

The Free Press' Short Story

Nothing Ever Happens Down on the Farm

MARGARET E. SANOSTER

KATE ELLIS looked jealously at her cousin, Jeanette. "How I envy you!" she sighed. "You work in an office; you live in the centre of a busy city. As for me—I'm a—hick! I'll never get much more than five steps from the farm."

"I don't see why you'd ever have the least desire to get five steps from a farm like this," Jeanette Carey echoed the sigh, while her eyes followed the line of the distant hills.

"That's all right for you to say. You are here for only two weeks every fall, on a vacation. Any farm is pretty in the fall, especially to city eyes. I'll grant you that! But for a steady diet, day in and day out—year in, year out—"

"What's wrong with it?" Jeanette interrupted.

"Nothing—from the standpoint of a farmer, I suppose. The land's fertile, the crops are good and the air is invigorating. But from the standpoint of a young girl, it's dull. Nothing ever happens! You see life—you're surrounded by people. There's excitement every second in the city. I can't tell you how much I envy you!"

Jeanette started to say, "You mustn't envy me. I'd change places with you in a trice." Before the words had taken form on her lips, Kate's mother had come hurrying on the scene. Her face was flushed and apprehensive.

"Kate," she exclaimed, "you'll have to jump into the car and hurry to your sister Carrie's place. She's been taken sick, and Ned's rushing her to the hospital—it's an appendix. (Ned was the Ellis son-in-law), and the baby can't be left alone and dinner must be got together for the hired hands."

Kate said, crossly, "Oh bother." To Jeanette, she added, "You see how it is!"

Jeanette asked, "Is Carrie very ill?" Mrs. Ellis said, "I hope not. Why don't you go along, Jeanette, and help your cousin?"

"Of course! — I was going to offer. In less time than it takes to tell, the two girls were speeding down the country road in the farm car.

Carrie's home was but a few miles from her mother's. As the girls entered the pretty lane, leading to it, Jeanette thought of the drab entrance to her city boarding house.

"This is charming," she murmured. "Kate, without answering said, "I can hear the baby crying. We'll have a busy day, you and I."

"The girls hurried into the neat, white farmhouse. The baby, sitting in a pen with his tops, was indeed crying. Jeanette leaned over and lifted him with gentle arms.

"There, little lamb," she comforted, as she kissed his chubby neck, "everything's okeh, now!"

"You must be fond of youngsters. The baby's smiling already—he takes to you like a duck to water!" Kate said.

"He's sleepy, poor dear. I'll cuddle him a bit and maybe he'll doze off."

"That sounds very attractive," said a voice from the doorway. "I wish I were a baby!"

Jeanette looked up and saw a young man in overalls. He was sitting and sunbathed and a gleam of laughter was in his eyes.

"I heard that Carrie was ill," he said. "Ned stopped by, at the lower meadow, where I was working—and told me. He asked me to come to the house and watch Sonny until Kate arrived."

Kate shrugged and returned to her biscuit cutting.

When the five farm hands came in from the fields, dinner was ready—a fricassee with potatoes and rice and a great basin of vegetables, a huge bowl of lettuce with old-fashioned boiled dressing. Biscuits with jam, a layer cake salvaged from the pantry, and the berries that Jeanette had prepared completed the meal. The men ate with rare appetite, and little conversation was indulged in. Burton Lake did most of the talking.

"We found a nest of kittens," he told Jeanette, "where we were plowing. One of the barn cats, I suppose. And we saw a blue jay as big, almost, as a hawk. And the ground is in such good condition that I'm all enthused. This will be a fine year—"

Kate said, "Ugh—I despise cats. And I'm tired of hearing about good ground."

"I never saw a baby barn kitten in my life," Jeanette said, softly.

"You poor little fresh air kid! Want to walk down to the lot with me, after lunch? I'll show the kitties to you," Burton said.

Jeanette said, doubtfully, "There are the dishes—"

"Don't worry about the dishes—they'll wait until you come back," Kate answered.

After the berries and cake had been consumed, Jeanette and Burton strolled out of the house and toward the lower meadow.

