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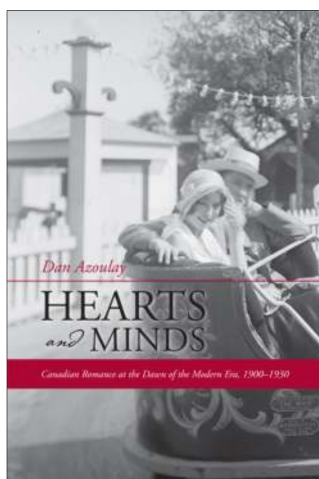

HEARTS AND MINDS:
CANADIAN ROMANCE AT THE DAWN OF THE MODERN ERA, 1900–1930
by Dan Azoulay

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For Raya

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Introduction

Why Romance?

During the week of March 10, 1913, five Canadians, each in a different province, sat down to compose a letter they hoped would be published in the next issue of the *Family Herald and Weekly Star,* a Montreal-based magazine with subscribers from across the country. Their letters were indeed published and appeared in the magazine's wildly popular "Prim Rose at Home" column. From Saskatchewan's Carrot River Valley came a letter from a farmer calling himself "Rasmus," who told the editor that he and eleven fellow farmers had recently formed a "Bachelors' Club" with the goal of enticing letters from women looking for husbands. "It seems a shame for us to be living alone in a country where nature has so abundantly provided the necessities of life, which are so essential in raising a large family." Any woman wishing to write to one of the club's members, he said, should contact him for a list of names and addresses. He warned, however, that "this is a new country, and they must not expect to find all the luxuries of life which they may enjoy in the older settled localities."

A "Wood Builder" from New Brunswick spoke of another danger: marrying someone you don't know well enough. "I am personally acquainted with a young woman who married a man after a short acquaintance," he said, and "with what results? A thousand miles separates them today." Another letter, from a "Busy Girl" in the fruit belt of Ontario's Niagara peninsula, pleaded for young men to remain in her province instead of heading West in search of fortune, as so many were doing. "Why leave these good old

farms and the certain promise of comfort and a happy home," she asked, "for the uncertain promise of much gold, accompanied by great hardships … and untold discomforts?" And from Alberta came a letter from one such displaced Ontarian who had, in fact, much to complain about: "Though I have just been homesteading for three years, … like many of my kind, I find the life pretty dull in the winter time, especially on account of a scarcity of the opposite sex." He also agreed with a writer in an earlier issue who had warned women against marrying men in debt. Buried in the "Condensed Letters" section of the column that week was also the editor's summary of a letter from Nova Scotia's "Golden Dear," a twenty-one-year-old bachelorette who "is boarding quite alone in the city and finds the evenings after work very long. She would like correspondence with respectable nice young men in the West, being interested in that part of the world; Roman Catholics preferred."[1]

These five letters were not unique. Like the hundreds of others the magazine received each week (only a fraction of which were published), they revealed some of the realities of heterosexual romance in these years: the scarcity of the opposite sex, the loneliness and boredom of many single people, the strong desire to marry, the qualities Canadians wanted in a spouse, and the measures they took to find such a person. What *is* unique is the window these letters provide on a part of Canada's past we know little about, namely, the romantic lives of our ancestors. Not that historians have lacked interest in the life experiences of average Canadians. Far from it. Since the 1970s, they have been providing answers to questions that earlier generations of scholars considered unimportant, even silly, like what did ordinary people do in their leisure time? Or what was it like being a lumber worker, immigrant, child, housewife, or soldier? And how did Canadians adapt or respond to their environment and to the powerful forces around them, be it war, depression, exploitation, or discrimination? Such questions have generated a rich body of historical literature about day-to-day life.

