DIGGING IN

BY DAVID CHURCHILL.

The smell of millions of buds, moist, living, of the sun-warmed earth; the spring wind, heavy with the odors of forest and plain, blowing on my face—and I was off. Once it was mud pies. This sun-drenched morning it was a muddy pit I was digging with a zest in every swing of the grub hoe that set me whistling "Turkey in the Straw."

"Hullo!" Neighbor called down. "So you're digging in, this morning! Is it oil or is the cow dead?"

"I am making a hotbed," I explained, showing off my swing.

"A hotbed, is it? Why not borrow the scoop and more and excavate her?"

"I like the exercise," I answered, with another splendid swing.

Neighbor lit his pipe and sat on his heel. "There is nothing I enjoy more'n to see another man sweat," he said. "Go on down to China for all of me."

"What's wrong with it—am I too deep?" I asked him.

"Depends. If you are raising early corn under glass for fodder——"

"Corn nothing! I intend to eat fresh vegetables for Easter."

"Do I understand you to say fresh vegetables for Easter? In that hole? Planted in the dark of the moon? My dear David, the Chinks will get 'em—they'll grow down! Not up "

"Bosh, you and your moon," I returned, but I stopped digging. "What is the matter—am I too deep?"

"By a good foot. What is the size of your frame?"

"Haven't made it yet, but I aimed to copy the one in the encyclopedia, which is six by twelve."

"Pretty wide reach for any but a professional gardener. Have to take off the sash to get at the back rows or else step in the bed. And if Mary wants a bit of greens it'll be hard for her to reach any but the front rows." He stood up and looked around. "It's beak here in the wind. Why don't you put it against the south wall of the barn, where it will be sheltered and get all the reflected heat?"

"And fill this up? You do like to see me work!"

"Come on," he said, "I need to bend my back, too—get this itch out of my feet. I came over for an excuse. Too early to start my greenhouse—just made fire to-day."

"I ordered my lumber, but it hasn't come," I told him.

DOING THE JOB WITH CEMENT.

"Use anything," he said, "boxes, those old roofers. Hot manure rots them soon anyhow. Save your good lumber for a cold frame, which lasts longer. Or better still, have you any cement? Lasts forever."

We compromised on cement, which Neighbor brought from his dry storehouse. I never had used it and was soon as excited at mixing my own as I used to be over those same mud pies. Neighbor threw a mixing "boat" together in no time. He said we could use the iron wheel-barrow, but he felt certain I would want to play with it again and I might as well have a regular box to mix in.

We dug a narrow trench a foot and a half deep, being careful to keep the sides hard and neat. It ran about eight inches wide, and made an inclosure three by twelve feet with two compartments six feet each. Then he built up a form of the old roofers, six inches above the ground at the back. The partition and the ends sloped from that to nothing in the front.

In a word, the whole thing, except the slope, was below the level of the ground. Not only that, but the only form below that level was the ground itself on each side of the trench.

Sand I had and we mixed our cement with it one to five. We mixed it dry for a long time before putting in the water, and the consistency was about like warm putty when we put it in. We kept dropping in stones and tamping them down. When it was all filled to the front level and the back form begun, he laid a board over the lower part of the sloping ends to keep the cement from running out as we fed it in at the higher level; this he drew up and nailed down when nearly full.

Then, when we filled the back form—six inches—we pushed the cement around the corners till the end forms were filled to the brim.

Four days later, when we removed the forms and dug out the dirt which had acted as the inner form below ground level, we both held our breaths. For the weather had turned the day after we mixed the cement. And in spite of rush mats and horse blankets, it had frozen inside and outside of our wall.

But the sun was hot again—the sound and smell of running water was all about us. We even covered the walls again so they would not dry too fast. Neighbor made a frame of 1x2-inch roof lath, which fitted around the outside of the upper edge of the cement walls. Upon this he fitted a flat frame, made from the same. To this he hinged some sashes I had been saving for years, with the idea of a hotbed some day.

"Now, where you going to get your horse manure?" he asked.

