

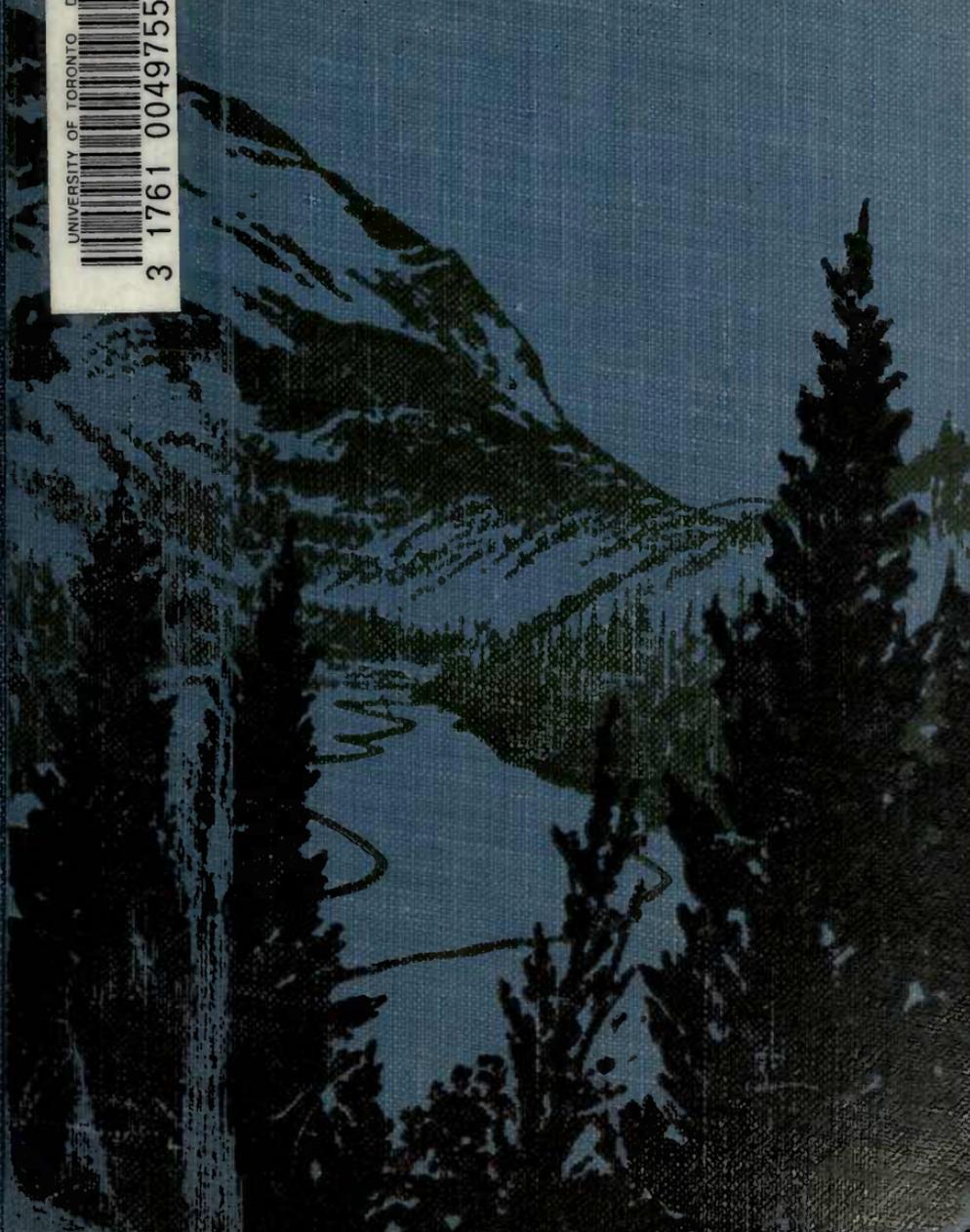
MY CANADA

ELINOR MARSDEN ELIOT

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO DUPL



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MY CANADA



The Way Home.

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BY

ELINOR MARSDEN ELIOT

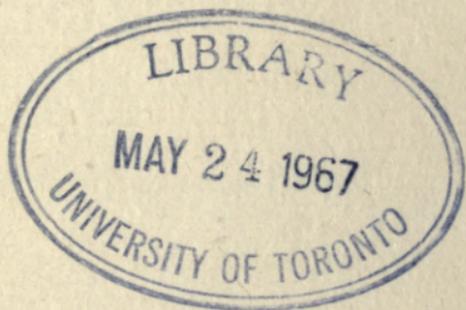
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ILLUSTRATIONS

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FOREWORD

“THE outstanding characteristic of the Western Canadian,” said an observant young Irishman to me the other day, “is an aggressive optimism.

“The Manitoban says, ‘Oh yes, the winters *are* cold, but the atmosphere is so dry that one does not feel the low temperature.’ The Albertan remarks casually— an Albertan always remarks casually— that ‘it is windy, but then one doesn’t mind the wind.’ And the man from the coast of British Columbia admits that the rainfall is very heavy, ‘but,’ he adds, ‘it is the sort of rain that doesn’t really wet one.’”

Optimism is more contagious than measles.

Western Canada needs women, and a warm welcome awaits those of the right type. But I do not wish the optimism with which I have become infected to give anyone the impression that *all* Englishwomen who come to Canada will fare as did my heroine.

She had friends who knew the country and its customs, and she was fitted by temperament and education "to look out for herself." Had she been without friends in Canada, and without the moral support of a small but regular income, her story might easily have been a tragedy instead of a comedy.

For the capable and well-educated Englishwoman as well as for the domestic servant the West is full of opportunities. We need teachers, we need nurses—first and most important, we need good wives and mothers. Then, too, in Canada a woman may enter the business and professional world more easily than in the Old Land. In several of the provinces women are admitted to the study and

practice of both Medicine and Law, and in all there are business opportunities without end. But, I repeat, for the right woman. Send us your best.

Of the inevitable hardships—the loneliness, the crudeness, the lack of the arts and luxuries which oil the machinery of existence, the climate which, by eliminating the unfit, goes far to prove the theory of the survival of the fittest—I shall not speak. No true Canadian does speak of these things, except to discourage the undesirables, for we know that the loneliness will pass, that arts and luxuries will come in time, and as for the climate,—well, “the winters are cold, but the atmosphere is so dry that one does not feel the low temperature.”

It is only fair, both to myself and to the possible reader, to confess that the following pages are an inextricable tangle of fact and fiction. Such as my story is, however, I dedicate it with hearty goodwill to all my Canadian friends, in the hope that it may, in

even the least degree, contribute to a better understanding between Canada and the Motherland.

ELINOR MARSDEN ELIOT.

WINNIPEG, CANADA.

I

WINNIPEG,
June 2nd, 19—.

HAD any one told me a year ago that I should ever be reduced to the necessity of keeping a diary in which to record my woes I would have refused to believe the prophecy—I, Elinor Marsden Eliot, healthy, happy, and moderately good-looking! And just here I may confess that the aforesaid Elinor is popularly supposed to be rather strong-minded, simply because she has reached the mature age of twenty-five without finding a husband necessary to her well-being.

Mary Arnold tells me that I must drop my roundabout mode of expression if I wish to find listeners in this busy country, so perhaps I had better go back a few months and begin at the beginning of my story instead of in the middle of it. Mary

also says that all my observations should be prefaced with the explanation, "I am English, you know." On my pointing out to her that she also is English, she retorted, "Not on your life! Canadian for mine!" I have remarked that she is more than usually lavish in her use of slang when she is speaking to me; she is a dear girl, however, and I am sure that she would allow no one else to guy (or, in Canadian, "string") me as she herself does.

Well, I am English, you know, and a few months ago, upon attaining my twenty-fifth birthday, I came into a small legacy, the bequest of a maiden aunt. This aunt, by the way, made provision in her will that, in the event of my marrying before the age of twenty-five, the hundred pounds a year was to go to a Dogs' Hospital in London! One of Father's curates—he is really awfully fond of dogs—tried to divert the money to this worthy object, but, as Mary says, "not for mine."

Ever since the Arnolds visited us in

England three years ago I have longed to see Canada. Mrs. Arnold invited me to spend a year with them, and she promised Mother to take good care of me if I were allowed to go; but as I had already been taken care of for twenty-two years, that prospect did not appeal to me. I wanted to go a-pioneering on my own responsibility, and of course Mother and Father would not consent to such a plan. Imagine, then, their consternation when I called a family council the day after my last birthday and informed them of my intention to go to Canada, with their consent or without it!

Mother cried. Father took his glasses off, wiped them carefully on the bit of chamois he carries in his waistcoat pocket for the purpose, put them on again, and then said in his own kind way, "Well, my dear, we'll talk it over." Ralph, aged twenty-two, winked solemnly at Helen, eighteen, and remarked to the world in general that I was afraid that my money would go to the bow-wows if

I stayed within reach of Arthur—Arthur is the curate. Helen had seemed to be on the verge of following Mother's example, but Ralph's nonsense acted as a general restorative, so I went on to tell them of the plans I had made.

x I intended to go first to the Arnolds' home in Winnipeg, and from there to look for a situation as working companion on a farm. Then, when I had gained a fair amount of experience, I would buy a small place of my own and go in for poultry-farming—far away from curates and mothers' meetings. Quite an ambitious programme for a girl who had never been out of England, was it not? But I longed for a complete change; I never was a success as "t' parson's daughter"; Helen plays that part much better than I do, perhaps because her godfather is a bishop. My godfather is an eccentric old bachelor who once aspired to Mother's hand, and who invariably supports my periodic rebellions against Mrs. Grundy.

After all, I think the greatest surprise of the day was mine, for this time Father and Mother agreed to let me try my wings. I have always suspected that in the bottom of his heart Father sympathized with my desire for a broader outlook, but the only way in which the poor dear man could show his feelings was by allowing me to study Latin and Trig. with the pupils he had to take before Aunt Josephine died and left us her money—peace to her ashes! Mother, however, while as sweet as she can be, is decidedly mid-Victorian in her ideals. Since I grew up she has at all times and seasons painted matrimony in the most glowing colours, and I firmly believe that only her conservatism prevents her from petitioning for a new clause in the Litany:—

“From all strong-minded women, feminists, and suffragettes,

Good Lord, deliver us.”

One day she went so far as to point out to me that I was tempting Providence by

refusing three offers of marriage when I had been privileged to receive more than my proportionate share. She had been perusing a table of statistics which showed an appalling preponderance of women over men in the British Isles. Perhaps I *was* tempting Providence, but I think I was justified. The first offer was from a retired Anglo-Indian with a good pension and a bad liver ; he wanted a nurse-housekeeper. The second was from an old pupil of Father's, a dear boy—but two years younger than I. The third was from Arthur, the fourth, fifth, and sixth also ; he will have a title some day if sundry uncles and cousins die, but he wears low collars and has no sense of humour. So what could a poor girl do ?

We were very busy for the next few weeks. It seems to me as I look back that all my time was spent either in the shops or in the sewing-room ; but at the last I had one lovely long week in which to say good-bye to every man, woman, and child in the village. I never realized

before to what an extent Wilmington had contributed to the population of North America; my address book was full in no time, and I innocently promised to look up people in New York and Norway House, Prince Rupert and Halifax.

I shall follow a time-honoured custom and draw a veil over the parting with my family. I can still feel the lump in my throat, and still hear the perfectly idiotic answers I made to Ralph's equally idiotic questions.

I presume my ocean voyage was like every other ocean voyage, and therefore need not be described. "Dear Arthur's" aunt's sister-in-law, or some such creature, crossed with me. Her presence was a great source of comfort to Mother, I believe, but I, suffering from a combination of homesickness and seasickness, would much rather have been alone. x

"Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on the wide, wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony!"

(All sentimental young ladies who keep diaries have poetical quotations in them—in the diaries, I mean—and this seemed so appropriate.)

“Yes, Elinor dear, you are a most fortunate girl—my salts, please—dear Arthur has always been such a comfort to his friends. He never caused his mother a moment’s anxiety—and the small box of capsules—he could repeat the whole of the Catechism before he was six years old—my shawl, dearest, no, not that one, the lavender with white trimmings.”

We parted at Montreal, and I was so overjoyed that I gave a dollar, my first Canadian expenditure, to a convenient Salvation Army lass.

When I asked Mary if I should preserve for posterity the record of my impressions from the moment my foot first touched Canadian soil, she told me that on no account must I make such a mistake, as nothing east of Winnipeg was of any

importance. Of course it was Mary who planted in my fertile mind the seed that produced this diary—I am really proud of that sentence; living in “the bread-basket of the Empire” seems to improve my literary style.

While I was dressing for dinner on the night of my arrival in Winnipeg, I must confess that I shed a few tears. Mary discovered their traces, and after administering consolation in the comical elder-sisterly style she affects—Mary is twenty—she advised me to invest in a diary.

“You are sure to be homesick at times,” she said, “and I can assure you that there is no more certain relief for that worst of all diseases than to write down your inmost feelings. When I was away at school I used to write the most mournful letters possible—the sort one can wring salt water out of, you know—address them to Mother, and then post them in the kitchen stove. Sometimes the chimney smoked for weeks, but *I* felt a whole heap better.”

On the whole her advice seemed to be worth following. And—who knows?—perhaps my grandchildren will be glad to read my chronicle !

On reading over what I have written, I feel as if it *had* been prepared for someone to read. But as I had no particular person in mind as I wrote, my imaginary confidant must be someone whom I have not yet seen. Rather a pretty fancy, that, one quite worthy of a young person who keeps a diary !

II

WINNIPEG,
June 4th, 19—.

WHEN Mr. Arnold came home for luncheon to-day he suggested that we should all go out on the river for the afternoon. We went. And the result is that my face and arms are burned to a blister. I am sure that Canadian sunburn is worse than the English variety. Fortunately for the continuation of my diary, I am not fit to be seen, so under a half-inch layer of cold cream I have gone into retreat for the evening.

I am greatly tempted to describe my adventures in the Pullman sleeping-car, but, according to Mary, that is forbidden ground.

Our train pulled into Winnipeg on the morning of Tuesday, May 31st. The negro porter was at hand to brush my coat and

to gather up the various belongings without which no Englishwoman can travel. I do not like to think that the courtesy and consideration shown to a lone woman on the Canadian Pacific Railway is entirely due to a fondness for tips; surely the virtue of simple kindness is at least partly responsible.

When Ralph was a small boy, someone who sympathized with him in his taste for "bluggy" things gave him an illustrated book of "Travels in the Wilds of North America." One picture in it haunted my dreams for years; it showed a man running the gauntlet between two rows of savage-looking Indians. I was now, after all these years, the interested spectator of a similar scene, minus the Indians.

As I stepped off the train, a uniformed seraph took my bag with "This way, lady; the gent's just inside," and I followed him across the platform. I wish I had a photograph of the sight that met my eyes as I entered the door of the station.

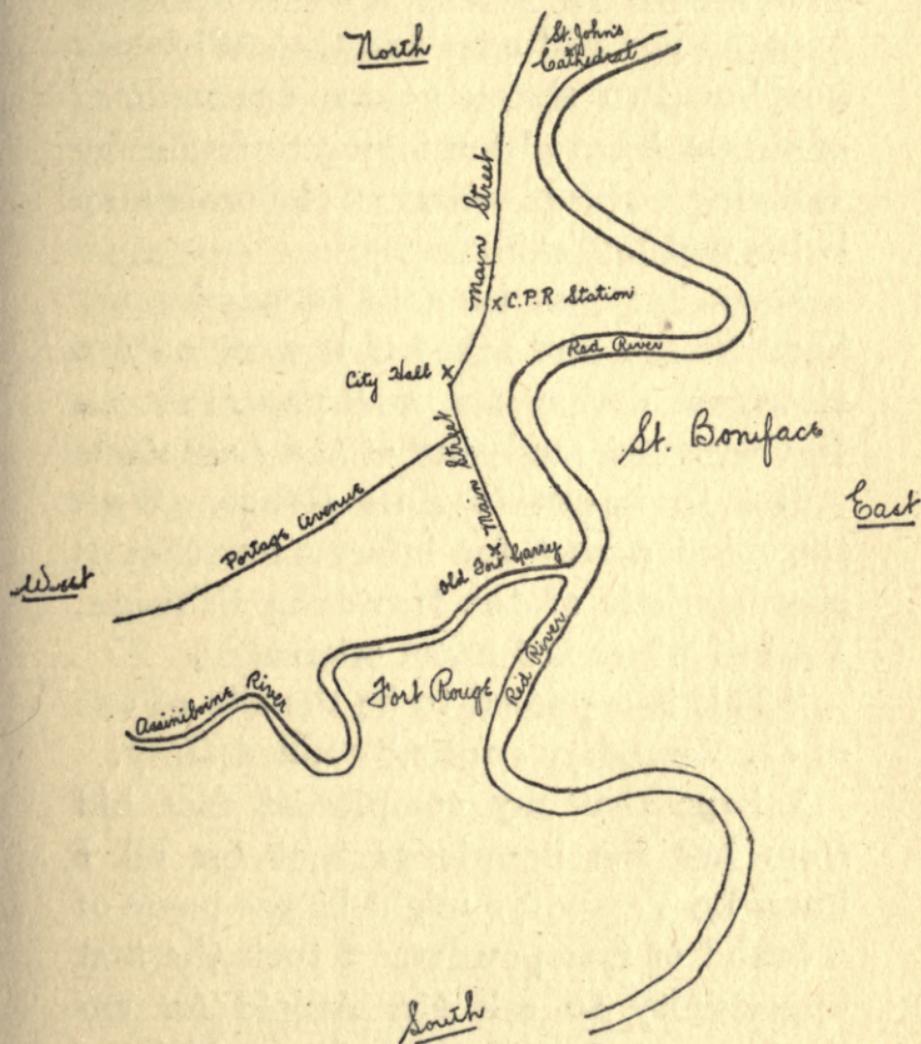
From one side of the rotunda to the other stretched two rows of people, and between these two rows the incoming passengers ran the gauntlet in the most approved fashion, until they were recognized and rescued by friends among the onlookers. The whole distance is probably two hundred feet or less, but it seemed to me to be at least a mile, and I was more than glad to find the Arnolds waiting for me at the door. I had felt sure that Mr. Arnold would meet me, but imagine my joy when I saw not only him but Mrs. Arnold and Mary. I may also admit that I was glad to turn my luggage checks over to Mr. Arnold. Men *are* useful, when all is said and done.

In a few minutes we were in a taxicab and whirling along Main Street on our way to the Arnold home. I had always understood that American cities were laid out strictly according to rule, but it appears that Winnipeg's main thoroughfare was surveyed by a calf! The legend is that in the early days, before Winnipeg

was, a calf strayed from the settlement in Kildonan and made its way to Fort Garry—Winnipeg is built on the site of the old fort; the owner followed it on horseback; next day another man in his Red River cart took the same trail. And in this way Main Street, Winnipeg, was duly opened, without the assistance of such modern inconveniences as civil engineers, compasses, tape-lines, and transits. It is probably unnecessary to add that calves do not, as a rule, wander in a straight line, and, as it has not been considered essential to the welfare of the city to make a change, Main Street remains as crooked as on the day the innocent calf broke the trail. It goes against the grain to admit it, but in honesty I have to record that some prosaic people assert that the old road followed the bends in the notoriously crooked Red River.

The Arnolds have a pretty home in the residential district known as Fort Rouge—this is south of the Assiniboine River.

To make my diary comprehensible to posterity, I shall insert here a map of Winnipeg and its surroundings. I copied



the outline of the rivers and of Main Street and Portage Avenue from a wonderfully well-informed little production known as "Waghorn's Guide." I hope no one will conclude that Winnipeg has but two streets—there are *millions* of them: I have been trying to find some Wilmington people—but an elaborate map is beyond my skill.

Mary has just been in to admire my handiwork. She asked if it were a l'Art Nouveau design for wall-paper or an Impressionist rendering of the Laocoön!

But to return to Fort Rouge. With the mind athirst for information that is characteristic of the travelling Britisher, I asked where the name originated.

"This is supposed to be the site of one of La Verandrye's forts," replied Mary.

I hope that my complacent face hid from her the knowledge that for all I knew La Verandrye might be the name of a brand of face-powder. I took the first opportunity to ask Mr. Arnold for enlightenment, but I think it would be a

step in the right direction if we were to make ourselves familiar with the outlines of Canadian history before we leave England; we should do so if we were visiting any other country, you know. (I do not mean that we should study *Canadian* history before visiting any other country.) Mr. Arnold has given me several books on the subject, and I intend to "make good" if I have to lose sleep to do it. Already my British prejudice has received one severe blow with the knowledge that France was largely responsible for the early development of "British" North America.

III

WINNIPEG,
June 8th, 19—.

I HAVE just returned from a shopping expedition taken in company with Mrs. Arnold and Mary. I really needed nothing; but they told me that shopping in Winnipeg is as interesting, as instructive, and almost as expensive as European travel, so of course I went with them.

We went first of all to the Hudson's Bay Stores. Fresh from the reading of Agnes C. Laut's "Lords of the North," I was rather disappointed to see an up-to-date departmental store where I had more than half expected to find a log fort with cannon guarding the gates.

However, Mary, who under a mixture of prosaic common-sense and irresponsible nonsense is blessed (?) with a romantic temperament, tells me that there is an

indescribable but unmistakable characteristic atmosphere in all Hudson's Bay Stores, whether they be of the modern or of the pioneer type. This, she explains, is due to the peculiar odour that is found in them all, an odour of smoke-tanned leather, fish, and the home-made tobacco smoked by the Indians and half-breeds.

"You may laugh if you please," she said in response to Mrs. Arnold's unbelieving smile, "but I am sure that I, blindfolded, could pick out a Hudson's Bay Store at a hundred yards! I have been in five, and the same perfume—to be polite—hangs over them all. I like it, but I can imagine that to the uninitiated it might be anything but pleasant."

Probably the damp climate of England has blunted my sense of smell. At any rate, I was not able to reconstruct the old fur-trading days on the strength of it.

From the Hudson's Bay we went to Eaton's—a truly marvellous shop where one can buy anything from a paper of

X pins to a motor-car. But the most interesting thing I saw was the promised substitute for European travel; this was a party of Galician women, in their native costume, who were gathered around a bargain counter on which was displayed "Canadian clothes" of the most violent colours. One smart maiden, who had evidently been in Canada for some time, was acting as guide and interpreter to her country cousins, and I could not but notice how much nicer the others looked than she. Miss Sophistication wore a very tight skirt, a bright purple blouse with a very low Dutch neck and very short sleeves, and I am sure that her hat was trimmed by a landscape gardener. But I suppose she felt happy in the knowledge that she no longer looked the peasant—and perhaps the next generation will learn to choose clothes to suit their short, squat figures and broad faces.

I know that I am committing a platitude when I speak of Winnipeg as a cosmopolitan city. Perhaps it is better

to quote Mary again, and say that the hardest thing to find in Winnipeg is a Canadian.

In addition to the immigrants from the British Isles, one sees on the street various tribes, or clans, or whatever the proper term is, from Russia; French; Germans; Italians in great numbers, who are, according to Mr. Arnold, excellent citizens—no “Black Hand outrages” here; Chinese men and boys; Jewish rabbis in their ceremonial dress; Greek Church dignitaries,—everything, in fact, but the painted, be-feathered, and blanket-clad Red Indian, whom I quite expected to meet at every turn. I have not yet seen an Indian.

But I have wandered a long way from Eaton's.

After Mrs. Arnold had finished her shopping, we went up to the lunch-room that is one of the most popular features of the “big store,” and there Mr. Arnold met us and we all had luncheon together.

Mr. Arnold had brought with him a

young, a very young, Englishman, Mr. Hoyt, and I shall never again be surprised that the English are not always popular in Canada. Mr. Hoyt was with us for an hour, and during that time he never spoke but to criticize Canada, its people, its customs, its climate, its architecture—even the luncheon we were eating! He is only a boy, and he is evidently very homesick, but he might have had the good taste to consider the Arnolds, and to keep his grumbling for the ears of his countrymen. Only once he had the grace to look thoroughly ashamed of himself.

“Canadians!” he had sneered, “there is no such thing as a Canadian, unless one happens to be an Indian. You are all either English or Irish or Scotch or . . .”

“Pardon me, Mr. Hoyt,” Mary broke in, “you call yourself English, and yet you told me that your grandparents were German. *My* grandparents, all four of them, were born in Canada. Why may I not call myself a Canadian?”

Well done, Mary !

I must say that the loyalty of the Canadian-born to Canada came as a surprise to me. We in the Old Land too often look upon the colonies merely as places in which one can make enough money to live upon at home. Canadians, on the other hand, are loyal to the Empire, to the British Constitution—whatever *it* is—and to the traditions of their forefathers, but what for lack of a better name I shall call their “personal loyalty” belongs to the land of their birth.

Perhaps I can give no better example of this than Mr. Arnold. I was with him a great deal when he was in England, and I am ashamed to say that he knows a great deal more of Britain’s history and legend than I do. And yet last week I saw that grey-haired man stand speechless and bare-headed before the little monument that marks the grave of the Winnipeggers who fell in the North-West Rebellion—raw volunteers who by their gallant and fearless conduct won from the

enemy the name by which the 90th Regiment is still affectionately known, "The Little Black Devils." I suppose that not one person out of a thousand at home has so much as heard of the North-West Rebellion. I was one of the nine hundred and ninety-nine; but I realize now that Canada has earned her right to a place among the nations—not independent of the Motherland, but in her dependence owning a distinct personality. As Mary quoted to-day,

" A Nation spoke to a Nation,
And a Queen sent word to a Throne,
' Daughter am I in my Mother's house
But mistress in my own.' "

IV

WINNIPEG,
June 17th, 19—.

THIS has been a busy week.

Sunday morning we went to St. John's Cathedral. St. John's, in spite of its impressive name, is but a tiny place, no larger than our smallest village churches. It is built of native stone, and is surrounded by a quaint old graveyard in which I was glad to wander for half an hour after the service.

On Monday I went sightseeing, with Mary as guide.

She took me first to the City Hall. Architecturally it leaves much to be desired—it looks like a cross between a wedding-cake and a mosque; but I was interested in the pictures of the mayors, and I fell in love with the pretty little

Council Chamber—it would be simply perfect for private theatricals.

