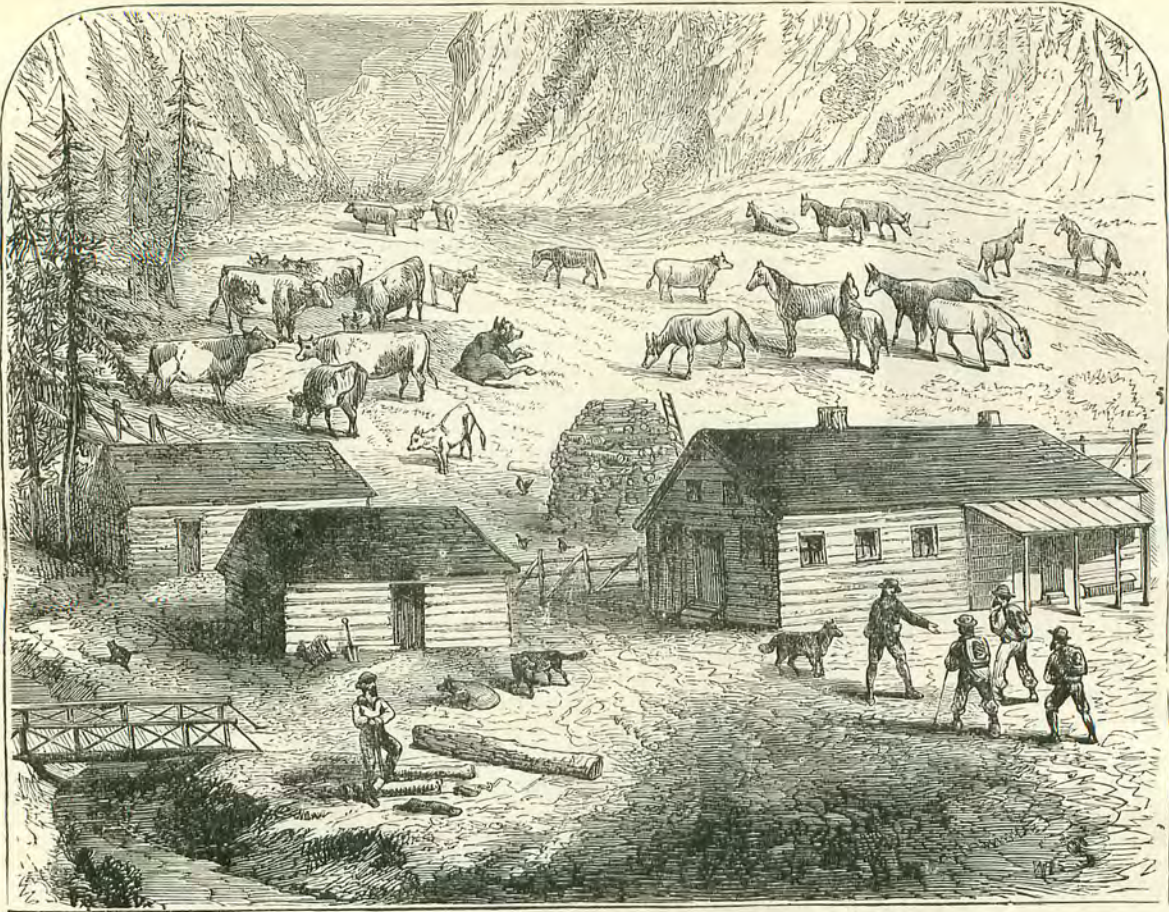




MARY AYLMER;
OR,
RANCH LIFE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

CHAPTER I.

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

PROBABLY not a great many of my readers have ever spent a summer in the Rocky Mountains. Those who may have been fortunate enough to enjoy such an experience will agree with me that it would be a hopeless task to attempt to convey any adequate idea of the beauty of their scenery. All the splendid and magnificent effects are there which Nature can produce when she has such materials to hand as massive rocks and yawning chasms, lakes, and streams, and waterfalls, dark green forests and dazzling snow fields, ice-clad mountain peaks, glittering under the deep blue vault of heaven—a region, in fact, where she may be studied in her grandest and wildest moods. And the creatures which love to dwell amid such solitudes are present, too, in large numbers—bears, panthers, lynx, deer, prairie wolves, or coyotes, as we call them, beavers, martens, ermines, squirrels, chipmunks, gophers, porcupines—a long list, indeed, and I must not omit the birds, which are our constant companions. Magpies hop about in the apple trees, bluebirds and blue jays chatter loudly in the sunshine, woodpeckers tap the trees, larks soar above our heads, and other little denizens of the forest make gentle music all day long in the pine trees and the cotton woods.

Down by the shores of the lakes flocks of wild duck, geese, swans, cranes, pelicans, teal, widgeon, and snipe appear from time to time,

according to the season of the year, and fly about unmolested for the most part; for no one has time to shoot them, unless they are urgently required to replenish the larder, or the Indians take a fancy to vary their fish diet for once.

Amidst such romantic surroundings a railway seems somewhat out of place, and, indeed, the line has only been opened a short time. The stations consist of small wooden erections, with a couple of rooms for the station-master usually, and perhaps another shanty for an engineer. The "town"—every place on this side of the Atlantic which is not a city is a town—which is the *raison d'être* of the said station, may consist of half-a-dozen similar residences, or perhaps, if it be a larger place, of twenty or thirty. Sometimes there are none at all, and then a few freight cars mark the stopping-place of the train; an arrangement which is often merely a convenience for some of the owners of the large cattle ranches, possibly one to two hundred miles away, frequently more, and a great boon it is to them and their families to possess this convenient product of civilisation. Before the line was opened it took many of them a fortnight or three weeks to reach a town of any size, riding hard by day and camping out by night; now they can perhaps do it in four or five days.

Girls who have passed their childhood and early youth among such influences as these are likely to differ somewhat from their English sisters in tastes and habits. They are generally

characterised by a love for an outdoor life, a capacity for household work and cooking, which develops itself at a very early age, and a way of being able to turn their hands to anything, from milking the cows to minding the baby, which is eminently suitable to the dwellers in a new country, and which would astonish some of their compatriots in the schoolrooms at home. So many young people in different stations in life emigrate now, that I imagine the story of a girl's life in the wilds of British Columbia may be interesting to those who have friends out in the Far West, as well as useful to others who may have an idea of starting themselves some day.

It was a lovely day in October—by far the pleasantest season of the year, for it is the Indian summer—a day to make the heart glad, and one on which it was very difficult to realise the near approach of winter, though the trees in the bush were already touched by the fires of autumn, and one knew but too well that the first snowstorm was lying in wait, so sudden is the transition of the seasons here. Standing on the platform of just such a little wooden station as I have described was a bright-looking girl of some twenty summers, evidently in the best of health and spirits. By her side was a lady four or five years older, and both of them were apparently waiting for an expected train, to judge by the pile of luggage near them.

"The Western train is just eight hours late, Mrs. Elliott," remarked a pleasant-looking

man, whose accent betrayed at once the Englishman; "the best thing you and Miss Aylmer can do is to go back to the hotel, and eat your dinner in peace. We will take good care it does not go without you. A bridge has given way somewhere in the North-West, and it will take some time to set matters to rights again."

After a few minutes' conversation together, the two ladies decided to take the friendly stationmaster's advice, and turned back to the dusty road they had just left, till they came to a pine forest, through which was an Indian trail, which they followed closely till they were lost to sight. We had better learn who they were before we follow them.