Studies of heterosexual romance, however, have been rare. Partly this is due to the absence of sufficient evidence. Romance, by its very nature, is a highly private and personal activity, one not likely to be observed and recorded for public consumption the way an election might be, for example, or a strike, parade, trial, royal visit, or war; this was especially true prior to the 1920s, when courtship took place largely in the home and when couples who did venture beyond the family parlour were expected to act with utmost discretion. But what about personal private records, such

as diaries, correspondence, and memoirs? These are by far the best sources for reconstructing the romantic past, but they are also the hardest to come by in sufficient quantity. True, historians and others have done a fine job in recent years unearthing and publishing substantial collections of letters buried in archives and old newspapers, but the romantic content of these collections is typically low.[2] What's more, the letters, diaries, and memoirs available to historians tend to be skewed towards the elite – politicians, entrepreneurs, novelists, and clergy – in other words, to literate and well-known individuals whose writings were more likely to be preserved for posterity.

To date, the most extensive study of heterosexual romance in Canada, and indeed the only full-length academic study, is Peter Ward's *Courtship, Love, and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century English Canada*. This study, although it pays some attention to marriage patterns in Ontario and to English-Canadian *perceptions* of marriage, deals principally with nineteenth-century courtship. The author describes in detail the rituals of courtship, from gift-giving to proposing marriage, as well as the varying degrees of "courtship space" or "territory" available to both sexes, to rural and urban couples, and to Canadians of different social classes. If there is a central theme in Ward's analysis it is that, over the course of the century, as Canada became more urbanized and industrialized, courtship changed: its rituals became less restrictive, the opportunities for courtship more abundant, and the influence of parents and communities over the process weaker.[3]

The strengths of Ward's seminal study – not least the bringing to light a little-known facet of Canada's social history – are many, the weaknesses few. Among the latter are the author's understatement of female power in initiating courtship opportunities, an all-too-brief reference to the difficulties of romance, and his slippery use of the "courtship territory" concept.[4] More problematic, however, is the narrowness of his sources. Ward's observations and conclusions are drawn heavily from the journals and letters of the English-Canadian elite, from the offspring of professionals, government officials, military officers, and prominent merchants; members of Toronto's illustrious Jarvis family and the well-established Tanswell family of Quebec City loom large in his account. This is understandable, given the paucity of more representative sources, but the result is a skewed portrait, one in which the romantic views and experiences of the average Canadian are largely obscured.[5]

The same can be said for Sarah Carter's *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, a recent exploration of marriage in western Canada in the half-century before World War I. To be fair, the romantic views and experiences of the masses are not Carter's main concern. She focuses mainly on the efforts of the white Anglo-Saxon bourgeoisie (newspaper editors, government officials, medical experts) to impose a particular marriage model on the region's heterogeneous population, a model marked above all by lifelong, intra-racial, and patriarchal monogamy; she also devotes much space to the challenges such efforts faced, especially from native and Mormon communities.[6] It is, on the whole, a convincing account, one that is especially adept at placing the "monogamous ideal" within a wide range of competing practices. Nevertheless, its elite-level analysis serves merely to reinforce certain historiographic stereotypes for this period, stereotypes with romantic implications: that Canadians measured female worth in exclusively domestic terms; that they were xenophobic and patriarchal in the extreme; and that they pursued romance mainly for "missionary," "colonizing," or "civilizing" reasons.[7] It remains to be seen, however, whether ordinary Canadians came to share such assumptions to any marked degree.

Courtship and marriage have also received some peripheral attention within larger studies. In her ground-breaking examination of sexual violence in rural and small-town Ontario between 1880 and 1930, for example, Karen Dubinsky devotes a chapter to courtship. In it she argues that rural women had as many opportunities as urban women to meet men and were no less defiant when it came to challenging social mores, especially in the sexual realm.[8] She also discusses briefly the efforts of parents and communities to protect the chastity of young women and how this restricted the courtship freedom of young couples, a topic explored more fully for Toronto's working-class women by Carolyn Strange,[9] for the city's university students by Catherine Gidney,[10] and for Canadian nurses by Kathryn McPherson.[11] This strict moral supervision, in addition to the sexual violence women sometimes experienced, made courtship less than ideal for many women, rural or otherwise.

