



Simon flung wide the door, every stiff red hair on his bullet head bristling hostility, "We're not expecting company," he growled

JOHANN LIND

By Laura Goodman Salverson

Illustrated by J. F. Clymer

SIXTH INSTALLMENT

Hawthorne . . . God pity us! Tom Higgins saw her with his own eyes on the train with Johann Lind!"

"Nonsense!" Herman shot out the word. "A fool's guess-work, you'll find better explanation."

Lena dabbled at her swollen eyes disconsolately. "You forget it takes money to travel, Herman; someone must have arranged her ticket."

At last Helga's slow suspicion took fire. Sure now that a key was presented to a dozen mysteries she burst out heatedly: "Tish! you forget the breed, Herman. What a Lind wants he takes. Now I understand that secrecy and sudden haste. Ja, and maybe the reason for Eli's putting off her marriage again and again."

Lena squirmed at sound of that but, mother-wise, preferred a daughter reluctant to a daughter unsought. Nevertheless, conscience urged a mild defence. "Twasn't that—least not at first. Andre's ambitious—"

"Ja, thank God!" repeated Helga vehemently, "and too much of a man to take advantage of your Eli. Tish! if you come to think of it Eli always had a soft way with her when Johann was around . . . Herre Gud! the deceit these days! Ja, that's what hurts—not Eli's weakness, Lena, but Johann to play my Andre such a trick!"

There it was again: Andre, Andre, Andre; nothing mattered except as it affected Andre. Lena froze in her chair, too shot with anger for instant response. Helga's pity was as hardly bought as Simon's; they were alike indifferent to all that lay outside their own personal aims and favor—both selfish to the core. Hard and clear, Lena's answer came at length. "Herman is right, Helga, it's a fool's story—Johann may have lent her the money, that is all."

"Men don't lend money to women for nothing," snapped Helga in high dudgeon, "not that I ever heard of."

"For shame, mistress!" old Herman got to his feet indignantly. "You dishonor yourself, Helga Boen, to voice such a thought. Nu, da, since I'm at it, let me admit I've always found you simple but never such a fool before!"

No less agitated Lena fumbled with her wraps; anger, dismay, and a nameless regret for the death of something utterly precious warring in her heart. "Ja, shame on you, Helga," she echoed bitterly, "to hint the like of my little Eli. And all this come upon her through your Andre, that wonderful spoil-pet with never a thought except for himself. A fine lover! If Johann cared enough to entice her away at least it's human—Ja, more luck to him, say I!"

"Tish! I thought so. Nu, da, you can have your

AT COFFEE-TIME next day Lena Berg, breathless and disheveled, flung in over the Boen threshold. "Helga! Helga!" she cried, hands before her like a dream walker, her eyes glassy-bright. "Helga Boen, where are you?"

In her haste to respond Helga upset the basket of wool old Herman and she had been carding and the soft, cloudy masses entangled about her feet. "Troll take it!" she kicked the precious stuff impatiently. "Nu, da, Lena, old friend, what is it? Herman, quick, get a cushion. Ja, sit nu—it's a long run over the meadows."

Lena fetched a great sigh. "God help me!" she groaned. "To give pain for comfort is hard. Helga, you'll not believe it, but Eli and Johann—"

"Woman! Woman!" cautioned old Herman sternly.

"It's true, old Grandfather, it's true; Little Eli could stand no more—Herre Gud! If you knew the whole of it—"

"But what is it?" demanded the mystified Helga shortly. "I can't make sense of what you say at all."

Lena rocked in an agony. "Ja, ja, I'm coming to it fast enough: yesterday my Eli disappeared. She's gone to the Ness', I thought, and said so to Papa when night fell and she hadn't returned . . . but it wasn't so. This morning Papa went to

fine opinions, Lena Berg, and your choice of a son-in-law, but don't expect me to welcome Eli to this house with open arms."

Pride kept Lena firm. "So! This, then, is the end of friendship? . . . You'll not welcome Eli; you'll not forgive—Simon won't have her; you'll not have her . . . God give Johann Lind has a kinder heart!"

Meanwhile in Winnipeg Eli was facing her paternal aunt in the Beard living-room, finding the ordeal peculiarly terrifying, wishing with all her strength Johann hadn't gone. Emma Beard, built like a rhinoceros, was like her brother in everything but size. His views were her views; his code her code. He had wired her to be on the watch for the runaway and to draw her conclusions—Grim, massive, she eyed the trembling fugitive coldly. "What kind of craziness do you call it, running away from a good home with a doubtful character?"

Timid little mouse, heart a-hammer in her breast, Eli came back valiantly: "Don't say it, Aunt Emma. He's not a doubtful character—he's not! He's good and kind and helpful. It's just a mistake, dear Aunt Emma. I ran away myself."

"Good, kind, helpful young man to bring you here? And do you expect Andre to overlook such behavior?"

"What behavior?" wailed Eli, wringing her hands in rising despair. "I've done nothing, Aunt Emma, but come straight to you. Johann phoned Andre's office but he wasn't in; he was up the line, they said, looking at land. Ah, it's true, true; and if he cares, shouldn't he be glad I've come?"

"Ja, and the money—where did you get the money to come to your Andre? Tell me that, bold little minx?"

Anyone less steeped in selfishness than Emma Beard would have seen the horror clouding Eli's guileless blue eyes. "Aunt Emma! Aunt Emma! don't look at me like that! Haasji Van Meiris, a dear friend, gave me the money—"

"Troll take it, what a story! You must be worse than I thought; impertinent, untruthful. And what, may I ask, do you propose to do?"

"Why I—why—" began poor Eli desperately. "I meant to get work. . . . I thought you'd take me in."

"Ho, ho! you flatter me, young lady. You thought I'd take you in—and so I might with your father's permission. But it happens he has forbidden my giving you houseroom except at Andre's behest."

Eli was never very certain of just what followed. Aunt Emma raced on, fat face very red, green eyes flint-hard, and the room went round in circles. Haasji had talked of leading one's life, but Haasji was wrong, you had no life, you were just a candle lighted at the parental fires and snuffed out at will . . . She remembered thinking that and, in a desperate effort to escape annihilation, rising to her feet, saying something that made Aunt Emma laugh, and rushing into the street.

When the door closed behind her Eli faced the evening shadows with no idea of where to go. Every fresh sound struck her as menacing; every dwelling seemed a laughing mockery. And her aunt's narrow green eyes she felt certain were following her progress down the street, boring and spying, cruel weasels of destruction.

At the first intersection she turned down Logan walking as fast as weariness permitted, noting in time the ever-increasing "Rooms to Let" and "Room and Board" placards posting the old street on either side. Evidently there were places in plenty to lay one's head but, with less than twelve dollars between her and the wind Eli decided to fix upon a shabby house, set in a garden of gnarled trees, and agreeably distant from the noisy street.

The woman opening to her knock was short, healthily plump, wreathed in onion smoke and smiling from behind horn spectacles. "Is it a room, yes?" said she, so like Vrouw Van Meiris that Eli took fresh heart of grace.

"Please, yes. I'm so tired and don't know where to go."

That Mrs. Rischta offered her cupboard of a room at the original one-fifty per week after that ingenuous confession bespoke her character and

honesty. "It's not big," she explained superfluously, squeezing by the bureau to deposit Eli's grip under the window. "Not big, but clean, and all my girls are respectable. There's four—two 'chambers' and two 'shirts'."

Eli's blank expression called for additional explanation. "You see, we call them by trade. Hetty and Selma Raabe work at the Leland Hotel; Mabel Cobb and Tess Stillman in the Western Shirt Factory. If they come home early I'll make you acquainted. I like my girls to be friends, it gives such a family feeling—Ma Rischta they call me."

