

ON THE PRAIRIE

By HONORE WILLESSE
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As far as the eye could see the prairie stretched as smooth as a floor. Rhoda and little Dinny strolled on and on till the home paddock was only a dot against the blue sky line. Little Dinny started from one buttercup patch to another, with wild shrieks of delight in their yellow glory. He pulled up great handfuls of them, rolled over and over in their beds of gold and covered his mother with showers of their petals. Rhoda paid little heed to Dinny's play. The blue delight of the June skies came as well have been November morning for all the pleasure reflected in her brown eyes. The ranch walls seemed to stifle her lately. She had planned all night to take the boy and spend the lonely waking hours in the open. But now, with all the wide space of sky and prairie about her, her sense of desolation and disappointment seemed accentuated instead of lessened. She was tired of thinking, utterly weary of trying to straighten her endless tangle of questionings. She wanted to get away, to find complete rest. She wondered, in spite of the soft and of Dinny in hers, if things might not have been vastly better had she ever come west to the ranch with Donald. Somehow marriage was so different from her girlish dreams of it, and now at twenty-three, after five years, she was wondering if it really had. Not but that Donald was kind, but that he gave her all that he could of himself he could spare from the ranch. It was the hopeless stupidity of it that was wearing on her. Her life was made up of inanities. After the advent of Dinny and the unusual surprise that he really was a girl, that he did smile, that it was a girl, that he had taken a step nothing had occurred to disturb the loving evenness of her existence. And Donald, all the old ecstasy of the first marriage days gone, how unessential



HERE WAS A MAD, ROAR—A WILD SWIM OF WIND.

was to his existence. How little he had, after all, so long as the household ran smoothly, whether or not her words were filled. Rhoda stooped to pick up Dinny, who asked that his bumped nose needed immediate attention. She sat down in buttercup bed and looked at the boy. He was very like his father, she thought. Puh! How stupid it was to rely to exist when she always had loved to live! The morning sun climbed steadily to noon. But still Rhoda sat with a drooping child in her lap and watched the black speck of the ranch house, knowing that she went back no more, knowing that she plod on to the station with the child to take a train for home, as she still called the place of childhood—well, and what then? Would she then cease to exist and be to live, or would the old inanity life soon overtake her even there? Might be worth the trial. But what? Donald? How would it affect him? Would he really be disturbed beyond inconvenience it would make in his household arrangements, or were there depths within him which she did suspect? Far away toward the east she could see the dark line which meant that the sun with Donald, were "sitting" the day. It would be long after dark before Donald came in. She took deep breaths of the prairie air, sweet with long sweep over flower laden grass, and exhilarating as is no other in the world. Nothing in her east-home could compare with this, she thought. The ocean itself would seem impatient, too restless, after the beauty and peace of the prairie. She stirred in her arms and woke. She filled his hands with cookies and asked him as he ate, answering his questions in abstracted monosyllables. Suddenly he cried in a shrill little voice, "Oh, mommie, what a funny cloud!" She looked lazily to the west; then she turned to her feet, Dinny in her arms. The air had grown suddenly unbearable. There was a strange haze over the prairie. Moving up in the west was the old familiar shaped cloud which for the past years had been her constant dread.

The child, after a look at her white face, clung whimpering to her neck. For a moment she stood undecided. Then she turned to the west. The sun was near to impossible. And, even so, of what use would it be to run when she was powerless to tell what would be the course of the tornado? She looked toward the faraway horizon line. At that far distance it seemed impossible, yet she knew that already the hard was snorting and wild with foam in the heavy silence her voice sounded loud and shrill.

"Dinny," she said, "we are going to lie down, with our faces in the grass, until the storm passes over us, and then we are going home, and mother will make boy a gingerbread man for supper. Won't that be nice?"

As she spoke Rhoda dropped the boy to the ground, and then, dropping beside him, she drew him close to her with one hand, shielding and protecting him with her body, while with the other hand she clung to a stubby briar root.