We know somewhat more about *postwar* courtship from the work historians have done on youth and women in the interwar years. Cynthia Comacchio, in her recent study of Canada's interwar youth, devotes a chapter to "dating and mating." She tells us about a generation of young people that was not only more sexually permissive after the war, but also

adopted (at least in urban areas and among non-immigrants) a less home-based, less marriage-focused form of courtship that came to be called "dating." *Why* such changes occurred, however, is only briefly discussed, with passing reference to the war and a more sexualized postwar pop culture. Additionally, the author is reluctant to make any firm generalizations, even about her main theme – postwar premarital sex – leaving readers to draw their own conclusions from the rather limited montage of romantic experiences she presents, a problem the author compounds by focusing more on the moral panic surrounding youthful sexual experimentation than on what youth were actually doing.[12] Somewhat less illuminating, in what is otherwise an excellent survey of girls' and women's lives between the wars, is Veronica Strong-Boag's chapter on courtship in her book *The New Day Recalled*. Without evidence or elaboration, for example, Strong-Boag asserts that "for many Canadians, courting remained a family-centered affair," something most historians of postwar romance, including Comacchio, would dispute. Apart from this, she says little about courtship; her focus is primarily on female marriage patterns and, even more so, on their (invariably unpleasant) experiences as wives.[13]

To these peripheral studies can be added a handful of shorter, more specialized studies. Denise Baillargeon has provided us with a picture of courtship and marriage in interwar Montreal, for example, in which she emphasizes the persistence of traditional courtship rituals, like chaperonage and the avoidance of pre-marital sex. But the bulk of her case study focuses on the wedding rituals and married lives of her small sample of women.[14] Catherine Gidney, in her examination of a working-class Baptist couple in Welland, Ontario, also notes the continuation of older courtship patterns, including well-supervised home and church-centred activities, although she does emphasize the greater freedom couples gained by this time to be alone in unsupervised and increasingly commercialized settings, such as movie theatres and dance pavilions.[15] Like Baillargeon (and Strong-Boag), however, she focuses mostly on the couple's wedding and married life.

Weddings also figure prominently in Suzanne Morton's study of working-class brides in 1920s Halifax. In it the author makes a reasonably strong case for the persistence of distinctive *working-class* wedding rituals and for the emergence, among working-class brides-to-be, of more sentimental, "companionate" attitudes towards marriage.[16] On this latter subject, Elaine Silverman argues the opposite about single women on Alberta's frontier in the early 1900s. She contends that this group of women, pressured by their

parents to marry early for the sake of economic sustenance, saw marriage in purely practical terms. "Frontier marriage," she asserts, "was quite simply a requisite economic arrangement."[17] Cecilia Danysk advances a similar interpretation of the bachelor-homesteaders of the region, whom she portrays as seeking primarily housekeepers as wives.[18] Both the Silverman and Danysk interpretations are somewhat at odds with the findings of the present study – men and women, even on the frontier, were never this narrow-minded – but they do raise a question historians of romance have been reluctant to raise, namely, what did marriage-bound Canadians look for in a partner?

What little we know about this subject comes from the relatively new field of gender history, whose practitioners have tried to define the changing meanings of "masculinity" and "femininity" over time.[19] From this still-emerging portrait at least two things are clear. One is that gender identities, apart from being changeable, were not universal or hegemonic in this period – that to some extent masculinity and femininity meant different things depending on the age, ethnicity, and class of the men and women in question.[20] The other is that notions of masculinity and femininity were most clearly and forcefully articulated by the rapidly expanding Anglo-Saxon Protestant middle class, whose spokespersons expended a tremendous amount of time and energy trying to make others conform to their ideals. In their way of thinking, the ideal woman of the late Victorian era, for example, was strongly committed to the "domestic ideal," which meant placing her role as wife and mother above all other concerns. She was a paragon of virtue and "respectability," which meant abstention from drinking, smoking, gambling, swearing, and especially sex (except within marriage for reproductive purposes), and was, in turn, expected to exercise a restraining or civilizing influence on males. She dressed and behaved modestly, especially in public. She displayed a high degree of altruism, in part by helping the less fortunate and working to create a better world (a powerful imperative in the progressive era especially). And, thanks to the growing emphasis on physical fitness and non-competitive sport, she was also sturdy and robust, yet still graceful.[21]

