Bovril helps you to "turn the corner"

The Pioneers

BY KATHARINE SUSANNAH PRICHARD

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CHAPTER XVII.—(Cont'd.)

Deirdre was breathless with running across the paddocks to reach the turn in the road. The wind had blown her dark hair into little tendrils about her face, and there was a sparkle of anger in her eyes.

"I heard what you said to father," she went on, "and if you haven't anything better to say to me, I'll go back."

Davey gazed at her. He gazed as though he had never seen her before. She seemed another creature, nothing like the ragged little urchin who had climbed trees with him and ridden to school straddle-legged behind him; nothing like the sedate housewife his mother had made of her, either.

Deirdre stared at him, too, as though he were quite different from the Davey she had known. A shy smile quivered on her lips. She plucked nervously at trails of the scarlet-runners which overhung the bank, and put the end of a runner between her teeth and chewed the stalk.

Davey saw that her lips were as scarlet as the flowers that, like broken-winged butterflies, hung at the end of the trail.

He slid off his horse and stood facing her. His limbs were trembling. "What's the matter?" she asked, a little distress creeping into her voice.

Davey's face was tense and colorless.

To the trouble which had surprised him that day, a strange soft thrill was added when she put the runner stalk with its scarlet flowers between her teeth. It struck him with a strange pang that Deirdre was beautiful, that her lips were the same color as the flowers hanging near them.

It was all translated, this emotion of his, in the shamed, shy smile that came into his face as he stared at her. Deirdre understood well enough.

She scrambled down the bank and went to him.

"You are sorry we're going, aren't you, Davey?" she asked.

He nodded, finding he could not speak.

The gloom of the forest was closing round them, the sunset dying. She slipped and slipped her hand into his. After a few moments, as he said nothing, she spoke again.

"It'll be all changed, I suppose, when father and I come back," she said. "We will come back, by and by, sometime, you know, father says. We'll come to see Steve, perhaps. But we'll be grown up . . . quite, you and I, Davey. You'll be married, and I—"

"What?"

Davey had wakened.

"I was saying, we'll be grown-up and married, perhaps by the time we see each other again," Deirdre murmured. "None of the times'll come again like the ones when we went home on Lass; or in the spring cart, or walked, and chased wallies and went after birds' nests. I wish they could! I wish I could be just ten when I come back and give you a race down the road, Davey."

Her voice ran on quickly, but Davey's mind stuck on her first words.

"There's only one girl I'll be married to," he said.

"Yes." Her eyes leapt to his. "Jess Ross!"

"Who says so?"

"She does." Deirdre laughed. "She says she's the only girl you've ever kissed. And her mother says——"

"When she was a kid, they put her face up to me; but I never kissed her—or any girl," Davey said.

"I didn't believe it, of course."

Deirdre laughed softly.

"Why?"

"Well—I thought—if there was any girl you'd be wanting to kiss it would be me, Davey!"

The bright shy glance that flew towards him, and the quiver of her lips, fired the boy.

His arms went out to her. He caught her shoulder and held her to him. For an instant he did not know whether it was night or day. But when he withdrew from that moment of unconsciousness, wild, uncontrollable joy and possession, his eyes were humid. And her eyes beneath his were like pools in the forest which the fallen-leaf mould has darkened and the twilight striking through the trees makes a dim, mysterious mirror of.

"Deirdre," he whispered, as if he had never before said her name, and to say it were like singing in church.

He kissed her again, slowly and tenderly; the first pressure of her lips had made a man of him.

"You're my sweetheart, aren't you, Deirdre?" he said exultingly, holding her in his arms and gazing down at her. "When you come back we'll be married."

"Yes," Deirdre whispered.

Her eyes reflected the glow of her heart.

"I've always meant to marry you, Davey, though I've sometimes pretended I liked Mick Ross, or Buddy Morrison better." She drew a little sigh. "But I'm so glad it's all settled, now . . . and we're really going to marry each other."

The sunset had died out of the sky, and the forest was dark about them when they kissed and whispered "good-bye—for a little while." Davey could scarcely say the words. He watched Deirdre as she fled up hill to the shanty; then leaping on his horse he sent her clattering down hill, all his young manhood—the tumult of his love, awakened senses, rejoicing and dreams—orchestrating within him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In the earliest days of Port Southern, settlers tracking inland or further along the coast, had to cross the Wirree, driving their cattle and horses before them. The shallows of the river where they crossed began to be called the Wirree Ford. The tracks converged there, and it was not long before a shanty appeared on the left bank a few hundred yards from the broad and slowly-moving river.