"Thank you, Mrs. Rischta, but tonight I'm very tired—"

Mrs. Rischta peered closer with nearsighted eyes. "Sure, poor baby, you look it. Now, how about a cup of tea?"

Eli had borne up under Aunt Emma's uncharitable reception, Ma Rischta's kindness dissolved her in tears. "Prut, now, jungling, you're cold and hungry. Come, there's Pee Wee in the kitchen singing his head off and Bunty just as like stealing the cream. Pee Wee never sings so loud 'less Bunty's up to something."

In the cheerful kitchen between sips of tea and nibbles of golden toast and shy passes at impudent green-eyed Bunty, Eli told as much of her story as shyness and discretion permitted. Papa and she, unfortunately, had not been able to agree—and Aunt Emma had taken Papa's part. That was the gist of it; that

and the burning desire to make good. She had to find work at once; oh, yes, she just had to succeed! Ma Rischta nodded, liking well Eli's transparent honesty, her desire to shield others from blame and her obvious innocence. "Sure, you'll succeed. Tess will find you work, and for fifty cents extra the kitchen is yours; and now, jungling, you better go to bed."

After all Eli slept soundly, waking with a sense of well-being impossible in Emma Beard's big house. The tiny room was full of light and from the kitchen issued peals of happy laughter and the tantalizing aroma of brewing coffee.

Jumping from bed Eli began a hasty toilet thinking the while how lucky she was and how glad Mama would be to learn of it. Poor Mama, left to face Simon's wrath! Timid, swallow-shy, she paused in the doorway, too bashful to speak, her questing eyes pleading for her. "Come in, come in," a chorus hailed her.

"Sure, child, come in," Ma's rich contralto topped the rest. "I'm doing lunches for the 'shirts'—Here, Tess, where's the string? . . . Eli, meet the girls. That's Het and Selma by the fire, and these imps pestering me are Mab and Tess."

"That's right, blacken my name from the start!" shouted Tess, making a pass at Bunty with the dish-towel. "Now, Miss Berg, take a little salt with Ma's brew; she's a base deceiver. Hey ho! get that cat, it's in the cream again—as Ma said, I'm Tess Stillman at your service, the meekest lamb of all." Thus Eli's introduction to Tess, the beginning of a curious attachment, for the vivacious, black-eyed Irish girl was as drawn to the pale, flaxen Scandinavian as Eli to that whirlwind personality. It was Tess perfected Eli in the technique of "baching," teaching her the mysteries of mock-oyster and duck; how to press laces on window panes, soap runs in her hose, not to mention lesser things. And it was Tess found her a job on the button-machine next her own "double-stitcher," and the button-machine paid ten a week when you got your hand in!

NOT until the fateful Saturday Tess decided to introduce Eli to the "gang" at Casey's had the happy girl given thought to Andre. It had been such an amazing fortnight, filled with strange experience and glad content. But now, watching

Tess struggle with the tuck in the dress she herself was to wear—to dazzle the lords of creation—she suddenly thought of him and felt, somehow, a traitor. "Tess," she confessed shyly, "I've not told you before, but there's a friend. . . ."

Tess flung down the dress, staring impudently at the blushing Eli. "Hey ho! a friend? And where, pray, have you been meeting him, my sly young puss?"

"Tess! I haven't! You know I haven't . . . why, how could I? I've been with you most all the time."

Tess's laughter filled the tiny room like a gale. "Between most, and all, there's a considerable gap, dearie. Out with it; make a clean breast—it's good for the soul."

"Dear Tess, it's true! I haven't met him, I don't know where he lodges; I'm not even certain of the firm where he works . . . yes, I know it sounds impossible. But, you see, he'd not like the way I came—"

"Save me!" shouted Tess, "what next? Is he a parson, or just a plain ass?"

Eli giggled. Thoughts of Andre in the cloth too much even for her gravity. "Oh, no, no! He's not a bit what you imagine. He's tall and fair and very ambitious. We're to be married—that is, we were to have been married, when he'd gotten a proper start—"

"Why the 'were'?" demanded Tess sharply.

Eli fidgeted, painfully conscious of tell-tale blushes. "Because," she repeated shamefully, "in running away I had to board the train with his foster-brother. Someone saw us, and—and didn't understand."

Tess whistled. "You never can tell," said she. "Now who'd have thought a quiet little mouse like you could stir such a fuss? I'll say I'd think better of myself if I were you. But as for that model sweetheart, forget him, dearie; most likely he's turned Mormon to satisfy his virtue. Forget him, Eli, unless he's man enough to hunt you up."

For the time being Eli was glad enough to adopt Tess's counsel. She wanted to be happy this night of her first city dance; to put from her all thoughts of duty and obligation, great and small. Tomorrow she could face them; tomorrow she must, for there were letters to write to Mama, to Haasji, and, if she dared, to Johann. So many, many things to do on the morrow; but tonight she would enjoy herself.

Enjoy herself she did—for a flawless, shining hour. Dressed to bring out the Dresden daintiness of her soft flaxen beauty Eli drank the heady wine of admiring glances lavished freely. She was pretty! She was besieged with dance-cards! And Tess was proud of her! The happiness of being thus approved wiped from consciousness the worrisome pain, now so seldom absent, together with each warning advanced by her old doctor—all else was forgotten save the radiant joy of being approved by this reckless laughter-loving company so different from any she had known.

Alas for such flawless joy! In a while it grew apparent that something mechanical, a defiant gaiety, colored Tess' manner. Eli, sensitive as a flower, at once voiced her concern to Mabel, busy fanning herself after a dizzy reel with a perspiring haberdasher. "Oh, dear, something does seem to worry Tess—I wish I dared ask her."

Mabel, wise of old, shrugged significantly. "Better not, I'd say! It's that chap she's so crazy about . . . he's late, as usual. And let me warn you, dearie, if the fool creature doesn't turn up, make yourself scarce—see? Slide home; Tess has a full-grown temper once it's roused." A pleasant young man, slightly bald, ended the confidence by claiming Mabel, leaving Eli to her thoughts.

Nothing loath to rest awhile, she slipped off to a secluded corner the better to watch the dancers and especially Tess, whose gay sallies came less frequently and stormy eyes kept darting downward. Why doesn't he come; why doesn't he come? wondered Eli nervously; oh, why—

Laughter, triumphant, passionate, chime-rich, riding that sea of noise eagle-proud cut her short. He had come! He had . . . then she saw him. No! no! Dear God, it couldn't be; dear God, it mustn't be . . . Eli covered her eyes, praying for strength,

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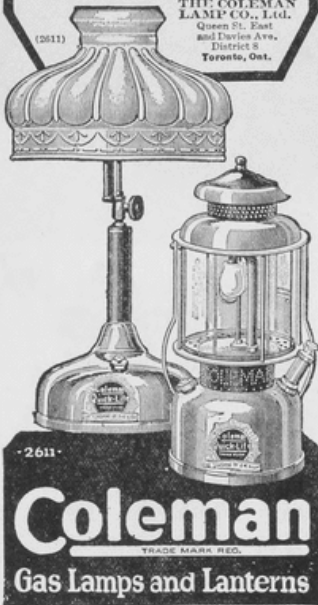
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praying for wisdom, hoping against hope she had seen wrongly. Surely life could not be that cruel! And then she heard his voice; quick, possessive, self-sure—Andre's voice!

Andre Boen, her Andre, was the man Tess loved so fiercely! The significance of it set her brain reeling. For herself she cared nothing, but Tess mustn't know. Dear Tess was her friend. With only one thought, the wild desire to escape unseen, Eli staggered to her feet and, dodging the dancers, ran towards the cloakroom.