I had forgotten all about that.

"Obed," said Neighbor, "is on his way here with a load."

Nothing he does surprises me any more. And I believe he gets more fun out of doing unexpected kindnesses than the person who receives them.

He said he had been turning it over for four days—letting it heat. Figured to save me that much time, though it was not according to Hoyle to heat it anywhere but in the hotbed. We put a foot of it in the bottom of the bed and all around the wall, in a trench we dug, we piled it up to the edge.

"Want to change that in about a week," he said. "And when you do, add some fresh and turn it all over."

"I let it cool down to about ninety-eight, don't I?"

JUST WARM.

"'Fraid I'm not scientific," he answered. "I just let it cool so when I stick my hand down in the loam—six inches of loam atop the manure—it feels just warm to my hand—blood warm. Then in go the seeds, just below the surface, with a sprinkle of straw or excelsior for shade when the sun is just a mite too hot."

"All very just," I said, and Neighbor turned quick to jostle me for my gibe. If there is anything more companionable than such outdoor jobs, unhurried, with one reasonably skillful and the other childishly delighted to learn, I have yet to find it.

"The loam at least is ready," I said. "I mixed it last fall. There it stands in that covered box."

It was still frozen, a solid mass. We broke the box away and knocked off lumps of it; under the sashes they would soon melt.

"What is in it besides old manure?" Neighbor demanded.

"It is two cubic yards of dirt," I said, "and I gave it a quart of lime and two of bone meal. As soon as I spread it I mean to add some of my high-grade fertilizer—4-8-8 it really is, but the pure stuff without filler."

"Go ahead," said Neighbor, "but be mighty careful you mix it in well and let it stand for at least ten days before planting."

"I can't do that and still have my vegetables for Easter!"

He thought a moment. "Easter is always the first Sunday after the full moon after the vernal equinox. We are in the last week of February and the new moon is due to-morrow. Consequently it will be full before the vernal equinox, and not full again till April is well begun.

"You can wait. Or you might mix in the fertiizer and spread the loam five inches thick. And then over that put a layer of an inch or so which has no fertilizer. Better yet, a thin layer of washed sand, as I do in the greenhouse. But be sure you cover the seed bed with either that sprinkle of straw or excelsior or lay newspapers, wet down. By the way, what proportions of soil, sand and loam did you use? What humus?"

"The humus is rotted clover sod. It is in good garden soil, and the proportion is one part of rotted sod, one part of year-old cow and horse manure and one part of sand that has been washed."

"I get good results with one part of good peat loam, one part of sand, not washed, and one part of old cow manure," he said. "And I add to each box of a hundred plants a handful of lime and another of 4-8-8 ready-mixed fertilizer, but if I had the time I should like to experiment with other things."

"It takes time to be such a good neighbor," I said.

"And I have to mix my soil in the fall when the winter stuff is all to be gathered.

"Uncle Peter—old Peter Henderson—says he has friends who number nineteen ways of mixing soil, but as his result is as good as any he sees no reason for the elaboration. He used one part of rotted manure, one part of loam—rotted sod—and one part of sand. That was in the fifties."

"Do you use the same for a cold frame?" I asked him.

"I do. And my forms are cement. But wooden ones are good."

"Do you set cold frames down in the ground?"

"To get below our frost level, yes. I set them as deep as the hotbed. But there is nothing inside but the loam mixture, which is leveled about six inches below the ground level. And I like cloth cover better than glass for them. Takes less watching—I can roll down the cover of a dozen at once if frost threatens. You use them for the overflow, you see, after you reset your seedlings, and by then the weather is warm enough so they are uncovered much of the time. Mine is almost a one-man greenhouse because help worth a tinker's dam doesn't exist. I have to do things the easiest way that will work."

A NEW TOMATO STUNT.

"Just one point more," I said. "I've seen frames on top of the ground that you move along a row—say of strawberries."

