WHILE THE REST OF THE WORLD GOES BY.

Mary Wendelboe.

Mrs. Wilson and her two daughters were always busy, but this week they had hardly time to sit down to eat. The reason was not hard to find. It would be Easter next Sunday; there had been almost continuous duststorms for a month, and no rain; and last, Mrs. Wilson's younger sister was coming to visit them for the summer, and maybe longer, if she liked it well enough out here.

Coming, as she did, from far-away England, and not having seen her sister for twenty years,- and furthermore,- never having set eyes on either her husband or her children, it was a burning question in everyones mind, how she would like it all. Even the two boys, twelve and fourteen, speculated a lot about this english aunt, though they were busy trying to organize their ballclub and gets their diamond in shape, besides preparing for the Easter exams. But now it would be Easter in less than a week, and the suspense would soon be over.

Miss Elizabeth Smith was supposed to have docked in Quebec on Palm Sunday, and should be in Lethbridge thursday or friday.

Mrs. Wilson had taken of her small hoard of egg-money, and bought wallpaper and enamel, and she and the girls had painted and papered a hitherto unused room, now to be used as a guest-room, but first they'd had to cover most of the walls with heavy pasteboard. This they obtained from old packing boxes, that Henry Wilson got from the stores in Granville, where they did their trading.

It had proved absolutely useless to try to get the owner of the place to help towards the upkeep of the farm buildings. He simply refused to accept any responsibility along that line. He even refused to pay for fencewire, though it had been impossible for Henry Wilson to farm the place at all, without first buying several miles of wire.

Wilson's would be glad of an opportunity to leave the place, but the owner had been tricky enough to get Wilson to sign a five years contract, and it was not till afterwards, the Wilsons found out, what a bad bargain they had made._But Mrs. Wilson had a very useful knack of fixing things, having had lots of experience with making bricks without straw, and the whole family was loud in praise, when the last coat had dried and they were allowed to have a look.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilson drove to Lethbridge thursday morning,_ returning the same night, which was excellently done, when one considers the state of the old auto the Wilsons drove, which sometimes had to do duty as waterwagon, as well as Sunday_ go_ to_ meeting car.

The boys had gone to bed at nine o'clock as usual, but the two girls kept the fire going and the lamp lit. Even a strange English lady might want a cup of hot tea or cocoa, after a windy, fourty_mile drive. And a lighted house always looks more friendly and hospitable than one that's dark.

Many cars went by, and the poor girls were almost tired and sleepy enough to give up the struggle, when the old car finally wheezed in through the gate, and stopped at the door. The girls grabbed their sweaters and were out of the door as soon as the car stopped. Their Dad greeted them and began at once filling their arms with grips and parcels. Their Mother spoke to them once, too tired to say much, and then

the low voice of a strange lady asked a question, which their Mother laughingly answered: "No, my dear, they are our own girls,_ daughters, I mean."

No more was said, till they were all inside, and the older women had removed their wraps. Then Mrs. Wilson drew the girls to her, and facing her sister, said proudly:"Beth, dear, here are my two precious girls; this is Edna and this is Mona. Girls, this is your Aunt Beth." Miss Elizabeth Smith, henceforth to be known as Aunt Beth, kissed her two nieces and said she was glad to see them, and then she told Edna that she was a perfect picture of her grandmother when she had been Edna's age, adding, that she had a lot of portraits in her trunk, which they would all be shown tomorrow. Edna and Mona were glad to observe, that their Aunt talked with only the slightest accent; they had been afraid she would talk like some english people they had heard, but their fears apparently were unfounded.

While Ella, Mrs. Wilson that is, and Beth, moved around to get the stiffness out of their joints, Henry Wilson, who had been putting the car in the garage, came in, and Mona hurried the fire with a stick of wood, while Edna put toast and Marmalade and cake on the already nicely arranged table.

Beth was frankly interested in everything she saw, and seemed to appreciate the cosy, homelike kitchen, with its inviting tea_table, bright lamps, and the circle of friend_ly faces. But she was simply amazed over the range."But Ella, what a queer type of range! I have never seen one like it! And isn't it shiny and bright? And what a heat it gives out, don't you think?"

Henry Wilson smiled whimsically and replied;" It does, alright, and that's fine on a chilly night like this, but when it's ninety in the shade, and you have to cook for harvesters, three or four meals a day, it's not so hot, in a manner of speaking."

"Oh, I see what you mean, but just now it surely makes one comfortable."

They all enjoyed their tea, but it made them all sleepy, and as soon as the last drop had disappeared, Mrs. Wilson lit a small lamp and said;

"Come girls, leave everything as it is and come upstairs to bed. I'll put the bread and cake away before I go to bed."

She went up with them, and showed her sister to her room, while the girls softly said goodnight and went to their own room, almost asleep on their feet.

When Mrs. Wilson came downstairs again, her husband was reading a letter he had taken from his box in the post office as they passed through town. His face looked tired and worried, and a stab of fear went through the heart of his wife, who had seen him take it on the chin many times during their married life, with a smile.

"What's bothering you, Henry?" she asked, after he had read it and was slowly folding it up.

"Oh, nothing to worry about, Ella, only_ this is from MacTavish; you know, I wrote him and asked him if it would be O.K. with him, if I didn't plough the summerfallow this year, but cultivated it instead, or else put it into corn."

"And what does he say?"

"I'll read it to you: 'You seem to forget that I am an old hand at farming myself, in fact, I was farming the place you are on, when you were in short pants, and nobody can tell

Me that any new-fangled method of tilling is any better than them, I have used the last forty years. And I want the west eighty ploughed and double disced, as soon as the seeding is done. No use of you writing me any more letters about it, this is my last word. - Jack MacTavish.' "

Henry Wilson sighed deeply and his wife said warmly:"Isn't that just like him, the grasping old crab? "What was good enough for my father was good enough for me" - that describes his farming methods to a dot, doesn't it, dear?"

"Yes, it does, Ella, but what do you say to calling it a day? No use to worry, we are really no worse off than we were before."

On this not so cheerful note they went to bed, Henry Wilson to fall at once into deep slumber, his wife to lay awake for hours, before finally dropping off, listening,- listening, raising her head from the pillow at every little puff of breeze, that struck the wall or the window.- Always listening. -

Great was Henry Wilson's amazement the next morning when he beheld his new sister-in-law on the stairs, as soon as he had started the fire and filled the tea-kettle. He had supposed she wouldn't be showing up till noon, probably, and here she was, up already, and dressed in a trim sort of uniform-dress, with her hair hidden under a bit of a cap.

"Good-morning, Henry," she greeted him, smiling when she saw his bewildered look.

"Good- morning, Be-Beth, but why are you up so early? Didn't you sleep well?"

"I slept simply topping, thanks, but when you have been getting up at six o'clock or earlier for seventeen years, it's hard to break the habit, don't you know."

Henry knew, alright, but, "Breakfast won't be ready for another hour yet," he informed her anxiously," and if I could get Ednaa and Mona down without waking their Mother, I would like her to sleep a little longer this morning. She has not been sleeping so well this spring, and she was so tired last night. "

"I will go up and call the girls," Beth said matter-of-factly," and we'll close Ella's door so she won't be disturbed. Don't worry."

"Well, I'll just leave it to you, then, and go out and start doing the chores. The boys will be up, when they hear the barn-door hinges screech, that's their alarm clock."With that Henry Wilson took his jumper and cap from the hook behind the stove and went out in the dawn.

Edna was up and dressing, when her aunt called her softly, and was down in a couple of minutes, wonder written all over her face. But her aunt calmly got her to show her, where the breakfast things were, and while Edna cooked the oatmeal, browned potatoes, and fried eggs and bacon, Beth set the table, cut bread, got butter and cream from the cellar, and it was only a bare half-hour before breakfast was ready.

While Beth busied herself fixing a tray for her sister, Edna ran upstairs to call Mona and the boys, who hadn't showed up yet.

When Bill and Jack came hurrying down, they gazed curiously at Beth, looking hard at her white uniform, cap, and shoes. Edna presented them to Beth, and they both spoke politely and shook hands with her, while looking her squarely in the eye. Then they washed in more or less of a hurry, and, as soon as their Dad came in, sat down to breakfast.

Beth went into Ella's room once, but came back reporting her still sound asleep. The boys talked with their Dad, and the three of them ~~came~~ seemed to be having some joke of their own. What this joke was soon came out.

"Which one of you was it, that had that brilliant idea, boys?" asked Henry Wilson, when they all had started their breakfast.

The boys tried to look innocent, but couldn't get away with it. Finally Jack, who was the oldest, spoke up.

"Well, you know Dad, it always makes such a racket, nobody can fail to hear it," (suddenly he had an inspiration) "why Mother wouldn't be able to ~~s~~ sleep till now, if we hadn't oiled the hinges of that barn-door."

"No, that's so," answered his Dad, "but now we'll have to have some sort of bell to call you boys with, won't we?"

"Sure," the boys agreed, busy with knife and fork.

Beth had been an attentive listener, and now she spoke up. "Maybe I can help you with that, I have repaired my call bell many times, and it shouldn't be hard to make one. I am sure we three can do it very well. We only need run it from my room to yours, and I always wake up around six."

Of course this statement brought amazement to themm all, but only Henry Wilson had nerve enough to ask:

"Where did you repair this bell, did you say?"

Beth smiled at their round eyes, then said casually: "You know, I have been a nurse since - seventeen? I haven't been working at it all the time, of course, but almost. That's also why I can't ~~can~~ sleep any later than six in the morning, no matter how many times I try; habit is strong, you know."

"Where did you nurse, Aunt Beth?" Mona asked, hesitantly,

"in private homes?"

"No, my dear, nothing so swanky. The last ~~four~~ fourteen years or fifteen I have been nursing soldiers in a big hospital in the south of England. All were veterans of the great war, and they all suffered more or less from shell-shock, besides being crippled physically."

"Why, can you beat that!" said Bill, suddenly. "I'll bet you can tell some dandy war-stories."

A shadow fell over Beth's face, and she answered slowly: "Of course, the boys were always telling each other stories, but they were not always exactly suitable for either a woman's or a childs ear, and then they always suffered, poor fellows, when they had been reminiscing, tossed on their cots and couldn't sleep at nights if they once got started remembering things. So we nurses naturally did our best to stop them from remembering too much, and I don't think I can tell you anything you'd like to hear."

Henry Wilson

Dad asked for another cup of coffee, and while it was being poured, said: "I harnessed, the gray, boys. We have to have a barrel of water this morning, I think."

Jack finished his breakfast, pushed back his chair, and said: "O.K. Dad - excuse me. - Make it snappy, Bill," and left the table. Bill, who was apparently the more leisurely minded of the two, finished his rhubarb sauce, excused himself, and then began to put on his coat and cap, while Edna emptied the last water out of two old cream-cans, and set them and the water-buckets outside the door, just as Jack pulled up right outside the gate and commenced hitching the old gray horse to the ~~steamsboat~~ stoneboat. This already held the big water-barrel, and after Bill had loaded the two cream-cans and the pails on, the boys took the trail to the

well, a quarter of a mile away, across the field, where the Wilson's got their drinking water.

There was a well with a pump in the yard, but the water was so strong with alkali, that it was useless for anything but watering the stock.

In the kitchen the new aunt looked at her nieces, who matter-of-factly put on their milking togs, as soon as Henry Wilson and the two boys had left.

"Where are you going?" she asked at last, when the girls didn't divulge any information.

