

WILD GEESE

By Martha Ostenso.

Judith returned his searching glance with equal deliberateness. She took in coolly the city cut of his clothes, his flaming tie, his long shining shoes that had no bumps on the toes such as Martin's yellow Sunday shoes had; and she made no comment upon his appearance. She knew that Sven expected her to. Sven was no fool. He laughed. "When he laughed there was no woman could withstand him, he had found. He had the most engagingly male smile in the world."

"Aw, come on, Jude, you ain't sore on me," he coaxed, shaking her foot. "How are you, that's what I'd like to know."

"I'm all right," she replied coldly. "How are you?"

"Fine. Couldn't wait till I got back. Thought about you all the time, and I would o' written, too, if I thought the old man wouldn't get hold of it. Gosh, you're prettier 'a ever, Jude. Girls in town can't hold a candle to you. I've seen 'em all."

He whipped out a sterling silver cigarette case and held it so that it flashed in the sun. It seemed that he kept it out unnecessarily long to draw a cigarette from it. Judith looked away to the horizon, and her horse stamped an impatient hoof. Sven put a hand on the horse's bridle, snapped the case together and slipped it back in his pocket.

"Come riding with me some night? I'll rot here if I don't do something—or see somebody," and he, indolently blowing the smoke upward into the air and flipping off the ash of his cigarette with his forefinger. He had not done that before he went away. Do something—see somebody, that was what he wanted to do, was it? Not something or somebody in particular.

Judith sat silent, her eyes moodily on the distance.

"Oh, that reminds me," he went on, "here's something I got you. All the girls are carryin' 'em." He drew a little package out of his pocket and unwrapped it. From the tissue paper he took out a gold plated vanity case which he held up to Judith, looking at her face for the smile of surprise he fully expected to see there.

Judith gave the thing a quick glance.

Then with a swift twist of her body she forced the horse to rear upright on his hind legs, his mouth wide, nostrils distended, eyes swimming. She dropped her head against his mane, wheeled him about and was off in an instant on an animal that had gone mad.

Sven, completely dazed, stared after her, saw the horse jerk from the road and take the fence that enclosed a hayfield at a fine long sweep, like a slender boat rising on a wave.

"Well—I'll be—," he marveled. "By gosh, she's a live one. Worse'n ever. What did she get sore at, anyway?"

But Sven felt uneasily that he "new." She thought he had been showing off.

Galloping away on the horse, Judith gave way to tears.

The days grew steadily warmer and longer, the distance over field and brush took on a deeper green. Caleb's herds on the prairie west-

ward sought shelter from the noon-day sun under the trees on the bluffs, and the milch cows in the north pasture gave up nibbling sweet-grass for long moments to stand knee-deep in the tepid swamps already a-drone with insects that ricocheted like sparks across the surface of the water. The season of cold morning dews changed to that of fireflies and evening mist. The yield of the earth passed from timorous seedling to rugged stalk and stem.

But in the life in the Gare household there was no apparent change no growth or maturing of dreams or fears, no evidence of crises in personal struggle, no peak of achievement rapturously reached. There was no outward emotion or expressed thought save that which led as a great tributary to the flow of Caleb's ambition. He talked now day and night of nothing but the livestock, circled the fields by day in the cart or walked abroad with his lantern alone at night, and compared the strength of his hay and his flax with that of Skull Erickson or Joe Brund, the husband of Mrs. Sandbo's daughter Dora. The early summer season was to him a terrific prolonged hour of passion during which he was blind and deaf and dumb to everything save the impulse that bound him to the land.

His flax was growing in such a way that he scarcely dared look at it lest it should vanish like a vision. He would put off examining it for a week at a time for fear that in a twinkling something dire had happened to it.

But smoothly as affairs seemed to run on the surface of life at the Gares', there had been a subtle diverting of the undercurrent. Lind Archer perceived it and was troubled.