Then there were a mad roar, a sudden half darkness and a wild swirl of wind, then gradual quiet and freezing cold with great deluges of icy rain. When the first roar had died away in the distance Rhoda sat up. The tornado had passed between her and the ranch house. She pulled off her skirt and wrapped it about the child, who was limp and speechless with terror. She herself was strangely calm.

As the darkness lifted a little she tried to look off through the driving rain to the horizon line, but she could see nothing. She lifted the child and with him in her arms struggled in the direction of the ranch house. Slipping, falling, wind whipped and half drowned, shivering with the cold, she struggled on and on.

Then through the swirl of the storm she heard hoof beats, then Donald's loud shout:

"Rhoda! Rhoda! Rhoda!" And her husband threw himself from his horse and clasped them both in his arms.

"Are you hurt? Oh, you poor, poor girl!"

"Oh, Donald, Donald!" she gasped. "Oh, no, I'm not hurt. Neither is Dinny."

"Dinny—oh, yes, Dinny, too, of course." And he took the little fellow from her and led her toward the house. "I went home for lunch," he panted, "to surprise you. They said you were out here. Then the tornado came, and—and I went mad, I guess."

"Donald," said Rhoda, raising her voice above the howl of the storm, "did you really care so much as that? Why, you even thought of me before you did Dinny. Did you really care so much, Donald?"

Donald looked down into her upturned face in dazed astonishment. "Care, Rhoda?" he asked. "Why, what else do I live for?" And he put her on the horse with a touch that thrilled her as of old. She looked down at the child as Donald laid him in her lap, and the thoughts of the morning of the past years came back to her.

"How could I have misunderstood so?" she asked herself. "What a fool a woman can be!"

Donald, leading the horse, could not hear, but she smiled happily at his back through the blinding rain and hugged the child to her with the old joy of living.

The Indian of Today.
Something more than four centuries have gone by since Columbus dawned on the view of the American red man. The red man's horizon has broadened in that time. A young man who describes his adventures among the Sioux for the Booklovers Magazine found the warriors of the plains unimpressed by the noble paleface.

"Why do they call the Fourth of July 'Independence day?'" an old warrior asked as they sat by the campfire.

The explanation was somewhat incoherent, but included mention of a war with Great Britain.

"Oh, yes, I have been there," remarked the Indian reminiscently. "London is a fine city."

Then up spoke another brave form from where he squatted, with dripping hair streaking his war paint, "I like Paris better."

The white man gasped.

"Archibald was born in Berlin," said the female sphinx at the lard pails, turning to indicate the child who grinned toothlessly in the background.

"Which do you prefer?" they asked.

"It has stopped raining," said the white man, "and I must be going."

Later it transpired that one was a Carlisle graduate, and all had been abroad with Buffalo Bill.

Pigeon Fakirs.
The bird fancier took a young pigeon's bank between his finger and thumb. "If I was a pigeon fakir," he said, "I'd make this hawk curve downward more. Every day I'd bend it this way, while it's young and soft, and when the bird would grow up it would have a bank of the correct shape. Before then, though, it would have passed through a lot of pain."

A Dancing Girl

By Martha McCulloch Williams
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"I wish"—Miranda said, then stopped, sighing. She was so little used to having her wishes come true.

Miranda loved color and light and music. Somewhere in her pedigree there must have been a strain of tropical blood, else how account for her desires any more than for her silky black hair, her liquid black eyes, her fine olive skin touched with scarlet? Her dancing as well was wholly untaught, untamed save by the sweep of the wind, the jingling patter of raindrops on the cottage roof. She danced only when she thought herself alone. Her grandfather, the minister, thought dancing of any sort a deadly sin.

He had a heart kind and true, this bent, white haired old gentleman, and truly loved his one grandchild. It was his creed, not himself, which forced him to deny her the things her youth craved. He did not understand her any more than he had understood his wife, her grandmother, who had died, leaving behind a baby girl that grew up the feminine counterpart of its father.