"Yes, wooden frames. There are ever so many kinds of things, like bell glass and boxes from six inches up, with a movable pane of glass. On big estates, where results and not cost are the only consideration, they may be practical. And I mean to try out some of these boxes with glass, especially on tomatoes. Got a catalogue in the house now. But it would take a man's whole time to keep watch of my 5,000 tomato plants—like tending 5,000 little scattered greenhouses! I can't do it and make my bread and butter off them, I'm afraid, not to mention honey to spread on the same. What are you planting in your new frame?"

"Lettuce and radish and onion sets and spinach and a clump of parsley roots——"

"And tomatoes?"

"Yes—eggplant and peppers and cauliflowers and cabbage and tomatoes, of course."

"Come over and see some tomato plants that I transplanted from a planting I made in November.

"I spread the last fine tomato between two rotted sods and wintered the little seedlings over in a cool room upstairs. They are sturdier plants than any I ever raised. I am curious to see if they will make such wonderful results as the expert who advised it claimed for that method. He said the soft substance like white of egg which surrounds the raw seed in the tomato was necessary to the best development of the plant and that it gets washed away in the preparation of dry seed."

"Neighbor," I said, "for all you say you have no time for this and that, you fool with little experiments more than anyone I know."

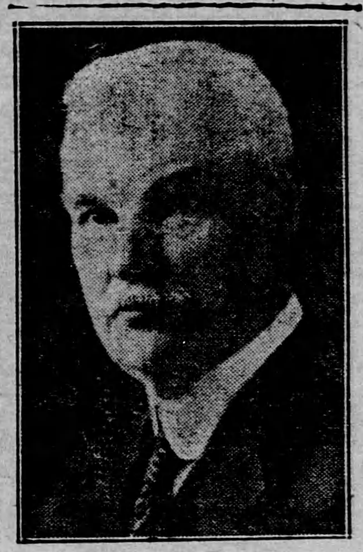
"To be sure, that's half the fun of living in the country. A man can make a fool of himself to the top of his bent and not hear a laugh from the peanut gallery. Don't you find it that way?"

There he goes, with the last word, as usual.

BILLION MARK PASSED BY SUN LIFE

It is seldom that a financial institution is able to mark the completion of its year with two such happy announcements as those made at the annual meeting of the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada. At the meeting in question, President Macaulay was able to announce that the assurance in force of the Sun Life Company is now considerably in excess of one billion dollars—a level never before reached by a Canadian company.

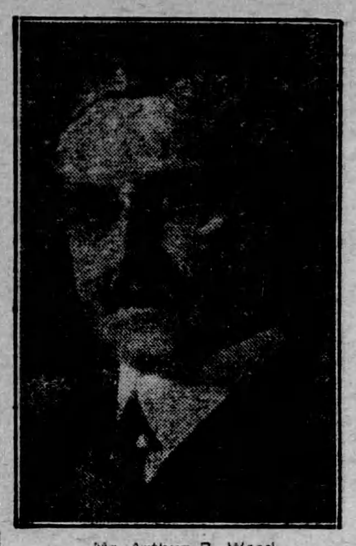
In the same address he stated that



Mr. T. B. Macaulay
President, Sun Life of Canada.

although, owing to the rapid expansion of business, it had been found necessary to greatly extend the head office building accommodation (the formal opening of which followed the annual meeting itself), it was evident that still further space must at once be provided. This in spite of the fact that the new Sun Life Building is one of the finest and most commodious in Canada, is devoted exclusively to the use of the Company, and houses about eleven hundred of a staff.

The fifty-fifth annual report, which appears in another column, reflects the enterprise which has marked the Company's operations, and the comprehensive way in which it is expanding, not only in Canada but throughout the world. It has become not only one of the outstanding financial institutions of the Dominion, but shares with one or two of the banks and



Mr. Arthur B. Wood
Vice-President and Actuary, Sun Life of Canada.

transportation companies the honor of being one of Canada's best known institutions abroad. Its ramifications now extend to forty-four countries and states, and its branches girdle the globe.