We then went to the roof of the Union Bank, Winnipeg's highest building. I understand that in New York and Chicago there are office-buildings four times as high, but I am sure I do not wish to practise mountain-climbing in them—the Union Bank is quite high enough. But the view from the top was worth the dizzy feeling.

By this time it was noon, and with my luncheon I had another novel experience. I never heard of a "Dairy Lunch" at home—doubtless they can be found in the larger cities if one knows where to look for them—and to me it was an entirely new experience to act as my own waitress and newer still to hear my orders, paraphrased beyond recognition, shouted through a dumb-waiter to an invisible cook. One goes into the lunch-room, takes a tray and the necessary dishes from a counter, together with whatever food is already cooked, and

then picks out a table for one's self. I was so much interested in the orders that were being passed on to the cook that I could scarcely eat my luncheon. Mary translated. "Ham and" means ham and eggs; "Pork and," pork and beans (an extraordinarily popular dish, apparently); "Four poached on two," is two orders of poached eggs on toast. (Mary tells me that she once heard the last order given as "Adam and Eve on a raft," but I think that story was made up for my special benefit.) As I listened I had a vision of the staid head-waiter in the quiet hotel where we always stay when we go to London. I shall never be satisfied with a mere head-waiter again.

In the afternoon we took a tram to the City Park. It is about five miles from Main Street. One goes that distance on Portage Avenue—another of the old trails—and then crosses the Assiniboine River on a fearfully seasick pontoon bridge. The park, which is left as much as possible in its natural state, is really beautiful,

although the trees are small and the grass is not like English grass. A home has been provided here for quite a good collection of the native animals. I saw several kinds of deer, wolves, foxes, buffaloes, badgers, bears, and one heart-broken old eagle. The animals are all fairly tame and I got some excellent photographs. I have been afraid to admit it to the Arnolds, but I was disappointed in the buffaloes—by the way, only the pedantic call them bisons here. I expected to see majestic creatures at least as large as elephants, and what I did see looked very much like the badly focussed picture that I took of some Highland cattle the first summer I had my camera. I went too close to the cattle, and as a result the heads and forequarters were about twice as big in the picture as they should have been.

And now for the most important thing that has yet found a place in my diary.

Each day since I reached Winnipeg I have read the "Situations Vacant"

column in the various papers, and on Monday I saw the very thing I had been watching for.

“WANTED : At once, a working companion.
Comfortable home for the right party.
\$20.00 per month. Apply to Mrs. John
Fiske, Elba, Manitoba.”

I wrote a letter of application and then went to talk the matter over with Mrs. Arnold. To my surprise and consternation she was horrified.

“A working companion in Canada is the same thing as a general servant in England,” she said when the first exclamations were over. “The work and the surroundings will not be what you expect, and you will meet with disappointment and difficulty at every turn. What will your mother say to me if I countenance so ridiculous a project ? ”

“Mother knew what my plans were before I left home,” I answered.

“But your mother does not know to what the realizing of those plans would

lead. In the first place, you would lose caste”

“I thought that caste was an unknown quantity in Canada,” I interrupted, rather rudely, I fear. “At any rate, I came here for experience, and I am certain that I shall never learn to farm while I stay in Winnipeg as your guest.”

Mrs. Arnold laughed.

“My dear Elinor,” she went on, “Canada cannot compare with India in the matter of caste, nor even with England; but I think you will find that wherever there is poverty and wealth, employer and employed, there will be caste also.

“As to experience—well, you will probably get more than you bargain for. By the time you have done the washing, scrubbed the floors, cooked the dinner in a red-hot kitchen full of flies, and milked twelve cows, you *may* feel like going into the subject of scientific farming, but I doubt it.

“Of course there is just a chance that you may find a place that will

suit you, but you are taking a big risk. Promise me that you will not post your application until you have consulted Mr. Arnold."

I promised. But what followed could scarcely be called a consultation, for Mr. Arnold only laughed at me. I hate to be laughed at, so, just the least bit annoyed, I started my letter on its way. Yesterday I received Mrs. Fiske's reply, in which she asked me to leave for Elba at once. As soon as I had read it I went to Mr. Arnold, and, fully convinced now that the matter was not a joke, he gave me a fatherly little lecture along the same lines as that delivered by Mrs. Arnold.

However, when Elinor Eliot makes up her mind it is made up to stay, and the only concession I would make was to agree to Mrs. Arnold's suggestion that Mary should go with me to Elba and stay with me until I was met by my employer. That one word "employer" makes me feel as if I were a lady's maid, but the deed is done and "England

expects . . . , etc.” To be quite honest, I am awfully nervous.

The Arnolds have been so good to me and have made my visit with them so pleasant that it seems ungrateful to leave them in this way. Although they think it unwise of me to go to Elba, they have done everything they could to help me in my preparations, quite as if I were acting in accordance with their advice. It is such a pleasure to meet people who do not look upon a contrary opinion as an insult !

And of one thing I am sure. If my venture fails and I return to them, they will meet me with open arms and closed lips.



*Where the landscape is
mostly horizon*

ELBA, MANITOBA,
June 21st, 19—.

At the present moment I am sitting, in a green-and-red plush-covered easy (?) chair, in the parlour of

“THE PALACE BOARDING-HOUSE

REFRESHMENT FOR MAN AND BEAST AT REASONABLE
RATES.

HOT MEALS AND BEDS.

EUROPEAN PLAN—YOU PAY FOR WHAT YOU EAT.

PROPRIETOR, MRS. REBECCA MILLS.”

I quote the sign-board.

At the opposite side of the room Mary is seated before one of those modern instruments of torture known as an American organ. From it she is extracting—no word but that one so suggestive of dentistry will describe the operation—accompaniments to the most ragged of rag-time melodies which she is singing for the

edification of Mrs. Mills' twin sons. The boys, who rejoice in the names of Reginald and Percival, are eight years old. They are red-headed, freckled little imps, and they possess the angelic smile which is peculiar to twins who are so much alike that they cannot be told apart and which, I believe, is due to the fact that punishment is always meted out to the wrong boy. Mary has discovered that Percival is minus a front tooth, so she feels sure that she will make no mistake. But if I am any judge of human nature as it is exhibited in boys of eight, Reginald also will lack a tooth before long. Who could blame him? I, for one, have not forgotten how I used to long for a "twin sister exactly like me."

" So long, Mary.
Mary, we will miss you so !
So long, Mary,
How we hate to see you go !
We'll be longing for you, Mary,
While you roam.
So long, Mary,
Don't forget to come back home."

The incorrigible girl has just succeeded in convincing the boys that this classic was written by a personal friend of hers, to be sung as a farewell when she left for England three years ago!

“Aw, Miss Mary, can't you stay here more'n one day?” says Percival coaxingly. “This town's deader'n Goliath, but if you'd stay we could have a swell time. Gee, I wish you'd come fishin' with me an' Reg—we'd put the worms on the hook if you're scared! What's the use of goin' back to Winnipeg? There ain't no fun there—too many cops around to take a kid home if he only just goes for a walk.”

“Say, Miss Mary,” broke in Reginald, “was you ever in the P'lice Station? Me an' Perc was wunst when we was in Winnipeg. We just went down the street a little ways an' 'long comes a cop an' says, ‘Say, son, does your mother know you're out?’ An' I says, ‘No, does yours?’ An' he just laughed and ast us where did we live and we says Elba,

an' then he says, ' Well, wouldn't youse kids like to take a walk with me ? ' An' then we went right to the P'lice Station, an' when we got there a man says to our cop, ' I'll eat my hat if them ain't the young divils a Mrs. Mills has been 'phon-ing about. Better have a good time when you're here, kids, because when your Ma gets you she'll be so darn glad that she'll well nigh lick the hides off of you.' "

" You bet she did, too," added Percival, with a reminiscent twinge.

Mary answered them, with deep regret, that she must go home as soon as I was called for, but she made them both promise to visit her when next they went to Winnipeg. Poor Mrs. Arnold !

But to go back. Yesterday at noon, after three hours of uneventful travel through uninteresting country, Mary and I reached Elba. I do not blame Napoleon for leaving his Elba as soon as possible if it was at all like its Canadian namesake. In spite of my unromantic nature, I had

pictured the scene of my labours as a cosy farm-house, nestling among tree-clad hills, where I should enjoy the freedom of Canadian life coupled with the comfort and refinement of England. But the picture vanished, never to return in its full beauty, when I saw Elba.

Flat prairie as far as I could see in three directions, and in the fourth a few scattered poplar bluffs, with the merciless noon-day sun searching out—as only the Canadian sun can—all the bareness and crudity of the little village that at first I scarcely noticed, so strong was the spell of the prairies upon me . . . that is, Elba.

The Corporate Village of Elba consists of three grain elevators (why “elevators” I cannot tell, for they are merely store-houses for corn—grain, I should say—but their dominating height draws all eyes to them, so there is probably some psychological reason for the name); one “General Store,” which I shall describe later; two agencies for agricultural machinery; a blacksmith’s shop; a bank

no larger than a good-sized packing-case—in fact, Mary looked for the address tag; and two or three houses. The station is a superannuated goods-van, one end of which is fitted up as an office and made impressive by the telegraph instrument, a copy of the Homestead Regulations, and a safe, and in the other end the station-master lives.

“The carriage waits, my lady,” said Mary as we stepped off the train; and then I saw, at the end of the platform farthest from the engine, a typical western conveyance—a two-seated light wagon to which was harnessed a pair of handsome but only half-broken horses. The driver did not seem to be at all disturbed by the way in which they reared and plunged, for he talked over his shoulder to the station-master most of the time while the train waited, only occasionally addressing an uncomplimentary but apparently soothing remark to his horses.

My heart sank as I thought of trusting my precious life—to say nothing of my

camera—to the tender mercies of such a careless driver and his Wild West Show steeds, but I hope I showed no timidity as I asked him if he were from the Fiske farm.

“No,” he replied; “I don’t think that any of the Fiskes are in town to-day.”

“That is strange!” said I. “I telegraphed them to meet me.”

At this the station-master turned to me. “There is a telegram for Mrs. Fiske lying in the office,” he volunteered—“it has been there since yesterday morning; and if it is yours they will not know that you are coming to-day.” Then, seeing my look of dismay, he added, “Their man will be in with butter to-morrow, and when he comes I’ll tell him that you are here. We have a boarding-house in Elba now, where you will be safe but uncomfortable, and I guess you can put up with it for one night.”

I looked at Mary and she looked at me, and then we both laughed. The men smiled in sympathy, and a bulldog that had been dozing on the platform wakened,

and gazed at me with a condescending air that said, plainer than words, "I told you so." At last I realized that I was in the Canada of my dreams.

"Where is the boarding-house?" asked Mary. "Within walking distance, I presume?"

Without taking any notice of the reflection upon the size of Elba, the station-master picked up our bags and lifted them into the back of the wagon. "Livingstone, here, goes right past the house, and he can drive you over," he said.

"Livingstone" now awoke to a sense of his duty. "Yes, get right in. Sorry I'm not going Fiske's way, so that I could take you out."

Again I felt that England and the conventions were far away; but remembering old Jane's comforting proverb to the effect that you may as well be killed for a sheep as a lamb, and also realizing that there was really nothing else to do, I accepted the invitation and Mary and I "got right in."

We were hardly seated when the train started with even more than the usual noise, and the horses immediately tried to climb the elevator that stood a few feet to one side of the road. I clutched Mary's arm and choked back a scream. And when order was restored, "Livingstone" turned to us and said, apologetically but calmly, "I'll have to put these brutes on the plough, they are a trifle fresh." A trifle fresh!—our lazy old pony and the staid carriage-horses Mrs. Carstone used to send for "the Rectory ladies" have left me with many things to learn, I can plainly see. How glad I am that I did not scream!

We were only a few moments reaching our destination, which was a fairly large two-storey wooden building, unpainted, but weather-stained to a lovely grey shade. A stout, energetic-looking woman came out as we drove up and welcomed us with a smile that would have put the Cheshire cat to shame.

"My, but I'm powerful glad to see you!

K I haven't had ladies to stay in my house since I came to Elba." And she helped us down, for "Livingstone" could not leave the horses that were a trifle fresh.

Then I turned to our driver, "Your charge?" But he became a beautiful terra-cotta colour, and with a hurried "The obligation is mine," he touched the horses with the whip and was off in a cloud of dust before I could decide whether he was offended, amused, or only shy.

Mrs. Mills (she had introduced herself by a graceful wave of her hand towards the sign-board, "I'm her") laughed aloud.

"Good Land, if that ain't the funniest thing I ever seen! Don Livingstone has got more money than you could shake a stick at, an' to think that you offered to pay him!" And she went off into another spasm.

"My friend has not been in the country long, and she does not understand all our ways," explained Mary with dignity.

"No offence, Miss, no offence! But

come right in. You'll be tired with your trip, an' a bite of dinner won't hurt you none, I'll warrant," said Mrs. Mills. And she caught up a bag in each hand and hurried inside, Mary and I following with becoming meekness.

The room we entered was large and airy, but beyond that little can be said in its favour. The floor was bare and none too clean, the walls were unplastered. The furniture consisted of a long narrow table, several chairs painted a bright yellow, and a stove that gave no evidence of having been polished since it left the factory. This was apparently the dining-room, for the end of the table was covered with a turkey-red cloth and laid for one.

Mrs. Mills never ceased talking.

"I'll have some dinner ready in a jiffy. Mr. Hartford—him as is the English Church missionary—ain't come for his yet, an' you can eat together; he'll be glad of company. Come right upstairs with me now and lay off your hats. Do you want one room or two?"

“One will do,” said Mary. “We shall be here for only one night and we should like to be together.”

“You could just as easy have two,” replied Mrs. Mills, as she preceded us up the open stairs which rose from one side of the room. “Room’s about all we’ve got here, and we’ve got lots of it—inside an’ out. This house was built last summer when the railroad was being put through. All the men in the construction camp got their meals here an’ some of the bosses slep’; but business is slow now, an’ if it wasn’t for the few steady boarders I’ve got, I’d be down an’ out. But it’s all in the game, an’ the Lord helps them what helps themselves, an’ they do say that an elevator gang is coming here next month, an’ that will help the exchequer some, as Mr. Mills used to say.” Mrs. Mills is apparently a philosopher in her own way.

“There’s two empty rooms, an’ you can have whichever one you want. Seeing as it’s for ladies, I could wish they were

more fancy like, but you'll sleep just as good I guess, Miss—— Land sakes! I'm that rattled that I clean forgot to ask your names!"

We gave the required information and then entered the first room. It contained an iron bed, a washstand on which was a basin and jug, and a small and uncomplimentary mirror. These things were what one might call the physical features, but in addition we saw two suitcases, rather the worse for wear, and—hanging on the row of hooks that did duty as wardrobe—several suits of men's clothes. Immediately the room took on a personality and I asked to see the other one.

"Them things," said Mrs. Mills in reply to my look of inquiry, "belongs to a drummer" ("Travelling salesman," whispered Mary) "what stayed here for a week in the winter. I suspicioned from his looks that he weren't none too honest—he was one of them kind that his eyes would have run together if it hadn't been for his nose—an' sure enough, first thing

I knew he had went off on the afternoon train without paying his bill.”

We crossed the hall to the second room, which was furnished in the same manner as the first one, but which showed no traces of its former occupants.

“This will do nicely,” I said. “And now, Mrs. Mills, if you could let us have dinner at once . . .”

“Bless your heart! I’m so glad to see a new face that I’d talk all day if somebody didn’t put the brakes on,” she interrupted. “But, being as you’ve reminded me, I’ll go now. Come down to the dining-room just as soon as you’re ready.” And with this she hurried away.

In less time than it takes to write about it, Mary had opened her bag and taken from it a cake of soap and a roll of paper towels and raised the window to its full height; and then by a judicious distribution of our worldly goods she gave the room an almost homelike air.

“Wash your face and hands and tuck up your truant locks, Elinor,” she advised.

“ And don't forget Mennens—an English Church missionary sounds rather interesting. Aside from its efficacy in the matter of sunburn, talcum powder is a great moral support.”

As usual, I followed Mary's advice; and then sought in vain for a place in which to empty the water so that Mary might have her turn.

“ What do you suppose an unscreened window is intended for ? ” asked that inventive young person. “ Here, hand me the basin,” and before I realized what she meant to do, she had spilled the water out of the window.

“ Well,” drawled a pleasant English voice from the ground below, “ what tricks are you young scamps up to now ? When I was a youth I was taught to respect the clergy, but in this enterprising country . . . ”

I heard no more.

“ Oh, Mary,” I gasped, “ that must be Mr. Hartford ! Do you think you hit him ? ”

“I don’t think so,” she replied coolly, “and even if I did he will soon dry in this hot sunshine. Probably he was sent out here by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen, and in that case he would expect scalping, at least—a little bit of cold water will not hurt him.”

VI

ELBA,
June 21st, 19—.

ONCE upon a time in the dim and distant past, when I was eighteen, I wrote a story and sent it to *The Young Churchman*. After several weeks it was returned to me, with a fatherly letter from the editor in which he regretted that he was unable to use it, because, "while it was of undoubted merit, it lacked serial value." I have since reached the conclusion that a story possessing serial value is one in which the chapters, like Sam Weller's valentine, pull up sudden so you wish there was more. Taking this as a standard, I feel sure that even the editor of *The Young Churchman* would commend what I wrote this morning. The credit is wholly due to Mrs. Mills, how-

ever, for she called me to dinner just at the psychological moment.

But to continue my chronicle of yesterday's happenings.

It was with fear and trembling that I descended to the dining-room. Mrs. Mills was coming in from the kitchen as we entered. In one hand she carried a platter of broiled chicken, and in the other a blue enamelled teapot.

“Just set down, Miss Eliot, an' you too, Miss Arnold, an' eat your chicken afore it gets cold. I hope you both fancy fowl. I ain't got anywheres to keep meat in the hot weather, an' so when company comes unbeknownst, I just pops out an' kills a rooster an' has a good meal ready in a jiffy. These here fowls were running around the yard as pert as you please half an hour ago. When I first come to Elba you couldn't get fowls for love or money, an' what eggs you could buy at the store had to have their necks wrung before you could cook them. I was raised back east where chickens an' eggs is as plentiful as

dirt, an' so I soon changed that—made the desert to blossom like a rose, as you might say."

"Dinner ready?" interrupted a familiar voice from the kitchen.

"The young ladies are just setting down, Mr. Hartford," replied our hostess. "Don't wait to give your hands a rinse, even; this chicken's fit for a king now an' I want you to eat it while it's fresh."

My heart was in my boots and Mary's eyes were dancing as the owner of the voice appeared.

"These here are Miss Eliot and Miss Arnold, Mr. Hartford." (Mrs. Mills had assumed her society manner, but she dropped it at once.) "Miss Eliot's the tall one with the pink cheeks—she's a countryman of yours, I reckon. An' the little one is Miss Arnold, an' if she ain't cut out of the same piece as them two young ones of mine you can call me Dinnis." And we found ourselves shaking hands with a middle-aged man instead of with

the raw curate we had expected. "Just make yourselves at home; I got some baking to do. Holler if you want anything." With this parting injunction the worthy Rebecca took herself off, and left me to do the honours of the table.

Mary's disappointment did not seem to affect her appetite—the way in which that chicken disappeared was a marvel. But a greater marvel still, Mr. Hartford went to Oriel with Father! What a small world this is, after all! And what a platitude that is! Of course Mr. Hartford is much younger than Father, and they did not know each other intimately; but in spite of these little drawbacks he made me feel that I had met an old friend, and almost before I was aware of what I was doing I had told him why I had come to Canada and what I intended to do while here.

And all the while I could *feel* Mary's impish smile, although her face bore the innocent expression of a cherub. One of her theories is that "an English girl

will fall for a clergyman every time, walk right up and eat out of his hand." I love Mary's metaphors.

Mr. Hartford is a singularly handsome man, with a grave expression that is contradicted by the humorous twist of his mouth and the twinkle in his grey eyes. Mary says that all he needs to make him a perfect hero for a romantic novel is a disappointment in love which has driven him to seek oblivion in the wild and woolly west. He may have a tragic past, though I doubt it, but the immediate cause of his sojourn in Canada was an attack of typhoid fever which left him unfit for work in his London parish. While he was still only convalescent he was reached by one of the periodic appeals of the Canadian Church for men to work in the mission fields, and as soon as he was able to travel he volunteered for a year. He has now been in Elba for six months, and every trace of his illness has vanished, the credit, he declares, being half due to Canadian air

and sunshine and half to Mrs. Mills's cooking.

He knows the Fiskes, although they do not attend his church. He tells me that they are quite wealthy for people in their position, but totally uneducated—with the exception of the youngest child, a girl who has been to school in Winnipeg and who tries to give a polish to the manners of the family. A pleasing prospect for me, is it not?

“While we are gossiping about our neighbours,” said Mary, “can you tell us anything about the young man who brought us from the station?”

“Livingstone? Well, not much about him, for he is only here for a visit. He has a big ranch in southern Alberta. But the family are fine people—‘the other kind of Canadians.’” (This with a mischievous glance in Mary's direction.) “They are Presbyterians, but as the Presbyterians have only one service a day, they often come to St. George's in the evening. Mrs. Livingstone is a dear old

lady, very proud of her descent from 'the MacDonalds of Glencoe,' and prouder still of 'my son Ian MacDonald,' the Don of your acquaintance."

After dinner Mary and I decided to "do" Elba. As we were about to leave the house, Mrs. Mills called to us to wait for a few minutes and she would go with us as she had some shopping to do. With the promise of such a guide of course we waited, and in ten minutes the three of us were walking down Elba's main and only street.

By this time I had decided that it would be wise to tell our hostess my business in Elba, for I could see that she was consumed with curiosity. I shall never forget her expression when I told her that I was going to the Fiske farm as a working companion.

"Land sakes! I'm that flabbergasted that I wellnigh swallowed my false teeth. *You* a working companion—why, that in plain Canadian means 'hired girl,' nothing more nor less! An' for Arabella

Fiske of all people! When we were kids back east we used to go to school together, an' of all stupid creatures she was the worst."

After a minute's pause, during which a retrospective smile relieved her bewildered expression, Mrs. Mills continued:

"When we were older an' John Fiske come west, I wrote every last letter he ever got from Arabella. She couldn't write fit to be seen, nor spell, an' her grammar was something fierce. They had always kep' company more or less, but I declared to goodness that it was my letters what brought him to the point. An' just you mark my words, there ain't nothing like a little encouraging to bring a man around.

"I remember once Arabella come to me in an awful fix.

"'Rebecca,' says she, 'I'm scared to death that John is catching on! In his last letter he says that he hardly knows me in my letters, them being so easy an' conversational like.'

“But I says to her, ‘Don’t you fret none, Arabella; I’ll make *that* all right.’

“So the next time I wrote to John I says that I, meaning Arabella, am one of them mute unglorious Miltons what we used to have in our old Fifth Reader, but that when I take my pen in hand my foot is on its native heath. Pretty good, wasn’t it?”

“Lovely!” responded Mary enthusiastically, “and what did John say?”

“Oh,” said Mrs. Mills, “he says that a mute unglorious Milton is just what he’s been looking for, an’ that spring was coming on an’ he had hired a lot of men an’ couldn’t get a cook, an’ would she marry him right away? I was their bridesmaid. They had a swell wedding.”

“But here we are at the store. Walk right in and I’ll introduce you to all the folks—nothing like being sociable in a small town.”

Coming after Eaton’s, the Elba Beehive was something of a shock; but I must admit that it fitted in with my pre-

conceived ideas of Canada much better than did the former place. In Elba, and I suppose in other small towns and villages, the "general store" is market, grocery, draper's shop, post-office, and club, all in one. The shelves contain a varied assortment of goods; and the chairs, stools, and empty boxes an equally varied assortment of humanity. Of the last mentioned I was most interested in an Indian woman, and a small boy who was gazing with longing eyes at a glass-stoppered—and long unwashed—bottle which held deadly-appearing but evidently desirable sweets.

After we had been introduced to the shopkeeper, his wife—who is also post-mistress—the clerk, and two farmers and their wives, Mrs. Mills gave her order, while Mary and I listened respectfully to a heated discussion which had for its subject the various virtues and vices of the Roblin Government.

"I tell you what," said one man, "the Agricultural College is the only good

thing the Conservatives ever gave us,—don't talk telephones to me ! ”

This reminded me that I had left Winnipeg without seeing the far-famed Agricultural College.

Mrs. Mills had now finished her purchasing, and after she had asked for her mail and left word for the Fiskes' man to call for me this evening, we proceeded on our way.

“ Another of them machinery duns, ” X
remarked our guide in a resigned tone of voice as she sorted out her letters. “ An' three letters for Mr. Hartford—two of them looks like they might be from ladies. Queer, ain't it, that he never got married, an' him such a fine-looking man ? ”

“ I hope you will pardon me if I am rude, Mrs. Mills, ” said I, “ but would you mind telling me what a ' machinery dun ' is ? I do not think that I have ever heard the phrase until now. ”

“ A machinery dun, ” she began, and I knew instantly that I had blundered upon

an unpleasant subject, "is a written request to put up or shut up. Them darn drummers comes around in the spring an' sells the farmers a whole caboodle of machinery they could just as well do without, an' takes notes due at harvest time. Well, perhaps when fall comes the crop has been bad or you can't get cars to ship your grain, an' then the firm begins to write polite letters threatening to seize everything you've got if you don't pay up immediate. If we ever get votes for women in this country, I'll bet my bottom dollar that there'll be a law made so that men can't buy machinery without their wives agree to it. It's a different story if a woman wants something to make *her* work easier!"

"I beg your pardon," I said as soon as she paused for breath. "I should not have mentioned the subject had I known that it was one on which you felt so strongly."

"Oh, it don't bother me particular," she replied, "except that I do hate to

see men make such fools of themselves, an' then their wives an' kids have got to suffer for it. You'll be wondering how I happened to get a dunning letter, so I'll just tell you how it come about. I like to have somebody to talk to, but these Elba women are such awful gossips that I hate to say a word to them. Sometimes I get so full up that I feel fit to bust right out into high-stericks.

“You'd probably never guess it, but I was only married three years ago. ^x Reginald an' Percival ain't my children at all, though I'm just as fond of the poor kids as if they were.

“About five years ago Pa died back east, an' being as I had lived on the same forty acres all my life, I was so sick of it that I just sold every stick an' come west for a visit to my brother in Winnipeg, an' later on I come out here to see John and Arabella Fiske.

