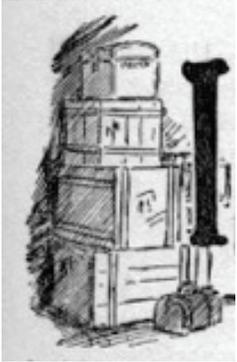


I. WESTWARD HO!



THOUGHT I was a Christian," said Gail Hamilton, "but we've been moving."

It seems that ever since Mother Eve got notice to leave, moving has meant a domestic cyclone. This is what I said to the family, as I surveyed our household penates done up in "big box, little box, band box, bundle," to say nothing of crates, barrels, bales and baskets; but the family were too busy to pay any attention to me. They fail to appreciate the appalling fact that I shall have to locate all my books on new shelves. When, anon, I go to the fourth shelf, fifth book from the north side, to get "The Scarlet Letter", it will be to find "Pearson on the Creed" or Jevons's "Logic" in that identical spot. It means a moving of all my mental images—a changing of my geography, so to say. What a lot of knowledge runs to waste in the world!

In no way is your weakness of character so revealed to you as in moving. Upstairs and downstairs, and in my lady's chamber, you find heaps of stuff that ought to be burned, but you have not sufficient stamina to apply the match. You dilly-dally, vacillate, and halt between two opinions.

"Things are expensive in the West," you argue mentally. "They have not been kept the proverbial seven years." And so, because of the vague possibilities of vaguer needs in a problematic future, you cumber and incommode the present.

To move means a review of your whole life. Inside one little hour, you laugh, swell with pride, cry, grovel with humility and burn with indignation as the fingers of still-born projects, dead joys, or foolish frolics reach out and touch you from the past.

There are compensations, though. Things get cleaned up. You lose fifteen pounds of absolutely useless

flesh. There is the secret and blissful consciousness of removing mountains and making things happen.

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It is a big flit we are taking. The moisture in my eyes is purely the result of smoke from the engines.

Blessed old Toronto, the home of our love! You have been good to us. I cannot forbear kissing my hands to your charm and beauty. To live with you is to "be happy ever after."

* * * * *

At five p.m. we found ourselves—the Padre, our two girls and myself—on board the Athabasca. She is a great white swan without a neck. They tell us she is "well-found," and "handy" in a storm. I don't know though. I never have time to look at anything but the engines—and, incidentally, the dining-table, when I am aboard ship. The pistons, wheels, belts, and shafts that strain and sweat and growl under the driving steam are an endless mystery to me. The greedy, glittering jaws and ponderous limbs of the weird monster hold me in an awesome but delightful spell.

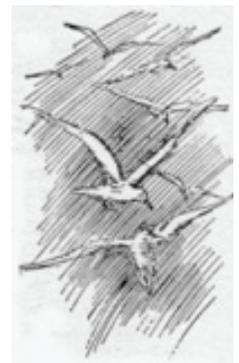
The Padre says I show a "residual taint of the original state," whatever he means by that. I do not answer him, for all the while I am singing the song *O' steam*:

"The tail-rods mark the time. The crank-throws give the double bass, the feed-pump sobs an' heaves, An' now the main eccentrics start and quarrel with the sheaves; Her time, her own appointed time, the rocking link-head bides, Till—hear that note—the red return whings glimmerin' through the guides. They're all awa'! True beat, full power, the clangin' chorus goes."

As the sea-gulls swirled around our ship to-day in looping flight, I heard a little girl say they were really angels.

Some poet has thought this already:

"A gull—nay rather A spirit on eternity's wide sea Calling: 'Come thou where all we Glad souls be.'"



As we watch them rise, quivering, falling, poising, and soaring like living fountains of wings, we wot that an angel could assume many forms less suitable and beautiful than that of a snow-white bird.

There is a Scotsman aboard whose chief aim seems to be the tabulation of all kinds of facts relating to Canada. Under the caption "Street Lamps of the Waterways," he has the number of light-houses, fog-stations and fog-horns in the Dominion; also their cost of maintenance. He has noted that in the years 1870 to 1902 the deaths on Canadian and British sea-going vessels, in our waters, have been 5,247. We have been trying to figure out the chances against our landing safely. They are, we conclude, about 100,000 to 1.

The woman who sits by me at the table is a person of varied interests and many pursuits. She is short-breathed and long-winded. She has "a voice." I mean one of those talking voices that continue to go through you long after the speaker has disappeared. She wants to know my age, my income, and how much I paid for my steamer-rug. She has a passion for "getting at the heart of things."

At nightfall a stiff wind blew up. There is nothing in the lake line superior to Lake Superior in a blow. I thought of certain characters in a song who "went to sea in a sieve they did, in a sieve they went to sea."

I am a most penitent traveller. Seasickness is an attitude which no amount of "new thought" can render graceful or dignified.

The Padre is one of those hateful people who are always well, even in a storm. He seems to think the malady amusing, and made himself objectionable by explaining to me the co-relation between she-sickness and nau-she-a.

On the second day we arrived at Port Arthur, at the head of navigation. My impressions? A green sea, a white ship, yellow sunlight, a city built on seven terraces!

A visit to the Canadian Northern Railway elevator at this port gives one, more than any other place, an idea of the enormous output of the Western wheatfields. In a glib way we talk of "millions of wheat," but it is only when we look at the space it takes to hold a million

bushels that we begin, in any measure, to comprehend the meaning of the words. I had to climb eighteen flights of stairs to look down the bins. I tried to explain to my guide that this was a magazine of cereal stories, but my little joke was quite lost.

The storage capacity of the building makes the enormous total of seven million bushels. The grain is held in huge circular towers or bins, each being eighty-five feet deep. It is an almost fearsome experience to look down their black cavernous depths. It gives one a nightmare at noonday. These giant bins are made of fireproof tiles which are set in bands of steel, embedded in cement. This makes the grain not only immune from fire but also from heat. Fifteen cars of grain may be run through the elevators every hour. The process by which the wheat is elevated, cleaned, weighed, and carried to its particular bin is a marvel of clever, but withal simple, mechanism.

The great bulk of grain grown in the North-West must be stored at Port Arthur. It is here one sees Canada's answer to the world's call for wheat. This is why elevators are of universal interest. It is not because they tell the progress of great companies, but in that they are chapters which mark the upward steps of our young land in clear, monetary gain, and consequently in knowledge, science, civilisation and all else for which wealth stands.

It is on these great mountains of grain, too, that the federation of the Empire will largely stand. Interdependent, the Colony shall feed the Motherland, and in return shall receive protection against the covetous claws of the world.

It has been computed that the wheat grown in Canada last year was sufficient to make a string of two-pound loaves which would pass around the world four times.

In China rice is life. In Canada life is wheat. We should throw wheat on our brides.

Who so great as to pen the song of the wheat? Who can sum up its epic? From its sibilant swish on the wide-flung steppes to its whir and crunch under the wheels of the mill, wheat sums up the tale of the race. Like love, wheat rules the court, the camp, the

grove. It makes or breaks the world of men. Wheat is blood. Wheat is life. Who can sing its song?

The rest of Janey Canuck in the West can be found at: <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/murphy/west/west.html>

Emily Murphy (formerly Ferguson) was an author, women's activist and first female magistrate in Canada. She was one of the Famous Five. To learn more about her visit: <https://www.historica-dominion.ca/content/heritage-minutes/emily-murphy>