She might have succeeded but for that yellow head of hers and winsome slenderness. A merry fellow, her partner earlier in the dance, caught her gaily. "Why the speed, Cinderella, the clocks have not struck twelve?"

Before she could shake him, glib though fear made her tongue, Tess had spied her. "Eli! Eli! Little puss, what now?" she enroiled. "Tommy boy, don't let her go."

Transfixed, Eli waited in helpless perplexity. To keep silence argued mischief; to speak implied disaster and, in either case Tess was lost to her. But what seemed calamitous to Eli struck Andre as capital good fortune. "Well, can you believe it!" he bantered lightly. "It's Eli—little Eli Berg!"

Swiftly suspicious, Tess whirled round, catching a queer expression on Andre's smiling face and, back to Eli, read in her troubled humility the marks of subterfuge and guilt. Tess knew her world. Laughing, she dropped an exaggerated curtsey. "Drown me for a dunce," said she, "if Cinderella hasn't met the Prince before."

Well aware of her jealous affection, Andre shot her a guarded, half contemptuous glance. A devil that Tess; no good to provoke her. Just the same, now he saw new possibilities in little Eli, he had no intention in playing loser either way. He matched her, laugh for laugh. "Right, Tess, right as usual. Eli Berg and I have known each other a long time—home town stuff, and all that. Isn't it so, Miss Berg?"

Too simple to grasp the wisdom of such apparent honesty and, caught in a wave of that high courage which sometimes bursts the barriers of ancient inhibitions Eli, face flaming, flung back boldly: "It is not so! You are mistaken, Eli Berg has never known you—doesn't want to know you, now or ever!"

When she had gone, dashing as though a legion of devils pursued her, Tess swung round on Andre danger signals high in either cheek. "Perhaps you'll tell me what it's all about?"

"Devil if I know," said he shortly. "She's a country kid I met back home. Wounded dignity, I suppose . . ."

"Andre, are you lying to me?"

"For heaven's sake, Tess, why should I lie?"

Tess laughed, silken lashes veiling the anger of her tell-tale eyes. "That's so—why should you—? Then, fiercely, "—and on the whole you'd better not! But come, it's lunch time, Romeo; lead me to the balcony, I'm starving."

TWO o'clock, and Ma Rischtaw wakened from a heavy doze beside the kitchen range (Ma always waited up Saturday nights) to find Tess, wild-eyed, bursting with indignation slamming into the room. "Mein Gott!" gasped Ma, somewhat off-guard, rubbing her short-sighted eyes and fumbling for her glasses.

Tess flung down her hat and coat. "Would you believe it," she began fiercely, "our innocent Eli has somehow got herself tangled with my young man? The deceitful devil, I saw it in her face—I read it in his eyes. My God, no wonder he's been busy! Busy chasing Eli, and she making off with someone else!"

Ma blinked, owlishly, finding it exceedingly hard to grasp this madcap story. "Prut! prut! don't be hasty, Tess." Ma, now sufficiently wakened, hastened to enjoin: "Stop and think, you've forgotten her own boy."

Tess snapped her fingers in poor Ma's face. "Think! Think yourself, Ma Rischtaw. Doesn't that prove she's deceitful as Satan. That lily-face of hers takes

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everyone in. My God, for all I know she's got a dozen!"

"Tess, Tess, don't be irreverent. You're in a temper, jungling, and no fit judge. Give the poor little thing a chance."

"Give her a chance—that man-eater? You should have seen her putting across the give-me-sympathy stuff!"

At last Ma imagined she had the right of it. "Prut, prut, jungling, I thought you knew so much about men? So much, and don't see he's playing your own game! You've forgotten, hein, that machinist he discovered with you at the Grand?"

Tess' black looks melted in shining relief. "Ma, Ma, you old pudding. Here, let me kiss you. . . ." God bless old Ma; she was always right. It was true, she had flirted outrageously—though not so often since Andre's advent. Still—Pshaw! she had a fiend's temper and most likely Eli wasn't so much to blame after all.

"Give her a chance to explain, anyway," Ma urged gently. "Whatever it was she's moping a-plenty. I heard her crying fit to break her heart."

Tess yanked out a mirror from a ridiculous handbag, scowled at the pretty image, and, popinjay fashion, sprang to her feet. "All right, Ma, I'll give her a chance. Just one! A second slip and Gabriel himself would pipe in vain till Doomsday!"

Ma arose at eight next morning determined to start the day right with sugar-muffins; Sunday being a day of special favors anyway. Hetty and Selma, dull-eyed for lack of sleep, appeared in due time, ate her delicacy absent-mindedly and hurried off to Mass. Prut! she might have spared herself that extra egg. Well, at least they were out of the way, and with Mabel sleeping till noon as usual the peace between Eli and Tess might be better effected.

But Tess had her own notions about reconciliation. Long before Ma ever thought of quitting her feather bed she had stolen to Eli's room, and found a very sick girl, indeed. Instantly her heart took fire with living pity. "Eli, Eli, poor baby," she crooned, squeezing in the cot beside her, gathering the feverish girl to her firm young breast. "Poor kid, poor baby! nice mess you've made—working up a cold like this!"

Silent and bittersweet, Eli's tears coursed her little feverish face. "Oh, Tess," she moaned. "Dear, dear Tess, never believe I'd want to hurt you."

Tess, contemplating the soft yellow hair brushing her cheek suffered momentary misgivings but, swiftly maternal, kissed the tear-wet face. "Hush, now, Eli, I don't care what you do, dearie—so long as you stay clear of—Andre!"

Eli lay very still . . . Tess thought she was sleeping.

GREAT was Ma Rischtaw's relief that peace once more reigned in her little house. But as the days passed a new anxiety presented itself. Her little "jungling," as she oftentimes called Eli, had a dry, hacking cough that yielded nothing to goose-grease and flannels. It troubled her exceedingly and led to no end of experiments, all of which Eli accepted gratefully. She had need of kindness; the letter sent to her mother had been returned unopened, re-addressed in her father's bungling hand. That night was an endless nightmare filled with tortuous thoughts of her mother's misery. Poor, poor Mama, what mustn't be her suffering; her troubled doubts; her hopeless despair. She should go back. It was her duty. Yes, yes, she saw that now, but could she? Would her papa take her back?

In the morning she was too ill to go to work, which precipitated fresh fears. She'd lose her machine; lose her job—be adrift once more. Lose her job? Not while Tess Stillman knew how to "touch" the boss—leave Searle Mason to her; she'd fix him. Fix him she did, and within a week Eli was back at the shop trying desperately to forget the past and acquire that not insignificant efficiency which brought a crisp ten-spot in the pay envelope Saturday night.

Doubtless because of her illness and subsequent depression nothing had been said of Andre, though Eli knew by her gaiety when Tess had been in his company and suffered panic lest the topic be brought up again. She only wished—and prayed God that one favor—to forget and be forgotten by him.

Not so Andre. In the house of Simon, mute, passive, mouse-like, Eli had seemed little more than a necessary means to her father's money. But in that atmosphere of light and music, exhibiting a spirit never shown before, she had awakened haunting interest.

Back in his lodgings he began upbraiding himself for letting her slip away; to wish he had acted on Johann's letter and hunted her up. The upshot of it, he visited Emma Baard, got that lady's unstinted opinion, which, if you please, placed a considerable responsibility on his graceless shoulders. Only he, so said Simon, could rehabilitate the truant Eli!