“Mr. Mills had a farm in these parts then, an' him being laid up with a broke collar-bone, Arabella used to go over

pretty often an' red up the house for him. He was a real interesting man to talk to—English, an' they do say that he has some letters to his name—but that shiftless! I used to be so sorry for them poor motherless kids that I'd like to have cried—they was just growing up like young Injuns; an' when he got better an' asked me would I marry him, I said yes. The folks around here says that an Ontario old maid will marry anything that calls itself a man; but, as true as I live, it weren't to hear myself called Missis that I married Mr. Mills, but because I'm that tender-hearted I can't bear to see them handless men trying to fend for themselves an' bring up kids.

“ Well, things went fine for a while. Mr. Mills was always a perfect gentleman, I'll say that for him. But one day there come a letter from the American Implement Company saying as how they'd heard that Mr. Mills had married a woman with money, an' would I do anything towards paying up his debts for machinery

—enough to run *three* farms, there was. An' if we didn't pay up at once they'd take back the goods an' foreclose the mortgage on the farm. An' that man had told me before ever we was married that he hadn't no debts to speak of, an' that he had a clear title to his farm !

“That fixed me. I wrote back to the company an' paid for the buggy we was using, but I told them that's all I would do, an' that there wasn't nothing on the place they could seize except Mills himself, an' they could have him an' welcome. An' then me an' Mr. Mills had what you might call a heart-to-heart talk, an' the result was that one day he cleared out an' went to Winnipeg, an' I ain't seen nor heard of him since. The firm foreclosed the mortgage an' of course we had to get off the farm, so I bought this here boarding-house, an' with the help of the Lord an' plenty of elbow-grease I've managed to keep things going an' them two poor kids is going to have their chance.”

There were tears in the good woman's

eyes as she finished. I shall never laugh at her grammar again. But the mixture of tragedy and comedy, philosophy and common-sense, is rather disconcerting.

“You’ll both be thinking that I’m an awful talker,” she said after a short pause. “But I’ve got one thing more to say, Miss Eliot, an’ you too, Miss Arnold. If ever you have a notion of getting married to a man, just go to the Land Titles Office an’ have a search made to see if his property is clear. It’ll only cost you a dollar or so, an’ it’s worth it.”

After we had returned to the “Palace” I wrote letters until tea-time, while Mary went in search of the twins, found them—digging fishworms in the back garden, ugh!—and made them her willing slaves for life. Mary “has a way with her” that makes me break the Tenth Commandment.

While we were having tea, Mr. Hartford told us that it was his custom to hold Evensong every evening. This custom scandalizes the good people of Elba, who

consider it a weak imitation of the forms and ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church. (It has just occurred to me that, so far as my feminine mind can grasp the situation, the average Canadian looks upon the Roman Catholic Church as a political party rather than as a religious body.) So when tea was over Mary and I, at Mary's suggestion, helped Mrs. Mills to wash the dishes and then we took her to church with us.

Mr. Hartford tells us that he has not seen a nicer village church in Manitoba than St. George's, so perhaps a description of it will not be out of place. To begin with, it is very tiny—a hundred people would fill it to overflowing, I am sure. To a height of four or five feet the walls are of stone, and above that they are covered with shingles stained a warm brown colour. The green roof has a low pitch, and the eaves project, the latter feature giving the building a homely, settled appearance painfully lacking in the usual Canadian church architecture.

Most Canadian roofs seem to be half a size smaller than the buildings they cover. The inside of the church is very plain, but all the furnishings are of good quality and in good taste. I cannot become reconciled to the clear glass windows, but there is something to be said in their favour when the evening sunlight floods all the building.

I slept without rocking that night, and dreamed that I was in our own church at home. Mr. Hartford was reading the lessons; while Father sat in the front pew and beamed approval. Arthur, meanwhile, was engaged in the laudable occupation of carving our initials—his and mine—on the chancel rail, and I was in agony lest Mr. Hartford should discover what he was doing.

Mary, whose train leaves in an hour, is hovering around, and I think from her expression that she has a few last words of advice to administer.

No, I do *not* wish that I were going back to Winnipeg with her!

VII

FISKE FARM, ELBA,
June 24th, 19—.

IN spite of Mrs. Arnold's prediction, I am not in a state of mental and physical collapse. Neither have I, since I reached the Fiske Farm, scrubbed the floors, done the washing, milked twelve cows, or cooked the dinner in a red-hot kitchen full of flies. In passing I might say that Mrs. Fiske's kitchen is the coolest and most delightful room in the house, and as for flies—why, even one fly would give her nervous prostration!

To be exact, I have just finished correcting several Latin exercises for Miss Fiske—christened Orvetta, known as Orvetty on Sundays, and as Gypsy on week-days. That does not appear as if I were a plain hired girl, does it?

I was listening with due attention to

Mary's farewell lecture on Tuesday when a war-whoop from Percival made me jump in a manner most humiliating to one who prides herself on a total lack of nerves.

"Gee, here's Gypsy Fiske in the auto! Come on, Reg." And the two boys, shouting a hearty welcome to the evidently popular unknown, clattered down the stairs.

"Brethren, my time is come," announced Mary solemnly. "This is positively your last chance to escape, Elinor. If your heart fails you now, tell me quickly and I shall inform the unknown Gypsy that *I* am Miss Elinor Eliot—and I wonder how long they would stand *me* as a working companion?"

"Don't be silly, Mary," I replied. "One would think to hear you that I am going into some awful danger."

"Well, doesn't such a combination as Gypsy Fiske and an automobile strike you as being dangerous?" she retorted.

"Come right up, Orvetty," we heard Mrs. Mills's voice from the stairs; "the

young ladies are in the setting-room. My, I like them auto bonnets! Do you think one of them would become me? A red one, say, with perhaps a bit of a feather on it? I was always partial to red."

"Young ladies?" questioned another voice. "I thought . . ."

"Hush-sh," returned Mrs. Mills as she opened the door.

Gypsy, alias Orvetta, Fiske deserves a paragraph to herself.

My first thought as she entered the room behind Mrs. Fiske was that she was the handsomest girl I had ever seen—not pretty, really handsome—and after watching her for the greater part of the time for three days I have not changed my mind. Why didn't Mr. Hartford warn me, I wonder? She is taller than I (five feet nine, I should say), and beautifully proportioned. Her hair is black, the soft, dusky black, as are her eyebrows and lashes, and she has the thick creamy skin that sun and wind do not mark. But her eyes are the most wonderful part

of all, wide-set, tilted just the least bit at the corners—and black? not a bit of it, but the bluest of blue.

I am sure that Mrs. Mills enjoyed the politely concealed wonder with which we three girls met each other.

For a few minutes we discussed the weather, crop prospects, my impressions of Canada, and other kindred themes. And then it was time for Mary to go to the station.

Miss Fiske took us all in the motor-car, which she drives for herself. She and Mrs. Mills occupied the front seat, Mary and I the back one, and the twins were overjoyed to be allowed to ride on the running-board. If Mr. Livingstone's horses were a trifle fresh, Miss Fiske's car was truly verdant. I had time for only one gasp before we were at the station. Elba is not so populous that speed regulations are necessary, and the street was clear, so we did not break anything.

It is the custom in Elba for all the inhabitants thereof to see the east-bound

train out of town. Mary says that she can now sympathize with royalty. Miss Fiske very thoughtfully kept Mrs. Mills and the boys occupied, so Mary and I were able to say good-bye in comparative privacy.

It was a very solemn Elinor who took her place in the motor-car after the train had carried Mary out of sight. The boys begged to sit in front and blow the horn, so Mrs. Mills came behind with me. "Don't you fret none," she said sympathetically under cover of the blood-curdling shrieks of the siren; "you'll be all right with Arabella, an' Gypsy's a real nice girl."

At five o'clock Miss Fiske and I left for the farm, which is four miles from Elba. We went in the direction of the few trees I had seen, and I found that they followed the course of a little river known as "Livingstone's Creek." Miss Fiske drove slowly, and as we passed each farm-house she gave me a short history of the family that lived in it.

But I could see that, in spite of her air of unconcern, she was not at her ease. At last she blurted out :

“Miss Eliot, do you know what a working companion’s duties are? I mean . . .” and here her courage failed her.

“Well,” I replied, glad that the ice was broken, “I thought at one time that I did, but it seems now that I must have been mistaken. But I shall do my best, and perhaps your mother and I can make some satisfactory arrangement. I shall certainly not go back on my bargain now.”

“The trouble is that Mother had very little to do with it,” Miss Fiske answered. “I am the one responsible.”

And then she told me how it was that they had advertised for a working companion rather than for a general servant.

“Mother is going to Ontario for a visit this summer,” she began, “and she will not leave me without a woman to keep me company. And even if I could stay

alone I could not manage all the work—we have six men to cook for, besides all the general housework.

“But you simply cannot imagine how hard it is to get anyone to work for you in the country. Since I have been away to school Mother has had one girl after another. All the nice ones get married in a few months and the others are—awful! The last one we had got drunk on a bottle of horse-liniment and nearly killed herself. And the one before that was a homesick German who cried all the time, and after six weeks eloped with a travelling butcher. And the one before that ‘wasn’t used to kitchen work’; all she could do was dust, and set the table fit for a banquet.

“So I just told Mother that I had to have someone who could be a companion to me while she was away, and I wrote the advertisement. When your letter came I picked it right out of the bunch. ‘That’s the one I want, Dad,’ I said. You see, we never thought of asking, and

you never thought of giving, your age. I made up my mind that you were one of those nice, capable, middle-aged English-women who had perhaps been somebody's housekeeper for twenty years or so."

I laughed. "I hope my application did not give you such a false impression," I said.

"I was just looking for false impressions," Miss Fiske replied. "When Dad said that you did not seem to have had the sort of experience that we wanted, and that he'd bet you were a lady that never done a day's work in your life—because you said 'shall' where we would say 'will'—I told him that I was going to have you anyway. You see," she finished apologetically, "I am the youngest of the family and the only girl, and I suppose I *am* spoiled."

After this explanation we talked with less constraint, and by the time we reached the farm I had classified Miss Gypsy as a new and very interesting specimen.

John Fiske is the proud owner of a

model farm, and as such he has been photographed and interviewed for all the agricultural journals in the province. Unlike most of the farm homes we had passed, this one is surrounded by trees, the native poplars and Balm of Gileads, and magnificent Scotch firs that were planted thirty years ago by Mrs. Fiske ^x when she came here a bride. The house stands on a natural terrace, and below this is a level stretch of lawn which reaches to the bank of the little river. At a good distance from the house are the barns and other outbuildings, among the latter being a galvanized-iron garage as obviously new as its owners.

“We’ll just drive around to the kitchen door,” said Miss Fiske. “Mother will likely be getting supper ready.”

Mrs. Fiske came to meet us and welcomed me kindly, but I could see that she too was rather surprised by my appearance. I am beginning to think that I must have an awfully helpless look!

“Just set here a minute,” she said, after

we had been introduced, "while Orvetty takes the car to the garage." (She pronounces "garage" to rhyme with "carriage.") "I daren't leave these potatoes long enough to take you upstairs."

Mrs. Fiske is a fine-looking woman, and it is evidently from her that Gypsy inherits her beautiful skin and odd colouring. But it is also quite evident that Mrs. Mills's description of her as the stupidest critter she ever knew is not far wrong. Mrs. Mills probably did the best she could with a limited vocabulary, but if I were asked to describe Mrs. Fiske in one word, that word would be "bovine."

Gypsy came back in a few minutes and we went upstairs together. As we stood on the landing to admire the view, Mrs. Fiske called Gypsy back. In a moment she returned to me, smiling.

"Mother said I was to ask you if you would rather have the spare bedroom than the one that the other girls have had. I think that you will like the hired girl's room best—I know I do. Did you

ever sleep on a feather tick in a room that is decorated by ten years' Christmas presents ? ”

I was obliged to admit that such a pleasure was still in store for me, and also that I would prefer to occupy the room that had been prepared for me. I have seen the feather tick and the Christmas presents since, and I think I chose wisely.

I was surprised to learn that the house contained a very up-to-date bathroom, the water for which is pumped by a gasoline engine from a well in the basement.

At the tea-table I met Mr. Fiske and the son, Fred. There is another son, the eldest of the family, who is married and living on a place of his own not far away. Gypsy tells me that Fred is to be married at Christmas, to the district school-teacher, and she adds that a teacher is as hard to keep in the country as a servant. x

Mr. Fiske has four “hired men,” but they do not have their meals with the

family. In the old house, where room was at a premium, they did so; but now, at the risk of being called a snob, Mrs. Fiske sets the family table in the dining-room and the men eat in the kitchen. I have not read a great many stories of farm life in America, but in all that I have read the awkward labourer eating peas with a knife was one of the indispensable properties. Another illusion vanished.

When the evening work was done, Mr. and Mrs. Fiske and Gypsy and I met in the parlour to discuss my affairs.

Before I go any farther I must describe that parlour, the queerest mixture of good and bad taste that I have ever seen. A very good carpet was on the floor; and white lace curtains, elaborately draped and held in place by bows of red ribbon, covered the windows. The plush-covered "parlour suite" was made all the more glaring by a few pieces of really good oak. The pictures ranged from the Pears' Soap school in massive gilt frames to properly

mounted sepia prints. And at one end of the room was a mirror-set organ, while at the other was the player-piano which was a birthday gift from Mr. Fiske to his daughter. In the midst of all this grandeur sat Mr. Fiske himself, coatless and collarless.

Gypsy broke the silence.

“I guess you were right about Miss Eliot, Dad. I’m sorry I was so stubborn. But can’t she stay and visit me until you find a really truly hired girl?”

“That is for Miss Eliot to say,” Mr. Fiske replied with a kindly smile.

“Oh, I should love to stay, even if I did come under false pretences,” I hastened to say; “but only if you will let me help around the house. I can do a few things, you know.”

“Well, Mother, what do you say?” asked Mr. Fiske.

“I’d be real glad to have you stay, Miss Eliot,” replied his wife. “Gypsy don’t seem to take to the neighbours’ girls, an’ I often think that she must get

lonely here all day with no young folks to talk to."

"Hurray!" exclaimed Gypsy. "I'm not such a dismal failure as an employment agent after all, am I?" And she hugged first her father and then her mother—and then gave me a shy little squeeze too!

So I wrote to Mrs. Arnold at once and told her that I should be here as Gypsy Fiske's *guest* for a couple of weeks, and then I felt that I could "turn right in and have a good time," according to Mr. Fiske's instructions.

For the benefit of philologists let me record that "right" is the most over-worked word in the Canadian vocabulary.

VIII

FISKE FARM, ELBA,
June 28th, 19—.

It is a week to-day since I came here, and I can truly say that I am having a "real good time." My only troubles are that I want to eat everything in sight, and that I am too sleepy by half-past nine to do any writing. My early sleepiness is the direct result of early rising. The day begins for us at the barbarous hour of five-thirty, except on wash-day, when we celebrate by making it five o'clock sharp!

I hope you remark the editorial "we." I am beginning to feel as if I had a part interest in the farm, for, in accordance with my wish, I am not being used as a visitor but as one of the family.

On Monday we wash, and make bread. Tuesday, we iron, and make butter.

Wednesday is a "slack" day. Thursday, we make bread. Friday, we make butter, and sweep and dust the whole house. Saturday, we prepare for Sunday—that means that we bake pies and cake enough to feed a regiment, for the Fiskes keep open house on Sunday.

Like the comic supplement orator, I can point with pride to my share in each of these tasks. Mrs. Fiske, model housewife that she is, went so far as to tell her husband that she never saw another English girl who was "so handy"!

I helped with the washing, and to-day I covered myself with glory by ironing some beautiful embroidery as well as Mrs. Fiske herself could have done it.

On churning day I haunt the dairy, a lovely cool stone building with an earthen floor. I turned the churn for a while, but found the task rather too strenuous to please me, so my dairying activities are principally confined to drinking unlimited quantities of buttermilk and making the fresh butter into little cakes for the table.

To do the latter I use a wooden mould on which is carved a sheaf of wheat—I have not had so good a time since I used to make mud pies.

I always did love to putter around in the kitchen, so on Saturday I was able to win more laurels by making some real English pastry and two big pans of toffee. Of course I burned my arm on the oven door, and the kitchen table was a sight to behold when I finished; but my guardian angel must have taken a course in Domestic Science at some time. Each of my ventures has proved successful. I try to look as if such a result is quite what I expected: I am not going to admit that I am not always so lucky.

For amusement Gypsy and I weed the onion bed, hunt for wild strawberries, and last, but not least amusing, go to the hen-house to look for eggs. Gypsy has a genuine Red-Riding-Hood basket which she has used to carry eggs in ever since she was big enough to hold it. I use the pocket of a big gingham apron. I had a

thrilling experience the very first day. I had found six eggs, and as I went to take the seventh out of a nest a miserable old suffragette flew off the perch, and, screaming "Help! Robbers!! Police!!!" landed almost on top of me. Of course I jumped, and dropped the eggs, which made themselves into an impromptu omelet. And Gypsy, all this time, was leaning against the door, and laughing until the tears rolled down her cheeks. She has such a jolly, gurgling laugh, the sort one hears from a well-fed baby.

Then we visit the horses regularly, and the calves, and the pigs. Mr. Fiske has eight teams of farm horses and a carriage team. The latter are bronchoes, "Imp" and "Pixie." Mr. Fiske bought them from *my* late coachman Mr. Livingstone, and they are branded with his mark "B," which is read "Bar B."

The menagerie is completed by two dogs, a thoroughbred collie "Mac" and a mongrel bull-terrier "Cop," and numerous cats.

On Saturday, after my toffee had cooled, Mrs. Fiske and Gypsy and I took a pan of it and went across the fields to call on John Fiske, Junior, his wife, and, most important of all, John Fiske the Third. This young man is two plus, and when I made his acquaintance he was clad in blue overalls and a hat the exact miniature of the one usually worn by his grandfather. Young Mrs. Fiske is very nice, and her home, to my mind, is in its simplicity and good taste greatly to be preferred to the parental mansion. The house is small, but I do not believe that one could find a ribbon bow in it if one looked from cellar to attic. If I were to marry a farmer (the prayers of the congregation are desired—for the farmer), I should wish my home to be like "Firstholm."

I do not think that I have mentioned before that the original Fiske house is still in existence. It is very small, built of logs, and white-washed, and with its untrimmed rose-bushes and vines it looks like the enchanted house in a fairy-tale.

“Most of the folks around uses their old houses for a granary or a hen-house, but I couldn’t bring myself to spoil the place me an’ John fixed up when we were young,” said Mrs. Fiske almost apologetically as she pointed it out to me. There is evidently a strain of sentiment in her.

Sunday morning we went to the Methodist service, which is held in the nearest school. Gypsy, Fred, and I went in the motor-car, and Mr. and Mrs. Fiske drove Imp and Pixie.

The school was well filled and the people were very reverent, but I missed the proper atmosphere. Perhaps we Churchpeople are too dependent on atmosphere—but how is one to appreciate properly a sermon on the Prodigal Son when from the black-board behind the preacher one can read this problem?—

“A monkey climbs a pole ten feet high at the rate of two feet a minute. But for each two feet he climbs he slips back one foot. How long will it take him to reach the top of the pole?”

The preacher was a theological student, very much in earnest but very youthful. And to disrespectful me, his progress was very much like that of the above-mentioned monkey; he kept slipping back from secondly to firstly, and from thirdly to secondly, in a most distracting manner. But I must not criticize.

Mr. and Mrs. Fiske, Junior, were at church, also the little boy. John the Third scandalized the staid members of the congregation by a valiant endeavour to join in the singing—between verses. And during a long prayer he got away from his mother and hurried across the room to his grandfather, in whose arms he slept all through the sermon. He has quite won my heart. One of his funny little tricks is a complete disregard of titles: I am simply “Eliot.”

The youthful cleric, Mr. Thompson, came home to dinner with us, as did Miss Allan, the girl to whom Fred is engaged. Mr. Thompson amused me by hovering around the motor-car in a very suspicious

manner when he came out of church; but Mrs. Fiske has her own conception of the respect due to "the cloth," and she insisted that he should drive with her and Mr. Fiske.

"I don't think it's becoming for a parson to go gadding around with the young folks on a Sunday, especially in one of them autos," she said to me. "If I had my way, the car would never come out of the garage on Sunday. I was raised to go to church behind a pair of decent horses, an' I can't bring myself to countenance them noisy things."

So the poor young man had to discuss crops and theology with his orthodox parishioners, while the candle to which he played moth so transparently wasted her sweetness on me. There's a mixed metaphor for you!

When we reached the house we found the verandah occupied by the entire staff of the Union Bank. In case you may fear that there would not be dinner enough to go around, I hasten to add that the

entire staff consists of two young men who describe themselves as "Teller Up" and "Ledger Down." Teller Up, who figures on the letter-heads as manager, is a nice Irish boy answering to the delightful name of Dennis O'Hara. Ledger Down is a Canadian, Jack Milne; he is a medical student and is working his way through college without any apparent injury to either his health or his spirits. Twelve of us sat down to dinner—not quite a regiment, but a very fair beginning for one.

Mr. Thompson had to leave us immediately after dinner in order to conduct afternoon service at another "station." Teller Up and Ledger Down—whom I feel like calling Tweedledum and Tweedledee—helped Gypsy and me to wash the dishes, and when that was done we went for a long walk, coming home just in time to have an early tea before going into Elba for Evensong at St. George's.

It was good to see Mr. Hartford and Mrs. Mills again—I count them old friends.

And this time I cannot complain of a lack of the church atmosphere.

On the whole, Sunday at the Fiske farm was a pleasant and not wholly unprofitable day.

In reviewing my various duties I forgot to mention particularly the Latin lessons which I give to Gypsy whenever and wherever we can find a place for them. I am learning more than I teach, for Gypsy has an original mind. Our favourite classroom is the hayloft, and the scent of the hay must be "mellering to the organ." The first day we studied there the matter-of-fact Gypsy waxed confidential and told me her troubles quite freely. It appears that she failed in Latin in her Matriculation exams., and therefore she has to write a supplementary exam. in September before she can go on with the next term's work.

"What's the use of me learning Latin?" she objected vigorously. "It would be more to the point if somebody would teach me to talk good English. I can

pass a grammar exam. and get fairly good marks, but when I have to write an essay I am all at sea. I read a story once about a young man who didn't know how to use a finger-bowl or a pronoun, and that's Gypsy Fiske right down to the ground. Of course finger-bowls are not what you would call common in these parts, but it's pretty hard to get along without pronouns. And believe me, it's not much use to know a lot of rules when you hear them broken every day of your life. I don't say 'I done it' and 'I seen it,' but if by any chance I use the proper pronoun in one of those awkward sentences it is so unusual that it does not sound right. I nearly cried for joy the day I came to the place in West's Grammar where it says, 'We learn to speak and write correctly by mixing with well-educated people and reading well-written books.' It is such a comforting explanation. Now, I have the best father and the best mother in the world, but a polite biographer would say that

their early education had been neglected. There is a girl in our class who teaches during the holidays, and wears shabby clothes, and trims her own hats; but I'd give half my allowance to be able to talk and write like she does, just because her people always have known how to do things. Now let's have another try at that last verb!"

IX

FISKE FARM, ELBA,
July 3rd, 19—.

UNTIL July 1st, 1867, the present province of Manitoba was known as Rupert's Land, and was under the control of the Hudson's Bay Company. It was at that time principally inhabited by bears, wolves, buffaloes, Hudson's Bay employees, and other fur-bearing animals, but upon the passing of the British North America Act—by which it became a part of the Dominion of Canada—the Canadian Pacific Railway, party politics, and typhoid fever put in an appearance.

I hope you will not consider that I spoil the effect of my knowledge by admitting that it was gained at a Dominion Day picnic. I look forward with a great deal of pleasure to the time when I shall tell Mr. Arnold that I have been engaged

in historical research, and that, with my customary thoroughness, I went to the original sources for my information. The original source in this case is a dear old lady whose parents came to Canada a hundred years ago.

When one is in the West—I believe that I have been spelling West with a small “w” all this time, I apologize—it is considered the proper thing to ignore the eastern provinces, and to look upon the First of July as the birthday of Canada. Under the title of Dominion Day the anniversary is religiously commemorated by all loyal Canadians. “Sure, they must have something to celebrate!” says Mr. O’Hara. In the country the celebration usually takes the form of a picnic, and Elba, not to be behind the rest of Canada, adds a baseball match.

The picnic was held in a pretty little grove about a mile up the creek from the Fiske farm. We all went, of course, and so did everyone else in the neighbourhood. Early in the morning Gypsy motored

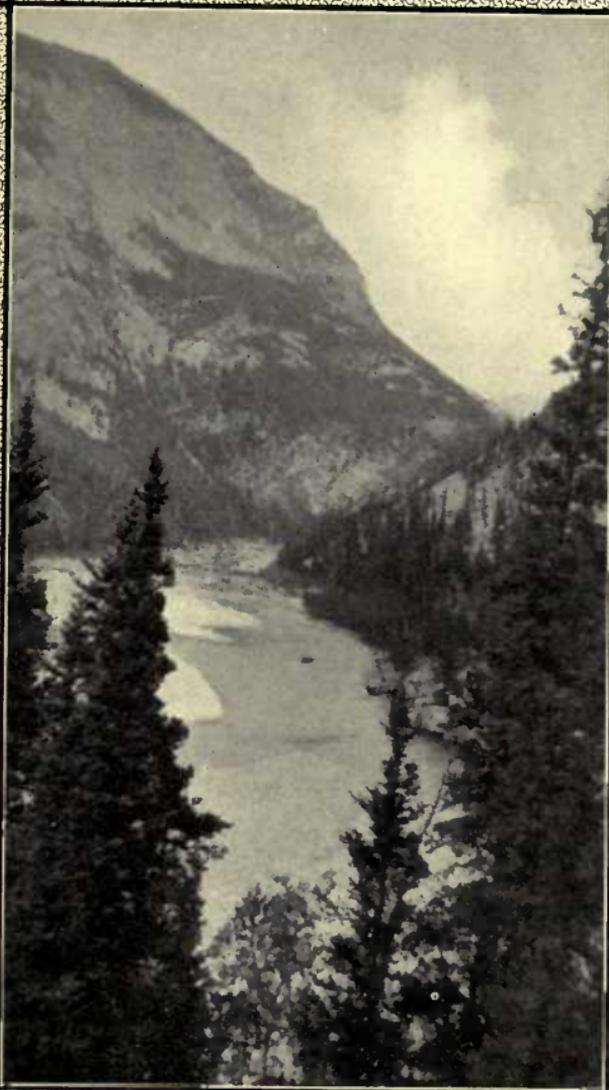
into Elba and brought out Mr. Hartford, Mrs. Mills, and Reginald and Percival. "Ours" was the only motor in evidence, and the other conveyances were of every sort imaginable, down to a heavy farm-wagon which had bare boards in place of seats. But I am sure that the people who came in the wagon were quite as happy as we; they were Cockneys who spilled "h's" all over the prairie, but more enthusiastic settlers I never saw—they will succeed.

