By the Author of "Well of Gold," "Christabel,'. Etc.

# A HOME ON THE RANGE

by BENTLEY RIDGE

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**CAPTAIN DAINTRY:** An Englishman, forced by business difficulties to emigrate with his family to New Zealand.
**MYRLE DAINTRY:** His daughter, a modern young girl, who discovers a new way of living—and loving—in the wilds of the new country.
**REX WILDE:** A gay, wealthy, irresponsible young man, whom Myrle promises to marry.
**GEORGE TELLFORTH:** A young but sullen and secretive widower, who loves Myrle but who is already engaged to be married.

### A CHILD IS BORN
### CHAPTER X

"I wish my man would come," Mrs. Henty said, fervishly. "I'd have thought he'd have been here before now."

"He couldn't possibly have got through so soon," Myrle assured her. "The road is probably blocked for forty miles, or more."

It was late that night, and they were four in the tent Myrle had found in the Henty's shed, and pitched in the garden; Myrle and Evelyn and Mrs. Henty, and a young Henty not three hours old.

Every now and again the earth would tremble, and a low rumble would come muttering across the dark country. The earth tremor was still persisting, but the petulant scream of the baby was a reassuring sound.

"If they cry it means they're all right," said Myrle.

She was in terror lest she might not have done all she could. Little Henty had come too early into the world Somewhere she had heard that in that case a baby should be wrapped in cotton wool, soaked in olive oil. There was no olive oil, but there was lard to be rescued from where it had been thrown on the kitchen floor, and butter muslin Mrs. Henty used for making cheese. Myrle had swathed the baby until he looked like a small cocoon.

He was warm enough in his mother's arms on a mattress Myrle had ragged from the house. The night was hot and close. Nothing more could be done.

"I wish I wasn't so scared," said Mrs. Henty, softly.

"Someone will come to-morrow," replied Myrle. "We must try to sleep."

Evelyn, even her interest in the baby exhausted, had fallen asleep.

But now it was all over, Myrle felt ill. She lay on her blanket on the hard ground and trembled. Her head was a jumble of the thousand and one things she had done, the makeshift devices to which her limited knowledge had prompted her. Groping for things in the wreckage of the house lighting a fire outside to boil water; hastening to and fro in an agony of anxiety.

"You're shaking like anything," said Mrs. Henty, beside her in the dark.

"I know I am. I'll be all right."

In the middle of the night a wind sprang up so suddenly in the stillness that when the first gust struck the tent Myrle was seized with terror

What did it mean? What new horror was this?

But the wind eased and blew steadily and gently; it was only the well-known nor'-wester.

She snatched a little sleep, only to be wakened by the ground lurching under her body, a cry of fear from Evelyn, and an uneasy rattle from the house behind them.

Then everything was still again. The sky was grey in the tent flap. Thank God!—the morning at last!

"Is he all right?" Myrle asked Mrs. Henty, anxiously.

Mrs. Henty said he seemed to be just the same.

Myrle went out into the dim light. The morning star burned bright and steadily; the unalterable sky seemed to belie the uneasiness of the earth.

"Someone is sure to come soon," thought Myrle, doggedly.

She lighted a fire with pine branches; water had to be fetched from the creek below the house in an old petrol tin, as the pump produced only a trickle of mud.

Evelyn soon joined her.

"I expect you must have been quite worn out."

"I slept practically all night."

"Will Daddy come soon?" Evelyn wanted to know.

"I expect so," said Myrle. "Joe will be here soon, too I expect. I thought they might get through last night."

She spoke wih cheerful centainty, but was really far from certain. Why had not Joe come last night? He must have read the note on his door if he had gone back to the homestead. He or some other of the men would have surely come at once. They had horses—it would not have taken them long; surely if the river had not deterred her, it would not stop them.

She thust aside her anxiety. The first thing to be thought of was food for Evelyn and Mrs. Henty. The cow was lowing diconsolately in the paddock.

"I can't milk her," said Myrle in dismay. The men had done the milking at "Petersdown."

"I can!" cried Evelyn.

She was overjoyed at being able to display her ability. The roof of the cow bale had collapsed, and they had to milk the cow in the open meadow, with Myrle holding her head. After much kicking and some spilt milk, she yielded them about a quart in the bottom of a petrol tin.

On the previous day they had finished the half loaf Myrle had rescued from the ruins of Mrs. Henty's smashed bread bin. But there was meat in the safe, which still clung miraculously to the wall of the shed.

"I had a batch of loaves in the oven when the quake came," Mrs. Henty said "But I don't suppose you'll find much of them left."