On his way back he thought the thing out carefully. Simon's contention was pure rot, of course, but Simon's bankroll an enticing argument. With another loan he could prove his acumen to Mr. Killam, whose speculative eye already turned his way. That being so and (according to Helga), the Bergs in this flurry about their daughter it might pay double dividends were he to locate Eli. In the midst of which noble conclusion he suddenly remembered Tess and the factory. What an ass he'd been not to think of that before! That accounted for their intimacy—they worked together at the "Western"!

At the lunch hour next day, Eli heard herself called, in a voice of all the world most unwelcome, as she left the factory. Andre Boen, smiling blandly, coming towards her from the confectioner's across the street. "Go away!" she cried in panic lest Tess should spy them. "Go away, and leave me in peace. No, no, I don't want to speak to you—please, Andre, let me go."

The flash of her eyes and the delicate pink staining cheek and brow flattered his vanity. "Oh, come now, Eli," he laughed, drawing her arm through his, "don't carry the thing too far. Remember, mine's the injury, if anyone's. Why, great heavens! what about your escapade with Johann Lind?"

"You lie! You know you lie. There wasn't any escapade—there wasn't anything! Besides, caring nothing about me why can't you leave me in peace?"

"What makes you say that?" he fenced, casting about in his mind for some happy reconciliation. "Isn't it unfair?"

"Unfair? To whom—me or Tess," she flashed back hotly.

Andre drew her closer. "Now, Eli, surely you don't think I take that wild young savage seriously? How could I, with your sweet little self—"

"Stop, stop!" cried Eli wildly, "I won't listen, I won't—Please, Andre, let me go."

He gave her a rough shake. "Now, that's enough; you're making a show of us both. There's no occasion for it, and don't forget I've a certain right—a right your father's only too willing I'd press. Besides, the scandal you've started will take a lot of living down."

Eli felt herself slipping into a bottomless pit; every terrifying thought that had rendered the night sleepless and the day dreary taking shape to jab her once again. Everything he said was true. Unjust or not, she couldn't go back unless he made peace for her. And poor Mama must be mad with worry. Dear Mama needed her so! Came then the image of Tess to mock her with ingratitude. "Oh, Andre," she wailed, "let me think it over . . . please, I can't make up my mind . . . I've got to think about it—Andre, let me go."

Never before had she demanded the right of decision, that human stubbornness amazed as much as it amused him. "Very well," he laughed, "until tomorrow, I'll meet you at six. We'll take dinner uptown."

Everything else forgotten, Eli dashed back to the factory, hoping to regain the respite of a few moments quiet in the cloak-room. But, no sooner had she hung up her coat than a mad fury pounced

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Kellogg's

CORN FLAKES

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upon her from behind. Eli screamed with the sudden shock of it.

"Shut up, little fool!" cried Tess, black eyes flashing, red lips curled in contemptuous hate. "Shut up and listen to me!"

"Tess! Tess!" The cry was a prayer, poignant and pitiful, but Tess was deaf to everything save the angry clamor of her own heart.

"Your lies can't help you now, Eli Berg. I've seen with my own eyes. Seen—do you hear? Oh, Eli, how could you do it?"

Eli made a last pathetic effort: "Dear, dear Tess, please let me explain. I can explain . . . I've kept it from you because I wanted you to be happy, but Andre—"

Laughing wildly Tess struck her on the mouth. "Lord, listen to her? She calls him Andre—shut up, before I kill you . . . She calls him Andre—she calls him Andre to my face!"

Little hands against her bleeding lips Eli waited, thinking in a pain-dazed way how good it were to die; how gladly she would die if only Tess believed. "Oh, Tess," she moaned, "what can I say? What can I do?"

"This, Eli Berg, get out and stay out—and at Ma's leave explanations to me!"

Never a shadow slipped away more quietly, left behind less evidence. When Tess came home that night Ma met her at the door: "Mein Gott!" was her perplexed and anxious greeting, "the little jungling has quit us; packed her things and gone without a word!"

THE winter passed uneventfully for Johann. He worked; he read; he took long walks about the country, finding in Nature that something human intercourse failed to give; an assurance of vast purpose imparting strength and poise. Friends he made among the natives who liked his blunt honesty; the villagers thought him proud, though why they couldn't exactly say. And Johann laughed, keeping his own counsel, thinking his own thoughts.

He had scant news of home. Helga, still smarting from the insult done her Andre, refused to write, and Ole, no hand with the pen at any time, found a line or two as much as he could manage. Herman alone wrote regularly, endeavoring to paint cheerfully a cheerless condition. It was true that gossip had affected a break between the two families, but he maintained stoutly that such things righted themselves. He'd seen the like time and again; Johann was not to worry.

Johann had other things to usurp his attention; debts to be met; loans to be transacted; he had little thought to spare for that tempest in a teapot. If he thought of it at all it was to hope that Eli was safe in Andre's keeping. And doubtless she was, for Andre had written expressing his eagerness to help her all he could. Then, too, now he was alone, the memory of Sheila revived to haunt him; all she had been, all she had meant, spoke from the pale sunlight, the virginal reaches of snowy field and pine-scented forest; she was everywhere in essence and forever elusive. Nor did she haunt him less when Anton wrote that Miss Patrick was to marry the new doctor. The Miss Patrick who was to marry the new doctor was not the woman he regretted.

In March, Johann left for Winnipeg, where he meant to spend a few days visiting old acquaintances and attending to necessary business. In the latter he was successful enough; in the former a dismal failure. To begin with, Andre, from whom he craved a definite understanding, was gone to Argyle to estimate farm values for the firm, and the two friends he most wished to see had both removed to the Coast. That is why Saturday night, with all Winnipeg pleasure-bent, found him aimlessly walking West Portage. The old city was spreading; Deer Lodge the next encroachment; it pleased him to see for himself this phenomenal growth.

The night being mild he took no trace of time so that returning, swinging at last down "Main," he found the crooked

old street well nigh deserted save for occasional merrymakers hastening homeward through the thickening downfall of feathery spring snow. Johann had not been conscious of weariness before but somehow the darkened buildings round about and the hurrying pedestrians reminded him that the morrow was a busy day, and rest most grateful.

Rounding William, on Main, he saw by the City Hall clock that the last north-bound car for the Avenue was shortly due and decided to wait. Waiting there under the wing of the new Union Bank Johann looked about him. Old Main Street swaying northward seemed an aisle of enchantment where infinitesimal stars whirled like moths in the shimmering electric light. But at Market Square the illusion died abruptly, shattered irreparably by hurdy-gurdy music pouring from garish windows, each a leering eye winking wickedly over the shoulders of musty shops and evil-smelling bars. Johann shrugged; it was Saturday night, these the sounds of human pastimes; human pleasures . . . or was it mad endeavor to forget?

The thought was broken by the sudden appearance of a girl opposite, whose strange behavior he could not help remark. It seemed she couldn't be still, but fluttered, phantom-like, from point to point, now breasting the City Hall; now plunging into the shadows behind, always glancing from side to side like a terrified, hunted creature. Somehow she fascinated him until he got the uncomfortable conviction of tables turned—that she was watching him. But, while debating whether to offer assistance or no a group of students from St. John's filed by shouting at top-voice, which apparently decided the matter. The young lady fled and Johann resumed his musings.

But he was not rid of her. Startling as a rapier-thrust the thin quaver of her thread-like voice leaped at him from the thickening mist. "It's dull being alone. You look . . . you need—you should have company."

She had crossed the upper street and crept up behind him, as pitiful a Magdalene as ever courted mercy. So thought Johann; sensing her inordinate terror, paradoxical though it seemed. "Poor kid," said he, "you're hungry."

Out flew her little hands in a gesture, at once despairing and full of imploration, and a cry of a woodland creature come on sudden death sent the blood to his heart. "God! God!—not that—not Johann—not Johann Lind!"

