the rising sun, and a smile of many meanings hovering about her charming mouth.

"The first thing to be accomplished," she announced, "is the immediate dispatch of Klarnz. I like boys and men, and thoroughly appreciate their appreciation of me. When one has served men and women in the ward of a hospital, one knows both, and the men were as grateful as the women were not. But has it struck you that in this country men appear to find diversion in watching women do the dirty work?"

I pleaded that the contrasting of nations might be held sacred to Lal for the present.

"Isn't he terrible?" she laughed. "But you have yet to see the ploughing. I have been considering it for the last ten minutes: one gets an excellent view from here. The bit he calls the garden is as long as the shack, but not nearly so wide; and the crop-land is about the length and breadth of a billiard-table. Do get up and look! What would father's face be like if he could share the view?"

I got off the stretcher, which had proved a somewhat chilly bed, and joined her in the doorway. Nocturnal music from the tent gave hint that my brother and Klarnz were still enjoying the placid slumber of the lazy. I followed the line indicated by Hilaria or should have failed to notice that a tiny patch of black soil relieved the grey-green tint of the prairie about fifty yards to the right of the shack; whilst a patch of about three times its length, and of the same breadth, lay about a hundred yards to our left.

"Do you think that really amounts to the sum total of the work?" I asked Hilaria. "It can't be! Perhaps Lal lent the plough and oxen to Mr. Hicks, and he has probably ploughed up sufficient land on his quarter to cover the land-duties of both of them."

"You mayn't do it," she answered. "I have read up homestead law carefully; there was a copy of the regulations tucked into a chink near my bed, and I awoke at dawn. It stipulates for 'actual residence on one's *own* homestead, and cultivation of a reasonable portion thereof, within six months from the date of entry.' We will hope there are no inspectors in this part of the world. One thing is certain, if Lal does not get his acres ploughed whilst we are here, they will never be ploughed at all."

"But there are neither oxen nor waggon," I said. "He can't possibly break up thirty acres of land with just a plough and Charles. And Charles alone remains to represent the waggon and oxen. That terrible buggy has still to be paid for, and I expect that we shall have to find the money."

"I almost wish that we had fallen in with the milkshop idea at Winnipeg," she said. "It was a bit vague, but could anything be more hopeless than this? An unfurnished shed pitched on the prairie, twenty-three miles distant from the newest and most expensive camp-town; without horses, cows, pigs, or poultry, and not even a well dug."

"There are two cows," I reminded her.

"They belong to the 'British Workman,' and are running with a herd of three hundred cattle ten miles west," she replied. "I will share your optimistic idea of his capabilities when I see them in action. Lal declares that he must have given somebody else half or even three-quarters of the dollar to dig that well. One thing is certain, three of them have been here off and on over a year, and there is no sign of a well as far as I can see. Lal took off his boots and socks to dip up the water from the slough last night. Now I will go and make the fire whilst you get out the food. Don't wake them before we are nearly ready, because if Klarnz stands gazing at me with his hands in his pockets whilst I work, I shall lose my temper and box his ears."

That first day on the prairie was also the first day of June, gloriously clear and bright, but with a bite in the wind at which we did not fail to grumble. However, as a matter of fact, we were more than fortunate to get in six days of perfect weather, since in Canada June is the month of the rainfall. If the rains of June fail, the harvest cannot be bountiful, although wheat in a dry year is often of the highest grade.

For the first few days Lal was an enthusiastic workman.

After the dispatch of Klarnz, Hilaria and I assisted at a most successful operation of the replastering of the shack. Lal allowed it was a stiffish fence for the start, but as before the stove could arrive we should probably have to boil the kettle in the open, with the rain falling in sheets and the wind blowing a gale, he considered there was nothing to be gained in letting us down lightly. So he got a pail of water, mixed it into mud of adhesive thickness, and pressed it in between the poles from the outside, whilst Hilaria and I pressed from the inside. When the main business was concluded, I pointed out all the tiny holes and chinks with a hatpin, and before the sun marked midday, our walls were waterproof, and we hoped windproof.

"I had better go and see if I can get a couple of duck for the evening meal," said Lal. "That ham won't last long, and you will take time to get used to the bacon."

"I thought there were Game Laws even out here," said Hilaria. "Every one may shoot, but only in season. Isn't that how it runs?"

"You may only shoot out of season if you are in absolute distress for food," answered Lal, who was carefully counting cartridges. "I shall have you being ill up here if you don't get some sort of decent food. And Mrs. White will have to entertain the itinerant parson on Sunday week. He will expect meat, you know, so I must get her a brace. And if you will come along to-morrow, Hilaria, and bring some flour, I know she will bake us a batch of bread, and show you how the trick is done."

"I can make excellent bread with baking-powder, thank you," said Hilaria.

"I shouldn't advise it. I got' tired of baking-powder bread the first month. Still, you needn't mind me! Only so will you. But Hicks likes it awfully, and he will keep you bakin' all the time. I tell you, girls, the appetite of the 'British Workman' will be an eye-opener for you. I won't answer for that well, but there is no doubt that he is a fine trencherman."

It seemed horrid to be discussing the appetite of the absent guest, and I reminded him a little coldly of the fable of the pot and the kettle.

"Oh, I like good feed," he acknowledged, "and so will you before you have put in three months on the prairie. Only you never will! But gourmands are like those interestin' virgins in the Bible, wise and foolish. Now I am attached to the god of those heroes against whose fate the "Chief" always warned us on the twenty-third Sunday after Trinity, within the limits of discretion. Hicks is its slave. One day we were right out of everything but flour, and had no money at all. Our credit at Macdonald's store ten miles west is limited, although Mac is one of the best; he wouldn't see any one starve, and he always takes us in and gives us a dinner. But on that day he wasn't at home; his missus didn't offer us any, and of course we couldn't suggest that we should dine. We bought the barest necessities—oatmeal, potatoes and a scrap of bacon, and just a pound of cheese. On the homeward trip of course we got a bit peckish,—you don't travel behind oxen at motor pace, you know,—still, we could have held out, as we both had tobacco. Before we had covered a mile,

Hicks said, 'I am mortal peckish, old chap. Let's have a look at the cheese.'

"Knowing Hicks, I cut the cheese exactly in two pieces, and gave him his half. I ate a tiny piece of my own, but he swallowed the lot promptly, without bread or biscuit. Oh, but this winter it arrived at a finer point than that. We came down to nothing but oatmeal, and couldn't even get over to old Mac's until the trail had settled down after a blizzard. Hicks hates his porridge thin: he likes it stodgy, like school puddings. I hate porridge anyhow, but of course I can eat it when there is nothing else. Knowing Hicks, I made the porridge, and made it thin, so that there was sufficient for a meal a day for three days. He grouched about it no end, and said he would rather have one good satisfyin' plate of the stuff and chance things than be fed in driblets; and he wanted me to divide like I did the cheese. But I didn't see that, because you couldn't possibly go on feedin' whilst another fellow starved. I should have had to *offer* my share, and Hicks simply couldn't have refused it!"

On the second day Lal had completed us a summer parlour of poplar poles and boughs. It was quite as big as the shack, and did excellent service in protecting it from bad weather on that side; and also we used it as a chamber of rest, as well as refreshment. Hilaria and I helped in handing up the boughs, and string, and nails which held them together; and later we unpacked our pictures and books, and bits and pieces of Liberty loveliness, and the shack put on an air of home. Unfortunately, both grain and flour bags had to stand within the door, and we were never without a company of gophirs; but

after a while we got used to them. They didn't climb the stretchers, but the amount of grain those little fat rat-like creatures can consume is amazing. I have known them to cat off an acre of green grain as clean as though a hailstorm had destroyed it.

Fired with our praises, the next day my brother started to make a rustic chair. It looked quite solid and most artistic, only it had a trick of falling forward the moment one attempted to sit on it; so we placed it just outside the door, and nailed it firmly to the poles, where it lent quite an hospitable air to the shack; but we fell back on our baggage as being more reliable accommodation, and the saddle-box did excellent duty for a table.

When all these preliminary arrangements were accomplished, Hilaria went over to Mrs. White, who most kindly volunteered to bake for us until our stove arrived. She arranged that Hilaria should go over at her next baking to be initiated into the manufacture of yeast-bread; but only a week later Hilaria returned with a very flushed face and her firmest expression of determination.

"I will not learn to make bread—it is a most horribly complicated process," she announced. "It is true that Mrs. White is the kindest thing, and always makes me tea with cream in it, although I am sure the good soul can't afford it with all those children, and she tells me they are very hard-up. But the fact is, I lost my way going and walked miles, only to lose it again coming home, when I walked more miles. This footling shack can't be seen from the north of the trail; the hill hides it. Lal says there is a kind of time-honoured arrangement over here, by which bachelors get matrons to bake for



them at a cost of about a dollar for the bag of flour. Do go and see her, and ask her nicely to deliver us from the bread difficulty. If she can let us have a batch once a week, I can eke it out with baking-powder bread."

To finish the bread story, I must plead guilty to having acted upon her suggestion, and for fifteen months after I arrived in Canada I prayed and paid for my bread. A neighbour of mine, who lives about a mile and a quarter from me as the crow flies, and makes some of the finest bread I have eaten in Canada, usually supplied me; when she failed, I had to drive to the Mission School at Le Bret to replenish my store. One blazing morning in July, the last crust was dispatched at breakfast; my neighbour could not help me out, and I drove eight miles in the scorching sun for bread, and drove back again without it—and four hungry men awaiting food at my empty hands! The baker at the Mission is a French-Swiss. I attacked him in English, and implored him in French for the grace of a solitary loaf. But it was the day after Dominion Day, the great public holiday of Canada. He had been away. Scarcely would his bread last out, and he knew there was not a loaf to be had in the village.

"But I have come eight miles for it," I reasoned.

"Mademoiselle was doubtless not long in the country," he suggested.

In the distressful moment of mental aberration I answered, "Only a year."

"One year in Canada and drive eight miles for bread! *Mais on voit bien que vous êtes anglaise, mademoiselle. C'est compris!*"

Within twenty-four hours I had mastered the very simple process of making yeast-bread, and it saved me many dollars.

During the first week we planted parsley, potatoes, lettuce, onions, cucumber and peas, and we collected and sorted the masculine wardrobe, and for the first and last time did a day's washing—it didn't pay.

On the last day of the week Hilaria and I paid our first visit to the Hungarians'. Lal's enthusiasm was slightly on the wane. He was inclined to be faintly surprised at the amount of wood Hilaria required for cooking, although he praised her duck stews unstintingly, and even on one occasion allowed that if we had been there at the start more of "those infernal homestead duties" might have been accomplished.

We left him on a stretcher in the green room with a copy of *Childe Harold* in his hand, and his eyes closed.

"That apricot dumpling was excellent, Hilaria, but a trifle heavy. I'll have a read. You can't miss your way to the Hungarians'. It is a mile and a half up the main trail; then you strike off to the right, and look for smoke, or listen for kids."

Hilaria and I discussed the situation solemnly on our way. We agreed that it was necessary to keep on moving, and that Lal must not be allowed to drop back into afternoon siestas. Occupation had to be provided. I had decided to risk comfort, sickness, disasters and return journeys, and buy a team of work-horses and a waggon. I was trying to make Hilaria understand how easily, and probably profitably, we could sell them again when the ploughing of the necessary acres had been

accomplished; but Hilaria could never be persuaded to take chances about her return ticket.

"I don't mind staying a few weeks now we are here," she said, "but I don't expect to stay long. Of course, with my nursing experience, I can easily get work in Winnipeg. Only I don't think you have any right to spend money on horses which father gave you for return tickets."

"Father will lose every cent he has advanced to Lal if we don't make some sort of definite effort," I reminded her. "If we can only secure the ultimate possession of the land, that at least will represent something; but if you and I don't see those duties completed, they won't be done, and the land-grant will be cancelled."

"A good thing too, and the least expense," said Hilaria obstinately.

"I must remind you also that father left everything to my discretion," I said.

"You haven't got any," she answered; and then we arrived at the off-trail to the Hungarians' place, a herd of cattle, and the only occasion during the six months in which Hilaria and I shared better and worse luck, on which we nearly arrived at a misunderstanding; and a misunderstanding is always ten thousand times worse than a quarrel.

Hilaria is not to be laughed out of her fear of cows. I don't know that I have ever been afraid of them, but in England, where one is fenced, or warned, or threatened out of familiar knowledge of the land, one naturally doesn't arrive at the same intimate understanding of four-footed creatures as one does on the prairie.

I hadn't given a thought to the cows which were alongside. My mind was entirely concentrated on the horses which were in the air.

"You coward!" cried Hilaria, and the soul-hit in the thrust was that she meant it.

It chanced that I had quite unconsciously changed sides just as Hilaria started to edge off, open her umbrella, and generally prepare to get in a panic over those placid-looking, happy milch-cows, which were peacefully chewing the cud by the slough, and just raised their heads in friendly fashion as we picked our way along its edge.

"Hilaria, how could you possibly think I could do so mean a thing, even if I were afraid?" I protested.

"Most people pretend that they are not afraid of cows," she answered loftily. "I don't. You can't get over the fact that you got inside just as that fierce brute was preparing to come snorting towards us!"

And the worst of it was that neither of us laughed.

Of all nations represented in the settlement of the North-West, the Hungarian commands my unqualified admiration. My brother imagines he detests them. It is part of the creed of every Englishman to dislike or at best to tolerate foreigners; but he agrees with me that if either of us owned a big area of agricultural land, and wanted to settle it up without reference to any other issue than the well-being of the land and its produce, we should select Hungarian settlers. Both men and women are almost ant-like in their instinct of industry, but especially the women. I have heard that they can be unjust; I know that they can be generous.

During our stay at my brother's homestead it so

chanced that I bought milk from an English settler, and also from these Hungarians. In either case, the quantity was a quart, and I believe the price but five cents. The Hungarians always brought it over, as though the act of carrying five cents' worth of produce a mile and a half across the prairie was their pleasure: the milk was of the richest quality; the quantity was nearly always half-way over the measure agreed on. The milk of the English settler was often quite remarkably poor, exactly measured, and brought as a favour.

On the day when Hilaria and I made the acquaintance of the Hungarian woman and her babies, she too was mud-plastering the shack. But what a difference between the effect of her work and that of our own! Her walls might have graced the studio and the paintings of a Melbury Road artist, so perfectly had she achieved her task; and although the floor was guiltless of board, it was beautifully clean, and smooth enough to waltz upon. One noticed at once the tendency of the Hungarian to rely on Nature alone to aid Hungarian exertion of physical power in fixing up a home.

This particular shack was built, as was my brother's, of logs and mud; but it was fully twice the size and considerably higher. The poles were very long and big; instead of being driven into the ground, they were placed horizontally one upon the other; a wedge being sliced from either end caused the poles to fit closely together, which secured the situation, and afforded better groundwork for the plastering. A wide porch added to the convenience and the beauty of this simple, neat, and comfortable dwelling-house. This porch was also

lofty; four maple poles driven into the earth secured the roof. The junior members of the domestic fowls, the baggage, the milk-pails and the cream-can, all found refuge within its hospitable shelter. A fence of poles kept out the cattle and pigs, and a rustic gate contrived to do its duty.

Neither of us ever arrived within miles of the other's language, but we were always good friends. Her eyes were bright with intelligence and goodwill; and I have been told that we British are always intelligible on the subject of our requirements. On that day we left her smiling at her gate, her pretty brown feet bare, her nut-brown, dark-eyed baby in her arms and another at her skirts. We carried away milk and eggs galore, and also the dollar-bill which she could not change. I endeavoured to make plain to her that we were strangers, and that as we knew where she lived, but she did not know where we lived, she should hold the money. But she wouldn't hear of it.

On the following day, and every day until the end of our stay, one of the boys arrived every morning with the pail of milk in time for six-o'clock breakfast. All they ever asked in return for this service was "noospepper." In time we discovered that it was the pictures, and not the letterpress, that appealed to them. When there were no pictures, the "noospepper" was thrown away directly they got out of our sight. One Sunday morning there were neither pictures nor "noospepper" at their service, and the disappointment was so apparent that I lent them an illustrated copy of the *Child-life and Girlhood of Queen Victoria*. It belonged to a member of my family, and

had come out to Canada among my own few books by accident. I made it quite clear that it was only a loan, and to be returned on the coming Sabbath without fail. But the book caught on, and the mother thanked me for it so sweetly, and with such genuine appreciation in her pretty eyes of the Early Victorian libels on the face of Queen Victoria, that the fact of its being the property of another escaped me, and I bestowed it upon them, a free gift without condition. I did not make Mr. Hungarian's acquaintance until some little while later. He marks a milestone in the history of our evolution on the prairie, and deserves a fresh page.

"Hicks and Charles are here!" cried Lal from the look-out, as we turned on to our own trail.

"What a blessing we have eggs!" said Hilaria.

The "British Workman" had brought the mail, and met with the warmest reception in consequence, in spite of the fact that my poultry commission was unfulfilled. Hilaria started to make a fire; Lal had already relieved him of the care of Charles, and was in the process of the dear brute's toilet; so that he was able to sit on the rustic chair at his ease, whilst Hilaria prepared boiled eggs and tea and things, and served him his meal on the hat-box, which at last had found a vocation worthy of its dimensions.

Included in my mail was a letter from my father. It eagerly anticipated my account of things in general at the *farm*! That letter swayed me straight down on to my determination to see the homestead duties performed and the possession of the land an accomplished fact. I announced my intention in the cheerfully expressed hope

that the next Sunday night would find the team of work-horses in residence and the new furrow cut.

"Then we shall have to start for Fort Qu'Appelle at daybreak the day after to-morrow," said Lal. "One day's rest should do Charles. You have taken things easy, Hicks. Well, if I get the horses and good ones, I can put in two acres a day, and we may hope to get out of this by the 1st of August easily."

"Man proposes!" mocked Hilaria.

"I don't know so much about that," said Lal. "Woman seems to be relievin' him of a good deal in these days, if you ask me. Still, I don't mind. I would just as soon plough as not. Have your own way by all means, but don't blame me!"

CHAPTER XI

FORT QU'APPELLE AND A DWELLER THEREIN

WE decided to go down to Fort Qu'Appelle *via* Lipton, as there we could bait Charles, dine, and remind the railway official of the existence of our lost baggage. My brother had bought his plough, waggon, oxen, and Charles through the Massey-Harris agent at Fort Qu'Appelle, who also had the promissory note for the buggy and harness; so we thought we could not do better than go to him for the horses.

We started at 5 a.m. . These early hours on the prairie never seem hard. To see the sun rise and remain in bed is to be followed with its reproach throughout the day. Also during the average Canadian summer it is not easy to toil at either house-work or cooking between the hours of ten and four o'clock, although the exceeding dryness of the Canadian atmosphere renders bearable such a degree of heat as would mean utter prostration in countries of humid atmosphere.

"Three of us make a stiff weight for Charles," said Lal, "but the trail is in fine condition. We must take things gently, and give him a good rest and feed at Lipton."

Four miles up the trail we met a family of settlers. There were many children, with cocks and hens and

furniture, in the first waggon, and lumber for the new shack in the second. A cow with calf at foot followed in the rear. They pitched in a pleasant spot just off the trail, and we always watched their development with interest.

At Lipton not a word could we hear of the missing baggage, but the stove had arrived.

"If we can only get the gees on this journey," said Lal, "it will save us six dollars. How would it be, in any case, to wait for the stove until we have made a deal?"

"No indeed," said Hilaria. "I have had one day's experience of cooking in the open in rain and wind, and I hope I may never have another. The stove must be got up at any price!"

I thought it seemed rather unwise to be paying six-dollars carriage on a ten-dollar stove, so I bought a comfortable rocker and two ordinary kitchen chairs at five and a half dollars the lot. The tables seemed altogether superior to our shack both in quality and cost, so I laid out fifty cents in two huge packing-cases, which did excellent duty for their betters.

After dinner, Lal came up to the balcony of the hotel with the gleam of an inspiration.

"I have just seen Klarnz. He says his father will sell the team that took us over. It was a fine team of middle-weight horses, you know. Klarnz says they can put on a fine spurt, only his father dared him to go harder than four miles an hour. The mare is a beauty, and only a four-year-old; the gelding is six off, and they are both absolutely sound. Klarnz thinks he will take

three hundred and fifty dollars (seventy guineas). But he is certain to be jolly well pleased to get two hundred dollars down, and the rest at three months. Then we can get the waggon from Massey-Harris on time. We don't exactly want a waggon,—at least, we could dispense with one,—but we must get the things over. We will go on down, and see what Jim M'Gusty has. You will like him. He has nice ways with him. He'll probably do us over the deal if he can, but you must expect that kind of thing in this country."

The scenery of the Canadian prairie has always a charm of its own, but on either side of the Qu'Appelle valley the approach is very lovely. From a short distance the bluffs have all the effect of neat plantations, unshadowed by the process of the planter. On either side of the trail attractive sites seemed to invite spacious country-houses, and although that stretch of the prairie is now broken up by many rich wheatfields, and some of the poplar bluffs have contributed of their beauty to fuel, as long as the line of misty blue hills lies beyond the valley beauty will be there. Even Lal shared our enthusiasm during the tiny intervals when he forgot his rôle as grand censor of anything and everything Canadian.

"Wait until you reach the top of the hill! It really is refreshing there. Although what wouldn't be, after the melancholy desert I'm pitched in! How I wish you would have gone partners in that milk-shop!"

"Partners!" echoed Hilaria. "I like your idea of partnership. Of course you would have wanted us to include the 'British Workman' as a member of the firm, and your united capital consists of Charles, since the

bill for the buggy could have been met only by the firm, which would probably have collapsed before it fell due."

"Your only chance is to do your level best with your homestead," I said. "Then, as soon as you get your patent, sell out, and use the proceeds as capital for a fresh start."

"Is that the Fort?" asked Hilaria, as we came in sight of a range of deep blue hills.

"Those are the hills on the far side of the valley. You won't see the village until we get towards the foot of the hill."

"And what a hill!" exclaimed Hilaria, as we arrived at the top, and at once relieved Charles of our weight.

The range of hills on either side of the Qu'Appelle valley is broken here and there with long, deep winding tracks. On the telegraph-trail these have been cut and graded, and except in the worst of weather offer fair passage to man and beast of burden. Words cannot make known the beauty of these lovely, lonesome hill-paths. Vegetation, secure in the shelter of these giant walls of hill, rushes into rich and brilliant life. Tall trees rise on either side of the cutting, and from spring to fall there is a wild luxuriance of loveliness in procession. The sweet-scented blossom of the choke-cherry and the pin-cherry, the delicate bloom of the saskatoon, is swiftly followed by the coming of the wild rose in every tint of its lovely hue, side by side with the father and mother of the blue forget-me-nots, unkindly known as the blue burr, and a wicked weed of the wheatfield. With the glowing heat of July sun colour arrives to the wild fruit of the valley. Vermilion currants, raspberries of

a deep rose-red, scarlet strawberries just big enough and sweet enough to let man know what they might become with the aid of his thought and care, and the wild cherry in its bright and deeper tints. Later, tall masses of mauve Michaelmas daisy, and the many-petalled puffs of a pale violet flower, whose name none seems to know, blend with the gold of ripe grain, and brilliant sunflowers, and other golden growths of less stately height — all glowing along their way into the incomparable glory of the transfiguration of the fall. Lastly comes winter's day; the haunting, lovely wonder of naked trees with frozen hope be-diamonded, keeping watch over the sleeping beauty of the spring as it rests beneath the snow.

It was about five o'clock, and the sun was moving west, as Hilaria and I rounded the last corner of the hill and looked down on Fort Qu'Appelle.

A tinge of gold hovered in the valley; on either side gleamed broad lakes, blue as the Mediterranean by the shore of blue Beaulieu. Between these lakes a river curled; horses and cattle were grazing on its banks; even these seemed invested with the Canadian spirit of inquiry, and turned their heads to take stock of the passer-by.

On that day the quiet little village-town was in unison with the rich and perfect beauty of its setting. Indeed, it was many days after the last leaves of flame had been swept away by the winds of winter, even after snow had covered the wide sweet valley, that it came to me one day, as I walked in for my mail, that the village Fort Qu'Appelle was a plain-featured performance of man, planted on one of those rare, sweet tracts of the great

Mother where Nature rests to raise an altar to the Highest.

There, in its exquisite environment, it stands expectant, a plain, patient little village-town, waiting for railroad help towards the fulfilment of the prophecy of its two noble street lines, which extend straight, strong, and full of promise towards the farther hills.

In obedience to the notice-board on the wooden bridge we abandoned effort, and slowed down to the natural pace of Charles in crossing. We drew up at the hotel, which faces the river about a hundred yards to the left of the bridge.

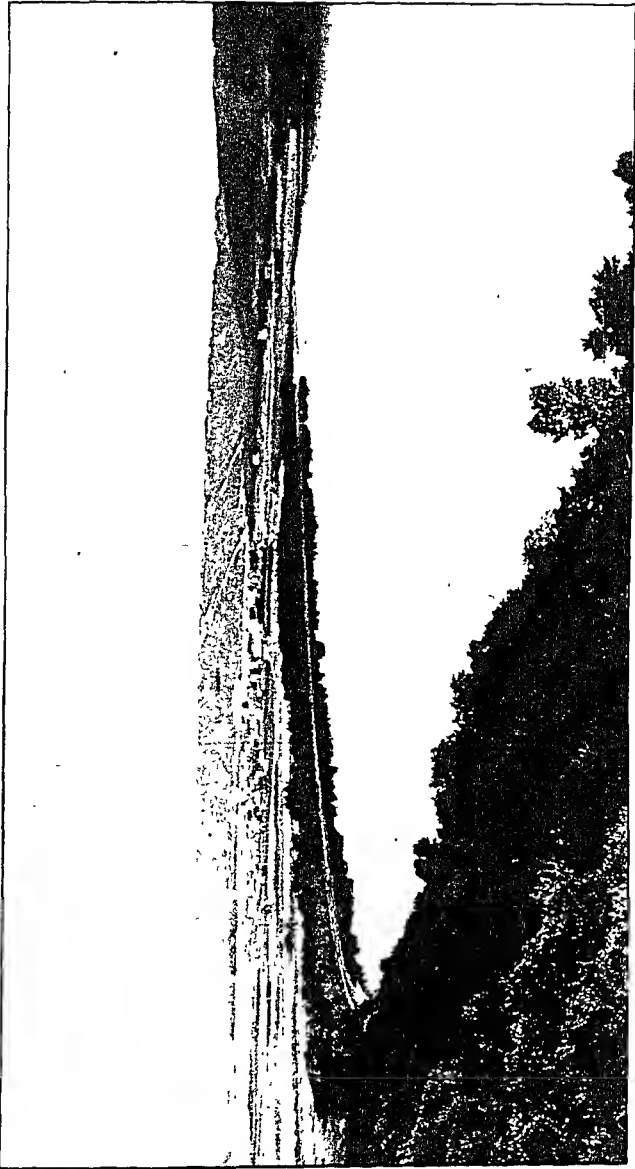
"The gods be praised, we are in time for supper!" said Lal, "and nearly an hour to spare."

We had accomplished our journey of thirty-five miles in ten hours, including two hours off for rest. Of course it was no motor pace, but for a conqueror of distance on his own terms Charles was not to be easily beaten.

Again Hilaria and I lay on a comfortable bed in a conventional bedroom, and listened to preparations for supper without having to energise to light a fire, cook, and wash up.

"Isn't this heavenly?" she said. "Why should we make martyrs of ourselves because of two men who have wasted borrowed capital, and who, I feel sure, intend to be too lazy to be even pulled through those footling homestead duties? Let us come and stay here for a month, go back and see that those acres are ploughed, and get home by New York in the autumn."

Deeply as I appreciated the sense of comfort after care, Hilaria's suggestion was not altogether as the voice of



FORT QU'APPELLE FROM THE NORTH-WEST

the charmer. From the first moment I found the prairie entirely attractive—its stillness, its serenity, together with its strong and eager pulse of life. It was in its own way as fascinating as are those rare but absorbing people whom you must hate in some moods and adore in all the rest, but whom you are always sorry to see go out of the room. It could raise one's mood to the power of wings and the seventh heaven, and hurl one down to those tiresome regions where one has to move with fixed determination, a tight gripped lip, and step by step—but it never bored. I found life on the land in Canada to be trying, tiring, exhilarating and exasperating in turn, but always inspiring. Many would persuade themselves and others that it can be unprofitable, but in considering the issues of production in a young country, the powers of the land and the man may not be divided; and I do not believe that “in the inmost centres of us all, where truth abides in fulness,” even my brother found it flat or stale.

So I answered that a week or two in the valley between the hills would certainly be an attainable delight, and suggested that we should lodge in a tent on the Lake-shore, and take our meals at the hotel.

“The mosquitoes would be appalling,” objected Hilaria; “I have had enough of camping out for the rest of my days.”

After supper, we crossed the flats which extend to the foot of the southern line of hills. There we climbed the long, steep footway to the quiet God's acre on the hill, where the silent sleepers seem to keep watch over the little village, that alternately sleeps and listens for fresh footsteps coming down the hills.

Later we chatted with the Massey-Harris agent, who had been in correspondence with my father over the first outfit. He was good-looking and friendly. He was also an Irishman and clever. He had talked with many of the English who halt at Fort Qu'Appelle. A long and varied experience had taught him exactly what to say; he had always known exactly how to say it.

He had no horses suitable to our purpose, and regretted that he had not known that we were coming, so that he might have looked some up. We spoke of the team in Lipton. He said it appeared to be a good deal. If it did not come off, we promised to return to him.

He knew so much of things of which I knew so little. I listened with eager interest to his yarns of all sorts and conditions of Englishmen, and found myself indirectly consulting him concerning the best way to proceed on the prairie. His information was entirely general, and most useful.

"I have seen hundreds of young Englishmen like your brother and Mr. Hicks take up their land," he said, "but I have known very few to take out their patents. The land is no good to them unless they can put in the work. Nine out of ten of them couldn't do it if they would, and the tenth in nine cases out of ten ain't willing. I guess the land-grant is principally useful to men of some agricultural experience who can't get a chance to start for themselves in England. They tell me that there are any number of men in the old country starving with their children, who can't get out because of the funds. I don't say that many can pull off a fortune from the land in Canada—it's the land *and the man*; but I guess that

neither a man nor his kids need go without plenty to eat in this country. It's the land and the man take things all the way through, but the first two years out here depend more on the man than on the land."