The dawning of the new century saw this conservative, middle-class ideal of womanhood challenged by another, albeit generally less popular, ideal. The so-called "New Woman" of the early 1900s, while she still displayed some of the attributes of the older femininity, particularly the missionary impulse to help the poor and civilize the "heathen" races, was

less enamoured of the domestic ideal. Young and university-educated, she was just as likely as not to forsake marriage for a career. She also displayed a visibility, freedom of movement, independence of thought, and brashness and irreverence of manner sufficient to elicit a good deal of scorn and dismay from the older generation. In the apt description of one historian she "was both spirited and public-spirited."[22]

She was, as well, a precursor to a new, more popular ideal of womanhood, one reminiscent in many ways of the much-maligned "working girl" at the turn of the century, but one which came to predominate in North American culture, if not by the 1910s, certainly by the 1920s. Canadian historians have said little about this development, but if American studies are any indication the ideal Canadian woman of the early post-Victorian era was very different from her recent middle-class predecessors. She did not display much in the way of reforming zeal, did not care much for either domesticity or career, eschewed modesty of manners and appearance, and had little use in particular for the prudish bourgeois morality of the pre-war years. This was the "modern" woman, best symbolized, perhaps, by the carefree and sexually liberated "flapper" of the twenties.[23]

Less is known about the changing notions of masculinity in these years. The task of identifying such notions is made even more difficult by Canadians' ambiguity over the issue, for definitions seemed to vary more with age and class than they did with femininity. For much of the nineteenth century, for example, it was considered manly for young, unmarried men, particularly among unskilled transient labourers, to engage in certain rowdy or "rough" activities, including drinking, fighting, swearing, gambling, and illicit sex.[24] Labour and social historians have reminded us, as well, that masculinity was often job-specific, and closely bound to certain skills and workplace traditions.[25] Generally speaking, however, most nineteenth-century commentators, whether from the pulpit or from the pages of the daily press, tended to measure true manhood – regardless of age or class – in terms of self-restraint. Real men drank only in moderation or not at all, avoided profanity, curbed their natural lustfulness, and demonstrated a high level of physical and emotional self-control. They were also brave, independent, hard-working, tough, concerned for the less fortunate, loyal to Crown and country, polite to women, and, above all, eager for physical, moral, and intellectual self-improvement.[26]

By the late Victorian era, as the social purity crusade intensified, middle-class standards of manly behaviour rose. Even less tolerance was afforded men

who lacked self-restraint, particularly around women and alcohol. Middle-class spokespersons also placed greater emphasis on the physical prowess of men – or at least white Protestant men. In their estimation, the morally upright Victorian male was superceded by the "muscular Christian," whose perfectly symmetrical body and virtuous mind would work in tandem to reverse the alleged moral and physical decline of the Anglo-Saxon race, defend the British Empire, and set an example to slovenly immigrants. The ideal man of the early 1900s was also "progressive." In addition to high moral rectitude, he rejected dishonesty and unbridled individualism and embraced fair play and a sense of social responsibility. As in the case of femininity, however, this essentially bourgeois, Protestant ideal of masculinity seems to have been overshadowed after World War I by one far less puritanical, militaristic, and reformist, although evidence of this transformation is still somewhat sketchy.[27]

Thanks to the work of gender historians, therefore, we have a reasonably complete picture of the changing ideals of masculinity and femininity during the Victorian and immediate post-Victorian eras, as defined primarily by the Anglo-Protestant middle-class elite. Less clear, however, is the extent to which these ideals were internalized by everyday Canadians and, in particular, by those looking for a spouse. What role did the attributes promoted so forcefully by the elite play in the romantic preferences of young men and women seeking life-long partners in the first three decades of the twentieth century? And did these preferences, like the "official" ideals of masculinity and femininity, change over time and, if so, why? As far as I know, no Canadian historian has tried to answer such questions in a systematic way.