He caught her as she fell. Too moved for words, he could only stare at the pinched little face and corn-tassel hair pillowed on his arm. Eli Berg! Little child-like Eli Berg had come to this! God? She had called on God. Well, who was about God's business that things like this could come to pass? And where was Andre? What the meaning of his lying letters? Where his sense of responsibility?

Swift as his anger mounted towards Andre he worked to revive the unconscious Eli, chafing her hands and face; talking the while as one does to encourage a timid child. Poor Eli would have preferred death but life is a stubborn reality. "Oh, Johann—" the words scarce audible carried a world of woe, "—you'll not believe . . . you can't, I know. But it's true. I—I—never quite dared before."

That inexplicable laughter so characteristically his own cut her short. "Of course I believe you, Eli . . . and now, suppose we eat. There's a place around the corner where coffee and waffles are served good and hot any old hour you please."

He wormed the story from her bit by bit: After leaving the friendly Rischtau's she had taken refuge in a dingy place on Point Douglas where landlady nor roomers troubled themselves about her, a characteristic indifference, had she known it. "Go to Ginsberg's" was a saying amongst certain light-fingered gentry, "there's no questions asked." Thence on it was one continual struggle for existence. Restaurants, soda fountains, laundries, department stores all had known her, and all had dismissed her. She wasn't strong

confines of roof and wall becoming intolerable, he flung into the dripping woods where the young leaves, tiny faces streaked with grey rain shivered in each gust of wind.

Still and grey, in a voiceless melancholy the lonely land breathed a peculiar comfort. Nothing mattered, but courage to endure! Everything else faded, passing into oblivion like a myriad dawns, but the "breath of life" breathed into a material Universe by human courage. Grey earth, grey sky and a grey rain falling yet, behind it a Principle of quenchless life. . . . What, then, of dark hours; dark days—dull years ahead? Years are but leaves whirling away on the winds of Eternity.

Very wet, very bedraggled, a young rabbit flashed across his path; Johann laughed softly at the little creature. Why such haste? What the urge driving him from a warm burrow to scamper pell-mell over the cold fields? What the vagrant impulse urging flight in the face of solemn silence? Such terrible, inescapable silence! Profound, mysterious, enveloping life like the walls of a jealous womb, it pressed upon action shaping it at will.

Upon these musings the sweetness of Anton's lyric voice broke in rainbow-sound:

"The canary, God's bird with the yellow breast,
Has for his tiny ones a tiny little nest—"

sang he cheerily swinging along, axe on shoulder. This unexpected meeting with his beloved Barin fetched an excited cry: "Horspidy! What luck! Barin, you must come and see what I've made—oh, an idea, I tell you!"

Hardly conscious of whither his steps were leading, Johann found the boy's welling gladness a gratifying surprise. He hadn't the heart to dash such joyous hope. Nor was Daria's exuberant reception less welcome. "Glory be to Thee, O God!" she carolled, hastily wiping a smudge from the "namesake's" face. "Barin, we think you forget; come no more. Much fools poor Russian people!"

Johann laughed heartily, complimented her garden, the new barn and pigery and, lastly, of course, expressed his astonishment anent the miraculous progress of the youngest Zekof. Daria struck her heavy thigh a resounding whack. "Horspidy! Such a Canadian! No sickness, and already he bites like a weasel. A great name, Barin, gives good luck."

Anton, not free from jealousy, came forward with his latest carving, a really moving bas-relief of Daria. Johann's praise was quick and cordial. "Splendid, Anton. An idea, truly. But, look, lad, aren't the hands a little weak, for—well, an Earth-mother? And what about making the background pure wilderness?"

"Horspidy, yes! The Canadian wilderness, one furrow turned and Mama alone—at sunrise!"

"Bravo, Anton! I said we'd hear from Russia yet!"

Anton's brow clouded. "Oh, I don't know, Barin. I guess I got the idea because Haasji wrote us of an exhibition—she wants me to send something."

Haasji Van Meiris! Here she was again, that comet-bright child, flashing inspiration along a dark highway. "So Haasji still keeps in touch, does she? I'd think she'd be too busy."

Anton grinned from ear to ear. "Barin, you should read those letters! Every week a nice fat one full of news. Parties and concerts and dinners, where you get mostly dishes and eat from the icebox afterwards. . . ."

Daria lunged at Anton in bearish playfulness. "Chut! big news come first. Such luck that girl gets, Barin, a money-book from her uncle and, last week a gold watch from the lover—"

"Mama! Anton blushed for her. "In America you don't talk like that. You should say from a friend and not make her mad with you."

Daria flicked her greasy apron in disrespect of such idiotic logic. "In America you should lie? What for then gets a girl a watch from a man? Ho! ho! Barin, my Anton is yet in petticoats, Glory be to God!"

Whereupon, with unreasonable increase, Johann's restless depression returned. He was bored, he was tired and wished himself away. Not only from

the Zekofs and the narrow world they knew, but free from all the farce man called existence. Just now it purposed nothing, that little span of dreams 'twixt birth and death. He neither heard, nor cared to hear, what more Anton said of Haasji: parties, dances, young men—what had that to do with the high-souled child he had known? The little golden Haasji whirling like an uprooted flower over brown fields! A sorry riddle, he'd had enough of it! More fool he to have dreamt of happiness. Happy alone, the mortal who, mole-like, ate and drank, begot his kind and died firm in the conceit that such pursuit assured him glories denied the ground-hog. . . .

There came to mind another vexation. "Anton," said he brusquely, rising to go, "you've not forgotten the Bergs?"

"No, Barin. But this week Mrs. Berg said to wait, I don't know why."

"Well, do your best, Anton—and keep to the carving. Luck to the garden, Mrs. Zekof, and more teeth to the weasel!"

But Daria must see him to the gate. "Come again," she begged, "come soon, Barin. In Russia, we say of the friend, 'when he smiles it is like a gift'. . . . When the Barin smiles—it is many gifts! God give you joy, Barin, and send you many sons!"

The Boens were home before him. Remarkably revived by her jaunt to town Helga left the pressing business of frying pancakes to greet him triumphantly. You wouldn't believe, Johann Lind, what a fuss! Bridesmaids like a rainbow round a white moon and enough flowers for a funeral—a kind of sick smell it made, and his Lordship the Bishop fine as Solomon. Ja, da, I said to my Ole, if only Johann were standing by the bride what a heart I'd have for the years to come."

"Mama! Mama!" bellowed her Ole, "ain't that a smell of burning pancakes?"

It was indeed, and, busy scraping the pan, Helga lost track of what had been in her mind to add anent the vanished hopes and glories. But, at supper-table she remembered a toothsome confidence. "Nu, what do you think Mrs. Jensen told me today?" she began, as sternly as good humor permitted, "not that you can always go by what she says owing to her deafness, poor soul."

Ole puffed his ruddy cheeks impatiently. "Well, what does she say, the old she-walrus? Ain't it queer she can't even quit gabbling on a wedding, that sea-serpent!"

"Nu, da, hear him, will you! Let me tell you, Ole Boen, it's queerer after all these years respectable on land you should hold to such sea-manners! Mrs. Jensen has her little faults but such is human nature!"

"Is it the catechism you're telling, good wife, or a sermon?"

"Nu, da, hold your tongue and I'll on with my story. You won't believe it, but a man told her someone very like Eli came on the train from Winnipeg today. He wasn't sure, but mighty suspicious."

Ole snorted angrily. "Suspicious? What for suspicious? Can't a girl come home without making some lubber suspicious?" he bellowed loud enough to sweep the widest deck.

"You never had much sense, Ole. Here, have another pancake and stop roaring. It ain't necessary to start a stampede with your racket."