Jeanette Carey never forgot that walk, under the warm noon sun, with Burton Lake. The very soil was fragrant, the trees cast restful shadows. Burton explained, easily, about his plans—the adjoining farm he was going to buy, the stock he would raise, the crops he would garner.

"Farming," he said, "may seem dull to you, Miss Carey, but it isn't. We farmers deal with fundamental things—we raise food; food for the world. We are not merely buying and selling—we're producing. Do you understand?"

"I understand," murmured Jeanette. She was thinking of the flurry of the famous street upon which she worked, a street that was dedicated to buying and selling. She was contrasting the city's hurry and bustle and dust with this calm sky and the green fields and the sweet sunshine. They had reached the lower meadow. Burton Lake stopped suddenly.

"Here's the nest," he said, "look at them, Miss Carey!"

"Oh, they're dear!" Jeanette leaned down and peered at the soft mass of wet, fuzzy bodies. "They're such little things."

"You like little things, don't you?" said Burton, watching her face. "Soy, may I call you Jeanne, same as Kate does? Miss Carey sounds so formal and you're not in the least at formal person."

"Indeed, I'm not," smiled Jeanette. Was it the reflection of the sunlight that made her cheeks so warmly pink? "Yes, you may call me anything you wish!"

"I'll remember that," exclaimed Burton Lake. "Maybe you've let yourself in for something."

While she and Kate were finishing the dishes, the baby wakened, cooing from his nap. Under Kate's direction, Jeanette bathed him and bundled him into a fresh romper and gave him his dinner of cereal and strained sprouts. She carried him out to the lawn and tumbled him on a spread blanket.

"There, Sonny," she said, "you can roll around and have an elegant time."

A car rattled up and came to a stop almost in front of Jeanette. The door opened and an old man stepped forth—because of his costume and the saintliness of his face, the girl could tell that he was a minister.

several forms of inspiration. The super was enticing.

The men ate their fill, and relaxed upon the porch to discuss the morrow's work. Jeanette and Kate dragged Burton into the kitchen, trusted him into an apron and set him over the dish pan. He was splashing noisily when his brother walked into the house, leading a wan Carrie.

"Well, we're home again!" said Ned. "And all in one piece."

"How is my baby?" asked Carrie. Jeanette said, "He's asleep—his eyes are tight as buttons. You'd better get to bed too."

"Carrie said, "I'm completely cured, now. But I must have had a touch of pneumonia. I went to a picnic yesterday, worse luck, but I'll feel a hundred per cent. by morning. You girls, have been wonders—but I won't need you any longer."

Kate said, affectionately, "You're an old nuisance. As soon as we've done your dishes we'll go back to Mother. Jeanne and I will be glad to get away from this place—and Ned's pest of a brother!"

Ned's pest of a brother said, eagerly, "I'll drive you back!"

"You will not!" So Burton Lake had to content himself with walking to the gate with them. He helped Kate into the car, but instead of assisting Jeanette in, after her, he pulled the city cousin aside.

"How much longer will you be here?" he asked in a whisper.

Jeanette whispered in reply: "I'm allotted two weeks, and half of the first week is gone—"

Burton said, "That leaves me a week and a half. Well, I'm a fast worker—a week and a half will be long enough. Are you doing anything to-morrow evening?"

Jeanette murmured, "Certainly not, as Kate called from the car."

In a moment the girls were off again, rolling along the road that they had travelled that morning. They were half-way home before Kate spoke.

"Gracious," she said, "I'm a wreck! If this isn't a typical farm day, I'll eat my hat, and I need my hat. Nothing ever happens here, Jeanne. I wish I could return to the city with you, and get a job."

Jeanette said, deep in her heart, "Maybe I won't be going back to the city. I'd like to stay here, too. I'm a trifle tired, too."

The yellow harvest moon, rising above the fringe of hills, peered at the two girls, riding along. To Jeanette the face in the moon was very clear and it seemed to be smiling.

THIRTEEN SKIPPED BY NEW TCA PLANE

There will be 14 passenger seats in each of the six new Lodestars ordered by the Trans-Canada Air Lines for delivery within the next few months. They will be numbered from 10 to 15 inclusive.