I inquired of methods, and if he thought it wiser to break with oxen or horses.

"Again that depends entirely on the man," he replied. "Oxen are slow but steady with their work; they can stick to it, and rightly handled, it pays well to break with them. They cost practically nothing to keep—good water, good pasture, and in winter oat-straw or hay, if a man's got it; if not, they'll manage to find food. Water should always be given them; they can't sip the snow like horses. But horses, I guess, to work well must be well done by. They need oats, and until a man can grow them, he must buy them. They need care, too; Eastern horses should be stabled through the winter in the North-West. Horses bred on the prairie here, or brought in from the ranches out West, do every bit as well; and some claim better, if left to run out on the prairie through the winter. But some hold they are not so easy handled if they get too much freedom when they are young. Many of the horses on the big ranches don't see a halter, I guess, till they have turned four years and are worth money. Some of them are a bit wild to the end of their days. I thought at the time it was a mistake for your brother and Mr. Hicks to start in with oxen. But I guessed they wouldn't be homesteading for long, anyway, so no harm would be done, and oxen are but half the price of horses."

I asked him if he considered homesteading to be

the cheapest way of obtaining possession of land in Canada.

He clung to his argument that it entirely depended on the man.

"Some men have got dollars, and others have got brains and grit, and I guess there's some round that ain't got much of anything. For those who have the dollars the cheapest way to get hold of the land is to pay for it. It costs a man very little in taxes. From the moment he's paid down his first instalment he is free to do what he likes with it. If it goes up—and land is going up all the time—he can take his dollars an acre, and walk out of his bargain the gainer by that much; or he can hold on and ~~wait~~ for a big deal. If a man's a real good worker, he should pay for his land with his work. I guess a real good worker in this country can always get top wages, and maybe a point over. But a big number of English immigrants ain't got much choice, I reckon; they must take up their land from the Government according to its law of homestead, or go landless; and that with many of the married men with families would mean homeless."

"But he doesn't actually possess that land for three years, does he?" I inquired.

"It's three years before he can get his patent. And a good thing that. What's the first thing a man does after he's got his patent, generally speaking? Why, raises a mortgage at eight per cent. or thereabouts, and I guess it takes some paying off. Three years are gone out in this country before you can look round. Six months of each one of them a man

is free to work out. And the advantage lies in this—most kinds of work over here close down after freeze-up till break-up. Well, I guess in those months a man can live more cheaply in his own shack on his own place than he can live anywhere.”

I objected that the land-duties must be fulfilled.

“But not necessarily in person,” he explained. “The point of residence must be observed, but a homesteader has the privilege of paying another man to break up his land, or fence it, or anything else. He could get his yearly share of work done by a neighbour, or a hired man for—say, two months’ pay drawn from the six months he will be working out himself. Most Canadian homesteaders follow this plan. They see the value of the free grant, and instead of stopping to pick holes in its law, they get straight on to the best way to make it come out all right at both ends.”

I saw that the means of life for one six months meant a great accommodation to the way of life for the other six months, and recognised that in the compilation of the homestead law Government had endeavoured to find fair justice for the land and the man. Not every homesteader by any means eventually makes a home of his homestead, but if it was not for that one clause of compulsory residence, there would be no prairie houses in the free-grant settlements; and those prairie houses are among the extra sound foundation-stones of Canadian life.

“Englishmen, except those drawn from the working classes, seldom adapt themselves either to the duties or privileges of homesteading,” he said. “You see, there

is in every case a considerable outlay to be made. Even if a homesteader gets his duties completed with hired men and hired horses, he must put up his shack and a stable. Well, I guess that doesn't amount to much to a man who can walk his twenty-five, thirty, or even fifty miles to the nearest town or station with a good heart, and hire on with a builder, or get work on the railroad, or a road-grading gang, at from two to three dollars a day; or to the man who can just walk out of the new settlement into an old settlement, and earn from twenty-five to fifty dollars a month and his board on a farm. But nothing is given away in this country—not even the hundred and sixty acres of land, if you hold it up to the lantern. Every day you ain't making a bit I guess you are losing some. And it's the kind that haven't got the grit in them to keep on making, and go on losing till all's gone, that give the country a bad name."

I grew hot on Lal's account.

"I always recommend such men as your brother and Mr. Hicks to buy a small farm in going order. There are always such places in the market—improved farms they're called. The greater number, I guess, have about one-third of the land broken. Beginners and small farmers' generally speaking can't afford to rely solely on wheat-raising. There's too much risk. The weather may fail the wheat, but a herd of cattle or some useful young horses won't be wiped out by hail or cut down by frost in a night. If they don't bring in much, they cost very little to raise, and all the work they make I guess can be put in in a couple of days over

making a sound fence; and a well-fenced pasture-field adds considerably to the value of the land."

I inquired at what price these improved farms usually changed hands.

"From ten to twenty dollars an acre they can be bought, and on very easy terms of payment," he answered. "About one-fifth down, and the balance can stand at a point or so below bank-rate, to be paid off in convenient instalments. The buyer gets his house and farm buildings, you see, which makes his start much easier. He gets about one-third of the land already cropped, or ready for seeding, according to the season; and he has still got a good proportion of his land to break up, on pasture fence or farm on his own lines. I know of just such a place as would suit your brother a mile or so across the hills—only about fifteen dollars an acre. Five thousand dollars is the actual price, and about eighty acres of the finest wheat in the country goes with it—it's several inches up already. The owner happens to be my wife's father; he is getting on in years, and the old lady don't always enjoy the best of health, and my wife she would like to have them both down near her. Just the very place for a young Englishman—good house, good large stable, a two-thousand-bushel granary, and something coming in right now. You should go and see the place; you should indeed."

I told him that I feared further investment could not be considered until the homestead had started to justify in some degree the money that had already been laid out; but in my heart I agreed with him. He gave us

an order on the Massey-Harris agent at Lipton to supply us with a waggon, and counselled us to be sure to communicate with him at once if the deal with our Lipton friend failed to come off.

Lal, who meditated a very early swim in the Lake, advised us not to get up with the sun, but to time ourselves for the second detachment for breakfast.

The hotel dining-room of a small town is usually well furnished with guests, since the clerks of the different stores and banks, as well as the bachelor population, generally make use of the hotel as a boarding-house, even if they have rooms elsewhere. This always lends an air of prosperity to the place, but I cannot think that a wide margin of profit can be gained from the Canadian twenty-five cent meal. In the smaller towns thirty-five cents is now frequently charged for dinner; at the Lipton hotel I believe this is the recognised price for all meals; but at an elevation town with considerable wheat-traffic, the old-time rule for the twenty-five cent substantial meal is observed.

The wheat-town of South Qu'Appelle, from whence thousands of bushels are shipped to Winnipeg direct by the farmer, and many more thousands of bushels are sold to the dealers at the elevator, supports two hotels. One summer their owners agreed together to raise the price of dinner to thirty-five cents, but I noticed that the price dropped back again to the original twenty-five cents directly wheat-hauling started. It is certainly fair that the farmer and his hired men should reap the benefit of a time-honoured custom rooted in Canada's tendency to insist that the weakest and the poorest shall have

sufficient ; because the farmer is posted at the foundation of the prosperity of Canada, and he is always the first to lose and the last to gain anything from bad times.

We left the Fort immediately after breakfast, in order to clinch the horse deal at Lipton ; but we encountered the father of Klarnz *en route*.

He didn't jump at our offer, and was clearly sorry to part with his team ; but the ready-money side of the deal proved an inducement, and he agreed to sell at a hundred and fifty dollars down, and a further hundred and fifty on the 1st of September. I had lodged my banker's draft with Messrs. Macdonald & Co., bankers at Fort Qu'Appelle, but as Hilaria and I were anxious to get home by daylight, we arranged that Lal should cash a cheque on their agent at Lipton, await the return of our friend and his chestnut mare, and follow on with waggon, team, stove, baggage, and new furniture the next day.

In Canada, if one makes a bargain, it is wisdom to clinch the deal.

Hilaria and I set out at one o'clock by the sun from Lipton on our twenty-four hours' journey, leaving Lal on the sidewalk well content with a further night's orthodox lodging. We carried a supply of bread, but had relieved the buggy of everything in the way of weight that we could possibly dispense with. At the last moment Hilaria held on to an umbrella with an unusually beautiful handle of ivory and gold—one of my mother's parting gifts.

"Lal would probably lose it, or some one might freeze on to it, and in any case it isn't in our way, and may be useful," she said, scanning a perfect sky.

Long before we reached the telegraph-trail the pace

of Charles had ebbed from measured to leisured. I got out and gathered a stick, but impressive sticks are difficult to obtain without a knife; each member of my collection snapped on introduction to the defiant hide of Charles.

Hilaria's cheek took a deeper tint, and her eyes grew ominous.

"Let me have the reins."

I resigned them.

"Charles—will you——! You lazy little beast! Charles!"

"It isn't a scrap of good," I urged. "He is undoubtedly a long-distance brute, and excellent at that. Let him walk. We are bound to get home sooner or later, if we keep moving."

"I am not so sure," said Hilaria. "The trail can be most confusing. I kept thinking we were on the wrong one this morning. And you know how chilly it grows after dark."

"Don't be a pessimist," I answered. "We had eight hours of daylight in front of us when we left Lipton. That is three miles an hour. We could easily walk it."

It was all very well until the sun went in; then a suggestion of sharp cold in the air and the appearance of Headlands post office reminded us that we were still eight miles from home. It was at that point Hilaria bethought herself of the treasured umbrella.

"I hope mother may not have developed a sense of clairvoyance since we left," she remarked, as she gave Charles a neat little hit, which sent him off on a hundred yards' trot. "We shall have to finish the journey in a series of sprints," she said hopefully; but before we had

travelled a mile she had reduced the umbrella to tatters, and Charles had nearly succeeded in reducing her to tears.

"I am so hungry!" she wailed. "And I know we shan't get home to-night, or ever reach that awful place where the buggy has to travel sideways before dark. Hunt up a loaf, will you?"

I took the reins again, and alternately encouraged and threatened Charles along for a further two miles. Then he fell lame.

Our rage at once melted to pity. We got out in turn to lead him, until suddenly some winged creature flew under his nose and startled him into another sprint, in which there was no hint of lameness.

"He must have been shamming!" I exclaimed.

"Oh no, poor dear! He wouldn't do that," said Hilaria, whose exasperation had been soothed with the bread.

Charles promptly resumed the limp and the pace of leisure.

"Hilaria, I know he is shamming," I said, after having carefully watched his every movement.

"Don't be unjust! Think of the miles he has travelled during the last month, and I really can't have my umbrella abused any more. Mother begged me to take care of it."

"By the way, where is it?" I asked, as I suddenly missed the gleam of the handle.

"Oh, we can't have lost it!" said Hilaria. And we hadn't, since the mangled remains of the parachute were lying forlornly in the bottom of the buggy; but the handle had dropped from it in disgust on to the prairie, and we never saw it again.

"One might have known that only trouble could come of driving a tortoise," Hilaria said bitterly.

"It has been a more costly journey than our last," I allowed, doing my best to look sympathetic, although I wanted to laugh.

Just then we came to the sign-post indicating the stopping house. Charles suddenly whinnied forth a long-sustained note of recognition, pulled himself together with a toss of his head, and lopped along at his top pace without the faintest sign of lameness, concluding the last mile and a half of the long two days' journey as only an Indian pony can.

From that hour we named him "Charles Edward."

The "British Workman" emerged from his tent with a big yawn.

"I didn't bother to light a fire," he said, "because I had given you up. I am awfully sorry. I guess it's a bit too late now."

"Much too late," agreed Hilaria. "The stove will be here to-morrow, thank Heaven!"

I felt guilty. I knew she was hating the prairie badly.

"Do have the mattress to-night," I said. "I'll have it to-morrow and the next day as well. As a matter of fact, I sleep more comfortably without it."

"Liar!" she said scornfully. "Oh, isn't this awful?" she cried, half laughing, half crying. "I am so tired, and starving with the cold, and no fire, no meal—no anything!—positively nothing but that grinning hole in the roof!"

"Cheer up!" I said. "We shan't know ourselves to-morrow, with the horses, and the waggon, and the chairs, and the stove. Lal can't be long now getting those acres turned, and then we will really and truly make tracks for New York."

"Perhaps!" she sighed.

CHAPTER XII

HORSE-HUNTING—A RANCHER ON TRAIL— A SCOTCH FAMILY

"I INTEND to print and nail a notice on the door of the shack," announced Hilaria. "'NO WOOD, NO FOOD.'"

"Short of wood; are we?" said the "British Workman" with sudden alacrity. "I'll soon scrape a pile together."

Hilaria gazed at his vanishing back in scorn.

"He will come back with two bits in one hand and three in the other," she prophesied. "Not enough to boil a kettle, to say nothing of warming up the rabbit stew. You know, if men who have quite an exaggerated regard for food haven't sufficient energy to keep the honorary cook supplied with fuel, which needs only to be gathered in a heap, I say it is a very bad look-out for their acres; and I don't think you have done a wise thing in buying those horses. At the end of the summer you will see that the only effectual issue of your good intention will be to have barred your own exit."

"In buying the horses I am not thinking of Lal but of father," I reminded her. "If Lal does not get the patent for this land, the capital advanced is absolutely wasted."

"You are throwing good money after bad," she said obstinately. "Go over and see the Whites' and the

Macfarlanes' places. The Macfarlanes, as they say, were 'raised' on the land. If with his energy and experience he can only accomplish what he has in this second year of homesteading, how can you expect anything at all of Lal and the 'British Workman'? The Macfarlanes ploughed twenty-five acres last year. He couldn't afford a disc, harrows, or seeder, but he manufactured something that answered the purpose, and scattered out seed by hand. This is all the crop to which they can look forward, and meantime there seems to be no increase of anything but babies. He is just off to work on a farm near Lipton. He gets three and a half dollars a day for himself and his team, and has to save from his wages the second payment of a hundred dollars which will shortly fall due on them. That poor woman will be left there with about ten children, twenty-four miles, as Lal says, from 'nowhere in particular' and two from the trail, with nothing in the way of food but tea, eggs, oatmeal, and bread and butter."

"You forget their condition in England," I said, "or rather the Scottish Highlands. There he probably earned three and a half dollars a week, instead of three and a half dollars a day. He was moving on towards the date of declining energy, and the consequent fall in the value of his manual labour was the only change in their prospects. Also you told me yourself that the eldest girl, who hasn't turned fifteen, was out earning her board and two guineas a month salary. The second girl is earning her board and going the whole day to a good school in exchange for looking after a farmer's little daughter and giving some help with the evening work of the household. Two guineas a month is the wages we paid Lavinia, a well-

trained London servant between thirty and forty years of age."

"Oh, I know homesteading has its points for those people," she allowed—"points for the future, at any rate; and of course it is better for the kiddies, although they are all in danger of getting badly out of hand, as the school is seemingly an ever-deferable hope. However, we mustn't mention the school before our two *protectors!*"

"Why?"

"Oh, they dread it! They are afraid of being saddled with the school-tax, you know. The school district will probably start at the Browns', encircle the Sampsons, and go right round the Hungarian settlement, including both Lal's and the 'British Workman's' homesteads, which means that they will have to pay the tax. But the Macfarlanes and the Whites won't have to pay anything; they have more than a dozen children, and will be in convenient reach of the school wherever it is held; but their land is not in the school district, and in consequence they haven't to pay the tax."

The "British Workman" came towards us with quite a decent pile of wood.

"It is our last meal from a gipsy-kettle for the season, we hope," I said. "Lal should be here about four o'clock. He planned a very early start."

"You were lucky to secure the team," said he; "they are real good cattle, and young. Most of the sound work-horses that are in the market over here are any age between thirteen and twenty-five."

Hilaria was pouring out our four-o'clock tea when we sighted Lal and the waggon from afar. I went down

towards the trail to meet him, and when I saw the two fine horses walking gaily under their load at the end of the long journey, I congratulated myself that at last we were on the eve of our start.

"You ought to have clinched the deal!" he shouted from a distance.

"I left the cheque with you!" I shouted back.

"He wouldn't take the money. When he came back last night, he came straight over to the hotel to tell me that the horses were too good to part with, and the deal was off. As you hadn't clinched the deal, he had the law on his side, although no sensible person bothers the law much in this country; it takes up all your time and considerably more than all your money."

I felt sick with disappointment, and frantic with rage.

"Not a bit of use gettin' your back up," advised Lal; "that won't touch the brute. He will only laugh at you. I thought the best thing to do was to hire his outfit, and get back with the stove and chairs and things; and tomorrow I will fasten Charles and the buggy behind the waggon, and go back to the Fort, and have a look at a team of which Jim M'Gusty sent me word last night."

"It will be a costly team by the time we get it," I observed.

"Everything is costly over here: not only in money but in time and trouble. Horses are really a reasonable price. You can get the finest team of work-horses in the country for five hundred dollars cash; but you may have to travel a hundred miles to fetch them, and another to bring them back; so that by the time they are safely in

the stable their cost is considerably in excess of their actual price."

"Well, what do you intend to do?" inquired Hilaria, at the end of our story.

"I see nothing for it but to follow Lal's suggestion that he shall go back to the Fort and see Mr. M'Gusty's team," I answered. "One thing is certain, so many acres have to be broken, and we cannot break them without a team."

"Have your way!" said Hilaria, with the patient endurance of a martyr in her eyes, and distinct disapproval set in the corners of the tell-tale mouth.

I felt that in resolving on the path of duty, like most of its pilgrims, I was doomed to be misunderstood.

On the day after the departure of Lal, the rains of June descended, and the winds blew, and if the floods didn't sweep away the shack, considerable drippings came in, especially at one corner.

Nothing can be done on the prairie when the rain falls in steady sheets. After breakfast I read; and Hilaria made preparations for the future in the shape of a batch of baking-powder bread and a boiled currant-roll. The "British Workman" sat not quite on the new stove, but as near as he could possibly get without endangering his personal safety. He smoked the pipe of peace, and the satisfaction of having the stove safely within, on the first day that cooking outside would have been absolutely impossible, kept us on terms with ourselves and each other. After dinner, the very slender stock of wood gave out—not altogether, I am afraid, to Hilaria's dissatisfaction.

“No fuel, no fire, I fear, Mr. Hicks,” she said with exasperating cheerfulness.

“No wood, eh! Oh, but we must keep the fire going,” said the “British Workman,” making bravely for the bluff.

“Isn’t the weather too awful?” said Hilaria. “And then having a man for ever at one’s elbow in a shed in which one has to cook, eat, live, and sleep! I wouldn’t care if he would only do something; but he simply sits and smokes, and gazes at everything I do, until this morning I felt that I should really forget which was his head and which the pudding.”

“He helped to build the shack, and he really is awfully good-natured about going out in the rain for wood,” I pleaded. “He went without a murmur.”

“Of course! Because he likes the fire. He has been out in the rain five times already this morning to look for fuel, instead of bringing along one good load that would carry us through the day. And if you want me to be nice, it is very indiscreet of you to remind me of who built the shack, when you can see for yourself the flood pouring into that corner.”

Sunrise, noon, and sunset sufficiently punctuated the average day on the prairie; but it must have been about three o’clock on that afternoon when a big rat-tat threatened our ailing-door.

The “British Workman,” who was always thoughtful to guard our privacy, shouted—

“All right there! I’ll come out!”

“Good-day,” was the greeting. “Got any fire inside?”

“Yes. But I can’t very well ask you in to-day. Ladies there.”

"Ladies! It isn't much of a place for them, is it? Do you think they would boil us some water for our tea?"

"Sure thing! Anything you like in that way. The place is very small, and they have only just come out, or I would ask you in to dry up."

"That's all right! I got a bunch of horses round you bluff. We meant getting on to Larcens', but, I guess if the weather gets much stronger we shall quit for the day, and put in at Sampson's. Guess you chaps ain't wanting a likely team? I brought down a bunch of two hundred and fifty from Edmonton. I have sold all but forty, and those left are mostly ponies. Let you have 'em darned cheap. My mates and I want to clear out, and get back without making farther than Lipton."

"My partner only yesterday went down to the station to look at a team," said the "British Workman." "If you had come along before he left we might have made a deal. Hold on a minute. I'll see about the water, and then I'll come along with you and look at the bunch."

We made tea for them in the enamelled ewer. There were four men, and they would have filled the shack had they consented to come in, but they wouldn't hear of it. The "British Workman" took them down the tea and a pile of bread-and-butter. Hilaria sighed that there was no cake: there is always a charm in feeding the hungry, and especially in bad weather on the prairie.

He returned with many compliments and thanks from the ranchers, and two tins of preserved peaches which the chief of the gang had sent us. He told us that there was a pony that would simply change the keynote of life for us, and the man would part for forty dollars.

I turned into a rain-coat. We had failed to provide ourselves with goloshes, and it proved to be a costly omission. The pony was one of the very dearest; I can see him now pawing the air, with rolling eye, and sniffing the driving wind into his eager, quivering nostrils, after a three-hundred-mile journey down the trail. He was curved and compact, and altogether a beautiful brute, only he had never been in harness. Had I known exactly how the payment for the team would be arranged, I should not have hesitated to buy him; but the balance at the bank was already well under five hundred dollars, and I felt that to buy anything more beautiful than useful in the chaotic condition of our affairs would be altogether lacking in discretion. So I let him go with a sigh of regret, which murmurs yet across the years.

The wind blew a hurricane, but the rain had ceased to fall. The "British Workman," who was a sociable being, suggested that he should take us across to make the acquaintance of the people who owned the stopping-house. So we fought our way through the south wind, which can bite through to one's very bones in Canada, until we reached the indicator which announced—

Meals	25 cents.
Bcd	25 "
Stabling and hay	25 "
Oats	25 "

Then we turned N.E., and out of the blinding cut of the wind.

Compared with my brother's, this homestead was in an advanced stage of development. The dwelling-house was quite a desirable residence, although it couldn't hold a

candle to the London policeman's bungalow, which gazed haughtily towards it from the far side of the trail, in spite of the fact that the owner of the stopping-house had presided over the erection of both. He had been an assistant builder in England, and had brought out with him the finest asset—a helpful wife. I shan't soon forget the warmth, bright cleanliness, and air of comfort which contributed to the cheering atmosphere of that prairie shack. Wood, cut to the exact length of the stove, was neatly stacked around the house. This consisted of two storeys and was soundly built of lumber; one long general room ran the length and breadth of the ground floor, and a partition divided the upper storey into two chambers. The kitchen stove-pipe travelled an apparently long journey to the far end of the room, dispensing warmth; then it passed up through the ceiling to perform the same service in the bedrooms, and in this way an even degree of heat contributed to the comfort of all the residents from one stove. The household consisted of two women and two men, and a little child who was pretty and interesting, and on Sunday a wonder to behold.

The wife was busy making apple-pies. She had the apple-mixture at hand, and was rolling out the dough. It all looked most inviting, and I thought her a wonderful person. A year before, the place had been unbroken prairie, and there she was, the moving spirit of a comfortable, prosperous-looking home, which might have been there for several years, so complete was its order. Yet the shack could not have been greater in dimensions than twenty-four by thirty, and she was calmly preparing for a party of thirty land-surveyors.

"But they travel with their own tent," she explained in reply to my question of where they were to sleep. "One or two may want to turn in here, although I hope not, because I never like to refuse people from the trail. Still, a survey party pays me well, and over here every one seems content with what is put before them."

They showed us over the whole domain. Within convenient distance of the shack was a comfortable log-stable, and attached to the shack a summer kitchen was already approaching completion. Two cows and their calves were in the stable; also a useful team, and two yearling steers. As we left, we met our friend with his bunch of horses.

"The wind was a bit too much for us. One of my mates heard these were good quarters, so we guessed it was better to turn in here for the night," he explained.

"Mail-day to-morrow," said Hilaria, glancing down the trail. "If our wanderer has not returned, what do you say to walking?"

"It's eight miles," dissuaded the "British Workman."

"Oh, that is what you have to say to walking, is it, Mr. Hicks!" returned Hilaria. "Then you shall stay at home and keep house."

We set out gaily just after midday to walk eight miles of the mud-capped trail. The rain had fallen heavily through the night, and still threatened; but the prospect of the English mail weighed down all other considerations.

'I wish I hadn't worn any boots,' I grumbled.

"Nothing I have with me is sufficiently stout to hold out against this sort of thing."

"Take them off and carry them," suggested Hilaria.

For six miles we stuck bravely to the trail, or within a few yards of it. Short as were our walking-skirts, they were all too long for the occasion, the tall wet grass proving preferable to the thick mud. Within sight of Headlands post office, but still two miles away, we resolved on a short cut, and struck off the trail to the east. On the prairie to leave the trail is fatal; by the time we had gone up hill and down dale, had skirted sloughs, and vainly endeavoured to force a passage through an impossible bluff, we must have nearly doubled that last two miles-of the journey, and the rain had started to fall in torrents; so that it was with the sincerest gratitude we accepted the invitation of the postmaster's daughter to go in and warm up.

The postmaster was also a British immigrant: he hailed from Liverpool, and had been an engineer on a liner. I have never yet met a Britisher so supremely content with his home, his land, his methods, his beasts, his achievements, as was this good man; and in spite of the fact that during his first winter on the prairie he missed the trail and had to remain out all night, which adventure cost him his foot. The story of its amateur amputation made one quail with horror, but being guests at the man's own hearth, we could not disturb him in the telling.

The house was long, and of one storey. The living-room, which was also the district post office, was pleasant enough, as the shack was built on a charming site, which



commanded a view of a picturesque bit of the prairie—irregular bluffs and big sheets of water, with the Touchwood trail twirling in and out on its way from south to north.

Hilaria and I listened with interest to the family history. We rose to the spirit of the achievements and general satisfaction of the head of the house, and dropped into sympathy with the mother and girls, whose hearts were wont to waunder far away from homestead and prairie, to linger longingly on life as it was still going on in Liverpool.

“No, I have listened to the waves of the Atlantic day in day out for thirty year, and I never want to hear ’em again. Where can a man get a chance like this in the old country? My boys and I hold elose on five hundred acres of land between us—a free gift! And it won’t be long before that five hundred acres is a thousand, for mine’s good lads—sound, hard-working, steady boys.” Now I guess your brother and Mr. Hicks ain’t going to do much out here. They haven’t got the heart, I reckon. It’s heart a man wants to get him along in this country.”

“And trained hands, don’t you think?” I suggested. “I expect your boys were engineers in England, and engineers can turn their hand to anything anywhere.”

“Ah well! You know the English ain’t much considered out here. The Scotch is highly respected, and the Irish is well liked. But there is too much affectation and nonsense and laziness about the Englishmen. You’ll ~~not~~ be taking offence?”

“Not in the least. We happen to hail from all three

countries. I had to come to Canada to learn that the English, Irish, and Scotch were representatives of three, and not one nation; but at any rate they are all one in me."

"An' must you be going? Well, ye dinna mind a walk. 'Tis a long eight miles. You must come and see us again. The missus and the bairns will be glad to see ye."

"He was paying you great compliments about our two beauties, wasn't he?" said Hilaria. "After all the nice things you were stuffing him up with, too! I liked the woman and the girls. They would all give their eyes to get back to England again. I would have cheerfully given them a dollar for a eup of tea, poor as we are. If only we could meet Lal and the team!"

But we met not a solitary soul; and for the last three miles trudged on through pelting rain and deepening mud without a word, until we turned the corner where our shack lounged in the landscape.

"Smoke!" exclaimed Hilaria. "Thank Heaven he hasn't let the fire out! At least we can turn into something dry and get a eup of tea."

The "British Workman" was at his best that afternoon. He had a ripping fire waiting for us; and he got tea and washed up in return for the weekly number of the *Times*, which was the only contribution of the mail that fell to his share.

Hilaria read her many letters several times through, and looked wistfully at the fire. Amongst mine was a further one from my father, full of unabated interest in our plan for the development of the farm, and I felt ever

so glad that I had not agreed to the abandonment of the homestead. Long after sunset we sat over the fire, chattering with the "British Workman." Oddly enough, we had lived within a stone's-throw of each other in Westminster, and shared an appreciation of its most endearing landmarks. Hilaria fell asleep in the rocker before he lit up a last pipe and prepared to make tracks for the tent. I felt abominably selfish to be turning into a more or less comfortable stretcher within a nearly rainproof shack, warmed with a stove, whilst a comrade turned out into the rain to roost on the turf under very limited canvas.

"He really isn't a bad sort," I said to sleepy Hilaria, "and quite picturesque."

"Picturesque!" she retorted. "It is all very well for you to talk. What do you know about him? You can imagine any one to be picturesque in the very few odd moments when you don't happen to be writing stuff that editors seem to have very little use for, or star-gazing on the prairie. But you try cooking for four persons with the fuel the 'British Workman' brings along, and wash up with the water one has to beseech him to fetch—then think him picturesque if you can!"

"I think you are most unjust," I answered. "You know I asked you to let me help you in the housekeeping—I begged you to take it in turn, by the week or day as you pleased. You insisted upon doing it all yourself, and now you throw brick-bats at me!"

"No, I don't," said Hilaria soothingly. "The fact is I'm sleepy. The work wouldn't really fill up two honest hours of the day, and I should be inclined to hang myself

if I hadn't something to do. Only don't make beautiful illusions about either Lal or the 'British Workman' for other people to live up to whilst you walk on, because that would be the last straw—my patience might snap."

CHAPTER XIII

THE COMING OF THE BEASTS OF THE FIELD

IT was after the midday meal, which in the absence of my brother boasted neither rabbit nor duck, that I started to walk round the domain to select a site for a decent habitation. In my mind it took the form of a bungalow, with one spacious many-windowed hall or day-room in the centre; bedrooms after the size and plan of the staterooms of a liner were at either end; and at the back a fair-sized, well-built lean-to kitchen. The margin of the quarter-section, which like the Equator must be run by the imagination, frequently upset my plan of garden, drive, and sunset view on the far side of water; but site selection is always a delightful diversion on the prairie.

Hardly had I reached the end of the territory that afternoon when I heard a shout of triumph from the trail, and beheld my brother waving to me from the high seat of a brand-new, bright-green Bain-waggon, drawn by a team of dark bay, fine-looking work-horses. Charles Edward and the buggy followed on a rope.