The Wirree came down from the hills and flowed across the plains at the foot of the ranges. The whole of the flat land it watered was spoken of as the Wirree river district, or the Wirree. The stream emptied itself into the waters of Bass Straits. Opposite was Van Dieman's Land, the beautiful green island on which penal settlements has been established. Men had been known to escape from it to the mainland. They made the dangerous passage of the Straits in open boats, and sometimes were picked up in an exhausted condition by a frigate policing the coast, or a trader, and sent back to Hobart Town or Port Arthur. Sometimes their dead bodies were tossed by the sea on the shores they had been trying to reach, and sometimes, steering by the muddy waters of the river that flowed out from the nearest point opposite the Island, bearing silt and driftwood for a couple of miles into the sea, they reached the land of promise and freedom.

As the beaten grass path along the sea-board became the main stock route between Port Southern and Rane, a newly-founded settlement at the further eastern end of the coast, a township of curious mushroom growth cropped up about the Wirree Ford and McNab's shanty.

It was a collection of huts, wattle and dab, white-washed, for the most part; but some of them were sun-baked sods, plastered together, or of the stones which were scattered over the plains or filled the creek beds. McNab's weatherboard shanty, with its signboard of a black bull, with red-rimmed eyes on a white ground, was by far the most pretentious. The history of these dwellers about McNab's was a matter of suspicion. They arrived from nowhere, out of the night, silently, and it was surmised, crept up the river in cockle-shell boats which had brought them over the Straits and were sunk in the slowly-moving river when they had served their purpose.

The fertile flats, stretching to the edge of the mountains, had been taken up before McNab got his holding on an arm of the Wirree. He set about acquiring the selvedge of the plains which was cut off from the finer, more arable land by a scrubby line of densely growing ti-tree. Most of the Wirree Ford men ran cattle on these strips of coarse-grassed land, thrashed by the sea breezes. But they were no sticklers for the niceties of boundaries and property laws. They drove their first, wild-eyed, scraggy herds whither they listed, a cursing, blasphemous crew, none dared gainsay them. It was reckoned better to have the good-will than the enmity of the Wirree river men. The body of a settler who had threatened "to have the law of them" for grazing their beasts on his land was, a few days afterwards, found in the river, drifting with the tide out to sea. Some of the Wirree men made a living as fishermen. Others maintained themselves by a desultory farming. They plowed the grey land of the seaboard with wooden hand-plows. But many of them thrived out of what they could make out of the stockmen and drovers who passed through the township on their way to Rane or to the Port.

McNab was powerful enough even in those days, and many and ingenious were the stories he invented to account for the presence of men who came to the Wirree Ford unexpectedly.

As the settlement grew, it did justice to the rumored accounts of its origin. McNab's was the meeting place of stockmen, drovers and teamsters on the southern roads, and the carouses held there were night-long. It was recognized as a hotbed of thieves and ruffians by the roadsters, and no man of substance or any pretensions at all, would lodge the night in any of the mud-built huts within a stone's throw of the river.

Before long, the Wirree men had fat cattle to dispose of. An open space between the huts, not far from McNab's, was used as a sale yard. It was then that settlers who wanted good prices for their beasts had to drive them to the Wirree market. A better bargain was driven in the Wirree square than anywhere else. So Wirree Ford became Wirreeford, and thrived and prospered until it was the busiest cattle market in the south.

To a certain extent, it prosperity threw an air of respectability over it. At first, cattle-owner and farmers from the hills entered the township in the morning and left it before the shadows of night fell. They did their business and left the Wirree not much better off for their coming, venturing into the shanty for a midday meal only, and drinking sparingly, if at all, of the curious, dark spirits it vended.

Then stores were opened. There were less fearsome comings and goings. Mrs. Mary Ann Hegarty set up a shanty and proceeded to do business with an air of great propriety. Women and children were brought into the township for the cattle sales. Sale days became weekly holidays. They meant the donning of festive ribbands by the women and children, the climbing into high spring-carts and buggies, and driving along the winding track from the sills to the township, where groceries, dress stuffs and household furnishings could be bought, and stowed in the back of the carts for the home journey.

Sale days, however, still ended in gaming and drinking brawls at the shanties, and sometimes in the dropping of a heavy, still body into the Wirree, when the tides would carry it out to sea.

(To be continued.)

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No Relation.

First Scholar—"Who was Nero, Bill? Wasn't he the chap who was always cold?"

Second Scholar—"No. That was Zero—another man altogether."

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About the House

Common Sense and Science.