"Milking. We always help Dad the mornings the boys go for water." answered Edna. Then: "Aunt ~~Edna~~ Beth, do you think Mother is sick? She has not been sleeping well for a long time, and she has never had breakfast in bed, since Bill was born, I don't believe."

"Don't worry, darlings, it's never too late to begin, and I am going to take this nice tray into your Mother now, I know she's awake, and we'll see what she says."

"It surely looks inviting, Aunt Beth, I hope it gives Mother an appetite; she never eats anything in the mornings, just drinks two or three cups of coffee , she says that does her till dinner-time."

"Well, that's a bad habit, girls, and we must try and break her of it, as painlessly as possible."

The girls departed for the barn, and Beth took the tray into her sisters bedroom. She was greeted by her sister, who was just getting out of bed.

"Go right back to bed,"said Beth firmly."The milking squad has departed, so has the water detail, and there isn't a thing to worry you, or me either, and here's your breakfast. " And Ella Wilson found herself tucked snugly back into

bed by her sisters expert hands, before she realized, what was happening to her.

Her breakfast, nicely arranged on an old tray, that had seen better days, was soon balanced across her lap, with the help of an extra pair of pillows, and then Beth went out into the kitchen and returned with two cups of coffee, one for the patient and one for herself, "for company's sake."

"I don't see, how I could sleep so late," said Ella, puzzled "I never do sleep after Henry opens the barn door."

"My dear, I can tell you why; it's a good joke on several people. Your two energetic sons decided to oil the hinges - or_what_you_may_call'em s, on the barn door, and made a good job of it; so good in fact, that they themselves overslept this morning. We had to call them for breakfast."

Ella smiled wistfully. "They are great kids for improvements on everything. I often wondered about what kind of men they'll be, they have so much energy and inventiveness, and so little to do with. They would be a really great help to Henry, if we had a place ofour own, where they could "improve" all they wanted to ."

"Would you think I was prying, if I asked how you came to lose your own farm? I have never understood it clearly."

"Of course I'd think no such thing, and it's soon told. There was no rain to speak of all summer of eighteen, and seven months of hard winter in eighteen_nineteen. We didn't have any feed, no strawstacks to speak of, and we had to buy feed. There was no way out, but to borrow money; to do that, we had to mortgage the land. When warm weather finally came in May and June, all of our young stock, horses and cattle, ~~both~~ died, and most of our working horses died too. When we saw we couldn't begin to pay up, next fall, we let the Loan_

company take it. And the way the crops have turned out since, it was the very best thing we could have done."

"I should think it would be rather impossible to see your livestock starve to death, even if you had to pay for their feed with your land. Don't think any more about it, but tell me, is there no way by which you can get out from under this old man of the sea, Jack MacTavish, in other words?"

"Oh, Beth, you don't know how much we worry about that old man's cussedness. He is so contrary and ignorant, even when he might easily make a profit by letting Henry have his way. What will happen if Henry should fall sick, or, - if we should have another year like the last two,-" she stopped for a minute and listened, intently-"we won't be able to carry on, contract or no contract."

"You mean, your yield was low last year?"

"Heavens, yes. We were barely able to pay, what we owed, when our wheat was thrashed; still, we thought we had a living in our cows and pigs and chickens. And - then came the duststorms, days of them; they filled all the feed and straw-stacks with fine sand, like ashes, you know, the horses and cattle had to eat it, of course, eventually they died, and that was the end of our promising little start in cattle."

"Are you sure, Ella, that it was the dust, that killed your stock? I mean, it doesn't seem, as if a few dusty days-?"

"No, I don't suppose it does, to you now, but just wait till you have seen one real, rip snorting sandstorm, it will change your mind, but you will wish, never to see another. - About the stock dying, that is really very simple. The sand is beaten far into the stacks; the stock has no way of eating

the straw, without eating a lot of sand; at last they get so much in their system, their digestion can't cope with it any more , and they starve to death, practically._ Horses can't stand it as long as cattle, and nearly all of our nieghbors lost most of their horses last winter."

"Why darling, that's horrible! Can nothing be done to stop it? The sand blowing, I mean?"

Ella smiled, wryly;"There has been meetings in the schools with important speakers lecturing on ways to stop soil_drifting. There must have been hundreds of articles written about it, and the farmers just listen to all this good advice, then goes right ahead and summer_fallows half his land every year."

"Just what does that mean, Ella? Summerfallow?"

"It means:_ First he plows it quite deep, and double discs it at once; then every two_three weeks all summer he goes over it with a disc, a harrow, or a cultivator. The idea is, to keep it free of weeds, but in doing that, he pulverizes the soil so fine, that even a mild breeze will be able to start it drifting."

"You mean like ashes? But doesn't it rain and wet it down?"

"Of course it rains, but very seldom at the time, the summerfallow is being worked. That, you see, is the time the weather makes our wheat No. 1 hard."

"It seems I have a lot to learn about wheatfarming, but lets leave it lie for now. Would you like to stay in bed today _ Heavens! Is there an air_raid on, or what is that noise?"

The mistress of the house laughed, a feeble laugh, but a laugh nevertheless."That's only the cream seperator, Beth, don't you want to go out and see Edna seperate the milk, if you

never have?"

"Absolutely, but let me take your tray out," and hastily Beth collected cups and tray, and went out to investigate the air-raid.

While Edna skimmed the milk, Mona was busy in the pantry, putting up the school lunch. Soon the boys pulled up to the door, with a barrel and two cream-cans full of water. They carried the cans in and filled reservoir and buckets. Jack spoke to Edna in a worried tone:"Don't start any washing to-day, Sis, there's a thick mist coming out of the pass, you know what that means." With that off his chest, he took his lunch pail, a bunch of books, and left, followed by Bill, who had been removing his overshoes, having got them muddy at the well.

In a few minutes, to the women's surprise, both boys appeared again in the door, asking anxiously;"Where's Mother? She isn't sick or anything, is she?"

Mother herself, appearing in the bedroom door, gave them the answer: "Was that a bright idea, oiling the barn-door, or wasn't it? When you know, it's almost the only time-piece I have? How long will it be, before it can be expected to shriek again?"

Both boys laughed with glee, and Bill said:"Put one over on you that time, didn't we, Mom? We thought of it long ago, but we wanted to do it, when you were away, so you would be surprised. 'By, Mom, don't work too hard," and again they were on their way to school.

There was not much conversation between them; school was only three-quarters of a mile from their home, but this morning they were not as early as usual, due both to their over-sleeping, and their turning back to ask about their

Mother. Just as they got near enough to the school to see, that only a few of the children had arrived, Bill said thoughtfully: "Don't you like her, Jack? I think she's nice."

"Yes, I think we'll get along O.K.. Did you notice how clean she was, I mean, sort of clean and shining, her hair and her hands, even her dress and shoes?"

"What do you mean? I don't think she's any cleaner than Mom, or Edna and Mona, either."

"Of course not, but look down there," and he pointed to the south-west, where a fine, opaque mist was streaming out of the Crow's Nest Pas, and spreading out fanwise over the prairie. "I'll bet, she won't be neither clean nor white, when we get back from school; how much will you bet?"

"Nothing. I know that's a sand-storm as well as you do, but maybe it won't be so bad; I hope not, Mom hates them so, and no wonder. Hie! there, Spike, did you bring your bat?"

The English aunt was not discussed any more in school that day. As the sun rose higher, so did the wind, and the children had to eat their noon lunch inside. The teacher, wise in the ways of sandstorms, had made the children pull their buggies and carts into the lee of the building, and had also made sure, the horses were tied securely in the barn, and the doors firmly closed. Now there was only one thing to do: tend to the schoolwork and hope, the wind would go down, before hometime.

When the boys had left for school, Ella Wilson and her daughters put all their energy into getting their morning's work done in a jiffy, as Beth intended to unpack her trunk as soon as possible, and also to do "a spot of washing."

But as the wind took on a whining note, and the dust-clouds began to scurry across the yard, everything was

left, and all hands turned their attention to getting ready to get through this day with as little wear and tear as possible. Beth, of course, had no idea, of what to expect, but helped, where she could. All bric-a-brac was put away in drawers, all doilies and runners were removed from the furniture, and heavy, unbleached sheeting was tucked into place on all the beds.

When Beth noticed how the sand sifted in through windows and door, she went upstairs and returned with three white, spotless caps, which she made the others wear. Mrs. Wilson protested, saying:" But they will be all black by evening," but Beth, who obviously didn't know, what scarcity of water means, only laughed at her and replied:"We can wash them, can't we? And the sight of them makes me think of my old home, the hospital, don't you know."

Henry Wilson had covered the water-barrels with clean blankets and tubs, and had been at work in the barn all morning. At dinnertime the wind was blowing a regular gale, with the dust getting thicker every hour. At times, between gusts, one could see across the pard and see the stack huddled in the lee of the barn, but mostly the dust flew past the windows so fast, it looked as if a grey sheet was stretched across each one, and the lamps were ready to be lit. The noise was increasing, and every now and then Henry Wilson would put down the paper he was reading, and go outside to investigate any new noise he had discovered.

Dinner was not a merry meal, ans was soon over. The clearing away was done in a few moments, and then Beth decided to unpack her trunks anyway, in spite of the dirt;

Mrs. Wilson was very restless, and had a headache, which her husband teasingly declared , came from having slept so long in the morning.

Soon thehouse vibrated continually under the impact of the blasts, the windows rattled loudly, and the curtains had turned first grey, then black, early in the day.

Mona told Beth the joke about their nieghbors: during one of the last summers violent duststorms, , this family had been scared out of their wits,when, happening to go to look at their sleeping baby, they found him to be coal-black. They thought at once, he was dead, strangled, or choked, but eventually it was found, he'd only been sweating, and the dust had covered him, and stuck.

Just as she finished this little tale, something made a big crash outside in the yard.

After going out to investigate, Henry Wilson returned with a big armful of splintered boards, which he said, was part of an almost new hayrack, that had been blown off its truck, and reduced to kindling.

"That's fifty dollars more or less of kindling," he said, and unless I go out right now and gather it up and put it in the coalshed, we won't have even that much. " And with that statement he went out in the teeth of the wind, and salvaged, what he could, while it was possible.

Mrs. Wilson had been growing more nervous,as the day went by, and now she began to fret, about the boys. It would soon be time for them to come home from school, and her restless walks around the house always ended at the window, that gave one a view of the gate, whenever the wind dropped a bit.

As soon as Henry Wilson had picked up the last broken board, he came to the door, got his goggles, and told them: "I am going up the road a bit and look for the kids."

He didn't get very far, before he met the boys, leading the old horse, that pulled the neighbors youngsters. These were all younger than Bill, and had trouble forcing the pony to face the driving sand, besides which they were almost blinded by it, and when Henry Wilson saw their streaming eyes, he led the horse into his own yard, intending to keep the kiddies until the wind died down, meanwhile phoning their folks, so they'd know, where they were.

When the three children trouped into the kitchen, Beth at once set to work cleaning them up, so they'd be able to see again. Edna and Nona helped her, of course, washing their faces and bathing their eyes, while Mrs. Wilson, who was used to this sort of thing, made a big pot of cocoa and a large platter of sand-wiches. The children were grateful for the warm drink, the piercing wind had chilled them, though they had only travelled three quarters of a mile. They weren't shy, and amused the Wilson family by relating stories of home and school during similiar storms.

As it was found impossible to use their phone, on account of the crackling and snapping in the instrument, Wilson decided to have the kiddies wrapped up as tight as possible, and himself would lead their horse to their home, one mile away. This was done as planned, and while he was away, the boys carried Beth's trunks into the living room, where she opened them, unmindful of howling wind and swirling dust.