I threw discretion to the winds, and, in spite of badger-holes, fairly leaped across the prairie to the trail. My brother was rolling a cigarette with "eyes of pride"!

“Not a team to light a candle to them up here,” he said loftily. “They would fetch every cent of five hundred dollars in Winnipeg. I got them for three hundred and fifty. One hundred and fifty down, the balance at six per cent. Very decent terms. I bought them from Johnson and Creamer. I don’t say they are exactly colt and filly—neither did they—but they are two of the best I have found myself behind in this country.”

I stroked their friendly noses, entirely forgetting to examine teeth or legs. Noble, gentle beasts they looked, and indeed proved to be. For over three years they worked together for me in good times and bad. None can tell the length and the breadth and the height and the depth of the debt man owes to horses on the prairie. I for one owe more than a lifetime of service could repay.

“We shall soon darken the landscape now,” announced my brother. “I shall turn over thirty acres, which will complete my duties; then in August we will take them down to Winnipeg by trail, and sell them there, where they will fetch five hundred if a dollar. Next year I shall just come up and put in my crop, get my patent, sell the land, and go home.”

Hilaria and the “British Workman” came out to meet us.

“Have you everything ready, Hicks?” demanded my brother in the possessive voice. “Gad! it will look like a farm with these beasts round. To-morrow you will just go over to Macdonald Hills and round up your cattle. If we get another fire, our neighbours won’t be able to blaze it all over the prairie that you and I

didn't lose anything because we had nothing to lose, will they?"

"Sure thing! Although my bunch won't make anything like the impression of those 'gees. They're stunners."

Kit and Jim, who afterwards became the "Admiral," were picketed, and for the rest of the day the two men tried to introduce a little stability and comfort to the skeleton of the sod-stable, which invited labour. The horses were happy enough there by day, as it was in the shadow of a bluff, but towards evening the mosquitoes waxed strong both in force and ferocity, and they had to be picketed over a fire of green herbage known on the prairie as a "smudge." Beasts fairly thrust themselves into this thick pungent smoke, and will walk any distance for such relief from the mosquito, which is indeed the plague of the prairie. No sooner does colour deepen to welcome the sun to the west than they come out in swarms. To all appearance an evening-time stroll across the prairie might be held sufficient joy in itself to sweeten life, but the attack of the mosquito makes it almost impossible even to sit outside the door, and it is fatal to go out without gloves and boots in the one country where one would imagine anything in the way of garments might be dispensed with. In civilised parts mosquito doors and windows keep them out of the house; but in all parts of the prairie the gloriously beautiful evening-time is spoiled by the attack of this ferocious insect.

In the morning Lal called us; hitherto that thankless task had fallen to our share. But he never failed in his

duty to a four-footed friend, and I often thought that if the duties of his homestead had been attacked in the first place with horses instead of oxen, they would have been faithfully accomplished in due season.

At five o'clock he was on his first furrow, the "British Workman" in attendance with the pick. The labour of stone-removing is arduous toil, and in less than half an hour I saw the latter in pursuit of Charles Edward.

"I am going over to Macdonald Hills to fetch my cattle," he announced. "The strawberries will soon be here, and Devonshire cream would improve things."

"Yes, indeed!" agreed Hilaria. "Hold on to the flour-bag one moment, please."

"Ah! Making a pudding, Miss Hilaria?"

"An apricot dumpling," replied Hilaria, as if it were quite an everyday detail of the menu.

"Oh! I *did* think of going over to the hills to round up my little bunch of cattle. But it's going to be terrifically hot."

"Oh, do go, Mr. Hicks!" said Hilaria. "It isn't far, and the milk and butter will be such a godsend. I'll keep the pudding hot. You should be back by two o'clock, if you get a move on. Only you must get me some more firewood before you leave. You know as well as I do that puddings have to boil all the time."

We watched him depart. Charles Edward was distinctly sulky. He had been grazing in the neighbourhood of his new comrades of the plough, or would not have suffered himself to be easily caught.

Hilaria returned to the shack and her pudding, and I to the green room and to the work of an article "For

Colonisation," which, written from the dangerous equipment of a little knowledge, was luckily not destined for the daylight of printer's ink.

"Lal's language is appalling," said Hilaria. "I wonder you can stand it out here. Do listen! Those poor horses!"

I listened.

"It's all for our benefit," I reported. "If you wait for a few minutes, you will hear that it ceases directly he considers himself to be out of earshot of the shack. But it is very disturbing!"

"Disturbing! Why, it's appalling! Has it occurred to you that if there came an earthquake we have only enough left to take us back second-class? And father would be furious if he knew how we were existing. Debts, too! Supposing those horses were to die? You are an ass to be muddling yourself up in Lal's concerns. Far better have bought him a ticket to Liverpool."

"Hilaria!" cried Lal, "a drink for the love of pity! "No. water? Oh, that *darned* Hicks! Of all the lazy, helpless, hopeless idiots! Took out two small stones and slunk off. Cold tea, did you say? If you have it, rather! Anything is better than slough-water warmed in the sun."

"Very tired?" suggested Hilaria.

"Done to death! Simply done to death! The team work well enough, but you want four horses to break with in this country. And the stones! I think I must write and ask the Government if they are aware they have bestowed a valuable quarry on an unfortunate homesteader. Hilaria, run to my tent and fetch a packet of

cigarette-papers, 'will you? You will find them in the pocket of Hicks' flannel coat. Thanks so much. I am completely played out."

"Poor old man! Why not lie on the stretcher for half an hour?" said Hilaria, in a tone of profound sympathy, but with a deliberate wink in my direction.

"No, I don't think I will—not until after lunch. Why, there isn't anything for lunch. Hadn't I better go out and get a duck?"

"Wouldn't it be a pity to stop work just as you have made such a fine start?" I suggested. "By boiling the bacon in the frying-pan before it is fried Hilaria says it is quite eatable with eggs. And she has made a jolly pudding—apricot."

"Apricot pudding! And Hicks out of it! What a supreme joke! He will cuss! Well, I must be gettin' back. I expect to finish two-thirds of an acre before lunch. After I have had a good rest, I shall get on to it again. To-morrow I must try and improve the pace. If the weather sets in hot and dry, we can't break far into July."

"If you leave the pudding in the saucepan, fill the stove and shut off the draught, we might go off to the Hungarians' and get some eggs," I suggested to Hilaria, as Lal went off to feed his team on oats just after lunch. "It's a lovely day, and a walk does so improve the outlook."

"He must be here soon," she answered, "and wouldn't it be rather hard on him to expect him to get his own meal after chasing cattle in this heat? Besides, he will have to get them into the corral."

"It is only to lift the things from the stove to the table, and Lal will see to the cows."

"I am not so sure of that," she replied. "Lal has not forgotten that the 'British Workman' shirked the pick this morning. I can't think how men cement their friendships. It is certainly not with mutual consideration or help."

"With the bond of their vices, I expect. What can be the meaning of that fiendish row?"

Gotter-dammerungs rent the air in the Anglo-Saxon tongue.

"Quick, girls!" shouted Lal. "Look at Hicks, or you will miss the sight of your lives."

Just on the other side of the trail Charles Edward and the "British Workman" were vainly endeavouring to extricate two cows and two calves from the Hungarians' straying herd.

It was the calves that made the trouble. Very few milch cows in Canada have the privilege of keeping their young even for the first twenty-four hours. Cattle of all ages claim their share of interest in a newly arrived baby, whilst horses simply fight over a new-comer; and I have never known an old horse show anything but marked kindness to a foal, even though it be the offspring of a companion it dislikes.

Charles Edward darted to disperse the group, and succeeded in chasing out the two cows. The "British Workman" hung on to the lines in apparent restraint, which might, however, have had something to do with concern for personal safety.

"Let him go, man!" roared my brother. "He knows

all about that game. Give him a chance! It is easy to see that Charles Edward has been a cattle-pony," he added. "Did you watch him make that round? Went for them straight as an arrow. Hicks will be off in a minute if he don't look out, and then his 'bunch' will make straight for Macdonald Hills. Well done, Charles Edward! He has got them out at last."

The calves slipped through the throng of their admirers, and followed in the wake of their respective parents. The "British Workman" took off his cap with a smile that endeavoured not to be over-triumphant.

"Well, we have got the cows at last, Miss Hilaria. Plenty of milk now. We shan't have to trouble the Hungarian boys any longer."

"You had better get them into the corral, Hicks, before you begin bleatin'," advised my brother, "or you may have to do your guessin' in the neighbourhood of Macdonald Hills. Sorry I can't give you a hand, old man. I must put in my acre and a quarter to-day. I really can't be sufficiently grateful to you for the number of stones you got out this morning. My sisters will help you, no doubt."

All would have been well if the "British Workman" had not been in such a hurry. The cows went quite quietly into the corral towards some inviting hay; but the calves were more sportive, and bucked round outside in wild delight, always successfully dodging the entrance. Still, if one of us had waited a few moments, they would have gone quietly in, and we should have barricaded the entrance. The calves could not have got out once safely in, and the cows would not have left the calves. But

within the shack the "British Workman" had got on to the line of the pudding; and Hilaria and I were getting on to the line of the Hungarians' eggs, when wild shrieks from the plough recalled us. Turning back, we beheld the two cows and their calves gently retracing their morning journey across the prairie—homeward bound. In the same moment Charles Edward tore past us with my brother in command.

"For Heaven's sake get right back and be prepared to help get them in! That wit-forsaken Hicks left the calves outside a corral which he had put up himself."

At the door of the shack the "British Workman" stood with his hands in the pockets of his blue overalls, and amusement not altogether untinged with anxiety in his deep brown eyes. One side of the corral had a bad gap.

"Did they leap it?" inquired Hilaria.

"I didn't see how it happened. Your pudding was too good. I ought to have got the calves in, even if I had left the cows outside. He's got them all right. Now for the critical moment! You stand there, Miss Hilaria, and very gently round them into the corral. Remember it is the calves we must go for. It is hopeless now to try and hoodwink the cows."

For two solid hours we chased those beasts—in vain! We worked in long intervals of nerve-strung silence, broken by short bursts of ear-splitting expletive. At first Hilaria and I were useless through uncontrollable mirth; but later the call of the chase leaped in our blood, and the only thing worth living for seemed to be the hounding of cattle into a corral.

At last, breathless, worn-out, but still dauntless and determined, the four of us formed a semicircle within five yards of the corral, and on the right side of us were the two calves.

"Hist! Not a word, girls!" commanded my brother to the only members of the party who had toiled in silence.

"Hicks," he whispered, "in another second I shall throw the noose round. You will at once leap to his head and hold on with all your might. It is the only way!"

In a twinkling the "British Workman" was holding on to the biggest calf, both arms round its neck, and my brother hung on to the other end of the rope with an expression of supremé elation. Hilaria kept off the mothers with a huge pole in her hand but fear in her eye. I held my breath in suspense.

A yell of disappointment! An explosion of a torrent of unrestrained but well-sustained expletive. Peals of laughter. The "British Workman" stretched helpless and exhausted on the turf; my brother on his back with the rope in his hand, and the four conquering beasts already nearly half a mile on their way home.

"Of all the fools I have encountered on and off the prairie, commend me to yourself, Hicks!" said my brother. "You have only two ideas in the world—feedin' and restin'. Is there any Heaven-forsaken man, woman, or child who doesn't know that to be sure of a cow one must make sure of the calf! Jumped the corral? Don't tell me! I should like to see a corral of yours for which any livin' beast would make the effort of a leap. Knocked it over with a flick of the tail, you mean. Well, I have

left my work, and the task which I set myself will have to forego completion solely on account of your infernal stupidity. Hilaria, I should like a cup of tea. Hicks no doubt will be able to finish his lunch!"

"No, thanks old man. I accomplished that before the play started. And uncommonly good it was, Miss Hilaria. Well, I must get over to the hills again to-morrow and bring them back. I'm afraid Macdonald will expect me to round them up myself this time. However, I guess I'll take the buggy, and get him to tic on the calves behind."

"Aren't men altogether detestable when you get them *au naturel*?" said Hilaria. "Did you ever hear such revolting language? But shall I ever forget the 'British Workman' sprawling on the turf with his arms round the neck of the calf!"

"It was altogether too bad to use such language before us," I agreed wrathfully. "I told Lal that I simply would not stand by to hear him speak to any man as he spoke to Mr. Hicks."

"I don't think you need have troubled yourself to put it in that way," said Hilaria. "The 'British Workman' naturally bottled up his wrath before us. I heard him from behind a bluff when he didn't think I was there. His language is quite as fiery as Lal's, and more original. And he is a fool! It stands to reason if you tie up a calf the mother will stand by. I am glad he enjoyed the pudding. But we shall not have *café au lait* or strawberries and cream for breakfast to-morrow."

The cows arrived in due course, and the calves were promptly and securely picketed on the borders of a slough. The mothers were lodged in the skeleton of the "British

Workman's" shack, which consisted of about twenty poplar poles driven into the earth lengthways, from which position they implored other poplar poles to join them in describing a certain type of an Englishman's home on the prairie.

On the morning after their arrival, the "British Workman" had borrowed Lal's air of importance.

"Could you spare a little boiling water to scald out a pail, Miss Hilaria?"

"You know best with how *little* water you provided me this morning, Mr. Hicks. Certainly you can have it, if there is sufficient. Why are you scalding pails? If you are contemplating a hot bath, it leaks impossibly."

"I was just going off to milk," he explained.

"Oh, the milk, of course!" said Hilaria in a new voice. "By all means. Take the washing-up water. The washing-up can wait."

Lal stood in the doorway, rolling a cigarette, with his team alongside in harness.

"But *when* did you learn to milk, Hicks?" he demanded.

"Oh well, old chap, I have always been able to milk, only it never pays to say so in this country. Milking's a job the farmer should do for himself. Last winter, when I was looking after a hundred head of cattle, I should have had neither time to eat or sleep if my boss had guessed I could milk. So I swore I couldn't, and stuck to it. But years ago I learned the trick in Devonshire."

"You can spin your hundred-head-of-cattle yarn to people who don't know you, and I shall believe in your milkin', Hicks, when I see the milk. If you can milk, why did we go without milk all last summer? and the

Hungarians' cattle pasturin' on our land all the time. However, you had better get on to your job. All the same, I don't expect the milk will run very straight."

"All right, old chap! If it don't run any straighter than your first furrow, it will take a long time to fill the pail."

"Ah! We will wait until next week and see *your* first furrow. But already, Hicks, you may observe over two acres of my land turned. If we should stay here over a century of Sundays, which God forbid, we shall never see two acres of your ploughing."

"Oh, go and get the milk, Mr. Hicks," exhorted Hilaria. "I am waiting to set a junket for lunch, although you must be content to eat it without Devonshire cream to-day."

"He is coming at last!" shouted Lal. "I have made eight furrows. He has been just eighteen minutes over the hour. Now for the milk! Go and meet him, Hilaria. Don't say I'm here."

"What luck?" cooed Hilaria from the doorway.

"Pretty poor."

"No, really? Never mind! It must be the change of air, or perhaps the two journeys. We will try again to-night, and just use that for lunch and tea."

"I'm afraid there isn't enough for a junket."

"Not enough for a junket! But how much, then? Oh, Mr. Hicks!"

The intense disappointment on Hilaria's face might have warned us of the worst. I had already made ready the small white enamelled basin in place of the gleaming

new milk-pan, which had awaited the coming of the milk in the place of honour on the top of the saddle-box. Close at hand a piece of white muslin was in readiness for the ceremony of straining.

"Take all that away," said Hilaria coldly.

"And that too," she added wrathfully, as I presented the dish destined for the junket. "Lal, bring the tumbler."

The transfer was accomplished without the faintest suggestion of a spill. The tumbler was three parts filled.

"Of all the bumptious, boasting, addle-headed braggarts, commend me to yourself, Hicks!" asserted my brother, choking with mirth.

"I expect that I had better come up to-night and see what I can make of the milking," said Hilaria, on the long-suffering note of a martyr.

"That is quite unnecessary," said Lal. "If Hicks had not been so voluble and swollen-headed in the matter of his accomplishments, I should have told you all that I could milk *a little*. I knew it was only a little, but I suspected that it was better than you, Hicks. I don't profess to have looked after a hundred head of cattle—fairy tales ain't my *forte*. But I stayed a month all but in my first billet."

"All but nine days, to be quite correct, old chap," interrupted the "British Workman."

"Well, it was long enough to learn to plough, as you may all see for yourselves, and my boss told me that I could learn as much in five minutes as the greater number of my countrymen could learn in five years. I don't know

whether he had the bad luck to strike you. Anyway, his missus did her best to teach me to milk, and I was just fallin' into the trick when the hot weather set in, and I *preferred* to move on to my own land. I'll lay you any odds that the history of your move and mine is strikingly different in the essential point. In short, to use the vernacular of the 'Promised Land,' I *quit*, but you were *fired*."

"Get out, both of you," commanded Hilaria, "or there will be no midday meal to-day. And in any case I warn you there will not be much."

"It is all very well to laugh," said Hilaria afterwards, "but honestly I am getting fed up with life on the prairie. I intend to go back to Winnipeg whilst we still have money to get so far. Of course I shan't have the slightest difficulty in getting into a colonial hospital when they hear that I was nearly a year at 'the London,' and I shall tell them that my throat has become absolutely sound thanks to the healthy quality of the Canadian air! Time is worth while, and I am not going to throw away another week of my life up here. I intend to go, and I shall go on Wednesday. If by any chance I fail to get into a hospital, I shall go on to mother's forty-seventh cousins at St. Paul."

"You can't mean that you really intend to leave me here with them alone, Hilaria!" I protested. "It would be the meanest thing."

"Not at all!" said Hilaria. "You are perfectly free to come too. There are a hundred things you could do in Winnipeg, if you don't want to go back to England; but you will never do any good here with these two men."

You should hear what the other settlers think about them. Mrs. White said she thought it was her duty to tell me. They are called remittance-men, and as far as I can make out remittance-men are just at the very bottom of things in Canadian estimation. No, I have given the matter very serious consideration. I am off, and you are very foolish if you remain."

CHAPTER XIV

PRIESTS OF THE PRAIRIE—HIGHLAND SETTLERS

WE were taking our four-o'clock tea in the green parlour when the "British Workman" announced the approach of a visitor.

"I guess it's the parson," he said. "Mrs. White was over yesterday to ask you to get her some duck, wasn't she?"

"Yes," replied Lal. "And although I had only three shells left, I risked one of them for the parson's dinner, and got her a brace." All she had to remark by way of thanks was in disparagement of their size. You don't think he expects us to put him up, do you, Hicks?"

"That would be quite out of the question, Mr. Hicks," said Hilaria. "All the other settlers are Dissenters, and have habitable shafts. We can't have him."

"He doesn't expect to come," said the "British Workman." "It is settled that he puts up alternately with the Whites and the Sampsons. He has either forgotten the Whites' trail, or is coming to round us up for service. Shall I go out and meet him?"

"Do," I said. "And you had better offer him a cup of tea."

The parson couldn't possibly have been over twenty. He had a fine sense of duty, and remarkably beautiful eyes. His voice, too, was beautiful in tone, though quite uncultured, and bearing an accent that can only be described as fierce.

I had ample opportunity to observe him, as he didn't take his eyes off Hilaria. In struggling to aid her in balancing the tea-tray on the hat-box tea-table, he turned the plate of bread-and-butter on to the turf face downwards, and before either of us could get farther than an exclamation, his dog had devoured the lot.

"Bad luck!" said the "British Workman." "Can I get some more bread-and-butter, Miss Hilaria?"

"No, I am afraid you can't," said Hilaria; "there is no more butter, and the Hungarians can't let us have any more until the morning. But you will find some biscuits in a tin in the luncheon-basket; and I know," she added to the parson, "that Mrs. White is preparing your six-o'clock meal."

The parson chatted to us of his life, his work, his prospects, and his hopes. He was so far only a theological student. He worked on a farm four days during the week. On Saturdays he rode forty miles across the prairie to hold morning service at a shack selected by the general consent of the neighbouring settlers. After the midday meal he rode ten miles east to hold afternoon service at the house of a well-known rancher; and after supper he set out on his fifty-mile journey home across the prairie.

The life of a priest of any order in the North-West of Canada is a life of genuine self-denial and devotion. In

the parish of Fort Qu'Appelle the vicar of the Anglican Church holds service at eleven o'clock on one Sunday, and at seven o'clock on the next in his parish church. Directly after dinner he drives ten miles east to hold service at Lipton; then a fourth long journey west for evensong at Cupar. On alternate Sundays he sets out for the twenty-four-mile drive to Cupar on Saturday afternoon, and claims the hospitality of a parishioner for the night. When it is remembered that the triple Sabbath journey is in winter-time frequently made with the glass set at anything from ten to fifty degrees below zero, that the stipend very seldom is as much as two hundred pounds a year, and the greater part of that depends on the voluntary contributions of the parishioners, it will be understood that the Anglican Church has a very different task in the colonies from the *facile princeps* part in which it is her lot to be cast at home. In England also the clergy are always more or less petted by the congregation; in Canada the parson is criticised all the time. To be popular he should be a sportsman, a good fellow, and certainly a Puritan with veiled eyelids; he must be endowed with the genius of common sense, and it is a *sine qua non* that he must be Broad Church.

I chanced to be acquainted with a priest of the Anglican Church in Canada who won one's entire respect, and that in spite of rather than because of many things. Our acquaintance did not open well. He offended me over a small matter, and I disliked his mannerisms. Yet one could but perceive in his sermons that he devoted time to reflection and mental application, although he received but little encouragement from either the interest or the

friendship of his congregation. The stipend was collected with a big effort, and bigger contributions from the churchwardens, who are usually selected from the men of substance.

It was on the occasion of an election of churchwardens that he first attracted one's special interest. An Englishman, who was a gentleman, a respectable and prosperous citizen, an excellent husband, and the father of a long and ever-increasing family of boys and girls, had been unanimously proposed for the vacant and honourable post of churchwarden. The vicar refused him because he had not fulfilled the required condition that candidates shall have partaken of the Sacrament at least three times during the year. The candidate was an old-timer, and popular indignation was rife. The vicar fell from the unpopular to the intolerable degree of public estimation. He must have clearly foreseen the consequence of his action;—his devotion to his wife and little children must have included the temptations of its deep and tender quality; but he faced the music, and fought with his back to the wall. None would wish to defend the narrowness of view which would protect the letter at the cost of the spirit; but beneath the whole disagreeable episode the rare quality of disinterestedness gleamed in the priest of the prairie with the same star-like attraction that it holds in the glowing lines of tribute to the character of our greatest statesman, carved beneath the monument of William Pitt in Westminster Abbey.

Grudgingly I had admired his Spartan Sundays, ungrudgingly I acquiesced in admiring the character of the man, and in a way I think we each tried to cultivate our

tiny sprig of fellowship. In the severe winter of 1906-1907, when for nearly three months the thermometer moved slowly between fifteen and fifty degrees below zero, he gradually became my only caller, and it was on one of these occasions that a significant rock threatened shipwreck to our friendship. The topic of the hour was the General Election; and the great issue on which it was being fought out in the province of Saskatchewan—separate schools, or but one school for the children of the Dominion. In the early winter I had driven many miles to a neighbouring town to a political meeting addressed by Mr. Haultain, on the subtle inducement of an enthusiast that he was the Rosebery of Canada. I found great enlightenment on the subject of Canadian political matters, and especially the school question, which clearly lay very near the “great desire” of Mr. Haultain. In the process of the election the Romanists, who do splendid work in Canada, especially among the Indians, had tumbled to the convenience of the phrase: “All is fair in love and war—and politics.” The vicar’s lips always set tight to silence when I dared to draw near the dangerous enclosure of theological argument, but we were of one mind in our mutual resentment of a particularly unsportsmanlike advantage of his powerful situation, which had been taken by a Roman archbishop, in writing a letter to his people of the see of Saskatchewan, charging them to vote against Mr. Haultain and his party.

“It seems so obvious and simple to me that the little children of a nation should unite in one service,” I said.

“Not very *simple*, I think,” he answered gently. “Very able, devoted, and patient minds have tried to think out

such a course of religious instruction as would meet the full claim of our own beloved Church and still be tolerable to the Church of Rome and the great body of Dissenters."

"But surely," I inquired, "the three great bodies of professing Christians are but as three great doors to the Church of Christ? Now, if all children were taught just to really understand our Lord's Prayer and His two commandments, and it was legally ordained that these should be repeated in unison throughout the land, whilst a representative priest from each of the Christian Churches should alternately pronounce 'the grace of our Lord' benediction, wouldn't it work out for national unity and at the same time sustain the beauty of the Christian ideal? They could all learn about dogma and things afterwards if they wanted, couldn't they? and follow their own conviction."

"I am afraid it would certainly not be possible," he answered with tightly compressed lips, and the warning of something deeper than impatience in his eye.

"Then I think it is horribly, hatefully sad!" I said with emphasis, knowing that it would probably have to be my last word.

"Should you advise me to have my two-year-old broken to the bridle before the snow goes?" he inquired of me on the cheerful note of a new topic, "or would you recommend me to wait until the spring, and put him in harness first?"

For a moment I rebelled against the snub, but the unwritten law of hospitality prevailed. After all, he was a good sportsman. Neither he nor his wife did much to fan the waxing or waning flame of social life in their

neighbourhood, but I noticed that the vicarage was the dumping-ground of the abandoned, and I think none ever claimed food or shelter at that vicar's hearth in vain.

Hilaria went across to service with the "British Workman," and I prepared the meal—boiled eggs, junket, and strawberry jam. I refused to spoil the serene sweetness of the prairie Sabbath with the fumes of bacon and fried potatoes.

"Hicks is always especially hungry after church," suggested my brother.

"That's quite all right," I answered. "I am going over to the Hungarians' to get some butter. It is much too hot to eat meat."

I started out a little sadly. I hated the thought of parting with Hilaria, but she had made up her mind that our mode of life was not to be endured, and there was an end. Besides, it was the fairest of fair mornings, and the roses were so lovely. It is not possible to convey the fulness of the beauty of colour which this sweet home flower contrives to draw from Canadian soil. Indeed, the soil seems charged with this gift of colour in every hue, but the prairie rose is insatiable of the gift. For ever it leaps to lend itself to the experiment of a new revelation. It has borrowed every cool, sweet tint from the sunrise, and every warm, defiant glorious depth of sunset shades. Sometimes it wears the tint of pale gold noon, and here and there are masses of the lovely blossom in the unstained and matchless hue of Death.

There was a new baby at the Hungarians'. The soft brown eyes of the mother were the deeper for its coming.

It was not a bit like other babies, but already wide-awake with the fresh, sweet life of the prairie, and hail-fellow-well-met with the cocks and hens and baby pigs, the three proud brothers, and all the other young life that found sweet nourishment on one side or the other of the Hungarians' neatly built garden-gate.

The baby had a rival in a further new and home-made possession which filled me with envy—a log-and-turf stable, big enough to hold eight or ten head of horses and cattle; and it was very near completion.

It was on this occasion that I met Mr. Hungarian. He knew about six words of English and several of the German language, so that we started to understand each other a little, and genuine admiration has always the gift of self-expression. Mine was genuine indeed just then, since on several occasions I had watched two Englishmen alternately frivol with, and toil at, and abandon precisely the same idea of a stable.

I made out that work was still to be had in Lipton, but he had already bought "one hoss, one ox, go plough ten acres." Also he considered it imperative to build a stable before he went out on his harvest and threshing job, but that one day he would come help "Ingleesh lady Mees" build stable.

His wife, who gave me to understand that she had also helped to build the stable by carrying the blocks of turf to his hand, just beamed with pleasure and satisfaction at his gracious promise, and I thanked them both, little dreaming that it would be fulfilled.

However, one morning just after my brother and the "British Workman" had each assured me that it was kill-

ingly hot, and dangerous for either man or beast to work that day, and in consequence I was feeling altogether discouraged about the evolution of the homestead, Mr. Hungarian appeared at the entrance to the green parlour.

"Me finish plough ten acre. My hoss and my ox do much quicklier fine more work. Me help Ingleesh build stable."

I called to my brother and the "British Workman," praying that they might rise to the effort in tribute to the true kindness of the occasion, and lend willing hands to this master in the art of laying sod walls.

The "British Workman" came and looked the "foreign fellow" up and down. He went off again, I concluded for the waggon, to load up turf-blocks from the broken land.

Lal came.

"What in the name of all that's bothersome does he want on a day like this?" he inquired of me in the tone of an angel, whilst he greeted the Hungarian in the manner of a friend.

"It is awfully good of him," I pleaded, "and if you will only both put the shoulder to the wheel you will get the walls turfed-in to-day. I have never seen such neat, good work as his."

"Then make a deal, and pay him so much to do the lot," he suggested. "It's really too hot!"

"You know they will never work out when you particularly want to *hire* them," I reminded him, "and one couldn't possibly offend him after his kindness."

The Hungarian had gone off to examine the skeleton of poplar poles. Lal went off in his wake. I flattered myself I had gained the day.

I hastened to prepare a meal and some good coffee; then I went out to examine the proceedings.

They were not exactly proceeding. My brother was looking hot and most irritable. The "British Workman" was nowhere to be seen.

"He says that it is all right, and that we must go on with it in the same way, and that he will call again another day, and see how we are gettin' on. Didn't you?" said my brother.

But I had seen the even and perfectly balanced sods of my neighbour's stable, built into a sound and solid wall, and I knew that he could never have passed that uneven, tumbling, awkward-looking mass as "all right."

"Come along," I said. "Let us both get him sods and shame the 'British Workman.'"

Lal started on the near ones with the air of a most unwilling martyr, and I did my level best; but the sods were not very clean cut, and as we had to go farther and farther for them, the "maestro" had waits that grew longer and longer. Presently my brother strolled off—I must acknowledge that he was not often ungracious: I felt scorchingly ashamed of my two Englishmen, and tried hard to atone for their backsliding with the hospitality of the shack.

"Ingleesh mens no work," deplored the Hungarian. "Hungarian work good. Ingleesh Mees work too bad."

There was something a little ambiguous about that "too bad," but my coffee was good, I know, and I hoped that after the meal he would resume the turfing, and intended to get a waggon-load of sods ready for the start. But when he had finished he promptly rose from the table.

