Neighbors

By ROBERT STEAD

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We had not the heart to tell her that there lay a great gulf between English roses and a Canadian cabbage patch, and she rattled on, evidently glad to have someone to whom to describe her cottage garden which she was building on her holiday.

"For myself, I am quite passionless," she confessed, thrusting her upturned palms toward us with a little hopeless gesture. "Gerald is my resource, as well as my responsibility. He has a hundred pounds a year. We shall invest it in this farm. I am sure we are going to prosper wonderfully.

"All this would seem to chime with Gerald," she added, as though it were an afterthought.

She made Jean and Marie sit down on a box on which she had spread a steamer rug. Jack and I stood at the door of the tent, where the setting sun gleamed our wind-tanned faces a ruddy red.

"How healthy you men are!" she observed, starving her fingers in a nervous grip. "If only Gerald will grow up like you!"

"He will come over when the rest brings the lumber, and help them build your house," Jack volunteered.

"The lumber—what lumber? Oh, the boards! Do how good of you!"

The regard in which she held us appeared in her further speech.

"And are you carpenters, as well as farmers?" she asked. "How wonderfully clever you men are, here. I had to go to a doctor in Winnipeg when I had a rash, or something—was it the sea-sickness?—and he told me all the time I was there I was having to your delivery."

"Do you see the sword," I whispered. "It's always here one night per member, a centurymon of yours, down on section Two. Signed, he quite honestly although that is not his real name."

His was worrying over the storm with her back toward us, and perhaps she failed longer than those was also one need for, but I took no notice of the matter at the time.

"What a strange name!" she said presently. "Is he there now—I mean, have you seen him lately? A countryman of mine, you know, I must be interested in him," she added, brightly, turning her face to us again.

At length, with assurances that we would report our visit soon, and a promise from Mrs. Allen that she would receive us the next time we left her house under way, we clambered into our wagon and drove off, leaving them waving and shouting after us.

"Well, we've got rid of the Allens, anyway," Jack remarked, as the team settled down to a jog-trot that would eat up the miles between us and the night's camping place. "I'm glad we didn't have to stay for supper."

"Why?" I asked, for I was hungry.

"Because I'd have had to eat with them, and I'd have had to say grace, and I'd have had to look at Mrs. Allen's face while I said it. I'm not built that way. I'm not a hypocrite."

"Jack, you're a heathen," I said, shocked.

"No, I don't think so," he said, reflectively. "I'm not a church member, but I'm not a heathen. I'm just a man who doesn't like to say grace before meals when he doesn't feel grateful. I'm grateful for this country, and for the chance we've got to make a home in it, but I'm not grateful for Mrs. Allen's face, and I'm not grateful for Mrs. Allen's dinner, and I'm not grateful for Mrs. Allen's conversation. I'm grateful for the chance to get away from her, and that's all I'm grateful for at present."

"Jack, you're a heathen," I repeated, but I was laughing.

"Oh, I don't know," he said, more cheerfully. "I'm not a bad sort. I'm grateful for you, and for Jean, and for Marie, and for the chance to get away from Mrs. Allen, and for the chance to get a good supper, and for the chance to get to bed. I'm grateful for a lot of things. I'm grateful for the chance to get a drink of water from the creek, and I'm grateful for the chance to get a wash in it. I'm grateful for the chance to get a good night's sleep, and I'm grateful for the chance to get a good breakfast in the morning. I'm grateful for the chance to get a job of work, and I'm grateful for the chance to get my pay. I'm grateful for the chance to get a square deal, and I'm grateful for the chance to get a fair price for my stock. I'm grateful for the chance to get a good crop, and I'm grateful for the chance to get it to market. I'm grateful for the chance to get a good price for it, and I'm grateful for the chance to get a square deal when I sell it. I'm grateful for the chance to get a good price for my land when I sell it, and I'm grateful for the chance to get a square deal when I buy