Clearly, then, there are problems with the historiography of Canadian romance: much of the literature is based on sources that are either too few or too elitist, or both; it is, with a few exceptions, unduly sentimental; it says little about the *etiquette* of romance – that is, about the specific customs men and women were expected to follow before and during courtship; and it is generally static, leaving us with little sense of how romance changed over time and why. Perhaps most serious is the continuing dearth of research on the subject of romance itself. This is especially true for the years 1900 to 1930, a period that witnessed, among other things, massive immigration, unprecedented prosperity, widespread social reform agitation, great strides in women's rights, rapid urbanization, industrialization, and western settlement, a world war that killed and maimed hundreds of thousands of

young Canadians, and a virtual revolution in morals and manners. How did this great transformation affect the romantic attitudes and experiences of Canadians? Despite the lavish attention paid by Canadian historians to these years, we still cannot answer this question. We can't even say with certainty what those attitudes and experiences *were*. This study seeks, therefore, to fill in some of the historiographic gaps by examining, in particular, four key aspects of romance for these years: what average Canadians sought in a marriage partner; the specific rules they were expected to follow and in most cases *did* follow in their romantic quest; the many hardships they endured along the way; and how the defining event of that era – the Great War – affected such things.

That I am able to do this has almost everything to do with two magnificent collections of letters I discovered a few years ago – two "correspondence columns" to be precise. The first, and most valuable, is the "Prim Rose at Home" column mentioned earlier, which ran continuously, on a weekly basis, from 1904 to 1929. The other I found buried in the pages of the *Western Home Monthly*, a magazine produced in Winnipeg and, like the *Family Herald*, widely distributed. This column began at the same time and ran, albeit only monthly, until 1924.[28] Together, the two columns printed approximately 20,000 full-length letters and, in the Prim Rose column, many more "Condensed Letters" distilled by the editor. Except for the few letters from non-Canadians, I have read them all. Granted, they don't all discuss romance-related subjects, but most do. And that's because the columns' main purpose was to "introduce" potential spouses to one another, by allowing contributors to essentially advertise themselves, and to then bring couples "together" by offering to forward letters to, or provide addresses for, their matrimonially inclined contributors. The need for such a service, as chapter 4 makes clear, was strong. At a time when Canada was still predominantly rural, many Canadians found themselves quite isolated – in rural hamlets and tiny fishing villages, on farms and in the bush – with few opportunities, and often insufficient time to meet potential partners. This was especially true in the vast expanses of the newly opened West, where loneliness was often intense. But loneliness was hardly unheard of in the more populous towns and cities. "I am a lonely little city girl, living in the metropolitan, cosmopolitan city of Vancouver," wrote B.C.'s "Vancouver Belle" to the Prim Rose column in 1913,

> and although I like Vancouver very much I am not acquainted with many people, and there are times when I feel very lonely, and think that I could not be more so if I were isolated from everybody and everything.… If any young man wishes to write with a view to matrimony, I should be pleased to hear from him.[29]

The fact that young women tended to predominate in urban areas while young men were over-represented in rural areas only made matters worse, as did the lack of rapid and affordable transportation for much of this period. To a great many matrimonially inclined Canadians, therefore, the personal columns provided an inexpensive and easily accessible method of finding a mate. Essentially, they served as "matrimonial bureaus" and their editors as match-makers.[30] The columns' predominantly romantic content is all the more remarkable given that Canadians of this era considered the public expression of romantic views improper. Perhaps the legendary modesty and prudishness of the age account for this, but, for whatever reason, such columns were not only useful, but evidently rare as well.[31]