So that was it! That was why Lena hadn't sent the weekly letter, thought Johann, grateful that Helga's spleen permitted even so much reflection. Somehow poor frantic Lena had arranged for Eli's return. By way of prod, Johann laughed lightly, seconding Ole's opinion. "Why, yes, just what was so terrible in Eli's coming back?"

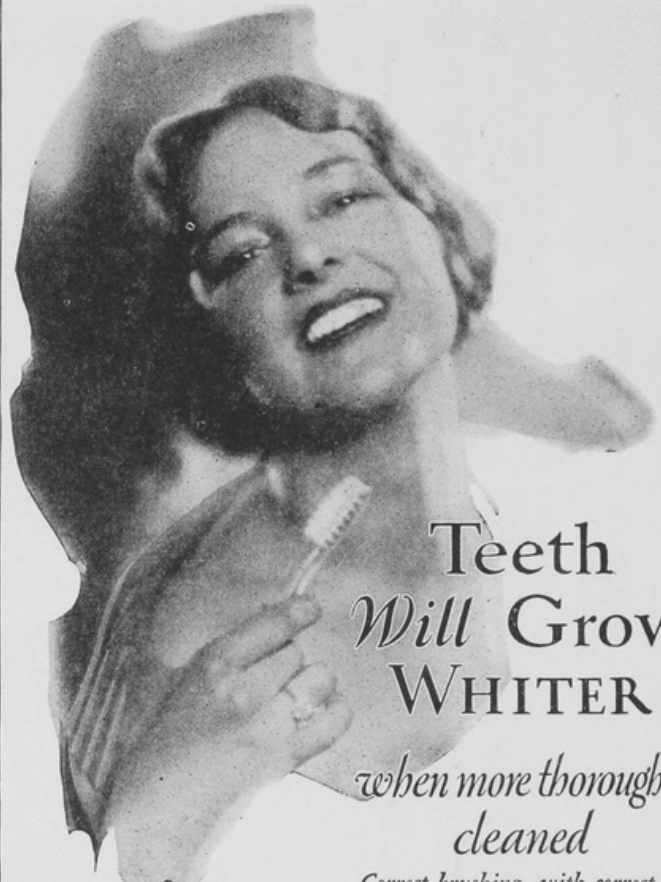
Helga could only stare at him. "You ask that, Johann Lind? When a girl makes disgrace for her papa, upsetting his plans and everything you think she should come back—and find a welcome maybe?"

Johann's black eyes snapped mischief. "Why not? Didn't you used to tell us of a fattened calf and a prodigal come home?"

Helga sniffed scornfully. "Irreverence and impudence! Use a little sense, Johann, and depend on it that Eli eats ashes before Simon takes her in."

"And if not, what then?"

Continued on page 40



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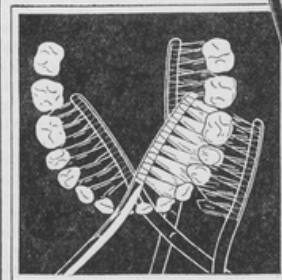
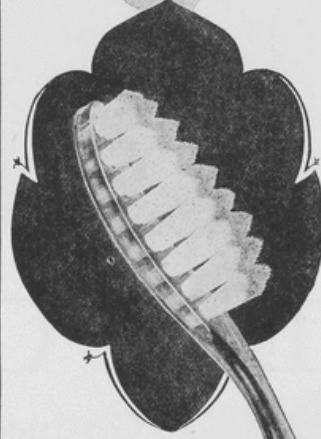
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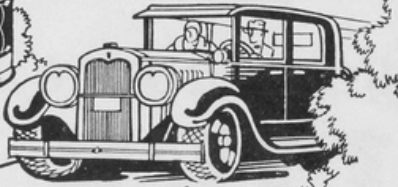


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W.H.M.—Aug

Johann Lind

Continued from page 33

"Ja, what then? What but the fate she's courted? A light girl playing fast with her betters!"

"Woman! woman!" Ole bawled in warning, "you do your sex dirt—Damnation, yes! You, Helga Boen, who long since brought a drifting brig to port!"

Helga shifted uneasily, wishing that duty demanded less strenuous measures. But Andre's honor was at stake. "Men don't see things rightly," she riposted, frowning on her dull tormentors, "A woman should stand by her kind in trouble, but not in foolishness—"

"Let's come to facts," Johann suggested, firmly. "Should Eli, sick, homeless, appeal to you—what then?"

Helga's face flamed at the seeming insult added to injury. He asked her that, the mother of Andre Boen! Nu, da, what could you expect— "Herre Gud! Johann Lind," her exasperation flared out at last, "what could I do but tell her to begone? Ja, I'd tell her that and keep my word to Lena Berg!"

"A fine word!" Ole growled contemptuously. "A lubberly fine word!"

"Ja, you said it, Ole Boen. A word never broken. 'Lena,' said I, 'because of shame put on me and mine never will Eli Berg enter here—never!'"

Johann got to his feet, that indescribably Lind smile creeping over his face. "I quite see," he told her pleasantly, "you couldn't abide by the letter and welcome Eli Berg after that."

"Nu, what does he mean, the young Troll?" Helga demanded of Ole when the door shut behind Johann's broad back.

Husband-wise, Ole lit his pipe and opened the paper. "You know so much, why ask me?"

"Ja, that's so. It's a foolishness got in me," she agreed swiftly. "What you'd tell me, Ole Boen, I could just as well get from the crows."

A STRANGE foreshadowing of disaster haunted Johann throughout the evening as he sat at cards with Herman. And, in the end his abstraction so irritated the old man he flung down his hand in disgust. "Johann Lind," he scolded, "you played a better game at seven. What's come over you?" No sooner spoken he wished the words back. Ah, he was growing old, to be so tactless! To have forgotten this was pretty Sheila's wedding-day! "Nu, da," he hastened to amend, "age is quarrelsome; it's the penalty of outlived usefulness. Give me my glasses, lad, I'll leave you in peace."

Johann was otherwise minded. "Grandfather, you weren't in at supper; perhaps you haven't heard that Eli has come back?"

Herman's shaggy white brows met in a puzzled frown. "Nu? . . . is that what troubles you?"

Johann's answer was characteristic if not satisfactory. "What else? If it's true, think how honors will be divided."

"Truth is painful, but rarely kills!" old Herman retorted tartly. "Ja, if there's one thing more than another I failed to understand in the Linds it was their reluctance to admit a generous impulse."

Johann walked to the window. It was raining heavily now with a sharp wind blowing. A dismal night in which to be abroad . . . the wedding guests would find it so down in the village . . . Well, they at least had joy to lighten the road. But poor little Eli, what had she? Yet what more gentle heart, or more-deserving? His answer came coldly, a clean cutting blade: "Truth is too exalted a virtue for me . . . As for impulse—well, grandfather, the less said of Lind impulses the better, I imagine."

That might be, thought old Herman. But, when some while later Anton, wet and breathless, bounded up the stairs, Johann's quick grasp of the situation belied his words. "Barin, Barin," gasped the boy, "something awful has happened! Oh, come quick, Papa found Eli by the big pond . . . she's all — she's nearly—"

Johann caught up his reefer and hat. "If I'm not back by morning," he told Herman quietly, "tell them I'm at the Zekofs . . . the reason can wait."

Continued on page 41

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Johann Lind

Continued from page 40

Prepared though he was for near-tragedy the scene greeting his eyes on entering Anton's stuffy little home exceeded his darkest expectations. On a bench before the fire lay Eli wrapped in Daria's best Russian blanket; her small face marble-white, her long yellow hair still dripping water and streaked with ugly green slime. Beside her, like a friendly "Newfoundland," Zekof stood gazing on his hostage snatched from Death, his big face wrinkled with perplexity. Daria wept, praying in turn to her Saints, and shooing the inquisitive youngsters back to their corners.