Science is the mother's background, but she cannot stop to count the calories for the school child's breakfast, and children have the royal scorn of youth and ignorance for dietetic principles as compared with desire. It is one thing to prescribe oatmeal, eggs and milk, and another to administer them!

But she can have facts and she can weigh the children instead of counting the calories. It's much simpler, and if they weigh too little by the standard card increase the butter, the milk, the whole wheat bread, take a look over the spinach and orange and apple supply, and for the rest make the food attractive. Spread the bread with butter and honey or good old-time molasses, and the whole wheat and butter go down with it.

Sugar is bad, principally because it makes the plain foods uninteresting and decreases appetite for them. It is a good energizer in itself and the growing, romping child craves it naturally. One wise dietetian in an institution gave the children permission to make candy whenever they wanted to—taking pains to see that they had a well balanced diet especially a good mineral supply (which means milk, whole wheat, egg yolk, fruit and fresh vegetables). Result, the "candy permits" were not often demanded. Provide wholesome sweets at the proper times—such as figs, raisins, plain candies—at the end of the meal, instead of heavy sweets, continuously "nibbled."

We know of one woman, the successful executor of a great commercial food house, who, in two years, put seventeen pounds on a child with a tubercular tendency. This by science, plus careful, grandmotherly supervision of every meal—slipping the eggs and milk and fresh vegetables into the menu and sitting by until they were eaten! The doctor in pronouncing the child cured and normal said: "That is one of the finest pieces of work a woman ever did." We agree. And there is much such vital work crying to be done. It takes a woman's patience, and detailed attention to make the science effective.

Martyrs of Housekeeping.

Obviously there are many jolly housekeepers who are not martyrs at all. They go frisking round the world, making merry at all times and in all places except near the domestic heath. They are always ready for a dance or a frolic, ready to be gay and to make others gay, as if there were not a brush or a broom in the world. But look at their houses—or perhaps it is as well not to look at them. There are unwashed dishes and unmade beds and dust in the corners and so many things out of place that you begin to wonder whether the things ever had any places.

Observing all this, you decide that your way will be different. You may not be quite so gay; but the broom will be respected. The chairs will be in their accustomed spots, the floors will be clean, the table will be properly set at the proper hours, with neat linen and dishes, and food upon it that has been thoughtfully prepared and that can be eaten with relish—not like the food you and Jim had the other day at that giddy Mrs. Jones's. You mean your husband and your children to have a home, to know the peace and comfort that come from good, careful housekeeping, and that can come from nothing else.

Which is all very well. Only, don't overdo it. Your husband and children, for whom all this is nominally done, are too likely to be martyrs themselves, to feel that the home, instead of being a paradise of unlimited freedom and exquisite relaxation, is a prison of restraint, of perfect convenience distorted into the acme of inconvenience. And that is a dismal state of things. A jolly good-natured disorder, even with a little untidiness, is better.

The Mother's Hope.

Is there when the winds are singing
In the happy summer time—
When the raptured air is ringing
With earth's music heavenward springing,
Forest chirp and village chime
Is there, of the sounds that float
Unsighingly, a single note
Half so sweet and clear and wild,
As the laughter of a child?

Organ finer, deeper, clearer,
Though it be a stranger's tone—
Than the winds or waters dearer,
More enchanting to the hearer,
For it answereth to his own.
But, of all its witching words
Those are sweetest, bubbling wild,
Through the laughter of a child.

Harmonies from the time-touched towers;
Haunted strains from rivulets,
Hum of bees among the flowers,
Rustling leaves and silver showers—
These, ere long, the ear forgets;
But in mine there is a sound
Ringing on the whole year round—
Heart-deep laughter that I heard
Ere my child could speak a word.

'Tis a mother's large affection
Hears with a mysterious sense—
Breathings that evade detection,
Whisper faint and fine inflection,
Thrill in her with power intense,
Childhood's honied words untaught
Hiveth she in loving thought—
Tones that never thence depart;
For she listens with her heart.

—Laman Blanchard.

In the Bible

"I don't think flying machines are so very wonderful," said little Sammy, after his mother had been telling him the story of their invention. "Teacher read about one in the Bible the other day."

"In the Bible?" exclaimed his mother. 'Are you sure?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Sammy. "She told us that Esau sold his hairship to his brother Jacob."