For a historian, the discovery of such a rich vein of information on an otherwise obscure subject is akin to striking gold. I know of no other sources that tell us as much about romance in Canada in the early 1900s as the *Family Herald* and the *Western Home Monthly* (*WHM*). Yes, reading thousands of letters (in small print on microfilm) has been a time-consuming and eye-straining process. But also fascinating. A self-styled "Wrathy Bachelor" from Saskatchewan, writing to Prim Rose in the spring of 1906, expressed my own feelings well. "I have taken quite an interest in your columns lately," he said. "What western bachelor would not when there are such glorious chances for studying human nature?"[32] At the very least I have come to appreciate how the romantic colloquialisms of one era can mean different things to another. Consider my surprise, for example, when I first encountered the phrase "to make love to" in the letters. Thinking I had stumbled across new evidence of liberal sexual attitudes and practices in a generation famous for its sexual repressiveness, I felt a bit like Columbus. Of course, I soon realized that in those days the phrase had no sexual connotations whatsoever. It simply meant to offer expressions of love to someone in an effort to win that person's affections. Similarly, a "lover" was a girlfriend or boyfriend whom one loved. I also came to realize that when Canadians criticized a bachelor for being "backward" or "too slow,"

this had nothing to do with his conservatism or how quickly he moved. They were referring, instead, to his bashfulness.[33]

But how representative were these letters? Did they accurately reflect a cross-section of Canadian society at the time? For the most part they did, particularly in the Prim Rose column, whose editor went out of her way to ensure a balanced sample of letters from all regions and groups.[34] Certainly men and women were equally represented. All the provinces and territories were represented, too, in proportion to their population, although the match is not exact. For example, in the *Family Herald* – the source of 80 per cent of the letters in the sample – the voices of Canadians from Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia were heard more loudly. Only one in thirteen Canadians lived in Saskatchewan in 1916, for example, and yet one in six letters published in the magazine came from that province. The *WHM* was even more skewed in favour of the West's residents, and in both publications the views of French-speaking Quebecers were highly under-represented.[35]

It would be wrong, however, to exaggerate the regional differences in the views and behaviour of Canadians at this time. Many areas were still too new to have formed a distinct regional identity. This was especially true of northern Ontario and the West. More important, such areas were being settled heavily by individuals transplanted from older regions of Canada. Of the close to one million people who poured into the West in the two decades before World War I, for example, almost one-third came from central and eastern Canada.[36] Rural and urban identities, on the other hand, were far more developed. Unfortunately, the balance between rural and urban correspondents in the columns is difficult to gauge, since writers usually only cited their home province. Nevertheless, rural Canadians – even though they represented a majority of the population until the 1920s – were probably over-represented in the columns, mainly because they were more isolated and lonelier than city folk and, therefore, more likely to use the columns to secure correspondents. Given the matrimonial purpose of the *Family Herald* and *WHM*, the voices of young, single Canadians were also heard more frequently than their numbers warranted.

The range of occupations was well represented, too. Clerks, teachers, stenographers, railway engineers, doctors, businesspeople – all made an appearance at some point. So did those involved in heavy manual labour, such as railway, forestry, farm, and dock workers, although not as often. Lack of time and poor literacy were probably to blame. Similarly, the voices of

those who could not write *any* English – including many recent immigrants and francophones – went unheard. As such, it would be fair to say that the letters in the columns represented mostly the views of anglophones, who did nevertheless constitute almost 60 per cent of the Canadian population in this period.[37] Even so, the editors tried to publish letters from all groups, as long as these were reasonably comprehensible. In an effort to be inclusive they sometimes accommodated writers whose native tongue was clearly not English, such as "De Duch Warbler," who wrote phonetically to the *WHM* in 1910: "I aldetime like to rite a letter so some of dem loaflie gales vud rite mit me, put I vus so pashful. Put at last I vil put on my dignitude und try und say sonding and if dem gales gif me sum curachment I vil say sonding more."[38] They also welcomed letters from visible minorities. When "An Indian" from Ontario asked if he could join the *Family Herald*'s circle of correspondents, Prim Rose replied, "Of course.… We are delighted indeed to welcome one of the original inhabitants of Canada."[39]

