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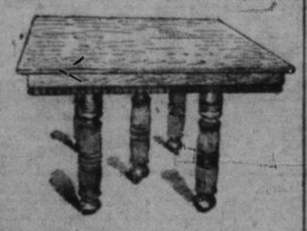

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Robert J. Reid

The Passage

By LOUISE OLNEY.

Prescott found his suit pleasant and ridiculously smooth. He had always thought of courtship as a stormy passage from vagabondage to responsibility, but Ione Ward did not impress one as a responsibility. If she gave little she demanded less. There were no harrowing periods of estrangement, no disconcerting scenes of reconciliation. It was ideally calm and correct and confident.

It was by the very lightest train of circumstances that it had begun at all. Prescott had dashed out from the office one day to buy a wedding present for the last of the old college fellows to go into the united state—that is, the last one save himself. While he was giving the address for the electric chafing dish, it occurred to him, to wonder how it would seem to swing into the procession, too. He was young, good looking, successful. There was no reason why he did not marry, except the lack of a girl. This struck him forcibly. He was still thinking about it when he returned to the office and took up his customary position at his desk, eyes fixed on his stenographer's left ear—a shell-like member with a tendril of brown hair around it—in direct range of his vision.

He really knew nothing else about her except that she was prompt and efficient. But no stenographer for him, thanks! He had always advocated that love should be guided. If one must love, why not love advisedly, with social position, money, looks thrown in.

Then the 'phone brought him out of his reverie. Ward, the president of his company, speaking for his wife, begged his presence at a dinner that evening. Candidly, a guest had failed. Would he fill it? Yes, he would. He remembered thrillingly that Ward had an attractive daughter.

She was amazingly so that evening. They were thrown together at dinner when she talked very well and afterwards she sang and played, all with a subtle deference to him that fitted neatly into his vague matrimonial intentions. It seemed the beginning of the end. There was no family opposition. Miss Ward, herself, typified all he had considered admirable in a wife. He began to pay her serious attentions.

But Prescott with the instinctive self preservation of the bachelor refrained from making a pointblank proposal. He intended to advance into matrimony gradually so as to incur no shock. It was, then, rather a cruel dispensation when he ran up unexpectedly late one afternoon with the half-formed intention of dining with the family and spending the evening. While the maid searched the upper rooms for Miss Ward he sauntered into the drawing-room and, with retreat cut off, overheard a conversation in the library between mother and daughter.

"You must land him," said Mrs. Ward peevishly. "With you father's bad investments, you on our hands, Marie to bring out, Clifton at Yale and the twins in Europe it's impossible to make ends meet."

"It is not easy to land an unimpassioned lover, Mamma. He's as emotional as a crawfish. But I do like him and his income certainly appeals to me in view of the fact that I'm an encumbrance here." Even a cold blooded girl's voice can quiver when she is thrust out from home.

"Now, don't be silly," protested her mother. "He's a good catch and you are getting on—26 next month. It is really a burden to have him here so constantly; I must keep up the table and have an extra maid."

The maid returning and opening a door somewhere, caused a draught that shut off the library with a slam, and in the interval Prescott fled to the hall. When Miss Ward came he was still excited enough to be breathless and he explained hurriedly that he would not be able to come up this evening after all and departed amid entreaties to remain.

He breathed like a runner in from a race. It was like having narrowly escaped something that had almost seized him. Something was wrong. Either fellows who married never overheard intimate family conferences, or else some families cloaked the ugly facts with polite illusion. Prescott was stunned to find that he had had illusions after all. The sordidness of the Wards shocked him. He found himself rushing back to the office. It was still early; perhaps he could bury himself in work.

He was afraid he had committed himself, that he could not honorably withdraw from his suit. Of course it was possible to go elsewhere. That would be better than wounded conceit. He might have to break away by degrees, to avoid explanations. He felt hunted, humiliated as he dashed into his office and stopped suddenly on the threshold, the door swinging behind him.

He remained quite still and looked at his stenographer. The desk light was on and it turned her dark hair into a golden aura and shed the subtle shadows of a cameo over her delicate profile. The click of her machine had drowned the noise of his arrival and she sat quite unconscious of his presence, a trifle drooped with weariness, simply girlish and appealingly sweet. Prescott had never really seen her before. He had always stopped at her left ear.