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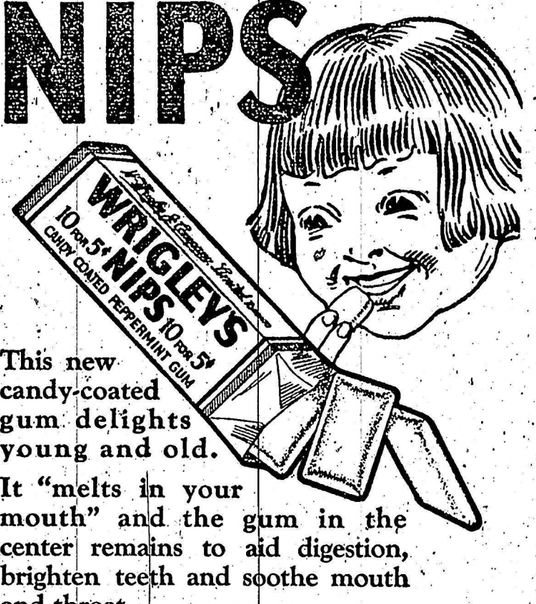

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THE HOTEL MOUSE

By G. Bruno-Ruby

Translated by William L. McPherson

A mouse—the word always arouses the image of a lively little creature sprightly and also young. And, after all, why should a mouse always seem young?

The one of which I speak was not young. She was a big mouse, a mouse who nibbled at other things than crusts of bread.

This mouse was named Lea Verney, and she made her way at night into hotel rooms to rob travelers. She was forty years old—an age which ought to be that of wisdom, but she had always been idle, horribly idle, and, as everyone knows, idleness is the mother of all the vices.

That evening she had arrived at the Terminus Hotel in the city of X . She had taken the only vacant room, a room on the sixth floor (a floor occupied by less prosperous people, which was hardly a good thing for her business), and she was reading with bursts of laughter a letter which she had just received.

This letter was from her brother, a brave and generous-minded man. He was the only one of the family who had not called her to account, who did not wish to guess what she was doing, who struggled to believe her honest. He told her that he had been appointed chief of a department in the establishment in which he had been working for the last fifteen years, and that he had an excellent situation for her.

An excellent situation. She laughed again, shrugged her shoulders, took her bunch of keys and her lamp and consulted her watch. One had struck in a neighboring belfry. Putting on a protective overgarment of gray linen—a hotel mouse, in body and soul—she left the room. She was going to lay her hands in a few minutes on as much money as she would probably have to work a year to win her honorable brother.

A hotel door is generally not difficult to open. This one made but little resistance. Slipping through the opening Lea listened intently and could hear a man breathing with painful regularity. She closed the door and cut the electric wiring. The room was exactly like her own. She crept straight to the mantelpiece, as men prefer to leave their pocketbooks and their jewelry. But the mantelpiece was bare.

Lea began to be annoyed. The breathing continued, tranquil and regular. The sleeper surely was not an easy conscience. She continued her search, examining the coat-rack. A hat was there, a stick. Nearby some clothes were carefully laid over a chair, a uniform, a modest livery.

"An officer!" Lea said to herself. "Not much to hope for."

She approached the bed. The moment to advance or retire was long gone. Lea leaned over the sleeper. The officer had blond hair, a pale face, shaved like an Etonian, and, in his sleep, all the charm of adolescence. Lea drew back a trifle, the chloroform in her hand.

"A little subject," she murmured.

Then she noticed on a stand by the bed some francs in back and a watch and a time-table.

"He arrives here," she thought. "He came to the first hotel, near the station, and here is his pay."

She bent down again over the sleeper. What confidence, what look in the clear countenance, what honesty, almost! Lea, with her forty years, could have had if she had not gone wrong of that age, a handsome young boy like this one!

She recoiled again.

This young man evidently was rich. She was going to rob him, cold-blooded, deliver him over on arrival at his garrison, to expose him to humiliations, perhaps to death.

She looked again at the bed, the simple wardrobe, the traveling-bag.

"If I had some money with me," she sighed, "I would double it for myself."

But she had no money with her, she simply left the room, her heart buzzing and heavy as the hotel mouse's ought to be. She went back to her own chamber, and with courage to continue her evil work.

She slowly took off her outer garment. Then seating herself at a table, she opened her brother's letter. She had laughed at it a few days before. But now, now, as the mysterious hand guided her, she took up a pen and answered:

"You are very good . . . I shall come to work with you. I shall come."

She signed her name. On the other side of the wall she could hear the regular breathing of the little tenant. How happy she was, still had his 600 francs!

So the deed was cast. She was going to become honest again. It was the mere sight of a young man's pure face which had accomplished that miracle. Honest! She looked at herself in the mirror. It seemed to her that she already had a different look, that she was a different woman. She went to bed, full of a lightness which she had never before felt, and for the first time, robbed and without booty, she had slept the sleep of the just.

Elephants [illegible] forty years.

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