

DIARY

Sept. 29th [1938]

"Smoky [sic] once more today. The wind having left the north & taken to an indeterminate direction elsewhere. It was so thick outside that we had to delay going out to our nets & all the way the smoke lay heavily on our fair land. It is very much inclined to make one groggy especially when it get so thick.

While A. and I were lifting the nets this morning somewhat later than usual, the Nancy appeared like a ghost out of the fog smoke, bore down on us & then swerved so as to miss us by yards. Curry out on the decks wanted to know how the fishing was & we told him fine, even though it most decidedly wasn't. The old batteau was then swallowed up in the smoke again, gave a toot for good measure & disappeared from [spoken: out of] our sight & hearing.

Bill came along then in his usual not so pleasant self. He stayed for dinner of which the main item was a partridge Ma had shot while we were fishing. Bill had nothing new to contribute except a handle for our kitchen table drawer. He left shortly after dinner much to

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our relief.

Mother also left after dinner bound for the other place. Alice busied herself with digging carrots of which our crop was almost microscopically minute while I painted on my picture. It doesn't seem to be doing badly even though I am getting most uncommonly mad at it. The fall colouring gives me such a wide scope that it is almost impossible to go wrong.

Last night Skeezi ate some porcupine quills in a vain endeavour to get to the meat and later she vomited them up again. We sincerely hope they all came up but whether they did or not Miss Skeezi went around today with an uncommonly large appetite. She ended up this evening so full that she was perfectly willing to call it a day & go to sleep.

Very unexpectedly while Alice was making some marmalade & I was contemplating resuming my work on my picture, who should appear on the scene but George Johnstone & Alf Fath. They gave us something of a start but were well welcomed all the same. Their luck at hunting had been nil except for one duck – a mallard.

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They had scared up several deer on their wide perambulations but had not been able to get one. As it was they had to return because their grub box was most

completely empty. We gave a loaf of bread to sustain them on the rest of their journey.

They stayed for a lunch-supper and were most entertaining. George certainly can talk & he is so quick in the way he sees & picks things up that it is a continual source of surprise to hear him. One wonders how a person with such perception that he has (which, however, is almost entirely confined to things & not to people) can remain so absolutely open & naive. He is like a fresh breeze in the mind; though rough & untutored yet he always leaves behind a feeling of vigorousness and of vast new fields to explore. He is a friend to have. Another thing that we like about him is that he knows his place in our establishment and keeps to it. He never tries to overstep the bounds of propriety in any way yet he bubbles over with boisterousness and vitality. That is speaking entirely of our own home, of course. From what we have heard, he is not such an angel elsewhere, but here he is alright so we should worry. Fable, who was with him, was on his good behavior too

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though in his own element he is quite a cocky active gentleman. If only some whites would restrict themselves so we would enjoy some aspects of this life out here a good deal more. They left just before dark bound for the Brook. They are going to try & get a deer after dark.

One thing which has just come to mind is of a talk that Captain Parsons & I had on my last trip on the *Nancy*. He spoke of a flightless, seagoing bird which he called "pin-wings" which lived on an island off the coast of Labrador or Newfoundland, I'm not sure which. These birds, according to him (he had seen them) were of white and black colouration, walked upright on land & were powerful swimmers. They lived only on one little island where they nested in numbers. Their eggs just covered the ground during the nesting season & I think he said that the ~~makes~~ birds carried their one egg under their wing when cold (legend?) The island they inhabited was covered with hay & somehow or other this hay caught fire during nesting season, trapping & killing all the "pin-wings", now they are extinct. He says that he visited the island both before & after the disastrous fire, saw the birds alive & their bones piled in heaps on the shore

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where they tried to escape. The only one that I know of that remotely resembles that description yet lives in our hemisphere is the great auk, yet it was extinct more than eighty years ago. So just what could this bird be? I think I'll ask him for a more detailed description when I see him again & maybe write to Professor Jackson. At any rate it sounds very interesting.

This same Captain also mentioned shooting a scoter down Red river, probably an American scoter from his description. He only found out after the bird was plucked that it was not common in the interior & that its hide could have brought something for mounting from Professor Jackson. The Captain, a Newfoundler [sic] born & bred, has spent all his life on water & a good deal of it hunting ducks so he knows something of what he's talking about even if his knowledge is neither scientific nor very exact. I'll have to see him again sometime soon.

September 30th

Epic day today.

One lesson learned: don't put minks in cages with cracks in the woodwork.

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Another lesson learned: how to get your buck without firing a shot. But to begin at the beginning.

The day dawned clear & smoky, which sounds anomalous & is. But anyway; it was so. The fishing was terrible so we had to put a net in over the day & then we weren't able to life it in the evening. We spent most of the morning shifting mink about into those cages that Dad made last summer. They are very porous cages especially in the woodwork, which is all miscellaneous bits of scrap lumber & it didn't take the mink long to find that out. In less time than it takes to tell one of the youngsters chewed one of the cracks into a hold & then went a-visiting on the one in the next compartment. That isn't so bad, but we'll have to take precautions to prevent them from going a-visiting on the whole wide world. We moved five during the day & one around 9 P.M.

This afternoon I slipped somewhere & went to sleep instead of doing work. That way I got through two hours of the afternoon & was most disgusted

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with myself afterwards but the precious time was lost. Result was that I didn't have any time to spend on my painting, all I could do was a few insignificant dabs at it. Rotten, absolutely so.

At 5 P.M. Alice & I went out to lift our net to get fish to feed the dogs. We just emerged from the Beaver when we saw a deer between us & Harry's. So off we went after hoping for better luck than when we chased the caribou. We got it. We overtook it about halfway to Harry's, a great big buck with a six-pronged set of horns. We had neither gun nor axe nor rope & we couldn't get near enough to stun him with an oar (our big canoe is not adapted for [illegible word]) so all we could do was keep it swimming around in circles in the middle of the lake. Alice was opposed to chasing it at first but we needed the meat very badly so we did

the cruel task anyway. We chased the labouring beast around & around at times being able to run up quite close to him but not enough

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to use an oar on him & end his miseries. After about an hour that seemed only a few minutes our exhausted quarry finally gave up the struggle & drowned somewhat to our surprise. Somehow we had never expected that. His horns were so heavy that they held his head down & he was soon done for. The law of tooth & claw!

Just at this juncture who should come along but Gus. He had finished his wood-cutting job at Bob's & was going home & he was kind enough to interrupt our journey to help us. We needed it too. The deer was too heavy to bring into the boat so we had to haul tow it home & that was some job. My hands were already in a sore state of blisters by this time & they were not at all improved by the more tedious work. Finally when we were pretty close to home Gus took the oars & brought our prey rest of the way. In the meantime, Alice was working like merry blazes on the paddle.

Gus dressed the deer for us with Alice acting as helper in chief. I alternated with that & getting some tea ready (smug occupation!) to revive

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us after all our violent efforts. It was well after dark by the time the deer was ready & by then mother had returned from her daily trip to our other place. She was both surprised & pleased to see as big a buck as we've ever had awaiting for her. She had had both Tom's rifle & our twenty two with her but had only gotten a partridge.

Gus stayed for something to eat & then departed with the escorts of a crescent moon & the northern lights. He left behind him a couple of very tired girls.

Oct. 1st. -

Most abysmally tired all day for some unknown reason. Tried to do some painting on my picture & all but spoiled it: I got it harsh & unharmonious & everything else that's wrong. So in disgust I turned to A. Beverly Baxter's "Blower of Bubbles" to [regale?] myself on the sentimental airy little bubbles that he blew & called stories. Beautifully polished in style, a fine sense of humour & words very conventional in philosophy &

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everything else. They float right away with all their cultural brightness & lack of originality. They are a type of story that one doesn't come across often these days.

