

The Free Press Short Story

The Second Discovery of Canada

By Christine MacGillivray Campbell

ARRIVED in the glory of fresh pink gingham, Norah ran down to their wayside stand in time to relieve Pat in his now-fresh green gingham as it had been in the morning. Handling strawberries, and bunching young carrots and beets, and dishing up buttermilk from the stone crock, all these and other busy tasks had contributed to the slight wilting of Pat's green-and-white as it would presently have its effect on Norah's pink-and-white.

"Been busy?" asked Norah. "Should say so," responded Pat, and was gone to the house for her dinner. An opulent car rolled in before the stand and an opulent gentleman rolled out from it. At least that was the way Norah described the proceeding to Pat in the afternoon.

"Young lady, have you buttermilk among your wares?" Norah assured him she had, with the proper pride of one who churns before breakfast. "The gentleman drained his glass. 'You don't empty the rinsings of your butter into your buttermilk, do you?'" he asked quizzically.

"I should think not," flashed Norah with Irish indignation. "No, I can see that, taste it, too. But I've seen stands where I suspected that the buttermilk was chiefly rinsings of the churn. Please fill my glass again, and tell me which is the best road to Rainy Hill?"

"Rainy Hill? Why, I suppose—I really don't know—I've never been out that way, but—" making a desperate guess, "I suppose you should take the Beach Highway." The opulent gentleman rolled away first to, then in his opulent car.

Other cars, more or less opulent, and many more that were frankly travelled and even better, stopped at the stand during the afternoon. The customers asked for strawberries—and directions on the way. They asked for vegetables—and the whereabouts of the nearest gas-station. They bought cream or butter—beggared information. They took long sniffs at the sweet peas—and inquired if there was any special scenery thereabouts, or interesting landmarks.

The girls supplied the fresh demand in each case pleasantly, efficiently, then counting their customers' change with scrupulous care, answered the queries about travel conditions rather indifferently, and even absentmindedly. "You'd think they took us for a bureau of information," sighed Norah, when the sun was down and Pat had joined her again after helping with the milking and the evening chores. "It seems to me everybody who stopped to-day wanted to know something about the country round."

Thinking it over while she set the place in order, reflected that they did not seem to have time for anything else any more. They had not read a book that summer. The daily paper was used for wrapping vegetables before it was read. Still, the stand was prospering and their customers were pleased. That big man yesterday, now, how he had relished his buttermilk.

When, while Norah meditated, the opulent person stopped his car and stared at his rolling globe to the stand. "It's coming for more buttermilk!" Norah thought, "Imagine drinking buttermilk just after breakfast!"

But he wasn't. "Young lady," he began, "you directed me across the third sideroad to a Beach Highway yesterday, didn't you? You said it was the road to Rainy Hill. I thought it might interest you to know that I took that sideroad, found a bridge down, got into a mud-hole trying to find another road, had to be towed out, reached your Beach Highway and traveled north for miles till I found out that Rainy Hill is not on that road at all but lies to the southeast. Then I ran out of gas and no farm-house had a telephone and I missed an appointment with a party of tourists I had intended to meet at Rainy Hill. Besides, getting back here I came around a sideroad where only the most cautious driving saved me from skidding over a two-hundred-foot bank and not a sign or a foot of rail. Young lady, I'd advise you to study the geography of your own country before you offer directions to any more victims."

The big car rolled away, its opulence dimmed by much dried mud. Other cars came, paused for supplies and went. Today Norah was keenly alive to the questions she was asked. But in most cases she was firm in refusing to offer even an opinion as to the best road, the most likely camping-side, or accommodation for the night. She told Pat about the stout man's misadventure and warned her not to misdirect a stranger if she could not direct him.

"But we are not an information bureau," retorted Pat, "we are here to sell supplies for the 'department of the interior' not to distribute roadmaps for a tourist committee of any chamber of commerce." But in this Norah found no comfort. Motorists continued to ask questions and Norah became unhappy in her inability to answer adequately. If ignorance is bliss, she pondered, the consciousness of it is far from blissful. It was not her humiliation that hurt so much as the knowledge that she was losing chances to help others.

