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An a little bit of June;
A little bit of August
When the day approaches noon;
A little bit of winter
As the sky gets cold and gray;
A little bit of everything
In one October day;
Laughing with the sunshine
And a'trembling with the storm,
Complainin' 'cause it's chilly now,
And then 'cause it's warm;
It keeps us all a'livin' in
A most uncertain state
A makes a feller jes' like
A weather vane!

HESPER
...BY...
HAMLIN GARLAND
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CHAPTER VII.
NCE more in Valley Springs, Ann's old self returned, and the scenes through which she had passed became as unreal as the happenings of a dream, but her sense of injury deepened into dislike of Raymond and the life he represented. Therefore she took care not to see him as he was borne into Barnett's house. "He is nothing to me, and I must decline to be troubled by him further," she said as she was dressing to go out.

Mrs. Barnett, however, was waiting and when the carriage in which he lay came to the door hastened to take his hand in both of hers and make him welcome. "I'm glad you came, Rob. We are going to have you out in a few days. How do you feel?"

In his weak state he could only boyishly say: "Oh, I'm on the up grade! You and Don are mighty good to me."

Thereafter Raymond abandoned himself to the joy of traveling back to life along such ways of wanton luxury as he had never known. He permitted himself to be waited upon, even by Mrs. Barnett, without protest, and when Louis came stealing into the room in awe and love his heart went out to the boy as to a brother.

"Hello, youngster!" he called. "You needn't walk so soft voiced. I'm worth a dozen dead men yet."
The boy's face shone. "I thought you were asleep. Can I do anything for you?"

"No; only come and sit down and talk to me. What have you been doing since you came back to the Springs?"
Louis took a seat. "Nothing of any consequence, except to make some drawings of the ranch. It's dull here. I want to go into the mountains."

"You're a wonderful youngster. Wait till I'm able to travel, and we'll go up into the high country together."
Louis clapped his hands. "Won't that be glorious? I'd rather do that than anything else in the world."
"How is your sister?" asked Raymond, with abrupt change of tone.

"She is well. She's always well. We just came in from a drive. That's the reason I was here to help you. Did it hurt you going upstairs?"
"Not a bit. The boys handled me as tenderly as a skee of pork. Let me see your drawings, will you?"
The boy's face glowed. "Well, you just wait." And he rushed away to get them.

Mrs. Barnett upon meeting Ann said, with deep feeling: "Rob's illness has transformed him. He said to me a few moments ago: 'If you can find the man who shot me, reward him. He has done me a great service. I am lost in a dream of luxury.' He asked after you with emotion and said he would like to thank you for your service to him."

Ann, listening intently, remained coldly impassive of face. "Mrs. Scribbles was the really efficient person. I have a horror of sick people, and as for wounds"—She shuddered for lack of words.

Mrs. Barnett went on: "I like to do for him, he's so grateful and so obedient. He says just the right thing always. There must be good breeding back of the man, although he never mentions his family. There's some love affair to account for his being here. He's too handsome not to have had engagements. Don't you think so?"
"He insisted not," replied Ann. "He begged me to consider that his life had been quite commonplace."

"I don't believe it. He couldn't be commonplace. He said to me just now, 'Sometimes a man must hear the wash of the river of death to realize how futile he has allowed his life to become. His gratitude toward you is pathetic.'"
Ann frowned. "It's worse; it's oppressive. I did so little, and that little was not done with a gracious spirit. I didn't enjoy it then nor in retrospect."

"You mustn't let him know that. His worship of you positively irradiates his face, and he's very handsome. He insists that you were heroic."
Ann grew a little petulant. "I wish you wouldn't try to make mountains out of molehills. It was a most unpleasant experience, and I wish to forget it, not to have it dinned in my ears forever. My going was folly, and my stay in that ghastly place was a torment. Please allow me to put it out of my memory."
Ann had a moment of bitter homesickness, a feeling she had never known before. This mad trip into the west with a reckless and supersensitive boy grew each moment more disastrous. At the moment she fairly hated her cousins and all the guests at their table and longed, with unspeakable hunger, for the roll of carriages on Fifth avenue and the glitter and tumult of Broadway. The stony, uninterested stare of her mother was better than this prying, this overstrained interest on the part of Jeannette.

monplace young eastern men who have tried their fortunes in the west and failed," she said. "Why should I be burdened with any further care of him?"