Didn't do much today at all, I am sorry to say. A. & I got busy & tacked up the buck's hide on the western wall of our kitchen cabin & did some fleshing. Mother quartered & fixed up the meat where it was exposed to the wind & would get a "Shell" on it to keep it preserved during the warmer days to come. It was certainly a big animal and for a buck, in excellent condition. Last night I had bad dreams about that; I dreamt that I (among many others) was being slowly roasted alive by cannibalistic Indians. I can remember trying to plead with the Indians without appearing to do so, to persuade them without them knowing I was deliberately doing it that they would be doing a rather awful deed by roasting me & my comrades by that slow & tortuous process. But then I remembered

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the deer & how we had ruthlessly worn him down by a process just as slow & I had to shut up. At that juncture I woke up so I was spared seeing myself & friends being cooked.

We are going to keep the horns for our room. One has six points, the other seven & though a very good size they are not symmetrical. However we can use them for hanging guns on, etc., even if they aren't perfect for decorative purposes. His hide is the winter hide; I never knew that they changed so early.

Lots of birds around now, the sparrows being particularly abundant, with the occasional pipit, lots of blackbirds (Brewer's mostly), & once I even thought I saw a Smith's Longspur but I could be sure. I haven't seen any Harris' Sparrows yet. The goldfinches seem to have all left us after keeping our clearing full of life for a couple of weeks. The cycle of life moves on an inexorable fate.

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October 2nd.

Very foggy indeed this morning; it was the worst we've ever seen on this lake. It was so dense that for a while we could hardly make out the points of our bay & that's not bad for London it is for us. The *Alda* was very late going up. It only passed around three o'clock. Was that the fog's influence?

Nothing much doing today. I'm afraid that we are getting very lazy. I didn't even do any painting & I really will have to dig down & work if I'm going to do all I want to before Christmas. I should be designing Hallowe'en cards now.

We went over for the Mail this afternoon in a faint blur of smoke. The fog itself had dispersed, a light wind blowing it away. The scenery is now golden grey &

white with a few dark evergreens for contrast & the blue sky & muddy, slimy water. It is incredibly beautiful in its windblown and desolate way: soon there will be no leaves at all & the trees & forest folk will be in a sort of animated suspension waiting for winter.

Our mail was waiting for us at Harry's; is most interesting

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mail. It included a nice long letter from Mrs. Colcleugh along with a *Free Press* of Oct. 1st. Pretty fast service for out here, eh what?

Bob has a new radio installed now & so is all set to hear the big news. We went around there to ask him if we could have the *Manchester Guardian* & found him in an advanced stage of sourness over his stove which was trying to work both ways at once. Smoke was belching out of every corner of the contraption & also in fortuitous quantities from the chimney. Trying to slow down its ambitions took all Bob's energies & he had no time for talk.

Blue haze over everything these days. That fire does not seem to be getting any smaller wherever it is. The sun, when it sets, is like a big old egg-yolk in the sky. Strange beautiful things in the woods.

The mail also included a note from Dad, who seems to be very cheerful. He wants Mother to go up & see him. It appears that he has finished his fire-fighting job for a while & is back on the road. Also a letter from a Hindu of India, most instructive & amusing.

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Oct. 3rd

Alice did the fishing this morning which was really very kind of her. I did the mundane & unimaginative tasks involved in housework & put some cloths to soak to wash only to find that we were to go over to Bill's & therefore I couldn't do it. Reason of the trip: - our meat is not keeping in the mild weather we have been having so we will have to can it & to can it we need sealers & to get sealers we had to go to Bill who is the only source of supply. So we had an early dinner & went over, Alice doing the rowing. We stopped in at Gus' & found him absent to Winnipeg. He has that addition to his house all finished now & it is as solid & well build a piece of work as one could get anywhere. He even has the corners dove-tailed which is a lot more work than notching & he has made the roof of poles shaved down flat. Lots of work, & good work too. We will have to employ him for building when we

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build our dream bungalow.

We found Bill his sloppy, unconcerned, usual self. Our conversation with him was not very enlightened but it did have its spots so when he told as of chasing a mink on new ice with a very thin covering of snow. He kept trying to head the mink off from shore & the mink would keep going till he ran alongside it then it would suddenly stop & go back in the direction it came from while Bill kept on going for another twelve or fifteen feet unable to check himself on the slippery ice. This was repeated several times & Bill was just about played out & feeling very foolish & mad at the mink for playing him so. He changed his tactics and went straight for the animal not bothering to try and head it off & of course that way he soon caught up to it & the mink was doomed. Who ever said that animals can't think?

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He also mentioned chasing a coyote swimming in a river (lower Hole River to be exact) but this time he was outwitted. He said that the animal swam so fast that it was raised half out of the water & was much too fast for him.

We took him some of our deer which he seemed to like. In return we got the sealers, a dozen or so, big suckers that he said he didn't need & two smoked Tullibee. We also got lots of music both from the radio & his new Minerva mouth organ both very gratifying to our starved music proclivities. The mouth organ was not particularly good as to tone but at least tunes came out of it. As for his famous drum he could not play it as it was smashed. A bunch of Indians had gotten at it & he had happened to go outside for a minute & when he returned the drums raw hide deer skin stretched across its top was neatly smashed. Of course none of the Indians did it & Bill simply couldn't get anything out of them.

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Just how that supremely tough raw-hide came to be broken is a mystery, someone sure must have given it a Samson wallop. We experimented with trying to break it but we were very far indeed from being successful.

There was a favourable wind for us to sail back with which we did, with a sail borrowed from Bill. It was made of gunny sacks very porous but it got us home, even if it did take twice the time as when we rowed over. We had forgotten our own sail which accounts for us procuring that one.

I haven't been feeling well lately. I seem to have something of a strain. I guess I have been over-exerting in general for the past year, particularly where the washing is concerned. That job always leaves me weak & exhausted for several

days afterwards & sometimes I feel it quite strongly. Lately I've been having the awfullest dreams at night which blight my whole day.

Mother spent her day washing the floor & changing some

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of the mink kits around. With one she was not very successful for though he got into the box trap all right he simply refuses to get out. All he does is squawk, & he does that very thoroughly. He has been ensconced there for several hours now & at the latest report he seems to be all set to spend the night there in bland rejection of the open door. Now what's the psychological lesson of that?

Oct 4th

Continuing the tale of the stubborn mink:- This morning Mother succeeded in getting her out of the box trap but the little beast was so nervous that she left the trap in for awhile with the door shut. In about an hour she returned & of all the unexpected things, beheld the mink once more in the trap. The animal must have done a lot of fancy pushing & shoving to get the door opened. It took mother some time to get her out again but she managed it & then moved some more mink. She now has eight young one moved.

Today was absolutely

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undistinguished both as to actions & thought. I did washing all day which was as tiresome as ever. The only variety is provided when I [illegible word] that homes made "lolly" of Nan's, it always goes to the tune of a [schottische?] & makes me want to kick my heels.

Alice did some preparatory measures for canning our meat in between reading "The Modern Buccaneer" by Rolf Boldrewood. She says that it is quite good. My own reading was absolutely undistinguished, being B. Baxter's Blower of Bubbles which loses none of its sentimental inanity as it goes on.

It was dull & overcast all day but the strong yellow of the beaver made it look as though the sun was shining. The winds have taken most of the leaves, strewing the ground with golden brown loveliness. There has been an east wind all day shifting to the north & becoming colder at evening. The winter voices are in, & now in all their mournful triumph

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Oct 6th

We have been having an eastern wind for several days now & it has been almost steadily at storm proportions. No rain as yet but it is rather cool & uncomfortable.

Yesterday which I was too lethargic to write about, contained nothing of importance or anything else. It was calm & uninspired, a nice sort of day for a change but not one we would like for a steady fact.

Today was more down to the mark. Alice has decided that she wanted to go to the Brook as we were in bad need of some essentials of food, & since she was going at all she thought that she might as well go in style. Accordingly, when Currie's boat turned up we went out to meet it & just as we were close to it one of the fastenings on the oar broke & I had to jump posthaste into the bow & the paddle. Currie himself was on board & was very

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solicitous for us & our welfare. Alice climbed on & I betook myself to shore doing my best to steer the canoe from the stern. I went up & down in a crosswise roll on the rather heavy waves, the bow exploring the stratosphere. Finally, when I got near shore, I had to stand in the middle of the canoe & keep her going from there. It was nice keeping balance in my swaying conveyance & I had to keep my mind strictly on the job else I go overboard. But I finally reached shore & all was well.