A young woman drove up and came to linger the strawberries to test their freshness. She turned away, then came back, bought half-a-dozen fresh eggs and asked if there were anything specially scenic that would be any good shooting for her camera. "Why, I don't think there is anything spectacular in this neighborhood," confessed Norah. "There is a waterfall somewhere off the highway about thirty miles north of here, but I really don't know where it is," she finished hastily, remembering the man she had misdirected.

"I guess you Canadian girls don't know much about Canada," drawled the young woman, "you don't care a hoot about it, do you?" So that was what tourists thought, then, when they found that keepers of wayside stands could not answer questions. That Canadians did not care about Canada. The Canada they had sang for till they were hoarse— "O, Canada, we stand on guard for thee. And with our lives we'll guard thy liberty!"

But what could she do about it? As Pat had said, irreverently, their job was to supply "the department of the interior." Curiously, Norah's eye fell on the same words "the Department of the Interior" at that moment as she deftly wrapped her fresh parsley with a newspaper. She stopped and read the announcement of some new booklets to be had from the Division of Natural Resources. Though a car that cost more than the cash value of the farm was bearing down upon the stand, Norah cut out the paragraph with her vegetable scissors and hung it on a nail. That evening, she wrote her application that went "Free—O. H. M. B." to Ottawa. Evidently Canada was willing to pay her own expenses in getting acquainted with her citizens. Still uncomfortably conscious of her ignorance, Norah added a wistful little request for a list of whatever publications were to be had.

With uncomprehending ears before. Promptly they applied for "any publications available" and as promptly came the brown parcels of regulation "blue books," reports or pamphlets. With their shivers of these new possessions the girls' wonder grew that there was so much to know about Canada that they Canadian born, had not known there was to know. Pat whooped and Norah almost wept over the beauty of the books sent by Canadian Parks Division.

Merrily the trade in fresh eggs and golden butter and crisp lettuce went on and the customers who asked questions soon found that though the girls at the stand had just drawn her eyes from a book, she was unusually alert and eager to answer their questions.

"Curious that we are getting just as much work done," remarked Norah one day, "and still we find time to read." "I always knew that there is time to read if you do any other wholesome thing for those who want to improve themselves or help others," replied her mother. At the same time Pat was pretending to assist her father in putting up an extra shelf at the stand.

"You like the blue books, too, don't you, Daddy? They help you to get more out of the farm, don't they?" "They've been a help," admitted her father, "and they'll be more of a help when we've had a chance to put them into practice. But I don't know that that's the best thing about your books, Pat. It's your learning to help your customers on their way that will pay best it seems to me."

"That we don't charge anything for that Daddy. Oh, I suppose you mean that it will attract more trade." "It may do that, but I wasn't thinking of that. It's been a good thing for you girls, and the farm, to have the stand, but I can't say I liked it altogether when all your time was taken up just in making money. Didn't seem just healthy, somehow."

"Why, Daddy," (Pat had glimpsed her father's meaning and meant to lead him on. It wasn't every day he could be snared into sermonizing.) "Why, Daddy, what could be healthier than reading and milking cows? And I'm sure it's been good for our backs— to learn to make an honest and independent living!" "That's right, too, daughter; but it seems to me we're not just in the right place till we've learned to make our own living and at the same time help somebody else, in some way, without any kind of pay."