"Ingleesh lady ver' kind. Me kom back."

But I left that part of the prairie within a few weeks, and didn't see him again. Only last year I inquired of his affairs, and was told that his wheat was of the finest on the Touchwood trail.

"If you are really going on Wednesday, Hilaria," said Lal, "do go over and see the Macfarlanes this afternoon. They are so keen on seein' you, and old Macfarlane has been awfully kind to Hicks and me, and he says he will always sharpen my plough-sharc if I like to take it over. She is a good soul, too, although I can never understand half she says. Can you, Hicks?"

"Two of the daughters are very pretty," said the "British Workman," "and their scones are the best I have struck. Better than Mrs. White's. They were poor enough when they first came up. Macfarlane had just managed to get the shack up; he is far and away the finest worker in the settlement; but they were on very short commons for a long time—bread, butter, porridge, eggs, and tea. Not much butter either, as they had only one cow and ten children; but she always wanted to give us some to bring home."

We agreed to go, on condition that the men stayed home and prepared the evening meal.

"You will only have to lay the cloth and things, and warm up the duck stew just as it is in the pot," directed Hilaria; "and please do not make the shack untidy."

We met Mr. Macfarlane on the borders of his territory. He came over one day to see our new team, and we liked

him well. He was a Scotch crofter, and his eyes were blue and brave as his own hills. We walked around the ten acres he had contrived to break during that first season of catastrophe. Something green was already standing several inches high in the first seed-bed.

"Is that wheat?" I asked.

"Nae, I wouldna risk the wheat this year. I had nae seeder, and but two horses, so I took my grain-bag and scattered my oat-seed the same as we do in the Highlands. They're thrivin' well. With them and the hay I shall put up, my stock will get well through the winter. And having nae wheat-harvest of my ain, I can just get in my oats, and hire on with my team through harvest. Maybe I shall earn enough to keep the wife and the bairns through the winter. It's nae soft country this Canada, but a mon can easy make out a livin' for the wife and bairns, and his hame is his ain. But you'll be having a look at my breaking of this year. It's better than yon. Twenty-five acres. Maybe I'll have wheat there next year. But it's better to grow oats at first, and just only think that the bairns and the beasts shall have all they can cat. I'll be making a fortune with the wheat later, when the railway comes nigh."

Within the roomy shack were many children. The "guid-wife" came out to greet us. The boys and girls were such a thriving lot. Garments for the most part defied any further careful attention of the needle, but they were clean and wholesome, with such a happy light shining at the back of their jolly blue eyes. The eldest girl was charmingly pretty and only fourteen; one would have guessed her to be fully three years older.

"Her sister's but sixteen, and gettin' ten dollars a month with Mrs. Macdonald at the Hills. Tends the store, and drives out and about. Ay, but they're guid to the lassie! Janet will come back on Sunday frae Qu'Appelle. She might have earned her twelve dollars a month already, but maybe very soon she will be earning twenty-five dollars a month school-teaching. Ay, it's a fine country for the puir mon and his bairns, and every day better times coming to us all. Ye can weel think it's hard to be bringing bairns into the world and be wondering all the time where's bite and sup to come frae. I'll not be saying but Scotland is a bonnie, bonnie country, and I'm glad 'twas my ain. But give the mother o' bairns the land where there's enough for all. Nay—ye're not going wi'out a sup o' tay. Janet, get the cream frae the cellar; and, Barbara, set the table."

No Bond Street tea-shop ever served guests so dainty and luxurious a tea. True, the cups had survived their complement of saucers, and neither cared a rap for their relation to the other. But tea is always good in Canada, and with the cream it was delicious. The bread-and-butter was fresh and delicate, and no such shortbread was ever eaten outside the Land o' Cakes.

Hilaria and I were shown everything, and everything that was anything had been manufactured by the "guid-mon." The shack, the stable, the piggery, the harrows, the wheelbarrow, the chairs, and the table—everything, in fact, but the two bedsteads.

"He made the table on Christmas Eve," said Barbara. "We told him straight out we wouldna eat our Christmas dinner from an auld box. He said, 'Nae, and ye shallna

do it—I must make the table.’ And on Christmas morning it was here waiting for us.”

It was so easy to admire, coming from our own domain and its surrounding territory. And if we received no reciprocative sentiments concerning the homesteads of my brother and his partner, the praise of our new team was generous and sincere.

The whole family accompanied us to the outskirts of their land. The “guid-wife” was full of information concerning her neighbours, but not an uncharitable sentiment escaped her lips. She looked at the mansion of the London policeman with a sympathetic eye.

“Puir daft laddie!” she said. “My guid-mon helped to raise it, but he didna help to rob him. He’s nae the mon to cheat a neighbour! Muckle room and mickle porridge for her bairns has the puir guid-wife. Ay, but it’s hard!”

The fumes of duck stew travelled towards us as we drew near the shack, and the tone and accent of a voice which certainly did not belong to Lal or the “British Workman.”

“Harding’s boy,” said Hilaria. “What a bore! That’s the worst of being neighbourly with these people. They take it for granted that they can come when they please.”

“You paid a long call,” said Lal, coming towards us. “We were just going to start in. Harding’s kid is here, layin’ down the law to Hicks and me. He won’t have any food. Only wants a chance of hearing the sound of his own voice, I think. Nothing less than kicking would move him on. Do you mind *much*?”

Hilaria knew the lad. She bowed to the inevitable, and added her invitation to the meal.

"No, I don't want no supper. We 'ad our tea six o'clock. An' we 'ad meat for dinner. I guess you've no more there than you kin manage. So you've been up to see the Macfarlanes? En what did you think of that outfit? My, they're an 'ungry lot! En not a crust to eat when they first come up—nothing but porridge. The gels work now? I guess it fakes all their earnings to keep 'em going.

"But the gels have something in them, mind you," he continued. "I say, d'you remember the fire? Macfarlane sends awf a kid to us, an' a kid to Brown the policeman, and that same kid 'ad to come straight on to you two fellows. An' wot d'you think Brown said about you?"

"We don't know and we don't care what Mr. Brown said, Jack," interrupted Lal. "We are not interested in what the neighbours think or say of us."

"Wal! you 'ad the narrowest squeak of all over the fire. Then you got nothing to lose, only duds! Good thing you sold the oxen and waggon the week before. They was never much good to you."

I tumbled to the uneasy look in Lal's eye. The lad's gossip recalled to me the graphic and highly dramatic account of the fire which had reached my father, and drawn tears of sympathy and distress from my mother, about two weeks before we set out on our travels.

The fire had completely enveloped them on every side. With their beasts and other possessions they had taken shelter in the middle of the nearest slough. Words failed him in painting the horror, devastation, desolation of their environment! Every heart in their neighbourhood was

broken! Starvation stared man and beast in the face, and he was hurrying into town to sell his oxen to avoid this last and worst calamity!

"Macfarlane was prepared, and so was we," continued the lad, "or we shouldn't 'ave been awf 'elpin' other people, law or no law. If it 'adn't been for Macfarlane, that fine 'ouse of Brown's wouldn't be standing to label a fool to-day, I guess. Yes, only the Wilsons was burnt clear out. 'Ouse an' stables, an' sticks an' all. Serve 'em right!"

The last observation was a kind of total eclipse—it staggered one. I broke my silence to demand its reason.

"Har Cees—Roman Karthlics—every one of 'em. Wot can you 'xpect?"

"What part of England do you come from?" I questioned, and learned that he had been brought up within fifty miles of London. The boy was already a youth, not a child, and must have attended the national school for many years before he was taken to Canada. So much for the system of denominational schools in sowing the seed of the Christian ideal!

Two days before the premeditated date of Hilaria's departure down, came the last edition of the rains of June.

"You will never be able to go this week, if it keeps up," my brother warned her. "The trail will be impossible."

"Then I shall walk," she answered. "Stay here another week I will not. It is a waste of life."

"So it is and no mistake," agreed Lal. "And I am very glad you have the common sense to see it in that light, Hilaria, and I hope you will have the honesty to tell father exactly what you think."

"I shall not go home until I have earned my return fare," said Hilaria vaingloriously. "That much, Lal, you and I both owe father. But I don't expect to have the slightest difficulty in earning twenty-five pounds in Winnipeg."

"Don't you!" said Lal. "Well, tell us all about that when you have been there a week. You may bring it off all right. I earned good money there in a brewery through my first winter, but it was as a bottle-washer, and not as a brewer. Although brewers have a very different position and a very different screw from what they have in the old country. Don't they, Hicks?"

"That's right, old man. At Whitfields we had a fine house, a good library, a butler and housekeeper, and nothing on earth to do but loaf round in a white coat and watch the thermometer, and see that the men were on the job. I never got the screw you got. If I had, wild horses wouldn't have dragged me out of the old country."

"I wish wild horses would drag me back!" sighed Lal. "I would willingly forfeit my Canadian estate, mansion, crop-land, stores, and expectations for my second-class fare home and enough to keep body and soul together on the train."

CHAPTER XV

EXIT HILARIA—TOMMY OF THE STAGE

ON the day of Hilaria's departure we rose at dawn, and set out at five o'clock, so that Charles Edward might take his own pace along the heavy trail. We hoped to reach Fort Qu'Appelle in time for twelve-o'clock dinner, and were to take the stage-coach from there to Qu'Appelle station, a distance of twenty miles. It would have been more convenient from one point of view to travel from Lipton, but the last journey over the Kirkella branch was green in our memory, and we were rather pleased with the prospect of a visit to South Qu'Appelle.

"I may as well see all that I can," said Hilaria, "as I devoutly hope I shall never set eyes on this part of the world again. Besides, we must draw some money; it will buck you up to put in a night in a decent bed, and we are certain to enjoy ourselves."

The "British Workman" watched our departure with every manifestation of regret, Lal with envy which he made no attempt to conceal.

"You are jolly well quit of this Heaven-forsaken wilderness," he moaned. "I only wish I was! Do try and get a fellow out of it somehow, Hilaria."

"You may come back to us yet, Miss Hilaria," softly suggested the "British Workman."

"Never!" said Hilaria.


We jolted over Lal's breaking with thumps and bumps, and the *grand finale* of a desperate jerk reached the trail.

"Shall I ever forget my first glimpse of it!" she exclaimed. "Thank Goodness that's my last!"

"I am afraid it is a poor look-out for dinner," I said; "in fact, I doubt if we shall catch the stage."

"How I detest Charles Edward!" said Hilaria.

We had pulled up by the trail-side twenty miles from home to refresh ourselves with bread-and-butter, and Charles Edward with oats and a drink. By the tradition and laws of gratitude it should have put fresh life into him, but it appeared to have precisely the opposite effect. Hilaria's charming face grew almost grim. I dared not laugh.



Fort Qu'Appelle seemed to steal farther away with every mile, and we thought the blue hills would never come in sight. The silence of a lost hope had fallen upon us long before we reached the brow of the hill, where Charles Edward suddenly revived, and trotted gaily to the bottom.

"The stage hasn't started," cried Hilaria with relief; "I can see it from here."

At the bridge she got out and ran off to secure seats. When I drew up at the livery barn, she was waiting for me with a beaming face.

"We are in time for dinner after all," she said. "We quite forgot that the clocks are set at an hour's difference. What a relief! Poor dear Charles Edward! But he will have a good rest, and Job himself couldn't have kept his temper."

The stage and Tommy its driver is a travelling institution between the Qu'Appelles. Tommy was a personal friend of my brother and Mr. Hicks, and many an anecdote in relation to him and his gossip had enlivened our wet days by the stove. But on that day one democrat could not accommodate all the passengers, and we were given the middle seat of the second, with our baggage in the rear.

Tommy hovered over us with the frankest curiosity.

"You ladies quite comfortable?" he inquired, and after being reassured on that point he started to pass on the result of his observations to his own contingent.

"Just out from the old country, by the look of them. My, but they keep their faces covered up! I guess they don't get much sun over thar. They will be getting something else before long."

And we did. Sheets of rain swept suddenly upon us, all but washing us out of the democrat, and reducing our motor-veils to pulp, and ourselves to damp and dripping specimens of humanity.

"Did you get wet?" inquired the Jehu in command. "Guess you'll get good and dry all right in the sun."

About five miles out we noticed a deserted shack on the right, and two cottages of the Bryant & May's order, separated by a long, luxuriant wheatfield. Had I but known it, the first of them represented the halter of my destiny. Farther along we passed a more pretentious building on the right. It guarded a corner of the trail, and seemed to be monarch of all it surveyed.

"That isn't so bad, is it?" I observed. "Could you be happy in a place like that with anybody you cared about,

Hilaria? Without frocks and things, and doing your own washing?"

"Not with Romeo himself!" she said without hesitation.

Round the next corner the trail ran through a stretch of newly broken land.

"See that?" cried Tommy. "Two young fellows came up from the East with a team of oxen, bought that half-section, and got that land broken before any one knew they were on the place. Seven dollars an acre they paid for it. It's a credit to them, I say. Git up thar!"

In a big slough to the left swarms of duck were enjoying life within the safe precincts of the unwinking security of the Game Law. A little farther on we pulled up with much importance at a long low shack, which had all the appearance of an Irish cabin from without. But oh! the comfort and cleanliness of that shack within! and the open-hearted, kindly hospitality of its owners—the Carrolls of Strath-Carroll, who were also the guardians of the post office.

A slip of a girl with black hair and black-fringed grey Irish eyes was a picture in the doorway. A bearded owner of a blue edition of the eyes of Ould Oireland threw in the mail-bags with a highly flavoured sentiment at the stage-master.

"That chap can swear, by Jove, he can," said Tommy. "I guess it would take the Devil to beat him."

"Is it very much farther?" inquired Hilaria of our friend on the box.

"Only ten miles. The post office is the half-way house. We shall get in on time, I guess, unless the trail is pretty bad towards the town."

Two miles farther on we passed a substantial house on the right, and were advised to take a look back over the valley behind it.

"That's Springbrook," said the lad. "I guess there's some money down thar. An' I guess there ain't an old-timer as give more than three dollars an acre for their land. An' most of them not that. They just home-steaded. There's Byrne—Byrne can afford to wait for the market. Wheat went up to a dollar a bushel not long since. Byrne had out twenty thousand bushels before the price dropped back. I guess lots of poor men had sold the same wheat for forty or fifty cents but a couple of months before. There's South Qu'Appelle straight ahead. See the elevators?"

We passed a charming little home in the dip, and from that point drove through a line of growing wheat, which ran almost into the town. Even Hilaria condescended to marvel at its luxuriance; it seemed to run for miles, nor was it even protected from the open trail by the customary barbed wire fence.

"Herd law is kept strict about here," explained the Jehu. "Farmers know better than to risk the grain, I guess, if a fence were real necessary."

The trail grew very heavy with deep, uncompromising black mud. The horses struggled gamely through.

"Twenty minutes behind time, by Jove!" cried Tommy. "Git up thar!"

We turned sharply off the prairie into a broad, straight street line, at the far end of which the Lake of the Woods elevator announced itself in gigantic white letters, and the town of South Qu'Appelle by the mere honour of its

presence. Small lumber houses, gaily painted, started irregularly on the trail-side; then the sidewalk took up the story of the town. A convent bell announced a church. We deposited our baggage at the depot, and ourselves at the Queen's Hotel.

"The train does not go out until seven-twenty. We shall have time to look round after supper," suggested Hilaria, "although we must confine our sight-seeing to the limit of the sidewalk. Did you ever see such mud! One would think with all those stones on the homestead settlement they could easily macadam the roads."

"Going on to Winnipeg?" inquired the waiter. "Train will be pretty late. Four hours behind time leaving Calgary. Guess it won't be along much before twelve."

"Heavens!" ejaculated Hilaria. "I am sleepy now. I can't possibly keep awake until twelve. Besides, we shall be hungry. This six-o'clock apology for one's evening meal is a custom of the country which requires apprenticeship. Canada does a lot for one's digestion, doesn't it? If you had offered me its weight in sovereigns I couldn't have eaten sausage when I first came out."

We went into the local tuck-shop, and laid in a store of shortbread and other confectionery, celebrated even in a country where all good housewives justly pride themselves on their cakes. But for wedding cakes, by the special appointment of general consent, Mrs. Mackenzie of South Qu'Appelle, who hails from Scotland, is also the Buszard of the district.

Provided with other luxuries, we sauntered round, remarked on the smallness of the Cathedral and admired

the beauty of its carved reredos, and then returned to the hotel and made music in the ladies' parlour. The host, a Frenchman, came to tell us that it would be 1.30 before the train got in. He was most kind and considerate. We discussed the matter in his native tongue, which seemed in itself an assurance that we were not to trouble about ourselves, since we were once more in an environment where courtesy is not forbidden. We gladly decided to adopt his suggestion that we should go and sleep comfortably in my bedroom until within half an hour of the coming of the train, when his son would call us, and conduct us to the depot, and return with me to the hotel, if I wished to see my sister into the train. If there was anything more that we required, it was to be served us. Other countries—other manners! Oh, Lipton! Ah, South Qu'Appelle! *Vive la France!*

"I know it is horrid of me to leave you, but I really can't help it," said Hilaria, as we parted on the platform of South Qu'Appelle under the sword of Orion.

"It would have been rather hard to tumble into the many surprises of life on the prairie without you," I answered. "But I really don't mind now. I am honestly quite content, and directly the ploughing is finished I too shall travel East or West."

"Do!" said Hilaria. "It is a shame to bury yourself even for a few months."

I got into the car, and saw her comfortably *en route* for rest. Our old friend, the coloured attendant, assisted me to alight. Two years had elapsed before I again boarded a train.

"All aboard! All aboard!" came a strong, deep voice from the hall of the hotel.

"You will sit here, if you please," directed Tommy in the manner of a sultan.

I was the only passenger, so the box-seat was a qualified honour, although it is true that I and some others have seen it unoccupied, when seats in the rear were full up. Tommy has only one tense, but more than one mood. He has driven the stage for over twenty years—day by day that same twenty miles to Fort Qu'Appelle in the morning, and the journey back after dinner. Now and again, on very rare occasions, I have seen others in command; but sooner or later Tommy is certain to reappear again. My brother arrived at my place one afternoon in the lowest spirits. He is devoted to Tommy, and he had discovered him weeping bitterly with his arms thrown over his horses. It had been decided that he really must quit his responsible post: it was to be his last journey over the trail as commander-in-chief. "Poor old chap!" said my brother, "it gave me the hump." But within a week he was again triumphantly wielding the whip to the tuneless phrase of "Git up thar!" If ever a human being was elected to his calling by Divine appointment, it is Tommy, the stage-driver of Qu'Appelle.

I answered the many questions which were put to me about myself and the conditions of the old country, and now and again held the lines to facilitate the lighting of his pipe.

"I guess you're a teetotlar. So am I," he observed. A ripple of self-reproach washed out the tiny suspicion

that had crossed my mind the day before. "But to-day my chest and throat is very bad," he continued. "Say now, if you can hold on to the lines, I guess I'll take a little from this here flask. Take a drink yourself first? No! Do you mean it? A teetotlar, I guess. So am I. That's better! They tell me things is pretty bad in the old country; England is behind the times—going to the dogs fast. She'll have to get a hustle on, I guess. Good working men, women, and children starving in the streets. Guess they ought to come out here. Say now, you don't happen to know any nice girl that would like to come out and be my house-keeper?"

I thought that any number might be found.

"I only want one, I guess," he answered. "She shall be well done by. No hard work. I'll get in a German to do the washing. Tell you wot it is—I'm right sick of having my meals at the hotel and a bachelor's life. If my housekeeper suits me, and I suit her, I shall be pleased to make her my wife. Git up thar!

"An' tell you wot—that woman would have a good home. I should make her a good husband. No rough work. When she's prepared my meals, she can get on with her sewing, or anything she likes. I am an easy fellow to get on with, and a teetotlar—very nearly. Say now, may I trouble you to hold the lines a minute?"

"Well, will you see after the business for me?" he inquired.

I promised that when I found myself in Winnipeg again I would go to the Girls' Home of Welcome and

inquire if the Matron could recommend some one for the post.


"Say now! You might send me her picture first, I guess." I agreed to the wisdom of the suggestion.

"Did you look at the dining-room gal at the hotel?" I had looked indeed. She was one of the most attractive girls I had caught sight of in Canada, and I had noticed that all the men seemed of the same opinion.

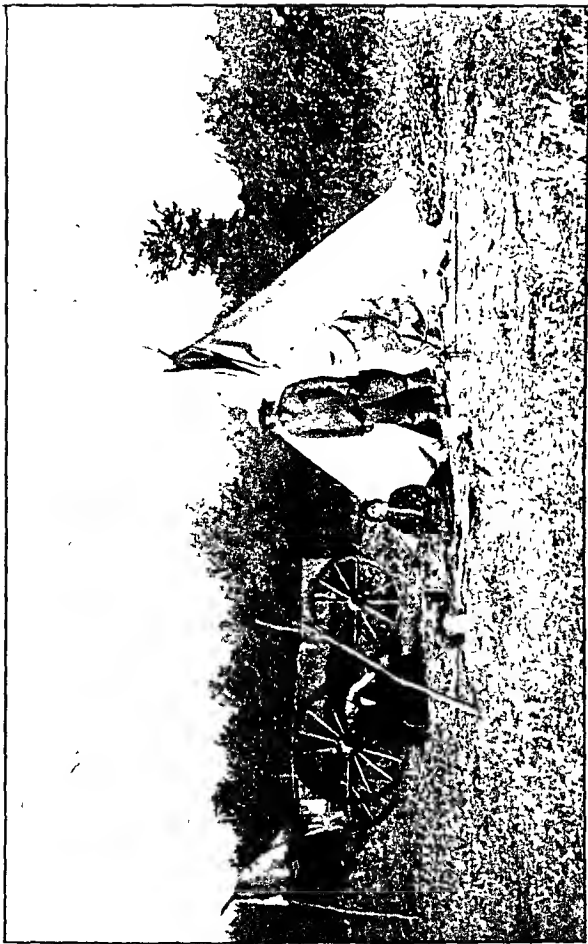
"Well, that's about my style. Now, you won't forget?"

"You shouldn't make the journey home to-day," advised Mr. M'Gusty. "The pony was pretty done-up yesterday with the heavy trail. Guess you better sleep over night and get an early start to-morrow."

It was the last day of June, and the thermometer stood at a hundred in the shade, but through the exceeding dryness of the atmosphere one felt no lack of energy.



Directly after dinner I set out for a long walk along the Lake-shore. The wild cherry had shed its fragrant blossom, and the green fruit hung in thick clusters all along the trail. Scarlet lilies beckoned invitingly from the range of hills and hillocks on the left, but I walked steadily on. About four miles out the trail made a dip downhill, and a wide tract of land curved into the Lake, as though in an effort to reach the other side. This is Smale's Point, and the favourite camping-ground of visitors. Smoke was rising from a tiny shack on the shore. Tents were pitched here and there. Had I but known that they were probably the tents of my countrymen, I should have made completer survey, but thinking they were the usual habitations of Indians or their near



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AN INDIAN'S HOME ON THE PRAIRIE





kin, I trudged up and down those most fascinating hills which monopolise miles of distance in apparent moments of space. I found myself fully six miles from home when I became aware that I was very tired.

In a well-kept garden at the foot of a sugar-loaf hill I noticed row upon row of potato foliage already in flower. They were more forward than any I had seen on the trail, and carrots, onions, lettuce, and rhubarb gave it the air of an English garden; but there was nothing about the shack to declare its owners English to the eye untrained to such distinctions, so I made the journey home with a rest here and there among the hillocks.

Mr. M'Gusty was sitting on the sidewalk with a wealthy landowner on either side in the persons of the local doctor and the local iron-goods store proprietor.

"I was looking for you," he said, as he came towards me. "Some of my youngsters would have been pleased to take you on the Lake."

I told him where I had been. Canadians simply can't understand our love of outdoor exercise, and especially of walking. Experience having proved to them that it is no affectation, they look down upon it as one of the prominent features of English eccentricity.

"My! Well, if I had known, you shouldn't have walked that distance, and a horse in my stable."

I assured him that it was delightful. But there was no conviction in the eye which always seemed to be seeking something in mine which it couldn't find.

"I wish now you are here you would go up and look at that farm I spoke to you about. My, but I guess you would make a deal! It's the very place for the whole lot

of you. And the crop! There's not another such a patch of grain this side of the country. I guess it will pay for half the land. Why not go up and take a look round to-morrow morning?"

I objected that it would make me so late in starting for home.

There was a sense of something unusual in the atmosphere of the next morning. Only about half a dozen persons were taking breakfast in the dining-room, and these were in gala attire. Bursts of gay laughter floated in from the windows which were opened on to the sidewalk. I had postponed my shopping as usual until the last moment, which is not wise. As I walked towards the Hudson Bay Store I became aware that every shop was closed. It was July 1st, Dominion Day, and yet another public holiday.

It wasn't of the slightest use to make the long journey without the necessary stores, and at least one was delayed in a delightful environment. None ever dreams of growing nervous about another in the North-West, as I proved to my cost on a subsequent occasion. I resolved to acquiesce cheerfully in the inevitable, which at any rate meant a further day's rest for Charles Edward.

Mr. M'Gusty stood at the door of his barn in his shirt-sleeves, and bade me good morning.

I explained that I couldn't start, as I had forgotten to get in my stores, and added that if he could tell me how to find my way to the farm I would go and look over the place.

He offered to drive me or lend me a hack, but walking pleased me best, and I set out almost immediately, making

the track of the telegraph-poles across the Fort flats to the foot of the cemetery hill, which is steep as the side of a house; although before the present trail was graded travellers had to make the best of it as the only descent into the valley. Now it is seldom used, unless by pilgrims to the little God's acre, which lies waiting at the top of the steep climb, to grant one's claim to rest.

The names on the headstones were arresting, and here and there English, making home seem as far and as near as the deep blue haze of distance which, no matter from which side you see it, is for ever calling you across the valley.

I crossed the stile, and made for the main trail at the top of Troy Hill, not caring to trust to my intuition in the choice of the several side-tracks which there branch off to the East. Two miles on a man with a waggon passed me, hesitated, then pulled up and waited.

"Guess it's rough driving, but maybe you would rather drive than walk. The sun beats strong on the trail."

I accepted the offer gratefully, and clambered up beside him. I learned that he had been in the country a number of years. He had come out without capital, and fought his way up the hill to the plain of prosperity inch by inch. It had been hard work all the time, and very little luck until he had the good fortune to buy the tract of land which lies on the surface of the range of hills which run down to the Lake-shore on the one side and the wide mysterious creek on the other. This particular tract of land seems to have the peculiar property of defying the frost. In the frozen harvest of 1907 every grain of that man's wheat was sound, and he told me

that he had never yet had frozen wheat. His grain always ripens a week or ten days ahead of that of his neighbours on the far side of the creek. Ice will be half an inch thick on the water-barrels of the people at the Fort, the farmers along the creek itself will be confronting the calamity of acres of frozen grain growing on the land that runs down towards the treacherous banks of the creek; but the golden wheat of that hill tract will remain unscathed, and even unconscious of frost. It is as though Nature in a blow of fury had condemned it to isolation, and then poured out her every good gift in repentant love.

Its owner had the good luck to buy the place at the cost of three dollars an acre; it is worth a hundred from any point of view. No more perfect site for a country-house could be imagined. In its grace and dignity, its air of detachment, even from its exquisite environment of lake and hill scenery, one is reminded of the lofty, lovely garden of St. Cloud by the Seine. Only here the plain of silence is undisturbed amid the echoes of surrounding hills, so that the spirit of the morning rests as it could never rest amid the haunting echoes of humankind, since although she may play the herald to the footfall of princes, she never waits to mourn its passing. In the wheat-garden by the Lake is the fresh sweet breath of rapture; in the rose-garden by the river only the echo of a sigh of regret.

I inquired about the farm which I was on my way to view.

"It's a good place in many ways. Old Alan has got a big wheat tract there as flat as any in Springbrook, but

on the east I have been told it is a bit rough. Still, the land is good all about these parts, I guess, and I hear he has a likely crop this year. Never have I seen a better prospect of getting it off. The sun is as true as the rains. You don't want to give too much for it, you know. What's he asking? Fifteen dollars—that's quite enough. Still, land is away up, and will be come good seasons. There's the house. You can just see the top of the roof over yon hill. Guess you'll find your way all right."

It was the first of the two houses divided by a long wheatfield which we had observed on our way to the station. I found myself ankle-deep in the middle of a seductive slough, but got out again with a little difficulty, and crawled carefully over the tract of brilliant green up the hill until I reached a more or less untidy barbed wire fence, which ran within a few yards of the house. It brought me to a collection of cord-wood, neatly stacked to form a fence, and I faced the door. An old lady in a sun-bonnet was sitting in the shade, watching the poultry. She heard me open the gate, and came to greet me.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FARM ON THE HILL

I TOLD her my business. She seemed interested and even pleased, although I made it quite clear that the chance of purchase was faint. She dispatched a good-looking granddaughter for the "guid-man," who was ploughing in the distance, and proceeded to show me over the house.

Its impression was bounded on the one side by my experience of England, on the other by my experience of Canada. It was a cottage, it was a mansion; it was diminutive, it was spacious; it was impossible, it was homelike. It had four walls and a roof, it was tolerable. The mistress was unfeignedly, and from her own point of view justly, proud of it. There were in all five rooms, and an attractive gallery recess at the head of the staircase; also a cellar. The kitchen was long and had an air of space; a gleaming stove, soothing rockers, and two long windows, graceful in spite of the fact that they were guiltless of a solitary correct line. From the south one looked across the wheatfield to the picturesque bluffland beyond the Touchwood trail; from the north away across four miles of peaceful prairie towards the deep blue distance on the far side of the Qu'Appelle valley.

The granddaughter had been washing up the dinner china as I entered; but my hostess brought me tea and bread-and-butter, which might have weighed down a hundred dinners in the opinion of Epicurus himself. The old man arrived at the door, and consented to take me round the place. We halted first by the wheatfield.

I had looked on the tract of brilliant green from the trail, and considered it with deepening interest, as I had endeavoured to find my way to the cottage without injury to the frill of its neat and regular outer skirt. The old man led me through the north-east corner.

“It will not be harming it yet, I guess, an’ I’d like you to see for yourself it’s clean o’ weed. There’s not such wheat as mine in these parts this year.”