Her sister had started to knit, but couldn't settle down to it; She kept getting up and wandering from one room to another, always listening to the screaming of the wind and the creaking of the timbers. She never talked, except when spoken to, and looked, as if she didn't hear anything but the gale. When she decided to go out in the kitchen and do the lunch dishes, Beth asked Edna, if her Mother was always so nervous, and Edna answered, hesitantly: "Well, Mother always has been nervous when it storms, but never as bad as now. But lately we have had so many duststorms, and it seems, as if she is always listening for the wind to start up; last year she had a bad spell of insomnia, and Dad said, she used to sleep with her head raised from the pillow, what little she did sleep, so she'd be able to hear, if the wind came up."

Here Mona took up the tale: "Last fall there was a long spell, when you'd go to bed with the loveliest weather, regularily, and then wake up about two-three o'clock, with a forty or fifty mile gale blowing, trying to lift the roof off. And like as not, you'd left your wash on the line overnight."

Bill broke in here with: "Remember the time, it blew so hard for thirty-six hours, and Jack didn't dare go to sleep, but sat up all night in a corner of the bed, watching the roof, ready to yell when it went?"

Now it was Jack's turn: "That was the time Edna walked over to Johnson's just before it got bad, had to stay overnight, and then had to walk home next afternoon, when it was at it's worst? You remember, Ed, how you dropped your handbag in the summer-fallow, but couldn't stop and hunt for it, because the sand whipped your legs, through your silk stockings, so they bled, before you could get to the house?"

Mona continued the story:"And you came in, demanding worsted stockings, got them on and ran back, to find your purse almost buried in sand, with money and wrist-watch and all."

Aunt Beth looked at the young people, then at the window, before she said slowly: "How long has this been going on, and haven't you been doing anything to prevent it?"

Bill was quick to speak:"Dad says, it didn't start to dust until eighteen, up till then, not enough land was under plough, but it has been terrible since then, though some years there is more wind and less rain than others."

Beth spoke thoughtfully:"That's eighteen years of it! Tell me, is there much sickness around here?"

Jack said promptly:"Oh, there's been measles, chickenpox, scarlet fever, and 'flu epidemics the last few years,- but -"

Bill broke in on his brother."Lots of queer people around here, too, and that's a disease, isn't it aunt Beth?"

"What do you mean by queer, Bill?"

"Crazy, insane, loony, a little off, not all there. That's what I mean."

Jack tried to help."Bill thinks, anybody is crazy, who kills or tries to kill, himself. There has been several suicides here the last ten years, but nobody knows if the fellows who did it were crazy or not."

But Edna knew more about people than the boys, and seeing her aunt interested, said:" What about Mrs. Jackson, she had to be sent to the mental hospital in Ponoko years ago, and has never been cured; and Mrs. Longham, who was in the hospital so long with a nervous breakdown, and now is only a shadow of herself. And there is our last teacher who had to quit,

"because" she said, "the sandstorms drive me insane." Then lots of people in the Mental hospital in Clarendon are from "sunny southern Alberta", and if that isn't here, where is it? The doctor in Granville told Dad, this was a hard country on women, especially older ones."

"Well, my dears, I have only been here a couple of days, but I should judge the doctor to be right,. I think, another day like today, will give me _ "

"The willies," said Bill emphatically, and the laughter that followed put an end to their talk. Beth had displayed her trunks contents to the family before supper-time, and left only the family pictures on the living-room table, to be looked over at leisure, after supper. At least, that was whatshe had planned,. But there was too much heavy work to be done that night, and they were put away with her linen, her old family silver, a bit of glass, and her more personal effects, which quite filled her trunks.

About sundown the wind died down, and the men, waiting for this, forwith pitched in and did the feeding, watering, and milking, as well as getting fuel and water into the house.

Mean-while, Edna and Mona cooked a light supper, leaving their Mother and aunt visiting in the living-room, and after th this ~~this~~ was cleared away, came the heavy work of getting ready for bed. First the covers were taken carefully off the bed, carried outside, and shaken, ther the bedding that was at all dusty, was also shaken vigorously outside in the dark; before the beds were made up again, all the sand was brushed off the windows, the doors, and the furniture, then the floor was swept as carefully as possible. Then the beds were made up. By the time this task was completed in four bed-

rooms, it was bedtime, and everyone was as black as a darky. However, there was plenty of hot water and soap, and there was a great washing and splashing in the kitchen for a while. But when the dust and grime had been removed, most of the skin seemed to have gone with it, so Mrs. Wilson brought out her big cold-cream jar, and it was liberally applied, amid loud complaints of smarts and pains, eventually soothing even Henry Wilson, who had been most exposed. But no cold cream could get the sand out of the eyes of those, who had been outside. But they knew from experience, it would work out to the corners during the night, so there was no complaints on that score. Mrs. Wilson's depression seemed to vanish as soon as the wind died down, and she talked and laughed at her familys antics, though not very hilariously.

The wind didn't die down completely at once, but by midnight there was not a breeze stirring. At sunrise the pas showed clear, and all the next day the weather was lovely and still, and the women all over the country must have been working with might and main, cleaning sand out of their houses. The Wilson family was no exception: curtains were taken down, and fresh ones hung; pictures taken down and polished, while the walls were being cleaned. All the furniture was being washed and polished, every closet was emptied, and the clothes shaken and brushed, while the bedding was hung on the line, given a thorough beating, and clean sheets and pillow cases were put on all around.

Mrs. Wilson confessed, not having slept much in the night, so under Beth's direction, her bedroom was cleaned first of all, and she was put to bed with a hot water bottle at her feet, and admonished to go to sleep. Of course she went under protest, but Beth had not been a nurse for eight-

teen years for nothing, and if she didn't actually sleep, she dozed off and on for a couple of hours, after which she got up again and joined the fray once more.

As soon as the kitchen had had its turn, Edna began on her Sunday cooking, and as soon as the rest of the house was half-ways clean, her Mother and Bill took a hand. Bill liked to help his Mother and sister, running errands to the cellar for vegetables, milk, or cream, to the woodshed for fuel, or polishing the silver for tomorrow, which, you'll remember, is Easter Sunday. but in all his goings and comings he kept a weather eye on the pas, down in the southwest. Once as he carried a pail of slop to the pig-pen, he heard a hen crying in the wailing, falsetto manner hens do, when a storm is brewing, and he immediately pursued her with sticks and stones till she fled away out into the pasture, hoping fervently "Mom hadn't heard the darn old thing, - it would be just like it to blow again to-morrow."

But, praise eb, the morning dawned bright and clear, a really lovely Easter morning, almost too good to be true. Beth had asked her sister:"Is there no church service near?" To which Mrs. Wilson replied:

"We used to have service regularily at the school, but these last three-four months of sandstorm have dropped that sort of thing, and we have never gone to church in town much, except to funerals." And there the matter was dropped.

The mornings work was soon disposed of, and then the final preparations for the big dinner began, for this was to be ready at two o'clock.

Some of the Wilson's very closest friends were invited,

and everyone was jolly and gay, getting bathed and dressed; suddenly the'phone rang the Wilsons signal. Mrs. Wilson answered it, and after a short conversation, hung up and explained to her family:"That was Eric Nielson; he told me, they would not be able to come out. He and Olga and the children had been out driving Friday, and the electric storm did something to their car, anyway they had to be towed home and both their children caught a bad cold. Olga has been frantic over all the nice dirt she has had to get out of her nice house yesterday, and is in bed today . He doesn't think she is really sick, but is getting the doctor, in spite of her, to take a look at her, and the children. Well, that's that."

"That leaves only Clarke's, beside ourselves," remarked Mona. "I do hope they have no accident."

They hadn't, as it turned out, and at twelve o'clock their blue sedan rolled into the yard, and both the boys and their Father went out to meet them. And here they stayed, minute after minute, apparently inspecting Clarke's car, which happened to be a Buick. Finally they all came into the house, via the back door, which surprised Beth, as there was a perfectly good front door, only it happened to be completely blocked by three tolerably deep sand-dunes, that had been piled up there the day before.

After the introductions were made, Bill couldn't keep still any longer."Oh, Mom," he cried eagerly."Just step out and take a look at Walter's car, you've never seen such a funny thing in your life, and you come too, Aunt Beth - come girls ," and he almost pulled them out the door in his haste. Wondering what it was all about, the four of them followed

the excited boy out, and around to the other side of Clarke's automobile. And then their eyes certainly did pop out, for the whole left side was as bare of paint as a stove-lid, there was not a scrap of varnish or enamel on the whole side from tail-light to radiator, only the bare steel body. Bill stood by and let them take in the whole spectacle, waiting for them to say something.

"It was Beth, who broke the stunned silence:"What on earth happened to it, Bill?"

Bill was so excited, he was almost incoherent. "Why, Walter couldn't budge it the last day it stormed, so he let it stand in the yard, like he does lots of times, and the sand just polished it off like this. Mrs. Clarke said, when he found it, he thought somebody had stolen his, and left this old thing, but then when he walked around it, and saw this painted side, I guess he knew, what had happened."

Mona said rebukingly:"This may seem funny to you, Bill, but I'll bet the Clarkes feel differently about it."

When the last group to examine the damaged car had entered the house, the men were in the living-room, talking earnestly to-gether. Mrs. Clarke had shed her hat and coat, and was ready to furnish them with all the latest news about the last storms velocity, destructiveness, etc.,

After holding forth a while, she informed her listeners: "But I am through - absolutely! And I've told Walter so too. If we have any more like we have had lately, I am going to get three boxes or barrels from my grocers, pack them with my dishes, silver, linen, and bedding, put our clothes in a couple of suitcases, and leave, for parts unknown, just so there are no sandstorms."

"Would you really do that, Mrs. Clarke?" asked Beth doubt-

fully.

"Would I? You just bet I would! I have been fed up on this country for a long time, but you know, how men are, conservative stick- in- the- muds, and Walter always seemed to think he couldn't live anywhere else."

"Has he changed his mind, them?"

"I don't know, but he has been reading about the re- clamation of land in Creston, and seem to think, it would be a good idea to run up and see this project, in the summer vacation when the boys can go along, and far be it from me to discourage him."

Mrs. Wilson sighed and said nothing, but Beth decided to have a talk with Mrs. Clarke after dinner, if possible. However, the best laid plans often go awry, and just as the party sat down at the dinner table, Mrs. Wilson happened to look out of the southwest window, and turning back to look at her friend, said in a troubled voice:"I hope you closed your house up tight, before you left it, I am sure, the sand is being raised again, down towards the gap." Mrs. Clarke took one look at the approaching murk, then went to the telephone and tried to call her nearest neighbor, to get her to go over and close any of her windows, that were open, even a small crack. But there was no answer, and Mrs. Clarke announ- ced to her family thay had to go home at once; after a bit of argument, Henry Wilson persuaded her, they should first be allowed to eat their dinner, now they had started eating.

The guests did full justice to the bountiful meal spread for them, but as soon as the last piece of pie had been con- sumed, Mrs. Clarke said:

"We must act like the beggars, eat and run, but there's

no help for it, I couldn't stand to do all that work over again, I did yesterday."

So, though the boys almost cried, they all bundled into their car, which Henry Wilson told Clarke, jokingly, he ought to call"half_and_half", and went home. Of course, Bill and Jack hated to see their two friends leave, they were all about the same age and mentality, and had not seen each other for several weeks. But now it was dark enough to light the lamps, even if the wind had not arrived yet, and Jack, who was his Dad's right_hand man, went with him out to do the necessary chores, while Bill went quietly up_stairs, closing all windows and pulling all blinds. Beth had an after dinner cigaret in the kitchen and then helped the others clear up after the party; Mrs. Wilson had aqui_red a head_ache and was so nervous and restless, Beth put her to bed with an aspirin and a hot_water bottle. Edna put her head in at the door, after she was settled, and teased her;

"That's life, Mom, eat a big dinner, and then go to bed, and take an aspirin."