Readers will also wonder why I chose to examine some aspects of romance over others. Here I defer to the evidence on which much of this book is based, namely the letters. These suggested a particular focus. Perhaps more than anything they suggested an analysis of the qualities Canadians looked for in a partner. Did they value a person's physical beauty or financial prospects? Did having a sense of humour matter? How important was someone's religion or ethnicity? Did it make a difference if the person chewed gum or smoked a pipe? What, in other words, constituted the ideal partner? And how closely did Canadians' romantic preferences coincide with prevailing notions of masculinity and femininity? Thanks to the richness of the personal columns, we finally have answers to such questions. Chapters 1 and 2 provide those answers.[40] Granted, the class and ethnocultural bases of such romantic preferences are less clear; as noted, only the writer's home province is consistently cited. Nevertheless, self-references to class and ethnic background are frequent enough to allow for some tentative observations in these chapters.

One particular feature of the *Family Herald* suggested another focus, namely, the "dos" and "don'ts" of romance. The magazine also contained an "Etiquette" column, run by Prim Rose, that answered questions from young Canadians about the *rules* of romance. What should a man say after dancing with an unmarried woman? Was it proper for such a woman to write to bachelors? Should she allow her boyfriends to take physical liberties with her? When was it acceptable to break a marital engagement and, if

so, how should it be done? Prim Rose gave answers to these questions and many more and, in doing so, provided readers with a thorough guide to Canada's romance etiquette. Canadians had access to other etiquette advice, of course, in the form of books and manuals, but almost certainly these were not read as widely as the *Family Herald*, the most popular "farm-and-family" magazine of the day.[41] This made Prim Rose an important source of romantic advice for thousands of Canadians. As far as the *Family Herald*'s loyal readers were concerned, her rules were *the* rules. Exactly what those rules were is the subject of chapter 3.

Now whether Canadians actually followed these rules is another matter. Only by examining the realities of courtship – as dating was then called – can we know for sure, and the next chapter does this to a degree. But it does so indirectly, in response to the question, "what hardships did Canadians suffer in their quest for romance?" A strict code of conduct, as prescribed by Prim Rose and others, was certainly one of them. But there were many more, for it was a sad fact that even when Canadians knew exactly what kind of a partner they wanted and had a solid grasp of the rules, success was not guaranteed. For many Canadians, the road to romantic bliss was littered with obstacles. This is the focus of chapter 4.

The final chapter looks at the impact of the Great War on Canadian romance. Here the correspondence columns proved less useful. Although they revealed the war's impact on romantic *attitudes*, more often they served as a platform for the super-charged patriotism of Canadians in these years. Therefore, to answer the question, "How did the Great War affect romance?," I was forced to rely largely on other sources, mostly private letters and diaries. And although it's always more difficult to generalize from such selective sources, the appearance in recent years of some outstanding collections of wartime letters made the task much easier. As such, I feel confident in my assertion that the war's impact on Canadian romance was, on the whole, devastating. I will let the reader decide.

My decision to focus on these four themes – ideal partners, romance etiquette, courtship hardship, and war – will undoubtedly raise questions in some quarters. Some will wonder why I say nothing about marriage, except tangentially. Certainly I do not mean to suggest that marriage and romance were mutually exclusive. Once a couple got married, however, the romance element of the relationship began to recede, while other, more pedestrian, aspects of married life – running a household, earning a living, raising children – moved to the fore. This, in turn, begs other questions:

Were couples happily married? How were household and bread-winning tasks divided up between husband and wife? Which partner wielded the most power in the family? What legal rights did each spouse have? – all interesting and legitimate questions, to be sure, but they have little to do with romance. Nor do I have much to say about the purely *physical* side of romance, mainly because Canadians themselves had so little to say, at least in their letters to the correspondence columns (and even in their private letters during the war). Those wishing to explore this aspect of heterosexual romance should look elsewhere.[42]