"The Ladies' Aid Society of the Methodist Church presided over a tent and served delicious ice-cream and palatable soft drinks throughout the day." I quote from the *Suffolk Argus*. I "dished" ice-cream in the morning, while Gypsy sold lemonade—it was made in a barrel—and I should never have believed that small boys, and big ones too, could eat so much ice-cream and drink so much lemonade. When Percival came around for the fourth time I asked him if he were not afraid that he would be ill.

“Gee, no!” he replied. “Anyways, Ma always gives me an’ Reg a dose of castor oil the night after a picnic, so you might as well have your money’s worth.”

Lnucheon was served at twelve o’clock. Table-cloths were spread on the grass, and we all sat cross-legged around them, with the exception of a few elderly people, and one or two girls who were afraid of spoiling their clothes. Just after we were seated Reginald stampeded the people at our table-cloth by producing a small but very active garter-snake from his trousers pocket. I like boys, but I do not like snakes. Gypsy secured both the boy and the snake, however, and threw the latter into the creek. Reginald she intimidated by the fearful threat of “not more than one piece of pie if you don’t behave.” And Reginald “behaved”—for as much as three-quarters of an hour.

Our party consisted of the Fiskes, Mrs. Mills, Mrs. Livingstone and her daughter Margaret, Mr. Hartford, Mr. O’Hara and



*The Gap" near Lundbreck
Alberta.*

Mr. Milne, Reginald and Percival, and I myself.

Mrs. Livingstone is the mother of "Don"—he, fortunately, has gone back to his ranch—and it was she who gave me my information regarding the early days in Manitoba. She is a dear old white-haired lady, with an inexhaustible fund of stories and an equally inexhaustible fund of humour. A slight strain of Celtic mysticism only makes her all the more interesting to the younger generation. She told me of the hard times and of the good times; of the "grasshopper years," when great swarms of grasshoppers completely demolished all the crops in the Red River Valley; of the North-West Rebellion; and of her voyage to England in a sailing-vessel *via* Hudson's Bay, when she was three months *en route*.

Hardly had she paused for breath when Gypsy said coaxingly, "*Please* tell Miss Eliot about the time you tried your fortune on Hallowe'en."

"Oh, that old tale! Why, your friend

would just laugh at such foolishness," was the reply.

I added my entreaties to Gypsy's, and between us we persuaded Mrs. Livingstone to tell us the desired story, which she commenced with the mysterious air appropriate to her subject.

"We were foolish girls at the time, Miss Eliot, or we should never have tried to peer into the future," she began. "But girls will be girls, even if the Good Book does forbid witchcraft and sooth-saying.

"It is well on to sixty years ago, but I remember it as well as if it were yesterday. Margaret Livingstone—she was my husband's cousin, though he was not my husband then—had come to spend the night with me and my sister Janet. Margaret was a bright lassie, full of life and mischief. You don't see many the like of her nowadays, more's the pity. And it was her suggestion that we should learn the names of our future husbands by listening outside a neighbour's window.

Perhaps you never heard of that way of trying your fate ?

“ Father was a stern and godly man who did not approve of Hallowe’en, and that night at family worship he read in the twenty-eighth chapter of the First Book of Samuel how Saul consulted the Witch of Endor. I was the youngest of the three girls, and the least daring, and by the time the chapter was finished I was almost ready to give up the fortune-telling. Father used to pray in the Gaelic, and the long prayer that we only half understood was a great trial to us young people, but that night it seemed a short time indeed until Father rose from his knees.

“ Almost at the same moment Margaret whispered, ‘ Now, girls, put shawls over your heads and we’ll away to Sandy Black’s before your father misses us ! ’

“ I hung back for a moment. ‘ Do you think we should do it, Margaret ? ’ I asked. For I could see poor foolish Saul as plain as I see you.

“ ‘ Oh, if you’re *afraid* . . . ’ began

Margaret, and that was enough for a MacDonald.

x “Our houses were built close together in Kildonan, so my store of courage had not given out before we stood beside Sandy Black’s kitchen window. The first name spoken by the people inside was to be the name of Janet’s husband, the second the name of mine, and the third the name of Margaret’s.

“You may be sure we were very quiet, and when Mrs. Black spoke to her husband after a few minutes we all jumped

“‘Sandy,’ she said, ‘can ye no tak’ heed to what the bairns are doing?’

“Sandy was a good-natured man whose easy ways were a sore trial to his energetic wife. ‘Whisht, woman,’ he replied soothingly, ‘let the bairns have their play. They’ll be auld soon enough, eh, Donald boy?’

Here Mrs. Livingstone paused, and Gypsy, who had heard the story before and so knew what was expected of the audience, said eagerly :

“ So Sandy and Donald were the names, were they ? ”

“ That they were, my girl. And in course of time I married Donald Livingstone and Janet married Sandy Morrison ! ”

“ But what about Margaret ? ” I asked.

“ Ah! my dear, that is the strange part of the story,” and Mrs. Livingstone lowered her voice almost to a whisper. “ Mrs. Black went into the bedroom, and while we could not hear her rightly she called some question to her good man. ‘ No,’ replied he, ‘ I drew a blank.’ ”

“ How we girls did laugh at Margaret, for we read the oracle to mean that she would never marry. And, would you believe it? she never did! The man she was promised to was lost when he was out hunting, and Margaret lived and died a single woman.

“ Well, well, those were the good old days ! ” sighed Mrs. Livingstone. “ Not that I’d be advising any young folk to try their fortunes as we did, though.

The Book says, in Matthew six and thirty-four, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof,' and the Book is always right—in spite of yon higher critics. 'Higher than what?' I'd like to ask them."

X I wish that I were able to describe as it should be described the afternoon and its activities—to come back to the twentieth century.

Quoting again from the *Argus*: "Prominent citizens had, as per usual, prepared a lengthy programme of sporting events. The time-honoured and classical tug-of-war between the Bachelors and the Benedicts was rivalled in interest only by the Married Ladies' race and the Baseball throwing contest for Unmarried Ladies. The last-mentioned event was won by a newcomer to our town and country, and we congratulate Miss Elinor Eliot (late of Wilmington, England) upon her prowess. During the afternoon our local band, under the able leadership of the Reverend Bernard Hartford, of St.

George's, discoursed sweet music to the delight and edification of all assembled." There is a whole column more, but this is enough to show what the *Argus* can do when it is backed up into a corner. That last phrase is Mr. Fiske's.

Even the *Argus* cannot do justice to the Baby Show. Our Cockney friends won first prize with their ten-months-old "Hellen 'Arriet," the prize being a bank-book in which ten dollars was shown to the credit of Ellen Harriet. After a succession of mild hints and direct questions I learned that half the prize had been donated by the stationmaster and half by the Massey-Harris agent—crusty old bachelors both, if one were to judge by appearances.

And the band! It consisted of one cornet (slightly off key), a fife, two violins, a piccolo, and an accordion. And the picture of Mr. Hartford conducting this motley crew through the intricacies of "Rule, Britannia" will cheer my last hour. When they came to "Arose, arose,

arose" the fife, after one superhuman crescendo, gave out.

"Faith, that lad must be a Home Ruler," remarked Mr. O'Hara.

The baseball match, between the Town of Elba and the Early Settlers, is also beyond my powers of description. The excitement caused by it was marvellous, as was the noise made by the onlookers. Mr. O'Hara and Mr. Milne, one on each side of me, were yelling bloodthirsty directions to their favourite players, and Reginald and Percival watched the game as if the fate of empires depended on it.

"Wouldn't you enjoy it all just as much if you did not wear your throats out?" I asked Mr. Milne.

"Oh, I don't know that we should," he replied. "We Canadians are rather primitive in the expression of our emotions, you see."

I thought for a minute that he was offended, but I changed my mind when, at the next brilliant strike, he clapped his hands gently, and said, "conver-

sational like," "Jolly well played, old chap!"

The Town of Elba won. Don't ask me what the score was.

By eight o'clock that night I could have gone to sleep in an iron foundry—but I would not have missed the experiences of the day for worlds.

I return to Winnipeg to-morrow, and I shall leave Elba with sincere regret. It is probably unnecessary for me to say that I know very little more about dairying and poultry raising than I did two weeks ago. But then just think of all the other things that I have seen and learned! There are more things in heaven and earth than dairies and hens, and I am not ashamed to admit that the aforesaid dairies and hens do not play so prominent a part in my scheme of life as they once did.

Perhaps the air of Canada is unsettling. Perhaps with hens, as in other matters, familiarity breeds contempt. Perhaps—but why search for a reason? I have,

at any rate, come to the conclusion that Canada is to be preferred to even a model dairy, Canadians to the most fascinating of hens, and human interest to bank interest.

Some day I shall have my farm, but for a few months at least I shall indulge my wanderlust and take with thankfulness all the adventures the Fates are pleased to send. It is still my intention to obtain a position as working companion. I consider that in this way I can best get to the heart of Canadian life. And I want to feel that I am more than a mere visitor in the land. Teaching is out of the question, for governesses are not in demand and my theories on education are not such as would recommend me to any well-regulated School Board. Office work I am not fitted for, nor should I like it. So, on the whole, my original plan seems the most satisfactory, even under changed conditions.

The Fiskes have asked me to stay with them for a couple of weeks longer,

but Mary Arnold also is begging for the honour of my distinguished company, so I must leave. Then, too, Mrs. Fiske has succeeded in getting a real "hired girl," a Scotch lassie whose accent is so broad that she has to go sideways through the doors. I do not think that she will last long. I do not mean to say that she shows any signs of departing this life in a hurry—far from it! But she is pretty, in a sensible, everyday fashion; and if the hungry young bachelors of Elba ever get a smell, much less a taste, of her cooking, Mrs. Fiske will have to advertise again. Long and sad experience has taught the Fiskes one lesson, however—Jeannie signed a contract to remain with them for one year.

WINNIPEG,
July 5th, 19—.

I AM back in Winnipeg again, with Mrs. Arnold to mother me, Mr. Arnold to father me, and Mary to keep a constant watch over my manners and morals. The strong-minded and aggressively independent Elinor is rather glad to be here, much as she is reluctant to admit it.

Mrs. Fiske and Gypsy brought me in to the train yesterday afternoon. Gypsy, I know, was sorry to see me go, and I am tempted to believe that Mrs Fiske was also. We called on Mrs. Mills for a few minutes; I could not leave Elba without saying good-bye to her and Mr. Hartford.

The train was half an hour late, but that surprised no one. In fact, the "oldest inhabitant" assures me that in the winter the train becomes later each day, until

at regular intervals it is on time because exactly twenty-four hours late.

I had scarcely settled myself when a man rose from the opposite end of the coach and came over to where I sat.

“You’re Miss Eliot, ain’t you?” he asked, raising his hat awkwardly. “My name is Brown, Jerry Brown of Brownsville, Saskatchewan. I used to live hereabouts and I’ve just been home to see Mother. I was at the picnic on Friday, and I seen you with the Fiskes and the Livingstones, but never got close enough to get an introduction to you, so I hope you will excuse me speaking now. You English ladies ain’t much used to traveling alone, I guess, and there’s some tough characters goes back and forth on this line.”

By this time Jerry Brown of Brownsville was so hot and embarrassed that his collar was wilting visibly. I thanked him for his knightly courtesy—not in those words, of course—and after falling over my bag and apologizing profusely he

threw his hat in the rack, sat down in the other half of my section, and proceeded to while away the weary hours.

News travels swiftly in the Elba district, apparently, for from some casual remarks that Mr. Brown let fall I think that my life-history in so far as it relates to my stay in Elba is fairly well known to him. He was very frank about his own affairs, told me in the first half-hour that his mother had been left a widow x thirty years ago, and that with her five small children she had come West and taken up a homestead. He did not say very much about the inevitable hardships, but he did tell me that last winter he took his mother "back East among her folks and gave her a rattling good time."

Here he chuckled.

"You should have seen Mother at a picture show. I took her to the wildest Wild West one I could find, and I'll bet she liked it, though she did pretend to be shocked. What troubled her most

was the cowgirl with red poppies in her hair and red 'chaps.' She wouldn't go to sleep that night until I swore on my honour that there weren't no cowgirls round about Brownsville. You know what mothers are like ? ”

At this interesting point the newsboy came along, crying his wares.

“ *Winnipeg Free Press, Tribune, and Telegram!* All about the big fire in a shoe factory—five hundred souls lost ! ”

“ Were the uppers burned too ? ” asked Mr. Brown.

The boy grinned appreciatively.

“ Say, son,” queried my escort, “ have you got anything good to eat ? ”

“ Peanuts, popcorn, chewing-gum, and caramels. Regular price twenty-five cents per package, but ten cents seeing it's you.”

“ Guess I'll have some gum,” said Mr. Brown. “ I've been telling the story of my life to this here young lady, and it's dry work.” Then he turned to me, “ You don't chew, I suppose ? ”

“Why, no,” I replied; “but don’t let me keep you from it.”

So he bought a package of gum for himself and peanuts, papers, and a magazine for me. Talk about American Yellow Journalism, *that* magazine was burnt orange!

Mary met me at the station and did not show the surprise she must have felt when I introduced Mr. Brown.

“I’ll see you later,” that gentleman announced as he picked up his bags. “What did you say your address was?”

I had not said that I so much as had an address, but Mary innocently broke in with, “314 Collegiate Avenue. Elinor never remembers numbers, so it’s lucky that I am here to tell you the right one.”

I could have shaken her, but of course she did not know at that time how Mr. Brown had happened to be with me. And when I told her, that night in the privacy of my bedroom, she threw herself face down on the bed and laughed until I began to think that she was hysterical.

“ I cannot see anything so very funny,” I objected at last.

“ Elinor,” she said, when she could speak without laughing, “ I should never have suspected *you* of such a thing ! To think that any well-bred English girl would so openly encourage a misguided youth ! ”

“ Misguided youth ! ” I retorted. “ He is thirty-seven—he told me so himself.”

“ Well, young or old, he has matrimony in his eye, or I’m no judge. His poor trusting mother !—and she was so sure that he was safe from all designing creatures.”

“ Mary,” I replied, with all the dignity I could muster, “ if you do not treat my confidences with more respect, I will never tell you another secret ! ”

This direful threat made her reform—for a time. But this afternoon, when a big box of roses came from the florist’s “ with the compliments of Jerry Brown,” she told me that the red poppies were in bloom and that she could lend me some

invisible hairpins. I am very much afraid that Brother Jeremiah—that is Mary's name for him, it is only in an emergency that she calls anyone by his or her proper name—will think it necessary to call, and, much as I regret to say it, I cannot answer for Mary's good behaviour if he does so. Age cannot wither, nor custom stale, her infinite variety of devices for the embarrassment of weak humanity.

The Arnolds have other guests at present—a Mrs. Bingham and her five-year-old daughter Sunny, from a ranch near Carbon City, Alberta. Sunny and I fell in love with each other at sight, and this morning she came into my room before I was up to show me snapshots of her home and her dog and—last but not least—“Daddy and Uncle Don.”

We were in the midst of a very confidential chat regarding life on a ranch when Mrs. Bingham knocked at the door.

“Excuse me, Miss Eliot, but I have looked everywhere for Sunny, and Mary suggested that she might be here.”

“ I’ll come in a minute, Mother,” Sunny promised, “ but I’m just telling Miss Eliot about the time David nearly killed Thomas a Becket when he was going to steal the chickens,” and she went on with her story.

David is the dog, a fox-terrier, and Thomas a Becket is the cat.

“ Was David called after the David who killed Goliath ? ” I asked when the story was finished.

“ No,” answered Sunny. “ Uncle Don named him David Lloyd George ’cause ‘ he’s the dickens of a fighter,’ but we call him David for short.”

XI

WINNIPEG,
July 5th, 19—.

MR. BROWN called just as I was completing my last entry. And he has been here almost every day since!!!

At first I was a trifle uneasy, for I was not at all sure that he would know how to act—one never can tell what these unconventional Canadians are going to do. But he is really very good and kind, and his unconventionality is not of the embarrassing sort. He usually comes laden with magazines and chocolates, and twice he has called with a motor-car and taken Mary and me for a spin around the city.

Next week a party of us are going to visit the Agricultural College. A friend of Mary's who is attending the Normal School will be there. Each teacher is required to take a month's course in Agri-

culture and Domestic Science before she is granted her certificate. I should prefer to see the college when the regular classes are in session, but even this Teachers' Course will be interesting, I am sure, and I shall at least see the buildings and grounds. Mr. Brown is to be of the party, so the live-stock is sure to be properly introduced.

And in ten days I again leave Winnipeg. I am *almost* excited, and no wonder, for my destination is the Bingham ranch ! ^x
Is it luck, or fate, or Providence, I wonder?

Sunny, bless her heart, opened the subject.

"Mother," she said one day after an unusually long silence, "why can't Miss Eliot come home with us?"

"Miss Eliot would not care to go so far away from her friends, dear," Mrs. Bingham replied. "Perhaps she and Mary can come out next summer, and we'll have a house-party for them and give them a really good time. It would be too quiet and lonely for her at the ranch now."

Then she turned to me. "I am dreading the winter, myself," she said. "My husband and Sunny and I always take a house in Carbon City for the winter months, but this year my doctor wants me to stay at the ranch and live outside as much as possible. I have not been very well, and he does not think that I shall get enough fresh air and sunshine in the town."

"You should try to find a companion," suggested Mrs. Arnold.

"I did think of sending to England for Jack's sister," Mrs. Bingham continued, "but I know she would simply die of homesickness. Then I thought of advertising for someone, but I don't care to be shut up for six months with a professional companion. So I have no plans made as yet."

"Mrs. Bingham," I began excitedly, "could I . . . would you let me . . . oh, I'd just love to go to Alberta if you'll only have me!"

"And I'd let you ride my very own horse," broke in Sunny, "and we could

play we were Indians, and I know David would love you. Please let her come, Mother," she coaxed.

"I could wish for nothing better," said Mrs. Bingham; "but hadn't you other plans?"

Then I told her what had been the object of my visit to Canada, and how that object had changed in part, and finally it was decided that I should go home with her—to stay as long as we were both satisfied.

I went down to the Hudson's Bay Stores early the next morning and was measured for a riding-habit. x

I think I shall like Mrs. Bingham very much indeed. She is a Canadian, a Winnipegger, and is not more than thirty. Mr. Bingham—who is coming down to go home with us—is English, ten years older than his wife, and also very nice—Mary is my authority.

The ranch is twenty miles from Carbon City, and Carbon City is a hundred miles from Nowhere, and there are no neigh- x

hours nearer than ten miles! But this seeming disadvantage is quite overbalanced by the fact that the mountains are visible—who would care for neighbours under such circumstances?

Sunny has chattered unceasingly since it was settled that I should go with them, until now I feel that I know everyone on the ranch, from Lee, the Chinese cook, to William, the goat.

There is an Indian Reserve just across the river from the house, so I shall have an opportunity to study “the only genuine Canadians.”

Oh! I almost forgot a very important bit of news. Mr. Hartford was in the city one day last week and he called on Mrs. Arnold. I suppose Mrs. Fiske gave him the address.

And that reminds me that I have had a long letter from Gypsy. She tells me that they all miss me—and that Jeannie has “set up a young man” already. I *was* slow.

XII

WINNIPEG,
July 19th, 19—.

It is a good thing that I have my diary to confide in, for I am awfully worried. I would give anything I possess to talk with Father for an hour, and as it is I do not feel free even to write to him about my trouble.

To come to the point at once, I have received a proposal from Jerry Brown of Brownsville! It is now quite evident that in this matter, as well as in many others, Mary was right and I was wrong.

The catastrophe occurred after our visit to the Agricultural College. When we had inspected everything of interest there, we all went out to Assiniboine Park and had tea at the pavilion. Afterwards the party broke up into groups

of two or three, and I found myself strolling down a woodland path—quite the classical setting—with Mr. Brown.

“Rather a neat signboard, that,” he remarked, pointing towards a notice just before us.

I followed the direction of his finger, and read this warning, which in large letters flaunted itself in the faces of the unsuspecting public:

“LOVERS’ LANE

NO HEAVY TRAFFIC ALLOWED ”

“I wonder what the limit is?” I asked. “Nine stone for the women and eleven for the men would be a fair one, I think.”

“Let me see,” Mr. Brown calculated, “that would be a hundred and twenty-six and a hundred and fifty-four pounds, wouldn’t it? Why don’t you English people drop those pesky stones and do your weighing in an up-to-date style?”

“That is just how I feel about your Canadian money,” I retorted.

He smiled as one will smile at a child. “If you’d just mention your objections to the folks at Ottawa, I’m sure they’d see what they could do for you,” he answered.

If there is anything that makes me perfectly wild, it is to be spoken to in that way!

“I suppose you’ll not go quite nine stone?” he continued.

“No!” I snapped; “if I did I’d begin to starve myself.”

“And I’m a little more than eleven,” he went on mildly, “so we should strike a pretty fair average.”

What was the man coming to? I soon found out.

“This park is pretty enough in its way, but it looks pretty small to me after being used to Saskatchewan,” he said. “I’ve got the dinkiest little lake on my place, about a hundred yards from the house, that would make that there toy

one look like a cupful of water to a thirsty ox."

"Your farm must be quite a big one," I observed, rather ashamed of my petulance.

"Well," he drawled, "we can see the neighbours' places without a telescope, and the cook don't need a wireless machine to call the men to dinner. But I've got nine quarter sections—that's fourteen hundred and forty acres. Never showed you any pictures of it, did I?" And he took some snapshots from an inner pocket.

When I had admired them sufficiently he put them back with seemingly unnecessary care, looked at his watch, cleared his throat, and then went on with his oration.

"You'd like that part of the country, Miss Eliot. The first time I seen you I says to myself, 'There's a girl that would like things on a big scale.' Don't know what give me the notion, but I got it and it stuck right to me. Of course it's a

bit lonely in the winter sometimes, when you have nobody to talk to but your dog—my housekeeper and her man don't speak much English. And I haven't even got a pipe. Mother made me promise when I was a little kid that I'd not smoke until I was twenty-one, and ever since that I've been too busy to learn. It is times like them that a man wants a wife."

Here he took off his hat, and stood with it in his hand as he finished, an act that to me was an indication of his innate gentlemanliness.

"I haven't got much in the way of education or polish," he continued, "but Mother always says that a good son makes a good husband. I've done my best to be a good son, and I'll do my best to make a good husband if you'll just give me a chance."

I was stunned, and I suppose I showed it.

"I ain't asking you to do anything in a hurry," he added. "You don't know

much about me, but I'll talk to Mr. Arnold and he can write to my bank and to the people at Elba, and they'll tell you that Jerry Brown's word is as good as his bond.

“And I don't want you to think that I'm just looking for a housekeeper that can talk good English. I used to think that love at first sight was just a thing to make books about, but I guess I've got mine.”

There was a lot more, but I don't care to write it.

What could I do but tell the man that I had no intention of marrying, and tell it to him in the kindest possible way? I must say that he took it very well, and I was really sorry to say good-bye to him when he left that night for his fourteen hundred and forty acre farm and his dog. He insisted that I should keep his address and let him know if I ever needed a friend or changed my mind. “I'll be Johnny-on-the-spot in either case, Miss Eliot, particularly in the last one.”

He is a good soul! Why can't men and women be just good friends without any sentimental nonsense?

This distressing occurrence has almost made me forget the pleasant afternoon we spent at the Agricultural College. I have acquired still another ambition—to become a graduate in Domestic Science of the Manitoba Agricultural College. What little I saw of the work was so fascinating that I could hardly tear myself away.

Miss Alexander, Mary's friend, showed us everything, from the gardens to the dormitories and from the kitchen to the carpenter shop.

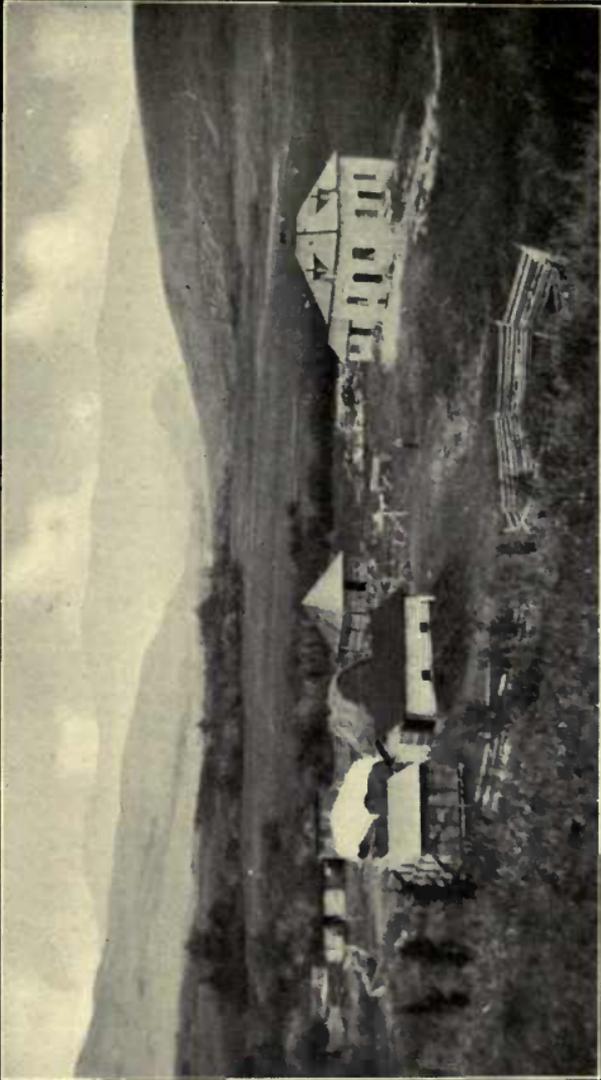
Each girl has her own little garden plot in which she hoes and rakes and weeds manfully, to the cultivation of her muscles and the destruction of her complexion. A few of the girls whom we met grumbled about the gardening, but the most of them seemed to enjoy it.