At dinner Don told again for the fortieth time the story of Raymond's shooting and in spite of Ann's protests put her in as the heroine, which reinfuriated her almost to the point of leaving the table. The "Ah's" and "Dear me's!" and "By Jove's!" volleying from the listeners were quite insupportable. One lady said, "Poor fellow!"

"Not at all," said Dr. Braide. "He was a lucky dog. I'd be shot any day to get such a nurse."
Jeannette saw the angry flush on Ann's face and hastily turned the conversation into less personal channels.

Thus every influence swept her toward a dislike of the wounded man's very name, and thereafter she ignored his presence in the house, his being in the world, as though he did not exist. She neither asked after his health nor replied to any report or question made by her brother concerning him.

Louis brought to Raymond one day a small limp book in red leather, which he proffered with the air of giving a gem.
"What's this?" asked Raymond. "Your diary?"
"No; my father's. He was out here before I was born, when the Indians were here."

Raymond opened the volume with languid interest, but soon realized that he was looking into the past through the eyes of a poet. Part of it was written in ink very legible, but in a fine running hand, while other of the pages were hastily scribbled in pencil and not to be easily deciphered. Plainly the record had been made under great disadvantages and in the field. The inks were of various colors, some watery blue, some dusty black.

Louis opened the book at the front, wherein the picture of a slender, smiling, handsome young fellow in sombrero and hunting clothes had been pasted.
"He enjoyed his new hat, didn't he?" said Raymond, to whom the essential incongruity of the refined face and border ruffian torgery first appealed.
"You're the image of your father?" he added, looking keenly at the boy. "He don't look much older in this picture, taken at Sylvanite. Well, Sylvanite was a wild town in those days. Is there much about it in the book?"

"Ten pages. He wrote a page of fine script every day, but I don't care so much for that—these stage rides, and the big canyons, and crossing the rivers, and the Indians—he saw lots of Indians—the Utes—these are what interested me."
Raymond became profoundly interested in this book. There was an appeal in the closing entry which touched him profoundly. The entry was headed "The Last View" and closed with these words: "I love my home and my friends in the east, but this primeval world has laid its spell upon me. I shall come again next year."

"Did he come again?" asked Raymond.
"No," answered Louis sadly. And it was soon evident to Raymond that the lad knew very little of his father beyond the message in the worn little book.
"Leave this with me, Louis. I want to read it all," he said. And the boy was glad of this interest.

Mrs. Barnett came in later and asked, "What are you reading?"
"It is a journal kept by Louis' father. Did you know him?"
"Oh, very well! He was my favorite uncle."

"Tell me of him. Who was he—how did he come to make this trip?"
Mrs. Barnett took a comfortable seat. "I don't know where Uncle Phil got his streak of sentiment. He was one of six brothers, all successful business men; keen, practical—you know the kind. But Phil—well, he was the odd sheep—he always seemed a boy to me. He worked in the bank, but his mind was on other things. I don't remember how they came to send him out here, but I can recall perfectly the effect he had on me when talking of his trip. He glorified this country. He saw the mountains as the old time landscapists pictured them. When I first came I wept with disappointment, the range seemed so prosaic by contrast. He talked of nothing else for a year. Then he married and gradually ceased referring to his experiences."

"He never came again, Louis tells me."
"No. His wife was not the kind of girl to go west. I don't want to say anything severe about Alicia, but she made Phil very unhappy. When Ann was born Phil wanted to call her Hesper, in memory of his trip to the west, but Alicia cried out against it. It was an odd name, but it was pretty, and there was no reason why the father shouldn't have had his wish, but that was her way. She was cold and selfish even in her honeymoon. I never saw such a girl. Phil went with her to every fashionable resort in Europe, but she not merely refused to make a trip into his Hesperian mountains, but she wouldn't let him go. He used to get up into the Adirondacks now and then. I

remember, but only for a day or two. Oh, how exacting she was! After Louis was born she grew worse. She became



"You say the father called her Hesper?"

morbid. I never could see that she had a particle of maternal affection. If Ann isn't like her it is because Phil's blood is in her veins. Louis is exactly as Phil was, as I recall him when I saw him first."