He walked over to her desk and stood looking down at her.

"Oh, why don't you go?" he asked, and felt strangely stirred that she was startled and then reassured to find it was he who spoke.

"I can't," she said, "till I get these letters out."

"Couldn't you leave them till tomorrow?" he asked, drawing up a chair.

"There will be others to-morrow." Her eyes met his for a moment pleasantly and he discovered they were blue as Miss Ward's violets, daily sent at his expense. They gave him a thought. He leaned forward intently.

"Why do you work?" he demanded.

Her gaze fluctuated for a moment and then came back to him steadied.

"I have to," she replied, simply.

"With those eyes?" He was sorry the moment it slipped out. A flush swept over her and her hands trembled.

"I like to," she added, with quiet dignity.

He leaned forward and his voice was almost reverent.

"I'm glad you do. Don't you ever get over that idea." Then gaily, "What do you do with your magnificent salary? Buy gold mines? Or just furbelows?"

"No, I'm buying a house."

"A house!" Prescott sat up as if some one had turned on an electric current. "On fifteen per? Where?"

"Out at Inglewood. And we have a kitchen garden and flowers and a whole nest of little chickens and mushrooms and a spring and a fire place and, oh, everything!" She stopped breathless, her face aglow with the householder's pride of possession.

"Great snakes!" said Prescott awestruck. "I'm coming out to see it."

"Oh, yes, do! And mother will make one of her cream pies for you and if you just wait long enough we'll have fried chicken."

"No, I won't wait, either. Don't you know it'll take those chickens weeks to grow up? I'm coming out Sunday and hoe in the garden. Say, put on your hat and I'll run you out there in the car. I'm crazy to see that place. We'll take out steak and things and cook our own dinner. Whoopee!"

Poor Mrs. Ward striving to cover inflated household expenses, would have groaned over the tragedy of extremes could she have seen Prescott, swathed in gingham, cavorting in a spotless kitchen and slapping a thick steak up and down in boyish glee, while his stenographer washed the vegetables and an impoverished gentlewoman laid the table. The whole family groaned when Prescott's engagement was announced two weeks before the wedding, and some cutting things were said about the present tendency of young men to marry beneath them.

Prescott, himself, had nothing but gratitude for the Wards.

"They at least showed me, dear, what love was not," he confided to his bride. "And until then I did not know that I had been falling in love with you for a year. Let me look at that adorable left ear of yours again."

Also the Whale.

A Kansas fisherman declares that a catfish will purr like a tomcat when it is stroked the right way. Did he ever try stroking a German carp and hearing it sing "Hi le, ho lo?"—Kansas City Star.

And did he ever stroke a whale and hear it spout?—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Dr. Morse's Indian Root Pills

are not a new and untried remedy—our grandfathers used them. Half a century ago, before Confederation, they were on sale in nearly every drug or general store in the Canada of that day, and were the recognized cure in thousands of homes for Constipation, Indigestion, Biliousness, Rheumatism and Kidney and Liver Troubles. To-day they are just as effective, just as reliable as ever, and nothing better has yet been devised to 6

Cure Common Ills

MUST SAVE FORESTS.

Porcupine Fire Is a Warning to All Canadians.

In Porcupine the terrible loss of life in the great fire dwarfs all other considerations. On account of this loss, rather than because of the value of the property destroyed, it is timely to point out the absolute necessity of greater expenditure upon forest protection. The methods that will protect the forest from fire will save the lives of the people dwelling near the forest. The Porcupine calamity will do much to create a public opinion that will support the Government in any expenditures that it may deem necessary for the protection of the forests in the north. It is a mistake to hold the great heat responsible for the holocaust at Porcupine. Unless the kindling is ready the match will not light the fire, and the terrible heat can only be considered as the match to the kindling already prepared by the carelessness of prospectors and others, for it is the dry debris lying on the ground and not the standing trees that provides the great fuel for the bush fires.

In a report on the subject issued by the Department of Agriculture at Washington five necessary measures for the protection of the forest are given, says The Mail and Empire, as follows:

The disposal of slash from logging operations.

The development of roads, trails and fire lines.

The establishment of lookout stations and telephone lines.

The organization of a protective supervisory and fire-fighting force.