Mrs. Elliott was the wife of a wealthy rancher, living some two hundred miles in the interior, far away on the other side of the Rockies; the girl who accompanied her, and who was about to become a member of her household in the capacity of general help, was the daughter of an old friend, a quondam officer in the English army, who had settled in Manitoba, and been, alas! like so many of his compatriots, "unfortunate." Unfortunate, however, as regards pecuniary matters only, for his brave daughter had decided that the best way to help her much-loved father was to go out into the world and earn her living, while a good friend of the family had begged him as a great favour to come and live in his house and educate his son.

Mary Aylmer was a prairie flower. Her parents had left the Old Country with high hopes in her early childhood; but after a few years' struggle the young mother was called away to the better land, and the bereaved husband, never in his best days a suitable man to emigrate, lost heart, and tried one thing after another, till disease laid its fell hand on him too; and had it not been for certain kind neighbours, Mary, then at school, would have lost her remaining parent. For two years the father and daughter succeeded in making both ends meet, but his illness had told upon Mr. Aylmer, and it was difficult not to see that he was in need of many comforts which it was impossible for their narrow income to supply. His old schoolfellow, Captain Burton, whose place was close by, *i.e.*, a fifty-mile ride or so, would only have been too glad to give him a helping hand out of his own abundance, but knew his friend too well to venture to offer it, until one day the bright idea occurred to him that his little six-year-old Charley ought to learn to read, and that he would be very much the better himself for an educated companion. After some preliminary difficulties, the matter was arranged, and greatly to the satisfaction of both parties, Captain Burton avowing that he was fast degenerating into a cow-boy, and that if someone did not rub the rust off him he would soon be unfit to appear in polite society at all. Some people said that the daughter would have been even more welcome than the father over at "Laughing Water." But that may

have been mere gossip. Everyone who knew her liked Mary, and out in the West every bachelor who can keep a roof over his head is only too glad to marry if he can find a wife, though the lot is a very hard one in most cases for girls who have not been bred in the country, unless they are possessed of robust health, strength, and physical and moral courage to an unusual extent. Those who have these requisites, and know how to cook in addition, may do very well, and lead both useful and happy lives, if they make a wise choice when they marry.

To return to our two travellers, who were making their way through the forest back to the inn they had left in the morning, it should be explained that Mrs. Elliott had been spending the summer with her two children in the little mountain town at whose station we made her acquaintance, her husband having been unable to leave his home. The journey before her was one to which she was accustomed, and she was therefore prepared for the casualties she might have to encounter, but to the uninitiated and those who know only the luxuries and conveniences of European travel, it would seem decidedly formidable.

"It is well the weather seems likely to hold up," she remarked to Mary, as they emerged from the wood; "in another three weeks we should find deep snow on the mountains we shall have to ride over. My husband writes to me from Minnetonka that there was a bush fire on the other side last week, but that he hopes that a heavy shower, which seemed imminent, may have put it out. Mr. F., who brought the letter, said we should, of course, find the heights very cold camping out; but we have plenty of blankets, and Oolachan, the Indian who always comes with us, will be at the station with the horses; he is a man to be trusted in the matter of fires."

"I suppose you take pack-horses for the luggage?"

"Yes, one for the tent and blankets, another for the kitchen utensils, another for the flour, potatoes, bacon, beans, and other etceteras in the way of food; two will be enough for our personal luggage, I fancy, and then two more—not pack-horses this time—for you and me, and one each for the Indians."

"What about our two small children?"

"They will be carried by the Indians in front of them; Nelly I shall pack into a long native basket, eminently suitable for the purpose, and both of them will enjoy the journey immensely. When we came down in June last the heat was intense, and the mosquitoes made life a burden; we shall be free from both these disagreeables this time."

"For my part I am looking forward very much to it all," said Mary; "I mean to enjoy it as well as the babies. Hitherto the extent of my travels, within my own recollection, has been the journey to and from school, and coming here to you last week; it was all train, and steamboat, or stage, and that is prosaic

enough. I have had many a gallop over the prairie, but except a rare visit to Laughing Water, I had never seen mountains till now, and a few days' ride over them will be a great treat to me."

"I liked it very much myself when my husband and I went together without children, but it is a different matter when you have such *impedimenta*. However, now I have your companionship and assistance, I do not mind so much. The worst of it is, by the end of the second day one gets so tired of the saddle. But what is Captain Burton like? I never saw him, but was talking to his poor wife only a few days before her accident. How was it that the child was saved and uninjured?"

"They had started together on horseback for a three months' visit to some place where they were to spend the summer—the baby was packed in a basket in front of him—when he suddenly remembered he had left his head man without a single cent, handed her the child, and galloped back to the house, about six miles away, telling his wife to walk her horse, a most gentle creature hitherto, till he returned. An Indian, who saw the whole thing, states that the horse suddenly began to buck, and Mrs. Burton threw the baby, basket and all, into a mass of bracken, but almost directly afterwards was thrown herself, with her head against a stone; and though not dead when her husband returned, only lived a few hours. But it was too terrible! Do not let us talk of it. He is a very kind, nice man, about thirty-eight, I think, tall and pleasant-looking, and very devoted to his little boy."

By this time they had reached a cleared space in the bush, where was an ugly wooden house and several tents; the former was the hotel. A group of loungers stood round the doors, but made room for them as they entered, and mentioned the reason of their return. They were requested to go up to the "ladies' parlour" until dinner was ready, and established themselves on the balcony, where they had a lovely view of the meeting of the waters—two broad rivers rushing together as one; beautiful rapids, and in mid-stream a large rock, with a fir tree growing on its grey side, while in the distance were beautiful snowy peaks, almost encircling the valley; a dark forest on the other side of the river, and here and there the smoke-browned tents of the Indians who inhabited the reserve near by.

The arrangements of the inn were of the most elementary description, but things were tolerably clean, and the prospect ever before the eyes compensated for much discomfort. In due time the dinner-bell rang, and the two ladies went down to a large bare room, with small tables, each holding six or eight people, scattered about. In these Western hotels there is generally something one can eat, though, regarded as a whole, the meals can hardly be considered satisfactory, or of an appetising description.

(To be continued.)

STUDENTS AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY.

THAT splendid collection of pictures which is one of the greatest possessions of the English people, the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, is I think well known to most of us. Two days in the week, namely, Thursday and Friday, are "students' days," when the Gallery is free only to those who can show their tickets of admission to copy the pictures—to the public in general the charge of sixpence being made.

It is frequently said that to copy pictures does more harm than good to the student; but why, then, is a copy from the old masters

one of the subjects required of all artists studying at the Academy schools, which has been truly called the nursery of our greatest painters of the present day?

The keeper and secretary of the National Gallery has power to refuse permission to copy, if he considers the student not sufficiently advanced, as shown by the specimen of work that is sent with the application for a ticket.

Every care is taken for the comfort of the student; a porter takes charge of her picture and easel. As soon as she finishes work on Friday, all her implements are put away; and

at ten o'clock on Thursday morning she will find them put in readiness, when she arrives, anxious to begin. Naturally, as is the case in many places where there are large numbers of young people together, much grumbling is heard; and some days the secretary finds his office no sinecure. As he passes through the Gallery he is besieged with applicants, all more or less hoping to evade the rules. But these students make a great mistake, as the powers that be soon discover that it is principally the ignorant and frivolous that are importunate: those who are really anxious to excel, work

must subdivide the distance between the freezing and boiling point in our thermometer, and we may do so in various ways.