"You say the father called her Hesper?" pursued Raymond, acutely interested in all that concerned Ann.
"It was his pet name for her. Few people knew it. I don't think Louis knows it, for Ann considered the name absurd as she grew older and never refers to it. I think it is a pretty name, don't you?"

"Yes. It is beautiful." His eyes took on a musing look.
Hesper! Somehow the name expressed the poetry of the father's conception, and with little else to do the wounded man gave long hours to recalling and reliving his experiences with her as his nurse.

He longed with a great longing to see her again, but to his curious shyness had been added the humility of one who feels himself unworthy to ask any favor, and the troubled look which came now and again into the lines of his face made Louis sad. The boy idealized him, made of him a wonderful being, better worth serving than any monarch, and in this strain he talked to Ann till she impatiently begged him to stop.

But in her secret heart Ann admitted that she, too, had been touched by the indefinable charm of Raymond's voice and manner, but the question of how best to check his growing power over her brother's life had become a very serious problem, for as the days wore on he put her aside as completely as she ignored his hero.

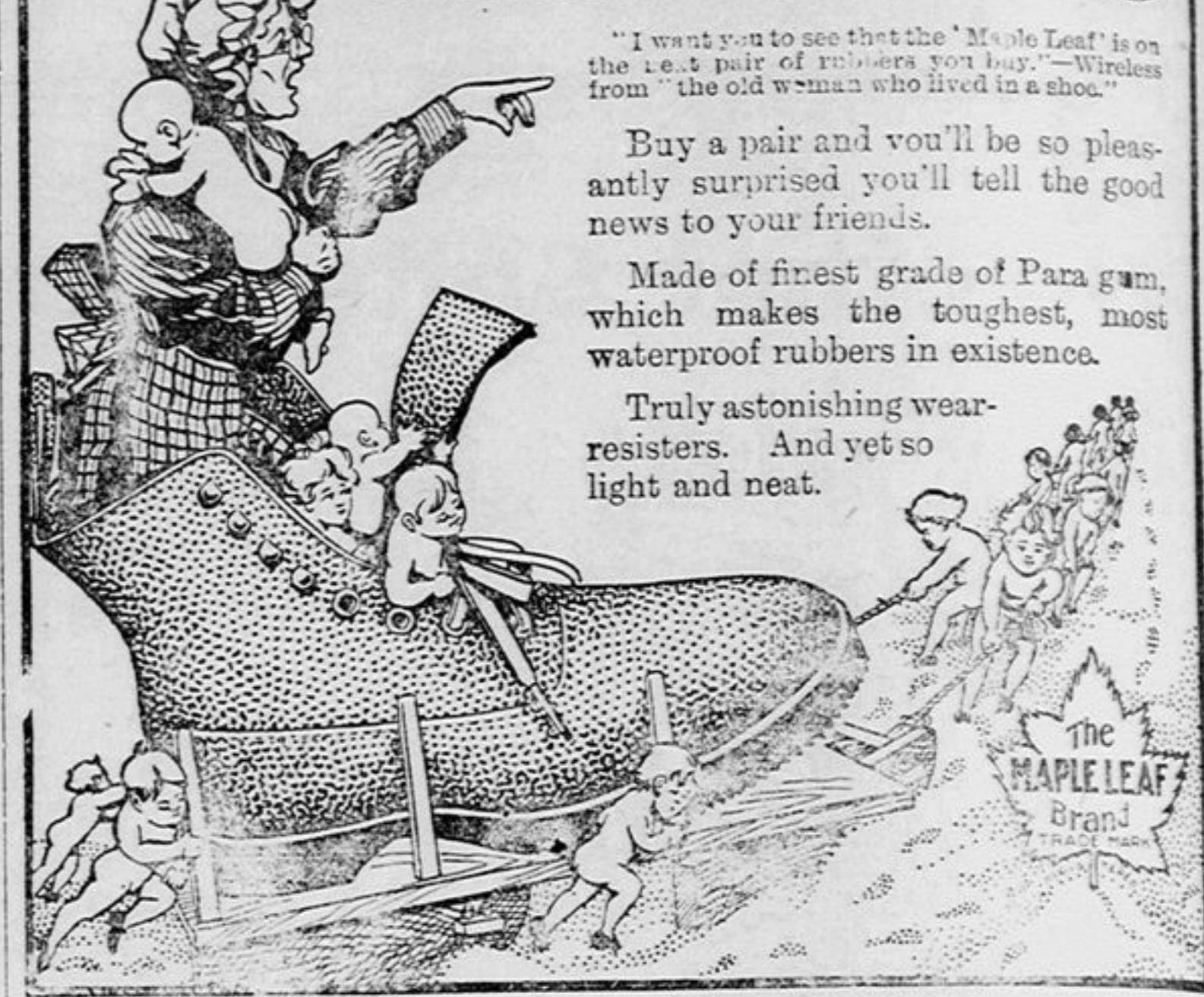
Together Raymond and the boy read the little red book, mapping the points described as best they could—a task of some difficulty, for the traveler had purposely given mythical names to the towns, rivers and peaks. It had all been a wonderland to Philip Rupert, and he took care to have no stupid or vulgar name mar the perfect effect.