Her relief on seeing Johann gushed out piously: "Glory be to Thee, O God! Barin, it is true, there is mercy in Heaven . . . how not when Zekof reaches the pond in time?"

Johann stood at loss for words. With that slender, wasted body stretched before him, tragic testimony of God knew what torments suffered, how should he speak? What could be said? Zekof fetched a groan. "Barin, because it rain I think to come across by the Big Pond it save a mile. Ah, it is the wind, I say, that noise. No, a sick rabbit—a lost calf. Christos, mercy! Instead she come, a white ghost, crying, crying . . . Glory be to God! My feet can't run, for when she jump I know it is a girl."

Daria lifted a warning finger. "Zekof, she moves, make still—maybe God touched her."

But Eli was sane enough, though nothing surprised her, neither Johann, smiling above her, dark eyes curiously kind, nor the troubled Zekofs; nor how she got there by a roaring fire. Sane enough, but weariness had her for its own and nothing mattered but this peace of undisturbed quiet, this cold suspended moment free of conscious thought and pain. Daria had no stomach for such death-like comfort. A steaming samovar of strong black tea and a priest to confess her was what was needed. Glory be to God, at least the tea was theirs to give.

Rekindled to misery by this well-meant service Eli cried out bitterly: "Oh, why didn't he let me go! I'll not have the courage again!"

Johann drew his chair closer. "Now, Eli, why regret a terrific nuisance?" he began cheerfully, inadvertently loosening the floodgates of suffering.

"But you don't know the awful things he said: what he did," she cried, starting up wildly, revealing in her excitement a mud-spattered muslin gown gaping at a blood-stained shoulder. "He struck her, Johann Lind—he struck my darling Mama!"

But Johann had no thought for Lena. Eyes onyx-black in an ashen face he sat transfixed staring at the ugly well coiled snake-wise on that frail white shoulder. The blasphemy of it fascinated him. Little, helpless, sick — yet Simon had struck her! Worse, he had heaped upon her unmentionable epithets—this wounded woman-child innocent of evil.

Like wind on still waters Johann's strange laughter swept despair. What an ironic climax that a Lind must measure pity to the yardstick of innocence! What priceless impertinence! What peerless piety—softly! softly! From down the silent years gossamer feet danced to meet him; another Fate-blown human flower, fragile and sweet, whirling to destruction . . . Little mother of laughter-loving ways; how came she now to creep into his thoughts?

"Johann Lind, Johann Lind!" Eli flung out her hands in a frightened supplication; "say something; anything—don't look at me like that. I—I—oh, dear God—"

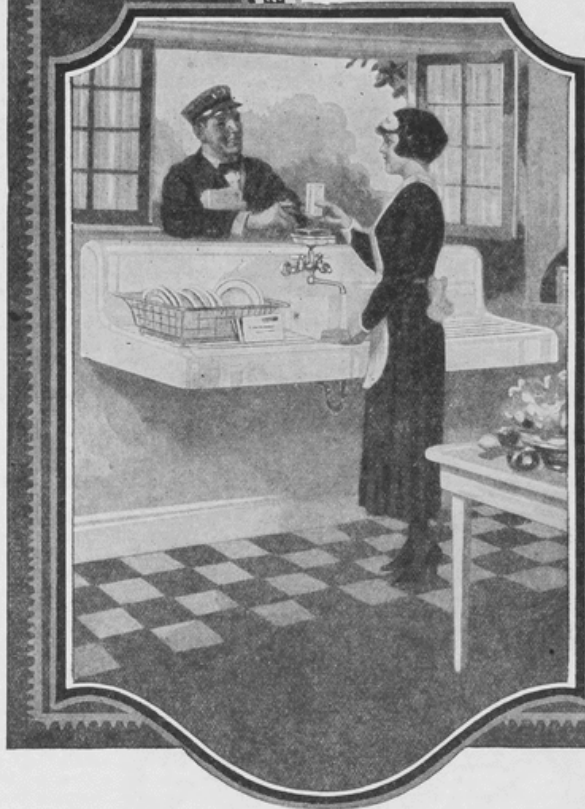
With that tidal compassion peculiar to high-hearts he took her in his arms. "There, there, it's over," said he, gently as one bespeaks a little child, "you're back with friends, Eli, where none can hurt you." Indeed, he'd see to that; now his duty lay clear before him. Still, peace, comfort, understanding, these must not be bought at Andre's expense, howsoever much they were Eli's due. No, that were small thanks for Helga's

Continued on page 42

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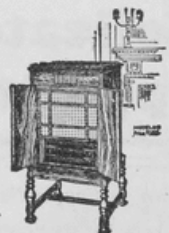
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The Western Home Monthly, Winnipeg

Johann Lind

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loving service to that little mother whose bird-like gladness still haunted the years.

Loyal Daria surmised what was passing in the Barin's mind. Eager, kindly, she caught Eli's hands to her warm bosom. "Little bird, cry no more. No more, no more," she crooned, "the Barin keeps you safe. Daria knows. Daria weep much and the Barin brings peace again."

Eli snatched back her hands, shuddering: "Don't, don't! Dear Mrs. Zekof, I can't bear it!"

Johann pretended offence. "Now, Eli, that's hardly flattering. My good friend will be cross with you."

Poor Eli, meeting Johann's enigmatic smile fell prey to fresh terrors: "Oh, what have I said? What have I done—"

"Nothing much, Eli. Only, you see, Mother Zekof took it for granted of lesser evils you'd much prefer me."

"Dear God, I must be going mad!"

"There you go again!" he laughed. "Honestly, if I'd known it was so hard to get a—wife, I'd not have tried at all!"

For one sweet moment Eli transcended doubt and fear; everything forgotten but the wild singing of her heart. Johann loved her . . . Johann wanted her—

Johann Lind. Johann Lind! But, turning suddenly, she surprised a look in his fine eyes, so grimly determined, so drained of joy her heart died within her. Dear God, she understood! She knew. "Johann, Johann! you mustn't do it," she cried convulsively; "you mustn't, I'm not worth it. There's nothing left to save."

Johann had recourse to Lind tactics. "You've forgotten," said he, ironically, "that my reputation demands some sacrifice."

"Sacrifice? Sacrifice?" Poor Eli was aghast.

"Well, yes," he amended drily. "I'll own it isn't pleasant, but you get accustomed to anything in time."

"Oh, don't talk like that! I'll—I'll die if you do!"

"Very well," said he, "we'll strike a bargain. I'll say no more and you let Daria put you to bed . . . There's a certain gentleman we must see at Olden in the morning."

Poor Helga suffered from rheumatism that morning, thanks to yesterday's rain ill at ease; tormented in body and mind adventures came, like Jove's thunderbolt, when he drove into the yard. Herre Gud! Where had he been? When had he taken the greys? And who, under high heaven, was that huddled beside him? "Ja, gudvelsigne meg!" she gasped, sinking in a chair beside the fire.

It had a queer look, sent a strange chill through her bones. Aye, stranger than strange! For now he faced her in the doorway, that hated, tyrannical smile of the Linds tempering lips and eyes. God spare her senses, was she seeing aright? Was that cringing creature hanging on his arm Eli Berg? Eli Berg, the light o' love, crossing her threshold!

"Johann!" burst from her hoarsely, "Johann Lind, how dare you, after my word to Lena, bring Eli to this house?"

Velvet-soft his quick laugh dashed her anger. "Now Mother, you do me wrong," he told her, "I'd never think of bringing Eli Berg—I'm only asking welcome for Eli Lind."