TRAINING TO BE MOORE LIKE VACATION

The 30-day period spent in training camps by Canadians will have much enjoyment thrown in with the business of learning how to be a soldier. The daily routine will be brightened with sports, sing-songs and recreations; after squad drills, lectures and target practices.

Huge Expansion Seen in Canada in First War Year

Twelve months ago Canada went to war. During these months—a peaceloving people forgot about its peaceloving pursuits to concentrate on the war task at hand, a task that was accelerated tremendously as shocking events overseas brought home to Canadians the stark realizations of modern warfare.

THE ARMY

Then Canada had 4,500 troops available for service in Canada and overseas. Now the Canadian Active Service Force numbers over 155,000.

THE NAVY

Last September the Navy had 1,700 officers and men. Now it has about 10,000.

THE AIR FORCE

Last September there were 4,000 officers and men in the Royal Canadian Air Force. Now there are about 25,000.

INDUSTRY

Last September Canada's aircraft production barely ran into double figures.

Now Canada has a production of 4,000 planes a year in sight and plans for increasing that figure.

Now this production has been initiated to a total of orders of \$63,000,000.

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How Big Are You Out of Your Car?

Some day, my ill-mannered friend, you are going too far. Some day when you swerve around a street corner, you are going to clip the buttons on the wrong pedestrian's vest, and he is going to catch up with you, haul you off your comfy upholstery and deal you the smacking-down you deserve.

You're a veritable Titan of self-assurance, aren't you, when you're behind an eight-cylinder engine? But how do you look on your feet? Are you the same dashing, imposing, self-assertive personage for whom the rest of the world must make room? Would you dare shove another pedestrian aside; would you jostle a six-footer? You would not, for you're just a grubby little inferiority complex who's been sublimated by a shot of gasoline.

And what's the reason for this break-neck rush of yours, anyway? You're in an automobile. You'll arrive at your destination 10, 15 or 20 times quicker than the pedestrian you're crowding back on the curb. The best he can do is five or six miles an hour. You are going 25 or 30, perhaps 40 miles an hour. Is your business ten times more urgent than his, My, my, what an important fellow you are! What vast designs, what momentous projects must occupy your waking hours to justify such impatience.

The automobile, it seems, is the devil's gift to the Little Man. Put him in control of a motor car and he's cock of the cross-walks. But if you suddenly yanked that ton or two of iron and steel out from under him, you'd find him just a measly nonentity with the mental setup of a public school bully.

You may say I'm in a lull frame of mind. You're right. And I'd get over it when fellows like you begin to use a little care, caution, courtesy and commonsense when you're driving on the streets and highways of this province.—Stratford Beacon-Herald.