I daresay that many of you have noticed, on the thermometer at home, that the scale, as it is called, is printed on the frame of the thermometer, and the letter F. is placed at the top or bottom of the scale. This letter F. is distinctive; it is the first letter of the name of the chemist who invented the particular scale to which it is appended; his name was Fahrenheit. Now, Fahrenheit found that he could

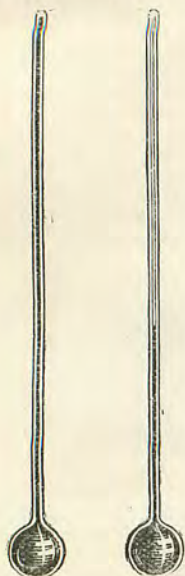


FIG. 3.

FIG. 4.

artificially produce a much greater cold than that of melting ice, by means of a mixture of salt and snow. He therefore called the temperature of melting ice 32° and that of snow and salt 0° . Boiling-point on Fahrenheit's scale is 212° , so that between freezing-point and boiling-point in Fahrenheit's scale there

are 180 degrees, or as it is written, 180° . This measurement of temperature is the one most in vogue in our own country; but amongst scientific men, and in most European countries, another scale is in use; this is the scale of Celsius, and is generally known as the "Centigrade" scale, from the following facts. Boiling-point and freezing-point are ascertained as already described, and freezing-point is called 0° , or zero, and boiling-point 100° ; and the distance between 0° and 100° is equally divided into a hundred parts, each of which is called a degree centigrade.

Although these two scales of measurement are best known in this country, there is another which you will often see used in those little ornamental thermometers which the German Swiss make, and which is the scale for Russia and Sweden; this is the scale of Réaumur. In this, as in the Centigrade or Celsius scale, the freezing-point is 0° , but the distance from freezing to boiling point is only divided into eighty equal parts, so that boiling point Réaumur is 80° .

Thus then are the little thermometers which contribute so much to the domestic economy of man made. A glance at Fig. 5 will show at once the relation of the three scales to one another. We have noticed these thermometers which are made with a red fluid inside instead of metallic mercury. They are made with alcohol instead of mercury, and the alcohol is coloured with cochineal or carmine, sometimes with Prussian blue.

The method of making these thermometers is similar to that employed in those prepared with mercury, but they have a rather different character, which it is worth while for me to mention. Mercury at certain very low temperatures freezes, and therefore ceases to be of any service in recording low temperatures; alcohol has never been frozen yet, and therefore is of use in this way. Alcohol, however, boils at a lower temperature than water, and becomes a vapour; it cannot therefore be used for such high temperatures as mercury. The old-fashioned thermometers were made with a spherical bulb; these, however, are not the best in shape, and the bulbs are made larger and thinner, thus giving a larger surface of

exposure. Of such a shape are the clinical thermometers used by physicians, which register from about 95° Fahrenheit to 113° Fahrenheit.

One often sees in a room the thermometer hung up against a wall. To do this is strictly speaking wrong, as, if the wall communicates with the outside, and it be a northern wall, the temperature on that wall will be lower than the temperature in the rest of the room. The proper way is to suspend the thermometer in the middle of the room, where it is free of any object likely to affect its temperature.

Similarly one often sees a thermometer outside a window, which is intended to take the temperature of the outer air, and on which a hot sun is shining; the thermometer, of course,

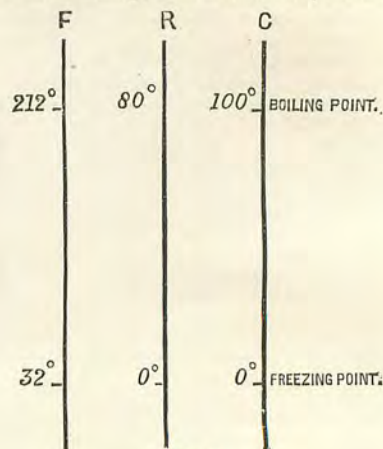


FIG. 5.

registers much too high a temperature; it should be suspended in the open air, and in the shade.

And now I hope that many of you know more about thermometers than you did, and can feel when you see one, "I know how you are made," "I know how you act." The little friend is, I hope, no longer a mystery to you, but a thing of familiar interest.

W. LAWRENCE LISTON.

MARY AYLMER;

OR,

RANCH LIFE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

CHAPTER II.

AT MINNETONKA.

In the dining-room some eight or ten men of the usual western type were assembled, rough as to externals, but excellent fellows enough, and all eating their meal as fast as possible, as if it were a business to be got through with the utmost speed, and no considerations of health or digestive powers ever entered their minds. At one table were three Englishmen, evidently gentlemen, for their speech betrayed them, as well as the cut of their very shabby clothes; one of them rose as Mrs. Elliott and her companion entered the room, and claiming acquaintance with her, begged them to sit at their table.

The speaker was a tall, powerful fellow of eight or twenty or so, perhaps, fair and blue-eyed, with a kindly expression, and his open glances of admiration at Mary's bright face gave her friend a good deal of amusement.

"It is so long since I have spoken to an English girl, Miss Aylmer," said he aside to her, as he observed Mrs. Elliott was in close conversation with another of the party, in

whom she had discovered a cousin of her husband's. "I can see you are just from the Old Country, and I am so anxious to know what you think of us. Don't we seem a very shabby lot? And what about our manners—if we have any left? Our customs I know are detestable. If you will tell me in confidence I won't mention it."

"But suppose I am a Canadian myself?"

"I know very well you are not."

"Anyhow I have been fifteen years in the country, and have never seen England since I was five years old."

"I dare not doubt your word, though I should never have supposed it possible; you are dressed just like my own sister, whose photograph was sent me the other day."

"I have an aunt 'at home' who looks after my wardrobe, so I enjoy the proud distinction of wearing what I suppose to be the London fashions very soon after they come out. I cannot get her to understand that we require the useful only, not the ornamental out here."

"It appears to me that your costume is a happy combination of the two; of course I know it is the proper thing in this country to

be as shabby as possible, but all the same it is a treat to see a lady dressed like one, with all the nice things about her that she would have in England, and yet not at all too fine to look after the house, as I hear you are going to do. I do not mean to say a word against my countrywomen out here, for I think them very courageous and good; they put their shoulder to the wheel in a way one cannot but admire, and it is not their fault that they have too much to do to have time to think of their appearance. But I am afraid your train is coming, for here is Wilson, the station-master. I shall be at Minnetonka very soon, on business, when I shall hope to have the pleasure of meeting you again."

During their journey that afternoon Mary took the opportunity of asking Mrs. Elliott if it had occurred to her that her style of dress was too smart for her mode of life.

"Certainly not, my dear girl. What could have put such an idea into your head? A plain grey serge and a close-fitting hat, without an inch of superfluous ornament, is the most suitable style you could adopt. That they are made and cut much better than our native

garments does not make them less neat or useful, and your mother's locket and ring are so plain that no one could find fault with you for wearing them. You have only to put on a large apron and sleeves, and you can make the pudding in that costume as well as in any other. Here we are at Metapedia Station; the coloured porter will lift the children out, and we will get supper at the inn, and go to bed at once. There is a Chinese cook here, just as at the last place, so we must not expect to enjoy supper much, but if the eggs and milk happen to be fresh, we shall do. There is Oolochan, the Indian, so we shall be able to start to-morrow morning nicely."