There was something in all this which refined and softened the young rancher. Joined with his love for "Hesper" (as he loved to call Ann in secret), this boyish father's enthusiasms transmuted every reckless, bitter impulse into stern resolutions to enter upon a new life—a life with purpose and devotion in its course.

CHAPTER VIII.
A last there came a day when the doctor permitted his patient to be clothed and seated in an easy chair, and, calling Mrs. Barnett to him, Raymond asked, "Do you think Miss Rupert will see me now?"
"I will ask her," replied Jeannette, with due appreciation of the romantic situation.

Ann rose to comply, with a little thrill of unpleasant excitement. She did not want to see him, and yet she could not decently refuse.
At the door of the sitting room Mrs. Barnett stopped, and the girl walked

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alone, her face set in lines of cold disdain.
Raymond sat in a big, padded chair, with his back to the window and the sunlight streaming over his head. He wore a handsome gray dressing gown, and the lincs at his neck and wrists were spotlessly clean. His hands were refined—almost delicate in effect—and his clean shaven face and his well brushed, abundant brown hair gave evidence of a most careful toilet. Something mystically solemn and sweet was in his eyes, and his lips trembled as he greeted her. "This is very good of you. Pardon me, won't you? I am forbidden to stand."

"I beg you, do not think of it."
"Dare I ask you to be seated? I want to thank you more suitably than I have been able to do for what you did for me."
"Please don't, Mr. Raymond. I assure you I deserve no credit. I went out there under compulsion, and what I did was determined by pressure of circumstances. I'm not a bit of a heroine, and I do not like praise."

He was chilled by her tone and for a moment hesitated. "A sick man may be forgiven some things," he began to say at last. "I may as well confess that I have been longing to see you. I have been trying for many days to rise and dress in order that I might have you come in. You must let me ask your forgiveness for the rude way in which I received you that day. All that I did seem incredible to me now, like the action of another man."

A gleam of amusement crossed Ann's face. "I didn't blame you. I'm willing to admit that your position was trying."
He was too exalted of mood to respond to her quizzical tone. "I had lived for years quite apart from any association with cultivated people, and besides I had begun to feel that I was wasting my life and had become irritable. I went to the ranch to pay off a debt, and I—well, I had fallen into a groove. You recalled me to better things."

"I and the bullet," she said rather flippantly, for she was becoming apprehensive of the trend of his confidences.
He ignored her interruption, or, rather, he plowed across it with something like his old time resolution. "It is due to you to know—or at any rate I desire you to know—that I am not a fugitive from justice. Baker thought he was being funny."

"I am not so dull as you think, Mr. Raymond. I understood him perfectly."
"I am glad you did. It is true I am estranged from my family, but it is not due—My faults have never been criminal."
"Please do not feel it necessary to explain," interrupted Ann. "It is painful to you, and—and it is wholly unnecessary. I beg you to desist. I hope you will understand that I am in no sense doubting you."

A shadow of pain crossed his face. Somehow the reality of their meeting was not as he had imagined it.

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