Nor was there. For certain reasons the land had lain fallow through the two preceding years. The weed to my inexperienced eye seemed absent, although the worst weed of the wheatfield, and certainly the most subtle, was in hiding among the luxuriant leaf. I never remember to have seen so perfect a tract of growing green as to all appearance was that eighty acres in 1905. I saw it in the zenith of the freshness of the beauty of the blade, and later on in the ear, and on the day when it waited for the reaper, each time a living thing of perfect loveliness. There is a mystery about wheat which grows deeper and stronger as one shares its life. The absorbing interest it inspires is not to be altogether explained in its relation to the superlative want of the world, or the grave risk from hail, drought, frost, or other calamities which threaten it between seed-time and harvest. There is something indefinable in the bond between man and wheat, which

is stronger than death or disappointment. It satisfies a great human need, but its claim seems deeper and more intimate than mere gratitude. It is more attractingly, hungrily alive than any fruit or even flower of the field, and the voice of its claim is to be felt in the field and not in the granary. None living within touch and sight of a field of wheat could ever feel quite lonely.

I hardly knew wheat that morning, and certainly not sufficiently well to detect the blade of tares, but I think I caught a hint of its secret spell in the wistfulness of the old man's eyes as he gazed upon it.

"Hey! 'tis a beautiful crop," said he, "and I'm loathe to part with my place. Never have I had such a promise of a crop since I came to the country. But all my gels is married, and the boys hev got on to their own land, and the missus she's getting sickly, and would be better, I guess, near her own kin."

But the wistfulness belonged to the wheat. I have seen the same look in the eyes of others since, of whom the world and his wife might say that they had lived out their long life content without the nourishment of emotion—but the living, breathing, whispering wheat knows better.

"Two thousand five hundred bushels I reckon it will yield, and two thousand five hundred bushels of wheat at a dollar a bushel is two thousand five hundred dollars. That's half the price of the farm!"

He shouted the last bombshell of information with the strength of its own weight, and the conviction of his own deafness. The old lady came across to meet us. She represented a rare type of Scottish woman: she was shrewd, industrious, caustic, generous, frugal, witty,

intuitive; the utterance of her lips had the charm of blarney, even when it convicted the meditations of her heart of occasional guile. In a different station of life her gossip would probably have refreshed the tired ear of kings.

"Eh, but we'd not be thinking of quitting the place but the old man is getting past it," she said.

"What's that the missus was saying?" demanded the old man, with the ready suspicion of the slightly deaf.

"That you hate leaving the place, but that she thinks that after your many years of toil you should retire in comfort," I shouted on one note.

The old lady at once imagined she saw in me a kindred spirit not altogether to be trusted. They conversed together in Gaelic. I felt sure she had given me away, and that I had thrown oil on the troubled waters of another's ship to the hindrance of my own barque.

"Eh, but it's a beautiful crop!" she sighed; "and my, the lovely neighbours!" she added, glancing across to the other little shack at the far end of the field as though she were gazing on a shrine, although "lovely" is merely the favourite appreciative adjective of the Canadian country-people, and bears but the vaguest relation to truth or beauty.

We examined a fair-sized granary, which was so very much superior to our own shack that it did not occur to me that it might not be an altogether desirable storehouse for grain. About a hundred yards north of the house was a long stable, built of gigantic logs plastered with mud upon a foundation of stones laid together. It could have lodged sixteen head of horses and cattle.

Just below my attention was called to a fine sow with nine small pigs, happily sunning themselves in a styleless enclosure to the music of their mother's contented snore. From this point I caught sight of the well, which was at the far side of a circular space of wild but luxuriant vegetation enclosed within the confines of a bluff of poplar, withy, and thorn trees. In the remnant of water at one end of the green oasis I failed to read the hint of tragic-comic days of spring-time, when the only way to reach the well is by the longest way round and a wary leap.

"That well cost me a hundred dollars," announced the old man, "and I have never knowed it dry up yet."

The heat had grown intense, and I asked for a glass of water. But my thirst had to wait on the sun. The water was positively too cold to drink. The old man was mightily pleased.

"Better let it stand under the sun awhile, I guess. My, but it's a fine well—and a cheap farm!"

"Five thousand dollars seems little enough," I said with the indiscretion of inexperience.

"But, mind you, I should want a thousand dollars spot cash," he answered, as though presenting an unrealised difficulty. "I have been done by an Englishman before."

"Do you mean five thousand or one thousand?" I inquired.

"Five thousand dollars is the price of the farm. I want a thousand dollars down, a thousand dollars after harvest, and three thousand can stand by. You can pay me a thousand dollars every year at six per cent. But I must have a thousand spot cash."

"It seems a remarkably easy way of making payment,"

I observed. It was a mystery to me that any one should want to sell a place for one thousand pounds where one-fourth of the land could produce five hundred pounds in one year, and the mystery was certainly not explained in the methods of small payments suspended over four years. I felt that I was on the line of a great bargain, and that in my dealings with these very simple souls it would be contemptibly mean to take undue advantage of my own superior knowledge of affairs, should we ever agree to make the deal.

"How did the Englishman do you?" I inquired.

"Bes' leave that alone, I guess. He's the last. There ain't going to be no other!"

I pierced the implied suspicion with the scorn of silence, and rose to go. On our way up we looked in at the stable. It was full of cocks and hens seeking shelter from the sun. In one corner was a nest with a pile of eggs. Some work-horses were at the far end munching hay. The plaster had been knocked out all over to allow of plenty of ventilation for the beasts, the old man explained, but it gave the building an air of being in pressing need of repair.

Facing the stable was a quarter of an acre of garden, fenced with poplar poles and barbed wire. One half of it was taken up with healthy-looking potato plants, the other half with turnips hand sown. At the far end cabbages, carrots, beetroot, and Indian corn had been carelessly sown together.

"My, the lovely potatoes!" said the old lady, who was waiting by the fence.

"You must just take a look at the pasture-field—forty acres," said the old man. "Yon slough in the corner I've never known to dry up."

Young horses, old horses, cows and calves were grazing in the pasture, and duck of all sizes were scattered over the slough.

"Well! I guess you'll be letting us know if you think to buy the place. I must be getting back to the plough. The missus will drive you down, I guess. Five thousand dollars will buy it. 'Tis a cheap farm."

"How did the Englishman do you?" I inquired of the old lady, as we turned into the house.

"Eh, but you couldna help but liking him for all he was no farmer!" she replied, "an' clever—my! He run the place right through the summer without a cent to his name. 'Twas his woman's money he was counting on. And when he had took all the trouble to get everything ready for her, she wouldn't have anything more to do with him. An' what could he do, poor lad? My, but he was clever! Horses and implements he got, and his stores, and friends to back bills for him at the bank. They do say that he was one too many for Donald Macdonald himself, but I am not saying that's true. Hey, but he had a soft tongue, and a pleasant way with him! And all he did, he did without a cent!"

"But what made you move out until he had made his first payment?" I inquired.

"The old man will never be doing that again," she replied in a tone of complete discouragement.

"I must be getting along," I said. "It has been a great pleasure and interest to me to look over your farm."

"Oh, but you will not be walking back. You shan't do it. Mary and I shall drive you down."

It was the swiftest passage that I had then made across

the prairie, and altogether delightful. The old man had not raised stock for over twenty years in vain; he had good horses and good cattle. The mare cut along the trail evenly and cleverly, without a pause or a blunder. The good lady checked the pace on the brow of Troy Hill—her granddaughter rebelliously effected a compromise. I bade my kind hostess farewell at the post office, and hoped that we should meet again.

The laying in of stores and oats took up considerable time the next morning, and Charles Edward and I did not get off until nearly ten o'clock. I had purposely omitted to get a sack of flour at the Fort, not because I was sufficiently intelligent to grasp the fact that for obvious reasons food is more expensive in a settlement many miles distant from a railway than it is within stone's-throw of the depot, but because it deferred a hundred pounds from the load of Charles Edward for a distance of ten miles.

At Lipton there was another long wait before the sack of flour was placed carefully beneath the sack of oats; also I was encouraged to wait for the depot-master's return from dinner with the information that a steamer-trunk answering to the description of mine had arrived the night before. It proved a forlorn hope, and the sun was looking towards the west before I left the town.

Eight miles out I remembered the storekeeper's warning to keep an eye on my load. The bag of oats was gone. Fully two miles behind I saw something alongside the trail which looked like a bag of grain. I drove back grimly—when I reached the place it was a stone.

The work-horses could not continue breaking without proper forage, and I remembered with relief that it was the time of full moon. To drop anything on the prairie trail is fatal if there is the faintest chance of its catching the eye of a passer-by. I lost a five-dollar-bill once under the first snowstorm and found it again in the spring. I also had lost and found as much as a hundred-dollar-bill on my own side-trail; but although my hired men and I have contrived to lose many bags of feed from the waggon, to say nothing of rugs, I have never yet recovered anything of the kind. I had passed two half-breeds hauling in a load. I surmised that my only chance was to reach the lost oats before they reached them. I caught them up just as they had turned off the telegraph-trail.

I was in a mood to fight for my rights. They had oats, but took solemn and profane vows that they were none of mine. I drove on to a place between the hills where I had stopped to water Charles Edward. There lay the sack, stretched lazily by the slough, inviting the beams of the vanishing sun. The half-breeds had trotted down in my wake, and seemed as sincerely pleased with my find as I was. They hoisted it into the buggy, a feat which I certainly couldn't have accomplished without time and a full concentration of force.

"It's a long lonesome journey for a woman, I guess," said one, and the other offered to share their meal with me.

I vowed to scorn suspicion and colour prejudice for evermore, and made off for the telegraph-trail with a heavier load but a lighter heart.

The sun dropped out of sight as we reached the point which makes twenty miles from home. In the North-

West twilight is but the briefest passage from sunlight to the silver silence of moontime. Night fell—but there is neither ghostliness nor glamour about the Canadian night. It has all the beauty and the brightness without the fever of day. Bluff and slough bare beauty to the revealing clearness of the moonlight, which they shield from the ray of a sun which can scorch and even blind. No phantom breath freezes on the ear; no phantom hands stretch through ghostly shadows to clutch at a heart suffocating with dread. It is as exquisitely real and of the moment, as are the joys of youth. Its truth is in the measure of its beauty. Nature rests, but with wide soft eyes awake, and the great Mother broods over all with her everlasting Hush! The shadow walls of time and space are lifted—it is the hour of the pasture of the soul. Very clearly through the soft white sweetness of the Canadian night floats the golden voice of the Shepherd-King with its blessing of the night—

“Love watching over Israel slumbers not nor sleeps.”

CHAPTER XVII

A LONDON POLICEMAN AND HIS FAMILY—THE SETTLEMENT SCHOOL—THE FLIGHT OF THE HORSES

"HICKS and I have always shared everything," announced my brother. "I think, if you don't mind, I ought to offer him the horses and plough this week for his homestead. I have done about eight acres."

"Eight acres is only a little more than one-fourth of thirty, and father will be expecting to hear that at least thirty acres have been broken," I reminded him. "Besides, you said that breaking was very doubtful after the middle of July, and we are nearly there. If we only get eight acres out of the horses it will be a very poor speculation."

"Well, I don't care! Only Hicks and I have always shared, and he will think it very mean of me to back out directly I get hold of horses that are capable of doing some work."

In the end I assented, or rather ceased to rebel. My brother returned to the old task of killing time and the old theme of running down the country. Mr. Hicks moved leisurely towards his own territory with the horses between the hours of seven and nine. I am afraid I lost patience. I know I declined to waste my days

over the stove, and living was decidedly on the simple side. I had thankfully fallen into the Canadian plan of three meals a day, the last being fixed for 6.30. We drew largely on the Hungarians' eggs, which I served boiled; and the prairie yielded us a generous supply of wild strawberries. We all missed *Hilaria* badly. For the inspiration of life I fell back on my writing-table and the prairie.

Raspberries arrived to take the place of strawberries, and masses of mauve daisy and golden sunflower covered the flight of the scarlet lilies; the roses grew paler and deeper. In summer Nature makes rich atonement to the prairie for the uncompromising severity of the winter months, and new beauty in flower form was a constant surprise and delight. In England life wears its many graces so easily that one is apt to forget one's own share in the dower. Surprise of the beautiful in Canada awoke a deeper appreciation of the beautiful which is ever with us in lovely England. Once a Russian said to me that it was a wonder to him to observe that the English would read anything, everything, on a railway journey rather than the exquisite lyric of England, as it passed before them in vain. I thought it a very charming thought in a foreigner, but it was not until I came back from Canada that the truth in his word found truth in me.

It was in these days that I did my best to prove the conditions of Canada for the average homesteader, and made myself known to some of our neighbours. The policeman's house had always attracted me; the policeman's wife was busy in her new garden when I paid my first visit. It already contained all sorts and conditions

of vegetables besides the green peas which, according to my brother, occupied the place of the *pièce de résistance*, and all the side dishes, at the family board. I noticed many cocks and hens, and concluded that peas now took a side seat in favour of eggs. A stable was in process of erection. Its skeleton promised well, although much depended on the ability to keep up with the ambition of the design. Horses, I learned, were to be purchased from the proceeds of wages for harvest and threshing labour. A tiny patch of land was already sown with oats—a further patch with flax—its blue bloom carried one back to MacWhirter's "Morning in the Austrian Tyrol." The London policeman had clearly brought out with him the supreme gift one can carry to the prairie—a breath of enthusiasm. He had taken his British earnings and distributed them in a royal spirit, but also with a regrettable lack of judgment. The land of the surrounding homesteads was already yielding towards the living of the settlers, thanks in no small measure to the wages for the work which those settlers had had the opportunity to put in on the policeman's fine house. From the eminence of their own loads of threshed grain these wiser neighbours continued to point with a gibe at the monument of the policeman's folly, long after they had forgotten the good part it had played in the development of their own welfare. Meantime the policeman's wife was one of the pluckiest souls I ever met on the prairie.

Peas, beans, potatoes, onions, lettuce, beetroot, cabbage, Indian corn, vegetable-marrow, a few nasturtiums, sweet pea, and mignonette charmed glad life from the sun and Canadian soil, thanks to her unfailing energy. I saw

every scrap of growing life before I entered the house, which contained six rooms in all. Two of them were very barely furnished, the four remaining chambers were spacious and empty.

There was no pride on the woman's face: it told a tale of constant toil, unwearied effort, steady patience, and such a longing need for a little praise. Her husband conducted me proudly through the spacious apartments.

"The neighbours call me a fool, but I say I built a house whilst I had the money, and if I wait to see a better until either of them makes the money to build it, I shall wait a long time. Now what would you have done?"

"Oh, undoubtedly had your idea been mine I should have been a fool too, and followed it," I answered.

His expression fell. I was awfully sorry for him, and from one point of view entirely in sympathy.

"I mean," I added, "that I can understand that if one had the money how very difficult it would be to resist building a nice house on such a perfect site. The lovely slough at the foot of the hill, and the pretty poplar bluffs, must have simply shouted for your many-windowed house. And after all, if you go out and get work through the harvest and threshing seasons, you can afford to pay some one else to do your homestead duties; and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that your wife and children are comfortably housed. I really don't see that your position is deplorable—if there is no risk about your obtaining work!"

"Oh, there's no fear about that! Donald Macfarlane on the next place could be working in a dozen places at

once. He earned over two hundred and fifty dollars with himself and his team last fall."

I thought his argument sufficiently reasonable, but remembered that between the land-work of a Scotch crofter and that of a London policeman there must lurk a very definite note of interrogation.

"In light of the present your prospect looks cheerful," I agreed. "Your wife has, at any rate, achieved a fine success with the garden."

"Oh, she's fond of tinkering round over that sort of thing," he allowed, with an air of magnificent tolerance.

"The vegetables are so good for the children," the woman explained with humility. "With eggs they can live on them, and soon I shall hope to have butter. When I was a girl I lived in the country, and I love to work in a garden. Gracie, go into the house."

Gracie appealed to her father.

"Leave the child alone, woman," decreed the expreserver of the public peace.

I noticed the fine-drawn patience of the woman's mouth droop to depression.

"Now what are we all going to do in the matter of the school?" I demanded. "The settlement is considerably over a year old—there are many more children than ten, and the greater number seem to be of an age when authority is essential to their future well-being. You were a public official in the old country. You must know the necessary steps to take in claiming a right. Why don't you insist on the establishment of the public school which is part of Canada's bait to the English emigrant?"

"Oh, it isn't the Government that holds back," he

explained. "We could have had the school long enough ago. But every one with children wants it in the most convenient place from their outlook, and every one that hasn't got children don't want it at all 'cos of the tax."

"Then education is not entirely a free gift out here?"

"Well, it is arranged in this way. In a new settlement, when there are ten children ready for education, the Government undertakes to plan out a school district and to provide a school-teacher. The school district is often laid out in queer shape to suit the early settlers. There are ever so many Hungarian kids north-east of your brother's homestead, and the district has to run that way so as to give 'em no chance not to be sending their children to school. It will only run that side of the trail, I guess, so that Macfarlanes and Whites will get their kids' schooling without paying a cent, but your brother and Mr. Hicks will have to pay although they ain't family men. Still, it won't be more than two cents an acre, if it's that."

"It is a small tax and a big matter in any case," I said. "If you will do your best to bring about another meeting, I will guarantee that there shall be no protest from my brother or Mr. Hicks; indeed, I feel sure they will help you all they can."

"I'll see what I can do. But if the school is fixed up at Sampson's, why, my kids ain't going. Sampson has got it all already, what with his building which is the worst I ever saw, and the stopping-house, and now they are trying to get the post office. Sampson's one o' those as wants the world. I should be sorry to be in it if he was Gawd Almighty."

"Wanting the world is no bad idea to start out with, if a man has the courage to work for it," I said.

"Oh, we are all workers out here," he retorted, with a gleam of something between defiance and suspicion in the corner of his eye. "And there's none of your classes out here—we're all alike."

"To start with," I said pointedly. "In a country where work is such a power, the best workman must come out top side in the long-run. You and your wife will be there, no doubt."

"Ah! she's a poor soul."

"She looks delicate," I agreed. "No doubt she has overdone herself toiling in the garden through the hot weather. I would like to send a snapshot of it to the *Daily Trail*—'The first season's work of an Englishwoman on the Canadian prairie.' No wonder *Englishwomen* have so high a reputation in Canada, if there are many like her."

"Oh, she means well," he allowed, "but no control! No control over the kids. Control is the first thing. If a woman can control her kids, she can do anything else she likes. Make home another story, in fact."

"If a man can control himself, he can control the world, and make life another story, including the life of the woman who has the good fortune to be attached to him, can't he?" I asked.

"I don't hold with women meddling in politics. That kind of thing would break the peace of heaven," he answered, as though from the pedestal of his profession.

"Do you think that your wife could possibly spare me some vegetables daily?" I asked. "Of course I know that you can pack them in sand, and that with your good

cellar they would keep through the winter, so that I shouldn't expect to get them for the price you would take if you would have no use for them."

"I make no doubt she would oblige you," he said graciously.

The little woman gladly consented to my suggestion.

"The money will help for the winter," she said. "Sometimes I daren't think about the winter. Oh, it's all right if you have enough—enough food and enough fuel. But we owe a lot yet on the house. And though the pay is good for harvest labour, the work is so hard, and you see he had just his beat and his report in the old country."

"What was his district?" I inquired.

She named a fashionable square and its adjoining streets.

"Not much to do there, I suppose?"

"Nothing! Good pay and a gentleman's life. And so respected in the force—and me too because of him. It's all so changed out here. My husband misses the respect—I miss it too. You see there's no difference. We're all alike in this country."

"We are good, bad, or indifferent in this or any other country, and *you* are one of the splendid ones," I told her.

"Law! if my husband could hear you say that! I haven't had such a laugh since I come to this country. Women wears themselves out before their time for men, and men thinks all the less of them. But there—he's clever, and I'm not, and men's men."

"They *are*," I agreed. "Tell me, can one of the children bring the vegetables?"

"Oh yes. Gracie will be pleased to come. You'll

come and see us again? It's that lonesome up here, it's a treat to speak to anything. I don't know what I should have done if it hadn't been for the garden. You'll just take those few lettuces and onions—if you don't mind carrying them."

"I should think I didn't," I said thankfully. "But remember, everything is to be charged up, and I'll have my bill once a week."

"I'm not taking nothing for those few. But I'll do as you say, and thank you."

Through the weeks that followed Gracie tripped across the breaking with her basket of green food, to the glory of our menu, and the shame of our own little street arab of a garden, whose backward potato plants and misunderstood onions and carrots seemed to cock an inquisitive eye at her passing. She always arrived in great form, looking as fresh and dainty as the flowers in her mother's garden. It was the end of the autumn when the news came to me that she was lying still, within the place where those flowers had been—ground hallowed by a mother's toil and a mother's tears. In the early days of a prairie settlement the shadow of death is of necessity bereft of the consolation which many find in the form and ceremony of conventional interment. But Nature never fails one. Neither the prejudice of priest or people can cheat her of one solitary atom: back upon the wisdom of the love of the great Mother it must fall, whether by way of the depths of the sea, or the sands of the desert; the soil of gardens of Gethsemane, or the clay of the Potter's Field.

I met my brother armed with a gun as I crossed the

trail, and at once opened the subject of the coming of the school and its tax.

“Hicks says he’s ‘darned’ if he will pay it, and I agree with him. There’s Macfarlane with eleven children. He can always get work because he has been doing farm-work all his life, and had forgotten more than any Canadian so-called farmer will ever know. His wife can make bread, and something out of nothing generally. His two eldest girls can earn as much as Hicks and I. Yet the Government coolly asks us to pay for the education of his children. Hicks says he will cheerfully go to Hades before he will go to one of their meetins, and so shall I.”

The “British Workman” discussed the excellent lettuce. We spoke a duet in favour of the woman-gardener. He was always kind, and so reasonable in theory; only he hated work with more energy than he put into the sum of his remaining qualities, and in consequence no matter how much we really liked him, we often had to hate him on the prairie.

“It is really terrible,” I explained to him. “There are over twenty children from four to fourteen years old in our immediate neighbourhood, and they are all running wild for want of discipline. They seem to be completely outside the control of their parents, and they will soon be representative English men and women in Canada. I dare say the Germans and Hungarians of the neighbourhood can hardly write their name, but they have complete authority over their children; whilst the English fathers and mothers seem to me to be either subdued or helpless, in their mistaken admiration of the impertinence and disobedience of their offspring.”

"Sure thing!" agreed the "British Workman," who in exclamation had become a slave to the Canadian vernacular. "The fact is, they all want the school, only they all want it on their own kitchen table. You can't get 'em to look at any single fact from a general point of view. The good of the settlement doesn't exist for them. The only sentiment of consideration a settler has for his neighbour is fear that he may score a point of advantage which he don't possess himself."

"And that is the poisonous germ which will destroy the tradition of English character in our most important colony," I said, "unless by means of education we can induce them to realise that the good of all is always good for each. Yet to-day I heard that two Englishmen, representatives of two of our foremost public schools, had used their influence against the coming of the school because of a miserable little tax."

"It sounds pretty bad, don't it?" he agreed, rolling a meagre cigarette with a luxurious air. "But Lal and I lived on porridge for weeks in February and March, and came to an end of even that. And the beggars thought it a fine joke! It's all very well to be high-falutin' in one's ideas when one's own head is well above water, but there can be nothing more offensive on the earth than the ignorance of the ignorant English."

"Is that the best reason you can find for using your influence to keep them in ignorance? You forget that out here we are all a bit of each other. They with their ignorance of yesterday, blood-curdling theories of to-morrow, and frequently offensive manners of to-day are a bit of you. It is one thing to measure one's height by

the depths of one's fellow-countrymen in England, where even a crossing-sweeper has his satellite to carry home the broom, but out here we stand for England, and must each and all utter our Shibboleth in work as well as in word. You know as well as I do that those of us who come out here expecting to find respect and sympathy waiting for us because we are English find ourselves against a brick wall. There is material kindness waiting for us, provided by the Government; but Canadian opinion divides the English into two groups, the ignorant English who can work, or the English wasters, who, having been dowered with every advantage which wealth can procure in a highly civilised country, won't work—although both divisions look to Canada for a living. We are dumped together as the helpless English, affected or ignorant, helpless or hopeless, snobs or slaves, and every one of us has to make his or her individual way through that barrier of prejudice."

"Sure thing!" reiterated the "British Workman."
"Well, I won't go against it. But I don't think you will ever drag Lal to a school meeting. From what he said to me, I gathered he would rather go *anywhere!*"

The service that day had been postponed until the afternoon. I decided to go over on the chance of finding a little enthusiasm for the school among the mothers, who made a point of being present at the weekly worship.

Mrs. White's kitchen seemed to be already overcrowded, and several men were standing in the doorway. I found a place in the window-seat, and when the earnestness of the Methodist preacher was inclined to submerge sweet reason, I took spiritual sustenance of preacher Pan.

There was no organ at Mrs. White's, but "Jesus, Lover of my soul," found its familiar note eager to give it welcome in the heart and voice of the little gathering; and if "Nothing but leaves" failed to meet so kind a fate, it also fails to deserve it.

Later I went fully a mile out of my way to talk over the matter with the mother of many.

"I'll not be the one to set my face agin the coming of the school," she said. "It will get the bairns out of the way, and although they're no trouble out all the day long, and as happy as princes, eddication is a guid thing, and the guid-mon will be well-pleased they shall get in schoolin'. Only it mustna be at the Sampsons', an' it shouldna be at the Whites'. The Sampsons has the stopping-house, and the Whites they hae the church, and that's already more than their stomachs can carry in the place o' pride."

"The Browns have excellent accommodation; they are fairly near the main trail, and quite central," I suggested.

"An' if it's to be at the Browns', ye dinna need to fash yourself agin the comin' of the school, for you'll get nane to send their bairns. The neighbours has all made too much o' the Browns in the buildin' o' that fine house, and now they can't abide them."

"How about the Hungarians?" I asked in a moment of mental aberration.

"The neighbours may do as they ken best, but my bairns winna go to the shack of any dirty foreigners for their eddication."

I went home in despair, and sat down in the one and

only shack where for obvious reasons the school could not be held.

That night the mosquitoes simply swarmed. My brother brought in a pail of green herbage and set fire to it in the shack. The "British Workman" performed a like service for his "bunch," and we all united in making one each for the two horses, who were inclined to become infuriated with the incessant attack of the enemy, to which, being unstabled, they were directly exposed.

I had to shut the door of the shack in spite of the intense heat, and having swathed my head in a motor-veil, drifted into sleep to the hum of their music in the roof. It was in a dream that the sound of galloping hoofs came to me; but I was wideawake when whinny after whinny blared forth the equine shout of victorious liberty to any four-footed wanderers within hail of its sound.

"Quick, Lal!" I shouted from the doorway. "The horses are away!"

"Oh, Hades! Hicks, do you hear? Get up, man! The horses are away! If we don't get them to-night—Heaven only knows when!"

For half an hour we pattered round in the moonlight—but there was neither sound nor sign of them.

"Better turn in again, old man," yawned the "British Workman," "and trace 'em out in the morning by their hoof-marks."

"They will be sixty miles away by to-morrow morning at Qu'Appelle Station. You are a lazy beggar, Hicks! Nothing gets a rise out of you! Well, you will have to hustle round and look for them, as it was your infernal

carelessness in picketin' them that must have been the cause of their gettin' away. We must both make tracks at dawn. I'll go south, and you go east, or accordin' to their tracks; only it's too dry to hope for much help from that. Oh, when shall I get clear of this Heaven-forsaken country! One thing after another! Nothin' but toil and trouble. And at the end of it all—nothin'!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE QUEST OF THE HORSES—CHINESE LAUNDRY- MEN—A COMRADE OF THE PRAIRIE

"FOR Heaven's sake, make me some tea! I have walked twenty miles if I have walked a yard, and eaten nothing but those two scones you gave me, and some slough-water. Not a sign of the horses! And no one has seen or heard anything of them. Where's Hicks?"

"Not back yet," I answered. "Perhaps he has succeeded in getting on their trail, and won't leave it."

"Succeeded in gettin' on the trail of a good meal is the likelier story. I'll lay you any odds he hasn't walked as far as I have."

The "British Workman" arrived with the first star.

"What luck?" shouted my brother.

"Pretty poor, old chap. I must have walked thirty-five miles if I have walked an inch, and not a sign of them."

"You must be famished," I said.

"Not particularly, thank you. I struck luck on the grub-line—came in for dinner with Scott the magistrate, seven miles north, and supper at Madamaz', nine miles east."

"By accident, of course," gibed my brother.

"Not altogether, old man," acknowledged the "British Workman." "I hoped I might get a whisky to help me on the quest at Scott's, but I didn't expect a new bride to ask me in to dinner. Jolly good dinner it was, too!"

"Don't swagger!" said Lal. "You couldn't possibly have had fresh meat fifteen miles from town in this weather."

"We didn't. But there was boiled bacon and cabbage, and new potatoes, and an apple pie."

"That's what Canadians live on week in week out. How a chap like Scott, who has enough money to do as he pleases, can choose to come out here, marry and settle down to lead this sort of life for ever, is more than I can understand. What did you get for supper at Madamaz', Hicks?"

"Fried bacon and potatoes, scones and stewed apples. Plenty of it—help yourself all round. Madamaz is a good sort—does his men well. I shouldn't mind hiring on with him myself. He thinks the horses are pretty certain to have struck for their old home at the station. But he has promised to keep a sharp look-out."

"I expect I shall have to make another journey down that confounded trail," grumbled my brother. "Still, we may as well have one more shot in the neighbourhood. I'll go due south, and you go towards Macdonald Hills to-morrow, Hicks. We had better reserve Charles Edward, in case he has to go to the station."

At midday my brother returned from a seven-hours' absence down the trail.

"News of them at last!" he cried. "Old Tosh, the squaw, heard them gallop past near the main trail when

they were camping out on their way home on Sunday night. Now shall I go to the Fort, or shall Hicks, or could you go? We are gettin' short of money, ain't we?"

"We have enough to move with, and I sent for some more last mail," I answered. "But I expect I had better go to the Fort. I hope to find my dress-basket at Lipton, and I left the linen at the laundry: I can call for that. There will probably be news from Hilaria. I really don't mind going."