The inn at Metapedia was of the usual pattern, and after a good night's rest the travellers set off soon after seven in the morning, on horseback, as arranged. The air was fresh and sweet, though chilly, and the ladies were obliged to put on an extra garment over their habits; but the sun soon began to shine with considerable power, and they were able to enjoy themselves comfortably. The bush on each side of them was black and burnt, showing the ravages made by recent fires; these are usually caused by the camp fires of the Indians, who do not take the trouble, when they leave their camping-grounds, to see that the embers are extinct. The mischief and destruction they cause is indescribable, and though almost incredible, the fact is perfectly true that the smoke of some of the large bush fires is carried more than a hundred miles, and the air is often so heavy with it that the mountains are all blotted out, while an uncomfortable feeling pervades the neighbourhood until a heavy rain takes away all sense of danger for the time being. Should the fire reach one of the ranches, the hay might be consumed, and then ruin would ensue, for the cattle have nothing else for the winter in the way of food. Few indeed are those who have not had house, corral, or kayricks burned down some time or other; indeed, the pine-wood of which everything is built is so inflammable that a stray match or spark may end the life of a whole family in a few minutes.

At midday a halt was called, fires lit by the Indians, potatoes and bacon put on to boil in their respective "kettles"—the said "kettles" answering, as far as their use is concerned, to the European saucepan; they are frequently made from Chicago lard tins, or perhaps I should say the lard tin is converted to that use. Open fires, except when camping, are never used, the American stove being universally adopted all over the country. The camp bread is mixed with yeast powder, and cooked in a frying-pan; it is, as may be imagined, a somewhat indigestible article. A cup of coffee followed the dinner, and then, after a short rest, the party set out again. As soon as the afternoon began to draw in, the last meal of the day was cooked and eaten, and then the Indians proceeded to cut down a number of small fir-trees. The branches of these were chopped off and spread on the ground, covered with sail-cloth and buffalo robes, blankets, pillows and tent unpacked, and the whole party turned in. Whether or not a bear or a mountain lion (panther) paid them a visit during their slumbers it is impossible to say, but it is more than probable, as the mountain range through which

they were then passing harbours many such creatures; and Mrs. Elliott whiled away the early part of the evening by telling Mary all the stories she could remember of her experiences under similar circumstances, notably one time when she had to ride through a terrible bush fire, with the flames on either side of her, singeing her horse and habit, and the great trees falling with a crash as the flames devoured them; her husband, too well used to it to fear for himself, but terribly uneasy as to its effect on her, not daring to halt on the journey for even one day, as the heavens were like brass, and there was not the smallest sign of rain. And there was a comic side to such journeys, too, sometimes. One Englishman who had lived out in Canada for many years, but had declined to fall into "up country" ways, used to carry all sorts of luxuries with him when he camped out, she related. One morning, when he was shaving by the aid of a small looking-glass which he had ingeniously fixed into a rock, he was somewhat startled when the head of a deer appeared over the ledge of it, calmly contemplating him for a few moments with much astonishment, and then scampering away.

No casualties occurred to our party, fortunately, and as one day was much like another, there is little use describing all of them. About three in the afternoon of the last day, however, Mr. Elliott appeared, and then his wife felt no more anxiety. The end of their ride took them through a valley covered, like the mountain sides, with the bunch grass, which the cattle love so well and thrive so splendidly upon. All was brown and bare-looking, except in the irrigated meadows, and it was difficult to believe that such dry, useless-looking stuff could be of the slightest use as food. Round the house were apple orchards, burdened with fruit, a few plum trees and yellow peach trees; nothing in the way of ornament, but all for use. The large vegetable garden had a clear trout stream running beside it, while over the front of the house, as usual only one storey high, the graceful tendrils of the hop vine clustered, the hops having been already gathered and dried for the winter's stock of yeast. At the back was the "corral" or farmyard, and the presence of fowls, pigs, cows, dogs, and other creatures was soon made known by the noises which reached the ear. An Indian woman, with long black hair, came forward to receive the party, and a half-breed girl, whose father belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company, and had married an Indian squaw, took charge of the two children.

Most of the Indian tribes in the part of British Columbia where Mr. Elliott lived are Roman Catholics, and have therefore received French names, the missionaries being French Canadians, or of Gallic birth. The two squaws employed by the family in question were known as Marie and Julie; both were very slow in their movements, but managed to get through a little hard work, such as scrubbing and washing; and Julie, the half-breed girl, could carry about the baby without coming to grief very often, though she was apt to stumble over everything in her way. The cooking, laying the table, and all the housemaid's work had to be done by the ladies, except the

carrying of water and fetching of wood; this was the work of the master of the house, unless one of the farm men happened to be at leisure, a very rare thing, as labour of any kind is very costly and very scarce in these out-of-the-way places. All the furniture of the house, except a few things in the "parlour," had been made on the premises, and when a new inmate appeared, as now, a number of planks were ordered from the nearest sawmill, and a bedstead and a few simple necessities put together for his or her use. It is surprising how little is actually necessary to keep life going, and how easy it is to do without many of the superfluities, which seem to be necessities in England, when one cannot get them.

The first two days after her return Mrs. Elliott declined to allow Mary to assist in any of the work of the household, alleging that she must unpack her belongings, and make herself thoroughly comfortable, as well as make acquaintance with her surroundings. The order of the day was as follows: the two servants were expected to rise at five o'clock all the year round, one to light the fire and the other to take the baby, the master getting up at the same hour. The rest of the household were called at six, and hot water brought to the rooms. Either the mistress of the house or Mary paid visits to the kitchen during the latter part of the process of dressing, to superintend the cooking of a hot breakfast, which is considered *de rigueur* at a Canadian table, and consisted of beef steak, mutton chops, and such like substantial dishes, also baked and fried potatoes. The hot bread and "biscuit"—a kind of soda scone—which are also expected to appear, were dispensed with at Minnetonka, the family being too English in their tastes to care for them.

Butter was made twice a week, bread every other day, the cooking for the men being done at the log house by the corral, in which they slept, by the wife of one of them who happened to be married, a rare case with "hired men," as there is no space or accommodation for a family on a ranch. Dinner was served at twelve, and the old English fashion of a joint and pudding—both fresh every day, for the amount of meat eaten (and wasted) in these places is almost incredible. The said joint always appeared in a cold form at "supper," a meal known in England as high tea, and eaten at six o'clock. Tea is brought on the table at dinner and supper, coffee at breakfast. The bacon cured in Canada is very inferior to that in the Old Country, but one or two of the settlers in some districts—Mr. Elliott being amongst the number—have made a study of this useful art, with very excellent results, and the ladies of the family found it a great convenience, as they rarely cared to begin the day with a large helping of fresh meat, and eggs were only procurable during spring and summer. Anyone who has travelled on the North American continent will have noticed that even children of five years old will take a good sized mutton chop, or its equivalent, on their plates at breakfast, and even an egg after that, not to speak of hot cakes and maple syrup to follow.

