The Fireside.

MASTER HAND AT PRAYIN'.

The Bannock stage was late. Mother Ferris shaded her eyes from the kitchen lamp, and peered anxiously through the small-paned window into the darkness, hoping to see its distant lights coming over the "spur," but only a line of fir-trees showing dimly against the starlit sky rewarded her.

"I do wish that boy was home. It's such skittish times. One doesn't seem to know what'll happen 'twixt sunrise and dark."

"It beats all, Miranda, what a sight o' store you do set by that boy."

"But Dan'l's a good boy, an awful good boy." And Mother Ferris placed the lamp nearer the centre of the table already spread for supper, and drew the fried pork further back upon the stove. "And it's such skittish times, somehow it seems as though there never was so unheard-of things happenin' as nowadays."

"There's nothin' going to happen to Daniel," said the sister-in-law, on the other side of the stove. "He hasn't drove that stage ever since his father went for nothing. You do have to carry so much along with you always. You never can let things rest."

"But Dan'l's such a good boy," answered the other meekly.

At this the sister-in-law gave a slight sniff, not exactly as though disagreeing with the statement made concerning the good qualities of her nephew, but rather as if agreeing she saw no necessity for discussing the subject.

Just here "t-o-o-t, t-o-o-t, t-o-o-t," sounded from over the fir-lined hills, and at the first note Mother Ferris' face lighted.

"How good it does seem to hear that toot again! It beats all what a difference it makes when one knows her own boy's back of it." And a soft pink came to her thin cheeks. "I wouldn't believe anything could sound as good as that horn does on a dark night like this."

She drew the spider back to its former place at the front of the stove placed the chairs in waiting at the table, filled the pitcher with water at the sink, and then looked around the little domain with quiet satisfaction.

Fifteen minutes later there was the sound of steps outside, and a stout lad of eighteen or thereabouts entered.

"Well, mother, here I am, as hungry as a hunter. Pretty dark night this. Got along all right, though. Quite a snap to the air; if it keeps on the river'll be frozen before long—pretty well rimmed with ice now."

Daniel tossed his coat off, doused his head into the wash basin at the sink, wiped his ruddy face on the crash-towel near, smoothed his hair, and drew back his chair and took his place at the table, all the while keeping up a steady stream of talk.

His mother gave him an apprehensive look, her attention had been quickened. What was it? Was he hiding something? His tongue didn't generally run like a grist-mill, at least unless he had something to grind.

She passed the milk and sugar for her sister-in-law's tea, and then took the plate Daniel had filled for her, glancing at him furitively. But she partook of her food slowly.

Daniel dipped a piece of bread in the gravy, and gave it to the cat sitting down on the floor at his feet, and as he glanced sideways, he said:

"Mr. Cavenaugh came down in the stage tonight."

There it was—the something she had been expecting. Mother Ferris' knife dropped on her plate. The plate was not china, and so it did not break, but at the sound the sister-in-law's head went back with a jerk, and her lips went together tighter than usual. Mother Ferris pushed her tea back, and lifted her thin hand to her face.

"Now, mother, 'tain't no sort o' use takin' it harder'n must be. If he has come to shut down on the mortgage, shut down it'll have to be for all of us. We've done the best we can, and there ain't anybody can do more."

"But, Dan'l, it don't seem as though I ever could go on livin' out o' this house, and your father layin' every inch of the stun wall, and drivin' in every nail in the house, and me and him settin' out every apple-tree on the place with our own hands. It just don't seem's though I could."

"I know, mother, it's hard." And now the boy choked, either with the food he was unceremoniously disposing of, or with emotion, but whichever the cause, his eyes were winked quickly as though moisture lay within them that he had no use for. "It's tough. Aunt Almira and I know that as well as anybody," and he glanced to his aunt. "She and I have talked of it many a time when you weren't 'round, haven't we, Aunt Almira?"

"Of course, everybody knows it's hard."

Mother Ferris arose and busied herself about the stove now, but the tears wet her thin, pinched face. "I know—I ought to be willin' to stand it," she sobbed, her emotion overcoming her as she leaned up against the sink and wiped her face with the towel. "But it seems though 'twas like buryin' your father over again."

"I know, mother. 'Tain't as though we hadn't got the interest money for him, if he'll take it. Of course it's hard times, 'n everybody wants to rake in all that's theirs, so if he won't let it run, he won't. And it ain't 's though you weren't a master hand at prayin', and hadn't prayed over that mortgage a good deal more'n you've ate or slept. Those prayers ought to 'mount to something."

Daniel did not mean those words as a criticism, but rather as a solace. To tell the truth, it was something that in a way held comfort for him. And more than once this very night, when beating his benumbed hands as the stage—with its unwelcome inside passenger—rolled along, his thoughts had been, "Well, she's prayed hard enough over it." And it was as though the last thing that could be done had been attended to.