A few more grumbled about the sewing. One jolly-looking little romp told me in

confidence that she had sewed the waist-band on an apron seven times and ripped it out six.

I wish the men who repeat the stale old joke to the effect that a woman cannot drive a nail without hammering her fingers could see the "fly-swatters" which those girls were making as their lesson in carpentering. For the enlightenment of the uninitiated I must explain that a "fly-swatter" is a nicely proportioned and carefully finished wooden handle in which is inserted a square of wire netting, the whole making an excellent instrument for the destruction of the ubiquitous house-fly.

The Domestic Science Department has a very wide scope. How wide may be imagined when I say that in one month the future teachers of Manitoba's youth are taught the elements of sanitation, how to manage a furnace, how to choose a cut of meat and how to cook it when it is chosen. The lesson on the different cuts of beef must be very interesting, and



A. Typical Ranch in the Foothills

to some, no doubt, the interest is heightened by the apparent danger, for the lesson is illustrated on a live animal. I can see enthusiastic anti-vivisectionists holding up their hands in holy horror, but their agitation is quite unnecessary. I did not see the process, but Miss Alexander told me that the girls were conducted to the cattle-barn, where they formed a ring around a mild old cow on whose anatomy was chalked a diagram, such as we see in the beginning of the meat section in a cookery-book.

The dormitories, which are not really dormitories but separate rooms, are very good indeed. Roblin Hall is the residence; it is called after the Premier of Manitoba. All the buildings seem to be well fitted for their respective purposes, but it has been found that they are not large enough, so another site has been secured in St. Vital, which is south of Fort Rouge on the Red River, and work has been commenced on new buildings there.

There are two courses in Agriculture

for young men : one of three years' duration, at the end of which time a diploma is granted ; and one which covers five years and leads to the degree of B.S.A.—Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. English and mathematics are included in both courses.

Besides short courses in dairying and horticulture, the Domestic Science Department conducts a regular two years' course. This is in session during the winter months, and is well patronized by the young women of the West.

Manitoba has good reason to be proud of her Agricultural College.

Mr. Bingham arrived this morning. He has been in the house for only a few minutes but he has made a very favourable impression on me, and I hope that I have made an equally favourable one on him. He is not as friendly as a Canadian would have been under similar circumstances, but it is like a breath of home to meet again an uncommunicative Englishman who wastes neither time nor words.

Mary is giving a little dance in my honour to-night, so I must stop writing and try to get my beauty sleep in advance.

XIII

OCCIDENTAL HOTEL, CARBON CITY, ALBERTA,
July 27th, 19—.

I PUT myself to bed at eight o'clock to-night on purpose to see if I could catch up the sleep I lost between here and Winnipeg, and now, at a quarter-past nine, I am still wide awake. As usual, I slept badly my first night on the train, and last night was even worse, for we had to change cars at midnight and we reached Carbon City at three o'clock in the morning. So with two broken nights behind me I am not sure whether it is to-day or to-morrow.

As to why I cannot go to sleep when I wish to do so—well, who could go to sleep when just across the hall a number of cowboys are singing at the tops of voices trained in the great out-of-doors ?

The chorus of one song, oft repeated, is quite audible :

“ Farewell, my Bloo-bell, farewell to you,
Just one fond glance into your eyes so blue.
Mid camp-fires glea-ming, midst shot and shell,
I will be drea-ming of my own Bloo-bell.”

Whoever is playing the accompaniment has played more difficult music than “Bloo-bell.” Who is he, I wonder—or is it she? Hardly the latter, I think, for I cannot hear a woman’s voice.

A notice over the piano is to the effect that all music must cease at half-past ten. Until that time I shall have to submit to the serenade, I presume.

Mr. and Mrs. Bingham and Sunny and I—I have become “Auntie Elinor,” by the way—left Winnipeg Monday evening. “We women,” to quote Sunny, occupied what is known as a state-room on the train. This is a private compartment at one end of the Pullman, and contains two berths and a couch. In view of the fact

that I like to watch my fellow-travellers, I considered the state-room an unnecessary luxury—ten marks off for pleonasm. But I must admit that at night it *was* pleasant to know that the berth above or below one was not occupied by a stranger. And it seems, although I do not know that my supposition can be confirmed by statistics, that the said stranger is always a fat man who snores excruciatingly.

I can truthfully say that the lack of picturesque scenery between Winnipeg and Carbon City was a disappointment. Mile after mile we rattled over level prairie, nothing ahead of us and nothing behind us but two steel rails. All the little towns looked alike, and after we had passed a dozen of them I concluded that the name was placed so prominently on the station in order that passengers might know when they had reached their own town, otherwise I cannot see how they would ever feel sure. The bigger towns, Brandon, Regina, Moose Jaw, and Medicine Hat, however, give evidence of life

and originality, even to one who only sees them from the coach window.

At Regina I saw my first Mounted Policeman. He was altogether beautiful, and I only hope that his nice shiny boots did not pinch him, and that he was not laced too tightly. "The red coats of the North-West Mounted Police"—what a Ralph Connorish thrill it gives one, approaching in degree if not in kind that attendant upon a dose of quinine.

As I said before, we reached Carbon City at three o'clock this morning. We came directly to the hotel, where Mr. Bingham had rooms reserved for us, so it was not until after my twelve-o'clock breakfast that I saw anything of the town. This hotel is palatial compared with the Palace Boarding House. But hot and cold water, electric light, and a regulation dining-room presided over by trim waitresses can never take the place of Mrs. Mills.

When we had finished our breakfast, Mrs. Bingham and Sunny took me around

Carbon City and showed me all the places of which they, as citizens, have reason to be proud.

Carbon City, as it appeared to me, is about midway between Winnipeg and Elba—I hope no one thinks that I mean this geographically—with a slight leaning towards the latter place. If one could take alternate buildings from Main Street, Winnipeg, and from Main Street, Elba, one would have a fair imitation of Main Street, Carbon City. Side by side with a low frame shack, none too substantial and sadly lacking in paint, one sees a four-storey brick office building with stone trimmings and a goodly assortment of plate-glass windows. In the residence district the contrasts are not so great, plain and unassuming homes are the rule. And there are no trees or gardens—a dry climate and an incessant wind discourages the most enthusiastic of gardeners.

After dinner we went for another walk, but this time we took a new direction, away from the town and towards the river.

At this season the river is very narrow and very shallow, but they tell me that at times the whole valley has been flooded. Properly speaking, the river has no banks, but runs through a level plain perhaps a quarter of a mile wide at this point. Then come the hills again, bare and brown and uncanny-looking to one used to the wooded hills of England.

“The foothills of the Rockies” is a phrase that gives a wrong impression. I expected to see a succession of hills gradually becoming higher until they were mountains, but the appearance is rather that of wide plains cut by deep valleys, technically known as canyons. As the mountains are not visible from Carbon City there is nothing to give me the feeling that I am in a high altitude. Even looking up from the river-bottom I felt only as if I were in a ditch!

The rarity of the atmosphere plays strange tricks with one. At one moment it seemed that I could have touched the opposite side of the canyon by putting out

my hand, but even as I looked it appeared to recede mysteriously until it was miles away—and *always*, near or far, austere and unapproachable.

On the whole, southern Alberta has not impressed me favourably. The great bare spaces, magnified and rendered unnatural by the atmospheric peculiarities that I have mentioned, and the arrogant sunshine “get on my nerves.”

Mrs. Bingham is very comforting in this connection. She tells me that when she first came here she felt just as I do, and that now she loves the place and feels out of her element away from it. She gives as the reason for the unpleasant effect on the newcomer a nervous irritation due to the excessive stimulation of air and altitude, and she assures me that I shall soon adjust myself to the change. Perhaps.

In spite of the noise in the parlour I find that I am growing sleepy. The pianist, true to my conjecture, has just finished playing Dvořák's “Humoresque.” He played it with a limpid touch and a

memory-rousing expression that makes me long to put my head under the bed-clothes and indulge in a good cry. Wilmington is so far away from Carbon City!

XIV

BAR B RANCH, CARBON CITY,
July 31st, 19—.

WHAT a wretched fit of the blues I must have had on Wednesday! Fortunately for the retention of my self-respect, I have ever since been too busy to be dismal, the days have not been half long enough to hold all the new impressions.

I woke bright and early Thursday morning, feeling as if, after all, there might be worse places than Carbon City. And when I had eaten my breakfast and written to Mother and Mrs. Arnold and made a trial of my skill on the "Bloo-bell" piano, I felt that there might be very much worse places. By the way, Mrs. Bingham tells me that the sleep-dispelling pianist is a well-educated but rather dissipated young Englishman, a "remittance man,"

Paget by name. He is our nearest neighbour, and comes often to Mr. Bingham for advice regarding the management of his ranch. The advice, Mrs. Bingham adds, is never followed, and he is in a fair way to lose the money he has foolishly invested in an unnecessarily expensive outfit.

If what follows is not proof positive of my innate stupidity and my complete disregard of the laws of coincidence, then I am no judge of such matters.

Mrs. Bingham, Sunny, and I sat in the parlour after breakfast, waiting for Mr. Bingham to come and tell us when he would be ready to leave for the ranch. I was reading when I heard Mr. Bingham's voice from the hall, and I did not look up until Sunny shouted, "Oh, Mother, that's Uncle Don talking!" Then I looked up, just in time to see her rush through the door, dropping her beloved doll as she ran. In a moment she returned, perched proudly on the shoulder of . . . Don Livingstone!!!

The thought of the shilling I nearly

gave him filled my mind so completely that I scarcely heard Mrs. Bingham as she introduced him. Of course he is not Mrs. Bingham's brother, as I had supposed from Sunny's constant chatter about "Uncle Don," but Mr. Bingham's partner, and merely adopted by Sunny as I am!

Due, no doubt, to the fact that he had the upper hand, Mr. Livingstone did not seem to be the least bit disconcerted, and there was a noticeable twinkle in his eye as he asked me if this were my first visit to the West. Humiliating as is the thought, I am forced to believe that his apparent embarrassment on that former occasion was not embarrassment at all, but well-concealed amusement. I have a presentiment that he is going to need discipline; I do not approve of calm politeness accompanied by a twinkle. I was very cool and very dignified, slightly bored in fact, if one were to judge by my deportment. And I suppose Mary knew all the time who "Uncle Don" was. Revenge will be sweet.

At half-past nine we left the town. The horses that came prancing up to the hotel door must have been closely related to those that tried to climb the elevator at Elba, but Sunny was delighted to see them, so I concluded that they could not be quite so murderous as they looked.

“Mother, can’t I please sit in the front seat with Uncle Don?” coaxed Sunny. “And you come too, Auntie Elinor, so’s I can tell you just as soon as we see the house. I wonder if David will come to meet me. Do you think he will, Uncle Don?”

“Sure he will,” replied that self-possessed young man in answer to the last question; “he promised me faithfully last night that he would wait for us at the first gate.” Then he added, “Perhaps Auntie Elinor would rather sit with her back to the horses—English people are like that, you know.”

The cheek of him.

“Thank you,” I said freezingly. “*Auntie Elinor*” (and didn’t I emphasize

it!) "would much rather stay with Mrs. Bingham."

Going in a south-westerly direction from the town, we followed the well-worn trail mile after mile, over plain and through valley. Once we frightened a mother-wolf and her litter of woolly cubs; another time a cynical-looking eagle fluttered up ahead of us; and once we saw in the distance a large flock of sheep watched over by a solitary herdsman.

In one valley I noticed that the "cut-banks" were streaked with black, and Mr. Bingham, in response to my remark regarding the strange marble-cake appearance, told me that the black streaks were outcropping seams of coal, and pointed to a place farther along the canyon where a mine-shaft could be dimly seen. A "cut-bank" is, presumably, a place where some prehistoric glacial or other torrent has torn away the face of a hill and left a cleanly cut bank as steep and smooth as the side of a house—an excellent place in which to study geological strata.

When I finally saw a house, ten miles out of Carbon City, I felt as I am sure Columbus must have felt when he sighted land. This house, by the way, is the only one between Carbon City and the Bar B.

“Is that a ranch?” I asked.

“No,” replied Mrs. Bingham with a strange emphasis; “that is a farm. We’ll call there, for I have some books and magazines for Mrs. Carroll.”

“A farm?” I repeated. “I did not know that there were farms in this part of the country.”

“There should not be,” Mrs. Bingham answered. And then she told me the history of the Carrolls.

They are English, of good family, and used to all the refinements if not the luxuries of life. But two years ago a “land shark,” to use Mrs. Bingham’s phrase, combined business and pleasure in a visit to the Old Country, and while there persuaded Mr. Carroll to sink all his capital in this so-called farm. He

enlarged upon the cheapness of the land and the healthfulness of the warm Alberta winters, but he omitted all mention of the fact that two-thirds of the land was boulder-strewn river bottom, and that an exceedingly light rainfall made farming next to impossible. And he did not tell them that the "good house" was a two-roomed shack, with no floor and a sod roof.

It is easy to say that Mr. Carroll should have made enquiries into the record of the man with whom he was dealing, but he is apparently very unpractical—at any rate, they are here, too proud to ask or accept assistance, and absolutely penniless except for a small annuity belonging to Mrs. Carroll. Of course as soon as they found that they had been tricked they tried to cancel the agreement and to have their payment refunded, but the agent had "skipped the country" and has not been heard of since.

It made me feel positively wretched to see the place. Mrs. Carroll came to the

door as we drove up, and invited us to go in just as if her miserable shack had been a mansion. But she seemed to be relieved when Mrs. Bingham said that we would not get out of the wagon, as we had only a few minutes to stay. Then Mrs. Bingham introduced me, saying that I was from England and that I was to spend the winter at the ranch. "From England," Mrs. Carroll repeated slowly, and I hope I shall never again see an expression of sadness such as crossed her face as she spoke. Mr. Carroll did not appear. I have formed an opinion, not so much from what Mrs. Bingham said as from what she left unsaid, that he has allowed himself to brood over his bad fortune, and that if he could only be persuaded to exert himself matters might be greatly improved. They have one child, a little boy of about Sunny's age.

In ten minutes we "hit the trail" again, and again drove mile after mile over plain and through valley. I was beginning to feel as if my back were six

inches too long, and to speculate upon how many layers of skin would peel off my nose, when suddenly Sunny called out, "Shut your eyes, Auntie Elinor, and don't open them until I tell you to."

I closed my eyes obediently, glad enough to rest them from the blazing sun. Promptly came the second order,

"Now, Auntie Elinor, look!"

I looked.

And far away to the south-west the jagged line of the Rockies broke into the blue of the sky. So far away that their natural colours were not discernible, they seemed to be made of shimmering steel and mother-of-pearl, so beautiful in their unexpectedness that I could not speak.

"That big one over there by himself is Old Chief; he belongs to the Yankees, but I just love him," volunteered Sunny.

I looked until my eyes ached, then rested them and looked again. Shall I ever tire of looking, I wonder? Need I say that the remainder of our drive was not monotonous?

David *was* waiting for us at the first gate. Never was a small dog so greatly excited. He wriggled with joy all the way from the tip of his nose to his rudimentary tail, ran around and around the wagon barking like mad, and was only silenced when Mr. Livingstone got out and lifted him to the seat beside Sunny. He is a jolly-looking little dog, with a rakish black spot around one eye à la Chamberlain, and a trick of running on three legs—"to excite sympathy," Mr. Livingstone explains.

It was one o'clock when we reached the house. Lee, the Chinese cook, welcomed us warmly—warmly for an oriental, I mean—and conducted us to the dining-room, where, as the Suffolk *Argus* would say, a sumptuous repast awaited us. If my dairy farm proves a failure, I shall go into the newspaper business.

BAR B RANCH,
August 3rd, 19—.

THE Bar B Ranch is bounded on the north by Lawrence Paget, on the south by the United States of America, on the east by a barbed-wire fence five strands high, and on the west by the Banshee River. Across the river is the Indian Reserve, on which Mr. Bingham "runs" his cattle.

The house is built quite close to the river, and at night I can hear the Banshee whispering over the submerged island which serves as a ford. I am not at all sure that I like the Banshee; it is too swift and too deep and too cold. Each person I have asked tells a different story to account for the river's name. The most probable one is that it is a corruption of the Indian name; but the most romantic

one, and therefore the one that I prefer, is as follows.

Years and years and years ago a young Irish prospector camped here one night in the early spring. Just at the witching hour he wakened his companion with the blood-curdling declaration that he had heard the Banshee. The companion, a hard-headed Scot, laughed at his friend's earnestness and traced the sound, to his own satisfaction, to an uneasy pack-mule or a suddenly awakened eagle. But the Irishman, true to his blood, was not to be convinced. And now comes the point of the story. When the two young men reached civilization again all doubts vanished, for a letter awaited them announcing the death of the Irishman's eldest brother on the very day on which the Banshee had been heard! Of course our friend succeeded to the title, married *one* of the girls whose photograph he carried under his cartridge belt, and lived happily ever after.

The Bingham house is absolutely per-

fect for its purpose. It is a big square place, painted white with green trimmings, and has a ten-foot veranda almost all the way around it. On the south side there is a balcony which can be closed in by windows—greenhouse fashion—during cold weather, and it is here that Mrs. Bingham intends to sleep all the winter through.

Entering the house by the front door, one comes directly into a large room which is hall and living-room combined. An immense open fireplace, built of water-worn stones from the Banshee, and an open staircase go a long way towards furnishing the room. One would expect the piano and the other impedimenta of civilization to look out of place in such unconventional surroundings, but they do not, so skilfully have they been chosen. There is not an inch of plaster in the whole house; every room is panelled from floor to ceiling with British Columbia fir. Can you not imagine how suitable a background this is for mounted heads and

antlers, Indian bead-work, and the right sort of pictures? In the hall and in the bedrooms there are "skins of bear and wolf and bison" instead of carpets; the other rooms have bare floors.

We are twenty miles from a town, but we have a real bathroom, thanks to a very ugly modern windmill—I shall have a wide-winged Dutch one on *my* farm. And the house is lighted throughout with gas generated by an evil-smelling plant in the basement.

My bedroom is in the west side of the house, and from my windows I have a glimpse of the mountains. It is perfectly lovely to be able to drive a nail whenever and wherever the spirit moves one, and when I had hung my pictures and scattered my various belongings around the room in what the novelists call "studied disorder," I began to feel very much at home.

The animals inhabiting the region of the Bar B are more numerous than might be imagined. I shall name, classify, and

otherwise dispose of, the quadrupeds first, because I can wait no longer to describe. . . .

Cupid, the horse of my dreams, who is to be mine to have and to hold so long as I am on the Bingham ranch. He is a beautiful little sorrel, with a cream mane and tail, a cream star on his forehead, and a truly angelic disposition. I very nearly hugged the dignified Mr. Bingham when he told me that he had given the foreman orders to the effect that Cupid was to be considered my special property ! Of course I cannot ride very well as yet, but Mr. Livingstone says that I am "doing as well as could be expected"—one would think that I was recovering from a severe illness. He looks with unconcealed scorn upon my riding-habit, and advises me at regular intervals and in a grandfatherly manner to have it changed for a divided skirt. I shall not have it changed, and I *will* not be advised in a grandfatherly manner by the handsomest Canadian living ! This is not to say that Mr. Livingstone is the handsomest Cana-

dian living—but I must admit that he is the handsomest one I have seen.

To return to the quadrupeds. There are, on the Bar B Ranch, several thousand cattle and one cow. For obvious reasons the cattle are not named, but the one cow, a thoroughbred Jersey, is called Kathleen, reason unknown. Kathleen is kept "picketed" on this side of the river, and is milked night and morning by the devoted Lee. Mr. Livingstone says that the first summer she was here the cattle used to line up across the river and watch the milking process with breathless interest, the younger ones saying in effect that they'd like to see themselves treated in such a way! This seems to be the place to explain that "cattle" are beef-cattle, and that "cows" are a grade lower in the bovine social scale—merely the producing end of a dairy business.

"We" have about a hundred horses. These are mostly "cow-ponies," tough, wiry, half-broken creatures, not to be compared with Cupid.

David has already been mentioned, but I almost forgot Thomas a Becket. If ever a cat was a born hermit, Thomas is that cat. He shuns human habitation, unless he wishes to steal something—that is not meant as an insinuation against hermits in general—and he is notoriously careless of his appearance. His tail has been broken and in consequence has a most melancholy droop, his ears are ragged from frost-bites, and he bears the scars of many wounds gained in honourable conflict with David and David's predecessors. I feel sorry for Thomas, but I am afraid to confess my partiality—may it not be the spinster's instinctive fondness for cats?

Last, but not by any means least in importance, comes William. William is a sanctimonious-looking billy-goat who was given to Sunny a year ago by her well-meaning but badly-informed godmother. Fancy a goat in the cattle country! Early this spring Sunny promoted herself from William and the governess-cart to

a real, if somewhat undersized, horse. William shows no resentment at being so summarily superannuated, and he takes quite kindly to his present free-and-easy existence. If there is one living thing that I dislike more than a parrot it is a goat, and when William fixes me with his glittering eye I quake inwardly. He is very popular among the cowboys, who have taught him to chew tobacco! Needless to say, the juice dribbles down his beard and detracts considerably from his otherwise venerable appearance.

The bipeds, while not so numerous as the quadrupeds, are equally interesting.

Just now there are only six cowboys, a cook, and a foreman, but in the busy season this number is doubled. The men live in the "bunk house," a few hundred yards from the "ranch house," and are seldom seen by anyone who rises as late as I do. They have a gramophone—just like the cowboys in Rex Beach's "Going Some"—and their favourite selection seems to be a cheerful ballad which announces to

the world, all through the calm summer evenings, that

“ Since I first met you-oo-oo,
Since I first met you,
Each flower has a new perfume
Since I met you.”

The tone of the gramophone is more to be commended for quantity than for quality. But it ~~is~~ never played when I play the piano—on the principle of honour among thieves, I presume.

I was greatly shocked when I rose Sunday morning to see that the men had a good-sized washing hung out on the fence. It appears that Sunday is their regular wash-day!

I fear that I shall find Sunday very strange here; it is not at all like our home Sundays. Mr. Bingham and Mr. Livingstone are around the house the greater part of the time, and in the evening we have sacred instead of secular music, but that is all that distinguishes it from other days. Of course it would be unreasonable to expect people to drive

twenty miles to church, but I feel that Mr. Bingham might at least read Morning Prayers. I have not told Father about this; I am sure "t'parson" would be scandalized. There, I set out to describe the ranch and its inhabitants, not to criticize my hosts!

Lee, our cook, is not beautiful either to look upon or to listen to; but he is a marvellous cook, a fairly competent seamstress, and if he cannot make bricks without straw he can raise vegetables without rain—and that is next thing to a miracle in this dry climate. I used to think that I should not like to have Chinese servants, but I have changed my mind. Lee does as much work as three women, and does it with a third of the fuss of one. He wears a pyjama suit, blue denim in the morning and white duck in the afternoon, and when he brings us afternoon tea I feel so luxurious and oriental!

There are twelve more bipeds who must be mentioned, one cock—"rooster" as the Canadians call them—and eleven hens.

There were twelve hens, but one died of acute nostalgia and gopher poison. The Binghamms have a harmless and amusing mania which takes the form of giving names to all their belongings. The cock is Brigham Young—the original Brigham Young was, I learn, a prominent Mormon—and the hens' names range from Elaine to Emmeline and Christabel. The last two, formerly Jemima and Mary Ann, were re-christened quite recently. I am to have the privilege of looking after the poultry, "just to keep my hand in," and that reminds me that Christabel gave me a nasty peck to-day. Mr. Livingstone says——; but I must not form the habit of quoting him—he is worse than Mary.



*When we learn to ride before
we learn to walk*

XVI

BAR B RANCH,
August 14th, 19—.

I AM so angry with Mr. Livingstone that I could revert to the days of my unregenerate childhood and kick and scream. Not for years have I been filled with a rage so helpless, so hopeless, and so unreasoning. I flatter myself that I can stand teasing with the next one,—but Don Livingstone is the most exasperating person I have ever met! He seems to consider it his mission in life to plague me to the limit of my endurance, and when I have reached that point he adds insult to injury by laughing at me. Perhaps he is merely trying to pay me back for the blunder I made at Elba. And that reminds me that Mary did not know who he was at that time; she had

never met Mr. Bingham's partner, and, not being particularly interested in him, did not connect him with the Don Livingstone of Elba until after Mrs. Bingham went to Winnipeg last month. Then, when it occurred to her that I might come here, she could not resist the temptation to keep the secret from me, in the hope that it might be productive of amusement for her and embarrassment for me.

When I try to put the cause of my anger into words, it seems a very small thing indeed, and I am ashamed that I allowed my annoyance to be seen. I do not know what Mrs. Bingham will think of me.

Last night, Saturday, Mr. Paget called. He is rather an extraordinary being, I must admit; still, even if he is painfully lacking in a sense of humour, he is a gentleman and English. He plays beautifully and sings not too badly, and with Mr. and Mrs. Bingham as an appreciative audience, we sang several duets, and were having a truly enjoyable time untangling

“Oh that we two were maying,” when the serpent appeared.

Not that Mr. Livingstone, with all his faults, has anything of the serpent about him! Forgive my scriptural metaphors. He came in through the kitchen, dressed—spurs and all—just as he had come off his horse after a day in the saddle, a big mug of milk in one hand, and a wedge of Lee’s delectable raisin pie in the other. And as he came he sang, in a sympathetic tenor voice that should be put to better uses, quite the silliest and most sentimental of the popular songs of the day. Really, the contrast between him in riding-clothes and Mr. Paget in evening-dress was very striking. ✕

Our duet stopped suddenly and Mr. Paget slipped into an improvised accompaniment to the interruption. He evidently knows that when Mr. Livingstone begins anything he does not stop until he has finished it.

“Don, I do wish you would not sing that insufferably silly stuff,” said Mrs.

Bingham when the song was ended. "Miss Eliot has never heard you sing anything worth while."

"Did you get track of the horses?" asked Mr. Bingham.

"Evening, Livingstone," put in Mr. Paget—"jolly good song, that. In its own class, of course, Mrs. Bingham."

The three greetings were characteristic, as was the compound reply.