But Ella Wilson only smiled feebly, and said;"You don't think it can be as bad as Friday, so soon again?"

"Maybe it won't last very long, Mother. It often stops at sun_down, you know."

"Yes, I know, dear, and I hope it does, to_day, I am so tired of listening,"

The wind rose, now it whined in the chimney, rattling the doors, and driving the sand through every crack and keyhole, till small drifts commenced to form around the house, in front of doors, and on window sills. The nice crisp cur_tains hung yesterday, turned limp and grey. The boys wanted

to play bridge, so they fixed up a system of playing, that let the dummy from the first table play a hand at the second table; this worked until there was a splintering, rending crash outside, close to the backdoor, that brought them all up standing, cards falling forgotten from limp fingers

Jack said breathlessly:" What the dickens was that?" Then both he and Bill went out in the kitchen, in the wake of their father, who was hunting for cap and coat. As they opened the back door, the gale tore in , filled the house, and put all the lamps out. Someone groaned, then Beth's cool voice said casually;

"Edna, get matches. The rest of us will stand still."

"Alright, Aunt Beth,"said Edna, going slowly out into the kitchen.

The men seemed to be right outside the back door, which of course had slammed shut, as soon as they had gone out. The girls could hear them shouting to one another, in the dark. Edna came back with matches and lighted all the lamps, and Beth took one up and went in to take a look at her sister. Right inside the bedroom door she stumbled and almost fell over something that was soft and yielding. It was Mrs. Wilson, in a dead faint. Beth, used to emergencies, set the lamp down, picked her sister up, and put her on her bed;then she called Mona, gave her a few directions, and closed the door after her, when she left. In a few moments Mona reappeared, and after applying spirits of Ammonia, smelling salts, and cold water, they soon revived Mrs. Wilson. Her first words were;

"What caused that awful crash?"

Mona answered hesitatingly:"Only the windmill:Dad says

it isn't broken up very much, but the old bunk_house is flattened, so it's only kindling_wood, and the woodshed is ruined too, but you know, that was so jiggly, it was threat_ening to fall down every windstorm we have had for so long."

Mrs. Wilson suddenly sat up in bed, threw out her hands, and said feverishly:"The bunkhouse is smashed? Oh,what if the boys had been inside? They wanted to begin sleeping out there now, at Easter, Thank God they weren't near it! Oh, why do we have to stay in this place, it isn't fit to live in_ you are never safe _ night or day. You can't leave your house for a few hours, or your car in your own yard, with _ out having them ruined." Mrs. Wilson wrung her hands, till ********** Beth took them firmly in hers, trying to calm her. But Ella Wilsons lifelong english restraint had broken, and she couldn't be stopped;"Look at our clothes, all clean and fresh this morning; look at our house, and think of how we worked yesterday, cleaning and brushing. Look at our faces, our hands, and hair! Is all the rest of our lives going to be the same round of useless efforts, we have had to make this winter?"

Mrs. Wilsons strength gave out, and she fell limply back on her pillows, crying softly, and hopelessly. Edna and Mona were horrified and amazed over their Mothers breakdown, but Beth thanked her stars, she's gotten here, just when she did, and also, because she knew how to deal with such emergencies as this. For her sister was sick, there was no doubt about that, and there was no telling how bad her nervous condition would be before it would begin to get better.

In a few minutes Ella Wilson fell into slumber, and the

two scared girls tip-toed softly out to Henry Wilson and the two boys, who had heard every word, and stood looking out of the window into the roaring darkness.

When Beth came from the bedroom, he turned to her and said apologetically:"I see, this has been harder on Ella, than I thought. She has never said a word before, but she must have been thinking and worrying, and now it has come to a climax, it seems. Well, I feel the same way, she does, but what can I do? I am tied down here for years, unless something happens, and this outfit is all we own. Can you see any way out?"

"Is it always so bad?"

"No, of course the wind doesn't blow, always, but every year there is more land summer-fallowed, it's pulverized finer, and so it takes less and less wind to raise a dust-cloud; and we do have sand-storms all the year around, summer and winter, no matter what the temperature is."

"Well, if by some chance you could get away from this, where would you move?"

"B.C. would be our best bet, I guess. They are beginning to grow wheat on the Kootenay, and that's the only thing, I know beans about?"

"But if you couldn't get a wheat-farm out there, you are not too old to learn fruit-farming, are you? That's what they do out there, isn't it?"

"I can, and will do anything to make an honest living, just so we could get to a country where there was some water, and not this everlasting sand and wind. I am sure our lungs must be black."

"Have you any idea about the price of land in B.C.?"

"Not reliable, but I do know, you can't get anything under a hundred dollars an acre, but it only takes ten acres to make a big ranch, so we might be able to buy a small one, if we were only sure, we could make a living, and it would suit Ella."

"Have you ever been out there?"

"Yes, I went out there with three-four other fellows looking for a location, but I didn't think Ella would ever like it out there, so nothing came of it."

"How far is it, to that place where they are draining out the lake, - is it Creston?"

"About three hundred miles by car, though straight as the crow flies, it may not be more than a hundred."

"Where have I seen that name before, Creston? I believe I saw it this morning. Could it have been on a map? But where did I see a map?"

"Could it have been in a paper? The newspapers are giving a lot of space to the reclamation-project out there, and Clarke brought out the mail."

"Did any letter come for me? But how could it?"

"I have not looked at the mail yet, where is it, Edna?"

Edna produced the bundle of mail, and her father started to sort it, but at once exclaimed:"Well, well. Here is a letter for you, Beth, and unless I'm much mistaken, it came in the first place from - Creston."

Beth took it and looked at it curiously. Yes, there was a Canadian stamp, and it was from Creston, but it had been back in England, and had been forwarded to Alberta. Had it crossed on the same steamer as she? Who knows? And who on earth was writing to her from Creston, B.C.?

* * * *

Mrs. Wilson slept on, and the rest, feeling a shade let down, went to the kitchen. The men puton caps and coats, and with flashlights went out to do the evening chores. Though it was early, Edna decided to get supper over with, so she cut bread, mixed a salad, sliced turkey, and made a big pot of tea; she didn't have to cook anything, of course, having prepared all kinds of things for a big crowd at noon. Mona set the table in the kitchen, as it was their custom to eat there , when there was no visitors.

When the menfolks came in again, blinded and chilled to the bone, they were thankful for the warm food and drink, and fell to without delay. Beth had been reading her letter in the dining_room, and when she joined the family, she seemed absent_minded and distrait.

The men were planning ways and means. What would they do about the water for the stock, now the pump and windmill was ruined?

"How deep is the well?" asked Jack.

"A hundred and seventy_five feet or so, so you see, we can't dip it up by hand very well," said his father.

"Maybe MacTavish will get you a new pump and milll, after all, _"

"Not a chance," Wilson said decidedly, "it isn't worth the trouble to ask him. No, I'll just have to disconnect the pump from the tower, and have that welded, and leave the windz mill down. I don't believe I can afford to have that ~~welded~~ repaired until after harvest."

"But that means, an awful lot of pumping will have to be done by hand, Dad, and you ~~know~~ know how hard it is, even when the well is full; gee whiz, that'll be tough," said Jack

contemplatively, knowing he'd have to do his share of the pumping.

"Maybe you'd like to take the stock down to the ditch every day after school," asked his father,"then you wouldn't have to pump, but that's over three miles, you know, down and back."

"We could do that, Jack, couldn't we?" said Bill,"or we could get an old water_tank from somewheres, and go down to the ditch for a tank, every once in a while."

"But Bill, tanks cost money, if you know what that is," said Jack, but Henry Wilson who had sat silent, thinking hard, said firmly:"That's an idea, boys, and I think, I know where I can borrow or rent a tank. You know, every fall several thrashing outfits pull into town, when their run is over, and park their machines on convenient backlots, till next fall. Back of Clarke's yard there is an outfit parked, and there's two big, almost new tanks, with pumps on them, and everything; the whole thing belongs to Macenzie, who has threshed for me two years running, and I am almost sure I can get one of them, to loan or rent."

"Oh, Dad, that will be great, it lifts a load off my heart,"laughed Jack, but Bill had more ideas.

"Say, Dad, when the weather is good, we can take both the stock, and the water_tank, and fill it, while they drink, and that will save a lot of time; on Saturdays and Sundays we could always do it that way."

"Why Bill, you are smart," said Mona, who had been an interested listener. "You actually use your imagination, don't you, or is it just brains you've got?"

"MacTavish says, all that ails us, is laziness," replied Jack, quick to defend his"baby brother"."He sneered at Dad,

when he saw the propeller I had made, to run the generator for the batteries, and he said, it would be better for Dad, if I had all these new-fangled notions wallloped out of me."

"Honest, Dad, I don't see, how you can be civil to that old crab, he sets my teeth on edge, every time I see him." Edna, who usually was so soft-spoken, didn't have any use for their land-lord.

"Oh, well, he's an old man, and two years is all I have left to work for him in, and I guess, I can stand it, that long," her patient father answered.

Beth was drawn to ask: "Why, don't you just ******** pack up and leave this place? What can he do to you?"

Henry Wilson answered slowly. "I can't afford to; you see, I didn't look closely enough at the contract, before I signed it, and now he says, there is a clause in it, that says he doesn't have to pay me for all the summer-fallowing I have done, if I leave this place, before the lease is up. - And you know we have to summerfallow a quarter of a section every year. - But if he sells it or trades it, then I can walk out on him, and he has to pay me for the summerfallow, too. But he won't pay for the wire."

"Now, if he will only sell or trade it to some poor sap, you will be rid of him and this darn sandheap, before we all get completely buried alive here," Beth said jokingly, but Henry Wilson didn't look , as if his hopes were very high.

After the supper was cleared away, Edna and Mona went upstairs to do some shaking out of blankets, before the boys should think of bed. The girls talked of the work they would have to do on the morrow, and deplored the failure, the whole day had turned out to be.

"But isn't Aunt Beth a brick?" said Mona admiringly. "What would we have done with Mama, if Auntie hadn't been here? Weren't you scared, when Mama burst out with that talk? She's never said so much before, has she?" she asked.

"I should think, it would do Mama good to get it off her chest, for once," replied Edna, as the two went downstairs again.

"Such an Easter," Beth greeted them, when they came down in the lamplit kitchen. "Will I ever forget it?"

"Neither will we, Aunt Beth," said Bill with a yawn, "but I am going up to bed, now, I think the wind is dying down."

Everybody listened; there was anew note in the wuthering around the house.

"It's blowing from the north, now, probably the ground will be white by morning," Wilson informed them, and he might have been right, for the north wind often brings snow after a dust-storm. But the wind changed back again, before they fell asleep, to the southwest, with renewed fury.

While Wilson and Jack went out for a last look at the stock and the weather, Beth asked her two nieces:

"Darlings, tell me, what is this Ditch, the boys are to get water from, and where is it? Why is its water better than the water out here in your own well?"

"It's a sort of what you could call a canal, Aunt Beth, made to carry the water from a river up in the mountains out to a large resevoir called Keho Lake, many miles East of here. It irrigates many square miles of land north of Lethbridge. I don't like the ditch water so very well, because its muddy, but maybe we can get used to it, as other

people have."

"But child, how big is this canal, and how do you cross it?"