Mother went up to Tom's leaving me all alone. For awhile I did nothing but complain to myself about my aching tummy & head & read some very interesting articles in "The Geographical Magazine". One about the ancient cultures of Mexico, rather confusing in the unending array of unfamiliar names. From that I emerged

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triumphant, however, with the knowledge that the Mayas [sic] marked their days with thirteen numbers & twenty animals, thus making it 260 days before the same marking was repeated & 52 years before a given day in a given position in the solar year was repeated. Their ideas of eighteen months of twenty days each with five left over wasn't so bad either. I rather like the idea of having each day with an individual name that was only repeated once in a blue moon. They knew the meaning of both accuracy & variety. The other article was about Lorenz Saladin, mountaineer par excellence, who seemed to be almost as interesting as his name would lead one to expect.

The wind kept on being wind, making it necessary to keep the doors shut. The flies are something terrible in our kitchen; there must be several hundred making

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the place their permanent camp. And when a bunch of blow-flies invaded the precincts this afternoon I lost my temper & went after them & broke a window in my zeal. I didn't mind that; the important thing was that I chased nearly all of the big fellows out leaving the field clear for the small ones once more. Thus, by a rigorous system of cleaning & covering up I managed to make the flies retreat to the ceiling where the [sic] stayed in sulky defeat for the rest of the afternoon.

Alice returned some time in late afternoon. The boat came in close to let her off which was all right but it didn't improve the wind any. The wind was so strong that when I went to give Alice my oars to pull me in to the boat so she could get off she couldn't do it & the strain was so great that I had to let go leaving Alice with the oar & me with the wind. Once more I

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resorted to standing in the middle & paddling & that way I got her to windward of the Nancy, which was much better for everyone concerned. But in the meantime the redoubtable Nancy was being blown towards the rocks at a remarkably perverse & fast rate & they had to throw the engines into reverse tout de suite. But all's well that ends well & this episode did that even though Herb Clark did look a bit cranky.

A's trip was evidently interesting & uneventful. Currie knew we had gotten a buck as he had seen the meat on the point through his binoculars; he even saw the hide stretched on our west wall! Those must be some glasses. He also said that we could get a free ride on the Lee [Berc?] to Winnipeg anytime we chose; that he would bring in all our freight free if we got it but by him that his wife was in Wpg. & would like to have one of us go in

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& keep her company. That sounds remarkably generous, & one doesn't know what to make of it particularly as it comes from a self-made Scotchman. All the same we really do appreciate it & we might give him a surprise by taking him up on it one of these days.

All was well down at the Brook, with our bill growing like a healthy child. Soon we should be getting some money from Dad & we will be able to pay it off.

A. was somewhat tired after her trip, her nerves were all shot. An after effect of that atrocious journey she made in that same direction a few weeks ago. Never again says she!

Oct. 7th

“For the wind she blow lak hurricane,
Bimeby she blow some more
And the scow bus’ up on Lac St. Pierre
Wan arpent from de shore.”

[End of quote]

The first part of that redoubtable

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song was very true this morning & the second part was nearly so. It took A. & I one & a half hours to lift two nets that were very close in to our place. The wind had shifted to the western quarter last night & seemed to be well pleased in its change of berth. Certainly it was feeling its oats & A. & I had some very fancy rowing to do before we could accomplish our tasks. However we finally did manage it in spite of the fact that the pegs were always jumping out of their holes causing us to lose precious ground, even though it was at the cost of most of our strength. We had to hole up some afterwards to catch up on ourselves.

We have not had any fall rains yet this year barring a few feeble attempts last night & today. It may be that we will have a dry fall which will have its points. We haven’t had anything approaching a real rain for a couple

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of months now. The leaves are almost entirely off the trees at the lake though those in the bush are still more or less foliated. The scenery is getting desolate & barren yet it possesses a poignant beauty too. Some say that the north is a hard place but we have never found it so. She is, at least to us, almost soft & very, very patient. She is rather ponderous in her movements & actions yet she is thorough, & that some people class as violent. She is also very exacting & terrible in her revenge yet she is kind. For one thing she always gives you a chance though often you don’t see it: & that is very much more than most humanity does.

This afternoon A. & I sharpened knives & the bench axe on the grindstone. Tomorrow we will have to do the other ones. They are all without exception extremely dull, almost beyond use: That’s what happens when women-folks get in

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charge. Mother made her usual trip up to our bush camp coming back just in time for our late supper.

One wonders what a disinterested (I mean impartial) onlooker of, say, the Collins stamp would think if they could see our relations with each other. Half the time we can't fathom it ourselves. It isn't that we quarrel much, for all our falling outs are short-lived & both sides are repentant afterwards. And certainly we all try to pull together for the common good, & we all respect & (sometimes) understand each other's idiosyncracies [sic]. But always, underneath it all, their [sic] is a veiled, subterreanean [sic] conflict, that of the psyche. Or am I just imagining things? But certain it is that we are continually brushing against something which none of us understands which we all recoil from. I'm sounding quite mysterious. I guess it's just adolescence.

Oct. 12th

A few things have happened in the silent interim, none very important but still worth experiencing. I went to the Brook with Bob on Sunday & got neither Noble's check nor the food Dad was supposed to have sent us. Bad luck all around. Oddin was there, rather friendly through the mellowing of Abe's "champagne". They had a capacity load of freight which just about took the *Alba* out of sight. Since Oddin re-organized the business he is making money, competition or no competition.

Mother went up on Sunday to visit Dad & returned yesterday (Tuesday). She went up with Oddin & a kit bag & came back with Currie & no kit bag. Due to a prize tangle up with Currie's outfit the kit bag got sadly mislaid & when Currie went to rescue it with his battered little coupe a wheel came off his vehicle leaving him

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stranded & the kit bag unrescued. It was, incidentally, full of stuff that Ma had acquired one way & another up there. Finally it was agreed that one of us should go up to rescue it but that was stopped with Alice getting very sick today & Mother having to go up to the bush camp to get corn for the chickens, leaving me as the only one capable of looking after the place. So the kit bag is still somewhere up at San Antonio, & I hope that that two-cylinder freight handler who was responsible for the original mix-up will not get hold of it again. It's all too complicated to explain so I'll leave it where it is. Otherwise Mother had a most excellent trip being fêted by everyone. Dad is beginning to get some pay now so the situation here should soon be eased a bit. As it is that order not coming in has left us stranded; we are out of flour & tea, nearly so of sugar & we don't want

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to ask Ernie for anything more as our bill there is altogether too high as it is, & Ernie is taking a personal risk in having let it get there. So, if something doesn't happen soon we will just slow up with nothing else to do.

Item:- in going to get my Mother off the Nancy E., Alice went alone & ran up alongside that perverse old tub with all the smoothness of great experience, & won the comment from the captain "Well, for once you did it right." That's an insult, especially as it is so true. We have never had the slightest trouble meeting the *Alda*, but the Nancy is another problem entirely. She is about as hard to handle as some of our mink.

The mink situation is merely fair, perhaps even a bit on the dull side. The gentleman mink who encamped in our storehouse for a few days was finally caught (Monday morning) & transferred to a more conventional dwelling, much to his huge disgust. We haven't

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we haven't seen sign nor trace of the other one who got away with him except for one dead chicken that had the mink sign about him. We haven't gotten around to setting traps for him as we've been so busy with other things. On Sunday morning some of our kits got in a fight & one male was killed & a female badly injured in her back & hind legs. Her rear quarters seem to be paralyzed & she can't use them. Trouble came not as a single spy but in battalions! We have left her in the cage with one of her mates having moved the others. Her recovery is not expected.

Best verse that I've come across:-
"Your soul, so kindly sent for our consideration,
Is here returned to you with deep appreciation;
No criticism of its merit is implied
But Heaven is at present very well supplied."

That, was what one well known lady journalist dreamt when her early efforts came back, every one of them,

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without fail & with a very courteous note attached. She dreamt that she died & that her soul tried to enter heaven; with that reply. How well I know how she felt!