Myrle picked her way over the overthrown furniture, some broken crockery and a pool of soup, and found the oven intact. Six loaves, rather pale, but undamaged, met her thankful eyes.

She carried them all out and stored them in the meat sale.

### THE TERROR RETURNS

Soon Mrs. Henty was proppped up on her pillows in the tent, drinking tea and eating bread and butter with a good appetite.

"How do you feel?" asked Myrle anxiously.

"Not so bad," said Mrs. Henty. "Whenever there's a shake I feel a bit sick, though. I wish my man would come."

"He'll be here soon," said Myrle.

She made Mrs. Henty wait until the sun was well up and the day was warm, before they attended to the baby. He seemed alive enough, though he did not cry, and seemed inclined to wish merely to sleep—Myrle trembling in her efforts to hurry, soon had him back under the blankets again.

Evelyn watched the road. The sun climbed higher. The road remained empty. Human life other than their own seemed to belong to some former existence.

Myrle, though she was painfully restless, knew that the only thing to do was to wait. She could not leave the others alone while she went away to look for help, though the subsiding tremors of the earth came less often, every half hour or so, instead of every few minutes.

At noon they were still alone. Mrs. Henty, who had borne up so well, was feeling worse and began to cry.

"Why hasn't Jack come? Something's happened to him — I know it has! He's been killed down in Christchurch!"

Myrle did her best to cheer her, got them some cold meat and bread, and gave Mrs. Henty some milk.

"I'm going to walk to the bridge," she said. "I might see someone in the 'Petersdown' direction."

"You won't go further will you?" said Mrs. Henty, instinctively clutching her baby with a look of dread.

"Can I come?" said Evelyn turning pale.

Myrle realized then how completely her presence sustained them.

"No, Evelyn you stay here and look after Mrs. Henty. I won't be long. I promise I won't go far."

They looked at her uneasily.

She set off on the tossed cracked road. Out alone in the empty turlocland she was filled with fears, too nearly rational to be suppressed.

"Is this the end of the world? Is it possible that the rest of New Zealand has been destroyed? Are we the only ones left alive?"

Her lips, for some reason, were dry and swollen.

The sun shone, the broom still flourished by the roadside, the day was bright was a kind of cruel mockery.

At every turn of the road she hoped to see someone coming. But in all the vast country there was not a sign of life, except for a few sheep grazing on the rugged hillsides.

At the river she looked over at a like loneliness on the other side. The waters flowed past the wrecked bridge "Petersdown" was hidden by the fold of the hills at the back. She looked away towards distant "Black Hill," where the plantation in which the house stood was visible on the cliff top. She fancied she saw a drift of smoke over it.

Was someone at "Black Hill?"

She thought of Tellforth instantly. But if he were alive he would have gone looking for Evelyn at "Petersdown." He would have found the note she had left.

When she looked again the drift of smoke seemed to be gone. She stared, she could not see it.

She almost cried in loneliness and despair.

She wanted to cross the river and find out what had happened. But supposing she were drowned in trying to swim across? The only hope for Mrs. Henty and the baby lay in her looking after them. She dared not risk risk it. Myrle set her teeth and turned back.

She talked to Mrs. Henty when she got back about her relatives in Waihi.

"Did they know you'd be up here alone?" asked Myrle.

"No. There's only my mother and sister there, anyway. Mother's got a bad heart; this'll have upset her pretty bad. Jack would have gone straight through Waihi yesterday without stopping—he was in a hurry to get back. Oh, dear, I wish I knew what's happened."

"So there was no one except myself and Jack who knew you were alone up here?"

"Not that I know of," said Mrs. Henty.

"What a good thing it was you sent us that fruit. If you hadn't I wouldn't have known it, either," said Myrle.

The conversation reassured her a little. Jack Henty might have been killed or injured in the town. In the chaos of everything after the quake, it might be that no one locally would think of going out to see how the Henty's were.

An idea occurred to her, and she set off for the river again an hour later, carrying a bright red jersey belonging to Mrs. Henty. She tied it on to a stout stick and planted it like a flag on a high point of the cliff above the bridge. Someone on the other side might see it, perhaps, and some over to investigate.

She got back when the sun was sinking. Another night of loneliness and sinister tremors was to be endured. Her anxiety had become an appalling conviction of total disaster, which she could not shake off.

"Isn't anyone ever coming?" said Evelyn, tremulously.

"Soon!—soon! Don't be impatient! Let's have some nice hot cocoa for tea," said Myrle encouragingly. "I found a tin on the floor in the kitchen."