Sven Sandbo had come home. And Judith's behavior was incomprehensible. Lind had tried to talk to her about him, but she had walked rudely away. And when Lind had offered Judith a book to read which had been sent her from the city, the girl's manner had been much more like Ellen's than her own. She had no time for the book, she had said. Amelia was preoccupied these days, and her attitude toward Caleb had become almost one of indulgence. There had been a letting down of the familiar tension on Amelia's part, and a tightening of restraint on the part of Judith. Caleb for a time was too engrossed in the affairs of the farm to notice any one. Unlike himself, he went constantly looking for something to do rather than, as usual, for something that Martin or Judith might do. Lind felt that something momentous had happened, and then realized how impossible it was for anything at all to happen here save the monotonous round of duty.

It was Lind alone who noticed these nuances in the life at the Gares. She had much time to herself in the evenings when she sat at her desk after the children were gone, and fell often to thinking about the Gares. But since the evening of the rain she had thought more of Mark Jordan.

On the third day after her visit at the Klovacs place, Lind sat at her desk in the school house. The children had been dismissed. The room was heavy with the smell of chalk and plum blossoms. Lind felt tired and rather depressed. She closed her eyes and leaned her head against the palms of her hands. She went in detail again over the frightening and delicious night of the rain.

The door opened slowly. Mark Jordan stood framed against the light, smiling, bareheaded, his hat in his hand. Lind clapped her hands to her cheeks. Then she laughed.

"You look guilty," said Mark. He came slowly down the aisle in the centre of the room, looking at her happily.

"I confess I am," Lind said shyly. "I was thinking of inviting myself to dinner again at your house." She got up from her desk and stretched her hand out to him. He held it, looked at it, pointed to the chalk and ink stains.

"Salt of the earth," a school teacher. I was one myself for about a month. Got fired for encouraging the kids to play hockey," he laughed. He dropped her hand and strode around the room examining the drawing and knock-knacks the children had made and hung on the walls.

Taking a piece of chalk he drew on the black-board a ridiculous figure with knock-knees and turned-in eyes, and under it wrote in a childish scrawl, "Teacher." Then he stepped back ten paces and took aim with the chalk, succeeding in tossing it on the ledge of the black-board. This he did several times, stepping back a few paces farther each time.

Lind watched the game for a while half-amusedly. Then she was conscious of a faint irritation. He apparently had forgotten she was there. His restlessness shut her out. Irrelevantly she recalled the words of the ancient grandmother of the Bjarnassons: she would never know the secret of him. As he stood in profile to her, her eyes outlined the well-bred shape of his head and shoulders. He turned to her so suddenly that she started.

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"Let's walk," he said. "What's the matter?"

"Nothing," she answered. She would have to try to understand him. "I really don't want to walk now that you have decided upon it for me so peremptorily. But I'll use you as a means to control my temper, and go with you. You are terribly used to having your own way. I can see that. As if you were the only person on earth."

"I always was—until you came. Lind. I just have to get used to the idea of your presence," he said, so seriously that she had to smile.

"Did any of the Gares see you come in here?" she asked uneasily.

"The Gares? Oh, those people? Don't know. I didn't see anybody except a robin in the road, and he didn't even turn a feather," he told her, going to the window while she cleared her desk. "Why? Are you afraid of them?"

"Oh, by no means," she said hastily. "It's just that I don't want them to—oh, I want to know you separately from them—in another world, so to speak. If you go there, or talk with them, I'll feel that the idea of you has mingled with them. See? I don't want you to see them or them to see you, except, perhaps, Judith—"

She glanced at him thoughtfully, as if to make up her mind as to the good judgment that lay in the reservation.

"You walked?" she asked, after they had slipped out and had taken a little path that insinuated itself through the thick growth of fir trees behind the school house.

"No, I came on an elephant. It evaporated at your door," he said, and they both laughed.

"But curiosity impels me to see this Gare family," Mark declared a little later. "Especially Caleb Gare. They told me at Yellow Post that he's the devil himself."

"No, he's too cowardly to be the devil. He's too cowardly even for a man to want to kill him. That's why Fusi Aronson hasn't done it long ago."

She told him about Fusi.

"I'd like to meet him," Mark said. "I'd like to see the strange unity between the nature of man and earth here in the north, and of the sparseness of both physical and spiritual life."