(To be continued.)



a fish attempting to seize a ring, which has probably given rise to the singular tradition that *Lady Berry was the heroine* of the old ballad called "The Cruel Knight," or "Fortunate Farmer's Daughter," according to which a very proud and high-born knight, who was deeply versed in necromancy, happened one day to be passing a cottage, when he heard the crying of a newly-born infant. His skill in "the black art" caused him at once to know that that child was destined to become his wife! Being of so proud a descent, he was horrified at the idea that he was fated to bring this disgrace upon his family. Therefore he determined to do all in his power to avert the decree, and even, if driven to extremity, to take the life of the child. As our girls no doubt have already foreseen, the two meet when the girl has grown very beautiful, but is still in the humble condition of "a maiden of low degree." The meeting appears to have taken place on board ship. Naturally the knight, not knowing

who she is, falls in love with her. When somehow or other it comes to his knowledge that she is the identical squalling baby who was destined by fate to have such a terrible influence over his proud nature, he is, as novelists say, "torn by conflicting emotions of love and pride." Unable to decide which course to pursue, he takes a gold ring from his finger, and throwing it into the sea, makes the remarkable declaration that if ever that ring is brought back to him, he will make the lowly maid his wife. The lady's prospects of filling that exalted position were certainly not encouraging, and so she takes the situation of cook or kitchenmaid. A codfish is brought to her to prepare for dinner, when the identical ring is discovered in the fish! The knight, finding that it is of no use attempting to escape the decree of fate, marries the maiden, and, let us hope, they lived happily together, though one may feel inclined to doubt about it. Whether there are any other reasons for connecting Lady Berry with this or some

similar legend, beyond the fact that she was evidently, from her epitaph, a person of humble origin, who married a man much above her in social rank, we are unable to say. She certainly cannot have been the heroine of the original ballad, which must have been written long before she was born.

The armorial bearings, the ring and the fish, appear to belong to a Cambridge-shire family, and cannot be in any way personally connected with Lady Berry, who, as a woman of lowly origin, would naturally have no armorial bearings apart from those of her husband. Lady Berry, however, if her epitaph is to be trusted, offers an example which our girls will do well to follow. She certainly dressed quietly, was gentle, cheerful, humble, and, what is still more remarkable, being a person of humble origin, raised to a rank far above that in which she was born, she never was guilty of the offensive vulgarity so well described by the old-fashioned expression of "giving herself airs."

MARY AYLMEY;

OR,

RANCH LIFE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

CHAPTER III.

A VISITOR.



As soon as supper was over, everyone was disposed to retire as early as possible, for besides the cooking and general house

work, the ironing, mending, and much of the making had to be done by the ladies, and the presence of two children in the house added considerably to this part of the labour, so that they were thoroughly tired out by the end of the day. Men out West do not wear the white shirt of English civilised life, but always a flannel one, collars also being usually forsworn, some people carrying their economy of labour so far as to use white American cloth for the dining-table instead of the orthodox damask.

Wonderful are many of the contrivances resorted to sometimes to make up for any deficiency, for the great difficulty of renewing any worn-out article leads the dwellers in such remote places to exercise their ingenuity in all sorts of ways, and things habitually thrown away at home are treasured up here for an indefinite period. Moccasins instead of boots are frequently worn by men; they require no cleaning, and are very soft and comfortable; the Indians make them of buckskin.

As the weather still continued warm, they had to depend on salt meat, game, or poultry for their supplies, as until it became cold

enough to allow it to be kept until wanted, not even a pig or sheep, much less a cow or steer, could be killed. So the days wore on until a slight frost occurred one night, and Mr. Elliott requested the whole household to adjourn to the orchard and assist in gathering the apples; all who could spare the time did so, and one of the farm men was able to come down with a "team," and fetch them up to the apple house. It was a long and tiring business, owing to the enormous quantity of fruit, and just as they had reached their last day of it, a horseman was seen riding into the corral, and Mrs. Elliott and Mary recognised the friend who had begged them to join him at dinner the day they waited for their train.

"There is Mr. Musgrave," the former called out to her husband, who hastily descended the tree into which he had climbed, "and we have nothing fresh in the house but the crane you shot yesterday."

"The Indian with him has got some wild duck though, if I mistake not," replied Mr. Elliott. "Musgrave always brings some game along with him at this time of year; you must give us those to-night, Nelly; they will be much nicer than the crane."

By this time the traveller had dismounted and joined them, receiving a hearty welcome from all.

"I see you have not come empty-handed," said his hostess, "and what you have brought will be specially welcome, as it happens, for our larder is disgracefully empty; there is nothing but corned beef, bacon, and deer hams available, and you must be pretty well tired of that kind of thing. But I daresay you will excuse us now, and take our places in the orchard, while we go and see about preparations for supper."

Mrs. Elliott and Mary then hastened indoors to the kitchen, where Marie was immediately summoned to pluck the teal and widgeon which they found awaiting them, and then the ladies betook themselves to the one spare room to make things ready there. As it often happened that several such unexpected guests arrived on the same day, Mr. Elliott had built a house especially for their accommodation; though, of course, those who were not personal friends paid the man in charge for what they received there, just as in an hotel, this arrange-

ment being almost a necessity in "up country" places, where Chinamen and white strangers pass through frequently.

At six o'clock the party assembled in the dining-room for supper, and listened to all their friend could tell them of the goings on in the outer world. This was always the pleasantest meal of the day, for the work was done, and the time of rest near.

Mary had been accustomed to spend the long evening with her father in her own home, but then her daily round had been an easy one, and there was no object in very early rising for such a small household; she would sing to him as he leant back in his easy chair, or worked while he read to her; but at Minnetonka no one felt the slightest wish to prolong the day, though on this special evening they adjourned to the "parlour" for an hour or two, in honour of the guest, who soon, however, showed by unmistakable yawns that his long ride in the open air had made him anything but wakeful, though he would willingly have disguised his fatigue, had it been possible, so pleased did he seem to be with his company.

The two gentlemen intended to go off very early in the morning for a long day's ride after cattle, and they would be absent till evening. On such occasions Mrs. Elliott and Mary would often manage to give themselves an hour or two of leisure, and go for a ride together, or possibly take up a book and indulge in some reading, doubly delightful to both on account of their enforced abstinence from such pleasures.

On the following evening, when Mr. Elliott returned, he confided to his wife that his companion had remarked that he thought it about time to think of getting married, and had followed up this remark by inquiring if Miss Aylmer was engaged to anybody—for a girl who is pleasant and good, a good housekeeper and pretty as well, rarely remains unmarried out West till she is twenty, unless she chooses to do so. He had been unable to give any information on the point, he said, but perhaps his wife might know, and to her he had referred Mr. Musgrave, who took the first opportunity to ask her the same question. But all his hostess could say was that she had heard some reports about a home at Laughing Water being always ready for Mary if she would only accept it, but whether there was

anything between her and Captain Burton it was impossible to say. She considered Mary to be a perfect treasure of a girl, but she was very reserved, and the last person in the world to own that she had refused anyone, if such was the case; if, on the contrary, she returned the affection he was supposed to feel for her, she was equally sure to keep the fact to herself until she became actually engaged.

Mr. Musgrave thought all this very unsatisfactory, and endeavoured to enlist his friend's sympathy on his behalf.

"I am going away on Saturday, Mrs. Elliott," said he; "your husband has, however, been kind enough to ask me to return next month. After so short an acquaintance I really have not the assurance to ask Miss Aylmer if she cares about me ever so little, but after I have paid another visit, don't you think I might? I wonder if you'll think me very bold if I beg you to feel the way for me ever such a little. It is so horrid, you know, to ask a girl to be your wife, and find out that she cares for some other fellow."

"No, I would gladly do anything for an old acquaintance like you, but I shall have to be very careful, or she will suspect me, and then she will immediately draw in her horns. What do you think about writing a line to her father, and asking him how the land lies? Everyone knows your position and antecedents out here, and he can have no objection to give his daughter to anyone so likely in every way to make her happy. It is very disinterested in me to give you all this good advice, for it is very much against my own interest; I shall never be able to replace her satisfactorily, and had been congratulating myself on such a delightful acquisition until you appeared on the scene."