The assurance in force was increased last year by $149,460,644, bringing the grand total up to $1,021,097,101. In keeping with this the assets were increased by nearly $29,000,000, making the total assets now $303,056,145. Payments to policyholders and beneficiaries of $35,441,582, brought the total amount so paid since the Company was organized to $219,239,710. The total net income for the year was nearly $70,000,000.

Policy holders will share in another increase in profits—the sixth consecutive increase of this kind.

An Easy Way With Cake.

A housewife who wishes to keep fresh cake on hand may do it with one or two bakings a week.

Make a sufficient quantity of batter for several layers. Put the extra layers away without icing in a tightly covered jar. When ready for them, cover with fresh icing, which steams and freshens the cake.

By using different icings or even different flavorings in the icings, one can have a different cake.

Ten thousand of the threads spun by a full-grown spider would not be equal in substance to one hair in a man's head.

BETWEEN-SEASON CLOTHES

BY MARY GRACE RAMEY.

Between-season clothes, though they are usually given the least consideration, are really the most important clothes of the year. The carefully selected coat or the not-too-extreme frock made for early spring wear will do duty on cool days all summer and still serve as a useful fall garment until the arrival of cold weather with its call for furs.

When one does not plan to buy many new frocks in the year or wishes to solve the clothes problem with little expenditure of time and effort, it is always well to select a frock of the general silhouette of the season without following the datable details too closely. Taken as a whole the lines of one season are usually good for a year or two, although the minor details of the styles are changed more frequently. But a simple tailored frock or coat is always good and it may take on a fresh appearance with the addition of a new collar, recut sleeves or a modish, well-placed belt.

Whatever the material selected for the spring frock, if it be one of the very new silk-and-wool combinations similar to eponge or one of the old stand-bys in the way of satin or twill, it will have an air of smart simplicity. No buttons in contrasting colors will mar its one-tone effect and its scant trimmings and embroideries will harmonize with the selected color.

The hat also will carry out the color scheme. It may be a close little turban, a bit darker in shade than the frock, or a small model turned sharply up in the back, even if it is large it will match the frock in general tone.

Unless all signs fail, the close-fitting, comfortable little hat of light-weight felt will be even more popular than during the past season, especially with the younger woman. These hats are of such alluring colors this season that it is almost impossible to resist them, and never was there a better hat for general all-round practical use.

Matrons and women not so slim will like the larger hat; these will have a higher crown than last year, and in some the brim is absent in the back. Take care, though, when you select your new hat that it is not too small for your face. Sacrifice style if you must, but don't neglect the good proportions of your figure. Nothing could be worse than a tiny hat perched on a large head or a huge brim meeting the back of the shoulders.

If your hat has a flower or two on the brim it will be quite the thing to wear a corsage or a boutonniere on your coat to match. Some of the hats are accompanied by such a flower, whereas down South they are wearing huge matching flowers on the hat and the frock.

As for colors, we are going to see blue in every shade again this spring, from the favorite navy for the practical woman to a deep rich royal shade—a bit trying perhaps to those who do not possess a perfect complexion; and also the shade of the Alice-blue gown in the song.

Next after blue comes rose—*bois de rose*, as it is called in Paris—a perfect shade to use with browns and tans; followed by green, bright green and the yellow greens on the chartreuse tendency for afternoon wear. Later the warm days of summer will bring forth the alluring and flattering pastel shades.

The new frock of cloth or the little afternoon dress of silk will doubtless follow the two-piece suggestion, even if it is made on one-piece lines. The skirts of the models are definitely wide, made so either by plaits and godets or cut in circular fashion, but fullness they must have, even if it is given by shirred panels that accentuate the flowing lines. The neck of the new frock may have one of the cunning little upstanding collars, or it may be of the adaptable high-low variety, a collar that fastens in the front to be worn either high or turned back in less trying style.

The dressy frock is sometimes finished with a collar of ribbon fastened across the back and flowing in scarf fashion; sometimes the collar ends in a tie that is merely a continuation of itself.

There is a return also to the lingerie idea in collars with cuffs to match, and all women should welcome the flattering use of white at the throat.