"There's no waste—that's it," Mark observed, "either in human relationships or in plant growth. There's no incontinency anywhere. I've made trips around Yellow Post since I've been here, and I haven't talked with a single farmer who wasn't looking forward to the time when he wouldn't have a grain of any kind in his bins if he didn't rake and scrape for all he's worth now. They seem to have no confidence in the soil—no confidence in anything save their own labor. Think of the difference there would be in the outward characters of these people if the land didn't sap up all their passion and sentiment."

Lind nodded. "That's what's wrong with the Gares. They all have a monstrously exaggerated conception of their duty to the land—or rather to Caleb, who is nothing but a symbol of the land."

They sat down upon a flat rock near the trail.

"I spent some time farther north—went up to a mission when I was only a kid with one of the priests, and later after I had grown up," Mark told her. "That's a country for you. If there's a God, I imagine that's where he sits and does his thinking. The silence is awful. You feel immense things going on, invisibly. There is that eternal sky—light and darkness—the endless plains of snow—a few fir-trees, maybe a hill or a frozen stream. And the human beings are like totems—figures of wood with mysterious legends upon them that you can never make out. The austerity of nature reduces the outward expression in life, simply. I think, because there is not such an abundance of

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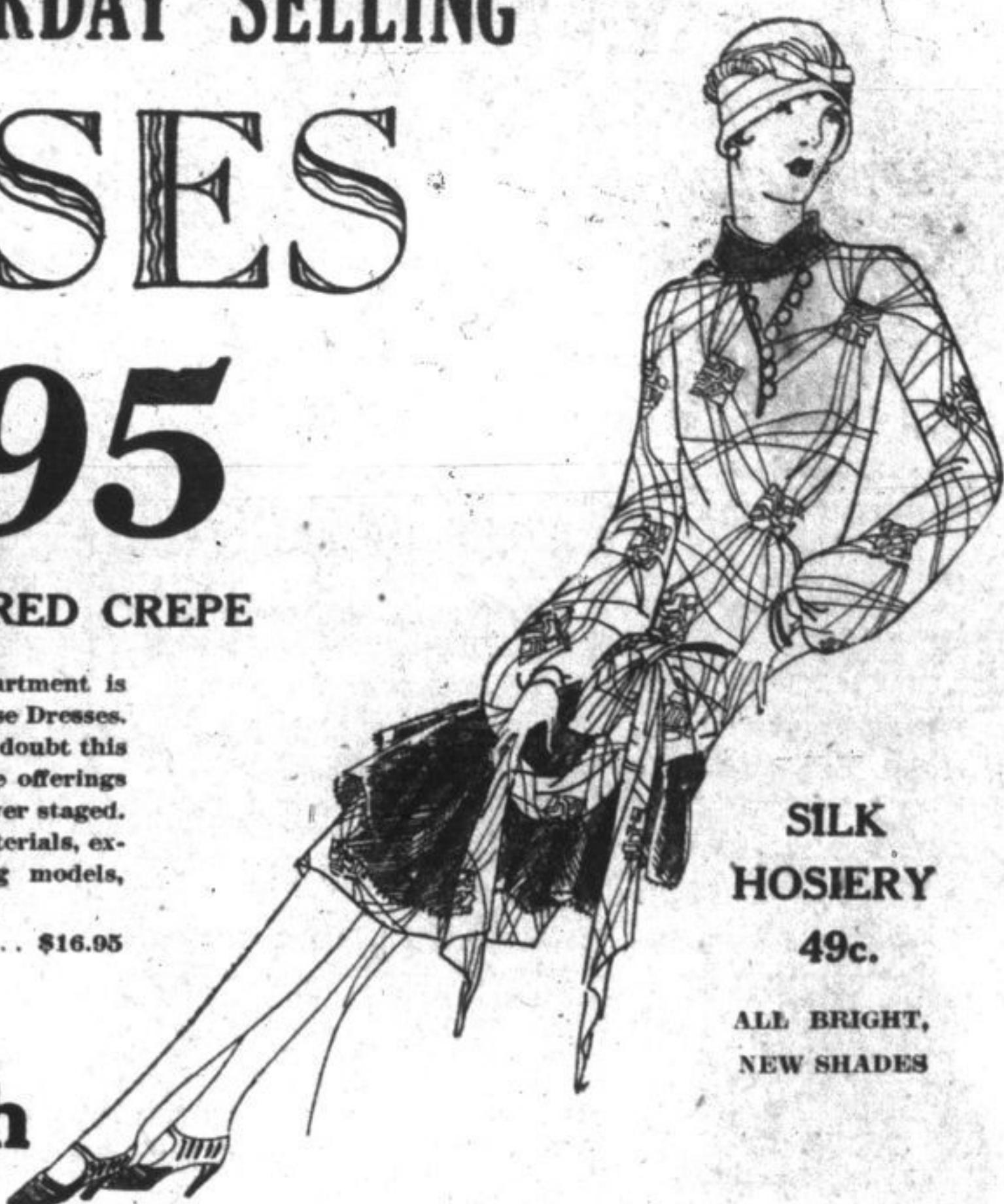
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ELGINBURG DOINGS.