Today Mother went up to our other place & came back with a porcupine to feed the dogs. Alice stayed in bed all the time, in desperate pain until she finally took some aspirin & that eased her. Her nerves have been more or less all shot since that epic trip to the Brook, but she is getting better. She spent all her time reading Mark Twain Short Stories, a book of portentous length which I got from Alec. They seem to make Alice laugh so may be Twain was a humorist.

I got busy & cleaned out the appalling [sic] mess in our room. Then I did some rearranging in it, adding that table which Avery brought (all enamelled [sic] up in that stickey enamel of Eaton's) & the hide of that unfortunate buck as a rug. Soon we'll have the horns in

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& then it'll be some room!

October 26th, 1938

From being the diary of a country girl this has changed into being the diary of a city girl. For where should I be now but at Selkirk, staying with Mrs. Colcleugh & very determined to make my mark in that noisy, dusty city of Winnipeg. And when I saw it yesterday for the first time in six years I realized how hard a job it was going to be.

Who ever said that a city was beautiful? Or inspiring? Who ever said that the city was one of man's greatest creations? Well maybe that is so, but if so it does not begin to compare with the creative force of nature. Maybe I am prejudiced; I have only seen the business section & the north end as yet, & I do not suppose that that part is famed for its beauty. Mrs. Colcleugh said it wasn't much and it isn't hard to

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believe her.

I came in on the Lu-Bric the boat which Currie commissions to carry his passengers across Lake Winnipeg. It was certainly a beautiful sight to that boat come up the Manigotogan River all lit up, mostly with white lights but also with a few green & red ones for contrast. It was very dark & the parts of the boat that the lights showed up looked strange & unreal in the surrounding gloom. All the rest of the passengers were in Quesnel's house at the time, rather bored & very hungry. The Quesnel's were getting supper but they did not seem to be in any hurry at all & were superior & distant to we travel-worn worms.

The house is certainly a lovely one especially in that country. It even has two stories, & that's something which is not usual in private (!) residences up in the

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bush. When supper was finally announced as ready by Tuny, Herb Clark's sixty pound girl friend. She may be small but she is well built & certainly very pretty. All the lady passengers went to it on the first relay & boy, were we hungry!

The passengers consisted of the usual hodge-podge mixture. Most outstanding were a little Irish girl with a two-year old boy called Dickie, the English Mountie Thorpe all rigged up in red coat & taking a prisoner in & his girl friend, Edith MacLeod. Edith was a very tall statuesque girl, very good looking &, it seemed to me, the most intelligent of the bunch. Her placid, rounded face was in sharp contrast to her boy-friend's, who though tall & well built is yet quick, nervous, [gag? – counter 098.] friendly & with just the type of face you would imagine to go with it – dark, lined & very expressive. The

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interpenetration of opposites to be sure! He is the direct antithesis of his calm, blonde girl friend.

The remaining passengers of interest, the little two-by-four (she stood five foot two & weighed eighty six pounds) Irish girl & her charge Dickie were on a different level all together with no claim to much brains. Dot Malone, the girl, had lovely red-gold hair & a pair of blue eyes that didn't leave room for anything else in her face, consequently her nose, mouth & chin were insignificant though stubborn. To top that she wore a pair of rimless glasses that reached up to her beautifully formed eyebrows & down to the bottom of her finely chiseled nose, making the bottom of her face look smaller still. She was very small boned & slender with long, slim fingers that would have been a dream if they weren't so work worn & a foot that would be the envy of a movie star. Being

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Irish she is talkative, has a violent temper & substitutes prejudice for knowledge.

One wonders when one looks at her how such a dainty specimen of humanity could be good for anything except decoration; it's almost impossible to conceive that slender form doing anything approaching work. Her charge, Dickie, was a cute little fellow & may have passed for what is called bright. Certainly he asked enough questions (he never stopped) & he asked them in a very penetrating, querying voice that was a little irritating after several hours of no let up. All the same he was very cute & really was intelligent if one could overlook all his questions.

And, oh yes! I cannot forget the Captain. I mean Captain Parsons of the Nancy E. He came in too for he had made his last trip on his run passed

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our place & was now going to fix his place up in Selkirk for the winter. He looked after my stuff, which included a small haunch of deer meat for him.

How strange it was to be leaving my home of six years! Yet I was not sad, for it seems to me that I should be making my way in the world now. Nobody at home offered any objections, in fact Mummy said that I should go & learn to shift for myself. I wonder if I ever become a mother, if I will have mother's capacity for self-sacrifice. I know that it hurt her a lot to have me want to go, especially with no friends in the city & no money & no prospects, & especially as I was needed around home. But she said I should determine my own life & she let me go even though she may not have approved. Whether she approves or not I don't know, but I am not

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inclined to think so; but all she did was to get me ready & to give me all the addresses she new [sic] of people who might help. Often I have heard the praises sung to mother love, but never did I fully realize what it was all about till now. Dad never offered any objections either, but he was very uncertain & uneasy as to my fate in the big city. He gave me five dollars which was the total wealth that I was able to take in with me. I didn't have to pay any fare in as that helped eke out my money a bit. The passage across the lake was nice but disappoint. For one thing it was all at night so I didn't have a chance to see the big lake. It was a very smooth crossing with precious few rolls & I slept all night.

In the morning I got up in time to see the sunrise over Red river, & that was something.

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The Lu-Bric is certainly a lovely boat, or at least it seems so to me after little ones like we have on the river. The chugging of the engine is also something very new & not too comfortable either. Dot Malone & I were bunked in the same cabin, the one nearest the engine, & we got jounced around most thoroughly. It's a funny sort of shaking that one gets:- it isn't jarring at all but more in the line of an all penetrating bouncing that takes your insides around & around & around.

We got into Selkirk around half past six just after we'd had breakfast. The Captain & I filed out & the Cap. Got a taxi & told me to get in & then followed himself. We went around to his place first & he got off there, then the driver took me around to Colcleugh's place. But it was locked up so he gave me instructions to get to Butler's &

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departed. I went over to the Butler establishment & found everything extremely quiet there. I considered knocking & then decided against it because I didn't want to wake them up.

I loafed around for awhile & renewed my acquaintance with Brownie, Colcleugh's Chesapeake bitch, who was in Butler's yard, a fairly [illegible word] that Mrs. . must be sleeping there. It was rather cold & I got tired waiting around, so Brownie & I went out for a walk. We went up the street past all the houses & what I later learned to be the mental sanitarium & off into the country. We went maybe a mile & then returned. The country is so flat & level, like a lake; there seems to be no end to it. It just goes & goes & goes: one can understand how the aspect of eternity came to man's mind when one sees the prairie. For as far as one can see there is no

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end & no beginning, just like we in our vision 1) time, can see no end & no beginning so we conceive it to be an endless cycle that goes 'round & 'round. Maybe some time we will be able to travel in three spheres & learn what there is to learn.

But to get back to earth. We came back from the walk refreshed & invigorated, having [covered?] my limits with exercise & my tongue with talking to Brownie, I found the Butler establishment still in other worlds. So I loafed around & sat on the back door step & in general behaved like a forlorn waif of no home & no prospects of one. By this time, it had warmed up considerably & was a beautiful clear day just warm enough to be comfortable & cool enough to be invigorating. Finally, after an interminable time during which the whole town but the Butler establishment seemed to be up & around, I got talking with a

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rather pretty young girl from a neighbouring house. She invited me in for lack of something better to do I accepted. Inside they were busy filling milk bottles, being in the milk business in a small way. They were the Jenkinsons byname, the family consisted of four or five sons & a couple of daughter, plus a couple of daughters-in-law & one son-in-law. The young lady who invited me in was the new wife of one of the boys & seemed a very friendly girl. She was busy on a cushion & showed me all sorts of embroidery & lace work which she has done & really its wonderful. How on person could do so much needle work in the few months since her marriage, besides all the housework that she gets through is something that takes some figuring out. She must never do any reading or visiting or such. Still all that work is real art & she seems to derive considerable enjoyment from it.