"That's settled, then," he said, with a sigh of relief. "I'll make you some coffee, and eggs, and stuff. You won't get to Lipton for hours, and driving in this intense heat is absolutely exhausting."

On the far side of Headlands I saw a tall woman walking towards me, which was unusual, as so few people walk in Canada, especially across lonely parts of the prairie, although men make their journeys on foot when they are very keen on saving money, or have fallen to their last dollar; but even then it is always in the hope of getting a lift.

The pedestrian proved to be the sister of our neighbour of the stopping-house. I pulled up to inquire for news of the horses, and to ask her to lose no opportunity to let any trailer know of our loss. She told me that her brother was coming along behind with a load of lumber, but it had taken so long to load up that she had started on foot, and it seemed she was destined to accomplish the long journey without a lift. I regretted that I was going in the opposite direction, and we chatted for a few moments whilst she scanned the trail in the hope of some sign of the coming waggon.

I learned that in England she had been a teacher in the Board-school, and at once tried to interest her in hurrying on the coming of the belated school in our district. I suggested that she might try and get the appointment as school-teacher for herself, which would at once cancel the problem of where the school should be held.

"Indeed I should be thankful to do so," she answered, "for I find the life very lonely and trying in many ways. You see, I have been accustomed to my own home and my own way of living in England. Canada offers such a fine opportunity to people like my brother and sister to improve their circumstances, but they had so very little capital, and I gladly consented to join forces. But, you see, the Government only grant the free land to men, so that my capital won't make the return to me that it will to my brother—I wish it might! They like the life better every day, and the little girl is so happy and bonny out here: the child and their own welfare is naturally their life. But I miss my occupation, and my life out here seems a little starved. I would do anything to fill it, and I shouldn't mind leaving them now they are well set up and likely to prosper. Still, there is a good deal of red tape to get through before one can obtain an official appointment even in Canada. To teach in a public school of the Dominion one must first obtain a certificate from the Educational Department. An Oxford B.A. would not be exempt from this examination, or its preceding condition of three or six months' preparation. However, I will do anything I can do for the coming of the school, and I am sure my brother and his wife will be only too glad to help. But I fear there is a good deal

of petty jealousy and even ill-feeling between some of the settlers in our neighbourhood; the greater number have no idea whatever of the meaning or the value of desirable social conditions."

The tracts of wheat had burst into bud, and gave us glad greeting here and there along the trail. How I wished that only a few acres of growing wheat were my own! I wondered if the eighty acres on the other side of the valley were filling out, and with what pride the old people would now be gazing at "the beautiful crop."

At Lipton, Charles Edward and I paused to take our evening meal. I found that my dress-basket had at last arrived; but although many settlers were in town, there was no news of the horses. I resolved to go on to the Fort, and stop over-night—Charles Edward fell in with the arrangement quite cheerfully.

No news awaited us there. Mr. M'Gusty was very kind and helpful; he promised to ask Tommy, the stage-driver, to inquire between the Fort and the station, and to telegraph back if there was word of them. He proposed to engage a man to bring them on if they were found, and as in any case I foresaw difficulty in driving Charles Edward whilst leading my two brave friends of the plough, I agreed to the suggestion. At the bank I gazed rather blankly at my account. Hilaria's travelling expenses and things in general had brought my credit margin well under fifty dollars. I drew another ten for stores, and in the economy of the moment determined to avoid Lipton and dinner, and bait Charles Edward on the trail; but I remembered the laundry and the dress-basket in time.

At Lipton, Charles Edward made straight for the livery barn, and refused to move. I saw him settle down to his oats, and then went in search of the Chinamen who are in occupation at the Lipton laundry, and generally in the public laundries of Canada, which are not usually patronised by the capable housewife.

“Where your ticky?”

For the first time since he had handed it to me I remembered the conundrum in black hieroglyphics on a bit of pink paper, which I had received in return for my household and personal belongings.

“I am sorry, but I have lost it,” I answered. “However, I know my own things. Open that biggest parcel over on the shelf.”

He shook his head politely.

“Where ticky?”

“I tell you I haven’t got it. I must have lost it. I didn’t know you would want it. Surely you remember me, and I know my own linen.”

He shook his head firmly.

“No ticky, no washy.”

“But I must have my things!” I expostulated. “I live twenty-five miles north. Do you suppose I shall drive fifty miles for a scrap of paper which I shall never find? Give me my parcel at once.”

“No ticky, no washy.”

“I shall fetch the policeman,” I threatened.

“Ingleesh lose much, lose everytink. Ingleesh bring ticky—Chinaman no got washy—Ingleesh police put Chinaman in the coop. No ticky, no washy!”

The argument was sound—the decree final. Iron was

knocking at the door of my soul as I crossed to the depot to inquire of my lost baggage.

The station-master met me with concern, relieved with congratulation.

"Your lost trunk has arrived—I am more than sorry for the delay. It was in the lost baggage office at Montreal. I was communicating with Winnipeg. One of the officers of the 'Alexandra' wrote to headquarters, and made a hustle over it. However, here is the trunk. If you'll bring your buggy over, I'll put it up for you. I have been away on my honeymoon, or I guess you wouldn't have been so long without it."

He had evidently received one of the arrows I had been directing week by week to headquarters; however, ill-nature itself cannot stand out against honeymoons, and the point was that after a long divorce my possession and I were again within touch. My scarred initials blinked me glad greeting. I dropped the blessing of my heart and a word of thanks to the purser of the "Alexandra," and wished I had ~~put him~~ on the track of the lost writing-table.

It was when the depot-master was making a safe place for the dress-basket that a scrap of pink paper dislodged itself from under the mat. He pounced on it.

"A laundry check! It would be safer in your bag. You would have some difficulty in claiming your goods, I guess, without that ticket."

"Difficulty!" I exclaimed gratefully. "It's not the word. The Chinaman positively refused to let me have the things. I dare say you think I am a careless person."

"All the English have to be looked after when they first come out. I guess you will soon learn in this country."

I pulled up in triumph at the door of the laundry.

"Bring out my parcel at once," I commanded. "Here is your ticket."

"Ingleesh lady come look washy right all there. One dollar twenty cent."

He checked the list carefully. The linen had been well washed, and fairly well laundered. The charge was moderate. I had no just cause of complaint. He invited my appreciation of his work, but I was not sufficiently generous to rise to the occasion. If there is one thing more than another which arouses one's ire in the North-West it is the calm way in which men of all nations and all callings dare to doubt one's word.

I walked across to the fruit store to get some oranges and biscuits, in place of the midday-meal of which my wrath against the Chinaman had robbed me. As I came out, a half-breed greeted me politely, and clearly wished to say more.

"I give you lift in my waggon the other day, mees, when you was walking on the prairie. I have team good horses drive back Touchwood now—presently. You drive with me—I tie your pony behind my buggy—you get home two hours."

"I can't do that," I said; "but I'll be very glad of your lead as long as my pony will keep up. And if you will take my portmanteau and drop it off on my brother's breaking, I shall be ever so grateful. My pony can travel if he isn't over-weighted."

"I go right away—get box off your buggy. Take on my buggy."

"That's right—do," I answered.

"You know people up Touchwood?" he questioned. "Good Ingleesh people there. I like Ingleesh. I see you walk a mile away on prairie. I say my brother, 'Look, Ingleesh.' Only one other walk across prairie like you. Ingleesh parson Touchwood. Guess you know."

I said I was a newcomer, and hardly knew my own neighbours.

"You not remember me? I wait long time that night give you lift: my brother wait too. You wait here till I come," he commanded.

However, I hadn't the faintest intention of obedience. Three miles out, he flashed to my side.

"I look up and down everywheres for you. It take long, long time. When I leave you, I say 'wait!'"

"Englishwomen don't wait for any one," I said loftily. "Get along in front of me, and make the pace. Only, if you find me far behind, don't wait, because I shall take things easily if I find it useless trying to keep up. Don't forget to drop my baggage."

"He keep up—he good pony—Indian! I give my team oats half-journey. Make fire, and make you tea."

I didn't expect to be within miles of him at the half-journey point; but oddly enough, no sooner did the team dash forward than a positively miraculous change came over Charles Edward.

He tossed his head, sniffed the air, and pulled himself together, with the proud intention of a hunter; then he gave one wild whinny, and positively darted after the

team ahead, and stuck to them without encouragement of whip or word until, about twelve miles out, our leader turned suddenly off the trail on to the prairie, and announced a halt for oats and tea.

His generosity took away my breath. He poured out sufficient oats before his own horses to have lasted them through a day's ploughing, and Charles Edward had far more than his poor old teeth could get to the end of within the twenty minutes which I intended to mark time limit.

My dusky-hued friend unharnessed his team, and suggested that he should perform the same service for Charles Edward; but one could rely on that gentleman's honour not to run away, even had not the oats under his nose stood for safe tether.

"Have you lost something?" I inquired, as I watched him apparently in search of treasure in our vicinity.

"I look for tin boil water make you cup tea. Trailers leave fruit tins, fish tins, on prairie."

I said that I couldn't drink tea that afternoon, if he placed it before me in a service of gold.

"No? Then you must eat. Good cheese, good biscuit. Good whisky!" The announcement closed with a wink.

I shared the biscuits and cheese, and was able to decline the whisky without breach of good-fellowship.

"Never drink nothing but tea, milk, water! Whisky is good—whisky is life! Ingleesh ladies drink out in Yukon. Drink everything! Champagne, brandy, whisky, all. Lots women out there—pretty, beautiful, very bad. Take all—geev very little."

Deeply interested as I was in the rare region where my

sex scored top hole, I thought it wisdom to draw him gently off that particular condition of the Yukon. His history disclosed him a strange creature, with a certain amount of energy, ambition of a kind, his share of luck, and that scrap of hunger for life which is such an appealing trait in the character of the darker races. We attempt to graft civilisation on the aborigines of our colonies with generosity and excellent intention. We give them good houses, which as a rule they refuse to live in; good farms which they refuse to till; far finer schools than we bestow on the children of the mother country, and less of the dogma and more of the consolation of religion than we bestow on the starved and patient lives of those who must look to the State in *merry* England; but we endeavour to rob them of the first joys which we as a nation seek with wealth—liberty and the joy of the hunter. We acknowledge their natural inheritance to be the prime joy of life in an immeasurable expenditure of time, thought, and British wealth; yet we rob them of it with a fine show of virtuosity; damming the flood of their natural vent with the cant and customs, but without the fellowship, of the strictly respectable side of our British civilisation. Then, when the pent-up passions of beings of a different phase of organisation or development confound control, overflowing the green pastures and threatening the neat fences of British conditions, shocked eyes are raised to heaven, and the ever-recurrent *Why* disturbs exclusive lips.

"Some one coming along the trail. Best hide behind that bluff, I guess," he suggested.

"Hide!" I inquired.

"Peoples laugh see Ingleeshwoman camping out with strange man."

"English people never hide! and don't in the least mind being laughed at. We don't care what others think about us: we only care what we think of ourselves," I told him, as I moved towards the buggy.

"Ingleesh peoples very clever, very pretty, very noble, very grand—very *green*."

I was getting into the buggy, and hoped he thought I hadn't caught the tail end of his observation.

"You will no doubt catch me up and give me a lead again presently," I said. "Thanks for your hospitality."

"You no fear I go off with your box?"

"Not the slightest," I answered.

"Ha, ha!"

We got home just before sundown. My brother's astonishment at the feat of Charles Edward was only matched by his pride.

"You have often jeered at Charles Edward," he said, "but he is a fine long-distance beast, and a sprinter into the bargain after this. I knew what I was doin' when I paid forty dollars spot cash for him. Any news of the team?"

"Not a word," I answered. "Our only hope that way is in Tommy of the trail. But I doubt if they are so far south: I should have heard word of them somewhere."

"It's bad luck. The land is as dry as a bone. I'm afraid we shan't break again this year, even if they do come back—which means that I shall have to come up again next spring."

"You see it was such utter waste lending them to the

‘British Workman,’” I said bitterly. “He didn’t get through half an acre.”

“Do you think that I was going to let him off his bit, after he had been sittin’ grinnin’ at me sweatin’ my soul out six days on end, with a cigarette in his mouth and his hands in his pockets? No, thank you! Share and share alike on the prairie.”

I had left the shack in perfect order, but in the hurry of the moment of departure I had omitted to put away any of the various bits and pieces which I had never ceased to congratulate myself on having brought out. A really lovely bit of amber-tinted brocade did duty as a cloth for my packing-case writing-table, and was one of the little things that softened daily life within the shack. That night upon its surface lay many queer-shaped pieces of leather among its own shreds, also the remnants of the evening meal, whilst on the cover the frying-pan had evidently been thrown down in a hurry.

“Oh, we’re goin’ to wash up all right presently,” said my brother, who had no doubt caught a glimpse of my heart through my eyes. “We’ve been trying to mend our boots and make some sandals. Macfarlane has made each of his kids a pair—just the thing for the prairie. We went over last night to find out if they had heard anything of the horses. They simply made us stay to supper. Cream in your tea, and such rippin’ cakes. These people know how to live, give them a chance. Only it makes me sick to hear them crackin’ up life on the prairie. They are so confoundedly pleased with themselves. Although they haven’t any money either, and never will have—I told them so.”

"It is most mean of you, Lal, to try to discourage them," I said.

"Not at all! They're not by way of bein' easily discouraged, I can tell you. You should hear Macfarlane's wife on the subject of British landlords and Canadian free land: 'What the guid-mon earns is his ain, and he'll nae be presentin' his wage to a landlord as his contribution to the entertainment of the fine folk who shoot pheasants out o' nonsense, whilst my guid-mon mustna shoot a rabbit though his bairns starve under his een.' She held forth for all she was worth. Hicks and I nearly had a fit. 'My guid-mon's house is his ain in this country, an' there will be nane o' your white-livered, evil-tongued rascals o' ne'er-do-weel agents waiting on the doorstep for the bit rent. The bairns was often enough without bite or sup in bonny Scotland: there's enough and to spare in this country.' And they needed a bit over for a guest like Hicks. You should have seen him lowerin' scones. The other daughter is back. She is going to train for a school-teacher. She's rather pretty—I expect Hicks would be awfully pleased if you would ask her to tea."

"Have you had your own supper?" I asked, as he busied himself at the stove about mine.

"Oh yes! I got seven duck with the last two shells: I hope you have brought along a box. Hicks ate four, but I saved you a nice one. He insisted on stuffin' them with potato and some chips of green that have come up at last in the onion bed. The calves are runnin' with the cows altogether now. He is too lazy even to tether them up. Is the duck good?"

"Excellent! Lal, what shall we do if we *never* get the horses again?" I asked. "There is still two hundred dollars to pay on them."

"Oh, they are certain to turn up. Don't worry. In the winter they might get off, but at this time of the year people get particular about stray heasts lest they make for the crops. They will probably be impounded, and you will have to pay the fine. But they are certain to turn up."

"Only we can't do any more breaking?"

"No, I'm afraid not; but I was thinkin' we could drive them down to Winnipeg. It is only three hundred and fifty miles—we could do it in ten days. And I could sell them for you in a dozen places at five hundred dollars. You see how utterly hopeless it is to think that we could ever get on over here. There is too much to contend with. If you don't get one thing, you get another."

"Yes. Only other people seem to get the one thing, and we get the other. It's all very well, but every settler in this settlement but you and the 'British Workman' has bettered his condition."

"My dear girl, they had nothing to better. You are unreasonable—all women are. White and Brown are the only ones of the lot who came out with capital. Brown spoofed it, and White made the most of every cent; but Mrs. White hates the life quite as much as I do, and would go back to the old country to-morrow if she could. It is all very well for White. He goes off and cooks for a railway gang at a hundred dollars a month or so, and he can afford to buy horses and implements and stock. It will take the others a *devil* of

a time to get their working-plant together. To hear these delegate chaps gas in Ireland you would have thought one had nothing to do but turn over their 'virgin soil' with one's fingers, and pick up sovereigns for your trouble. No—you can't talk to me—Canada is a fraud! I dare say I might have a different opinion of it if I had been 'reared on the land,' as they say out here, or even if I had a dozen hungry kids to feed. But from the point of view of Hicks and me, Canada is a frost!"

"Don't be too hard on the delegates," I said. "I have heard them in England, and their text is always 'the land *and* the man.'"

"All I know is that I have earned five hundred pounds a year in England at brewin', and can do it again; so why should I stay out here and starve?"

"The delegates would be the first to advise men who can earn five hundred pounds a year in England or any other country to stay where they were," I said.

"It's no use cryin' over spilt milk," he objected. "The question is whether it is best that I throw up the whole shoot and go home, or now that I have put in two years of toil and misery, stick to it for a third and get my patent. You see, I shouldn't get much for my improvements."

"Improvements?" I inquired.

"H'm! When a homestead is cancelled voluntarily or involuntarily, the Government makes an estimate of the value of the improvements, and the next chap who gets the homestead has to pay. One usually gets something for the house—not much."

"How much would you get?" I asked—"the value of your fare?"

"Heavens, no! I should think myself uncommonly lucky if I got thirty dollars."

"Then how could you get home?" I said pointedly. "You would have no money for your fare."

"I suppose I should have to try and earn it. I might get home in a cattle-boat in charge of stock. Hartley did it. He says it is the roughest way he knows of strikin' bottom, and he has very seldom struck anything else. Still, I don't quite see losin' my land after all the labour I have put into it this summer."

"Quite so, old chap," agreed the "British Workman" from the doorway.

"Well, Hicks, any news?"

"Not a breath. I guess it's a bad job."

"We had better advertise. It's mail-day to-morrow. One of us must go to Headlands and send an advertisement along to the post office and the local papers. Sixteen more miles in this heat—it's awful! And I feel miserable when I have nothing to do. Hard labour is misery on the prairie, and so it is when it isn't."

"Sure thing, old chap," agreed the "British Workman."

CHAPTER XIX

HILARIA'S ADVENTURES—A NIGHT OUT

"WHY, I believe you have the blues at last! What's Hilaria got to say?" asked Lal.

"Aren't you going to read your own letters?" I said.

"No, I haven't the blues, but I'm afraid I shall have to make the trail again to-morrow."

"You—why? I don't think the horses are south."

"I want to wire some money to Hilaria."

"She said in her last letter that she was going on to the Graylings'. Why does she want money? Wired, too! Surely they would let her have some, if it was anything desperate. New clothes, I expect—Hilaria's disgustingly vain."

"All women worthy of the name care how they look," I said. "It appears that she didn't go on to St. Paul. She did her best to get nursing-work in Winnipeg—only there was none to be had there. She writes that if there had been, she hardly thinks she would have got a post worth having without a certificate. In a colony, too! One would have thought they would have been only too thankful to find any one who had put in nine months' training at the 'London.'"

"Well, what did she do, then? Is she stayin' at Mariaggi's?"

"Certainly not! She went off into the country as a farm help. She couldn't possibly do the work expected of her. Beside——"

"What?"

"There were creatures in her bedroom."

"Oh! Bugs, I suppose?"

"Hush!"

"Well, of course there were bugs—they are everywhere in this country."

"Lal!"

"'Pon my soul, it's true. I was eaten alive in my first billet. But you get used to them in time. There are worse things at sea than bugs. Hicks had to sleep seven in a bed in his first show, and he said he took *darned* good care to get in the middle! Good old Hicks! I wouldn't have endured the prairie a week without him. What's Hilaria gettin'?"

"Twenty dollars a month, but she is to have twenty-five through harvest and threshing."

"That's very good pay. They'll be awfully sick if she clears out before harvest."

"She has already decided to leave. She says the farmer's wife was kindness itself, and did all the cooking, but left her the house-work and the laundry. The second day she was there she had to wash seven blankets! And then not being able to sleep at night! She is awfully keen to get back. At present she is staying at the Women's Home of Welcome. Most clean and comfortable, with baths and things; but Winnipeg is hot and dusty. She says that the shack and the prairie will be *heavenly* after her adventures."

"Now don't pile it on!"

"You can read it for yourself, if you don't believe me."

"How often I think of the prairie and the dear old shack! Does the 'British Workman' still meditate like Hamlet beside the stove? I hope he appreciates your cooking.' By Jove! she has soon changed her note. If I had turned tail at the first bug, where should I have been to-day?"

"Where indeed?"

He went off chuckling.

"You will be starting early, won't you? I'll take the buggy down to the slough, and see if I can get off some of the dirt."

I was truly anxious about Hilaria. She was evidently unhappy, and I had always considered that she wasn't one to turn back unless she found herself in a *cul-de-sac*. Also I felt that she might be in difficulties about money. I had given her an emergency cheque for thirty dollars, but it was quite possible that in the far neighbourhood of some out-of-the-way wheat-town she would have considerable difficulty in cashing it. And the thought of Hilaria looking for rescue from toilsome days and sleepless, feverish nights was not to be endured.

At Fort Qu'Appelle I wired sufficient money to allow for sundry expenses and the journey home. I also paid the reply that she might let me know that it was safely received.

"I don't think that we can expect to get back the answer to-night," said the operator, "but no doubt it will be in to-morrow morning."

But the morning brought no acknowledgment, and

by the mail came a letter telling me that she was leaving Winnipeg that night, so I concluded that my wire had failed to find her. I paid the hotel bill, and cashed my last available dollar to send a message to Winnipeg post office, where I felt sure she would call to give instructions about her mail, asking her to send me word to Lipton that all was well. Then, with fifty cents to my name, I set out on my thirty-five-mile journey home.

At Lipton there was no wire. I showed the outside edge of my anxiety to the depot-master.

"I guess she's all right! My, that's a terrible fire they had there last night—makes any one anxious—sure thing! You haven't seen the account? Maybe you would care to read it? . . . Why, certainly."

Had I known more of Winnipeg I should have known that the fire was in the heart of the city, and the last neighbourhood in which Hilaria would be likely to find herself; but I had reached the spot where one's nerves lie at the mercy of the imagination. All the horrible deaths from fire I had ever heard or dreamed of blazed in my memory. I waited in hope until four o'clock, and then drove back to the Fort in despair, hoping to find reassurance in the telegraphed acknowledgment of the money.

In my ignorance of many customs of the country, which are not easily learned in the isolated life we had been living in a new settlement on the prairie, I had not grown used to the fact that in Canada you seek your letters and telegrams: they do not come out to look for you, as in England. I naturally expected that

had mine arrived it would have been sent to the hotel.

The last glimmer of the setting sun was tinting the Lake as I crossed the bridge. All the inhabitants of Fort Qu'Appelle seemed to be sitting on the sidewalk in front of the hotel. I inquired if a telegram had been delivered for me, which simple question seemed to have the effect of provoking considerable mirth.

"Well, I guess it would hardly be sent to the hotel," said one.

"Where then?" I inquired.

"Well, the operating office; but that's closed, I guess."

"And the bank is also closed, I suppose?"

"This three hours."

I was evidently exciting a good deal of curiosity, and felt as though St. Peter had refused to unlock the gate at my bidding in full face of my friends. Before I realised quite what I was doing, I had run away, or rather turned my back and crawled over the bridge, at the most defiantly sulky pace of Charles Edward. If the English are difficult to understand, the Canadians are easily misunderstood. In a like difficulty to-day I should not hesitate to go to a local banker, hotel proprietor, or magistrate, and claim their assistance. Canadians are always kind, and it is absolutely against the Canadian spirit to refuse hospitality at any time, especially in time of need; but I think it is in the English spirit to find it most difficult to ask for anything which may not be claimed as a right; and the more urgent the need the harder we find it to ask the favour. Of all those people sitting on the sidewalk I doubt if there was one who

would not have instantly offered me generous hospitality had they known of my predicament, and liked the English all the better for the fact of one of us being so very much off the pedestal on which we are supposed to pose; but the fact remains that the channel of mutual understanding was closed, and Charles Edward and I went back over the bridge hungry, weary, and with a very swollen sense of wrong, leaving the little group doubtless discussing the question whether I was eccentric in the average degree of my nation, or "real downright silly."

I have no respect for a last coin, and as we climbed the hill I pacified my hunger with the assurance that I would breakfast at the Lipton hotel in the morning. True, the charge was thirty-five cents, whilst at the Fort it was only twenty-five; but time was an hour in front at Lipton, which is also a less respectable, and consequently less curious, town than Fort Qu'Appelle. Many strange birds from many countries roost there from time to time. None would take the trouble to put two and two together, and arrive at the fact that I must have spent the night under the stars; and if they did, the hum of affairs would silence the small and unimportant voice of my business. Fort Qu'Appelle and Lipton mark just the difference that lies between a wheat-town and a settlement minus a railway.

We turned off the trail about half-way. It was impossible to get into the close shelter of the bluff because of the mosquitoes. I took Charles Edward out of the traces and tied him to the back wheel, where he fed with joy, first munching his oats and then the grass at his feet. "The days are hot, the nights are cold." How often had

I heard my brother and the "British Workman" quote the stock phrase of the stock delegate with a gibe. The moon and I shared the joke, as she rose in fullest glory to keep watch over us; and the moon in Canada never plays the part of the sleeping disciples as she does in England, but watches without the flicker of an eyelid until the day-break, and the glorious sun banishes its lovely satellite.

Luckily I had already learned to drive in a sun-coat, our first experience of the power of the sun having blistered itself through the average thickness of white silk shirts, which we wore in preference to those of any other fabric, finding it more easily washable. I wore the shortest of tweed skirts, and for my sins shoes instead of boots; so that there was only one place for the very light carriage rug,—the vulnerable precincts of my ankles. Judging from my earlier night-drive across the prairie, one might have dreamed that a night spent in the open under the Canadian stars could be nothing less than a poem—but the mosquito is stronger than death, since it can rob one of all joy in consciousness of beauty. I have no remembrance of that night but the fierce and unending battle with those myriads of piercing demons. It must have been between the hours of one and two that for the space of a few moments I was tempted to draw up the rug over my shoulders, and in the added comfort of its warmth was lured into a doze, from which I was roused by a concentrated fierceness of attack upon the exposed section of my lower limbs. Gloves of sound English reindeer protected my hands from their merciless assault; which was fortunate, since suicide, murder, blasphemy,

anything but treachery to a friend, may be excused of a person with mosquito-bitten fingers. The shadows of dawn brought hint of the coming on of day. From here and there came the far-off crow of cockerels. Not a wolf had bayed through the night, which was a mercy, as I had not then learned that the prairie-wolf does not attack human beings; and even now the baying of a pack strikes weirdly through one to hit the note of melancholy. Sleep was out of the question in the coming of day, although the mosquitoes could hardly do more mischief—there could have been no blank space for a solitary bite. I got out and fastened Charles Edward once more between the shafts, and we drove slowly up and down the trail until the sun came up to right all wrongs, and coax one back to the effort of the new day.

In my own physical woes I had forgotten the anxiety for Hilaria. Hilaria's fate was in the lap of the gods: mine was in my weary, mosquito-bitten body, which yearned for sleep, or failing sleep, soap and water, and a cup of tea. Common sense reasserted itself with breakfast. I remembered that my father had been in direct communication with the Massey-Harris agent over the oxen deal. My bank draft had been cashed without a question, and in all probability there would be no difficulty in obtaining an overdraft. I crossed over to the station to see if by any chance a wire had arrived.

"You had an early drive from the Fort this morning," observed the depot-master.

"Very!" I answered. "No message for me? Then

I shall make one more journey back to the Fort, and if I don't get news of my sister I shall go home, and wait until it comes."

"I guess you're right. It never pays to expect anything or any one on time in the North-West. Best to wait quiet, and take what turns up. Care to look at the paper?"

I scanned the list of the names of the injured in the fire, but found no hint of our own. As I handed it back, a woman with an air of trouble, which seemed foreign to her jolly, good-tempered-looking face, came quickly towards the depot-master.

"What! Ain't your friends come along yet?" he inquired.

"No. I guess I shall have to stay on at the hotel another night. Since they wasn't expecting me yesterday, they'll not be looking out for me till to-morrow, I guess. Wal, Lipton's a nice promising city, anyhow!" She turned towards me with a smile, which invited another, and a confirmation of her eulogy; but my mendacity was not equal to the last demand.

"I'm here on a visit to my sister," she said. "She's settled ten miles west with her husband and children—nice children, seven of 'em. It's a lovely country: they make good money. Guess they're right out of their reckoning of my day of arrival. I come up from Dakota. Guess I'll have to stop round Lipton an extra day. I observed you at breakfast this morning—I could tell you were from the old country, so I didn't make any advances. Though I guess the English is more affable when you know them. Been out long? You

seem a bit lonesome like—guess you're waitin' for your husband?"

For the first time in my life I felt that he ought to be there. It was probably but the deviation of a strong current of opinion at that moment passing over the mind of my new friend from Dakota. I laid bare my state of single blessedness with profound humility.

"Ah! Guess the farmers round can afford to pay pretty good for female help in these parts?"

Feeling a further exposure of ignorance to be ill-fitting, I rose to the true Canadian spirit for the occasion.

"I believe the highest degree of wages in the Dominion is the rule in this district," I said solemnly.

"For goodness' sake! Wal, thar! And homestead lands for the most part. Now what might you be getting?"

I confessed that at that moment I was earning nothing.

"Sakes alive! A likely-looking body, too. Not sufficiently domesticated, I guess. I've heard tell the English come out to get a livin' in the West, and all they can mostly do is dab the organ and speak foreign tongues—which don't set bread for themselves nor their employers. But you ain't one of that sort, I guess," she added consolingly. "Drove up from the valley before six o'clock this morning, they was saying at breakfast. Say now! I've got three nephews down Dakota—all batchin'! My, the lovely farm! and no female."

"How distressing!"

“‘Boys,’ I tell ‘em, ‘there’s no economy in sparing money over female help.’ ‘Say, aunt,’ sez they, ‘bring us along a likely woman, and she can do what she likes, and we’ll pay her good money.’ And that they will. And treat you like a queen. You bet they will. They’re real nice fellows.”

There was no mistaking the accent on the “you” for general: it was special and mine. I thanked her, saying that the prospect was as pleasing as her kind intention, but unfortunately out of the question.

“You would learn in no time. I guess you can bake?”

I wasn’t going into details about my accomplishments, negative or affirmative.

“It isn’t exactly that,” I answered.

“Guess I understand. It’s the fare. My dear, they’ll send you that, if I give the word.”

“I fear they would have to look hard for its value,” I replied. “I could hardly expect them to advance me my fare back.”