"Gee, I wish you people would go on with the dance, and let me eat! My apologies, Mrs. Bingham; I'll sing Tosti's 'Good-bye' for you just as soon as I finish this pie,—but you must cry into your handkerchief, I don't want my spurs rusted. The horses were at the Agency, Jack. Glad to see you, Paget; do the orchestra stunt while I feed the brute, there's a good soul."

All this was said in one breath. Then Mr. Livingstone returned to his light refreshments and did not speak again until they had gone the way of all flesh.

But we did not have Tosti's "Good-bye"

(I was not sorry—I hate water-soaked sentiment), for Mr. Livingstone was in a teasing mood, and as soon as he was ready for action he began to guy Mr. Paget, telling him the most awful “whoppers” about pioneer days in the West. And the worst of it is that he is sufficiently clever to add just enough truth to his stories to make them seem probable to one who is inclined to be credulous. For a while I rather enjoyed the novel experience of seeing someone else get my usual fare; but at last my patriotism overcame me and I entered the lists in the interests of Old England. Mrs. Bingham occasionally exclaimed, “Oh, Don!” after a more than usually direct shot, but Mr. Bingham paid very little attention to us. Finally, Mr. Paget began to realize that he was being butchered to make a Roman holiday, and I was indeed glad to see him rise to go home, for I feared a scene. Mrs. Bingham assured me afterwards that my fears were groundless, and that last night’s per-

formance was a common occurrence, in spite of which the principals were the best of friends.

“Well, what do you think of dear Lawrence, Miss Eliot?” asked Mr. Livingstone when our guest had gone.

“He is very nice and gentlemanly,” I replied sweetly; “he made me feel quite as if I were at home again. And he sings and plays *so* well—when he has a chance.”

“One for you, Don,” laughed Mrs. Bingham.

“Rotten bad taste, I call it, for him to come here in his war-paint when he knows that we never dress for dinner,” remarked Mr. Bingham, to my great surprise.

“Oh, I don’t think so,” replied Mrs. Bingham. “I consider it a compliment to us—don’t you, Miss Eliot?”

“I certainly do,” I agreed.

“You know, Jack,” Mrs. Bingham went on, “we Canadians are careless about such things. And you have caught the habit from your Canadian wife, I suppose.

I always put on a fresh dress for dinner, and so does Miss Eliot, and I have never heard you complain that *we* were overdressed."

"Of course I like to see my womenfolk decently dressed," said Mr. Bingham grudgingly, "but a man . . ." here he paused and looked to Mr. Livingstone for assistance.

"Paget's not half bad," began Mr. Livingstone, "but he does lay it on rather thick at times. Reminds me of the man who wouldn't shoot a rabbit ^x because he was dressed for grouse. But if our clothes make Miss Eliot homesick, we'll have to see what we can do about it. You *have* a dress-suit, haven't you, Jack?"

"Yes," said Mr. Bingham; "but I haven't had it on since the summer I was married—praise be!"

"I'll see that you get it out to-morrow, and I'll disinter my own, too. And what about Lee? We may as well do this thing properly while we are at it."

I said good-night and went to bed!

When I woke this morning my annoyance seemed childish in the extreme, so I went down to breakfast determined to act as if I would rather be made fun of than not. I half expected to see Lee in a dress-suit—but Mr. Livingstone is not so crude in his methods as to do the thing that is expected of him.

The disturber of my peace was on his best behaviour, and I immediately jumped to the conclusion that he, too, had decided to turn over a new leaf. At the breakfast table he devoted himself to Sunny. I like to watch him when he is with her; he has the uncommon gift of being able to talk to children without talking down to them, and Sunny adores him.

So when he asked me, as we rose from the table, if I would go for a ride with him, I accepted most graciously, and hurried upstairs to get into the disapproved riding-habit.

Sunny came up with me, and it was lucky that she did so, for I wasted ten minutes looking for one of my boots, and

was just on the point of borrowing Mrs. Bingham's when Sunny had an inspiration.

"Why, Auntie Elinor, *I* remember! Me and Thomas were playing puss-in-boots yesterday, and I just took one of your boots 'cause Mother's weren't high enough—Thomas fell right out of them."

"Where is the boot now?" I asked as calmly as I could.

"I'll go and see," announced the culprit, not in the least disconcerted, and in a minute she returned with the missing boot.

"It was in Uncle Don's room under a chair," she explained confidentially. "Thomas runned away from me and went in there, and I runned in after him and I must have dropped your boot."

Comment seemed useless.

Following this, everything I touched delayed me. The hooks and eyes on my skirt all seemed to be misfits, and I ran a pin into my finger and put blood-stains

on the dressing-table cover. So when I finally went downstairs Mr. Livingstone was waiting at the door with the horses.

“You’d better hurry up,” cautioned Sunny; “Uncle Don doesn’t like to wait. He says that a lady *never* keeps a gentleman waiting.”

x All former injuries were forgotten when I saw Mr. Livingstone. From head to foot he was clad in irreproachable evening-dress! And of course every man on the place “just happened” to be close enough to see us.

My first impulse was to go back to my room and take off my riding-clothes, but instantly I realized that this was exactly the course that Mr. Livingstone would expect me to follow, so—not very gracefully, I fear, for I did not wait for his assistance—I pulled myself into the saddle and gave Cupid his head.

I was around the base of a hill and out of sight of the house before Mr. Livingstone caught up with me. I glanced out of

the corner of my eye at him and was overjoyed to see that he did not seem to be enjoying the joke as much as he had anticipated—and also to see that one pair of pearl-grey kid gloves and one pair of patent leather pumps were on a fair way to destruction.

You may be sure that I let him speak first.

“I say, Miss Eliot,” he said, not so very humbly, “I hope I haven’t offended you. I only meant this in fun, you know.”

“Of course I am not offended,” I said as sarcastically as I could; “I enjoy nothing more than to be made the laughing-stock of the ranch. I must say that you Canadians have a peculiar sense of humour—one which I am powerless to appreciate.”

“We’ll leave Canadians in general out of this, if you please,” he interrupted hotly. “I did not intend to make you the laughing-stock of the ranch, and when I try to apologize you might at least

pretend to believe that I am sincere in what I say."

"What about all the men who were standing around?" I asked. "I suppose they are fairly in ecstasies over your latest joke on the English girl."

"Our men are fairly decent," he answered. "And in all probability they are enjoying the clever way in which you turned the joke on me. I am sure I look absolutely idiotic in these togs—I wish Mother had licked the teasing out of me when I was a kid!"

But my injured dignity was not to be appeased so easily, and we rode for half an hour without speaking again. Then we turned to come home, and as we neared the house Mr. Livingstone said, in a dangerously smooth voice, "You will not accept my apology, then?"

"No," I replied, against my better judgment.

"Very well," he blazed. (He has a temper, evidently.) "I shall certainly not trouble you with it again!"

And that is how matters stand. I don't suppose he will ask me to ride with him until I make the first move, and I have vowed a solemn vow to be even with him if the endeavour fills the rest of my days.

XVII

BAR B RANCH,
August 24th, 19—.

THE past ten days have been very quiet and uneventful, but on Monday Mrs. Bingham and Sunny and I are going to Carbon City to do some shopping. Perhaps something worth recording will happen there.

Mr. Livingstone and I are still at daggers drawn. We are painfully polite when we have to speak to each other, but that is not very often, for he is much busier than he was formerly. I scarcely see him except during meals, and on some days not even then. He has not so much as mentioned riding since the day of our quarrel,—neither have I, and I am determined that he shall speak first, even if I were partly in the wrong. It does not

hurt a man of his type to discipline him occasionally.

Mrs. Bingham and I ride nearly every day, so I have not been without exercise. Mr. Paget joined us one day last week. His riding-clothes are quite as correct in cut as the dress-suit which so roused Mr. Bingham's ire. But why will men wear brown, men of his type especially? It always seems to me that a brown suit throws into high relief all there is in a man of "the world, the flesh, and the devil." I would rather see Mr. Paget at the piano than on horseback. I wonder when he looks after his business? In the intervals between changing his clothes, I suppose.

I have just had a very amusing letter from Mother, in reply to the last one I wrote to her before leaving Winnipeg. Poor dear Mother, she is so anxious about her duck chicken! She advises me to buy a small revolver—and she has a distinctly feminine horror of firearms—learn to use it, and carry it with me night

and day. The general impression she has gained from my letter seems to be that southern Alberta is inhabited wholly by "bad men" and wild, very wild, Indians (perhaps I should not have mentioned the Reserve), and she wonders that a person of Mrs. Bingham's evident refinement can content herself in such a place. I *think* my first letter from the ranch would reassure her, and I am *sure* that my description of Mr. Paget would.

Mother also tells me that in the same mail with my "amazing" letter was one for Father from Mr. Hartford, and that Father is highly gratified by the renewal of their acquaintance. And her letter ends with a lengthy explanation of the way in which Mr. Hartford is connected with several "very good families."

XVIII

BAR B RANCH,
August 31st, 19—.

ON Monday, August 29th, at 6.30 p.m., peace was declared. Even more important is the fact that I won, and that Mr. Livingstone plays the part of the humble vanquished to perfection.

Mr. Bingham had intended to come into town with us on Monday, but at the last minute something occurred to change his plans and Mr. Livingstone came instead. Imagine the joys of a twenty-mile ride with a person whom you do not feel free to talk to!

We made an early start and reached the town just in time for luncheon, spent the whole afternoon shopping, had dinner and a half-hour nap afterwards, then started for home again, reaching the ranch

shortly before midnight. What do you think of that for a strenuous day? Sunny slept nearly all the way home, and I wanted to but did not.

Carbon City's largest shop, where we spent the most of our time, is just like the Elba General Store, only bigger. There is the same incongruous variety of goods, the same group of loungers, and the same friendly interest in customers' affairs on the part of the clerks. I needed nothing but glycerine and rose-water, of which I use quarts, so when I had laid in a good supply of this, I wandered to the other end of the store, on picture postcards bent, leaving Mrs. Bingham to continue her search for Sunny-proof gingham and sandals.

A very obliging young "salesman" assisted me to pick out several dozen postcards of the wild-and-woolly variety that I affect for my British correspondence,—the people at home expect cowboys and Indians, so why disappoint them?

Just as I was turning away he leaned

across the counter and said in a confidential whisper, "Beg your pardon, Madam, but *there's* something I'll bet you never seen in the Old Country."

I followed his pointing finger until my eyes rested on a tea-table presided over by a smartly dressed woman.

"Are you serving tea in the shop?" I asked.

"No," he explained, also confidentially; "she's what we call a 'demonstrator.' It's really a Yankee advertising dodge. You see, that lady represents a big manufacturer of canned goods and jelly-powder, and she goes around to the different cities and serves samples of the stuff in the principal stores, and takes orders too. Better go over and sample the things; they're a real good brand. Miss Montgomery will be only too glad to let you see the way we run things over here—that's her job. I don't suppose Montgomery is her name; demonstrators are like actresses, they change their names for the good of the trade."

Thanking my instructor, I proceeded to follow his advice. There were several people standing between me and the table, and it was not until I was close beside him that I noticed Don Livingstone sitting opposite the demonstrator and calmly consuming a dish of peaches !

“ You here ! ” I stammered awkwardly.

“ Sure,” he replied. “ Didn’t you know that I never could resist a peach ? ”

The demonstrator giggled appreciatively

“ Them gentlemen are all alike, ain’t they ? ” she sympathized. “ But they are different once they’ve been married a
x while. I should know, for I’ve had four.”

From the look of her gay and roving eye I imagined that a fifth would not be unwelcome. She was one of those conspicuously blonde blondes, and she looked as if she had been upholstered rather than clothed in the usual way. In fact, she made me think of the girl Mary told me about who had to put on her dress with a shoehorn.

“ Won’t you try some jelly ? ” she asked

sweetly. "The peaches are some richer than ladies usually like, but they are always what the gentlemen asks for."

"I am not keeping house," I began, "so it is not likely that I can give you an order. But I should like to try your jelly."

And once more the lure of the unknown led me into mischief.

"Just boarding, are you?" my hostess asked with interest, as she served me a generous portion of pineapple jelly and passed a plate of wafers. "I always think that's a mistake for young people just starting up. I'm sure Mr. . . . will agree with me—a man always wants a home of his own, don't he, now?"

"Nothing would suit me better," agreed Mr. Livingstone heartily, "than to see my wife opening a can of these peaches in our own kitchen."

The demonstrator turned to me. "I'm old enough to be your mother, even if I don't look it," she said impressively, "so I'm just going to give you a word of

advice. If you've got a good man that wants a home of his own, don't make him live in a boarding-house—and they've
k mostly got Chinese cooks in this town, ain't they? I'll be back here in the spring again, and I hope by that time you'll be able to give me a good big order. Not that I'm so dead set after commissions, you understand, but because I hate to see a likely young couple make a mistake."

Mr. Livingstone choked on his last piece of peach, and I blushed furiously—not because I was embarrassed, but because the woman's blunder had given me an inspiration, and inspirations always affect me in that way.

"There *was* a house that we passed this morning," I began shyly, "and someone said it was for sale. And it's *awfully* good of you to take an interest in our affairs, isn't it, Don?"

"Don" gasped a confused assent, and I rejoiced inwardly as inspiration followed inspiration.

“I’ll tell you what we might do,” I went on. “I have become very much interested in the little hospital here—wouldn’t it be just lovely to send over a box of jelly and preserves? Let me see, a dozen tins of peaches and two dozen packages of the jelly-powder will be enough, I think. You pay for them, Don, while I go for my other parcels.”

And with this I escaped.

I did not see Mr. Livingstone again until we met for dinner. He was in the dining-room when Mrs. Bingham and Sunny and I went in, and as I entered the door he came towards me with his hand out. “You win, Miss Eliot! The matron wishes me to thank you for your very welcome donation.”

Then with a return of the old-time twinkle, which is really not so unpleasant when one becomes used to it, he finished, “There’s a livery-stable in town—just say the word and I’ll order a pair of saddle-horses; I don’t feel as if I could wait until to-morrow!”

XIX

BAR B RANCH,
September 4th, 19—.

SINCE making my last entry I have had two new experiences.

Number one: I forded the Banshee River.

Number two: I dined, chaperoned of course, in a bachelor establishment of the most bachelorish sort.

While we were having luncheon on Friday Mr. Bingham told us that he was going to the Paget ranch during the afternoon, and that we, Mrs. Bingham, Sunny, and I, might go with him if we wished. You will notice that he did not *ask* us to go, but merely intimated that he would tolerate our company. But we went. Even so indifferent an invitation is not enough to discourage Mrs. Bingham in

her search after something to break the monotony of ranch life. And I, too, am learning to separate Mr. Bingham's manner from his motive.

My only hesitation was due to a fear that Mr. Paget might not care to have us drop in on him unexpectedly, but Mrs. Bingham soon reassured me on this point. Mr. Paget had often asked us to return some of his numerous calls, but I find it very hard to become used to the informality of Canadian social life, and it seemed very strange to come down on him like a wolf on the fold. Of course we should stay for dinner after going such a distance, and suppose he did not have enough to go around? Even the best of housekeepers are sometimes embarrassed by unbidden guests, and a mere man—words fail me to picture his probable confusion as my imagination pictured it!

Mr. Paget's ranch is on the west side of the river, and the crossing of the ford was an ordeal, I must confess. I hope

I am not a coward—but when the horses seemed to be making no headway against the stream, and the water splashed into the wagon-box, it took all my courage to enable me to appear unconcerned. We crossed the river diagonally, and the rush of the water gave me an uncanny feeling, as if we were being carried downstream. Either because he was used to an exhibition of “nerves” on the part of women crossing the ford for the first time, or because he noticed that I was not speaking, Mr. Bingham stopped in mid-stream and turned around in his seat long enough to say to me, “Don’t watch the water, Miss Eliot; look at the horses’ heads, or at some point on the far bank of the river.” I followed his advice, and found that it was good; the sinking, floating sensation left me—but not the fear of what would happen should we miss the ford. I was sincerely glad to feel the good old solid earth under me again when we reached the shore.

Sunny and I heaved sighs of relief in

concert as soon as we were out of the water. "I do wish Uncle Don would build a bridge like they have in Winnipeg," said Sunny. "I've asked him, and asked him, and asked him, but he never does. That nasty old ford makes me feel like when I'm dreadfully hungry, and when Mary took me down in the elevator at Eaton's I felt exactly the same way."

Sunny has her sensations more carefully classified than I. The three feelings are very much alike, but until she mentioned it the likeness had not occurred to me.

As the crow flies it cannot be more than three or four miles from the Bar B to Paget Park. But it is ten miles by the road, which follows the winding of the river all the way, and it was after four o'clock when we reached our destination.

Mr. Paget, in white ducks, met us at the door and conducted Mrs. Bingham and me to the . . . drawing-room, I sup-

pose I should call it, and then went with Mr. Bingham to put up the horses.

The house is a good-sized one, but most of it is shut up. No one lives in it but x Mr. Paget and a greasy Chinese servant, as different in appearance from our Lee as day is from night. And the house gives ample evidence of how far he is behind Lee in skill and cleanliness.

I wish Mother could see that drawing-room! It was as dusty and untidy as a room could well be, the window-curtains were soiled and wrinkled, and papers and books were scattered everywhere—we had to empty our chairs before we sat down. The dining-table, which occupied the centre of the room, was still covered with the cloth from luncheon—from a good many luncheons, to judge by the stains. An old and exceedingly shabby couch, whose succession of hills and hollows reminded me of the road between Carbon City and the Bar B, was placed across one corner, and was adorned with a saddle and a pair of riding-boots. A broom and

a dust-pan were leaning against the wall behind the couch, to be well out of the way of temptation, I presume. And in the opposite corner was the piano, a very fine baby grand, on which the most critical of housekeepers could not have discovered a speck of dust—the poor thing looked sadly out of its element! An upholstered armchair, evidently suffering from senile decay, was filled with music of all kinds—good, bad, and indifferent—to suit the catholic taste of its owner.

“How nigh is grandeur to our dust,”^x quoted Mrs. Bingham lightly, as I stood amazed. “Not quite what you expected, is it? White muslin draperies and blue ribbons would seem to be more appropriate for our Beau Brummell, would they not?”

“It is simply dreadful!” I exclaimed. “What would his people at home say if they could see how he lives!”

Mrs. Bingham shrugged her shoulders. “I’ve seen it much worse than this. And when you have lived in Canada for a while, you will cease to wonder at the way in

which a well-bred man will live when he has no women to look after him.”

“But Mr. Paget has money, hasn't he? Surely he could hire someone to keep the place presentable,” I objected. “Anyway, one can be reasonably clean without spending a great deal of either time or money.”

“So long as he has his tub and lots of clean clothes he is satisfied to let Sing neglect everything else about the place,” Mrs. Bingham replied. “That heathen Chinee wastes enough in the housekeeping to run a summer hotel, and still he never prepares a good meal. But he is an excellent ‘washwoman,’ so Mr. Paget will not let him go. If you ever want to hire a Chinese servant, Miss Eliot, choose him as carefully as you would choose a husband.”

At this point the men came back. Our host was apparently delighted to see us, and very insistent that we should stay to dinner. He was not at all put out by his surroundings, so I soon forgot

them too. After chatting for a few minutes he took Mr. Bingham away to "the library"—what sort of a place is it, I wonder?—and there they remained until Sing slouched in to lay the table for dinner.

Lee wears his pigtail in a neat coronet braid, but Sing's hangs down his back, and flaps in a most laughable manner when he walks.

"Put a clean cloth on, Sing," ordered Mr. Paget.

"All light," replied Sing with well-bred indifference.

"Where's the cream?" was the next suggestion.

"Cleam all gone—cat dlink it."

"Oh, by Jove, that's too bad! But there's no use crying over spilt cream, is there, Miss Eliot? Open a tin of condensed milk, Sing. The tin-opener is in the carriage shed."

For dinner we had tinned tomato soup, not quite warm, delicious mutton chops, tinned pork and beans, bread and butter,

tinned plum pudding, tinned coffee with condensed milk, and ginger ale.

Why can't the brick-throwing suffragettes realize that in Western Canada they would find an excellent outlet for their energy? I think seriously of writing to Lloyd George with the suggestion that he should confine the leaders of the militants in insane asylums and ship the rank and file to Canada. Given a hundred and sixty acres of land and a man to look after, they would soon see the folly of brick-throwing—and the first thing they knew the franchise would be handed to them, wrapped in white tissue paper and tied with gold cord!

We started for home in the early evening, and so reached the Bar B before dark. The evenings are very much longer here than in England.

I am sorry that it was not dark as we drove home, for just as we left Paget Park I had a glimpse of the seamy side of ranch life. A small herd of thoroughbred Durhams were standing near the

trail, and Mr. Bingham stopped the horses so that we might admire them. Of course I had known for years that cattle were branded with a hot iron, and since coming here I had found it very interesting to decipher the various brands on the horses and cattle and to speculate upon their former history. But until I saw the poor little calves in this herd I had never realized just what the branding meant to the cattle. Each calf carried on its side an ugly raw burn, bleeding in some cases, and sore-looking in all. And the flies—I cannot write about it, it is too shocking. I wonder if Mr. Livingstone ever branded a calf?

Sunny and I raided the kitchen when we reached home. Lee had just taken a baking of bread out of the oven, so we had hot bread and butter, marmalade, and tea with “cleam” in it. Lee looked on with interest. “Sing velly bad Chinaman, heap bad cook,” he volunteered sympathetically.

XX

BAR B RANCH,
September 19th, 19—.

I WENT to church on Sunday, for the first time since I left Winnipeg. It was a beautiful morning, and at breakfast Mrs. Bingham suggested that we should all go to evening service at the Indian Mission on the Reserve, twelve miles away. Ever since coming here I have wished to visit the Reserve, so I was greatly pleased when Mr. Bingham and Mr. Livingstone fell in with Mrs. Bingham's proposal.

We had luncheon early, for we wished to be at the Mission in time to call on some of the Indian celebrities before tea, as the service was directly afterwards.

Half-way between the Bar B and the Mission we came to the "dip," and I got out to see it, with Mr. Livingstone as

showman. I don't suppose you know what a "dip" is, so I shall describe it as best I can.

At first I thought that the wooden structure I saw was a bridge. It certainly looked like one, but why build a bridge over dry land? And why build it so narrow? To add to my mystification, when I reached the end of the sloping approach I found myself looking down into a reservoir full of water. Mr. Livingstone evidently enjoyed my astonishment—I believe he would have enjoyed it even had I fallen into the water—and after waiting in vain for me to speak and display my ignorance, he told me quite seriously that most of the Bar B cattle were shipped to England, and that the British authorities would not allow them to land until assured that they had been given a bath! I refused to laugh, so he finally told me that ranchers were compelled by law to "dip" their cattle in an antiseptic solution before shipping them, this to prevent the spread of mange

or other similar diseases. The cattle are driven up the approach, and when they come to the water there is nothing for them to do but go into it; both approach and reservoir are too narrow for them to turn in. There is a gradually sloping floor in the reservoir, and before they know what is happening to them the bewildered cattle find themselves in water too deep to wade in, and are therefore forced to swim. In this way the chemically treated water covers them all but their heads. Quite clever, is it not? And wouldn't it be a perfectly lovely way to bathe refractory small boys?

A hill around which the road winds hid us from the Mission until we were within half a mile of it. To my surprise, the many buildings connected with the Agency and the Mission made a good-sized village, and—to my greater surprise—a very picturesque one. They are situated in a fan-shaped hollow amidst the hills, are all painted white, and—greatest surprise of all—are surrounded by trees and gardens.

We drove directly to the residence of the Indian Agent. His wife, a friendly little woman of forty or so, met us with a hearty welcome. In five minutes she was calling me "my dear," and telling me how lonely she found life on the Reserve. She was a governess, so Mrs. Bingham tells me, who came out from England to teach the children of the man who owned the ranch where Mr. Paget now lives—and within a year she married the Indian Agent! Single women in Alberta have need to be wary indeed. x

By the way, an Indian Agent is not an *Indian* agent. He is the man appointed by the Government to look after the temporal affairs of the Indians, and is usually—this may be merely scandal—a person of firmly rooted political convictions in favour of the ruling party.

At the first opportunity Mrs. Bingham told Mrs. Davidson, our hostess, that I wanted to see "some real Indians," but it was not until after we had promised to return for tea that Mrs. Davidson would

let us go. Mr. Livingstone came with Mrs. Bingham and me, and Mr. Bingham and Sunny stayed with the Davidsons. Mr. Bingham does not enjoy "wandering around like a party of Cook's tourists."

The largest of the Mission buildings is the school. It would need to be large, for there are nearly a hundred children in attendance.

As "real Indians" the children were rather disappointing. The boys wear smart dark blue uniforms. The girls, too, are all dressed alike, though not to as good advantage as the boys; but the feminine love of adornment finds expression in hair-ribbons of every colour of the rainbow and a few never seen in any rainbow. The girls are not at all pretty, but they have very sweet voices, and a half-shy manner that is altogether charming. All the children go to school half of each day. During the other half-day the boys are taught carpentering and farming, and the girls learn to cook and sew and "keep house" generally. They

all seemed to be as healthy and happy as children could well be.

A deaconess with a sanctimonious way of talking, and an unsanctimonious way of looking at Mr. Livingstone, showed us the school. I detest goody-goody people. She is young and not by any means plain, and I suppose her enthusiasm to be of some use to suffering humanity is beginning to grow cold. But I really do not think that she should waste her arts on Mr. Livingstone; he is scarcely the sort of man to be taken in by the purring type of women. Of course one never knows; he may like to be purred over. I was rather glad to get away from her; she rubbed me the wrong way until I felt like contradicting everything she said, even if she expressed what had been my own opinion a moment before.

Once outside again we walked around the gardens and looked at the outside of the other buildings, they, of course, being closed for the day.

And then we made two calls.

The first celebrity to whom I paid my respects was a dear old lady—I use “lady” advisedly—who is called Ellen Prince of Wales. She had another surname once, but upon learning that she was of the same age as the late King Edward, she changed to the more distinguished title. With her son and his wife and children she had come to spend the week-end at the Mission. Their tent was pitched just outside the school fence.

Ellen and Mrs. Bingham are fast friends, so I had little to do but listen to them and keep the dogs from carrying me off bodily. Like all self-respecting Indians, Ellen’s son travels with a retinue of dogs of all ages and sizes. I counted nine and then gave up—of course some of them may have been visitors.