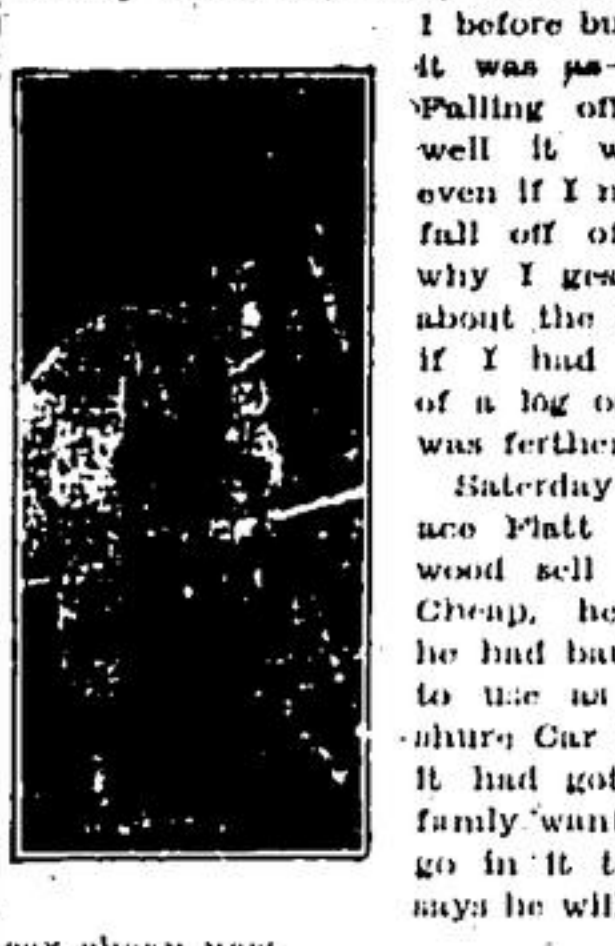
It was the next summer that brought the opulent man with his not-quite-so-opulent car to the stand. "Having had a year to mend his temper he was quite benign again. "This is the stand where you sell unadulterated and undiluted buttermilk, is it not?" he asked facetiously. Norah filled his glass with some excitement in her eyes.

"You've been building, too," went on the big man, half-closing his eyes to size up the improvements. "You'll be more comfortable in this weather-tight place. Quite artistic, too,—like a miniature bungalow." The big man was turning away. "Do you—do you happen to be going to Rainy Hill to-day?" stammered Norah. "Why, yes," the man turned back, surprised, then remembering, he redoubled. "I suppose I was rude that morning—" "Oh, it isn't that," deprecatd Norah, "I was so sorry to have sent a stranger out of his way. If you want to go to Rainy Hill this morning you will find a good road now by crossing at the second sideroad and taking the fifth concession here." Norah indicated on a small roadway issued by the board of trade in the nearest city. "You may have the map. We have a supply of them. I usually telephone in the morning to find out the condition of all roads about here, in case of washouts or construction work, but perhaps, you would not mind telephoning yourself. Ask for Central at Carlington and inquire if the new bridge on the South Road was opened yesterday."

The man stepped within the stand. Norah indicated as she turned to other customers. Within he found the telephone in no conventional booth but in a sunny little room full of bookshelves. Above these were fastened cards indicating the contents—"Canadiana." There were sections labelled "Historic Sites," "Canadian Natural Resources," "Forestry," "Geography—Local," "Scenery—Provincial." The man of big business smiled as he looked over the girls' attempt to provide a complete reference library for her tourists there by the roadside. There were books from all the provincial legislatures as well as from Ottawa, books, on camping, books for prospective settlers, for prospective prospectors, indeed. There were booklets provided by the railways, with information for the serious traveller and the gay rambler, guides to hunting-grounds and golf-links. There were various maps, local and provincial in scope.

SLATS' DIARY BY BOBS PARQUHAR

Friday—well I got me a new bicycle for my birth day today & I never rode it before but pa said it was so easy as falling off a log, well it was and even if I never did fall off of a log why I guess I fell about the same as if I had fell off of a log oney this was further to fall.



Saturday—Mornace Matt and his wood sell his car cheap, he told pa he had built it for to use as a pleasure car but now it had got so his family wanted it to go in it to no he says he will sell his car cheap now.

Sunday—Ant Emmy had the hecup; today and flurey we went for the Dr. and when he can he got to talking about how sum times hecup lusted for a weak at a time and the person which had them died sum times and she got so scared she quit having them rite away.

Monday—pa got balled out today by the boss down at the moss paper wear he works. The boss balled him out for smoking wile at work and pa says it was very very injust becuz he wasent working.

Tuesday—Ant Emmy wants to be rite up to stle and now she is looking for a new site to ware this fall. she wants it to be in the new culter she has ben hearing so much about wile they call Zane Gray.