Sleeves are an important feature of the new mode. Early spring will see only the long sleeve, worn either loose and flowing or gracefully gathered into a cuff at the wrist. A wide flaring cuff or a puffed lower section to the sleeve is a smart detail of the dressy frock. On sports and tailored dresses the sleeves are slim and close-fitting, finished at the wrist with a tailored cuff. Later, as the season advances, the short sleeve will come into its own again, as this pretty fashion is quite too comfortable and too becoming to be abandoned altogether.

By the way, a sleeveless last year's frock of crepe or silk will take on new usefulness if long sleeves of georgette or some soft material are added. These can be gathered at the wrist, in approved style, with a frill falling over the hand.

Never was there such a season for make-overs, so it will be well before deciding upon new purchases to look over the wardrobe possibilities, for many times an attractive new dress may be fashioned from two old ones. The smartest of the two-piece frocks shown in the shops are more often than not of two materials. A plaid skirt is used with a becoming little jumper blouse of velveteen, and to show that it is a complete costume a bit of the plaid is used on the collar, cuffs and pockets of the blouse. The combination may be reversed and the blouse of plaid may top the skirt of plain material.

BALBRIGGAN AND VELVET.

Balbriggan, that light-weight jerseylike fabric frosted with threads of white or contrasting color, is most adaptable; it is combined with velvet or with almost any material, and the greater the contrast the smarter the frock.

One of the newest of the tailored models just arrived from Paris is a Scotch plaided taffeta skirt, cut circular with a plain navy-blue crepe-satin blouse; the collar and cuffs are of the plaid. Even the little girl is wearing the frock of two-color combinations worked out in cotton. The jumper effect is simulated by a wide tuck at the low waistline.

Nowadays no one wears a house dress; it's a daytime frock one dons in the morning before breakfast, but it is so neatly made and so prettily made and so prettily designed one can feel well dressed in it all day. The daytime frocks is usually made of gingham or chambray or printed pongee cloth, and it follows the same easy-to-slip-into lines of the old house dress, taking on such up-to-date touches as the fuller skirt and collar on modish lines.

For comfort, the sleeves are three-quarter length, though they may be made to the wrist if one desires. A bit of embroidery and a string belt that ties in the back give it a dress-up appearance.

If one is slim and youthful the bungalow apron takes on the lines of a smock, big and full, to be slipped on over a frock or worn with a separate skirt. The smock, by the way, is used by schoolgirls and young business women to protect their pretty dresses.