Ellen was delighted to hear that I had seen her illustrious namesake, and I had to describe him minutely for her edification. She speaks very good English, with a pretty accent that I wish I could reproduce in writing.

From Ellen's tent we went to the cottage where lives Mr. Benjamin Little Bear with his wife, née Mary Two Stars. Both these young people are "ex-pupils" of whom the Indian Department has every reason to be proud. Mr. Little Bear is now a member of "the staff," albeit a humble one; he has charge of the gardens and the livestock. His wife was Mrs. Bingham's maid from the time she graduated until she married. She is not pretty according to English standards—is the pretty Indian girl a myth?—but she is very neat and capable-looking, and she is evidently a model housewife. I wish we could have accepted her invitation to stay to tea—what a lovely story I should have had to write to the home-folk!

I am almost afraid to attempt to describe the third member of the Little Bear family. I know that I cannot do her justice. Helen Little Bear—called after Mrs. Bingham—is the most fascinating three-months-old baby I have ever seen. Mrs. Little Bear follows the good

old Indian custom and keeps her small daughter in a moss-bag which covers her all but her head. It made me think of the old pictures in which the Holy Child is seen "wrapped in swaddling clothes." Wee Helen's moss-bag is made of black velvet gorgeously embroidered and beaded, but neither embroidery nor beads can compare in brightness with the two black eyes that shine and twinkle above the velvet.

After Mrs. Bingham and I had praised the baby to the mother's satisfaction, Mr. Livingstone, who had been looking on with the usual masculine assumption of superiority to such trifles, evidently thought it was his turn.

"Let's have the kid a minute, Mary," he said. "That's right, young lady"—this to the baby, as he took her awkwardly—"let's see what you can do in the way of a smile; if you cry, I'll drop you and run."

"Do be careful of her back, Don," cautioned Mrs. Bingham.

“Gee, yes!” was the cheerful reply. “The young ones get cross-eyed or bow-legged if you don’t hold their backs steady, don’t they, Mary?”

Mary laughed shyly, and went on talking with Mrs. Bingham, but I observed that she kept one eye on the baby. That young person was having a glorious time trying to catch Mr. Livingstone’s watch in her mouth, as he swung it by the chain just out of her reach, and flirting shamelessly as only a baby can flirt. I was sorry when Mrs. Bingham rose to go. I was always perfectly foolish about babies, and this one is such a dear. I wish I could buy or steal her.

The service in the school chapel was short and simple, as was the sermon, and admirably fitted to the capacity of the children who listened to it. The singing was very good, and as we sang the old hymns I longed for a glimpse of the church at home, with Father at the desk and Mother and Ralph and Helen in our high-backed pew.

After the service was over, I met all the staff. The deaconess was very much in evidence: when not lavishing her St. Cecilia expression on Mr. Livingstone, she turned it on the doctor, who does not seem to be of a responsive temperament. Dr. McMurray is middle-aged, rather distinguished in appearance, and more taciturn than Mr. Bingham at his worst.

The memory of our drive home makes me shiver even now. Before we left the Mission heavy clouds had begun to pile up in the sky. Mrs. Davidson endeavoured to persuade us to stay with her all night, and when the storm broke, while we were still five miles from home, I wished with all my heart that we had done so. First came a wind that seemed as if it would lift us bodily out of our seats, then sudden darkness, and then blinding flashes of lightning, followed by thunder so close that it sounded like the crashing and splintering of heavy timber. Even the horses were frightened, poor

creatures! I shut my teeth hard and prayed for the rain to begin, thankful in one way for the untimely darkness that hid my fear. But when the rain began to fall, it did not bring the relief that I had hoped for; it came in torrents, and with such force that the drops smarted like sleet against my face—and still the thunder and lightning continued. It was so dark that, except during the flashes of lightning, I could not see where we were going, and the fear of being lost added to my already humiliating terror. We lost no time on the road, and we were at the ford before I realized how far we had come. And I had forgotten the ford!

It was dark as the horses felt their way carefully down the bank to the edge of the water; but just as we were well into the river, the whole sky broke into a blaze, and at the same moment came a crash of thunder which was absolutely deafening. The horses stopped short in the stream, Sunny began to cry pitifully, and I felt Mr. Livingstone's hand close tightly over

mine. Of course I tried instinctively to pull my hand away, even although his touch *did* lessen the awful feeling that I was alone in the universe and at the mercy of uncontrollable natural forces; but in the deathly silence that followed the thunder he said quietly, "That's all right. Sunny doesn't like the ford either, and I always hold her hand while we cross." I hardly know how we reached this side of the river, but as soon as we were out of the water Mr. Livingstone let go my hand. If he had continued to hold it I should have known what to do, but as it was I am rather puzzled. I hate to have anyone touch me, but when he did it so simply it would have been silly for me to protest, would it not? I wish I were not so great a coward where water and storms are concerned; comparison with Sunny is not very flattering to my vanity.

The storm ceased as suddenly as it began, there was no more severe thunder and lightning after we crossed the river,

and long before I could sleep—I tossed in bed for half the night—the stars were shining brightly. Verily, this is a marvellous country !

XXI

BAR B RANCH,
October 2nd, 19—.

k EXHIBITIONS and fairs are extraordinarily popular in Western Canada. Is it, as Mr. O'Hara said, because Canadians must have something to celebrate? The Carbon City Annual Exhibition was held on Thursday and Friday of last week, and we all went in from the Bar B for the two days. To judge by the crowds which thronged the fair grounds, the neighbouring ranches must have been depopulated. I am sure that everyone for miles around was in town. Men, women, and children, white, Indians, and Chinese, all dressed in their best, and all good-naturedly oblivious to the discomforts due to lack of accommodation, passed and repassed each other, and gave to Carbon City quite a metropolitan air.

A seventeenth-rate theatrical troupe was in town, as also was an eighteenth-rate circus. The artistes connected with these two organizations stayed at our hotel. In fact, the Great American Giantess and the Snake Charmer had the bedroom just across the hall from me, while the Armless Lady was next door! They were very modest and unassuming in manner, and when the Giantess came to my door to ask for the loan of a needle and thread, one would never have suspected that she was "a personage of international celebrity."

The members of the theatrical company were more exclusive, and I was not so fortunate as to make the acquaintance of any of them. However, Mr Livingstone and I went to see them in "A Knight of the Prairie" on Thursday evening. The play was the usual western melodrama—with a heroine who made me think of Jerry Brown's mother and her fears, and a hero who looked no more like a cowboy than he looked like the Lord Chief Justice

—and the scenery had evidently been mixed in transit. In the last act, where the bold bad cattle-thief is confronted with the proofs of his guilt and the heroine confesses that she has misjudged the hero, “though her heart was ever his,” the actors showed up beautifully against a Forest of Arden background with an ivy-covered church in the middle distance. I must not forget to mention the English lord, who is an indispensable feature of “dramas of western life”—surely such an Englishman as never was on land or sea! He wore hunting-clothes of the most pronounced type and carried a monocle, and his conversation consisted chiefly of such phrases as, “I say, deah boy,” and “Dontcher know,” spoken with an atrocious pseudo-Cockney accent. He was exceedingly popular with the audience, who shouted with laughter whenever he raised his monocle to his eye. There was no orchestra, but between the acts an imitation Paderewski played popular songs on an old piano, half of

whose notes—the piano's, I mean—did not sound at all, and the other half were out of tune. But the audience very kindly joined in the choruses, so no one missed the orchestra. Taking it altogether, the performance was vastly more amusing than any musical comedy I have ever seen, and I enjoyed the evening immensely.

I enjoyed the Exhibition too. We spent Thursday morning viewing the exhibits, and I found much to admire—prize pigs, patchwork quilts, Indian beadwork, china-painting, and amateur photography, to mention only a few of the sections.

But even prize pigs lose their charm eventually, and I was glad when it was time for the afternoon programme of sports. We had good seats in the grandstand. By the way, the uncovered part of the grandstand is known as "The Bleachers"—isn't that a delightful piece of irony?

For once posters told the truth, for without a doubt "the Grand Event of the Fair" was the Indian Parade with

which the programme commenced. This parade consisted of about fifty "braves," who, clad in their war-paint—and very little else in some cases—rode on horse-back twice around the race-track. Quite a number of the horses were piebald, and these had their white spots decorated with geometrical designs painted in the gaudiest of colours. The men also were painted, several of them wore eagle-feather war-bonnets, nearly all had beautiful beaded leggings and moccasins, and one old man created a sensation in a soldier's red coat and a dilapidated chimney-pot hat. They were a fearsome sight, and if they had given just one war-whoop I am sure I should have crawled under a seat. No need to complain that these did not look like real Indians! With the braves, but at a respectful distance to the rear, came their natural corollary—the "fair." There were not as many women as men, perhaps not more than a dozen in all, but they too were in all their finery. Three or four of the women had one or

two children on the horse with them, and when you remember that the Indian's horses are very small ponies, you can imagine the top-heavy appearance of the patient steed.

Quite the funniest thing I ever saw was the squaw race. There were six entries, and the signal to start was given eleven times. The long-suffering judges at last gave up trying to have the horses start together, and it was lucky that they did so, otherwise we might have been waiting yet for the race to begin. As it was, one pony balked, one wheeled and galloped around the track in the wrong direction, and finally a little girl, of not more than seven or eight years old, brought her one-eyed charger to the tape in triumph, thirty yards ahead of the others. She took the thundering applause very calmly; to all appearances she might have been a jockey all her life.

One of the "spectacular" events failed to materialize. A handsome prize had been offered to the man who should suc-

ceed in riding an "outlaw" for a specified distance. An "outlaw" is a horse which cannot be broken, which has all the tricks known and a few not yet discovered, and which can only be ridden at peril of life and limb, so I looked forward to an exciting half-hour. Mr. Livingstone, who is said to be one of the best horsemen in the country, had entered for the competition. But this outlaw had one trick that had never been seen before, even by the oldest inhabitant. When he was led out into the ring, he positively refused to rear, kick, bite, or run away. Tin whistles and torn paper merely bored him. With a melancholy air and drooping head he planted his four feet firmly on the ground and kept them there, instead of standing on his head after the manner of the picture-postcard broncho. Even the shouts of laughter and the cries of "What's the matter with Livingstone? *He's* all right!" failed to rouse him, and with a very foolish expression Mr. Livingstone mounted and rode the required

distance. But he refused to claim the prize; and it was announced that the contest would be repeated on Friday. If ever a horse laughed up his sleeve, I am sure that one did. Why, *I* could have ridden him! I did not see the contest on Friday—Mrs. Bingham took me with her to make some calls—and I am very glad that I did not. The first and only man who tried to mount this very horse was thrown, trampled badly, and had his arm broken.

In accordance with my resolve to show the good with the bad in my Canadian diary, I must admit that there were things at the fair which I did not like. How civilized people can look with approval on the steer-roping contest is a mystery to me. On the ranches it is doubtless needful to pit a man on horse-back against an infuriated steer; but when it is done for *amusement*, I draw the line. It was exciting, I must confess, and both men and horses seemed to enjoy the sport, even if the cattle did not. But

when one maddened steer charged furiously and gored a gallant little horse, I came to my senses with a shock of shame. "Gee, that's nothing!" exclaimed a woman behind me; "there were three steers and two horses killed last time. These Alberta cowboys aren't on to their job—back home I've seen a worse steer than that roped and tied in thirty seconds, and nobody hurt." Plunging blindly, the horse put a few yards between itself and the steer, then crumpled into a heap, taking the rider down with it. Before I could tear my eyes away from the sickening scene, the man jumped to his feet and two revolver-shots rang out in the stillness—the first one sent the horse to the Happy Hunting-grounds, and the other was just in time to stop the steer in its second wild charge. The grandstand shook with applause—who could help applauding a man that had the cool courage to put his horse out of agony before thinking of his own danger? *And that man was Lawrence Paget!* Is it any

wonder that England rules the world when even her "degenerates" can act in such a way?

But to return to the pleasant things. After the steer-roping came the ladies' relay race, in which each contestant—there were five—rode four horses; that is, after riding the first horse once around the quarter-mile track, she dismounted, mounted a fresh horse, and went on, doing this until she had gone four times around, with a different horse each time. I did not forget to point out to Mr. Livingstone that the race was won by a girl who used a side-saddle, while the other four contestants rode astride. He says that I must enter next year; I should love to if I think by that time that I can ride well enough. In a little place such as Carbon City everyone takes part in the Exhibition who wishes to do so, and where everyone knows everyone else there is no unpleasant publicity.

On the whole, I spent two very enjoyable days, and I feel that I have seen still

another phase of Western life. Mr. Livingstone and I had a long conversation about the things which shocked me. He seemed to understand my amazement that such barbarities should be approved by apparently nice people, and he admitted that he always voted against the steer-roping contest. "But riding a bucking horse or an outlaw is different," he hastened to add. "A horse is always more or less 'white,' and if he is going to kill you he'll do it like a gentleman." He laughed at me when I coaxed him not to enter the contest on Friday, but finally he let me have my way. And now, in view of the accident which occurred, in which he might so easily have been the man hurt, he says that I am a witch.

Mr. Livingstone has never yet mentioned our meeting in Elba, even though he has spoken several times of having received letters from his mother or sisters. I suppose this is the far-famed Scotch "dourness"—or maybe he is trying to see how long a woman can keep a secret.

XXII

BAR B RANCH,
November 20th, 19—.

SEVEN whole weeks since I wrote in my diary! And but for Mrs. Bingham it might have been even longer. A few days after we had been to Carbon City to the Exhibition I woke with a splitting headache and a sore throat. I dressed and went down to breakfast, but could not eat anything. Mrs. Bingham became anxious, took my temperature and found it above normal, looked at my tongue, then sent me back to bed, and dispatched Mr. Bingham to the Agency with orders to bring Dr. McMurray back with him as soon as possible. The doctor was not at the Agency, and Mr. Bingham had to ride an additional ten miles before he found him, and it was not until late in

the evening that they reached the Bar B. All day I felt wretchedly ill, and when the doctor came he made a hasty examination, asked a few questions, and then growled, "Scarlet fever. All the rest of
* you had it?"

I was surprised and dismayed, but Mrs. Bingham was neither. "We've all had it, except Sunny, and I can easily keep her out of danger. I'll go into quarantine with Miss Eliot. Mrs. Davidson will be glad to come and keep house for me."

"Can't I go to the hospital?" I asked. "I shall be an awful nuisance to you all if I stay here."

"I suppose you want to have pneumonia, too, do you?" questioned the doctor, rather unsympathetically, I thought. "No, young lady; you'll stay where you are—and thank your lucky stars that you have a good nurse to look after you."

I felt too ill to remonstrate further, and it was several days before I was able to appreciate Mrs. Bingham's kindness pro-

perly. She might have had someone else to look after me, and she must have been very anxious about Sunny, but she never so much as hinted that she was making any sacrifice. In fact, even now she refuses to let me thank her, and when I try to do so she only laughs and tells me that she was delighted to get into uniform again, and to have a patient to tyrannize over. She was a nurse before her marriage.

She moved me into an unoccupied bedroom which opens on the balcony, and there we lived for six long weeks—six months, it seemed to be. For a couple of weeks I was too ill to be lonely, but after that each day was longer than the preceding one. I had to stay in bed for four weeks, and even now I feel very wobbly about the knees. The doctor says that my heart is not very strong and that I must avoid all exertion for some time.

Everyone was *so* good to me. As soon as I was able to listen to them Mr. Paget and Mr. Livingstone gave concerts, as-

sisted by Mrs. Davidson. Lee excelled himself in the making of dishes that would have tempted the most fickle appetite. Mary Little Bear sent me fresh eggs, a few at a time, whenever she had a chance. And the deaconess, Miss Marshall—she prefers to be called “Sister Lillian”—wrote a very kind note, offering to relieve Mrs. Bingham if another nurse should be needed at any time!

And letters! Mary wrote twice a week—long, rambling, funny letters, which were almost as good as a visit from the writer. Gypsy Fiske, who is now in Winnipeg attending college, wrote each week, telling me all the Elba news. And I had a very characteristic epistle from Mrs. Mills—I was so sorry that it had to be burned—Mr. Hartford, Mr. O’Hara, and the twins added postscripts, and the resulting manuscript was so weighty that it required double postage.

We had a private system of postal delivery too. Mr. Livingstone and Sunny used to write the quaintest little notes to

me and put them on my tray. Of course all the writing was done by Mr. Livingstone, but he made no distinction between what he wrote for himself and what was dictated by Sunny—you may imagine what a queer jumble of nonsense those letters were. They invariably began, “Dear Auntie Elinor,” and they usually ended in this fashion,

“Yours sincerely,

DON LIVINGSTONE

and

her

SUNNY X BINGHAM

mark

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“P.S.—These are kisses.”

But it is Mrs. Bingham who has won my lasting gratitude. Before we were shut up together I liked her very much, and admired her never-failing optimism; but now—well, for six weeks she was mother, sister, and nurse all in one, always ready to pet me when I was blue and

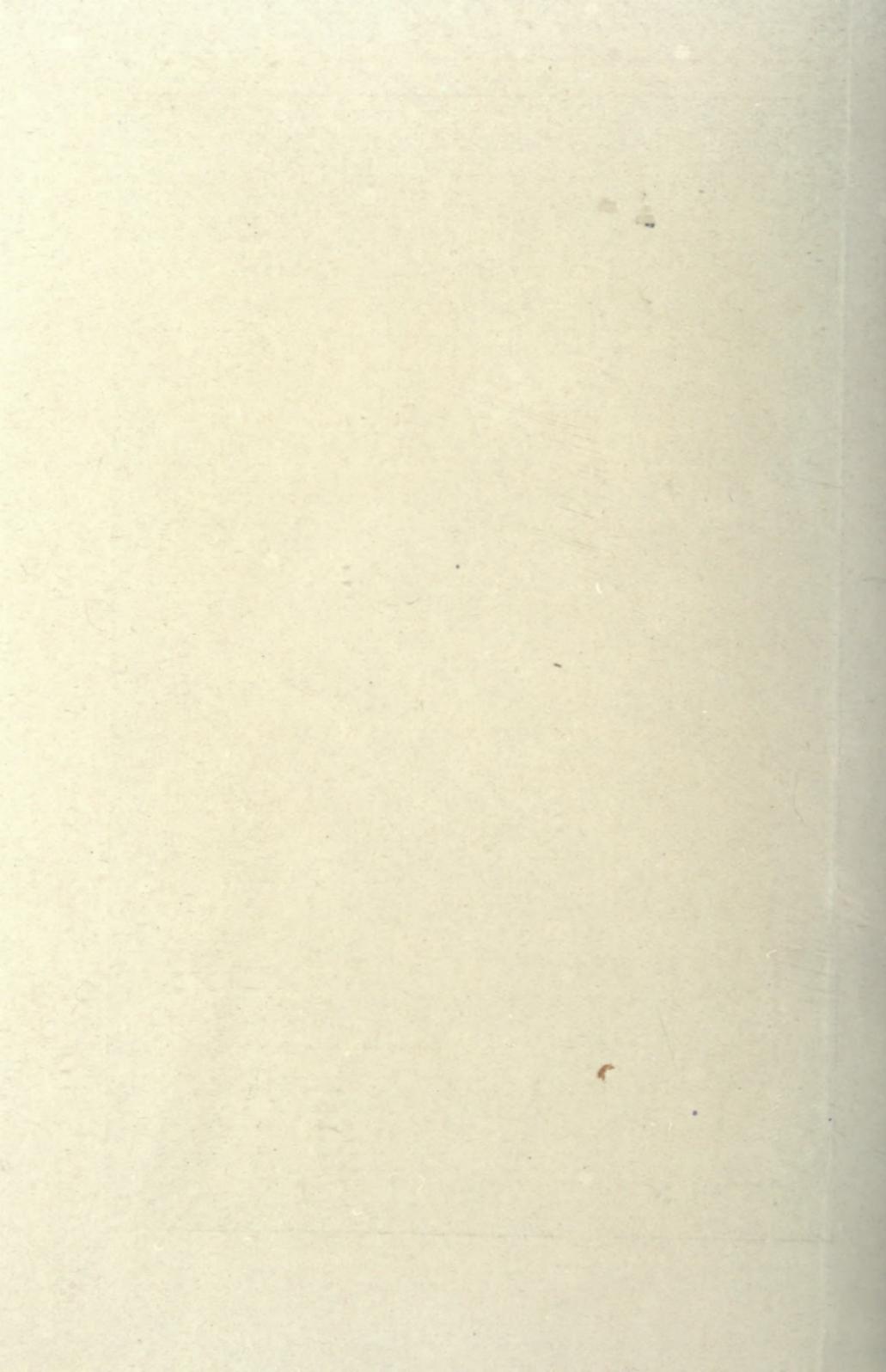
homesick, and to amuse me when I was restless and fretting against confinement. Mere "liking" is too mild a term for what I now feel towards her.

I wish she could be persuaded to write a book about her experiences as a nurse. Her patients have been of so many sorts, ranging from a society woman with an imaginary case of nervous prostration to a smallpox patient in one of the lumbering camps in the wilds of Northern Saskatchewan.

"There is not so much romance in our profession as many people believe," she said one day when she was in a reminiscent mood. "In this country 'The Lady with the Lamp' frequently gives place to 'The Lady with the Broom and Wash-tub.' I have often nursed in places where I had to wash and cook and keep the house clean, simply because there was no one else to do those things. Of course there is a certain amount of fun to be had 'on the side,' if one knows where to look for it. For one thing, men have an incurable



*A Miniature Niagara
near Lundbreck Alberta*



habit of falling in love—temporarily, of course—with their nurses. They always fall out again, but the attack is very serious while it lasts, and if the man is young and eligible and has a mother within range, the old lady nearly always adds the last touch to the comedy by trying to counteract the nurse's influence. Poor old ladies! They waste a lot of valuable time and energy, and all because they do not know that a man's infatuation for his nurse is but one stage in his convalescence. My experience in this respect has not been very wide, but some nurses I know could tell you tales that would make you open your eyes. The girl I roomed with while I was in training had one typhoid patient who used to quote 'Maud' to her when he was delirious. As soon as he began,

'She is coming, my own, my sweet,'

Molly would get the ice-pack out and then jab the thermometer into his mouth. The poor man was very ill at the time,

but even when he was out of danger, and supposed to be quite rational, he stopped reciting 'Maud' only to tell Molly whenever he had the chance that she was the very image of the only girl he had ever loved.

"Molly was the worst flirt I *ever* knew. She kept in practice by experimenting on everyone, from the visiting doctors to the elevator boys. And whenever I remonstrated with her, she would excuse herself by saying that there were times—when books and cards failed—when one *had* to flirt with a patient in order to keep him from being bored to death."

"What was the most interesting case that you ever nursed?" I asked.

"The one that introduced me to the Bar B," returned Mrs. Bingham promptly. "Did Mary not tell you how I met my husband?"

"No," I replied. "Please tell me. I hope I am not inquisitive, but I do love 'truly' stories just as much as Sunny does."

“It is a wonder that Mary did not mention it,” Mrs. Bingham began; “she never forgets to remind me of the fact that I broke all my solemn vows and married a patient.

“Seven years ago this summer I was visiting Dr. and Mrs. Randall in Carbon City, when one day a call came for the doctor to go out to see a man who had been badly hurt while breaking a young horse. The doctor was away all night, and when he came back he told Mrs. Randall and me what he had found—a man with a leg broken in two places, a dislocated shoulder, and bruises from head to foot. That man was Mr. Bingham. The doctor knew him slightly and so did Mrs. Randall, and they were plainly worried to think that he could not possibly receive the proper attention. So in a fit of temporary aberration I volunteered to go out to the ranch and nurse him! There was not another nurse closer than Medicine Hat, and the doctor, manlike, jumped at my offer, in spite of the objec-

the 8 month the 8
tions of his wife. Before I had time to change my mind he had 'phoned to the hotel and told Don Livingstone to call for me on his way home (Don had come in with the doctor for some greatly needed sickroom supplies; I had not met him before), given me numerous directions and some warnings, and hurried off to another case, leaving me to pack my suitcase in fear and trembling.

“ If I had retained any illusions regarding my profession I should have lost them immediately upon seeing my patient and his surroundings. The surroundings were the worst—for in spite of the fact that Jack's distinguished countenance was more or less obscured by a three days' growth of beard, he looked quite safe and harmless. But he and Don lived in the x bunk-house with the men, and the place was hot and untidy, and stuffy with stale tobacco-smoke—imagine a sick man in such a sick-room! I must confess that I have been in many worse houses lots of times, houses where several servants

were kept, for the bunk-house was clean in a primitive, masculine way.

“Secure in my uniform, I assumed command at once, and inside of ten minutes had Don and the men well in hand. Dr. Randall had told me to have the men set up a tent for me and my patient, and it was not long before this was done. Moving the patient was not so easy a task—I suppose it hurt his dignity to be carried on a cot; but finally this too was accomplished.

“Westerner as I am, I had never before slept outside, and the first night in the tent was not strictly enjoyable. My patient was restless and feverish, so I was up several times, and each time I went back to my side of the curtain it was harder to go to sleep than the time before. And when I got up in the morning a garter-snake was curled neatly under my bed! I threw a boot at it, and as I watched it wriggle away I pined for home and mother.

“For the two weeks I was at the ranch

I never saw a woman, except once when Mrs. Randall came out with the doctor. But the cowboys were a compensation; it was lovely to see them falling over each other to do things for me, and Don was a tower of strength in himself. Mr. Bingham says that he is still jealous of Don!

“For the first few days Jack was a model patient. Then he had a shave, and at once became cross. Really, cross is no name for the way he behaved! He had never been ill a day in his life, and the enforced quiet told on his nerves, I suppose; and then, too, his leg had been so long unset before the doctor reached him that there was considerable inflammation, so he had a great deal of pain. You may think that he is quiet and not given to unnecessary speech, but I can assure you that at times his vocabulary is nothing short of marvellous.

“At the end of two weeks Dr. Randall decided that the men could in future do all that was necessary for my patient, so

I went back to Carbon City. I thought at that time that I never wanted to see a ranch again, but . . .”

“You changed your mind?” I suggested, fearful that I was not going to hear the end of the story.

“No, *I* didn’t; Mr. Bingham changed it for me,” Mrs. Bingham replied. “He wrote every week, and made numerous ‘business trips’ to Winnipeg after I went home, and at last I had to marry him to get rid of him.”