About an hour after I found sanctuary in the Jenkinson

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establishment, that is around half past ten, Mrs. Colcleugh finally emerged from the Butler place. So I went out to meet her & there followed a nice time of introductions & greetings, etc. We went to her establishment which was two story building set in rather nice if slightly restricted grounds. What followed was mostly talk of uncertain value.

Later on Mrs. Butler came around & there followed another round of greetings & how-do-you-dos. Both Mrs. B & Mrs. C. Seems to be in their usual trim, Mrs. B. Is enthusiastic as ever about everything. In the evening we both went over to her place to stay the night. Mrs. C. Has been sleeping there lately as she is alone & so is Mrs. B., whom son is working on night shift at the rolling mills I think it is.

Mrs. Butler proposed a novice show for me which was

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enthusiastically accepted. Previously in the afternoon, Mrs. C. Had taken me around the town to do some shopping & to see what there is to see which was precious little. I feel as though I have come back to my own after six years of absence. Strange, especially as at the same time I long for the natural rivers & trees.

But to get back to the movie. It was a double feature with the Jones family in "Borrowing Trouble" & somebody else (I forget who) in "Racket" "Busting". But first & foremost came the news & that was truly wonderful. The peaceful occupation of [Suletenland?] was one part, the Chinese war, the race between the Bluenose & the Gertrude L. Thebaud, Ballet dancing & lots of other things. Oh boy, oh boy, but it was wonderful! Of the two pictures the first one put a silly comedy with a truly remarkable wedding

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& gangster chase at seventy miles an hour all mixed up as the climax. "Racket Bustings" was what took my fancy, dealing as it does with labour troubles. May be it was exciting & made more adventurous than is usually the case, bit it is supposed to be based upon actual facts & certainly it did bring a lot closer to me all this union trouble that has been going on lately. It was the political & educational side of it that I liked, plus the graphic portrayal of the awful trouble that labour has to prevent itself being exploited. But in real life the fight is much more incidious[sic] & [illegible word] & the heroes are not only truckers but all labour & the other side (villains? May be?) are not only rackateers trying to control the unions, but also the big business concerns & money interests who work in with, & often are, the law. To me the picture was wonderfully good, even

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if it wasn't on a high standard dramatically, which I don't know. Best scene:- where one of those heavily loaded trucks goes down a wild & woolly hill, out of control as the brakes have been cut. The portrayal of the wild careening of the truck, its load going everywhere, & the expressions of the driver & his companion as they sought to steer it to safety & the final smash-up, was something really worth looking at. And so passed that night.

Next day, which was yesterday, Mrs. C & I went to the great smoke on the 12:50 bus. We passed Iowa Fort Gary, fox farms, a German settlement, market gardens of Kildman & finally entered into Winnipeg, which seemed to consist of noise, dust, pavement & people. It seemed terrible to me to have pavement & buildings over the good earth; how [illegible word] it would look if Winnipeg was torn

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down! And the people! They were worse than the pavement. They came in waves, little ones, big ones, [breeders?], combers. The [swirled?] & passed & repassed, talking, chattering, sulking, looking at everything on the surface, & the noise of their feet & their voices was like the noise of the water, restless water, its moods & fancies sometimes lovely, sometimes terrible, dependant on the winds that go over it. How I can realize the force of the crowd: that restless, blunt, ever moving force; it is the force of water & of the wind & it can be as cruel & as sublime. The power of the wind, of rhetoric! They are there, those people, to be molded to be formed, to be sent in the direction of those who can guide them. How I can see the truth of this view, which I didn't believe before:-

“That brain, says he, is not our own,
But a dip net in the sea,
And the green wave washing through its [illegible word]
Make thought for you & me.”

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Once I believed in independent thought, but in the city & among the crowds I cannot see how it is possible. Power! There is power there, waiting for the one who can take it. Who said that cities are removed from nature? Are they not just a manifestation of nature, as man is nature? Now I can understand Hitler, & I can even ploy in his ploying of power. All the same I wish there was somebody else there.

November 3rd

I have had considerable difficulty concentrating myself to writing, consequently this journal has been really neglected. However I am back again for a short time so maybe I can write something of what I have seen.

My days have passed without anything to [sic] unusual in them, yet each distinct in its own way. I have been looking around hunting for prospects of a job. I find them very restricted indeed. Every one just shakes his or her [head] & says that

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if I'm lucky I might find something. The fact is that I would take almost anything for a start, to get a foothold so I could look around & see what is what. Noble, when I went to see him yesterday for the second time, was very dubious indeed & plainly thought that I would be better off home though he didn't say as much. Then I went to the Y.W.C.A. & saw the matron there, a certain Miss Alexander. She is a small, slender, person with freckles, light brown hair, very dark brown eyes, glasses & an appearance of having red hair instead of brown. Several times I had to look at her hair to make sure of its color because looking at her face it always seemed that it must be red. She has a very slow manner of speaking & is also very observant, to judge by the look in her really lovely eyes. She was very kind & interested but was not much help. All she could suggest was the employment bureau of King & William Sts. [streets] which deals mainly with domestic labour and has at present more applicants than jobs. At her suggestion I went to see Miss Roe, editor of the women's section of the Country Guide. There, midst a litter of desks & papers in a little den partitioned off, I found Miss Roe. She is an elderly woman,

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large-faced, kind & not too quick-witted, though I should imagine that she is very thorough. Of all things, she new [sic] English Brook & its surrounding areas, & also remembered the article of mine which was published in their magazine a year or so ago. She brought in the editor, Mr. Abel, a tall, kindly looking gentleman, with grey hair & brown eyes. We discussed writing in general & Mr. Abel said that many of the articles he receives are spoiled by being too pedantic & pretentious of style. His advice was to write about what I know, write simply & feel what I put down, & I might have a chance of getting somewhere. Formal training does not count for much, according to him, though it undoubtedly does help to polish one up a bit. In fine, they had no work for me & neither could they suggest anything, but they did tell me to keep up with my writing. Miss Roe lent me a book on short-story writing which she values & would

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like returned. It was very nice of her to go to that extent of trusting me, a mere stranger & one out of work too. By this time I was so sick of hunting up unknown buildings on unknown streets & going through all the tortures of interviews that I was only too willing to call it a day & to go home on the bus. This was the first trip I had made alone in the city & I never was so glad as when I got home again.

On the street, just in front of Eaton's who should I meet but Myrna Marsh. She was all made up & dressed in black & made a very fetching picture indeed. With her was a girl friend of some bright, inconsequential sort, made up within an ace of her looks & dressed in what was supposed to be a very dashing & chic manner. We talked for awhile & Myrna said that she was out of work & hunting for some which I thought to be a rather unoriginal state of affairs. She also said that she would like some lace & would come down on

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Saturday to Selkirk to see Mrs. C [Mrs. Colcleugh] & myself & to see what the new batch of lace which I had just gotten out of the customs was like. I had had to pay the round sum of \$6.45 to get the lace out of the customs & had caused some surprise to the uninhibited clerk when I walked up, without a card and asked for lace from India. Besides being uninhibited he was not too strict so he let me have the lace along with such comments as "wow" & "gee" when first I told him what it was I wanted & second I blandly stated that it was worth some twenty dollars. Anyway I got the lace & took it home where I opened the parcel. Mrs. C & I certainly did admire the lovely work, but there was so much of it that one wondered how one woman could do it all. And then Mrs. Aigland happened to have some doilies exactly similar to some of these, so a sneaking doubt got in somewhere as to their authenticity. That doubt increased when Mrs. Aigland

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said that there was lots of it in Eaton's. I will have to go up & take a look, & see just exactly what is what. Their lace is imported, but from where is not known.

Later flash: - Mrs. Aigland, Mrs. C & I were looking over the lace & admiring its delicate beauty. Mrs. Aigland said that the lace she has from Eaton's is supposed to be hand made too, but she doesn't think it's from India. However, she is pretty sure that this stuff is hand made because of the stitch, & as she has made lace & has had a lot she should know something about it. That brings us back to where we started from – viz., the lace is handmade & from India though if this girl's mother makes it all is subject to doubt.