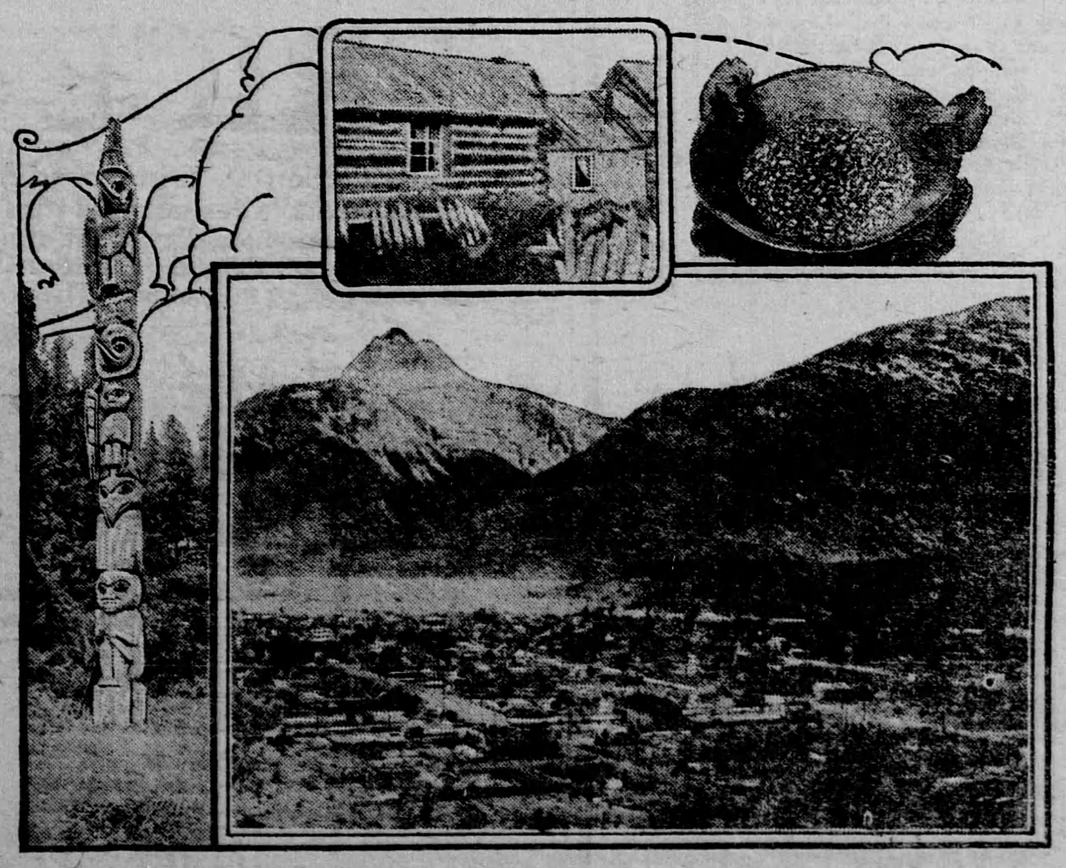
THE NEW ACCESSORIES.

Tiny daughter who still wears bloomers with her frocks will be adorable in a simple little smocked or shirred dress. Embroidery on the collar and cuffs makes a dress-up frock of a design that is not too elaborate for play.

As for the little accessories that go toward making a complete and smart ensemble, spring will see hosiery in subdued tones, for gradually are we creeping away from the more conspicuous stockings. Gun metal is new, and when selected in sheer hose of silk and worn with black pumps the effect is charming. Atmosphere, almost a flesh tint, and shell pink are worn for evening affairs and with very light frocks.

French gray is good also, not only for hose but for accessories of all varieties, and when they are in this pleasant neutral tone they will harmonize well with any frock or wra.

Alaska The New Playground



ALASKA is an Indian word meaning "The Great Country," an interpretation so adequately descriptive of its charms that it receives the unanimous approval of all tourists who visit Alaska though they may substitute an accentuated "Some" for "The Great." The oil—burning steamships of the Canadian National Railways plying up and down the Inside Passage off the British Columbia coast have brought Alaska very close to Vancouver and Prince Rupert and therefore within the means and time of the army of tourists and holiday makers who visit the Pacific slope of Canada in the summer time. It is the new playground of the Pacific.

Once Alaska was identified with the gold seeker. Today it is as closely linked with tourist traffic, for men have found that there is more sheer gold in one Alaskan sunset than ever came out of its rock-bound mines. It is a land of strange contradictions and of never-ending surprises. Flowers bloom at the heel of glaciers as large as some European principalities. The primitive totem pole of the Indian stands next door to a building which is a monument to modern architecture. The pack trail of yesterday is the motor road of today.

On the left of the photograph is seen one of Alaska's famous totem poles. It is that of the Raven, the creator of man and the hat which surmounts the totem is that which the Raven saw in the creator's house. The bottom figure is Hi-yi-shen-a-gu, the Indian Atlas who holds up the earth. Thousands of totems as curious and as interesting are to be seen in Alaska.

The log cabin at the top is claimed to be that which was occupied by the famous Sam McGee, immortalized by Robert W. Service. Beside it is a pan of gold washed from the creeks of the Yukon which borders on Alaska. The gold in the pan was said to be worth $10,000.

The large picture is a view of Skagway, the home port in Alaska of the Canadian National steamships and the gateway to the famous White Horse Pass of the Yukon as well as to many beauty spots that are without a rival on the continent.