The Binghams are not noticeably sentimental.

Four weeks from the day I went into quarantine Mrs. Bingham let me sit out on the balcony. Mr. Bingham and Sunny, Mrs. Davidson, and Mr. Livingstone stood on the ground below—Romeo and Juliet up to date—and we all talked at once until “the nurse” ordered me back to my little bed. From that time on I went out every day, and almost before I knew it two weeks had passed and I was free once more.

We had a flurry of snow yesterday, and the air is pleasantly frosty, but the sunshine is as bright as ever. I have had a drive every day since I came out of quarantine, but I am not yet allowed to ride. I am afraid that Cupid will grow fat and lazy. I had been counting on sleigh-rides, but they tell me that the little bit of snow that does fall here never lasts long enough to make good sleighing. The hills are scarcely browner than when I came; nothing but the colder air and the absence of flowers mark the change from summer to winter. That is hardly true, though; there *is* a subtle and indefinable silence which tells that Nature is sleeping—what a very poetical sentence for Elinor to be guilty of! After all, the silence may only mean that the flies no longer buzz, the mosquitoes no longer sing, and the crickets no longer chirp.

XXIII

BAR B RANCH,
December 4th, 19—.

I AM homesick, *homesick*, HOMESICK, and only my pride, together with a feeling of obligation towards Mrs. Bingham, keeps me from telegraphing for a berth on the next boat. If I were to leave Carbon City to-morrow I could be home in time for Christmas. That wretched scarlet fever seems to have burned up all my strength of mind, and it is only by filling every moment with employment that I am able to keep from giving in to my loneliness. The home letters are full of Christmas plans, and it is almost more than I can bear. Mother coaxes me to come home, and I can read between the lines that they all had many an anxious hour when I was ill. But I will not go ;

there is really no reason, beyond that of self-indulgence, why I should go, and I do not approve of self-indulgence.

Mrs. Bingham still watches over me professionally. I am not growing strong as quickly as she would like, so she insists upon giving me a tonic. According to the wrapper on the bottle, the tonic is "the nutritive constituents of the blood of beef." At first I thought that it consisted principally of a clever combination of bad tastes, but by again referring to the label I found that it contained the following unpronounceable ingredients, along with several more familiar ones: hæmoglobin, seralbumen, sodium chloride, and phosphoric anhydrate. If all cattle have that stuff flowing in their veins, it is no wonder that even the mild dairy-cow sometimes kicks the milking-pail over!

We have been to the Agency, to Paget Park, and to the Carroll farm within the last month, and we have had a great deal of company here; but I do not care for

anything—I just want to go home. The Carrolls have had a stroke of luck; while I was ill a bachelor brother of Mr. Carroll's died (very conveniently for them) and left them enough money to keep them in comfort at home. Mrs. Carroll was fairly running over with happiness when she came to say good-bye to us. They sail from New York this week.

I have written forty letters since last Sunday, and half a dozen or so remain to be written to-day. My Christmas shopping was conspicuous by its absence this year. I sent each of the home-folk a pair of beaded slipper moccasins made by Ellen Prince of Wales, and I sent Mary the money to buy presents in Winnipeg for my Canadian friends. Mary loves to shop, even for someone else. I have not been to Carbon City since I was ill, and I did not like to trouble Mrs. Bingham to get anything for me when she went into town—I do not suppose I should have been able to get what I wanted in so small a place, anyway.

Mr. Livingstone has been away for nearly two weeks. He went to Elba to attend the marriage of his eldest brother, the one who manages the farm. We expect him back to-morrow or the next day.

XXIV

BAR B RANCH,
December 27th, 19—.

I GREATLY fear that my diary, like many other diaries, is about to become a thing of fits and starts. Either I am too busy to write, or I have nothing to write about. However, my book is almost full. I certainly found enough to write about when everything was new and strange, and no doubt I shall find it interesting reading when I am a be-capped and be-spectacled old lady.

I am not nearly so homesick as I was a few weeks ago, although I still wake in the morning with a very vivid realization of the size of the earth. If I invested in a nice little globe, say nine inches in diameter, would Wilmington seem any closer to the Bar B, I wonder? (I wish

the purists who object to the use of "wonder" in this connection would provide an unoffending substitute.) But before I have rubbed the sleep out of my eyes a voice comes from the other side of the room, "Oh, Elinor! Is it time to get up *already*?" and the edge is immediately taken off my homesickness.

Of course you will guess at once to whom the voice belongs, so why should I try to be mysterious simply to whet the curiosity of a possible but improbable reader?

A week ago to-day Mrs. Bingham and Mr. Livingstone went to Carbon City "to bring out the Christmas mail." Sunny and I were sitting in the firelight when they came home just at dusk, Sunny busy chattering about the probable nature of Santa Claus's load, and I pretending to listen but with my thoughts thousands of miles away. It was very windy, so windy that we could not hear anything outside the house, and I did not know that "Mother and Uncle Don" had

returned until someone slipped up behind my chair and blindfolded me with a pair of cold but very live hands.

“Guess, Miss Eliot,” laughed Mr. Livingstone.

“Oh, Auntie Elinor,” shouted Sunny, almost beside herself with excitement, “guess who’s here. We’ll have a good time now, you bet!” And for this once Mrs. Bingham let Sunny’s slang pass unreprieved.

I had been blindfolded by that particular pair of hands too often to be in doubt as to their identity, but I could not get their owner’s name past the lump in my throat! Mary herself—for of course it was no one else—was half laughing and half crying, and saying over and over, “I wanted to come when you were sick, but Dad wouldn’t let me, because I never had scarlet fever. And you might have died away out here, with nobody to care whether you got better or not!”

“Oh, I say, Miss Arnold, that is rather unfair,” objected Mr. Livingstone. And

when neither Mary nor I answered him, he picked Sunny up and left the room, saying in a mock-tragic voice as he went, "We may just as well make ourselves scarce, kiddie. Auntie Elinor doesn't want *us* any more." Mrs. Bingham followed them.

I lighted the gas and then turned Mary around and around to see if she had changed. She is, if anything, prettier than ever, and in her long grey squirrel coat and grey squirrel turban trimmed with pink rosebuds she made a charming picture. I trembled for the susceptible Mr. Paget.

To tell the truth, the Bar B men, from Mr. Bingham to Lee, are all more or less susceptible to Mary's charms. The very morning after she arrived she went into the kitchen, borrowed a big apron from Lee, and proceeded to make an immense dish of chocolate fudge, Lee all the while looking on with undisguised admiration, and handing her the necessary articles almost before she asked for them—

and with the rest of us Lee is absolute monarch in his own domain !

Then, too, Mary flirts disgracefully with Mr. Livingstone, whom she insists upon calling "Uncle Don." He seems to enjoy the process as much as she does, and returns the compliment by calling her "The Little One," altogether regardless of who hears him. On Christmas Eve the Davidsons, Dr. McMurray, Mr. Paget, and Miss Marshall were here for dinner, and Miss Marshall's face as she watched Mary and Mr. Livingstone was a study in expression. Mary and I went upstairs with her when she went to put on her wraps before going home, and she took the opportunity to ask Mary if she had known Mr. Livingstone long.

"Why, no," replied Mary, almost too sweetly; "I never saw him until last summer !"

"Oh," ejaculated Miss Marshall, with a world of meaning in her tone, "I thought you were old friends."

"That estimable young woman needs

watching," Mary warned me that night after we had gone to bed. "If I know anything, she has her eye on *my* Uncle Don. Don't let her get him, Elinor! If you don't want him, I do; it would be a pity to let such an interesting specimen out of the connection."

I pretended that I was asleep, and Mary—doubtless suspecting the pretence—smothered what I thought was an unnecessary laugh in the pillows. I have ceased to pay any attention to Mary's teasing—why, she teases even Mr. Bingham, and if that does not prove her incurable, I have nothing further to say.

For two weeks before Christmas Mrs. Bingham had taken charge of all parcels that came, and would allow none of them to be opened; so on the eventful morning the Christmas-tree was covered with bundles of all sizes and shapes, and several big ones had to be piled on the floor. I think I was *almost* as much excited as Sunny, but not quite so noisy, I hope. Everyone remembered me, and a list of

my gifts would read like a bazaar prospectus. "Jerry" Brown sent me a rug about six feet square made of beautiful silky badger skins. I suppose I should return it, but I hate to hurt his feelings—and then the rug is *so* lovely.

"I'd like you to keep it for yourself," ran the note which accompanied it; "the badgers was all shot on my own place. But if you don't want to keep it, I guess you'd better send it home to your father. I notice that Old Country folks generally like such things. Don't feel bad about 'the poor little badgers,' a lot more good horses won't get their legs broke with them out of the way."

No one here, except Mary, knows who sent the rug, and I have the pleasure of seeing them all consumed with curiosity.

I do not know what time Sunny woke on Christmas morning, but I do know that she woke me before seven by pounding on the door and shouting, "Please let me in, Auntie Elinor. I have something for you from Uncle Don."

To calm the tumult I jumped out of bed, lighted the gas, and opened the door. Sunny was in her dressing-gown and slippers, and she carried a long box which she handed to me with an impressive bow.

“Look here, Sunny,” said Mary, who of course had been wakened by the noise, “Uncle Don must have meant you to give that to *me*.”

“No, he didn’t,” said the messenger decidedly; “he said to give it to Auntie Elinor with his love, and not to wake Mary. I guess he thought you would be tired.”

“*Very* considerate of him, I’m sure,” drawled Mary mockingly. “Elinor dear, I think you had better lie down again; you look rather feverish.”

“Not scarlet feverish?” queried Sunny anxiously.

“Perhaps it’s only the reflection of that pink lamp-shade,” Mary answered, after a moment of consideration, and Sunny looked happy again.

I wish I could cure myself of that foolish habit of blushing !

“Hurry up and open your box,” commanded Sunny, “and then you and Mary get dressed and come down to breakfast. I just feel as if I couldn’t wait a minute longer to see what Santa Claus brought me, and Mother says that I must wait until everybody else is ready before I touch one thing.”

I opened the box, and found—an immense bunch of big, velvety La France roses ! To appreciate my feelings one must remember that the nearest florist’s shop is hundreds of miles away. Mary looked a whole circulating library, but said nothing. She is calling me now to go downstairs and play with her. I think it best to do so, as she threatens to confiscate and read my diary if I do not go at once.

XXV

BAR B RANCH,
February 5th, 19—.

THE first month of the New Year has passed uneventfully. Almost before I know it I shall have come to the end of my year in Canada.

Mary left us last week, and all the flags are flying at half-mast—to speak figuratively.

DANGER !!!

That is to remind Elinor Eliot, aged seventy-five, to skip a few pages just here. It is well for age to forget the follies of youth.

I know quite well that I should not be jealous of Mary, but I am, and I was never really jealous of anyone before. It is not a comfortable sensation, I can assure you. I am *very* fond of Mary, and

I hope we shall always be good friends, but I must confess it troubles me to hear her praises sung from morning until night. Isn't that a despicable frame of mind to be in ?

Of course there is a man at the bottom of it—who was the idiot who first said that a woman was at the bottom of all the trouble in the world, I wonder ? He simply did not know what he was talking about. For my part, I think this would be a perfectly lovely world if there were no *men* in it.

Mr. Livingstone and I were the best of friends before Mary came, but of late he has changed towards me. I do not like to be hard on another girl, but I do think that Mary flirted with him a little too brazenly. And I could do nothing but ignore the change in his attitude, and at the same time reproach myself for being so credulous as to believe that real friendship was possible between a man and a woman. It is quite evident now that Mr. Livingstone was so very good to me

simply because I was the only girl at hand. I suppose he would have flirted with *me* if I had given him any encouragement. I hope he does not know that he is hurting me; I would rather die than let him see just how much I feel the loss of his old brotherly manner.

I have one thing to thank Mary for, although I was angry when first I heard about it. She told Mr. Livingstone about Arthur. How much she told I cannot say, nor do I care now. He (Mr. Livingstone) is evidently of the opinion that we are as good as engaged, and I shall let him continue to think so. It is one way of saving my pride, and I intend to save my pride even at the expense of my boasted honesty. And poor Arthur has nothing to lose by the deception—Mother tells me that he is openly transferring his affections to Helen! “The very best thing that could happen,” says Mother in her last letter, and I had not the heart to laugh; “his prospects are good, and he will make a more suitable husband for

Helen than for you. Helen is just what I was as a girl, but you are different. Your husband will have to be your master, and Arthur is too much of a Christian gentleman to even wish to be any woman's master." It looks as if Mother is beginning to understand her duck chicken at last. Is it possible that, under her mid-Victorian veneer, she also has known the charm of a slightly modernized cave-man? I hope Helen will not fall in love with Arthur; I wish my baby sister to have something better than my cast-offs—but perhaps Helen is not jealous!

Mr. Livingstone drove Mary in to Carbon City and saw her started on her journey home. I had taken it for granted that I should go too, but when the time came they let me see very plainly that I was not wanted. They *said* that it was because the day was stormy and I might catch cold, so of course I had to submit gracefully. But I know quite well that they did not want me. I suppose it is perfectly natural for people in that con-

dition to wish to be alone to say good-bye. I am *horrid*, I know.

I feel utterly wretched, and the thing that hurts me most is the knowledge that there is a cloud between Mary and me. (Perhaps that is not *quite* honest, but I shall let it stand.) When she kissed me good-bye she was very much affected, and so was I, but her last words braced me up as nothing else could have done. "You will forgive me some time, Elinor," she whispered, and then tore herself away before I could reply. Have I made it so plain to her that Mr. Livingstone's desertion has hurt me? She might at least have had the grace to refrain from speaking of it. I hate to feel so towards her—and I wish that I had never seen Don Livingstone!

I had a letter from her to-day, just a few lines written on the train and posted when she reached Winnipeg. I do not know how to answer it in my usual way, but I must try to do so. If I can help it, no man living shall come between Mary and me.

I have not had a letter from home for two weeks, but I hope to get two this evening. Mr. Paget called yesterday on his way to Carbon City, and he will come back this way to-night if there is any mail for us. "It is no trouble at all," he assured me when I thanked him; "we Britishers must stand by each other, you know. And we all feel jolly blue when we think the people at home have forgotten us." Every once in a while Mr. Paget does or says some tactful little thing that makes me regret the many times I have made fun of him. And then, as he says, we Britishers must stand by each other.

XXVI

BAR B RANCH,
February 28th, 19—.

My petty troubles and resentments have been forced into the background by real tragedy. It is all so fresh that I can scarcely write or speak about it, and at the same time I feel as if ages had passed since I wrote in my diary only three weeks ago. And what a pitiful, childish outburst that was! After all, I am not the first person to learn that dolls are made of sawdust and imagination.

When I went downstairs on that seemingly far-off Sunday I found Mrs. Bingham standing beside the hall window, with an anxious expression on her usually placid face.

“Is there anything wrong?” I asked.

“Do you see that sky?” she answered, as she drew me to the window. “I am afraid it means a storm, and a storm here means death.” She lowered her voice with the last words.

“Oh, surely not!” I said. “No one would venture out if a storm were coming up.”

“People who live in such a country grow reckless,” she replied, and then changed the subject with an effort.

Just at sundown her prediction came true, the wind rose, and inside an hour we were in the grip of the storm. It was no gentle drift of fleecy flakes that threw a white blanket over a bare and ugly world, but a howling, shrieking hurricane, accompanied by fine snow which stung like millions of needle-pricks wherever it touched the bare skin. While it was still light enough to do so, I watched it from the window, fascinated, in spite of myself, by the fantastic shapes of the eddying snow which seemed to fall to within a few inches of the ground, only to be

caught up again like dust by a whirlwind. As it grew darker, the wind became wilder, and all night long it blew, sometimes moaning in a way to make one remember all the world-old stories of lost souls, and then again rising louder and louder until it ended in a blood-curdling shriek. We sat up until after midnight, Mr. and Mrs. Bingham, Mr. Livingstone and I, trying to forget in the warmth and light of the big hall the awful danger which threatened the life of anyone who might be out on such a night. Even after I went to bed I could not sleep for a long while, tired as I was; but the storm must have worn itself out before daylight, for at eight o'clock I woke from troubled dreams and looked out upon a quiet world. A world covered as far as I could see with glittering white snow, blue in the shadowed hollows, but almost blinding in its radiance where the sun shone upon it. And the Banshee, swift and cruel-looking as ever, ran like a black ribbon through all this dazzling beauty.

When I went down to breakfast the dining-room was empty, but in a few minutes Mrs. Bingham came in, followed a moment later by her husband. As soon as I saw them I knew that something awful had happened.

“What is it?” I asked.

Mrs. Bingham tried to speak, but before she could control her voice Mr. Bingham answered for her.

“It’s Paget, Miss Eliot. When I went to the stables this morning, his team and wagon were standing in the open shed, but there was no driver. He must have missed the road in the storm and gotten out of the wagon to look for it. Livingstone and two of our men started back on the trail at once. Better have a cup of tea,” he finished kindly; “we can always hope for the best, you know, and you must not make yourself ill. It wouldn’t surprise me in the least if Paget were to come in this minute, grumbling about the bad walking.”

With this Mr. Bingham went out, and

Mrs. Bingham and I sat down at the table and coaxed each other to eat.

The next hour is like a nightmare to me. We had just risen from our make-believe breakfast when mad barking from David sent us both to the door like a flash. Mr. Bingham was there before us, however. "The men are coming back, Helen," he said reassuringly, as one always says the obvious thing in an emotional crisis, and hurried out to meet them.

In a few moments the wagon pulled up at the door, and Don and Mr. Bingham carried in all that was left of poor Lawrence Paget. They had found him only a mile from the house. At first we thought, or pretended to think, that he was still living, but it was a sorry pretence. And the bitterness of it is that he was so close to safety all the time—to think that while we sat in comfort the night before he was battling for his life!

There was very little for Mrs. Bingham and me to do; the men attended to everything. When all was quiet again, Mr.

Livingstone came into the hall where I sat alone.

“ I found this in Paget’s pocket,” he said, and handed me my English mail. And then I broke down and cried like a baby—I couldn’t help it. His very last words to me came back with a rush of feeling that I had not considered possible: “ We Britishers must stand by each other, you know.”

I have scarcely seen Mr. Livingstone since then; he has been very busy looking after Mr. Paget’s affairs. But he has been very nice and friendly whenever we have met. Mr. Paget’s death has sobered us all, I think. Of course I shall never feel towards him just as I did before—why should I, when he is apparently satisfied with the present situation? To come right down to the bare facts: I evidently took his kindness to mean more than he actually meant by it, and feeling so, I thought that I had a right to feel hurt by his sudden devotion to Mary. I see my blunder now, and I shall not repeat it.

XXVII

BAR B RANCH,
March 30th, 19—.

I OPEN my diary again only to close it.

I realize that what I am about to write will read exactly like the last chapter in a novel, but that cannot be helped.

Last Sunday was the first day of spring. Saturday had been wintry, but the seasons are true Canadians—always in a hurry, and with no half-tones—and as soon as I woke on Sunday morning I knew that the winter was over.

“Will you come for a ride after breakfast?” Mr. Livingstone asked me as we met in the hall.

I *did* want a ride, under any circumstances, so I said yes, and in an hour I was on Cupid and “headed for the south

to meet the summer," as Mr. Livingstone put it.

Both the horses were fresh and eager to stretch their limbs, so we let them race for a while and did not attempt to talk. The warm lazy breeze was busily blowing away all my unpleasant memories, and as we slowed our horses down to a walk at the top of a steep hill it came upon me suddenly that I *loved* Canada, the big, crude land that had seemed so unfriendly throughout the winter.

"That was glorious!" I said to Mr. Livingstone.

"Yes, wasn't it?" he replied. "Don't you wish Miss Arnold were here to enjoy it with us?"

All the little demons came back instantly, and I gave poor Cupid a cruel cut with the whip. One unbearably long minute followed, during which I seemed to fall half-way through to Australia, and then all was black and I knew nothing more until I came to my senses on a swiftly-revolving hillside, while Mr. Living-

stone poured brandy down my throat with as little consideration as if I had been a funnel. I hate brandy, but it had the desired effect, and before long the hills settled back into their accustomed places.

“What happened?” I asked, as I stood up, very shaky, but very independent.

“Cupid bolted, and half-way down the hill he put his foot into a badger hole. It is a wonder that you both were not killed—especially when you will insist on wearing that Hyde Park riding-skirt.”

Mr. Livingstone had evidently been badly frightened, and, manlike, he showed his concern by blaming the woman.

There was a good-sized stone not far from where I had fallen, so I went over and sat down on it, glad to be able to view the situation from a more or less comfortable seat. I seemed to have acquired a short circuit in my nervous system.

My hat had vanished, my hairpins also, and my hair hung in a braid over my shoulder. Cupid stood a few feet away with an apologetic expression on his face that surely meant, "I know it was all *my* fault." Cupid, like Mr. Mills, is always a perfect gentleman. And Mr. Livingstone glared at us alternately. It *was* funny, and I began to laugh.

"I am glad that you find me amusing," said Mr. Livingstone stiffly.

And then I began to cry! Surely the strain of the last few months has weakened my brain.

In a moment Mr. Livingstone was beside me. "Elinor," he said gently, "are you, or are you not, engaged to that man in England?"

"I am *not*!" I replied indignantly, between sobs; "and even if I were, I don't see what right you have to ask personal questions."

"You don't, eh?"—this with a queer little laugh—"well, we'll see about that later. And in the meantime, if you *have*

to cry you must do it more comfortably.”

And now, after encouraging me so shamelessly, he says that I spoiled his second-best tie by sprinkling salt water all over it! Of course he has said other things too—a great many of them; but while eminently satisfactory to me, his conversation is not suitable for insertion in a well-conducted diary.

We had to tell our wonderful news to the Bingham, but until we hear from Father we shall not tell anyone else. Don and I wrote to Father at once, and Mr. Bingham did also—awfully good of him, I thought it. We have decided that I shall go home about the first of May, and Don will come for me at Christmas. Inside my ring is engraved, “Elba, June 20th, 19—.” Fancy Don’s remembering the exact date!

I am just a little bit worried about Mary. Don has made it very plain that he flirted with her only because he felt that I had used him badly by concealing

my engagement to another man. But did Mary flirt with him just for mischief, or did she care for him seriously? I wish I knew.

April 20th, 19—.

Father has cabled his consent.

THE END

XXVIII

BAR B RANCH,
May 3rd, 19—.

THE end of my diary begins to resemble Sarah Bernhardt's farewell tour. But as I never add a postscript to a letter, perhaps I may be allowed to add one to my diary.

Properly speaking, Mary is responsible for this addition. After I received Father's cable, I wrote to her and announced my engagement. Her reply came to-day, and as I could not do justice to it in an extract I shall paste it in my diary here; it forms a more fitting conclusion than anything I myself could write.

“WINNIPEG,
“*April 27th, 19—.*

“DEAREST ELINOR,—

“When I had read your letter containing the marvellous news of your

engagement I felt so happy that I wanted to hug someone, you or Uncle Don in preference. But there was no suitable victim within range, so I abducted the nearest small boy and took him to see the 'movies.' This small boy is perfectly adorable; he has tow-coloured curly hair, a turned-up nose, and an entrancing lisp. We had 'one swell time,'—that very vulgar expression is a quotation from the small boy's vote of thanks. *I* have cut out slang.

Honestly, Elinor, I cannot tell you how glad I am that you and Uncle Don have at last acted in a sensible manner. As soon as I saw you together at the ranch I concluded that he was—well, not wholly indifferent to you. But you know, my dear, your predilection for Platonic friendship and poultry farming would discourage the boldest of men, so I thought that it was time for little Mary to take a hand in the game. Is that slang, or merely technical phraseology?

First of all, I tried flirting with Uncle

Don, but that did not seem to trouble you in the least. It was *very* discouraging, and I was almost disheartened when suddenly it occurred to me that if I could make Uncle Don flirt with me it might bring you to your senses. So I called out the Reserves, and told him a more or less true story about dear Arthur. Have you ever observed the line of Uncle Don's jaw when he isn't exactly pleased? Gee, I *was* scared! But I stood to my guns, and when he began to conceal his injured pride by devoting himself to me, I felt satisfied that I had followed the proper course. You certainly did sit up and take notice, but—this for your consolation—Uncle Don never caught on; he thought that you were homesick! Men are stupid creatures, even the best of them.

“However, towards the end of my visit I had many an anxious moment; and I vowed then that I would never again interfere in such a matter. Two or three times since I came home I have been on

the point of writing to Uncle Don to tell him what I had done, but I couldn't very well tell him that you were breaking your heart because he wouldn't play with you any more, could I? The next time I shall leave the matrimonial game to Cupid—I do not refer to your Cupid, excellent though he is as a substitute for his more renowned namesake.

“If Uncle Don is reading this over your shoulder, please send him away now—I have something to tell you that is for you alone. Look for a soft spot to fall on, because you will probably faint; but you cannot be half as much surprised as I am myself.

“Since 8.45 p.m. on February 3rd I have been engaged . . . to the Reverend Bernard Hartford! Don't laugh, *please*; it is not funny. To tell the honest cross-my-heart truth, I think it is rather a tragic occurrence. Just suppose I should disgrace him some time—by throwing cold water on the bishop, for instance! Or, worse and worse, by flirting with the

choir boys ! We are going back to England, Elinor. *Can* you picture me with a London parish as background ? We expect to be married early in September.

“No one will ever be able to say now that I cannot keep a secret. I almost told you about this when I was at the Bar B, but I was shy,—though I don’t suppose you will credit my shyness. Of course I was not really engaged then—just ‘on probation,’ as it were. But we wrote to each other twice a week, and you never suspected anything ! That shows how much you were taken up with your own affairs.

“Elinor, I am reforming ; you would scarcely know me. I am very sweet and submissive, and I say ‘yessir’ and ‘no, sir’ to Mr. Hartford whenever he speaks to me. And every time I use slang I put five cents in the W.A. mite box—here’s hoping the heathen appreciate my self-sacrifice. It is not for the sake of the heathen that I make the sacrifice, however ; I have the bishop in my mind’s eye.

“‘Queer, ain’t it, that Mr. Hartford never got married, an’ him such a fine-looking man?’ I think seriously of asking Mrs. Mills to be my matron-of-honour..

“Yours, for ever and ever,

“And then some,

“MARY ARNOLD.”

THE REAL END

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Eliot, Elinor Marsden
My Canada

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