

## May! May! the Merry Month of May!

Although spring has arrived and the daffodils and tulips are in bloom, the flowering shrubs about to burst into blossom in all their glory, it is hard to believe from the cool temperatures and the report of 30 odd centimetres of snow in Nova Scotia, that this is really spring. But it is. I'm here to tell you that the first official happening of spring has occurred... *our cows were out.*

As any farmer, especially if he is raising beef cattle, knows, cows can tell where the best, and earliest and sweetest, grass is growing, and it is never in their pasture. They will wait until it is just right, then go en masse, through fence and field to find it. Once it is found and their bellies are full, they are quite content to come home and reside peacefully until the next treat comes to mind. Our cows have now had their little May fling.

May is also the month when mothers are celebrated. Where would any of us be without one? ... or fathers, for that matter, but their turn comes next month. In celebration of the state of motherhood, children are making pictures, cards and crafts, and discussing what they can make for mother's breakfast-in-bed.

One breakfast that will always remain in my mind, as well as the dog that helped eat it, was a Mother's Day breakfast that my children made me when they were young. One decided to make me a fried egg and did so. Another, on seeing the fried egg, decided that some bacon would go well with it, so put the egg on a plate and fried up bacon in the pan. The older boys decided that toast and coffee would go well with this feast, so made the toast and then the coffee. At last the repast was on a plate and on a tray, complete with napkin and jam. But wait... it looks a little bare... what about a flower to make it look pretty. Five happy scavengers raced out of doors to find a suitable flower worthy of gracing this special tray. I learned years

later that the two lovely daffodils came from Kathleen Helferty's.

What could I do but praise the little troop for this wonderful breakfast? They clustered, like starving urchins, at the foot of my bed and watched me sup and chew. Hung on my every word of praise. Then dashed off when I at last saw a way out of this dilemma by suggesting that if they had the mess in the kitchen cleaned up by the time I came down, I would make them breakfast for making me such a special treat. They went. The congealed egg, bacon that appeared permanently attached by a half inch of lard to the plate and the frozen toast went down on the floor to the dog. I drank the coffee and after waiting a suitable time, went down and made breakfast, sharing the daffodils by giving them pride of place on the breakfast table. The children couldn't quite understand, how after having eaten their offering, as witnessed by my empty plate, I could eat again so soon... for I felt I should join them. Nor could they understand why the dog wasn't at the table begging scraps.

Then we go on in the month to celebrate that wonderful mother of the previous century, Queen Victoria. Victoria died at the age of 81, having ruled England for 63 years. She bore nine children in 17 years and as one biographer says, "...no mother could have devoted more care to the organisation of the nursery than our Queen, or have had more healthy children. As the family grew year by year the nation watched with deep interest the happy home of the Queen.... all without exception of sound mind, and several very markedly above the average in intellectual vigour and capacity."

Because of her love of children, Queen Victoria was one of Lord Shaftsbury's greatest supporters in his efforts to end child labour in England, and bring about an educational system for the poor. This in-

fluence in and influence of the politics of her time, belies the notion we have developed over the years, of Victoria as a stuffy, old soul. For her day, she was a very forceful and influential woman and did much to inspire the changing social attitudes that lead to the more caring society we enjoy today. A mother and a queen, well worth celebrating.

Another mother that I celebrate, is my own. She is in her 101st year and living in a seniors' residence in Saskatoon. Here I feel that I should explain, that she was getting on when I was born, and I was very young at the time. I say that lest you suspect that I am of greater vintage than I am. Mother has seen changes in her lifetime, such as will never be seen again, from horse and buggy to space travel, from magic lantern shows to television, from a country with seven provinces, the Yukon and North West Territories to the present 10 provinces and two territories.

She homesteaded twice with her husband. Raised five children during the drought and depression in Saskatchewan and saw members of her immediate family go off in two world wars, some never to return. Through her love of the piano and violin, she brought music into many lives, both through her playing and through her teaching of children to play these instruments.

One of the funniest stories about my mother and her music, also demonstrates her ability to improvise. It happened that the organist of one of the Winnipeg churches invited mother to take her place for a month one summer, while she was on vacation. During that period, the church's lawn bowling league held its annual church parade. Imagine mother's amazement when the sexton made his way to the organ to tell her that this somewhat elderly group had assembled and were awaiting the signal to parade into church. Mother had not been f