"Oh, I don't know how wide it is, twenty-five or thirty feet, and about twenty feet or so, from the top of the dyke to the bottom of the ditch, but the bridges, that cross it at every section-line, are level with the road, and only eight or ten feet above the bottom of the ditch. Of course, in winter the water doesn't run down from the dam in the mountains."

"Well, upon my word! Fancy bringing water down from those peaks, and actually watering fields and gardens,-yes-and stock with it; it's hardly believable. But didn't it cost a lot to arrange all that, dig the canal, and everything?"

"Surely, but think of all the farmers raising wheat and gardens, where there didn't use to grow anything but Russian thistles; that's worth something, isn't it? Dad says, "the Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District is simply a garden of Eden, compared to what it was ten years ago," but still, I don't think, he'd like to move out there, a man has to live in his rubber boots from the time the first water is turned into his ditches, till he's through irrigating for the season. Not everyone can stand to wade around in water all the time for two-three months."

Beth agreed, it wouldn't be pleasant and after a last look at Mrs. Wilson who was still sound asleep, the three went up to bed, just as Jack and his father came in from the barn.

All night the wind raged and the sand drifted, but the slithering, hissing sound of it was soothing to tired ears, and they were all, except Beth, used to it, and if it kept

her awake during the night, she didn't say anything about it, when she came down at the usual hour next morning.

The gale had died completely down by sunrise, but it was a weird sight, that greeted her eyes, when the sun shone once more on "Sunny Southern Alberta." Everywhere dust, in dunes, in heaps, in ridges, in waves, inside as well as out. All the walls were coated with it, the furniture, the lovely house-plants, and the once so fresh and dainty ~~house~~ curtains, were loaded with it, looking as if they had been used for dust-rags.

Beth looked in despair at Mona, who followed her down the stairs, and asked her: "Tell me, where do we begin?"

Mona, who had been through years of this sort of thing, took a long look around, before she replied: "First we clean the stove, because it smells so awful, when the dust gets hot, then we cook breakfast; then after the milking and seperating is out of the way, we start a fire in the heater, so we can stand to have the doors and windows open while we sweep and dust in the livingroom and Mama's bedroom. Then if the wind doesn't get too strong, we should wash to-day, but I don't know about water yet, and anyway, we have to get mostof this dirt shoveled out first, before we can begin to wash."

"I don't think I'll ever be able to learn to figure about the water, like you people do," said Beth, as the two went to work on the job of getting a reasonably dustless breakfast on the table in the shortest possible time. "At home, you know, we have water everywhere, good water, and I've never even heard of anyone having to drive their cattle three miles to water."

"It must be lovely, to live in England, and I don't wonder, Mother feels the way she does, about water. She says herself,

she is "bugs" on that subject."

"Just what is this attitude, you say is "bugs" whatever that may mean, darling?"

"She says, for one thing, her idea of heaven is a place where she can get all the soft water she needs. And she thinks, lack of good water is responsible for seventy-five per-cent of all the sickness, misery, and ugliness, in this part of the world, at least."

"Welll well, that's strong talk," saod Beth slowly, "but probably she is right, though I have never looked at water in quite that light."

"Of course, Beth, you wouldn't, when you have always had lots of it, and it's been easy to get," said Mrs. Wilson from the bedroom door, "If I hadn't been used to having such a lot of water, I don't think I would have found it so hard to get along with so little, and that little often hard. Really, dear, I could talk about this topic for hours, I get so wrought up, when I let myself even think of the privations, lack of water causes, mostly to women and children. But right now we have other fish to fry, haven't we?"

Edna was just coming downstairs, and with all of them lending a hand, breakfast was soon aon the table. When Henry Wilson came in and saw his wife, he said teasingly;

"You know, Ella, I didn't think you were going to wake up till noon, you slept so soundly, and I'll bet, you hardly shifted position all night. I looked at you several times, and you had not stirred."

" I feel as if I had slept a week," said Mrs. Wilson. "It was the aspirin, I think. I am not in the habit of taking it ~~them~~, because it makes me dizzy, but it certainly gave me a

good nights sleep."

While the family were eating their breakfast , a man on horseback came into the yard, one of the neighbors, it appeared and when Henry Wilson asked him to come in, his errand soon came to light. After a few words about the storm of last night, the man, who was introduced to Beth as Mr, White, said:

"You didn't see the fire last night, did you?"

"What fire?"

"George Benson's house burnt down."

"How awful! Anybody hurt?"

"Not bad, thought the boys all got singed here and there. Only the house went, but that's of course bad enough, but they got a few things out, in spite of the start, the blaze had, and they will be able to live in the big bunkhouse, with a gramary to do the cooking in,. But what I came for, was to see, if you could donate some grub, to tide them over till things get kinda straightened out. I brought what I could, but it wasn't much, and they need everything, and tney need it right away."

"Of course, we will give what we can," Mrs. Wilson said at once, "the poor things; the baby is so delicate, and Mrs. BENson herself isn't strong. How did it start? Do they know?"

"Well, they have a pretty good idea; It started under the house and the middle of the livingroom floor, so they couldn't get at it at first. But one of the boys took a pan of ashes out late in the afternoon, and he didn't put water on them, as he was told, because there was no dirty water handy, and he thought it would be a crime to use clean water for it, when there was only a few pails in the barrel. The spark

must have been blown under the house, there is a long stretch where all the banked up dirt has been blown clean away; I don't know why this doesn't happen oftener than it does, people are too reckless with their hot ashes, and too sparing with their water."

While this explanation was delivered, Mrs. Wilson and Edna had decided what they would send, but as the caller couldn not carry anything, it was decided, Mr. Wilson would crank up his car at once, if possible, and if it would go, take all the grub they could spare, over to the Bensons, who lived a mile and a half east of the Wilsons.

Nothing could induce Wilsons old Dodge to start, so the boys harnessed a horse, hitched it to the democrat, and after loading it with bread, butter, milk, potatoes, canned goods, and jars of preserves, Mr. Wilson and Bill started off on their errand of mercy.

When they returned they were followed by Walter Clarke, in his "half-and-half". Like a great many others he had heard about the fire, and had driven out to view the scene. When invited to come in and have some breakfast, he accepted without hesitation.

"Only had a cup of coffee and a doughnut, before I came out," he said, "My wife can't do any cooking, till most of the sand has been moved out of the house, and that will take most of the day." Mr. Clarke was just full of disgust for the system of farming, Wilson and his neighbors followed. He was orating about it, as he washed his hands, and only stopped, when he began eating. Beth listened with interest, it was all news to her, naturally, and when she ran up against some expression she didn't understand, she asked one of the girls about it, without stopping the flow of words.

But Henry Wilson laughed at his friend in his good-natured way, and when Clarke finally gave up"spouting" to pay attention to his breakfast, he said with conviction:

"You are alright, Walter, as far as you go, but even yet you don't approve of laws that will stop soil-drifting,do you?"

Walter answered vehemently:"After last night I approve of anything - anything I tell you, - that will keep everybody's farms at home, where they belong."

The boys laughed, but Wilson kept on.

"You have heard all this talk about shelter-belts,how they would stop the sand blowing? But you agree with me, before the trees got big enough to do any good, they would be buried, or what's more likely, they would never get started growing at all. It's hard to get trees to grow, espscially in dry years. So what? But if what they say about strip-farming is true, and I guess it is, that's our salvation, alright, if you ask me."

"But Henry, strip-farming is not difficult, so why don't you fellows try it?"asked Walter Clarke.

"Because there isn't any co-operative spirit in the country nobody wants to take a back seat for his neighbor, but wants us all to think, he knows as much as the next fellow about farming, and nobody can tell him different,"

"Then there will have to be laws about it, that's all," agreed Clarke."If the farmers haven't enough sense to do it voluntarily, they'll have to be forced to it. That's the way I feel about it this morning."

"So you think it should be made compulsory, do you?Then when you get home to-day, sit down and write a letter to our M.P.

and tell him about it. As far as I can see, that's the only thing any of us can do ."

"I'll do that, you can just bet your boots," said Clarke enthusiastically."Watch my smoke." .

After a hearty breakfast, Clarke departed in a cloud of dust, and then the Wilsons rolled up their sleeves, tied towels around their,heads, and went to work, cleaning house - again!

The men had to get the wreck of the pump and windmill cleared off the backyard, but it turned out to be quite simple, after the ruins of the bunkhouse and woodshed had been removed piecemeal, to the implement shed. The weather stayed clear and still, but chilly.

After dinner, Henry Wilson harnessed a team of horses, rode one of them into town, where he saw Macenzie about the watertank, brought one of them home, where it was overhauled and greased, and made ready for the next day. The water in the big trough was low, so while Wilson was in town, the boys had driven the whole bunch of cattle and horses down the almost two miles to the ditch and watered them, having had a lot of trouble with them, as they found this a very unusual procedure.

After the women had beaten, swept, and dusted, till everything was clean once more, it was too late to wash, and it was postponed to the next morning. The whole family was deathly tired, when it was time to hit the hay, but it was with a feeling of satisfaction, they went to bed, with everything ready to do a big days work tomorrow again.

Just before sunrise the wind rose, and when the blinds began to flop, Beth woke up, got up and shut her windows as she did so, she heard one of the girls stirring, closing windows

both in their own and the boys room.

Hoping desperately, they weren't in for another windy day, and wondering how she could live through it, if they had, she put on a warm bathrobe, and hunted up her stationery, then fell to studying the letter she had recieved Sunday, from Creston, B.C., but which had first been in England, and then followed her here.

Moving softly, so as not to disturb the sleepers around her she had sat down by the window, when she heard the staircase door close, and a few seconds later her sister came up and into her room.

"What are you doing, Ella, walking in your sleep?" asked Beth alarmed, but Ella smiled wryly and said,

"I heard you were up and moving around, so I thought I would come up and talk to you. Henry is so tired, I hate to disturb him, but if you are awake anyway, we can visit a while, can't we?"

"Of course we can, it's a splendid idea, and I am not a bit sleepy. But you must get into my bed, it's lovely soft and warm, and then you will be resting, even if you don't sleep."

"I am not going to try sleeping any more today, Beth. I wish I didn't have to sleep, or try to go to sleep, either. Everytime I close my eyes, I have the most horrible sensation of falling over backwards from great heights. I have to open my eyes and look around the room, to stop my feeling of horror, - sometimes I think my mind is really giving away."

"Nonsense, Ella," said Beth briskly. "Nothing is the matter with your mind, so don't talk rubbish, but something should be done about your insomnia; I don't mean with drugs, but some other treatment."

"Henry has been after me to go and see a doctor, but I am afraid. He has a habit of sending nervous women to the insane asylum for observation, and they haven't all come back, although some of them were cured in a short while. I don't think, I could live through the indignity of going even temporarily to Yamoko. And think of the shame, Henry and the children would feel."

"Ella, stop that this minute, do you hear? If Henry wants you to be examined by your doctor, we will go and see him, and it had best be soon. I really don't like the state of your nerves, dear, but they will be better at once, if you could get more sleep."

"If you will go with me, Beth, I won't feel so bad; you are used to doctors, and will know, what he means."

"Surely, your good old brains are able to understand what any man says, even if he be a doctor."

"I am not so sure, Beth. Of course, you can not imagine, how little brains count, in this country. I used to think of myself as fairly intelligent, but not any more. You get in a rut, and once in, it's almost impossible to get out,- it's such a vicious circle: You have so much cleaning and washing to do,- but you have only so much, or rather, so little, water, so - you wear only dark goods for shirts and dresses, wear them till they are real dirty; you have to wash them in as little water as possible, result: They don't last any time. Where if you had plenty of decent water, you didn't need to let your clothes get so dirty, you'd not have to scrub them so hard; and they would last so muchlonger. Then if you could have a good tubbath often, instead of just a sponge-bath, maybe you'd feel clean once in a while."