It was a queer, a piteous jest of fate that gave her, a woman born for the missionary cause, such a piece of quick silver as Miranda for a daughter. How the girl came by the quicksilver except through the grandmother was a puzzle of heredity. Her father was a missionary, meek in all things except regarding his chosen work. There he had a lion's heart, a Spartan's endurance. Thus Miranda had been left behind when her parents went to the far east. That was ten years back—so long ago they were little more to her now than memories.

Miranda picked up her mother's latest letter. The paper was thin, the writing fine and crabbed, but she was able to read an account of the dancing girls in one of the heathen temples. After the third reading she shut her eyes. Her mother had dwelt feelingly upon the horror, the impiety of it all, but somehow there had crept between the lines enough of the east to bewitch the reader. She seemed to see it all—the crowd, the lights, the wreaths of smoking incense, the figures swaying in time and tune. And as she thus saw mentally there came to her a longing not to be resisted to dance, dance, dance, the night away.

It was evening. Her grandfather was away at a special service in his mission chapel. She had been left behind to finish some slight household tasks. Half a mile down the street the Brixton fancy ball was in full blast. She had a card to it—one she had not dared to display. Now, insanely, she made up her mind to go—notwithstanding her formal regrets. She would not go as Miranda Acton—rather as a dancing girl from a world unknown.

Her mother had sent home a complete outfit to be sold at the Twelfth Night St. Barrabas fair. With shaking hands she undressed herself into it, then looked at herself in the glass. The effect startled her, but it convinced her there must be further disguise. She caught up her water colors, gave herself a dusky complexion, carmine cheeks and heavy black lashes. She stained her arms, her ankles, her bare throat.

By the time it was done the clock was striking 10. In half an hour her grandfather would be home. For a minute she hesitated, then, almost before she knew it, she had guloshes over her sandals, and, well wrapped in her long mackintosh, was out in the street.

Presently she found herself in the Brixtons' library. She had crushed through a great multitude of figures nearly as much out of the common as her own. She remembered, too, having dropped a frightened courtesy to stately Mme. Brixton, who had stared at her, then smiled a kindly welcome, and let her slip away in the crowd.

The band was playing. In the room beyond all sorts and conditions of folk whirled madly about. Miranda glanced at them and shrank back. They were dancing two and two—she could only dance alone—and dance she must. The stealing music said so beyond peradventure. The library was empty. Half unconsciously she began to foot it over the polished floor, weaving back and forth, bending, swaying, balancing upon one foot, arms up, arms down or extended as though in entreaty.

On, on, on she bent and swayed, now stamping one tiny foot, now pirouetting with untaught grace, unconscious that two pairs of eyes watched her from the ambush of heavy curtains swung across a deep window seat. They were masculine eyes—Tom Brixton and his city friend, just back from globe trotting, had found harbor there. They gazed spellbound at Miranda, then breathlessly at each other.

"It is a miracle," Tom whispered at last, "one that shows how blood will tell. I know our dancer. She's old Parson Carter's granddaughter. Let's go out and take possession of her. We understand, but if the others saw—my! There would be a kettle of fish!"

"Be still!" It is sacrilege to think of stopping her," Landon, the city friend, said, breathing hard, "and it would be worse sacrilege to let her stay here. Can't you see her, dancing on a floor of men's hearts?"

Tom broke from his hold with a little uneasy laugh.

At the sound Miranda stopped, panic stricken, trembling so deeply her rouge showed pale. "You—you'll help me get

away—back home—I—I had to come," she panted.

Tom took her hand kindly and put his arm half about her. Then in through the door came the old minister in his rusty black coat, the picture of stern, yet benignant, amaze until he caught sight of his granddaughter. Then a wave of wrath swept him into speech.

"Miranda, I came to thank you for a brand from the burning—but, oh, you wanton! You have made it certain you will burn for this in everlasting fires."

He swung upon his heel, but turned back, saying dully, "I shall be waiting when you choose to come—home."

Miranda sprang toward him, but Landon restrained her. "You will only make things worse," he said. "Listen. Tom Brixton will vouch for me—that I mean you no harm in what I say. Let me take you away—to the city. It is the place for such as you. Here life will be a burden to you and those around you. There you may be happy and famous and rich."