It is evening now & Mrs. Colcleugh is playing the piano, sending strange thoughts through my head. My visits to the city had sort of embittered me, what with all the artificiality & sectionalism that is rampant there. Even in the few people I have met it is apparent. Noble telling me to associate with girls my own class! Pray, what is my class? Always I have been searching for

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girls of my own class & never yet had I met one. I don't know if I'm confusing things; if I am confusing "class" with mental accomplishment & outlook &

ambition. But be as it may, I have not met ~~men~~ any girls who were interested in anything else but appearances & boy friends, two things which I will admit that I am interested in to a certain extent but certainly not exclusively & not even dominantly. I have met some men who came up to my standards & have far surpassed me, but no women. Eva Jaspersen was the closest approach to that & Martha Wigelow is seriously ambitious, but I have never met her. The city & its people are welcome to their castes & classes if they want them but they have to pay a price for that too, in being that much further removed from the realities of life. And that, to my mind, is the thing of greatest importance: the realities of the plain down-to-earth realities of our existence. If it is a priviledge [sic] to sit at the board of & talk with the kings & social leaders,

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then it is equally a priviledge to suffer the hardships & privations which nature can put on we, her children. In the city they wear make-up & high heels & polish their nails & talk of the latest fashions & if so-and-so has had a good time during his or her visit to some metropolis which is distinguished by reason of a few degrees more artificiality. But we of nature, of the earth & the grass, we have the age old problems to occupy us: problems which began with this earth, long before humanity ever came on it & will stay long after humanity has left. All this may sound just the embittered comment of one who is envious of the things above her, & that may be so: I really do not know myself. But, though I am aware of a desire to see the "higher" part of society at close range & live amongst it for a while, yet I never have & never will have, a desire to make my permanent orbit up there. Because if I did so I would be escaping my mission is this life & that is help in bringing to people

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some of the joys of life, of life itself and not it's frivolous adornments with which it is so often confused. I want to do so by the medium of writing & it may be that I shall succeed; to be personal, I hope so.

List of people I've met: -

Mrs. Gobert & her mother Mrs. Lyons. Mrs. Lyons is over eighty yet she does the most beautiful crochet & fancy work imaginable. What's more she is always at it; she isn't happy unless she is working & that's all the time. How her eyes stand it is something that takes some figuring out. Mrs. Gobert herself is a rather remarkable woman. Her husband is something of a useless sort of gentleman & she has had to take on the task of providing for the household & educating her three children. She is a school teacher & teaches steadily, keeping her house going on the side & looking after her one remaining child, a six footer by the name of Eugene. She is sending him through University what with her own resources & those of a brother in Winnipeg who has a very good government position & who has

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helped them out an awful lot. Not quite straight as he was able to give good jobs to the children when they were not at school. Patronage; yet here it was put to a good use. Of her other two children, one boy has an excellent job in South Africa in the Rand & the other, a girl, is a teacher somewhere. Eugene is the only one at home now. He is a handsome gentleman of the blonde gargantuan type.

At their place we met a pretty little student of the name of Ruth Lusk. She is taking normal but at present is out doing some teaching. Eugene was to take her to the Hallowe'en dance somewhere or other. That is a family with whom I would like to get better acquainted. Mrs. Gobert is an awfully nice woman, of the sort who can unite both your admiration & respect. She is very fond of young people and takes an active interest in their affairs & they are all very fond of her. I'm one of them.

Mrs. Aigland is acquaintance no. (what? I don't know how I'm counting them so let it go.) Any way, she is Mrs. Colcleugh's next door neighbour & has a very lovely home which she keeps just spotless. Though

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Dutch there is nothing dumpy or staid about her. In fact, her only dutch quality apparent to the naked eye is her cleanliness & thrift. She is young, slender, with a lovely figure, dark skin, medium brown hair & gray eyes. She has a rather decided & deliberate way of speaking & has a most surprising English accent at times. Being very quick & intelligent she knows something of almost anything; is skilled in practical work such as knitting & crocheting & has a cat (a big Tom of venerable age) whom she calls Alfred Orlando Alluwishus Boots Aigland. Please excuse the spelling of that peculiar central name but that's the only one I could think of to fit the pronunciation. Though married eight years she is still on the right side of thirty & is really very attractive.

Let me see, who else have I met? Mrs. Butler's family, of course. Mr. Butler is not at home at present, being engineer on the Luc-Burc he has to keep to that venerable boat. Of her two sons only Frank is home, Billy working for Consolidated Smelters in Trail, B.C. Frank is a puzzle with a long, cadaverous face, a gloomy, gruff & rarely polite manner and a habit of hanging his head. I have

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never seen him hold his head erect. Yet there is something charming about him too for all that & on the whole I think I like him. Certainly he is very thoughtful & kind for all his lack of politeness and now and then comes out with flashes of wit

that are both to the point & pleasant. He is engaged to a very nice girl, Maud Smallman by name but universally known as Pinky. I think that that is an awful nickname for a girl to be burdened with but she says that she likes it better than Maud which she regards as too stiff.

She is tall & though not pretty yet she has a very pleasant manner. Everybody likes Pinky & I have heard nothing but kind words where she is concerned. She has been engaged to Frank a long time (they plan to marry this coming spring) is twenty eight years old & out of work. She is a secretary by training but hasn't had anything but an occasional day of work for so long that she has just about lost her knack for shorthand. One interesting thing about her is that she draws cards, though from what I can gather they are not monuments

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of originality. She stays with her father & her step-mother & her step-brother – who goes by the awe-inspiring name of Bertram Van Blaricom - & his wife. Bertram is an extremely handsome youth of the sort who grow stout in middle age & like their slippers & seat beside the fire. His wife is so unlike him that it is hard to imagine the two ever being married: - she is short, very dark – black hair, black (or nearly so) eyes the darkest of skins - & possessed of a very decided manner which lacks somewhat in pliability. The Smallman menagerie was up to Butler's the other night, including Mrs. Smallman but not Mr. The evening was very quiet & uninspiring with no one having anything to contribute to the spirit of the evening. Mrs. Butler & I had gone to some trouble to prepare the eats, which was one thing at least that seemed to be appreciated by everybody. I ate so much that evening that I was tided over next day & didn't have to eat much then at all.

On Sunday Frank, Pinky (wherever one is the other is sure to be somewhere near. Pinky is the only person

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whom I have seen Frank be anywhere lacking in gruffness with. And they've been engaged for ages). Mrs. Butler, Mrs. Colcleugh & I went out for a trip into the surrounding country in Frank's car. It was a lovely day & consequently a lovely ride. Never did I dream that there could be so much sky anywhere; earth was absolutely inconsequential. It was a wonderful relief to get away from streets & lights & people, though Selkirk is not remarkable for any of these phenomena. We passed fields plowed under, fields still in stubble, bush, broken-down fences, uncertain little creeks, an occasional farm with the barn dominating the buildings, & finally came to Ross's farm, which was our destination. I suppose that the place was typical of prosperous prairie farms: it included enough animals to pass by with, plenty of ground, & a nice house with lots of people in it. There was one young gentleman there by the name of Stuart

Garnett who, upon learning that I wanted to ride a horse, went & saddled a light work

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horse of some sort. I was considerably surprised as I had no idea there was even a saddle on the place, had in fact been told by Pinky just a moment before that there were no saddle horses there. That was why I had said I wanted a ride, I suppose. But anyway the horse was there, plus a saddle, & I was in for it. I got aboard & felt perfectly foolish & also perfectly comfortable: & the dobbin who was very, very, obliging & did what he wanted without bothering about what I had to say about the matter, walked around & tried a [sic: to] follow a regular moose of a horse that must have weighed a ton. If I had been alone I am sure that I would have done some real sky hopping aboard my mount but as it was I felt very conspicuous & was glad to get off as soon as possible. Pinky & Frank & I inspected all there was to inspect on the outside of the farm: the barn, it's loft, the chickens, turkeys, pigs & cattle. Then, for lack of anything else to do, we had to return to the house where Mistresses Ross, Colcleugh, Butler, Harty & Hepburn were keeping

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up a flow of talk that was incessant & mostly unintelligible, at least to my bewildered ears. Pinky & I sat on a low stool of some sort, very subdued, & ate grapes & peppermints. There were some men in another room but they were, relatively speaking, very quiet & some ventured in where we were. Finally Frank announced in his own inimitable manner that if we were not staying – the constant assertions of Mistresses Butler & Colcleugh – we had better go. So go we did to the freeness of the open air once more.