There had been a time when the Ferrises had hoped to lift the mortgage on their little home, but that was before the father died. To scrape the interest together now, by dint of hard saving, was the utmost limit of their accomplishment. And the year before, the holder of the mortgage had said it was the last time he would accept the interest, as "the thing must be cleared up. It had run long enough." Still they went on to accumulate the interest, but they had little hope that it was for that Mr. Cavenaugh had come.

The supper was over, and they waited around the stove, listening for the step they expected, but no visitor appeared. There was little said at the breakfast table, but Mother Ferris' eyes told the story of the night.

"I was in the hopes he'd get 'round 'fore I left," Daniel said, as he took down his greatcoat and buckskin gloves, preparatory to setting out with the stage on his return trip. "I tried to get a squint at him when I was over at the tavern, but he wasn't 'round nowhere.'

At this moment Daniel caught sight of a tall silk hat turning in at the big gate under the apple-trees. He gave a quick look at his aunt, pulled a chair back, pushed the coffee-pot into the cupboard, picked up the molasses pitcher, and put that out of sight, too, and then, thinking it best to give warning, said: "He's here. You open the door, Aunt Almira," and with a stride to his mother's chair, he said, gently pressing her back when she would have risen: "Don't let it upset you, mother. We've done the best we could."

"Good morning, Mr. Cavenaugh. I saw you come down in the stage last night. Take a chair near the stove." But Daniel left his aunt to place the chair, while he stayed guard by the little scared-eyed woman down by his side, who vainly essayed to pass words of greeting to her visitor, but felt tears in her eyes, and desisted, giving her whole attention to trying to keep her lips steady, that trembled for all. Mr. Cavenaugh assented that the "morning was a bit stiff," as he withdrew a glove from one hand, then the other, pocketing the gloves, and extending his bloodless members over the stove."

"When I was here last fall," he said, "I had my little girl with me."

"Why, so you did, I remember. She was a right purty little thing." Mother Ferris' face relaxed and Daniel let go his possession on her shoulder, while Almira turned. But Mr. Cavenaugh seemed not to notice. He spoke again, looking down—perhaps he, like Daniel, found it easier to say hard things when not looking straight across to his audience—"it was her first visit to the country. She liked it—the windmills and the bridge and the little houses. You gave her an apple, madam." He lifted his eyes, and sent them right over to Mrs. Ferris, and something in the eyes drew the good woman straight to her feet.

"I do hope there ain't nothing happened to her. It's such skittish times."

"She died four weeks after she was here." Still his eyes were on Mrs. Ferris' face as though they held an appeal. "She talked a great deal at the last about the fields, and the apple you gave her; it had a green leaf on the stem. She seemed to be holding the apple at the last, and she talked of the leaf. She wished—I'd make your face happier." He drew a long, deep breath, as though a great task was over, and rising, made a dive for his gloves. "It's all right about the mortgage." He had taken his hat from the floor, and his hand was upon the door.

"But, Mr. Cavenaugh, we have the interest, if you'll take it." It was Daniel, pressing close, but he was waved back with one of the thin, white hands, and then, seeming to bethink himself, the visitor turned courteously, and crossing over to Mrs. Ferris, looked down on the plaintiff face, saying: "I trust, madam, the years will be kind to you," and waiting for no thanks, accepting none, he passed out, engineering his tall hat under the apple-boughs, and made his way into the road.

"Dan'l, if ever you say's how there's nothing in prayer after this!" And then Mother Ferris broke down, and Daniel held her close—held her in his great ungainly arms—and let the tears have their way.

But when the stage—with Mr. Cavenaugh in its most comfortable inside seat, as snug as rugs and robes could make him—went over the spur, what a "t-o-o-t, t-o-o-t, t-o-o-t," was sent back!

And as the stage, with a flourish, dipped down into the ravine, Daniel's comment, up there on the driver's seat, with the blue mists of morning on fir-trees, river, and distant fields, was: "A master hand at prayin'!"—*Ex.*

* * *

The Lord's work can only be done wih what we sacrifice, not by what we think we can spare.

The Surest Remedy is
Allen's Lung Balsam
It never fails to cure a SIMPLE COLD, HEAVY COLD, and all BRONCHIAL TROUBLES.
Large Bottles $1.00. Medium Size 50c.
Small or Trial Size 25c.
Endorsed by all who have tried it.

Don't Chide the Children.

Don't scold the little ones if the bed is wet in the morning. It isn't the child's fault. It is suffering from a weakness of the kidneys and bladder, and weak kidneys need strengthening—that's all. You can't afford to risk delay. Neglect may entail a lifetime of suffering and misery.

DOAN'S KIDNEY PILLS
strengthen the kidneys and bladder, then all trouble is at an end.
Mrs. E. Kidner, a London, Ont., mother, living at 499 Gray St., says:
"My little daughter, six years old, has had weak kidneys since birth. Last February I got a box of Doan's Kidney Pills at Strong's drug store. Since taking them she has had no more kidney trouble of any kind. I gladly make this statement because of the benefit my child has received from this medicine."

The Doctor's ORDERS:
Fresh Air
Good Food
"The D&L" Emulsion
Trade Mark.
For all those threatened with Consumption.