"Mercy, what a vista, Ella. You have a perfect complex about water, haven't you?

Any more ideas about the subject?"

"You can call it, what you like, Beth, but sometimes I feel just like Hazel Clarke. She is Dutch, you know, and so used to much more water than anyone else in the world, and she gets simply frantic over all this "dry cleaning" she has to do."

"And no wonder. I don't see how you women stand it, year after year, without breaking down. So much wind and sand, and so little water."

"We ought to be used to it by now, but I don't think everyone is able to keep up with it and keep their minds working right. And then there is all this talk about so many women going insane, after they are past forty. Thats what makes me afraid. I have seen the patients in the mental hospital here, and I tell you, my heart stood still, when I thought, I might someday be in there too, with all those poor, irresponsible beings. And I can't get them out of my mind!"

"Don't work yourself up, Ella, it's bad for you, but I can easily see, you have good reason for it. Now lay down and try to relax. You must try to get more sleep and rest, now, ~~xxxxxxx~~ I am here, and you know the girls are perfectly able to do everything. "

"Oh, yes, they are as able as I am to run things. - Sometimes I feel as thoughI could go to sleep and sleep for a week, but when bedtime comes, and I lay down, I get perfecily wide awake."

"Next time, you feel sleepy, we will put you right into bed, and see what happens."

"No use trying to sleep now, I never can sleep when the wind blows. It makes me all tight inside, like a hard rolled up ball, and I can't relax, as you say. Besides, there is too much work on this place for two young girls, if I try to

to shirk doing my share. If the incubator had hatched four hundred chickens as it should, instead of just a hundred, Mama would have been busy nearly all day with them, and Edna could never manage all the rest of the work, even if she worked sixteen hours a day."

"But Ella, now I am here, we can let you take it a little easy; I may not be very smart, but I am strong, and I will learn, as quickly as I can, so you won't feel, you are so busy, you don't dare to take time to sleep."

"Listen, Beth, I think the wind has died down, again." It had, and soon sounds of activity drifted up from down-stairs. Edna looked in at the door, on her way down, said:

"Whatever are you doing up here, Mama? Couldn't sleep, again? Well, I had better get at the breakfast, we will have to wash today, wind or no wind."- and disappeared .

Her mother, after listening to the dying wind for a second, settled down in Beths bed, and her sister was surprised to note how bad her sisters face looked in repose. As far back as Beth could remember, Ella had been considered beautiful, even by her rivals, but now, with her dusty-dry hair, stringy and lifeless, and her skin leathery, brown and wrinkled, she looked as if she was nearer seventy than forty. It shocked Beth so much, she made up her mind on the spot, to do everything she could, to help her sister back to better health, looks, and spirits. -And to begin at once.-

Beth didn't write any letters that morning, but as soon as breakfast was over, she began working on the big hamper of laundry that was waiting to be washed. The wind didn't quite stop blowing, but a moderate wind dried the clothes as soon

as they were hung out, which greatly surprised Beth, who was used to it taking hours and even days sometimes, to dry even the thinnest of garments.

In spite of the big heap of laundry, it was not noon before the last boilerful of clothes was on the line, and the kitchen mopped. Towards evening, when Beth was helping Edna remove the last clothes from the line, she noticed the most gorgeous cloud formations in the southwest, and stood for minutes fascinated by them. Finally she asked Edna, what she thought they would bring. Edna left her work and looked at the piled up ~~snowy~~ masses of snowy white, shading to ~~palest~~ delicate rose and palest lavendar, billowing up in great round balls and domes, changing contour and color, as the sun sank lower in the west.

Edna answered reflectively, after a pause: "If this was in the middle of February, and we'd had a long, cold snap, it would mean we'd have a chinook before morning. But just now, I am not so sure what it means, so I'll say like Dad does, when he is up a tree: 'Probably we sill have some more wind.' You know he is hardly ever wrong in that."

"Surely we have had enough wind for a while," cried Beth in dismay. "Personally, I can get along for a long while on the dose we have just had. "

"Maybe so," laughed Edna, "but I guess the weather-man doesn't know that.

After supper, everyone was dogtired, and more than willing to call it a day. Mrs. Wilson had been working hard all day with the rest of them, and Beth hoped, she would be so tired, she couldn't help sleeping, but promised her a glass of hot milk, after she'd gone to bed, if she didn't go to sleep, immediately. But she didn't fall asleep until after she ~~had~~

drank it, when she dropped off at once, leaving the rest of the family to tiptoe up to their respective rooms.

Beth had made a decision; as soon as the ironing was done the next day, she would persuade Ella to go to town with her to see the doctor. So it was with a feeling of deep annoyance, she woke at six oVclock as usual, and heard the wind, "wuthering" around the house, the sand swirling up in pillars from the drifted_over garden, and sifting in at the partly_open window, which she lost no time in closing. She heard the girls get up, then the boys, and go downstairs, but still she stood at her window, looking out at the desolate landscape. Finally, she walked over to her dresser, picking up the letter she had got from Creston, and read it over again. Apparently she was trying hard to come to a decision.

Suddenly the staircase door was opened, and Mona called sharply:"Aunt Beth, are you awake?"

Beth answered "Yes," immediately.

"Is Mother up there with you?"

"No, dear, she is not," replied Beth, and putting the letter down, dressed in a hurry, with an uneasy feeling of panic.

Coming down in the kitchen two minutes later, she found only Edna there, white_faced and trembling, bravely trying to cook breakfast singlehanded. Without waiting to be asked, she told her aunt: "Mother has disappeared, Dad doesn't know when, and the others are all out, hunting for her. Aunt Beth, what shall we do, if we don't find her soon?"

"Gone?" gasped Beth, "When did you discover it?"

~~Just now when~~

"Just now when Mona called to you. "

"But where can she go in this wind? She may have gone out to the chickens, have you looked in the brooder house?"

~~her tracks she's part out through the gate to the road, Dad found~~

"No, she went out through the gate tothe road, Dad found her tracks that far, but out in the road they are already drifted full of sand, and she may have gone in any direction, - and it's so cold, this morning, and she only has her pajamas on, and she'll freeze -" Edna broke down and cried as if her heart was breaking, while Beth rescued a smoking griddle from the fire, and poured boiling water into a saucepan for porridge

Beth was as upset as the poor child sobbing in the pantry, but part of her turmoil was just plain disgust at the ever-lasting wind, though she realized clearly, how silly and futile this was. In all her eighteen years of nursing mentally unsettled men, she had never felt so feeble and helpless, as she did at this moment. What could she do? Phone the neighbors? When she asked, if this has been done, Edna told her, the telephone pole just outside the gate had blown down during the night and had broken the wires, so phoning anywhere was impossible. But there must be something she could do.

"If you will only stay here, I can run over to Johnson's, Aunt Beth, "said Edna. "They might have seen her, and I can be back here in half an hour, if I run."

"Go, dear, if you are sure you can find the way. It's very hard to wait here and not be able to do anything to help."

Without more talk, Edna was on her way. Beth thought for a moment of taking the old car out, but discarded that idea, as she couldn't see any farther than across the garden now, and the dust was getting thicker every minute.

She cooked some oatmeal, found potatoes, which she browned, fried bacon and eggs, and made a big pot of coffee, all the time with an eye on the back gate, looking for Edna. But it was Jack who came back first. He had gone up the road to the school, hoping to find some trace of his Mother, and had run every

step of the way. Beth made him lay down on the couch in the kitchen and rest, long enough to get his breath back to normal, before she asked him a single question. She could see, he was badly scared, and thought, he had good reason to be, but she made her manner as casual as she could, while inside she was getting more frantic every moment.

When the coffee was ready, Edna came panting in through the door:"They haven't seen her, but Mr. Johnson is starting his car, if he can, and is driving around on the east road.- Did you find anything, Jack?"

"Not a thing, but don't cry, Ed, she can't have gone very far, somebody is bound to have seen her. Don't cry, here comes Dad."

One look at Henry Wilson's set, grim face, told them all they wanted to know, and he just took one look around the room, said,"No luck?" and went out again to start the car, before going to town tonotify the police. As he was backing the old car out of the implement shed, Bill came in at the gate at a tired dog-trot, defeat written very plainly in his face, which was grimy with dust and streaked with tears. He came over to the car and told his Dad, he'd gone to the near-est neighbors on the west side, but they hadn't seen anybody going by. However, that might not mean anything, as their buildings were a good ways from the road, and the dust thicker if possible, than around the Wilson's farm. Henry Wilson told his boys before he set off:"I went down to the ditch. As far as I could see, she hadn't been there, but then I am no Indian tracker, God knows, and there were so many tracks there,- but first you kids get some breakfast, and then do the chores. The girls will help you milk, and I'll maybe be back soon. But Bill, before you go in, open the gate down to ~~the~~

the well, I am going to look there before going to town; Ella worried a lot about water, and she may have gone to get a pail of real clear water for drinking _"

Bill had been standing on the running_board, now he jumped off and opened the three strand barb_wire gate, let the car through, and closed it again after his Dad, who would leave the field by another gate in the north_west corner of the farm, if he didn't have any luck at the well._

Bill trudged Back to the house; the others looked at him questioningly, but he only shook his head, and started to cry again. Jack was washing his face, and the girls were putting the food on the table, but Beth, who was very near crying her_self, took poor Bill in her arms, patted him on the back, and told him;

"Buck up, old man, things are hardly ever as dark as they seem," but Bill sobbed on, till Beth led him to a chair, made him sit down, and brought him a glass of cold water to sip. Then he stopped sobbing long enough to say :"It's chilly this morning, it's snowed up in the hills, and Mama didn't have any clothes on _ " and then he began to cry again, but Edna com_forted him:

"Bill, stop and listen, will you? We can't find Dad's long, heavy bathrobe anywheres, you know the one Mama wears sometimes, and her oldest oxfords are gone, so are her stock_ings, so maybe she won't really freeze, even if she isn't found right away."

Nobody had much appetite, but were sitting around the table, talking, when suddenly a car rolled out of the murk, and stopped at the back_gate. Jack went out on a run to see if there was a message, and came back in a moment, followed by Walter Clarke, who said at once, as soon as he was inside the

door.

"Cheer up, folks, your Mother is safe and sound in the hospital. She is absolutely O.K. now, and your Dad will soon be back. I met him on the road, and he told me to come out and let you know."

Edna and Beth looked at one another, and heaved twin sighs of relief; then Edna said, in a shaking voice: "I have only been thinking of one thing,-the ditch."

"I kept thinking of that,too," confessed Beth., and then they all watched Walter Clarke try to get central. When he couldn't get any service, he told them, how hard he had tried to call them, early in the morning.

"But Mom wasn't gone then, yet," said Mona.

"I didn't know about Mrs. Wilson, till about a couple of hours ago," answered Clarke,"but I had lots of troubles of my own. Hazel went completely haywire this morning, when the wind began to stir things up, again. I had to call the doctor, before she would stop having hysterics, and I tried to get Miss Smith here to come in and look after her, but she fell asleep after taking the medicine the doctor perscribed, and was asleep, when I left.But after the doctor had her calmed down, he asked me, to let you people know, your Mother had been picked up on the road, and brought in to the hospital, early this morning,. So here I am, and I must say, that breakfast table looks inviting, to a hungry man."