"I don't think I quite like saying anything to anyone, not even her own father, before speaking to the girl herself—I mean in an official sort of way—for it is quite different talking to you; I know you will be discreet."

"Of course, I shall only tell my husband."

"That is what I mean."

Mr. Musgrave left shortly after this conversation, and Mrs. Elliott turned over in her mind what he had been saying. She was anxious for the happiness of both the young people, for whom she had a sincere regard, but disliked the idea of undertaking any responsibility in the matter, and her husband was quite of her opinion.

On the following Sunday the clergyman who was in the habit of paying three yearly visits to Minnetonka, to hold a service there, arrived somewhat unexpectedly, but fortunately found the guest-chamber empty. On these occasions any English people within reach would ride over the previous day to join in it, some taking a journey of nearly a hundred miles to have this privilege; Mr. Elwood had himself to travel over two hundred to see these distant parishioners, and usually stayed a few days to enjoy the comforts of a good house after all his camping out, also a little shooting when possible. He informed them that a ranch two days' journey off had just been sold to an Englishman from the North-West, who intended to live part of the year there, and this news caused considerable excitement in the family, as a pleasant new neighbour was always an acquisition, and the house was situated on the way to the railway line, thus making the journey easier, for hospitality, either given or paid for, was almost certain to be accorded, and the place had been empty for some time—that is to say, in the charge of a half-breed.

It was delightful to all to feel that Sunday was about to be celebrated in a suitable manner, though the service was always read in any case, but the opportunities of taking the Holy Communion were necessarily very rare, and therefore doubly precious. Several of the farm men attended, chairs being placed in the parlour for the purpose, and fortunately the piano-tuner, who visited the district once a year, had just paid his annual visit, so the hymns and chants could be played and sung with good effect, the service taking the form of a harvest thanksgiving. Some of the splendid fruit and vegetables were used as decorations, no flowers being available, though the leaves of some trees, notably the maple, accorded well with the fruits of autumn, for they were touched with the autumn tints.

Next week the mail came in, a time of great excitement, naturally, when it only arrives twelve times in a year, unless by some lucky chance of a personal friend passing the post-office on the railway, when bound for Minnetonka, and remembering to ask for letters. It brought one from Mr. Musgrave, stating that, to his great regret, he was absolutely obliged to defer his next visit, but that, in spite of the snows of winter, he should, if it were humanly possible, endeavour to come up in December. The husband and wife, when alone, could not

help smiling a little at the epistle of the eager lover. There could be no doubt whatever as to his being in earnest, when he was willing to risk the discomfort he must encounter while travelling up country in cold weather. His friend had been faithful to her trust, but had been absolutely unable, during a conversation she held with Mary respecting his good qualities, to extract anything from her that could lead her to suppose he had made any lasting impression. It was on this wise, and the reader can deduce therefrom her own conclusion.

Mrs. Elliott, *loquitur*: "Talking of men, I must say I liked Mr. Musgrave very much. He is always so nice to women; so different from such people as the two Wilsons, for instance, who though quite as well-born and educated, and have not been out here as long, yet have quite lost their English manners."

Mary (with the utmost composure): "Yes, I thought him very nice; though I have known so few men at all well, I can hardly judge; we led such a very isolated life. My father did not care for such society as we had, and I only cared to be with him."

"That is all very proper and right, dear, but still I suppose you will leave him some day."

"Why, yes; have I not left him now?"

"I mean you might get married, dear."

"One does not talk about that, though. Did you remember to tell Marie the swan was to be plucked to-night?"

"I did, and as we don't like swan, it would not have mattered if I had forgotten it; they had better have it in the kitchen, we none of us care for it, and they do. I suppose you were too far from Laughing Water to see Captain Burton very often? Somebody told me he was so very agreeable."

"I think we saw him three or four times a year; he is very nice, as you say, and I feel I can never be grateful enough to him for his kindness to my father, who does not see, as I do, that Captain Burton's offer to him was only made because he did not dare to offer him help in any other way. The little boy is much too young to require tuition, except in the form of 'Reading Without Tears,' perhaps, but you should have seen the pile of literature the dear man had provided for his pupil; fortunately the little fellow has taken a fancy to have Scott read to him, and I hear my father is delighted to indulge him, the other books not having been yet unpacked. There is baby crying—I must go to her."

(To be concluded.)

WORK, WAIT, WIN.

By RUTH LAMB, Author of "One Little Vein of Dross," "Only a Girl Wife," etc.

CHAPTER XVIII. FOREBODINGS AND HOPES.



THE Harwoods' old cottage was still standing empty as we left it. Mr. Burford had not quite made up his mind as to the kind and size of the dwelling which was to occupy the

site of it, but in the meanwhile he would not let the place again.

I was rather sorry that the cottage was not promptly demolished, for I found out that the old people got into a way of haunting the scene of so many memories, and I was sure this would do them no

good. They were very proud of Rose Cottage, which was a very palace in comparison, but they clung to the less attractive spot, in spite of being really satisfied with the change they had made, for my sake in the first instance.

Jabez would sometimes go out after working hours with his gardening tools, and on several occasions I caught him digging and delving in the old ground.

I ventured to remonstrate with him for spending the strength of which he had none to spare, on a place in which he had no beneficial interest.

He looked up wistfully, and replied—

"I can't help it, Mr. John. I have kept this garden in order for so many years, and never could abear to see a

weed in it, that it goes to my heart to let it be neglected now."

"But when the men begin to pull the cottage down, and afterwards, whilst the building is going on, your work will be undone. There will be all the worthless materials from the old place, and the bricks and mortar, timber and slates for the new, upon the very beds that are costing you so much labour. Even at the best you will reap no benefit. Others will do that, wherever the garden is unoccupied by the things I have named."

"Well, Mr. John, I can't help that. As to doing a bit for other people to benefit, I shall never grieve over that. We didn't come into this world to think only of ourselves. If so be that little

"May I see her?" he asked, pleadingly.
 "I regret to say my niece can see no one, for some time to come—for months perhaps; for if I have my way she shall be punished after she has confessed her sin."

"See no one for months! Why, what has she done to be treated so severely?" asked Dr. Grey.

"That I cannot tell you."

"But I have the right to know. Miss Buchanan has promised to be my wife, subject to her guardian's consent; and as I am in a position to marry, I see no reason why that should be withheld."

"Marjery engaged to you!" interrupted Mrs. Buchanan.

"Only since Monday evening. We had no intention of keeping it a secret. I am surprised she has not told you," said Dr. Grey.

"You will be still more surprised when you hear we fear she has broken open her uncle's cash-box, and robbed him of fifteen pounds."

"I don't believe it," exclaimed the young doctor, springing to his feet.

"She has virtually confessed it, for silence gives consent, and she will not deny it," said Mrs. Buchanan, coldly.

He sat down again and buried his face in his hands, without speaking. Presently he looked up, and, in an altered voice, and with a face ashen-grey with suppressed emotion, he said—

"I must see her, and hear the truth from her own lips."

And something in his voice and manner forced Mrs. Buchanan to yield and send for Marjery. Perhaps she wished to hear the truth herself also.

Presently the door opened, and Marjery walked in, pale and grave, but with a look of proud endurance on her face her lover had not thought her capable of. That she was suffering intensely was plain enough; but there was no sign of shame or penitence on that pale, sweet countenance.