“Don’t you worry yourself about that: it would never be needed! I can’t say which of them it would be, but I guess you would get the pick. And they’re real nice fellows, every one of them.”

“I really can’t desert my present post,” I explained. “You see, I am looking after my brother and his friend.”

“So that’s it, is it! And what may your brother’s friend be making?”

A picture of the “British Workman” in blue overalls, sitting on a portmanteau in the middle of the prairie with the eternal cigarette between his lips, and his hands

in his pockets, gravely considering how he could raise a further fifty pounds from the respectable British guardian who lived in solemn British chambers in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn, flashed to my brain.

"In my absence a good deal of work, I shouldn't wonder," I answered. "Men are so untidy, aren't they?"

"Ah, women's a lot to put up with, but we couldn't do without 'em on a farm."

"Couldn't we!" I said. "But I must be getting along, or the sun will be miles ahead of me."

"Well, good-day to you, and I'm downright pleased to have made your acquaintance. I've always said that I didn't see why the English should be more disagreeable than other folk. And they ain't!"

I chuckled over my compliments many times as Charles Edward and I made our way once more over the lonesome but beautiful prairie which stretches between Lipton and Fort Qu'Appelle. In the dust of circumstance, and the absence of that wire, my anxiety for Hilaria had crystallised to a less tender sentiment. Charles Edward made his way down the hill with great deliberation. Just as we were rounding the first corner there came the cheerful pipe of laughter. In a buggy perched between two Canadian youths, with discretion in her attitude, and the intention to get every scrap of amusement out of that or any other situation in her eyes, was Hilaria.

"You!" she cried. "Thanks be. I thought I might have to walk home from Lipton, and you know how I hate the thought of wolves." She explained me to her

two companions, who made no effort to conceal their disappointment in being deprived of their guest. "I am so grateful to you both for offering me the lift, and I do hope you weren't too uncomfortable!" It is never what Hilaria says, but always how she says it. I have yet to meet the masculine entity for whom she cannot affect a tender interest.

"We are both most grateful," I struck in, in my most matter-of-fact tone. "Only, if I am to catch the mail, Hilaria, we must hurry."

"Oh, but I'm thankful you have turned up," she said. "I haven't a cent left, and had only just enough to get through with. You never know anything about a country until you haven't any money."

"I wired you money to that outlandish place the moment I received your letter," I said, not without resentment.

"Yes, but I left the very day I wrote to you. I didn't see being devoured alive by bugs."

"They are the bottom," I agreed, remembering a morning when I had watched the sunrise from the gardens of the Luxembourg after a night of horror. "Were they very awful?"

"Oh, I didn't get as far as that. The girl I was expected to share a room with said she had never seen anything of the kind, but another girl who stayed there the year before had told her she had suspicions. However, suspicions are quite enough to keep off sleep, and I wasn't taking any chances. And the work—endless! I scrubbed and washed up, and made the beds, dusted the rooms, and set the table. But when it came to washing blankets—blankets in July!—I made up my

mind. When she had finished counting eight, I said I felt ill, and went upstairs to pack my things. I had only just money enough to get through with, and left my luncheon bill unpaid at the hotel. But they were quite nice about it. Of course I said we would send it along."

"We have to get it first," I reminded her. "But I expect we can at any rate reclaim the sum I wired you."

The local banker, who is quoted in Wall Street, and lives the simple life at the foot of the hills at Fort Qu'Appelle, smiled behind the curtain of his eyelids.

"So she got back?" he remarked.

All went well. We walked off with the necessary funds, and the promise of more if it was required. I didn't dream of asking the current rate of interest—just then it chanced to be ten per cent.

I was too late for the midday-meal, but bought crackers and oranges at the Hudson Bay Store, whilst Hilaria bragged of the menu which she had discussed just before we met.

"Quite such a nice salad I have never eaten," she said tenderly, "and the tablemaid told me it was cabbage. It must have been a very special kind of cabbage, don't you think? But I was sold in my choice of a sweet. '*Cream of tapioca*' sounds most alluring, doesn't it? And it was nothing but a plain tapioca pudding. Still, in spite of a high-falutin' name here and there, one can always get a good meal in Canada for a shilling. In Winnipeg meals are ever so cheap, but everything else is distressingly dear."

We wandered up the road that leads to the Springbrook trail. Hilaria's gossip over people and places and ways

and means was most refreshing. In Winnipeg she had stayed at the Women's Home of Welcome. "Two such nice Englishwomen shared the bedroom with me," she said. "They were going on to Vancouver. One travels so cheaply in these days. Sixty pounds, I think they said, was the cost of their return tickets. Of course that didn't include sleepers or Pullman. They stay at the Y.W.C.A. and those kind of places, which are most clean and comfortable, and cost half nothing. I wish I had taken a return ticket. I shall never earn one in Canada. Make one's fortune indeed! I could make a living far more easily in England. It isn't that Canadians require you to do so much, although they are by no means moderate in their idea of value for money, but they seem to think it such an ordinary occurrence that everything should be extraordinarily well done."

"Wouldn't they have given you any sort of salary at the Hospital, and allowed you to complete your training? You know even your friend the Matron allowed you were a fine nurse."

"But not on paper! It is your certificates and diplomas from morning until night in Winnipeg, if one has the ill-luck to be a woman; although men pull through on nothing at all. Canadians go to the States to train, because very few of them can afford to go to England, I suppose, since the Matron begged me to go back and finish my training at the 'London,' which she enthused about a good deal. She said if I came back with a 'London' certificate, age wouldn't keep me out of the highest position. Efficiency was everything. And they really are efficient over here. You should see the

Canadian women in their white gowns—every bit as well turned out as the French contingent in the Bois. And they wash and starch and iron them themselves! I saw them. Every woman seems to wear white—babies, girls, women and grandmothers—and I didn't see a solitary turn-out that was not absolutely fresh and dainty."

"Then that accounts for their having so little imagination," I said, "because if they really do it all themselves, they can't have time for anything else."

"Well, they are wonders," said Hilaria with a sigh. "But believe me, Canada is neither my El Dorado nor yours. There is only one road that is really open—domestic service. Judging from my own experience, I should say that there the battle was to the strong. But they are kindness itself, and one shares all that comes along in the way of diversion. Oh, I forgot! One woman offered me thirty dollars a month to go as lady-nurse to her small girl and boy. She said she liked my *accent*! Did you ever hear of such impertinence? They were wealthy people—positively kept two women helps and a gardener-groom. But I was too tired for any fresh adventures when the offer came along."

"I can understand any one not being able to get anything to do, but I can't understand your failing in anything you arrived at. I should have thought your cooking alone would have dragged you through," I said.

"You see, the menu isn't confined to ducks, apricot dumplings, and rock cakes, even on a Canadian farm. Besides, I wasn't allowed to touch the cooking. Not that I wished it! It chanced that while I was there they gave what they call a box-social. Every one

arrives with a present in a box. All the presents are of an average value. Then they draw. Oh, they think it is wild excitement! When the great event of the distribution of gifts had been got over, they gazed at my frock, and I gazed at their food. They all brought cakes—and such cakes! Not one of them but might have hailed from Buszard as far as appearance goes, and they tasted infinitely better than any cakes I have eaten from anywhere—the variety, the lightness, the flavour, and the icing—exquisitely done, *and* delicious!”

“Did they keep it up long?” I inquired.

“My dear, half of them remained to breakfast! You see, we danced. All the hired men in the neighbourhood came—of course there aren't any others, but there were many Englishmen—gentlemen—among them. These, I need hardly tell you, didn't dance. But the Canadians made up for it—how those men danced! Canadian men dance even better than Canadian women cook and do laundry-work. And I must say I liked them. Women are 'best goods' to them, you know—they value them, and well they may! Not that I would marry a Canadian for anything you could mention. In the nature of things they would expect too much.”

“But, Hilaria,” I protested, “surely we come in somewhere. I am quite sure that both you and your frock were much nicer than anything else at the box-social.”

“We did very well,” she admitted. “None of them were guys, but a Paris frock holds its own the world over. Still, the Canadian woman has annexed the cut that we all acknowledged to be such a fine point with the Americans; and from morning till night, in spite of the

endlessness of the daily round, they contrive to be dainty. And after all, that is everything! I think we score over them in conversation, and probably as sportswomen. I doubt if they could come near us there—I am sure they wouldn't want to. . . . Can they hold their own with men? Oh, but that is such a very individual question. Men are so easily led by anybody the world over! Still, the American contingent hold on to their own, and continue to annex a number of ours, don't they?"

We turned in at sundown—both of us deadly tired.

"What a boon is bed!" I exclaimed from my heart.

"Oh, I had quite forgotten," replied Hilaria. "It will be those tiresome stretchers again to-morrow."

"For *one* of us. Just after you left the 'British Workman' and Lal sat on the weakling, and it snapped in the middle."

"I shan't dream of coming back to rob you of it. I shall sleep on the floor," she said heroically.

"Better draw lots," I suggested. "It is always more satisfactory. Oh, Hilaria, surely they are not going to have that miserable concert, knowing how frightfully tired we must be."

"You may be quite sure that will not be allowed to make any difference, and I really don't see any special reason why it should. I suppose it is a pleasure to them all, and we only come along now and again. That's the barber singing now—I really don't mind the music, if only they would spare their energy over the applause. Hush! that's the pretty girl with the green eyes and golden hair in a bun. 'The beautiful land of Nod.' I mean to be asleep before the end." And she was.

CHAPTER XX

HILARIA'S RETURN—CHARMING STRANGERS CAMP BENEATH AN IMMIGRANT TENT

“HICKS is very sorry he has lost our only remainin’ comb, Hilaria,” said Lal. “Hamlet was anxious to salute Ophelia with ‘See the conquerin’ hero comes.’ You will observe I have not been idle,” he added, as we made our last desperate jolts over quite three acres of fresh ploughing.

Lal was looking in the brown-pink of condition in a torn shirt, a pair of blue overalls, one brown top-boot and a dancing-slipper.

“When did the horses come back?” I inquired.

“Hicks found them at Madamaz’ on the day you left, and has bucked over it ever since—although Madamaz sent over to tell us they were there. He is a good sort, and must have done them well. They have worked like blazes without turnin’ a hair. You should see the neighbours open their mouths at my ploughin’! I can do more in a day than they can slog through in a week—when it suits me.”

“What a den! It is time I got back!” exclaimed Hilaria from the doorway of the shack.

The last hint of the bond which united the door to

the building had given way; it rested horizontally against the wall. A dozen gophirs flew in various directions from the oat-sack; a brave comrade stood up boldly and said its prayers at the foot of the flour-bag.

"Lal, do come and make the coffee," entreated Hilaria. "We can't move in this pigsty; and you might take the frying-pan off the eider-down, and put it on the stove. I suppose there is nothing to eat?"

"I am sorry there isn't," said Lal. "I used my last shell yesterday: I hope you haven't forgotten to bring some more. Hicks would insist on making bannocks this afternoon. I hope you will make him eat them, as it was only an excuse to sit near the stove. Here he comes, with a loaf from Mrs. White's."

We dispatched our meal, retailed our news, and bade them an early good-night. Hilaria looked at the stretcher.

"It is one thing to agree to sleep on the floor from the place of a distant and orthodox bed, and quite another after one has watched an army of gophirs bestir themselves from among the fleshpots and skedaddle. We must both of us manage with the stretcher," she said with decision.

"That is really out of the question," I protested. "I'll try the floor."

"Well, you may. I am not getting out of it because of the discomfort, but I can't stand gophirs. You may have the mattress, and you can put on a motor-veil. I dare say I appear selfish, but that can't be helped. Better lose one's character than be devoured by vermin; besides, I believe you like them."

“They will not attempt to devour you or me as long as oats and flour are in our apartment; and I quite understand that you are not selfish, but only a coward,” I said without bitterness, since the floor with a mattress was decidedly more comfortable than that rain-shrunk stretcher without one.

“Lal’s breaking is really not at all bad,” said Hilaria, as we toiled across it with eggs and butter from the Hungarian’s. “But oh! if you had only bargained with the half-breed to put it ready for crop at five dollars an acre! To-day we should have been free, with money in our pocket, instead of tied to the legs of those horses, and penniless.”

“It would have been such a disappointment to father if we had turned tail,” I pleaded. “You can’t get over the fact that in the entire settlement we are the only real failures. Our two men, who have had more advantages than all the rest of the neighbours put together, are the only ones who have failed. And it isn’t even because they are helpless: it is because they won’t lend themselves to small beginnings.”

“The difference is easily explained,” said Hilaria. “The greater number of the neighbours are running away resentfully from other people’s fleshpots in Britain, and Lal and Mr. Hicks are looking back regretfully on their own. As for advantages, if by that you mean education, I should like to know what the Greek alphabet and Latin verse has to do with ploughing a straight furrow or building a shack.”

“Either marks the track of heroes,” I reminded her,

“and I think the privilege of a classical education should cause one to do the meanest or the greatest work with a great heart.”

“That is all very well, but then it doesn't. Although if they followed the language for love of the gods, there is a chance that the mind might drag the body through the major or minor tasks of a settler's life on the prairie in a philosophic state of indifference towards the fleshpots of home. But forty-nine boys out of fifty follow the gods for fear of the birch, and select life out West as being the mode of existence at the remotest distance from everything and anything that has ever been drilled into them at school. Homesteading is a hope for the hopeless, and a fine opportunity for those who have none better. You transplant an average man from the circumstances which the fact of a decent income will create for him in England he will be neither prosperous nor content in toiling on the prairie. If either Lal or the 'British Workman' had bought land with the money which they have wasted on the free grant, they could have each been making money in the city at their own work; or even if they had gone back to England, the land would have been their own in any case, rising in value every day; and it would have cost them practically nothing—the tax is very light. As it is, time has gone, money has gone, life is going, and if you have a grain of common sense left, we shall go.”

“And yet I can't help thinking that if Lal had gone into an improved farm he would have succeeded,” I said. “I don't see how he could fail. Those lovely wheatfields, Hilaria! And living costs so little! I do so wish you had seen that farm on the other side of the valley.”

"Well, I devoutly wish you had not seen it," snapped Hilaria; "and if you take my advice, you will put Canadian wheat out of your mind. I tell you it is too good to be true—there must be a weak spot somewhere. It is very delightful to drive through miles of waving grain, I grant you, especially if it is your own; but remember nearly every acre of land on which it is grown has been given to the owner, and gifts are often expensive possessions."

"Not the gifts of the gods," I urged.

"The land is the gift of the Government," she retorted. "Who can be coming here? What jolly ponies! Do see what they want. They look nice people, and I have flour all over my frock."

"There is nothing to be ashamed of in that," I said. "But the woman looks English, and I am not going to be seen in a dressing-jacket much the worse for its sojourn on the prairie."

Hilaria came back, bubbling over with pleased interest.

"Do go out! They want to camp here. She's charming! Where is Lal? They are going to pitch their own tent, and have all their own grub; they only want boiling water, and the privilege of pegging their tent on our territory."

She walked into my mind and lives in my memory as Eve. Her hair had more than a tinge of Venetian red, which flickered again to the depths of her brown eyes. At the end of a long day's drive she was fresh, dainty, delightful, and attractive in the grace of perfect freedom. In the morning she left us the remains of a pot of strawberry jam of her own making, and I think it must have been from that that I caught the idea that she was

practical and efficient, that, and her amused surprise that we householders should require the loan of her candle by which to read our letters.

They were using an immigrant's tent. We all sat within its shelter after supper, and chatted by the light of a candle attached to one blade of the man's penknife, whilst the other blade was fixed into the pole of the tent. The tent seemed vast: it was really designed to contain eighteen sleeping warriors, and the cost, they told us, was but ten dollars. . We admired that and everything about them, from his deft way of manipulating the tent to her personal neatness, and the dainty way in which she wiped the cups and saucers of white ironstone china with the tea-cloth which she had not forgotten to pack in their luncheon-basket. The "British Workman," returning from Headlands with a heavy mail, fell at her feet, and remained there. We had finished breakfast before they started; later we chatted with them until they drove off, gaily refusing the passage of the breaking for the more level if longer round, and we all felt the brighter for their coming, and talked of them for days.

On the very day that they left I walked as the crow flies towards the landmark of the bungalow of the London policeman. The line of the crow invariably proves the longest way round in Canada, as in England, but here and there it is irresistible. It was a brilliant day—azure and gold, with a tiny breath of warm wind, which would either grow violent or die out altogether by midday. During the weeks of sunshine nearly every slough in the neighbourhood had dried up; but the long stretch of blue water at the foot of the policeman's domain seemed the

deeper and the bluer in contrast. Tall troops of sunflowers blazed in the outskirts of the encircling bluffs. From the foot of the eminence of its approach the bungalow wore the sleepy individual air of an English country-house. I wondered what his London comrades would think of the owner's fate in Canada. Would they envy him this conspicuous habitation, and its lovely environment? or go gaily on patrol with a sounder appreciation of the compensations of the lot which he had left?

"Your place is a picture," I said; "although I miss the blue flax blossom. Flax is well worth cultivation, if only for the joy of its flower."

"It's worth more than that to a new settler. You see, it will grow on newly broken land, and sells for a dollar a bushel. They get fifteen bushels to the acre at the Government farms. Of course I can't expect any such return as that, but I reckon to have a few bushels for sale or trading; and linseed is useful enough with stock round."

His wife was weeding the carrots.

"I was just going to send Gracie over with a dish of new potatoes," she said, with the becoming modesty that always hints of cause for pride in the background.

I sat down on a packing-case and glanced round the garden, which was racing towards a fulfilment of its promise, and the end of the story of what a brave, patient, loving English mother can accomplish under the stress of circumstance.

Scarlet runners had grown out of knowledge. Dwarf peas had passed from bloom to pod. Vegetable-marrows



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SUPPER ON THE PRAIRIE

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eyed me with a full sense of their future importance in the menu, whilst cabbages and cauliflowers, ignoring destiny, appeared prepared to stand at attention as long as the sun should grant the grace.

"You won't starve this year," I prophesied. "Vegetables alone will keep you going, stored in that fine frost-proof cellar."

"Yes," she said thankfully. "They tell me that once the frost sets in, the cabbages will keep all through the winter, and eat as good as the first cut. Carrots, onions, beet, and most of the roots are better packed in sand. I think we can sell enough potatoes to pay for our flour. Oh, I do hope we have turned the corner! It has been such a hard pull sometimes. But I have nearly always had eggs for the children, and now plenty of vegetables. And even though the neighbours do look down on my husband for building a fine house before he got his implements and stock together—I know the comfort of it."

"I am sure you do," I agreed. "The neighbours should all come and live in my brother's shack for a week, and they would know too. I have come to ask if you will hire me your tent."

"Why, certainly!" said she.

"The children won't like losing their tent. You see, they use it for a playground," said the man, with a hint of unforgotten pomp—doubtless employed to conceal the pleasure he felt at being in the position to bestow a favour.

"You have a six-roomed, comfortable house, and I have a shed that becomes more impossible day by day," I

reminded him. "Your wife, I feel sure, will be glad of a little extra money, and I am perfectly willing to buy the tent, or to pay you a reasonable rent for it; so I certainly think you ought to let me have it."

"Well, well! I guess you must have it if you want it."

"I'll pay you seventy-five cents a week for its hire, and if you will get it down and rolled up at once, I will ask my brother to fetch it this afternoon," I said, mindful of the danger of second thoughts.

"Anything to oblige!" he swaggered. "We must all learn to give and take on the prairie."

"The money will be so very welcome," whispered the little woman as I bade her good-bye; "and so it is for the vegetables, although I do wish I could afford to give them to you. It isn't altogether the money that I'm thankful for, useful as it is, but it is to think that at last we have got something to bring in a little, after all the goings out. Something that we grew ourselves on the place that we have put the savings of our life into."

"Something that *you* grew yourself, you mean," I said. "In England I used to think that men worked whilst women gossiped. On a prairie settlement the women work, and it isn't the women who gossip. I owe one debt to my life on the prairie, and that is a fair appreciation of my own sex."


"Ah, but men's men, and women's women. We must put up with our lot, and make the best of things."

It was the old story—the old, patient, intolerably tolerant excuse of the beast of burden who has grown used to the load.

By four o'clock there was the landmark of a tent in the place where our wayfaring friends had pitched its prophet. I walked into it just as the "British Workman's" face had brightened to its proudest smile of self-congratulation.

"There's your tent for you, fully rigged," he said, "and I wish you had had it before."

Hilaria and I busied ourselves in making the interior beautiful. Everything looked well on the green carpet, and I found a collection of various bits of beauty from Liberty's and other lands were safe in my steamer-trunk, although the linen sheets had been appropriated during its long holiday, together with a tiny treasured volume of Paracelsus. Any thief of any nationality should be pardoned for succumbing to the temptation of sheets of Irish linen, but the small theft of the book is neither to be forgiven nor forgotten. By supper-time we had defied every bare part from saddle-box to tea-basket to even whisper its own story. The stretcher, the rocker, the packing-case writing-table, and the entire collection of our personal belongings found gracious space within our canvas walls. The stove, pots and pans, and all unsightly things, remained at home with the gophirs in the shack. Fresh roses, tall sunflowers, branches of mauve daisy fulfilled "the beautiful necessity" of our welcome habitation, and even Hilaria allowed that had we possessed ourselves of an immigrant's tent at Winnipeg, life on the prairie might have been quite another story.



CHAPTER XXI

THE SHADOW AND THE STORM—SHELTER

AT the dawn of a Sabbath-day Hilaria set down a cup of tea beside me.

“Why so early?” I inquired; “the sun isn’t up, and it’s Sunday.”

“Lal is ill,” she answered. “Can’t you hear him groaning? He has the beginning of a sore throat. I have taken him a cup of tea, and told him to put on a compress. It would be rather bad if he got an attack of tonsilitis under present conditions, wouldn’t it? He says he hasn’t slept at all, but that I don’t believe, because the ‘British Workman’ is still in the depths, and I can’t quite see Lal lying in silent, unprotesting patience through a night of pain.”

“No, I am no better, and if I get worse I shall die,” he informed me later. “You will be sorry then that you insisted on dragging us all back to this God-forsaken wilderness—to be frozen at night and baked by day.”

I walked over to Mrs. White’s in search of nostrums, and returned with a share of her castor-oil, and Eliman’s Embrocation. Hilaria administered the one and applied the other with her customary firmness. She shook her head gravely, as she crawled out of the horrid little rat-

catcher's tent which my brother shared with the "British Workman" without an inch to spare, and for which they had paid over three dollars more than the cost of the orthodox immigrant's tent.

"At any rate, we have taken it in time," I said hopefully; "the inflammation will yield to the compress."

"It has had too good a start," she dissented. "I am afraid it's a gathering, and the inflammation in that case won't go under until it has grown much more painful than it is now. What shall we do if he gets really ill? Twenty-three miles from a doctor, and to-day the heat is intolerable to a sick person. We don't feel it because we are sound, and the atmosphere is so dry; but to a person enduring the agony of throat-sickness it must be pretty bad. Besides, it is probable that we are all equally unprepared to meet anything like a strain on our physical resources, living on tea and bread-and-butter and that kind of thing."

"And eggs and ducks," I reminded her. "But I don't agree with you. I have never felt better; the air positively nourishes one, and at any rate we are within reach of new milk. We had better take the stretcher back to the shack, and fix him up more comfortably in there."

"The stretcher is too small for him, but we will take in the mattress and the blankets. He will be much more comfortable with room to toss about a little."

But Lal was obstinate in his refusal to leave the tent, although Hilaria fired her advice on the top note of command, and the persuasions of the "British Workman" were pitched at that degree of eloquence which nothing short of self-interest can produce.

"For mercy's sake take that mess away, and leave a poor devil alone in his last agony," he conjured Hilaria, as she patiently waited beside him with a glass of milk into which she had whipped the white of an egg.

"Don't forget that I have been a hospital nurse," said Hilaria calmly. "People are never melodramatic in a last agony. But you may be there to-morrow or the next day if you don't look out and do as I tell you. Besides, there's brandy in the milk."

"I don't believe it. We haven't any. It's no use tryin' taradiddles on me, Hilaria, if I am in the depths."

"It's true, on my honour," vowed Hilaria. "I discovered a little in the bottom of one of the bottles of my dressing-case. I shouldn't like to say how long it's been there. Since the last time we crossed the Irish Channel, I shouldn't wonder. But it's brandy, and enough to take off the milkiness of the milk."

"Well, I'll try. But I don't want that fool Hicks sleepin' in here to-night. He will sleep through the crack of doom."

"All right, old man," agreed the "British Workman," who shone in every relation of life which didn't require a physical effort.

"You had better sleep in the bed which we have made up for Lal in the shack," I suggested; "and perhaps you won't mind calling us if you hear groans. And you might take in plenty of chips, in case we have need of a fire. There is any amount of dry wood round."

"How I wish we had brought an inhaler!" said Hilaria, emerging triumphant with the empty glass. "There are two things one should never travel without—a hot-water

bottle and an inhaler. I'll get the flannel case, so that he can rest his throat upon the hot-water bottle. Only steam will arrest the inflammation, but the extreme warmth will soothe him; that and regular poulticing is all we can do until the doctor comes. If it gets worse quickly, I fear he will have to use the lance. It is a pity tonsils don't drop out like one's first teeth."

One or the other of us awoke every two hours, and went over to the patient, who slept a good deal, thanks to the hot-water pillow, which to refill the "British Workman" twice lit a fire during the night. At sunrise he slipped two cups of tea under the walls of our tent.

"I have taken the patient a cup," he said. "I'm afraid he is pretty bad, you know. Still, he managed to swallow half of it."

"The 'British Workman' is a good sort," said Hilaria, "only he can be so exasperating! Lal is so much cleverer in appearing to be energetic."

Throughout the day Lal's pain grew towards agony. The throat seemed rapidly closing. Hilaria's face wore a look of deep anxiety.

"It's terrifyingly like diphtheria," she said under her breath. "Indeed, I am not at all sure that it isn't. If it is, don't you see that we are all in horrible danger? and we must not allow any people with children to come near."

"Don't let us cross bridges till we come to them," I pleaded, with the instinctive resistance to the very idea of such a calamity. "The doctor will be here in a few hours. In the meantime by all means let us warn off any one and every one, if you think there is danger to them; only do make him swallow the rest of the castor-

oil. Mrs. White said it was a certain remedy for everything."

Lal, the worst of patients on the safe side of danger became the best at the first hint of the knowledge that he was within its grip. He swallowed the oil without a protest, and agreed to follow our advice to move into the shack. He crossed the twenty yards or so of turf that lay between the tent and the shack as the sun was dipping to the west. He pointed to it, as though to indicate a cause of alarm.

"Storm?" said the "British Workman." "Think so, old man? Oh, I guess it will pass over. In any case, the doctor will be here before it breaks. Sampson promised to send him on directly he arrived."

The hours passed, but no doctor came. The storm-clouds gathered overhead and arose like grey, fire-fringed mountains about the drawn daggers of a wrathful sun. As it dropped from our horizon the "British Workman" volunteered to go over again to find out what had happened to the doctor.

"Luck is against us," he said, as I crossed the breaking to meet him. "This is the first time he has missed his day for weeks. Sampson thinks an important case must have detained him; he says that he is certain to turn up to-morrow."

We arranged that I should sit up until three o'clock, when Hilaria would take her turn. The "British Workman" was anxious to share the watch, but we agreed that if there was no relief before dawn, he must ride down for the doctor, and that, in that case, he should certainly turn in.

At ten o'clock the storm announced its approach with low protracted growls of thunder; flashes of blue lightning played through the darkness, revealing every bluff and slough for miles around with the triumph of phantom swiftness over familiar time and space. The claps came nearer and grew longer; the deepening growl seemed to hurl itself around the shack to rip it through. The red spear of danger flashed zigzag through the heavens, and no rain fell.

"For God's sake, light the candle!"

"Dear old boy, I dare not. We have half an inch to last us until morning, and it's hardly eleven o'clock. I must save it for boiling water. Do be patient—it isn't of the smallest use being anything else."

"All right," he whispered hoarsely; "but the storm means to be terrific."

There came the relief of rain. At first it fell in heavy palpitating spots, slow and deliberate as drops of blood. Then in a patter of protection—then in sheets.

"Oh, Heavens! It's coming through. Hadn't I better have the umbrella up?"

I lit the candle. Through the stove-pipe hole and many weak places in the roof the rain was forcing steady entrance. We moved the mattress into the farther corner. But it was still necessary to keep up the umbrella.

"There isn't an inch of that roof that will stand a bad storm. How I wish we had turfed it the day the ~~flax~~ was here!" I deplored.

My brother misunderstood my complaint.

"You ain't afraid of the thunder, are you?"

I disdained the suggestion. But those crashing peals

seemed to lift one bodily into the heart of the terror of sound to be hurled down into the black cave of silence. The heavy rain was falling with the force of a deluge. Débris of rotten turf fell in every direction.

"Heavens! to die like a dog after all!" Melodrama went right under to the true note of despair.

I went to the doorway and shrieked for Hilaria and the "British Workman," but no human voice could hope to pierce the yell of the storm.

A flash of lightning mocked the darkness, but the big white tent uttered its message of shelter in the flash. We had to reach the tent and *literally* in a flash of lightning. Black darkness ruled between those demi-semi-seconds of clearest light, which were as flashes of life in the hall of death.

Again I lit the scrap of candle under the umbrella.

"Roll yourself in the biggest blanket, Lal, and come to the doorway," I said. "You must keep hold of my hand hard. I shall wait for the flash, and dart for the tent. We can't reach the entrance, but we may reach a peg, and we can guide ourselves round."

The first flash passed us.

"Missed, by Jove! Those ropes look dangerous. Better make for the entrance."

But I wasn't taking any chances. The flash played, and we sprang towards the tent. The crashing peal that followed found me flat on my face in deep mud, but with a hand clutching a rope of the tent.

"Are you there?" said Hilaria. "Could you ever dream one could exist through such a storm? Quick, creep under! I was dying to come over, but I knew I

couldn't find the way through the darkness. Where's the bit of candle?"

"I forgot it. But I should have dropped it when I fell if I hadn't. Lal must go straight into your warm bed."

Hilaria lit a match. Lal's teeth were chattering, his eyes blazing.

"Hanged if I don't think the pain has moved a bit, Hilaria, and I hate gettin' into the only bed, and leavin' you girls on the mat. But it would be very inconvenient if I pegged out, wouldn't it?"