"If you have been so busy this morning, maybe you'd like a bite to eat, Walter," invited Edna."There is lots left, we didn't feel like eating very much, any of us."

"Thanks for them kind words, Lady," bantered Clarke,"I haven't had anything to eat today, and yesterday Hazel was so rushed cleaning house, after the last storm, she didn't take

time to cook much, so we had only a very sketchy supper. But please, don't talk to me, until I wrap myself around this bacon and eggs, there's a good girl," and Walter pulled up his chair and started in, and the boys in their relief from the terrible suspense, discovering room for a little more food, than they had suspected, sat down also and kept him company.

Leaving the men to wait on themselves, the women went upstairs. The chores had been attended to, as they have to be on a farm, come sickness, or even death, and now they all felt better about Ella, Beth decided to take her nieces into her confidence, and as soon as they were upstairs, gave them the letter to read, that she had been going to answer in the early morning. Seeing the way they had behaved in the day's crisis, had confirmed her impression of them as bright, intelligent girls, with a better judgement of important matters than one could expect of their years.

Edna read the letter with Mona looking over her shoulder. It ran as follows: Creston, B.C. Dear Nurse Smith,

'It's ages since I have heard from you, my dear, but Nurse Mills wrote me, you had left no 14. and were going to Alberta. If this is so, for Mercy's sake, come a little farther west, and look me up, won't you? I am simply dying to see someone from home, no matter how dumb, and you were never that. Can't you manage it? Do try hard, won't you? You can get here either by train or bus, if you are in Southern Alberta, but you'll see more scenery if you come by bus, - but I don't care how you come, just so you get here.- You remember Harris, the blind soldier boy, who was so nice - an only child, -Mother dead - Father a sort of fruit raiser in British Columbia?

Y

You were there **** at No. 14. when I left with him to see him home, weren't you? Well, I am still taking care of Tommy, you see, he is my stepson, now, I mean, nothing would do, but I must marry the old gentleman, - so I did, but he died half a year ago, but left me a lovely big house, splendid gardens, and lots of money, providing I would take care of Tommy as long as he needs me. Ant that's not a hard job, Tommy's a perfect lamb, but very lonely, for young people's company, I mean, and you know, I am no "spring chicken." There is simply no one, who has sympathy, without showing pity, and he won't have that, it makes him furious. But he needs a firm hand, at times, - but I don't need to tell you all this, weren't we trained in the same hospital? Write me, as soon as you get this, there's a dear, but come and see me, and plan to make it a long visit.

Always Yours,

(Mrs.) John Harris.

nee Nurse Borden.

Henry Wilson returned from town shortly before noon. His wife didn't come with him, but the children and Beth were cheered up wonderfully by the report he brought. Their Mother - Thank Heaven! - was in her right mind now, but she had suffered an attack of Aphasia, starting before she left the house, after the storm had got a good start; this fact she was able to recall, but had no memory of going out on the road or of being picked up, between the farm and the school. It was only after the doctor took her in hand, she came out of her sleep-walking, and recognized him and her surroundings. She could come home tomorrow, if she kept on as she was, but wanted Beth to come in and see her this afternoon.

Beth lost no time, but in a few moments came down, dressed

dressed in tweeds and oxfords, carrying all the money she owned in the world, in her roomy handbag, in the form of travellers checks. Clarke was ready to leave, the moment she showed up, and told the Wilsons, his wife would put her up, and he would bring both Beth and Ella out in the morning.

Never had the Wilsons spent such a queer day. The dust was flying thick and fast, and made all outdoor work impossible. And indoors, there was the strangest feeling of emptiness, they had ever felt. For the first time in their life, their Mother was not at home, within call. Always before this, Mother had been here, whenever they wanted her. If she ever went out, they knew where she had gone, and could tell almost to the moment, when she'd be back.

The few times a year, she went to Lethbridge, they all went along. But even though they knew where their Mother was, it seemed as though the bottom had dropped out of their universe. In spite of the wind and dust, Henry Wilson and the boys disconnected the windmill, and transported it piecemeal to the loft of the barn, to await the time Wilson would feel, he could afford to have it welded together and erected again. The pump was shattered so badly, it wouldn't pay to have it repaired, so it was stored away too. The wind died down at sunset, enabling the boys to do their evening chores in comfort, but by bedtime the girls were almost ready to drop. The day had nearly proved too much for them, with the shock of their Mother's disappearance, the hunt for her, the enervating dust-storm, not to mention all the cleaning they had had to do between sunset and bedtime.

Before darkness set in, Wilson and Jack raised and planted the broken telephone pole, and spliced the wire, loosely but serviceably, and now they were able to call the hospital. Beth came to the phone, and told them all they

wanted to know; what She didn't tell them, was, thedoctor wanted to send Mrs. Wilson to the mental hospital for observation. While this might not be a bad thing for some nervous cases, Beth was firmly convinced, Ella would not have any benefits from it, and when the doctors heard, where Beth had spent the last eighteen years, they admitted, she might be right.

Beth went to the Clarkes that night, and after supper she had a long talk with Walter Clarke, who was a shrewd business man.

Following his advice, and accompanied by him, she went to the bank, as soon as it was open, cashed her travellers check, deposited the amount in the bank, except five hundred dollars , which Clarke assured her, would be ample for the purpose she had in mind.

Before leaving town, she sent the following ~~addressed~~ telegram to Mrs. John Harris, Creston, B.C.

Arranging to visit you ~~stop~~ june stop will motor stop three women in party
E Smith

Everyone seemed to become much happier as soon as Ella Wilson returned to her home and family. It became the childrens habit to pop in and look at her every few moments. But Henry Wilson still seemed to have something on his mind. When his wife asked him pointblank, what it was, he confessed, he was worried. The banker had written to him, asking him to call in at the bank, as soon as it was convenient. And Wilson was afraid, it meant more trouble with MacTavish. Instead of worrying over it any more, he went in the next day.

The weather had warmed up a bit, and for the rest of the week the wind was only moderately strong. The boys had, after a hard struggle, got the stock broken in to the idea, they

had to go down to the ditch for their daily drink, and the wind mill was stowed away in the loft of the barn, awaiting better times; the men had decided it was not possible to grow a garden inthe sanddunes surrounding the house, and were working on a piece of more suitable ground, a few ~~yards~~ rods away from the yard. While this was not very convenient, from the womens standpoint, it had to do. And as Bill pointed out hopefully to his Mother, "What's the difference, where we plant our seeds, they are either buried or blown over in the next section, anyway. Or if it doesn't rain they won't sprout."

When Beth turned an unbelieving eye on him, he said defensively: "That's true, Aunt Beth, just ask Mom, if Macfarlands gardenseeds didn't all ~~grow~~ blow out on the section-line and grow there, and in the next field."

Henry Wilson returned home from his interview with the bank manager, looking both stunned and relieved. At the supper table, when everyone was seated, he sprung his bomb.

"How soon can we be ready to leave here, do you think, and should we have a sale, before we go?"

If his family had not been well balanced mentally, they would have gone into hysterics. As it was, it was many moments before they calmed down enough to think of their cooling suppers, but after that outburst they had a good appetite, and ate happily, listening to their dad's plans.

Beth had trouble grasping, what was the cause for the rejoicing, but her sister enlightened her, after the storm had blown somewhat over.

"It's like this, Beth. MacTavish had had to ~~loan~~ borrow money from the bank, and has had to turn his farm over to them, you know, the bank has to have some securities, and that lets

~~us~~

us out, if we want to turn in our contract. Isn't it almost unbelievable?"

Beth, however, didn't let these changed circumstances deflect her from her already laid plans. So after supper they made Wilson promise to take them to Lethbridge next day, if the weather would allow it.

Next day turned out to be a lovely warm day, and as Mrs. Wilson had slept like a top all night, she went with her husband and sister, asplanned. It was a long day for the children, but it passed; before supper the three returned in a lovely blue streamlined Sedan, not a last years model, it is true, but overpoweringly elegant and up-to-date to the eyes of the Wilsons, who were used to cherishing and repairing their old 1920 model Dodge.

The week passed with housecleaning, washing, ironing, and some sewing. The next Sunday, just as the Clarkes had arrived for a short visit, Wilson came from the barn and called them all out, in the yard, where he pointed out to them the wonderful, dark-grey pillars of dust, that were raising their heads to towering heights in the north-west. One by one the solid stripes were erected, spreading their sinister breaths both to east and west, while the blue sky still showed at the zenith. The Clarkes, after bidding their friends a hasty good-bye, left for town as fast as their car could travel, so they wouldn't be held up when the storm struck.

After the Clarkes had left in a small cloud of dust, the group watched the terrible panaroma for a while, then went to work on their usual routine, when preparing for a blow. The boys hurried to the barn to make all things ship-shape, before the blast should strike, and meanwhile kept an eye

on the approaching cloud. Pillar by pillar it raised its dirty greybrown head, higher and higher towered the whole mass, as it advanced both to the east and the west, till finally it blotted out the sun, leaving the whole world in a dark grey murk, that was weird enough to scare the hens into going to roost.

The women soon had their preparations made, windows closed, drawers shut, blinds drawn. After everything had been done, that had to be done, inside the house and out, the Wilsons gathered in the kitchen, the lamps were lit, and tried to do justice to their Sunday dinner, always with an ear cocked for the hurricane.

But no wind blew here. On the contrary, it became absolutely calm, while the air was full of fine sand, sifting softly down. This state of affairs lasted all day, sometimes the world seemed a little brighter, then it became dark again, nobody could tell why. After the first excitement had worn off, the family settled down to their usual Sunday tasks, reading, writing letters, playing cards. Last year a good deal of time had been spent listening to church services and sermons over the radio, but now the batteries were run down, and this of course, put the radio out of whack.

Since the only broadcasting station their radio could get had gone into the hands of the Social Credit party, who used it to broadcast a mixture of politics and religion, Henry Wilson had lost all interest in the sunday broadcasts, and consequently, nobody worried about the radio being out of order.

There was to have been church service in the schoolhouse in the evening, but this would certainly be called off.

Just before sunset a breeze sprang up directly from the west, over the mountains, and in half an hour the heavens were clear, the sun shone brightly for ten minutes before setting, and the immense gray mass, that had hovered over the country for hours, rolled up like a bank of fog, and disappeared over the eastern horizon.

Mrs. Wilson had been obliged to spend most of this week in bed, and to the amazement of the family, she slept a lot, night time, and in the daytime, too.

She might be doing anything, and then suddenly she would become unbearably sleepy, and fall asleep, the second her head touched the pillow. And she would wake up again, just as suddenly, maybe in ten minutes, and maybe not for several hours Beth encouraged her to get as much sleep as possible, and told the rest of them, that it was the best thing she could do, and that they ought to be thankful she could sleep, without the aid of drugs. Her long experience told her, the irregularity of Ella's sleep, would eventually be changed to the old, natural routine.

Most of this week, time was spent in getting Mrs. Wilsons and Mona's wardrobe ready so they could get away as quickly as possible. Only two duststorms raged in the few days it took them, and by now Beth had become so used to them, it only set them back a trifle. Finally, all was ready, and one bright, sunny morning, Beth, Ella, and Mona set forth on their trip, that was to take them to health and happiness, if not wealth. Their plan was to cross the Rockies by the Crows Nest Pas, and penemtrate the Selkirks, as far as Creston, on Lake Kootenay, where they expected to visit Beth's friend, Mrs. Harris, while looking for a suitable location.

Our party stopped in Macleod long enough to fill up

with gas and oil, look over the tires, buy each of them a pair of smoked goggles, and get a map of the Pas highway, and then they left that town of stony streets behind them.