I don't know when I last wrote in this book. And I don't care. Life has suddenly taken on a very queer look indeed: it doesn't fit me & I don't fit it. I'm sure that one of us is square & the other round but which is which or which is the peg & which is the hole is something very far beyond me. Such events that have occurred, especially while I was in Selkirk, are all hazy to me & difficult to recall. Such events as the Hallowe'en parade

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where all the kids were dressed up in the most outlandish costumes possible & prizes given for the (purpose of the parade was to keep the kids off the streets); of a midnight walk to the cemetery passed [sic] the asylum, where I climbed through the fence & communed with the gravestones in the moonlight, & the cold walk back with the east wind going through & through me; the marriage of Clifford Morrison, a cripple who has to use two crutches (infantile paralysis) to a

girl called Ethel Bell in the Knox Presbyterian Church. How everything & everybody was so formal & strict except the minister & he spoiled it all by passing a wisecrack every now & then during the ceremony; how everybody was so furious afterwards at that poor minister (yours truly apparently being the only one delighted – it was the first wedding I'd ever seen & the wise cracks just added

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spice to the affair so far as I was concerned); Now Mrs. Colcleugh & I went to a lecture delivered by an Englishwoman about her experiences during the coronation at London (she had been a member of the choir so the talk was really much better than expected); how the Lu-Burc finally came in to dock & Mr. Butler went on a spree, causing endless pain & worry to his wife; how poor Mrs. Butler has no alternative but to spend all her husband's summer wages as fast as she can to prevent him from blowing them all in, and in the meantime their house is in bad need of repair it won't get; the lovely evenings I spent at Colcleugh's, arguing politics & discussing art or learning the diamond hitch from Nan; of listening to the radio to plays & songs & humour, some rotten & some superb: of my elation at

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receiving a call from Mr. Gobert saying that a certain Mrs. Smith of River Heights would be willing to try me out as a maid; of my first visit to Mrs. Smith & of my acceptance. There was only one flaw to mar my happiness & that was the wages; since I was inexperienced I could only get ten dollars a month to start with. Of my last evening at Colcleugh's when Mrs. C took me to a movie; never will I forget that one! It was a mystery night, but was really very good. Billy & Bobby March in one of the Penrod stories were excellent; a true experience put on by Floyd Gibson was superb; & a short color piece on Siam passed all praise. All hail to the east! And to its dancing in particular! Those expressive hands, those expressionless faces, those nimble supple feet; the

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slow, dignified motion all combined to make it a portrayal of life. I don't mean the surface life, but the life of the ages, the something that is far deeper than humanity, goes far beyond it on all sides. What are the comparisons for age & nature? The west has neither, the east both. Then our parting. Can I ever forget the kiss Mrs. Colcleugh gave me as I boarded the bus? How unexpected it was & how sustaining? How I think of it now, & how it keeps me determined to keep a stiff upper lip & not give in.

I think it is Nov. 17th I'm not quite sure & I don't particularly care. I've been here a day & a half & already I feel as though I have lost my identity, that my

body is here while my soul is rambling some far off bitter places. I now have a maid's uniform on my body & make-up on my cheeks; I am

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I am sitting in the kitchen awaiting my mistress's pleasure while she has tea with a friend in the parlour; already I have been reprimanded for impudence. I am a stranger here; I know nobody; I don't know the work, in fact I never imagined that a simple meal which, after all, was designed for eating, could be so complicated. They sat in the dining room, I sat in the kitchen & jump every time a bell is rung. I have a room to myself, a barren characterless little room, fanatically clean as all the rest of the house is. It is only a small two-storied house but that makes it none the less swanky & formal. How cold & restricted & narrow the place is, in spite of the lovely hand-carved furniture, & the chesterfield & the rugs; how distant is the master of the house & the little daughter; how narrow & efficient is the mistress, even though she is kind. She is kind without

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understanding.

February 1st 1939

Well here we are in another year, out to make or break our fortunes. I can't say what I'm going to do but suffice it to mention that I am now on an entirely different course to what I ever dreamt I'd take & that I'm enjoying it rather well. Many & varied things have happened since I got too disgusted with things to keep on writing this half-baked chronicle. To begin where I left off I only stayed six days at the Smith's & then I decamped to the Whiteway's place where I stayed for two weeks. They kept me, a homeless stray, for absolutely nothing & what's more I was just one of the family. The two weeks which I spent there were really very pleasant and I have nothing distasteful in my memories of it. Buster is just the same as he always was while his two sisters Toots & Gina & his mother are just the tops. When I felt that I could impose upon their hospitality no longer then I went to the Catholic Hostel where I stayed over another week & dodged the houseworking jobs

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which the sisters were continually trying to thrust me. Just the very idea of housework made me curl up inside & I wouldn't consider it under any consideration. The nearest approach I got to it again was to go out & do day work for one day, earning \$1.25 for myself. Then I went back to Selkirk where I was welcomed with open arms & where I went to work for a week helping Mrs. Butler who was very sick & needed someone to help with the housework. Well I earned two dollars that way & then I received five dollars from home as an Xmas gift which was very much to the point in the circumstances I was in. I had a really

nice Christmas between Mr. Colcleugh & Mrs. Butler. On New Year's I was sick, the culmination of several weeks queasiness as to health. However, I got over it & stayed there another week or so, when I answered an advertisement in a paper which wanted a young lady, not over twenty-four, of neat appearance & who was free to travel. As I answered these qualifications I applied & was accepted along with about,

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fifteen others. It was a salesman job of course. And what was more, it was for selling magazines, the Canadian Home Journal. The only point of differentiation was the canvass. In this business we are would-be aviators & we are working for a fifteen hour course so we can get something, supposedly a pilot's license. To get this licence we have to get two thousand credits inside of twelve weeks time, & to get these credits we take down subscriptions. We don't let on to our prospective victim that he/she is taking a subscription: all they're supposed to be doing is to be helping us get our credits by letting us use their names & addresses, & then we'll send them a publication as a thank you & all they'll have to do is look after the postage & that just comes to two cents a week. Now as everybody knows two cents a week is very little, so very often the victim is only too pleased to take it just to help us get our credits. Needless to say what they are paying for is the subscription, a dollar a year. And we get a fifty per-cent commission on it, credits or no credits. It's one way of making your living anyway and certainly we can have lots of fun at it & see a lot. For three weeks we

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the crew worked around Winnipeg, which is a very poor city to work anyway. In the first week I earned \$13.50 for myself. In the second week, \$7.50 and in the third week \$7.25. By that time I'd seen more strange things in Winnipeg than I'd ever dreamt existed. And I'd been through just about all the factories & business places there were to go through. Certainly I saw & learnt a lot & I finally came out with the conviction that the open road is the road for me, that I'd sooner starve in fresh air than make my fortune in an enclosed space where there would be nothing but walls to look upon. Lord, but the poor miserable specimens one sees cooped up in dark, dusty factories! No wonder the city produces so many strange specimens of human nature when one sees the conditions under which they are forced to make their living. I have never ceased to thank the Lord for the life I have had: it may have been hard at times & certainly it had its limitations but foremost & above all it has been fresh & free. We could always call our soul our own & if we had to starve for the privilege [sic], why then we starved. So if at first I

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recoiled from the idea of selling magazines, I soon got over it when I saw what I might have had to do. So now I'm on the open road with the swellest partner imaginable & enjoying myself immensely.