"Marjery, my sweet Marjery, what is this I hear?" said Dr. Grey, going forward with outstretched hands to greet her.

She did not advance to meet him, nor put out her own clasped hands; but with bent head she said firmly, but in an unnatural voice, which sounded afar off—

"I am in disgrace with my uncle. You cannot marry me now; I release you from our engagement."

Then there was silence. Edward Grey was puzzled. If she were guilty, sweet as she was, and much as he loved her, he would hesitate to marry her; but in spite of her conduct he did not believe it possible she could have done such a thing; he guessed she was screening Malcolm.

"Marjery," he said at last, "I do not believe it; at any rate I will take the risk."

"No," said Marjery, proudly, raising her drooping head and looking him full in the

face, "I love you too well to let you marry me while I am under a cloud."

"Be it so then," said the young doctor, abruptly, after a short pause, and without another word he left the house.

The next week Marjery was told by her aunt Dr. Grey had left the place, and another doctor bought the practice.

From that day Marjery's health began to fail. Till then she had borne her virtual imprisonment in her own room, which she never left except for meals and to go to church on Sundays, very well; she preferred it to her aunt's society. If only she had been allowed to go out-of-doors, the punishment would not have been severe; but her uncle had, in the hope of making her deny the charge, or if she were guilty confess it, made her punishment as severe as he could; the sharper it was the shorter it need last, he considered; and her obstinate refusal to answer provoked him greatly.

On one point he differed from his wife; he wished to release his niece at the end of a week, but Mrs. Buchanan would not hear of it; her punishment was light enough for such obstinacy if it lasted three months, she maintained, and being a henpecked husband, he yielded, always hoping Marjery would answer.

A week after Dr. Grey left, the change in Marjery was so marked that Mr. Buchanan was alarmed, and insisted on her going out with her aunt every day, either walking or driving for air and exercise. But the colour did not return to her cheeks; her eyes looked as if they were wide awake, as indeed they were, a greater part of the night, and her appetite was so bad that they had almost to force her to eat.

At the end of a fortnight the new doctor was sent for. He shook his head; he could do nothing; the girl had something on her mind, and unless she had it removed he would not answer for the consequences. This visit resulted in Mr. Buchanan formally forgiving his niece, and saying he wished the matter to be forgotten, also he was certain the girl was innocent; but Marjery was now too ill to leave her room except for an hour or two every day, and every day that time grew shorter, and before Dr. Grey had been gone a month Marjery had taken to her bed, from which the new doctor said it was more than doubtful if she would ever rise again.

"She has some secret trouble, and she is not strong enough to bear it; she has not the physical strength to support it, and all the drugs I can get her won't give it her."

It seemed to be a kind of atrophy from which Marjery was suffering. She had no pain, but she had no wish to live, and day by day she grew weaker and weaker, till it was evident to all around her the end was not far off.

Then there came a day when Mrs. Buchanan was called from her niece's bedside to see a visitor, which, to do her justice, she seldom

left, for now that Marjery lay dying her aunt did all she could to atone for her past harshness, and on going downstairs she found Dr. Grey in the drawing-room.

"Mrs. Buchanan, I must see Marjery, as I know she is innocent. I have seen Malcolm; I went to Manitoba on purpose. He took the money, and has entrusted me to refund it; he considered it his due. Where is she?"

"Upstairs, dying; there is no hope."

"Dying! God in mercy forbid it. Take me to her."

Upstairs they went, and Dr. Grey stood by the bedside of the apparently dying girl; she was shrunk almost to a skeleton, and the only scrap of colour about her was in her blue eyes and her lovely golden hair, which lay in a mass on the pillow.

"Marjery, my sweet Marjery, I knew it before I went away. I know it all now, for I have been to Manitoba and seen Malcolm. He took the money, and he has repaid it."

"Dear Malcolm! Now I shall die happy," said Marjery, a faint tinge of pink coming into her pale cheeks as she laid one of her delicate little hands in Dr. Grey's.

"You must not die, Marjery; I cannot spare you," said the young doctor, in a broken voice.

"Yes, I think I shall. Do you remember I told you I would die for Malcolm?" she said, with a faint smile.

"I do, but I remember you also said you would live for me."

"So I did—I—I should like to keep my promise," said Marjery, with a faint smile.

This was music to the doctor's ears, for he knew the wish to live was a good sign. For some days Marjery lay at death's door, but the wish to live grew stronger every day, and with the wish the will, and with the will the power, till there came a day when she was pronounced out of danger; and a month after Dr. Grey's return they stood once more by the reedy meadow, now carpeted with fallen leaves, and no longer a blaze of colour, for the loose-strife was dead and the pink petals of the rose-bay had fallen; the meadow, too, had had its sorrows, for every blade and leaf and petal has its story like the rest of us. The sweet marjoram was dead, but the girl had survived her suffering, and was daily regaining health and strength.

"We are wiser than when we last walked here, my Marjery—at least I am, for you have taught me what true love is," said he.

"But I am not sure that I know. What is it?" said Marjery.

"Self-sacrifice."

Yes, it is hard to learn, but nevertheless it is true. Love is self-sacrifice.

It is not poetry; it is not sentiment; it is not a dream; it is not romance; it is not passion; it is not selfishness; it is not softness; nor sweetness, nor weakness. Love is none of these; love is strong and noble and true; love is a reality, stern and capable of enduring; in a word, love is self-sacrifice.

MARY AYLMEY;

OR,

RANCH LIFE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH ALL ENDS HAPPILY.

A MONTH passed by and the winter snow-storms commenced. Indoors stoves were lighted all over the house, and the only outdoor amusement possible was sleighing, as walking in snow-shoes is rather too fatiguing an exercise to be indulged in for long.

A letter arrived from Mary's father telling his daughter that in the following spring she

might expect to see him, for Captain Burton wanted to send someone to represent him in British Columbia on a business matter, and had asked him to undertake the affair; of his welcome to Minnetonka he felt secure, for Mrs. Elliott had not failed to express to him her great satisfaction in the pleasant companion and valuable assistant she had found in Mary.

The mountains and surrounding country

looked very beautiful in their snowy mantle, the dark fir-trees standing up like sentinels here and there; the "creeks"—rivers—were frozen. The deer came down in droves quite close to the house, while flocks of wild swans and geese kept flying overhead, and one day Mr. Elliott sent home two beautiful mountain sheep. The roof of the verandah at the back of the house looked like a poultryer's shop, with its rows of prairie chickens and other such

spoils, whenever any of the male friends of the master of the house came to stay for a day or two, for there was nothing else for them to do but shoot on such occasions.

As the season advanced, the cold became intense, the thermometer frequently going down twenty degrees below zero, but the snow became perfectly hard, and the time passed quickly enough, for no moment was left unoccupied. The death of Mr. Musgrave's father in Scotland had called him suddenly to Europe, but he took care to let Mrs. Elliott know that his visit was only deferred, and that his plans and hopes for the future remained unchanged.