They put the cocoa over the fire to boil, but they never drank it. A sudden trembling came, and the ground rose under them with a lurch and a roar. Myrle started up to run to Mrs. Henty in the tent, took two steps, and went flat on the grass. She lifted her face to see trees and bushes rocking wildly, and the wooden house threshing like a willow in a gale.

Evelyn was screaming hysterically.

At length the quake subsided. Myrle rested a moment, getting her breath, and then she scrambled up.

"It's all right, Evelyn! Don't get upset! It's all over. You aren't hurt and I'm not hurt."

She took Evelyn's hand hurried to see how Mrs. Henty was. Mrs. Henty was very white, and half-crying, but still lying on her mattress, holding the baby. The tent stood firm.

"That was nearly as bad as the first one we had," gasped Mrs. Henty.

"Yes, I didn't think there would be another like it," Myrle forced a cheerful smile. "Well, anyhow, the worst that has happened is that we've lost our cocoa."

The fire had to be re-lighted, more water fetched. Myrle felt too sick and shaken to eat, but she talked as much and as cheerfully as she could.

Night descended, lonely, inexorable.

Myrle lay on her face on her blanket. She had walked sixteen miles, she had worked incessantly, she had struggled to keep Mrs. Henty and Evelyn going. She felt weak, filthily dirty, and ill. Was it all an hallucination? Had life run off its usual track into some peculiar nightmare? She felt as though she was losing her reason.

A stupor of weariness overcame her.

When she wakened it was morning.

She rose up with one determination She would cross the river immediately and try to get help. Mrs. Henty seemed well enough, except for a misery of worry about her husband. At the very worst she could fend for herself now. The baby had increased its hold on life to the extent of crying for nourishment.

Myrle got food for Mrs. Henty and Evelyn, and then explained to them what she intended to do.

"I'd rather you went," Mrs. Henty said, looking rather white. "I was afraid of you leaving yesterday, but to-day I'd rather you went. I just can't stay still here any longer, not knowing about my man."

"Very Well," said Myrle. "But you must promise on no account to get up while I'm away. Evelyn will look after you—won't you Evelyn?"

Evelyn nodded, looking scared but determined to be brave.

Myrle showed her where the food was in the safe, impressed on her the necessity for saving matches when she lit the fire.

"I expect to be back quite soon, but if I shouldn't come Evelyn, just go on looking after Mrs. Henty as long as possible. Don't be frightened. In a day or two it won't be so bad for Mrs. Henty to get about again."

"But won't you be coming back?" said Evelyn, her lip trembling. "Are you going to swim the river?"

"Yes, and of course I shall come back; I hope I shall be back here again before the evening. It's only just in case; you mustn't be frightened by my telling you what to do."

"I'll do my best," said Evelyn bravely.

### "TELLFORTH!"

Moved by the effort the poor child was making not to look utterly dismayed, Myrle put her arms about her and huugged her tightly. Evelyn clung to her and cried for a moment, asking:

"Do you think Daddy will ever come?"

"I'm going away now to find him for you," said Myrle, resolutely.

She wrapped up some bread and butter and some cold meat in a parcel, washed her face, and combed her dishevelled hair. Having done all she could to brace Evelyn and Mrs. Henty to face their fears without her, she set off to look for a world that seemed to have been completely lost overnight. A fancy haunted her that she would look down on the plains of Canterbury and find them become but a part of the sea. As she walked stiffly along in the morning sunshine she wondered what she would do. Her mind was too dulled to imagine what life would be like if everything worth living for was lost. But there were vegetables in the Henty's garden and the cow and plenty of sheep about. They could live. Her fantastic thoughts even took her to the point of considering that if Mrs. Henty's boy grew up he could marry Evelyn and they could continue the race.

She pushed on doggedly. She was about a mile from the river, approaching a bend in the road when a sound fell on her ears. It sounded like the clip-clop of horses' hoofs.

She stopped dead, listening. The sound came again. Wildly she ran to meet it. As she rounded the bend she came full upon them; two men on horseback trotting briskly up the road from the river.

One was Joe—and the other was Tellforth!

She had to dodge to avoid them; Joe's horse shied and nearly threw him, and he shouted:

"By gum—here she is!"

Tellforth pulled up more easily, and Myrle stumbling and suddenly dizzy found herself grasping his stirrup leather for support.

"How did you get up here? Is Evelyn with you?"

She heard Tellforth's questions, but for a moment she couldn't reply, except to gasp:

"Yes, Evelyn is here. She's all right. Thank heaven you've come."