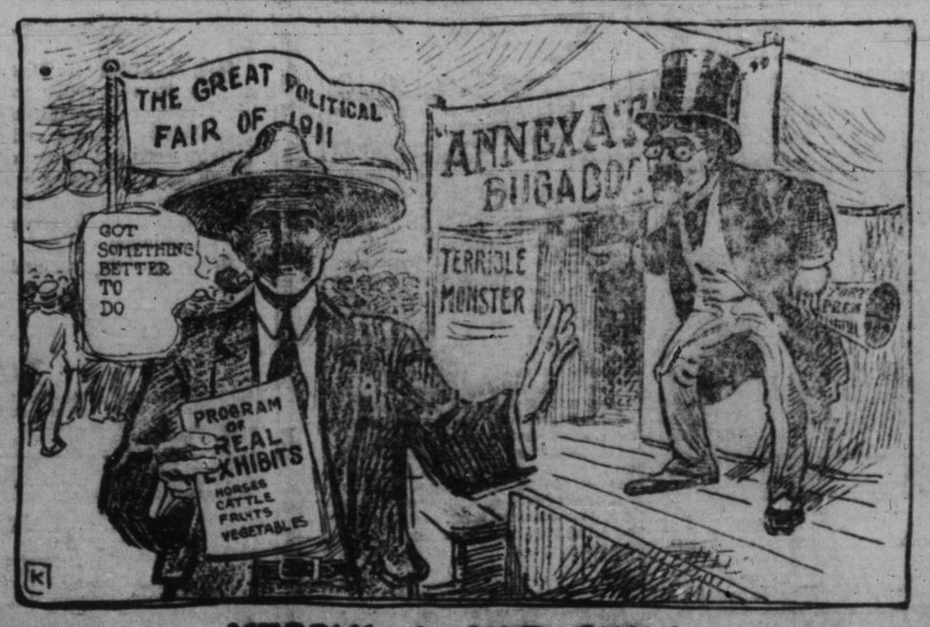
The control of insects which kill trees and cause an accumulation of dead, inflammable timber.

No one of these measures alone will protect a forest, nor can one of them be safely omitted. With all these measures in operation and carried out by an adequate force, such fires as that of the Porcupine would be impossible. To put into effect such a scheme a great expenditure of money would be necessary, but no district in the world is better able to afford it than Ontario's mining district. There has been more than enough silver taken out of Cobalt to give forest protection from North Bay to James Bay.

Apart from the necessity of protection to human life, the forests of the north are well worth preserving for their own sakes. Until a few years ago it was popularly supposed that our timber was almost as inexhaustible as our supply of fresh water, and even yet the official estimates of the remaining timber convey this impression to anyone who is not a lumberman. We have standing in Canada something less than 2,000 billion feet of timber, including the very low grades. It seems a lot, but it is not much more than half the estimated amount at one time. What we have cut and used amounts to little compared with what has been lost by fire. In our greatest lumbering region, the Ottawa valley, it has been calculated that for every foot that has been cut by lumbermen twenty feet has been destroyed by fire. A recent bulletin from the forestry branch of the Department of the Interior says that the loss to the public treasury due to forest fires is not less than $1,042,500,000.

The same report declares that the forest fires that are occurring are not so much the result of the absence of laws as the lack of enforcement of existing laws. To be properly enforced, these laws must have back of them the support of the people, for without it Legislatures will not vote the generous sums necessary for carrying on the work. It also points out that reforestration has its limits, and that it cannot undo the work of a disastrous fire. Not only are the standing trees destroyed, but often the soil is rendered permanently unfit for growing another forest. This is because the humus in the ground is consumed. In cases where the soil is not spoiled for producing a second growth it is generally found that the forest succeeding a burned pine or spruce district is made up of inferior varieties of trees, on account of the fact that aspen, poplar, birch and jack pine produce more seeds than white pine and spruce and scatter them over a wider area.

The effect of forests upon rainfall and climate generally is pretty well understood. It has been discussed previously and need not be pointed out again. The fact to bear in mind is that wisdom twenty years from now will not correct any neglect of the forests to-day; and that there is considerable neglect is indicated by the following passage from the report of the Department of the Interior: "Of all the civilized nations in the northern hemisphere, Canada is doing the least to treat the public lands as a permanent asset." When it comes to be a question of the lives of citizens, as in Porcupine, Canada is not likely to remain indifferent.—Montreal Standard.



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