"Let's get out of this," Brixton said, opening a locked door that led to his father's office and drawing the minister and Landon within it. Miranda followed them, moving like one in a dream. "There were low, earnest words, whose import she did not catch, then somehow she was whisked off to the parsonage."

She did not sleep that night. Next morning she was on a train speeding cityward, wondering if she ever should see her native town again.

Miranda must have been born under a specially lucky star, for she was permitted to come back seven years later to the succor of those she had left behind. Her parents had come home, all their strength and use sapped by the cruel east, to rest, they said; to die, said those about them.

Parson Carter was in little better case. New men, methods, measures had crowded him from the place he loved so well. Now, for two years past, Miranda's bounty had maintained him. He knew the source of it, although he never mentioned her name. She was no mere dancer, but an actress who had conquered her place in the world. Landon had lived up to his word—he had made her rich and famous, albeit he had been unable to make her love him.

Why, he could not understand. Tom Brixton might possibly have enlightened him. It was Tom who kept Miranda in touch with what went on in the little brown cottage, and when he said simply "Come!" she knew something of what to expect.

But not all. No fancy could paint for her the mother face, wan and full of mother longing, or show the father, thin and bowed, with yet something of soldier fire in his faded eyes. Grandfather Carter was pitifully aged. The good man had lived so sparsely he was almost bloodless.

Miranda came in to them, not a creature of silk and lace, but in the same stuff frock she had worn upon her outgoing. As she looked from one to another her heart rose in her throat. Instinctively she ran and caught her mother in her arms, kneeling to lay her head upon the thin breast and sob out, "I am never going away again—if you will let me stay."

"No, she isn't going, whatever you say," Tom interposed. He was a common sense person and knew things were getting too tense. "I've been waiting for her long enough—all of seven years. Now I mean to have her, whether or not it's by your leave."

"Take her, although she is not ours to give. We were the deserters," Mrs. Acton said, while the two ministers laid their clasped hands upon Miranda's head, saying with choked voices, but in a happy key: "Amen! Amen!"

She Didn't Put It Out.

An old lady of his flock once called upon Dr. Gill with a grievance. The doctor's neckbands were too long for her ideas of ministerial humility, and after a long bannister on the sin of pride she intimated that she had brought a pair of scissors with her and would be pleased if her dear pastor would permit her to cut them down to her notions of propriety.

The doctor not only listened patiently, but handed over the offending white bands to be operated upon. When she had cut them to her satisfaction and returned the bibs it was the doctor's turn.

"Now," said he, "you must do me a good turn also."

"Yes, that I will, doctor. What can it be?"

"Well, you have something about you which is a deal too long and which causes me no end of trouble, and I should like to see it shorter."

"Indeed, dear sir, I will not hesitate. What is it? Here are the scissors; use them as you please."

"Come, then," said the sturdy divine, "good sister, put out your tongue!"—London Mail.

Out of the Barrel.

A Boston steamship man was a witness of this incident: A liner was unloading at one of the Charlestown docks. A cook's helper, a small and very black negro, was leaning over the rail. A large hoghead of molasses came creaking up on the end of the chain and swung unsteadily to and fro. Finally, with a smash, it struck the rail and broke into bits, molasses flying everywhere. There was a wild cry, and from the wreckage came the negro, soaked from head to foot and entirely unrecognizable. He danced madly about and shouted like nothing human. A little Irishman, in overalls, regarded the apparition for a moment with mouth open awe, and a light breaking on him, he shouted: "Molke! For the love of hivin'! Molke! Will yez see what came out of the barrel yer molasses!" It took the combined efforts of the superintendent and his assistants to convince Pat that he hadn't discovered a new stowaway method.

A STORY OF THE CARNIVAL

(Original.)

There are people who love gloom and people who are only happy in sunshine. I am one of the latter kind. I do not winter; summer is my delight. This is often the case with those who are ideal, imaginative, impressionable. To escape the cold season of 1880—I went to Nice and took rooms in a hotel looking out on the quay, decorated with tropical plants, and the Mediterranean beyond. Going to a window to take in the pleasant view, I noticed a name that had been scratched on the pane with a diamond.