One stormy day in April the first visitor of the year was seen approaching; the snow was disappearing fast, and the sun gaining power every day. The mistress of the house, who was looking out of the window, did not recognise the new comer, and her husband had gone after cattle, while Mary was out for a ride. He dismounted and entered, astonishing her greatly by announcing himself as Captain Burton. She at once feared that he had brought bad news for Mary, but could not bring herself to ask. His first words, however, reassured her, when he remarked that he was the purchaser of the ranch about which Mr. Ellwood, the clergyman, had spoken, but that for reasons of his own he had not wished his name to be mentioned at the time. He had been informed that the house was in excellent repair, and had, therefore, brought his household over from the North-West for three months; and as Mr. Aylmer was now so near his daughter, and could see her at any time, he had come in person to make the acquaintance of the Elliott family, his nearest neighbours, though he begged to be allowed to go over to the guest-house, so as not to incommode them in the matter of sleeping quarters. This, of course, was not allowed, and after some hesitation he allowed himself to be persuaded to remain where he was.

As Mrs. Elliott returned to the kitchen, on hospitable cares intent, she could not help pondering as to whether any new complications were about to arise respecting Mary's affairs. When the latter returned, her astonishment was great, but the pleasure of having her father near her again seemed to overcome every other feeling. The master of the house returned in the evening, and after all had retired, his wife asked him anxiously if he had any reason to suppose Captain Burton's visit had any relation to her friend.

"I have no idea," replied her husband; "I confess that I forgot all about her when we were talking together, and he did not allude to her, of course. I am extremely pleased to have him for a neighbour anyhow. He says he has had a very good offer for Laughing Water, and he is not at all sure, if he finds Bear Lake—where he now is—to his taste, whether he shall not accept it, as the idea of making a railway at the former place has been given up, and it is too far from civilisation altogether. At Bear Lake he can get to the railway in two days in summer."

"Then if Mary did marry him she would be near us, probably."

"My dear Nelly, you are becoming a match-maker; it is far better to leave such matters to the parties most concerned."

"I know it is, but then I cannot help feeling I am a traitor to Mr. Musgrave if I let her be carried off while he is so far away, after all he said to me; I cannot help it, I know, if it is to be, but I think I ought to give her a hint as to his intentions."

"He ought to have written to the girl herself if he could not come."

"I know I should never have married you if you had only made love to me by letter."

"Indeed! Well, I have the highest opinion of your judgment, and therefore

decline to interfere; I am quite sure you will not fail to do the right thing."

The result was that Mrs. Elliott found some excuse for paying a visit to Mary's room, and finding her sitting by her open wood fire, drew up a chair also, and after a little preliminary skirmishing managed to approach the matter she had so much at heart.

"My husband has just told me Captain Burton has almost decided on selling Laughing Water and settling at Bear Lake."

"So my father says in his letter, but he asked me not to mention it."

"You will be glad, won't you, dear? You do not seem as pleased as I expected."

"Yes, indeed, he is all I have."

"I do not suppose he will always be that; girls out here are expected to marry. Mary, do not be angry with me or think I want to know anything you do not choose to tell, but did it never occur to you that the reason Mr. Musgrave is so anxious to return here is because he wants to see you, and get you to like him?"

Mary did not reply for a minute or two, and then she said with a sort of effort—

"A girl cannot possibly know such a thing unless a man tells her."

"The reason he did not tell you was that he was afraid you would think it impertinent after so short an acquaintance."

"He was quite right, and I respect him all the more for refraining."

"But I have to answer his letter next mail; it is not fair to let him come all this way if it is to be for nothing."

"Dearest Nelly, think for one moment. Can I possibly refuse or accept a man who has never asked me?"

"But if you are quite sure you never would accept him, it would only be kind to hint it to me. You know I would never say a word that could compromise you. If I promise to show you my letter, will you tell me?"

Mary laughed outright at her friend's persistence, and after remarking that Mr. Musgrave was fortunate to have such a faithful friend, declared she would say no more that night, but that when the letter had to be written they would speak of it again, if necessary, and with this Mrs. Elliott had to be content.

Next day the two men went off according to custom, and returned in the evening for supper and a chat by the fire. This went on for several days, and Mary had the opportunity of a good gallop on such afternoons. She was returning one day, about four o'clock, when she found a gate, hitherto always left open, had been for some reason shut; she had just dismounted to undo the fastening, when she heard footsteps approaching, and, turning round, found Captain Burton at her side.

"Somebody has come up the lake in a little steamer," he said to her, "and I have been despatched to find you and take you down there. The rest of the household started half an hour ago to see this infant prodigy, and we are to meet them there; the Indian is coming along to take the horses back, as it is a nasty place for you to ride. Shall you mind walking down in your habit?"

"Not in the least, but the other path is much shorter than this way," she replied, as he turned to follow a trail through the wood.

"It is very wet, there is so much snow still; there is no hurry, the steamer remains over-night."

Mary had taken the route she recommended only two days before, and on horseback, and had no recollection of finding it either very difficult to ride over or very wet, but followed where he led in silence.

After a desultory conversation about nothing in particular, he began to talk to her about her father, a subject on which she could be eloquent enough.

"I cannot tell you what a difference his coming has made in my life," he said; "it

was so miserable not to have a soul to speak to in the evenings, for one can get through the day well enough; but now we have a really good time, and I think he is as happy as he could be without you. There are only seven years between us, but he is so much older and graver than his years, yet he is the most pleasant companion I have ever come across, and I think he feels as if he were a sort of elder brother of mine. I have not told you a certain piece of news, though, which I hope you will like to hear: a public appointment has been offered me, and I have accepted it on condition that he will become my secretary; at last he has said yes."

Mary felt almost certain the post had been accepted solely for her father's sake, in order to give him some employment which would ensure him an income, but she only murmured, "You are too good."

"Nonsense; it is a mere matter of dollars and cents. He will do a lot of work for me which I should never get through without his help, and I shall get the credit of it."

She did not speak for some moments, and when he glanced at her the tears were in her eyes.

"Mary, you are not vexed about it? You do not think I have done wrong to persuade him to stay with me?"

In her vexation that he should have noticed her tears, she hardly observed that he had used her christian name—an old habit that had been given up *some years ago* when she announced herself as grown up.

"I am so horribly lonely," he continued. "You refused to come yourself, Mary, therefore you need not grudge me his company. I have wondered sometimes, dear, whether you could not be brought to think that over again, and if there is no one you like better—for I have heard something about young Musgrave," he added emphatically—"why should you not try to like me a little?"

"I do like you, you know it; how could I help it when you have been so good to him? Do you think I do not see through it all, because I say nothing?"

He looked for one moment at her blushing but animated face, and the bright eyes still wet, but now boldly facing him, instead of being turned away, and then remarked in a quiet, grave tone, "Sit down here a few minutes; we cannot possibly get down to the lake in time to meet them now, and I want a quiet talk with you."

"I had rather walk on, if you do not mind."

"I do mind; however, if you will not sit down, perhaps you will allow me to lean over this fence and finish our talk thus; I will not go on, and I will not leave you." His tone had changed a little, for he had been quick to note that she only seemed to evade his remarks, not to reply to them.

"Look me in the face, dear, and tell me honestly whether you care for anyone else."

"No."

He came quickly to her side, and, taking her hand in his, said earnestly, "If there is any hope for me, I ought to know it."

Neither of them quite knew how it happened, but before she had any time to reply, her face was pressed against his shoulder, and something was whispered in her ear to which she managed to say "Yes," and then he was content.

When they returned, the happiness which could be plainly read in both faces told its own tale, and Mrs. Elliott remarked to Mary that evening that after all her letter to Mr. Musgrave would not give her much trouble, though for his sake she regretted the news she had to tell him.

Mary's wedding is to take place as soon as possible, and those who know both bride and bridegroom believe that their married life will be the happiest that can be imagined.

[THE END.]