"Don't, dear old boy!" said Hilaria, with such a very unusual vibration in her voice that I suddenly remembered that she was afraid of thunder.

"I *am* sorry, Hilaria," I said. "I had quite forgotten that you can't stand storms."

"Oh, that's nothing!" she answered. "Those little popgun storms in England are a bit disconcerting when one has nothing else to do but think about them. But we are so absolutely between the devil and the deep sea that I forgot about being afraid. He is certain to be worse after this," she whispered. "His voice is better, but his eyes! It is a mercy I can't take his temperature! I should be afraid to look."

"We will find Charles Edward at daybreak," I said, "and send Mr. Hicks down for the doctor without another moment's delay."

At dawn the "British Workman" and I discussed the situation out of earshot of the tent.

"We think it may be diphtheria. The voice was fairly strong last night: it's simply gone now. In any case, my

sister feels sure the throat should be lanced, and quickly. It is now half-past three. Charles Edward is feeding near the horses—you will easily catch him with oats in this half-light. I will get you some breakfast, and with luck you could get into Lipton by eight o'clock, and the doctor should be here by midday."

He rode away a full half-hour before the sun rose in brilliance to work its way over the thirst-slaked land. By eight o'clock it blazed over the tent; still, by lacing up the east and west walls, we contrived to create a draught. Lal had sunk into the silence and utter stillness of intense pain, although the feverishness seemed to have abated. By warming up linseed meal we were still able to poultice; but even the nourishment of milk could no longer be taken. Hilaria filled the brandy-flask with water, which had taken on the muddy tint of storm, and administered a teaspoonful every twenty minutes.

"It will keep the throat-passage open, if only in the least degree," she said.

By two o'clock we were in despair. Lal was looking absolutely ghastly, and simply writhed in the agony of the effort to swallow. Hilaria's face was tight-set.

"If it is diphtheria he won't get through—he can't!" she said. "Oh, why did we ever come!"

At four o'clock I took the team down to the slough to water. A whinny from Jim brought an echo from the south. A buggy and pair of greys dashed along the trail. I curbed the invitation to let the horses loose and fly to meet the doctor. When I got back, he was already standing over the patient with a phial in his fingers.

"Your brother is a very sick man, but it's not diph-

theria," he said. "I started to paint his throat, and the gathering discharged itself right there on one side. You'll have trouble with the other yet; but it isn't ready for the lance. He will have relief for to-night, anyhow. I have brought you along linseed meal, and your sister has had nursing experience and will treat the throat with the paint-brush. Mr. Hicks will bring on medicine to-morrow; but this is no place for a sick man. Even if the other gathering was ready for the lance, I'd not care to undertake it here. In his condition he's dangerously exposed. If he is able to speak to-morrow and is no worse, wrap him up in a blanket, and put him on a mattress in the waggon, and bring him down to the Fort. I guess the journey won't hurt, if you manage not to shake him too badly."

"Do you think that the danger is over?"

"There is always danger with a nasty throat. But it's not diphtheria. And I guess he's a pretty strong man."

I inquired of his fee.

"It's a dollar a mile. But I had to hire on horses at Lipton. I guess we will leave it at thirty dollars."

I had no dollar-bills at hand, but felt sure the local banker would honour my cheque.

"Let it be till you come down," he said. "That will be all right. And you'd better bring him along as soon as you can. The prairie is no place for a sick man, unless he's got a sound house to shelter him."

Relieved from the dire dread of diphtheria, we worked again in hope. The discharge had brought great relief to one side, besides making nourishment possible. Lal

patiently submitted to the painful process of throat-painting, and by nightfall slept.

The "British Workman" returned the next afternoon, bringing medicine and news.

"The other chap's carriage drove into Sampson's within half an hour of 'Doc' Hall's, and he only charges fifteen dollars for a special trip," he said; "but I couldn't get any one at Lipton, and when I got down to the Fort, I found that the man who visits these parts didn't live there, but at Le Bret, the Mission village, four miles east. We pushed on to it, and when I got there I found that he had been summoned to a special case at the head of the Lakes, and meant to cross from there to Sampson's. But I thought it better not to take any chances, so rode straight back, and sent on 'Doc' Hall. He says we had better take him down as soon as he's fit, as he is certain to be pretty weak after this turn. What did he charge? Thirty dollars! Bit stiff, wasn't it?"

I hardly thought so. Thirty miles out and thirty back covered a good deal of time and horse-power. But I wondered what would happen to people under similar circumstances who *couldn't* pay—for instance, the greater number of our neighbours.

"That's just it," said the "British Workman," as he affectionately rolled a cigarette. "Very few settlers could possibly afford the doctor's fee. 'Doc' Hall is decent: he winks at those who can't pay, and makes those who he thinks can pay for those who can't. Some of them won't budge until they have seen money. Soon along, wasn't he? He was sitting on the sidewalk outside the hotel when I got back from Le Bret. It was after dinner.

He must have done it under three hours. But he only drove his own team to Lipton, and hired the greys from the livery barn."

Lal passed out of danger, not out of pain. Ulceration continued to torment the throat, and at the end of three days I am afraid he had worn us all out with his irritability and impatience of the continuing pain.

One night the "British Workman" had been fired out of the tent with the command never to enter it again. Hilaria and I, who were using the rat-catcher's tent, had promptly turned out, and made the best of the situation. But in a daylight council we were all agreed that it couldn't go on, and that we must take him to the Fort without further delay.

"It is too late for the waggon, and a sick man would never stand the jolting. Better plant him in the buggy," advised the "British Workman." "You will get rainstorms on the road, I fear, but the best thing all the way round is to get him into a decent bed within four walls and a roof as quickly as we can."

It was a ghastly drive. I had never even attempted to drag anything approaching pace out of Charles Edward since that night we had broken the umbrella in the vain endeavour. I knew he could go, and with the lines in my brother's hands he was usually another beast altogether—brisk and bright, with an even, hearty pace over the longest journey. Lal had the knack of lifting him, as it were, over the difficult bits which I knew all about from the saddle, but am a thousand miles away from in the seat of a vehicle.

From time to time my invalid snatched the lines from

my hand with despairing groans for the helplessness of my sex in general and myself in particular. Sixteen miles down the trail a deluge of rain nearly washed us out of the buggy; at the moment of its coming we discovered that the mackintosh rug had dropped out on the prairie.

"Let us go to Larcens' place and get tea, and a dry up," I suggested.

He assented with a tragic motion of the head.

We sat through the storm, but getting dry was out of the question. The floor of the buggy was a pool in spite of its drainage hole. Nor could Mr. Larcens offer us anything but milkless tea, dry bread, and bacon, which we declined.

The thunder was pealing across the prairie as we drew near the Qu'Appelle valley. The violet tint of the hills melted into the heavy thunder-clouds which pressed down upon them, weighted with dolour. Now and again a little vagabond wind puffed from the west to fan the sombre heat of the atmosphere. It was one of Canada's very few grey days. I felt utterly disheartened; but the flash of lightning somehow seemed as a sword between one's teeth, inciting to sharp rebellion. As we drove through patches of amber wheat I vowed I would not acquiesce in failure; that I would make one straight strong effort to get on the line of prosperity which others seemed to find in Canada, and often in spite of utter poverty, and frequent mischance at the start.

At the foot of the hill my brother was looking very ill and weary. The owner of the livery barn was not on his premises, but the Englishman who did his clerical work was still in the office.

"Our friend Mr. Hicks said that you lived in the house at the foot of the hill, and that you thought your wife might be kind enough to take us in," I said. "My brother requires a quiet room and some nursing."

"I did say so," he answered, "but I quite forgot to say anything to my wife. Perhaps you will drive down and ask her."

In a cool white muslin morning-gown and every other detail she stood in the favourable light of contrast with our vagabond life on the prairie, a perfectly frank but kindly-mannered Englishwoman.

"The house is too large for us, and I suggested summer boarders to my husband for the Lake season," she explained, "but it was weeks ago. I am not in the least prepared for visitors; and it is a responsibility to take charge of an invalid. I am not feeling too well myself, and have no girl just now."

"You don't quite understand," I pleaded. "We have just come in from tent-life on the prairie. It really wouldn't matter what sort of room it was, as long as it didn't leak, and he could easily dispense with a bed."

"There are beds enough and to spare," she answered with a smile, which, however, wouldn't go so far as to even hint of a possible welcome; but her frankness was reassuring in its own way, and she grew compassionate in gazing at my brother. "If he will manage with a back room, I will agree to put up your brother," she said. "A friend who has been spending his holiday with us only left yesterday, and the room will not require preparation. But I really don't think I can offer to take you as well."

"Please don't bother," I entreated. "We have stayed

several times at the hotel. It is only because of the noise that I don't want my brother to be there. If I can leave him in good hands, I must get back to my sister to-morrow."

So Lal was encouraged up the staircase and into the inviting white bed with its linen sheets and embroidered pillowcase. Our hostess hustled me down to the hall with the unspoken hint that my sickroom authority was at an end. She bestowed the cup of consolation upon me in the pretty lounge hall, which opened from the one side into an airy kitchen, and from the other into a spacious dining-room. The house had been built by English people who had loved Canada for the sake of its freedom and abiding charm. It was, too, thoroughly imbued with the English ideal of comfort to stand the severe test of the Canadian winter, nor was its architecture attractive from without. But from just within the hall one gazed straight on to the lofty hill, and in face of the hill in its summer or winter dress the soul simply refuses to be a prisoner within the realm of the troublesome facts of Time and Space. On that evening the eager rays of a repentant sun pierced the opal tint of the storm to cheer the steadfast heights. Strong and true are the voices of inspiration and sympathy which call across the hills of Fort Qu'Appelle, and many a tight-strung string must have snapped in the sweetness of their echo to find relief in tears.

I went back to the livery barn and saw Charles Edward comfortably installed for the night, and after supper braved the mosquitoes to learn how it fared with the invalid.

The doctor had called, and lanced an ulcer which had lain low in the throat. Mrs. Cregan came out of the door with an empty cup.

“He is quite comfortable, and has taken a large cup of bread-and-milk. Such a good patient! I am afraid you must have thought me rather ungracious and inhospitable: you know some men are so impatient and irritable in sickness. But any one can see that your brother has the sweetest disposition. He is so grateful. And what a charming smile!”

A baby moon peered solemnly down on the valley of Lakes. I made special obeisance, remembering it must be the harvest moon. It recalled to my mind the eighty acres of wheat on the farm beyond the hill, and the fact that four walls and a roof kept guard by its side.

CHAPTER XXII

HOW I BOUGHT MY CANADIAN FARM

In the morning I stood beside the eighty acres of waving wheat. It was turning gold at the tips, and the glint of green below rippled to the wind. I hid within the standing grain and lost the horizon.

"Hey, but you must be hot. An' you hadn't need to have walked. Jim M'Gusty would have hitched up a horse and driven you up. I seen you looking at the crop. My, but it is a good year! An' the best wheat we ever had. Come in and get a drink of milk. The old man's inside."

He stood within the doorway.

"Well, an' hae ye come to buy th' auld place?"

I hadn't been sure of it until that moment. But the walk along the wheat-side had drawn to an even balance the agreement of pro and con, and the primitive cottage brought down pro's side with a thump. Four walls and a roof, after those wearying last days and nights of distress. To go back to the prairie with my brother and take up life again at the place where his illness had broken off its few unwilling threads seemed beyond one's effort. And in the farm lay a safe and sure investment, an immediate return in the rich and rapidly ripening field of wheat, a home for man and beast, food, milk, eggs, butter, all the

late luxuries of life again presenting themselves in the everyday garb of necessity.

"I guess there's never been a better year in the North-West," pronounced the old man, "and through all the land there's no better crop than you."

"There is no better crop along the trail," I agreed.

"Two thousand five hundred bushels of wheat if there's a grain, and wheat going up. My, but it's a cheap farm! Ye'll never get a better chance. A thousand dollars down, a thousand dollars when you have sold the wheat, and the balance can stay on at six per cent."

"What about the implements?"

"My son's got them all promised to him. I guess you had best get all yours new from Jim M'Gusty."

"And the stock?"

"My son has got most of 'em promised. I might be letting you have a team of work-horses."

"And cows?"

"You can have two cows and their calves, I guess. Ninety dollars the four head."

"And pigs?"

"You shall have th' auld sow and the litter for thirty dollars. They're fine pigs, and ready to kill by threshing."

"And the chickens?"

"You must ask the woman about the fowl, I guess."

"Will you take four thousand?" I said persuasively.

"I'll not be taking one cent off five thousand dollars; and I'd not be selling the farm at all, but that my missus is sickly and canna stand the winter well. And I should want a thousand-dollars down before I quit, for I sold the place to an Englishman two years ago, and when it come

to paying for it, he got nothing to pay with. I had to come back to th' auld place to find the feller had been no sort of farmer, an' I was dollars and dollars out o' pocket by the deal."

"Eh, but you couldna but like him," said the old lady. "I guess 'twas his woman's fault. She wouldna come out to marry him herself, nor send him the money for the farm."

"I shall not be leaving till after the mail is in to-morrow. I'll take from now until then to think it over," I said, and walked towards the trail by way of the seductive line of the wheatfield.

One thousand pounds for the whole thing, and five hundred pounds coming in from that one wheatfield, which takes up exactly one-fourth of the land. It seemed a genuine gold-mine that had gaped at one's passing.

The doctor had called to find the invalid comparatively out of pain, although weak. He assured me that he was having the kindest attention from Mrs. Cregan, and wouldn't mind in the least if he had to stay in bed a week.

"In that case, I had better go north to-morrow and bring along Hilaria," I said. "It is of very little use our remaining there, and until funds arrive we can't leave the neighbourhood. I have been up to take another look at that farm on the hill."

"Well, don't get muddled up with that. I should think even you were fed up with life on 'the land' by this time. You are more unsuited for it than any of us, and in my opinion hate it quite as much, only you like to be different from other people."

I changed the subject.

In the afternoon I met Mr. M'Gusty, and told him that I had decided we would buy the place, and was only waiting for the mail, which would probably bring my father's opinion about the matter, of which I had written to him on the day I first saw the place, and in any case sufficient funds to cover the greater part of the first instalment.

But the mail that day brought me nothing.

"It is a pity to miss it," advised Jim M'Gusty. "And the riper the crop grows the less willing grows the old man to part with the place."

"I suppose he would accept any purchaser whose income was sufficient to cover the deferred payments of a thousand dollars a year?" I suggested.

"Sure thing! As long as he gets his thousand dollars down, anybody can walk into the place to-morrow."

"My income is sufficient to guarantee those payments," I said, "and I am daily expecting a remittance which will cover the initial payment. I'll decide to buy it on my own responsibility; my father and I can settle the matter between ourselves."

"It's settled," said he. "I'll tell the notary-public to get the papers ready, and you can sign them before you start north."

I sent a cablegram to my father—

"Bought that farm at five thousand dollars."

There was an air of finality about the office of the notary - public which I found a little depressing. I supposed that the transfer of the deed could be easily accomplished on the arrival of my father.

The notary-public assured me that this was so, without

entering into any disagreeable details about the additional cost.

I refused to "kiss the book," which lapse was permitted to pass—the vendor and his witnesses took the plunge without protest. Everything else seemed fairly simple to the purchaser, and everybody else looked supremely pleased with all the world. As I affixed my signature to the fact that I became the purchaser of the southern half of Section X, a farm of three hundred and twenty acres, with its house and its farm-buildings, its fences and its crops, or a second the spirit of a threatening destiny seemed to look me in the face.

"There is one thing," said the vendor with his eyes on the table. "I guess it's the matter of the potatoes."

"Yes?" I inquired.

"There's plenty for us both, I guess, and my ~~missus~~ she would like to keep the half."

Potatoes frequently fetch a dollar a bushel in those parts. I didn't know it then—we split the potatoes.

"Then there's the question of the taxes. Only ten dollars. The law is on your side. They can claim payment of me."

"But you don't think it's quite just?" I asked. "When do taxes become due?"

"It's near about the half-year," he answered.

"Very well, I'll agree to pay one-half the taxes of the current year."

"It's only right," agreed Mr. M'Gusty, "but it is very fair of you to see it in that light."

The old man had a little private conversation with Mr. M'Gusty.

"There's just one other thing," said the latter. "The old man wants to know what about the hay."

"I have left plenty on the place that's to be had for the cutting and carrying," explained the old man; "but when I made the big rick, I guess I gathered it for myself, not thinking as you would really be buying th' auld place. I shall have my own stock to feed during the winter, and I guess I'd like not to part with that hayrick."

"If you say there is plenty more, keep the rick by all means," I responded magnificently, falling in with the argument of the man's personal toil, and totally forgetting that toil or no toil I had purchased the place with the crops. "Green English" was doubtless the sentiment shared by every man in the room, and "green English" echoed in my own heart before the winter had gone over, when I found myself of necessity the purchaser of the worst of a neighbour's hay, bestowed upon me as a personal favour, in return for my thanks and five dollars a load.

"Best enter about the hay on the agreement," advised Mr. M'Gusty.

"If you will just add your initials here," said the notary-public.

"I have bought the place, and we can get in directly the funds arrive to settle the first instalment," I said to my brother. "No more shacks!"

"You haven't been such a fool! Besides, how could you without father's permission? You will have to look cheap and back out."

"I can't. I have signed the papers."

"You couldn't!"

"I could and I have. You see, I have just sufficient income to guarantee the payments."

"Well, you will live to repent it. And you will have to run it yourself. Stay in this *darned* hole I won't!"

Mrs. Cregan promised to take us all in until we were ready to move into our own place. Hilaria and I were to share quite a spacious two-bedded room, which had been designed for a nursery, and looked out over the Eastern Lake and the Mission School at Le Bret. I went gaily back over the trail to pack up, and bring along Hilaria. Lal was to return for the horses and heavy baggage as soon as he was able.

"Hilaria, I have bought that farm!" I shouted, thinking it wiser to break the news from a distance.

"You are quite mad," said Hilaria, "and father will be furious! I hope he will make you keep it yourself."

"He will be delighted," I prophesied. "The crop value will produce half the price of the whole thing, and next year as much again. I shall break every inch. People with anything in them simply can't help making money in Canada."

"Then why are nine persons out of every ten hard up?" demanded Hilaria. "Do back out of it!"

"It's out of the question. I signed papers and things, and only didn't kiss the book because I wouldn't; although in any case I can't see that ceremony making much difference out here. Don't be discouraging, Hilaria! At least, it is a place to go into. Our visit has been such a rotten failure: if we had thrown it up and gone home, it would have meant a further and considerable sum to be

tacked on to the capital already advanced to Lal. I honestly think it is his only chance of ever getting anything back; and at least he can see what he has got for his money, and won't find its solitary souvenir in an unused plough."

"I think, it is the maddest thing which you have ever done, and that even you will live to be sorry. But if you have signed papers and things I suppose it can't be helped," said Hilaria, with a profound sigh. "Only let me tell you that I wrote home weeks ago for my return fare. I will see you through the harvest—then I go. Why, if once you inveigled father over here, one would probably find oneself planted in this wilderness for ever. I am going whilst the way is clear."

Sunday was our last day in those parts. We packed our goods and chattels in the early cool of the day. There was no bacon, and there had been no duck since Lal fell ill. Once more we dined with the "British Workman" from eggs *à la coque*, green peas, bread-and-butter, and the remains of a pot of strawberry jam. Earlier in the day I had informed Hilaria that I would not admit the "British Workman" to the new home until after harvest was over.

"I think it is exceedingly mean of you to leave him up here alone," said Hilaria. "He couldn't have been kinder or more helpful since Lal has been ill. Neither of them is any good on the land, nor ever will be. Why should they?"

"How often have you observed, Hilaria, that one could not recognise Lal of the first ten days to be the same man that he has proved himself since the very first days of the return of the 'British Workman'?" I asked.

"Besides, Lal has at any rate broken nearly ten acres, and would have doubled it had he not lent the horses, or, fallen sick. Lal is only passively, comparatively lazy—the 'British Workman' is actively, superlatively lazy."

"They are birds of a feather," said Hilaria, "and I don't see Lal doing any more work in the harvest-field than the 'British Workman.' But have your way."

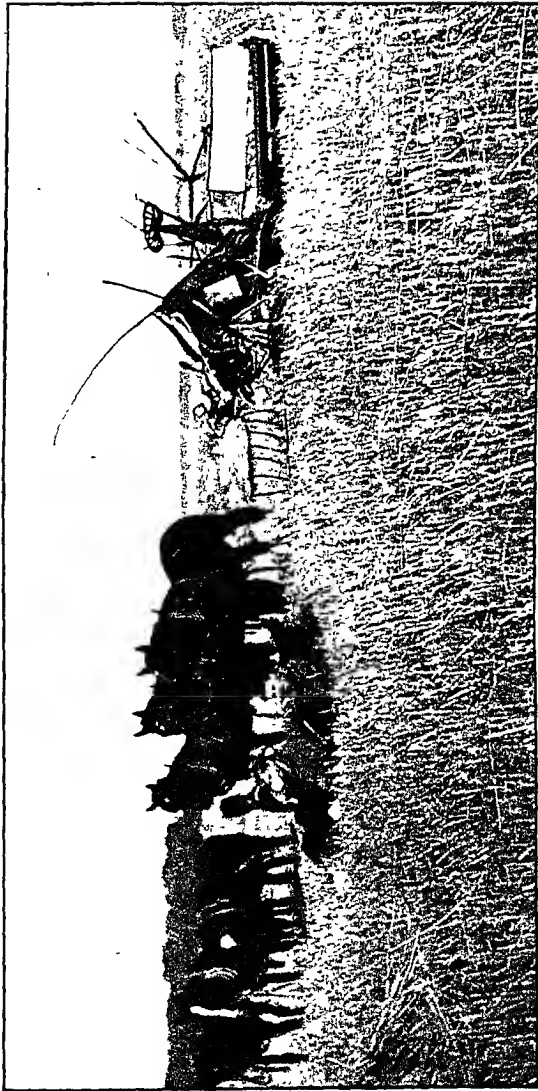
So I told him that I should be delighted if he would be our guest for as long as he pleased *after* harvest. But as it was absolutely necessary for my brother to realise that he had to work, I thought it much better that during the harvest-days he should only be among *bona fide* workmen.

The "British Workman" accepted it with his unfailing cheerfulness, which was no doubt a branch of a deeper philosophy than one would have expected of him. But I think he didn't like being left behind, and it was quite the meanest act of which I was guilty on the prairie.

"But you will never get Lal to work," he said in an afterthought towards self-defence. "He hasn't the faintest intention of working any more than I have."

However, harvest was barely over when the deferred hope of a remittance of fifty pounds arrived at last, and the "British Workman" set out in highest spirits for British Columbia, leaving his unwilling partner stooking wheat-sheaves. Three weeks later he came along again to borrow his fare back to Winnipeg. Shortly after he wrote to tell us that he had fallen into a promising opening in a brewery, and that things in general were likely to boom.

It was on the morning after Hilaria and I got back to the Fort that our long-expected communication arrived.



THE FIRST DAY'S HARVEST



It contained a bank draft for a hundred pounds, with directions to proceed to St. Paul or Minnesota immediately. Letters of introduction were enclosed to certain brewing firms, and the opinion expressed that good posts would doubtless be offered to my brother. On no condition whatever were we to buy land.

Neither Lal nor Hilariã were sufficiently imbued with the spirit of self-sacrifice to conceal their very human sentiments.

"I told you so," said the one.

"I knew it," echoed the other.

"What shall you do now?" they demanded in a breath.

"Borrow some money from father on the security of the income which my work in England brings me," I answered vaingloriously, in obedience to an instinct to cover my wound from unsympathetic eyes. "I intend to run the farm myself," I added.

"Ha, ha! A woman work a Canadian farm! Why, you would be the laughing-stock of the country, if you could do it, which you can't," said my brother.

"But how do you mean?" said Hilaria. "You can't even cook! And I warn you I don't intend to throw away another day of my life in 'the Land' after harvest."

"Nor I another *hour* after I can raise the wind to get away," echoed my brother, with more vigour but less assurance.

"In the meantime, as even twelve and sixpence a day is money, as we have all lately had ample opportunity to find out, we had better settle our account here, and get on to the place," I suggested.

"I'll lay you anything you like they won't let you take possession until you have made the first payment. Father has only sent a hundred pounds. Take my advice, and offer them a tenner to get out of it."

"Tenners are not so plentiful with me as they appear to be with you," I gibed, whilst Hilaria tittered from the window-seat.

"Ah, well, I was only offerin' you a little advice."

"Precisely!"

"But it is drawn from as many years' experience of this country as you have had months."

"Exactly!"

"Well, let us go and cash the draft," he suggested cheerfully, "and I'll get back to my estate to-morrow, and bring on the team and the household gods. If you really are going through to the bitter end, you are quite right in thinking we had better get there at once, if they will let us in."

But it appeared that they required some days to make their exit.

"An' your brother should be gettin' on to the summer-fallow and gettin' up his hay," advised the old man, who had one opinion about acknowledging the right of a woman to purchase his place, and quite another about her right to become anything but a figure-head in its management.

I refused the first team he offered me at three hundred and fifty dollars, because I thought he might have given me the option of buying some of his mares. The implements and the work-horses were claimed by members of his family, one of whom undertook to cut my

crop for the sum of four and a half dollars a day for himself and team. I had to order a new binder-reaper at once: it cost a hundred and fifty dollars, and various other implements brought up the implement bill to five hundred dollars. A second team of middle-weight work-horses I bought cheaply enough from a man at the Fort for three hundred and ten dollars, with harness thrown in. The gelding was swift and strong, and the most generous I think of the many good beasts I have encountered in Canada. Both were young, one rising four, the other five years. I took the two cows with their calves, and the sow and her family for the price quoted; and the old lady presented me with five hens and a cock by way of "backsheesh." There were besides these three pullets who refused to quit.

The days grew hotter, and across the valley the hill-tops were patched with brightest gold. Hilaria and I lay on the high hill behind the Cregans' vegetable-garden, when we perceived Lal coming over the bridge with the waggon and team.

"He had better go straight on to the farm with the horses," suggested Hilaria.

"And stay there himself," I added. "He can learn a great deal from the old man in a day or so, and we shall be there ourselves to-morrow or the day after."

"I will take the horses up and walk back, but I am not going to stay with people I don't know, especially before you have paid over the thousand dollars," objected Lal.

"Mrs. Cregan can no longer conveniently put you up," said Hilaria.

"Oh ycs, she will," said he with confidence. "If not I have slept on the prairie before to-day, and probably shall again. And so will you, if you don't look out."

No words can pay tribute to the kindness of our hostess. She supplied us with everything, and bestowed upon us sufficient of her excellent cakes and pastry to last us several days.

"I expect Charles-Edward wonders what sort of a queer load he is carrying to-day," she observed with a hint of apology in her voice, as she settled a beef-steak pie on top of a batch of loaves, and made all safe with a pillow.

"Not at all," my brother said politely, and Hilaria vowed Charles Edward winked.

As we climbed Troy Hill in the rear of the buggy, Hilaria's face wore the "martyr" expression which she reserves for her family. She kept it up even after we turned off on to our own trail, and only sighed when we sighted the first granary, then the solitary chimneypot, and finally the stables, which hardly wore an air of prosperity even then.

"Wait until you see the wheat!" I said triumphantly.

"It is difficult to see anything in the glare of your folly," she said bitterly; "but I notice that the stable roof has everything in common with the roof of the shack."

The house was exquisitely clean for our coming. Much of the furniture of the vendors remained, as they had not settled on a new home. The old man had removed his bed to the granary. It was politely understood between us that until funds arrived for me to conveniently make the whole of the first payment, he would remain on the place as our guest.

The shining stove, the ample supply of pots and pans, sufficient chairs and an orthodox table were too much for Hilaria's rôle of martyr. She abandoned it with the coming of four-o'clock tea. Later I met her running across from the stables, as I returned from a walk round the wheatfield, and she fairly beamed upon me.

"I have found a nest with eighteen eggs," she cried, "and they must be quite all right because none of them wobble—there will be some pleasure in making cakes at last!"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LAST CHAPTER AND THE FIRST SHEAVES

THROUGH the hottest hours of Thursday I sat on the turf, holding twine, and generally waiting on Mr. M'Gusty, as he fixed up the belated binder-reaper.

"A third o' your crop is spilled on the land," the old man had warned me. "Jim M'Gusty he's my son-in-law, and so shrewd a feller as you'll find in these parts. He's sold your binder to somebody-else, and I guess you will be kept waiting for another."

"The old man is getting childish," said Mr. M'Gusty, when I hinted at the suspicion during the process of threading the canvas. "The grain will be better cut to-morrow than to-day, I guess."

"It won't be cut to-morrow unless we get down the first sheaves to-day," I said. "I never start things on Friday."

My brother and sister blushed at my acknowledgment of the superstition which they both shared.

"As if a day could make any difference!" gibed Lal.

"I should say one day could prove no worse than another," said Hilaria pointedly.

At four o'clock the binder swept into the wheatfield,

and tossed the first sheaves of the harvest which we had not sown at our feet.

"I can do all the stooking there is to be done to-day, but to-morrow one or both of you must lend a hand, unless Jim M'Gusty can send us along two professional stookers. I expect to get round the field and be back at this point in exactly half an hour. You can bring me my tea out here, Hilaria. There will be more sheaves about presently, when the binder has been round once or twice, and I shall then instruct you both in the art of stooking!"

"Thank you!" said Hilaria.

"Be sure you put cream in the tea. I can't drink it with milk. You had better let me have a teapot to myself. Stookin' is very exhaustin' labour. And, Hilaria——!"

"Oh, glory take him!" said Hilaria.

"A scrap of cake. Not the ones you made yourself. A slice of that big dark one Mrs. Cregan gave us."

Hilaria is just a little thin-skinned about her domestic accomplishments—although she needn't be, as they are good all round, and excellent in places.

"Your cakes were ripping," I said consolingly. "He ate seven the moment they came out of the oven—I saw him. Don't condescend to notice his insults!"

"There isn't the slightest occasion to worry yourself about *my* insults," said Hilaria. "Do you sec this?"

I examined the slip of paper to find it a bank draft for thirty pounds.

"My return fare," explained Hilaria. "A month to-day he will be eating *yours*!"

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