The car was riding smooth as a rocking chair, Beth had brought her own special travel -pillows, and as soon as Ella showed signs of drowsiness, Mona arranged her mother comfortably on the back seat, where she soon fell asleep. Before she dozed off, she told them to wake her, as soon as they began to climb.

The distance to Pincher Creek was soon covered, then going northwest to Cowley, it's still prairie, but when they got to ~~Dumbrick~~ Lundbreck, Ella woke up just in time to admire the falls, that were visible from the bridge, where Beth stopped the car for a few minutes.

Now began the climb up through the Rockies, up a long rise, then down a short one. Soon the road ran theough a perfect chain of mining towns, Bellevue - Coleman - Blairmore, including the terrible field of rocks that is called the "Frank slide"; it covers a whole town that was wiped out, when Turtle Mountain slid a rocky shoulder into the valley, and buried the town of Frank, with all, ********** who were in it.

But this was the only depressing sight on the whole trip. The rushing rivers along the highway, foaming and glittering in the sunshine, was a steady source of interest. On the other side of the highway, towering peaks, mostly naked rock, reached hundreds of feet up into the clear sky; now the road curved around a shoulder, high up around the mountainside, and the river widened out to a shining mirror, four-five hundred feet below; now it dipped down, and wound around the base of some

granite monument, that cast a welcoming shade. In a few hours they were at the boundary, in the town of Crows Nest, but as there was not even a gas-pump in sight, they drove on, and in half an hour, found themselves between rows of the greasiest houses, Mona had ever seen. Beth laughed at her, and told her, it was nothing, compared to some of the towns she had seen, back in England. All mining towns are greasy, of course, but as it wasn't near dark, yet, Beth pushed on, and passing through Fernie, without stopping, sundown found them in Elko, where they spent the night in a tourist camp, right on the edge of two deep steps, down to the Columbia Valley.

Never having been in the mountains before, our three travellers were much impressed by the mighty peaks, that kept marching along the sides of the road they were following. The flats between Elko and the international boundary were the only spots on their journey that in any way resembled the prairies, and as soon as our party got down to the ground floor, all resemblance ceased. The road at once curved in under shady rows of tall, old trees, and kept winding along lake and river, through woods and brush. Every few miles there would be an icecold spring bubbling out of the rocky ground at the side of the road, and every so often Beth would stop the car and they would have a drink from one of them. Mrs. Wilson, especially, enjoyed the fresh, cold "free drink", but said reflectively:"

"Think of all the pickle crocks, I have given to the men to take drinking water out to the fields in, and never got back, and the water was never cold, after the first hour, anyway."

Our party arrived in Creston late in the afternoon, and

after several inquiries, found Mrs. John Harris at home, and welcoming them with open arms.

In no time at all, after a bath and a change from their dusty clothes, they found themselves sitting down to supper in a cool, shady dining-room, that looked as if it had been transplanted bodily from old England.

Mrs. Harris was overjoyed to see them, especially Beth, and those two kept up a rapid fire of conversation that left the others free to listen, and enjoy the lovely, strange food. During a lull, Mrs. Harris turned to Mona, and said impulsively:

" My dear, I simply can't believe in my luck, having you come with your aunt at this time. You are just the person, Tommy needs, to turn his thoughts away from his own troubles. Tell him all about the terrible hardships and sandstorms you have been enduring down on the prairies, get his mind off his own "bad luck" as he calls it, and for heavens sake, even if you feel pity for him, don't show it, will you? It isn't good for him, so it breaks down his morale, and it makes him so furious, he might take a dislike to you. Will you remember that, there's a dear?"

Mona was a little amazed at this frank speech, and promised to remember if she ever saw the young man. Mrs. Harris assured her she would see a lot of him, but that he never let anybody but her be present, when he had his meals, though he was as able to use his knife and fork as many who had two eyes, "And wore glasses", she concluded, and told them, she would introduce him after supper.

A week after the three women had left for B.C., Henry Wilson

advertised an auction sale for all his stock, and implements, including both his wrecked windmill and his old Dodge, which hehad had overhauled in Lethzbridge, and was using for all purposes.

On the day of the sale, the weather was warm and still, and a big crowd gathered early in the day. Lunch and coffee was served to all at one c'clock, and everything was sold and most of it taken away at six P.M.

Everything brought better prices, than Wilson had dreamed of; being hard up himself, he had thought there was no money in the country.

The new tenant bought the windmill, and the banker , who was a just man, as bankers go, allowed Wilson half the price for the barbwire, he had bought and put up, when they settled their accounts. Wilson had not dared to expect that, and it made him feel, that maybe all landlords weren't to be classed with MacTavish, after all.

Letter from Mrs. Ella Wilson, Creston, B.C. to Henry Wilson, Granville, Alberta:

Dear Henry,

We got here alright, as you know, but it was a shame, you couldn't have come too, it was a wonderful experience, at least it was for me. Beth is a very reliable driver, and we only had one bad moment on the trip; driving along Moyie Lake, we met a big Pontiac going forty miles per hour, right on a curve, and we were on the outside. We had no engine or tire-trouble, and of course, no accidents. How did the sale go? I hope you had a big crowd, and got good prices for everything, we need it, if we are going to buy out here, the everage price is a hundred dollars per acre, no less. Beth has been looking at "ranches" every day. She is considering one ranch,

she thinks you'll like, but I don't know, you always said you couldn't imagine living anywheres but an the prairies and raising, grain, and the only wheatland here, is this "dyked" or "reclaimed" land, south or west of Creston. But you had bettr come out,_all of you,_ when you get things settled, and see what Beth has scared up.

You can't imagine, Henry, how beautiful the landscape is out here. Mrs. Harris's house is built rather high up on the hillside east of the valley, and we have the most glor_ious view of the river that is flooding the flats south and west of town, and of the mountains across the valley, and way down to the border, seven or eight miles away. The mountains west of town look to me as if they were at most two miles away, but Beth says, according to an oldtimer she's met, the valley is seven or eight miles across. We can see the clouds of fog and mist, crawling around the middle of them, and all the while the sun is shining on their peaks. I hope, you'll like it out here enough to live here a while, I think I would get well here, if anywheres, if we only can make a living.

Give my love to Edna and the boys, dear, and take good care of yourself.

Yours as always,

Ella.

Letter from Mona Wilson, Creston, B.C.
to Edna Wilson, Granville, Alberta.
Dearest, eldest sister,

Aren't you just dying to hear about everything? I would be, I know, especially about the blind boy; so I am going to tell you most about him.

He's no boy, he's a man of about thirty_six, as you can s

figure out yourself, from the world war, but he does not look a day over twenty-five. And he's got the curliest brown hair, and you can't tell, he's blind at all, either from his eyes or his actions.

So you don't think of pitying him, when you meet him. But is he bossy? He makes everybody jump, let me tell you, you can see at once, he's been pampered and spoiled for years! And he's got the loveliest Radio in the biggest livingroom on earth and one of these fine days, Master Tommy is going to find himself out on that floor, dancing. Why not? He needs a lot more exercise, than he gets. He thinks I am about twelve years old, or that's the way he talks to me, and to me he's just like Jack and Billy, only not so wisecracking. His slang is from right after the war, horribly out of date, - and he doesn't think it's coarse to smoke in public:- he's never been a "ladies man," and he doesn't like young girls, who giggle, - they are thoughtless, or shallow - or something! You should hear him holding forth on this subject, and him never having known any girls, hardly. It's a joke on him, but who's going to tell him, the world has changed a lot since 'eighteen, when his lights went out?

I nearly forgot to tell you, his eyes are not hurt, it's some other place, his spine, I mean, that's out of whack, and if he could only get that fixed up, his eyes might be as good as new. He was shell-shocked in the last week of the war, isn't it terrible? I hear the dinner gong, will write more, later.-

Later: I am so hoarse, I couldn't talk to you, if you were here. I have been reading to Master Tommy, and my throat is not used to it, but I simply could not stop that story in the middle, he hung so on every word. What does it matter, I can't talk to-morrow, we finished the whole works. Good-bye, I'm dead.

P.S. He's never read or seem any funnies, so I have to read and explain them to him. Sometimes he ~~must~~ laughs, other times he just looks bored. Next time he looks bored, I am going to stop at once, and walk away from him, then we will see!

Your loving sister,

Ramona.

Letter from Beth, Creston, B.C. to the Clarkes, Granville, Alberta.

Dear Friends;

Am writing in haste to tell you, everything is "fine and dandy" as you are so fond of saying. Ella's nerves are almost in as good shape as mine, and she is gradually getting over her irregular sleeping periods, except when it rains. Then she goes into a perfect coma, but I am not worrying, as her health is better in all other respects, than when I came to Alberta.

By all means, come out for a visit, as soon as ever you can; why wait for Henry Wilson? There areall kinds of camps and hotels along the way, you might bring the boys, if you can squeeze them in, Wilson doesn't need them any more, does he? Well, cheerio, we'll be looking for you.

Beth.

From Bill Wilson, Creston, B.C. to his Dad, still in Alberta.

Dear Dad and Edna,

Gee, I hope this catches you, before you get away from Alberta. We got your letter last night, and if you don't get this in time - well, here goes. If you have the money, Dad, will you buy a couple of good bicycles for us? We are lost up here on this mountain, afoot. No pony, and gas forty cent per gallon, what do you know about that? If we only had one bike, it would be better, than it is now, but if we had two,

Jack and I could go so many places to-gether, and have such grand times this summer: we could get the mail, every day, and run other erramds. What do you say Dad, can you afford it? There are some at the secondhand store, and anyway the used ones sell for almost as much as a new one from Eatons, but you can pick up a couple of good secondhand ones in Lethbridge, can't you?

I am going to get adrivers licensse, at once, if I can, too. Tommy has a Baby Austim, you'll laugh when you see it, it looks so much like a toy car. But he says it used to be a good car for speed.

You'll try and get us a couple of bikes, won't you? And hurry up and come out.

We don't eat much now, Jack and I, only bread and butter - and berries, all kinds, seems like we don't want anything else. Did you ever have enough rasberries, so you got sick, I mean? Jack sure was sick, the other day: I know he ate a little worm from a berry, but I never look at them, so I must have eaten lots, but I haven't been sick, yet.

Your Loving

Bill.

Letter from Henry Wilson, Alberta, to his wife, B.C.,

Dear Ella;

Your letter got here O.K. and I'll just write and tell you how things are, and I will tell you all the details, when I see you in a few days.

To begin with, the sale brought ****** in a lot more than I expected, and then several of our old neighbors turned up, and from them I collected a few small debts that I had given up hoping about. I had no trouble squaring all our small, accounts, and will have eight hundred dollars clear,

when all the money has been paid, in and out.

You wrote not to buy a car, so I haven't. Bill wrote to buy two bikes, and Edna and I are going to Lethbridge tomorrow and will buy the boys two new bikes, they certainly deserve that after all these years of hard work.

All our furniture is loaded on a box-car; we are staying at the Johnsons till everything on the place is straightened out, and then we are coming west. The weather has been bad, we've had four good winds since you left, and no rain. It gives me such a queer feeling to think that I won't have to worry about that anymore, for a while at least.

The rest can keep, till I see you, perhaps on Sunday.

Yours,

Henry.

P.S. The Clarke's are back, full of the glories of the mountains, and of all the rain that fell while they were out. If half of what Walter says is true, Beth has picked just about the best "Ranch" in the Selkirks. Clarke's are selling their house and lot, but are keeping their car and furniture, so I guess they are going to try out B.C. for a short while.

Henry.