Helga felt her senses reeling. Ja, it made her dizzy to see how right she'd been. Nu da, perhaps that stubborn Lena would own her injustice. Troll take her, for the hard things flung at Andre. Devoted Andre, robbed of love and by a brother! But then, what could you expect of Johann Lind?

So healing was the thought of Andre blameless, cleared of all suspicion, that, with only three false starts, bursts of breath, half word, half groan, she rose to the occasion nobly. "Nu da, come here, foolish girl. Come, child . . . kiss me. Eli Lind, have welcome to the house!"

THROUGHOUT that difficult day Eli did her best to ignore the queer light-headedness following each jab of pain piercing her chest like rapiers. Shy; ill at ease; tormented in body and mind she heard, as from afar, her own disconnected rambling statements and dutiful replies to Helga in sore bewilderment. How came it she had heart to talk, with

Mama suffering the cruellest doubts? She couldn't understand it. And the less she understood it the more she talked. And the more she talked the more she laughed. It certainly was queer.

Helga, too, thought it queer until the shell-pink she had misread for shy blushes deepened to mottled red and the foolish laughter ended in sobs of pain.

Poor child, poor foolish one—Herre Gud! what a judgment to fall sick on the wedding day! Ja, now she thought of it the whole thing was hard on Eli. No cake, no dress, and the bridegroom himself so uncommon sensible . . . True, you couldn't bargain on a Lind but, never a one so frigid in love affairs—never a one! Yet here was Johann gone to the fields after introducing his bride as prosaically as though she had been a new housemaid. It wasn't fair to the poor child; it wasn't human. She was on the point of going out to tell him so when, in the midst of feverish jabber, Eli crumpled forward in a dead faint.

Helga lost sight of transgressions and righteous judgments in the fight that followed. Indeed, once Eli's bruised and wasted body came under her care, pity vowed she should suffer no more. But, like the most of Earth's children, Eli seemed destined for little else.

Suffer she did, and so cruelly that none marvelled more at her recovery than the doctor whose skill accomplished it. And none remained so unimpressed, so utterly indifferent to that miraculous skill as Eli herself. Ah, yes, she was alive—if consciousness freed of momentary pain meant living—but, with hope of health forever removed to what purpose the long-drawn battle? What had she to live for? Oh, what was it all about? And where would it end? Dear God, if only she had Mama to comfort her—"Mother! Mother! Mother!"

That cry torn from a lacerated heart to haunt the dark of night, finished Helga's pride. Word, or no word, the child must have her mother. Ja, right off in the morning Ole should fetch her. But Ole could not fetch her then, nor for many days. The Berg domicile had a queer look about it, an air of turbulence he found hard to explain. Ja, even before he saw the broken window with a bit of Lena's dress blowing from it he felt that something evil had taken place. The Irish family, east of Bergs, threw some light on the mystery for they, it was, had seen Simon driving to Olden with Lena semi-conscious groaning and moaning in the wagon-box. But the whole truth of it (as Helga learned much later) was like this: When Simon came home from Hawthorne the night of Sheila's wedding to find Lena and Eli laughing together as though they had nothing for which to be ashamed, he flew into such a violent temper that nothing of what transpired was, afterwards, very clear. Startled out of her senses Lena committed the error of appealing to mercy. He must be kind—he must be sparing. Eli would perish if he persisted in his threat. He must not turn her out—

Ho! ho! He must not, must he? And who was master in the house, he wondered? And what was it to him if a thing like that perished? Look at her—Devil take it if that wasn't a guilty face. Bah! she wasn't only weak and spineless, she was BAD!

Like a tigress, barb in heart, Lena leaped at him, biting, scratching; and, such is the strength of madness, he had hard work to be rid of her. But, the crazed woman safe behind a bolted door, Eli paid the price. Paper-frail and unresisting, she dropped beneath his heavy blow like a broken reed. Better, perhaps, had she clawed him back, giving him vent for the fury raging in him, for her lamb-like meekness only acted as a spur. Beside himself with choler, he caught her as she fell, shook her hound-fashion, and thrust her from the door.

It was some time during the terrible silence, descending like a blight on the house following that inhuman act, that Lena completely lost her head and, with God knows what in mind, crashed through the window. There, after an all-night tramp through the woods, Simon found her sprawled in a bed of splintered glass,

her face caked in blood, limbs doubled jack-knife fashion, a wretched, pain-crazed creature more dead than alive.

Simon, by now a conscience-ridden mortal, was come prepared to be magnanimous. Ja, if the old wife showed proper humility he wasn't so sure but forgive Eli . . . certain he'd have to get someone to help in threshing anyway. Eli was a ninny, but, handled right could make a good day's showing.

Such were the charitable thoughts rudely ousted on discovering Lena lying like a bag of meal in the muck outside her window. Shocked, and aggrieved at this fresh impertinence, he attempted to lift her, getting for his clumsy pains an ear-splitting shriek. Nu, nu, what now? What was the matter with the woman . . . Ja, Herre Gud! She'd gone and broke her leg—broke her leg, the creature! A doctor to pay and a hospital—a doctor and a hospital—and no one to milk or feed the pigs! That's what came of having erring daughters! Just wait till he laid hold of her! She'd pay—Pay—the word curbed his temper, touching, as it did, on larger needs. Ja, well if the creature was back let her stay . . . it would cost less than hired help for the house.

But, neither this unfulfilled hope, nor the fury riding him when, with Lena laid in hospital, he fell slave to a thousand household sacraments was ever quite confessed. Folks guessed; and in the country folks have a gift for guessing. Ole got a little here, a little there and, like a man soliciting gifts for a charity bazaar, came home laden with much of which he had rather be rid.

To Helga the whole affair seemed a preposterous nightmare; a thing passing belief and never had a duty loomed so bitter as this of telling Eli. Poor little bride, white as a snow-drop, on that lonely couch of hers. Many a tear Helga wiped at thoughts of it and, if sometime she thanked God in secret for Andre's deliverance, she made up in living service for the uncharitable thought.

But there were other reasons, deeper still, for her change of attitude. With a woman's unerring instinct she knew that despite kindness it was not love, but lack of it sustained Johann throughout these trying days. Then why had he married the girl? Lind querness notwithstanding it passed her comprehension. Ja, but first how to tell Eli the dreadful news—that was the problem. Herre Gud how she wished Haasji was home.

Like an answer to prayer old Herman ambled up the walk, stepping slowly over the threshold. "Nu, da, can you believe it, Helga, Peter Van Meiris just turned the corner in a bran' new buggy and the little Haasji was with him. Praise God, she'll do our Eli more good than twenty doctors!"

"Ja, praise God, she will." Helga echoed fervently. "Tomorrow I fetch the child myself to help us."

(To be continued)

A Cup of Coffee

Continued from page 20

place and hence would never have come upon Mary crying. The quarter of beef was left to guard the doorstep while Kale found courage to go up and put his arm around Mary, who promptly transferred her weeping to his shoulder. After a blissful time of comforting and petting Mary confessed her misery.

"I th-thought when you told those whopping lies about Shorty and Slim and the rest of them having money you were trying to switch my attention to them. I thought you were tired of having me ask you in for a c-cup of coffee. I only did it because I felt sorry for you, alone and lonesome. Ever since I found your little book I could just see you with your shirts and socks coming from the laundry all holes and no buttons—"

Kale exhaled weakly. "What book?" he managed to ask.

"See, here it is," went on Mary. "See, it says on every page: '2 pr. socks; 2 shirts; 2 underwear; 2 handkerchiefs.'"

Kale studied the little book and understood with what he had been trying to impress Mary Patton. It was his laundry list book.

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