Utterly exhausted she burst out sobbing. Tellforth bent in his saddle; she felt his hand on her shoulder, a warm strengthening grip. His voice was gentle;

"There now—everything's fine."

Myrle controlled herself with an effort, and stood back.

"Are my mother and father all right?"

"Yes, all safe."

Tellforth dismounted and Myrle tried ineffectually to dry her eyes on the back of her hand. Tellforth, with a heightened colour in his face, offered her his handkerchief. Joe sat his horse patently, excitement mingled with his embarrassment.

While Myrle dried her eyes, Tellforth felt for his cigarettes and, fumbling lighted one. She noticed, as she recovered her calm, that his hand was shaking.

He spoke, rather loudly and cheerfully as a man does who wants to hide his emotion:

"Rex and your father and I haxe been scouring the country for you and Evelyn. We all arrived at "Petersdown' at about the same time. We thought you must have gone down to Christchurch or been taken down by somebody. No one had seen you, of course. It never occurred to us that you might be over here."

"Do you know," said Joe impressivley, "they're digging for you and Evelyn under the fallen cliff back there by the river."

"But didn't you find my note? I left a note on your door saying I was going up to see Mrs. Henty."

"I never found it," said Joe.

"I knew Mrs. Henty was alone. And then I couldn't leave her—She's—she's had a baby."

"What?' said Joe. "And you all alone up here?"

They stared at her, Tellforth, with his eyes narrowed.

"And how did you get across the river?" he asked.

"Evelyn and I swam across. It was all I could do. I know it was a risk. I was afraid you would be angry at my taking Evelyn, but I couldn't leave her and I had to go to Mrs. Henty." Myrle became almost incoherent in her explanation.

"Don't apologize," said Tellforth quietly, while Joe uttered a kind of snort and said:

"Well, you haven't done so badly!"

(To be Continued)

## To Improve T. N. O. Service Porquis Jct. to Cochrane

There have been several references recently in The Advance to complaints about the equipment on trains between Porquis Junction and Cochrane. One man writing The Advance said:— "The coaches between Porquis and Cochrane are rotten, and between Cochrane and Porquis are the some." That seems logical, in part, at least. The Cochrane council passed a resolution asking the T. & N. O. to do better, and this resolution was endorsed by the Timmins town council. The following is from last week's issue of The Cochrane Northland Post:—

"Mr. C. O. Baker, Traffic Manager of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway, was in town to-day, and spent considerable time in company with Mr. A. T. King in going into complaints about the coaches ordinarily used on the run between Cochrane and Porquis Junction. As a result of the town council's recent resolution asking for improved service, Mr. Baker had conferences with mayor J. M. Penney and public works chairman W. G. Martin.

"There is an acute shortage of equipment at the present time, Mr. Baker pointed out, and no possibility of remedying the shortage. However, measures designed to improve the comfort of passengers in the coaches have already been agreed upon, and as the equipment is overhauled in the railway shops at North Bay it is expected that other changes can be made."

## Effort to Revive the Cochrane Board of Trade

At the present time effort is being made to revive the Cochrane Board of Trade which has been dormant for some years. Recently the Cochrane town council appointed a committee to study the best plans for reconstruction after the war, so far as Cochrane is concerned. This committee found that a board of trade was practically essential for them to get anywhere in tackling the problem. Consequently the council committee has sent out an S. O.S. for the board of trade to re-organize at Cochrane.

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# A profession of faith

We have faith in Canada
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We have faith in her present * in the part she is playing to save the world from tyranny...in her young men and women who serve on land and sea and in the air...in her workers who labour for more than wages...in every man and woman and child striving for Victory.
We have faith in her future * believing that she is destined to exert an ever-increasing influence in world affairs, and in the shaping of tomorrow, when many will turn to her with new hope.

We have faith in more than the statistics of Canada's bank clearings and her car-loadings, the vastness of her untapped resources, or even the glorious war record of a people numbering less than twelve millions.
OUR faith is a faith in a land we love, whose soul speaks to us from every free acre of Canadian soil... in the splendour of the Rockies at sunset, the blue mystery of a Laurentian dawn, the quiet of an Ontario woodlot, the far call of prairie horizons, the sound of surf on the Atlantic shore and the wash of the Pacific tides. It speaks to us from churchyards where Canadian dead lie beneath the tribute of English blossoms ...from the poppied fields of France and Flanders...from the winged and seafaring and mechanized epics of a new war.
OUR faith is a faith in her people... people, noted and obscure, with whom we daily rub shoulders...and by whose united effort, sacrifice and creative vigour the greater Canada of tomorrow will be built.
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