I have said that I am of an impressionable nature, but this does not explain satisfactorily the effect this name Marguerite had upon me. Besides the curiosity natural to any one under the circumstances as to who Marguerite might be, I felt some mysterious linking of her personality with mine.

I remained in Nice for the carnival. When the streets were full of merry-makers I sallied forth to mingle with the fun. I walked back and forth, jostled by the crowd, for an hour and was about to return to my hotel when I met two girls sandwiched between two men. My attention was called to them by receiving a handful of confetti—bits of paper the size of snowflakes and somewhat resembling them—thrown in my face by one of the girls. Her eyes scintillated with mischief. A few seconds was the period we looked at each other; then I was again confronted with the crowd in which I had no interest. I walked the street till the last merry-maker had left it, hoping to see her again, but was doomed to disappointment.

I went to sleep thinking of the pretty face of the girl who had covered me with confetti and the next morning awoke to see the laughing eyes looking into mine, and, to my surprise, they did not fade away with time.

I spent the coming summer at Paris. Whoever has been there in the month of June will not be likely to forget the gay throngs, the sparkle of sunshine, the young leaves in the Champs d'Elysees, the universal brightness. While reading my paper one morning at breakfast I came upon an article at variance with all this liveliness. It was an account of the case of Mme. Thurier, who had married an old man for family reasons, who had been brutally treated by him and a few weeks after her marriage had been accused by him of infidelity. It suited his purpose to get rid of her, and he hired people to swear to facts that were untrue. By her adroitness she exposed the plot and got a counter divorce. I was much interested in the case, especially in the ingenious methods by which the lady proved her innocence and exposed her husband's villainy. The article stated that she was much broken down by her trying experience.

A year later I was in Paris again. One night at the opera my friend Jean Chapporal between the acts told me that he wished to present me to his cousin. I was about to leave to keep an engagement and suggested taking another opportunity. "I have no right to say so," he said, "but she will be disappointed." This was enough, and I went with him to his cousin's box.

"Mlle. Martel, I have the—"

I heard no more. There before me, a vision of loveliness in silk and lace, was the girl who had covered me with confetti. She had noticed me sitting in the parquet and had seen her cousin speak to me; hence the introduction. The only change I noticed in her was that her face lacked the roundness I had noticed when I had first seen it, and there was something in it to remind me of a fair landscape on which the sun is shining, but over which a storm has recently crossed.

"I will leave you for a few minutes," said Chapporal, "with Mme. Thurier. I mean"—He retired in confusion.

An expression of pain came over the lady's face.

"Do not think," she said, "that I am sailing under false colors. Everybody knows that I am Mme. Thurier, though I pass under my maiden name."

She was about to explain further when I spared her the pain of doing so by telling her that I knew her story.

What she said to me and I to her during those few minutes that I was left alone with her I have no remembrance. I was wholly taken up with a great joy that I had found the girl of whom I had been dreaming since the carnival. Just before the curtain rose Chapporal returned, and I arose to leave.

"My cousin," said the lady, "will show you the way to our house. Won't you, Jean?"

"Certainly, Marguerite."

I started.

"What's the matter now?" exclaimed Chapporal. "Have I blundered again?"

"Mademoiselle," I said, "were you ever at Nice before the season during which I saw you there?"

"Yes; several times."

"Did you stay at any time at the Hotel—?"

"I did."

"Did you write your name with a diamond ring on the window pane?"

"Oh, I was only fifteen when I did that."

The orchestra began to play, and I left the box.

That all happened years ago. Since then I have been following Marguerite wherever she goes. She will not marry me so long as her husband lives, but he is a very old man and feeble, and I have just heard a rumor that he has fallen over a precipice in the Alps and broken his neck.

The report is true.
JOHN V. TUCKER.

MUGGERTON

(Original.)

I was sitting in my editorial den preparing matter for the Sunday edition when a big muscular fellow who looked like a prize fighter came in and asked for employment. I feared that his real intention was to rob me and dalled with him.