To get down to our organization I am working for the Consolidated Press, which puts out a variety of papers & journals including the Canadian Home Journal. The crew of girls that I am with are under the direction of Mr. Conrad (Connie) Starkell who is in turn under the jurisdiction of Ted Golightly who is in turn responsible to the head office at Toronto. We girls turn in half our take to Connie, who gets so much of that & then has to give so much to Ted & so on up till there's nothing left but the orders for the head office. But they don't worry because what they want is the circulation, as the advertising in the magazine then bring in the money. Connie & his wife Alice are the crew managers for the girls while a certain Al Simmons is crew manager for the boys, who sell the same magazine with a different canvass. Our boss Connie is a Russian German and a typical salesman, somewhat a little too easily impressed with a flashy show of success but still a good sort all the same. His

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wife Alice is a little French Canadian so diametrically opposed to Connie that it is a definite strain on the credulity to believe they are husband & wife. However that is what they are and they seem to be happily married too. Alice goes around working with the girls and she & the other two old hands at the game were the ones who trained the flock of green ones which the ad brought down on them. The other two were Mary Miller, an Italian girl, & Gwen Giese, a German girl. We all worked around Winnipeg and we all grumbled an immense amount when the territory began to play out with such a flock of girls working over it. The eventual result was that Connie sent two up north to Flin Flon – and Lord! But how I wanted to go there. He sent what he thought was his best girl, a certain Jeanne LaRue and her partner, Dorothy Oakley. Jeanne brought in the most orders of any of Connie's girls but she did it by means of a good deal of flirting & fooling around which did not go over so well with her companions. Dorothy was the only one who really liked her, and she worshipped the ground that

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Jeanne walked on. Neither of these girls had to work for a living, Jeanne getting an allowance from home & Dorothy in the middle of her education. And foolish little Dot, with a first class musical education & an excellent chance to make good if only she kept up her studies, went off after cheap little Jeanne & in all probability will either spoil herself entirely or else come out much the sadder & wiser. However, Jeanne certainly does bring in the orders and I can only hope that she does well & steers clear of trouble for herself & Dot on this trip. If only some girls had the chances Dot had, how they would hop at them instead of running away from them! Yet who knows? Maybe she will be just making herself

a better girl for this world by going on this venture. The next pair to be sent out were Gwen Geise & I and we were assigned to the southern part of Manitoba & Saskatchewan, working all the little prairie towns. We have come through Carman & Plum Coulee & now we are in Winkler. So far we have just succeeded in making expenses but we are the last ones to worry about that, for we are at least having a nice time.

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Today, Feb. 1st, we awoke in Plum Coulee and worked what little bit there was to work there in the morning getting precious little out of it. An interruption occurred in the form of a runaway team which suddenly decided to go places. The team broke loose in front of the station and away they went down the street scattering blankets & miscellaneous other things along the street, the cutter upside down & banging from side to side. They finally freed themselves of the cutter & off they went for home, full of rip-snorting freedom, leaving their owner stranded in Plum Coulee. That was worth seeing even if there was a certain amount of bother involved for somebody. Just a little before twelve we caught the train for Winkler & now we are here in something of a blizzard, not a very bad one to be sure but still bearing the unmistakable earmarks of a blizzard. We had our best day yet today. Gwen writing down \$6.50 and me writing down \$5.00. So far we are just keeping ahead of expenses but

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so long as we don't actually go into the hole then, it isn't so bad. Meals form our biggest item, with hotels coming next. So far we have been lucky in the matter of accommodation, not having to pay more than fifty cents each a night for a double room. It is strange how expenses mount and mount when one is travelling. I've somehow not quite figured out just where everything has gone, though I have accounted for every cent.

Of the towns that we have been in, Carman has been the biggest and best. It has some really nice places, especially in the restaurant line, though it was fearfully expensive. My memories of that place include a very nice talk that I had with a modern young Chinese, a follower of Meng-Tse. We had a delightful talk on China & its philosophy & its problems which I think was mutually enjoyed. She gave me the address of a Vancouver Company which stocks Chinese works in English & I have written for a catalogue. My Chinese friend couldn't get over the fact that I knew something

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about those things; he said that he had met many Canadian born Chinese who didn't know as much about those things as I do. Such a wonderfully erudite person am !!!!!

Plum Coulee is just a half-baked little prairie town with no pretences to anything except farmers of German stock. I learned there that the Hutterites are not good citizens because they make everything themselves that they need & therefore they do not help the trade of the community at all. Winkler is just a larger edition of Plum Coulee, with one battered hotel, no restaurants worth eating in & with lots of German farmers. Somehow I enjoy being among these people: it seems to me that they have a solid, practical quality which this country needs badly & which has something sublime in its very earthiness. They have a fullness of character which is sadly lacking in our citified dandies. One character whom we had the priviledge [sic] of meeting was a blind mat-maker. He made his living by making rubber mats, and somehow I don't think I've

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ever met a nicer character than he was. He had a cheerfulness and a steadfastness about him that one does not often see in others more fortunate.

Mystery tonight: - a long distance call came from Roland tonight for Gwen, from a certain Frank Peterson whom she can't remember for the life of her. evidently his remembrances of her are nice however, because he said he would like to come to see her tonight, but he probably won't because this storm has sort of blocked the roads. And in the meantime Gwen simply can't place him at all. Spice of life.

We had a swell talk tonight, on religion & evolution, which mayn't have taught either of us much but which was nice anyhow. She told me lots about the Lutheran Church - her religion - which I never knew before. Certainly Miss Gwen Geise has more of a brain in her head than some I've met. I only wish mine was a bit more clear. Just now I'm reading "The Ascent of Man" by W. Drummond & so far I like it a lot.

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Feb. 2nd - We slept in late this a.m. Seeing that there wasn't much left in Winkler to work & the train only left at noon. Outside was stormy & blowy yet with the sun shining giving a most peculiar effect to the scenery. We just had time to put in a bit of work, about an hour, before train time, during which Gwen wrote down \$2.50 plus a .25¢ tip while I wrote down \$2.50 from one man, the first time I've ever done that. There we went to catch the train, which was due at 12:00 sharp but which didn't turn up till 12:40, much to our disgust. We spent our time waiting in the station & wondering just how long we would stand it. Gwen just dying for a smoke & me longing for something to eat. Finally Gwen went ahead & smoked anyhow in spite of the strongly worded no smoking signs which were conspicuously adorning the place. There were a bunch of the local gentry hanging around discoursing in the native German. Gwen couldn't catch exactly

what they were saying because they weren't talking loudly enough, but she caught enough to know that we were the subjects of their discourse. I wonder how they

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could have looked if they had known that she could understand them?

When the train finally did come & take us to Morden, we found ourselves in a much larger & more advanced place. There are the Dominion Experimental farms here which help considerably, and also some nice buildings. The prices in the hotels were also more advanced than elsewhere. We couldn't get anything cheaper than .75¢ each a night, which was pretty bad. Also we could find of no private places where we could get cheaper accommodation, so considering everything we went to the best hotel in town & decided to get our money's worth. We were given a really nice room, much more swanky than we've been in so far, and there we proceeded to make ourselves at home. We went out for lunch & found out that all the stores in town were closed, it being Thursday afternoon. So back we came & prepared for a swell blow-out, planning to spurt on all sorts of swank & to have dinner in the hotel dining room with all its exaggerated prices. But what should happen but that Gwen and I discovered that she'd forgotten to pack her shoes, so all visions of our

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blow-out faded & instead I had to go down & eat all by myself, which was an intense ordeal for me. I thought that by this time I'd gotten over being shy but I soon learnt otherwise. I ordered a lunch to be sent up to stranded Gwen and we then had our blow out in the confines of our room. We spent the evening trying out the steps to the new "Injun Dance" getting beautifully tangled up in it & having a swell time. Then we played honeymoon bridge at which I came out second best. And so passed our first afternoon & evening in Morden, with no money being made & expenses piling up faster than we care to think about. Oh well, it's all in a life time and how! There are other salesman booked in this hotel too. In fact two came in on the same train we did. I wonder what they are trying to sell? Gee, but every time we think of Gwen's shoes we get just a little madder. How perverse fate (or was it human nature?) can be at times! And in the meantime we're hoping to make something tomorrow to defray some of our high falutin expenses. Adios!