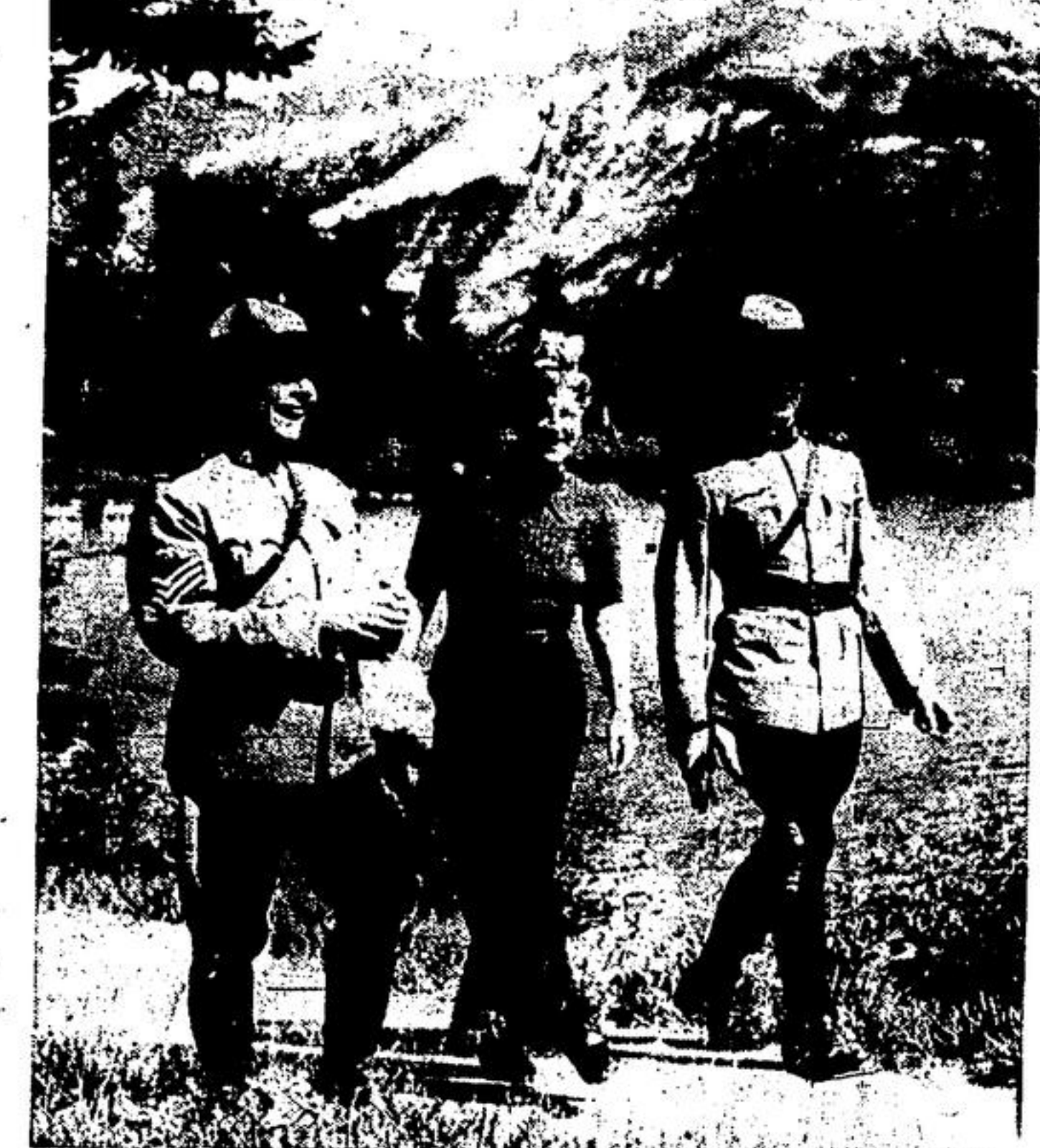
DEVELOP "MINAKI" SLEDDER

After years of experimenting with cross levels to develop the "perfect" lead sled dog, Jim Donnelly, veteran guide at Minaki Lodge, reports success. Donnelly has developed an exclusive "Minaki strain," a cross between an Irish wolfhound and husky. "Although not much to look at," Jim says, "it is a natural and perfect leader, gentle and intelligent, with great pulling power."

Quality Guaranteed

"SALADA" TEA

ESCORT FOR GRACIE AT JASPER



Appearing at Jasper Park Lodge in her first charity concert in the Canadian Rockies recently, Gracie Fields made excellent use of the spare time during her mountain visit. It was a red letter hour when she met two of Canada's famous Royal Canadian Mounted Police while strolling in the environs of Outlook Cabin, where King George and Queen Elizabeth stayed during their visit a year ago. Walking with the popular comedienne are Sgt. J. W. Faulkner, at Gracie's right, and Const. E. C. R. Woods.

CARROLL'S

Advertisement for Carroll's products including Raspberry or Strawberry JAM, OATS, SALADA TEA, C. & S. COFFEE, XXX VINEGAR, PICKLING SPICE, Ground MUSTARD, MUSTARD SEED, JAR RUBBERS, PAROWAX, CERTO Liquid Pectin, P. & G. SOAP, SOAP FLAKES, AMMONIA, FLOOR WAX, OLD DUTCH, RINSO, LUX, and CHIPSO. Includes prices and descriptions for various items.