"Any experience?" I asked.

"Lots. I worked three weeks on the D—Bee. That's after I left college, a month ago."

At mention of college I started.

"Any creative faculty?"

"You bet! I can dig off a story any time."

"I'm thinking of running a short story every Sunday. Sit down there and let me see what you can do."

He took a seat at a vacant reporter's desk and wrote this story:

"The nineteenth century was just twenty-five years old. It was the winter season. By the wayside stood a hotel, with a barroom just off the office. The landlord was absent, and his daughter, a beautiful girl of eighteen, sat sewing behind the counter. The door opened, and a young man, a regular stalwart, walked up to the counter and registered. He wrote in a fine round hand, 'Dick Tutt, Central City, Colo.'"

I paused and looked at the author. In 1825 the Rocky mountains where Central City is located had probably never seen a white man.

"I'm a cowboy, I am," said Mr. Tutt, sweeping the floor with his broad brim. "I won \$700 at faro off the boys punchin' cows around 'Central,' and I've come east to blow it in."

"As he spoke he drew a bead on the girl with his eagle eye and brought her down like an antelope. Taking a key off a rack, she handed it to him, and he was about to go upstairs when a party came in smoking 'long nines' and took possession of the big stove in the center of the room. Mr. Tutt paused and watched them. They soon got to kicking up a row, and the girl started for the telephone to call the police."

"You've made a slight mistake," I remarked to the author. "The telephone was invented half a century after the date of your story."

He glared and ground his teeth like a lion poked with a long stick, and I went on reading.

"Mr Tutt walked up to the lady and said:

"If you want these galoots tumbled out I reckon I can do the job."

"No, sir," replied the girl softly; "we never allow any shooting in this house."

"Shootin'!" exclaimed the gentleman. "What do I need of a gun with such muscle?" And, rolling up his sleeve, he showed a biceps that measured a good twenty inches.

"Without waiting for permission he sidled up to the man making the most noise and, straightening his crooked arm, sent the fellow sailing like an ice boat along the floor till he brought up against the baseboard. Mr. Tutt then turned and faced the rest of the gang. It happened that Kid Mahons was in the crowd, at that time training for a fight with Pat McCreacken. He stepped to the front, and a ring was formed. The kid was a featherweight with fancy fist training, and the cowboy was strong as a bull buffalo. While the kid was dancing around the cowboy broke his guard, got a clutch on him and, raising him in the air, threw him into the next room."

"This ended the fight. The gang picked up the unconscious kid and ran him out, for they didn't know but the police might come in any minute."

"How can I ever thank you enough?" remarked the young lady, going back to her sewing machine behind the counter."

Again I paused to think. My recollection was that the sewing machine did not come into use before 1860.

"At that moment the old man walked in."

"Father," said the girl, "here's a guest from the wild and woolly west. A gang of rowdies came in a few minutes ago and made a disturbance. The gentleman cleaned them out."

"My friend," said the landlord, "what can I do for you? 'Anything in this house is none too good for Riley,' quoting a popular song."

"Stranger," said the cowboy, "you've got only one thing I want, your daughter."

"I'd rather part with my new Colt's pistol or my typewriting machine, but if she's willing you have my consent."

"When they were married the cowboy wore a woolen shirt, corduroy trousers, boots and spurs. The bride wore white muslin."

Having finished the story, I looked up at the author.

"Did you take a full course in college?" I asked.

"Well, no. I was brought in for a special when the varsity team went into training for the annual football game. I left college just before the examination."

"I see. You are—"

"Muggerton."

"The tackle that laid everybody out opposed to your college last season?"

"The same."

"Why did you place the scene of your story so far back as to time?"

"Well, you see, I ain't up to what's going on, and by the looks of you I thought you might not be either, so I set it back where the mistakes would not be noticed."

"You've made a blunder on every line. How would you like to run a page of sports?"

"Bully!"

"Very well, I'll start you in at \$30 a week."

BARTON WILLIAMSON.