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Stover are leaving for Kingston, Elginburg, April 28.—The men have enjoyed many days fishing and have brought home some good fish, as well as the usual fish stories.

Miss Madeline Boles was called home at Clarendon on Friday last to attend her little brother's funeral. Mr. M. H. Stover has been in bed for a couple of days, but he is able to be around the house again. Mr. E. H. Stover and sons are unloading a car of feed and one of salt. Mrs. Walter Pattenham is visiting at Perth Road while Mrs. (Rev.) Pattenham is attending her son, George, who is very ill in Kingston.

Rev. W. T. Mackenzie is attending the ministers' meeting in Kingston. Mr. Keith Mackenzie is visiting his parents a few days before leaving for the west.

Mr. and Mrs. Albert Stover have bought a house in Kingston. They will be leaving here in a few days. It is with deep regret that the friends bid them farewell for they will be greatly missed as neighbors and in the United church, where Mr. and Mrs. Stover have sung in the choir for years. Mrs. Stover is the president of the Ladies' Aid Society and Mr. Stover has been a member of the quarterly board for a great many years. While the loss will be keenly felt by this community, there will be gain for another. The best wishes for future happiness and prosperity go with them to their new field of labor. Miss Storing, Denbigh, has been visiting Mr. and Mrs. W. Storing. Mr. and Mrs. Louis Gordanier have been visiting at Mr. Gordanier's parents. Mr. and Mrs. Storing entertained a number of their friends on evening last week at lunch hour every one enjoyed a treat of hot maple sugar.

Envy is usually the first dividend of success.

BUILDING AT LOON LAKE.

Many Summer Cottages Are Being Reared There.

Cloyne, April 26.—Spring is here at last. The robins, crows and many other spring birds are singing around Cloyne. Roads very muddy. Nothing but water and mud everywhere. A few cars are running in spite of the mud. Service in the United church Sunday afternoon and in town hall at night and quite a good crowd attended.

A. Spencer and family moved from the Both property here to the P. Bay place, a mile north, last Friday. Miss Leitha Wheeler, who spent last week with friends at Northbrook has again returned to her home here. Mrs. S. Wheeler has recovered after a serious sickness. Everyone is glad to see her around again. Angus Spencer is employed at Loon Lake just now. Many more cottages are going up for summer tourists.

The main order of the day is house-cleaning. Nearly everyone is busy papering and painting and getting ready for summer. Mrs. Kate Meeks, a guest at Tannahill Meeks', Sunday. We are all sorry to hear that Ody Levesair is sick with croup. Frank Wheeler is visiting at his brother's, S. Wheeler's, for a short time.

Mrs. Andrew Meeks and Mr. and Mrs. Levi Meeks and children visited Cloyne, Saturday on business. Mr. Percy King is employed helping Harry Levers for a few days. Wilton Spencer is helping S. Wheeler for a few weeks.

A lightning and rain storm was witnessed on Saturday and a heavy snow storm on Sunday. William McCausland was a guest at Mrs. K. Meeks, Sunday night. Sugar weather is pretty good this year in some places and large quantities of syrup has been made.

Howard Lloyd spent the week-end with Ezra Wheeler. Many are on the sick list with colds.

Anyway, the man who has no faith in himself is able to realize his own weakness.

A man has outlived his usefulness when he is no longer capable of giving advice.

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