Wednesday—Unkle Hen was at are house today a long with sum uther Co. and I and him was talking amongst each other and he showed me a nife he has had sense he went to skool more fifty yrs. ago. All he has done to it is to have 2 new blades put in and a new handle put on it.

Thursday—Elly Profs has rote a book and she was a getting pritty discouraged about it till the preachers can out va. her book so now she is happy and it looks like she will be a very very rich lady sense the preachers have denounced her book.

Friday—Unkle Hen was at are house today a long with sum uther Co. and I and him was talking amongst each other and he showed me a nife he has had sense he went to skool more fifty yrs. ago. All he has done to it is to have 2 new blades put in and a new handle put on it.

TRANSLATED

In a small village in Ireland the mother of a soldier met the village priest, who asked her if she had had news. "Sure, I have," she said, "Pat has been killed." "Oh, I am very sorry," said the priest. "Did you receive words from the war office?" "No," she said, "I received word from himself."

The priest looked perplexed, and said, "But how is that?" "Sure," she said, "here is the letter; read it yourself." The letter said: "Dear mother, I am now in the Holy Land."

THE TIME TO SELL A farmer once asked the editor of a country paper for advice, as follows: "I have a horse that at times appears normal, but at other times is lame to an alarming degree. What shall I do?" The reply came: "The next time your horse appears normal, sell him."

Monday—pa got balled out today by the boss down at the moss paper wear he works. The boss balled him out for smoking wile at work and pa says it was very very injust becuz he wasent working.

Tuesday—Ant Emmy wants to be rite up to stle and now she is looking for a new site to ware this fall. she wants it to be in the new culter she has ben hearing so much about wile they call Zane Gray.

Wednesday—Unkle Hen was at are house today a long with sum uther Co. and I and him was talking amongst each other and he showed me a nife he has had sense he went to skool more fifty yrs. ago. All he has done to it is to have 2 new blades put in and a new handle put on it.

Thursday—Elly Profs has rote a book and she was a getting pritty discouraged about it till the preachers can out va. her book so now she is happy and it looks like she will be a very very rich lady sense the preachers have denounced her book.

Friday—Unkle Hen was at are house today a long with sum uther Co. and I and him was talking amongst each other and he showed me a nife he has had sense he went to skool more fifty yrs. ago. All he has done to it is to have 2 new blades put in and a new handle put on it.

Saturday—Mornace Matt and his wood sell his car cheap, he told pa he had built it for to use as a pleasure car but now it had got so his family wanted it to go in it to no he says he will sell his car cheap now.

We are Going to Save-You Money by Selling Coal for Cash Only. This year coal prices to us are higher than last year, owing to the duty, excise tax and the discount on the Canadian dollar and increased freight rate on the U. S. railways. Yet to-day we are selling coal for less money than last year, and we can continue to do so by selling for cash only. Many of our last year's coal accounts are still uncollected, and we do not believe it would be right, in these days of difficult times, to charge our cash customers sufficient to carry these slow accounts.

Table with 2 columns: Coal Type and Price per ton. Includes items like RANGE SIZE HAMILTON COKE, FURNACE AND LARGE STOVE SIZE COKE, STOVE SIZE POCANTON, etc.

J. B. MACKENZIE & SON. ACTON—PHONE 48. WILLIAM ROZEJEL, Manager. EVAN JONES, Carver.

Carrying On Its Traditions. THE Bank of Montreal was founded in 1817 in order to fill the need for a commercial bank in a young and growing country. The Bank owes its success to the fact that it has always kept pace with the growth of the communities it has served and, in every way consistent with the principles of sound banking, has constantly endeavoured to be of genuine assistance to its customers.

Announcing J. R. Leishman Acton, Ontario. KOLSTER Authorized Retail Merchant. It is with pleasure we announce the appointment of this well known dealer as an authorized representative of Kolster Radio in your district. We suggest that you visit this newly appointed Kolster dealer NOW to see and hear the latest Kolster models—learn what Kolster's outstanding performance over the entire dial really means.

stand was an insatiable demand. Norah,

department of which they had heard

Answer—"Guys who fix windows when they are broken."

KOLSTER RADIO LIMITED, TORONTO