Readers might also ask why I chose to focus mostly on the years 1904 to 1920 when the correspondence columns ran into the 1920s. The main reason is the sparseness of evidence beyond the war years. In the case of the *Western Home Monthly*, the volume of letters fell considerably after the war, an indication that by the 1920s single men and women of the "frontier" regions found less need to search for partners in this way. Rapid advances in transportation, like railroads and cars, helped reduce their isolation, while opportunities for heterosexual contact expanded as the new communities of the West and northern Ontario became more populated and urbanized. "There are not many bachelors around here," wrote a resident of Moosomin, Saskatchewan, in 1914. "Although they were numerous a few years ago, … they are nearly all married now and settled down nice and comfortable."[43]

Drawing conclusions for the postwar years was also difficult because the content of the letters changed. Even though the editors still considered the columns as serving an essentially match-making purpose, the *WHM*'s editor began limiting the number of romance letters in the 1910s, perhaps in response to the growing criticism that these were becoming monotonous; the same happened with the *Family Herald*. Over time, therefore, the columns became less matrimonial and more like true correspondence columns, where views were exchanged on a wide variety of subjects. The shrinking pool of evidence, therefore, means the columns are only able to suggest romantic *trends* for the postwar years. These trends are discussed in the Epilogue.

There is one more question that needs to be addressed by way of introduction to this study, and it is yet another that most historians have not asked: "Why Romance?" Why did Canadians long for and pursue partners to share their lives with in these years? The answer is not as obvious as it seems. Prior to the nineteenth century, when parents or guardians *arranged* most marriages, Canadians had little need for romance. Once young people gained the right to choose their *own* spouses, however, romance developed naturally as a prelude to marriage, as an opportunity to find or (in the case of women) attract the right marriage partner.[44]

A better question, then, is "Why Marriage?" Why did most Canadians over the age of fifteen choose matrimony over the single life? Marriage did have its naysayers, those who felt the institution was over-rated and that true happiness lay in "single blessedness"; a number wrote to the *Family Herald* and *WHM* to say they knew of few happily married couples.[45] Men sometimes renounced marriage because they cherished their freedom – "If I was married I should not be able to talk sweet nothings to a good looking girl at the dance" wrote one – and because they considered the modern young woman, with her "abnormal hats, peek-a-boo waists and tight skirts," frivolous and expensive to maintain.[46] Women had reservations too. Spurred by the "first wave" women's movement of the early 1900s, a number of female correspondents, especially farm women, denounced marriage as oppressive, as a one-way ticket to hard labour and thankless drudgery. Forced to choose between marriage and a career, more of them were choosing the latter, not least because of the greater number of satisfying job opportunities available to them in these years, including teaching, nursing, and missionary work.[47]

But most Canadians favoured marriage, and with good reason. In practical terms, marriage permitted a sharing of responsibilities necessary to a couple's survival and well being, whether this meant running a family farm or business, managing a household, or raising children who would one day contribute to the "family economy" and care for their elderly parents. Specifically, a man needed a wife to run a household, raise his children, and help with the farm or family business. And a woman (unless she was lucky enough to be economically self-sufficient) needed a husband to support her financially. No woman wanted to be a life-long burden on her aging parents or one of her married siblings.[48]

At another level, Canadians desired marriage for the companionship it offered. After all, loneliness was common in these years, especially in the

Courtship in the early 1900s was inevitably followed by marriage. This 1923 wedding portrait of a happy Ontario couple was something to which most Canadians aspired. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, F 1405-9-6, MSR9872-10.*

more sparsely settled areas of the country. Despite the legendary stoicism of Canada's Anglo-Saxon population, the pages of the personal columns are filled with sad letters from young men and women lamenting their "single wretchedness" and desperately seeking companions. Marriage was also the only socially acceptable method at this time of having children and enjoying the more intimate physical pleasures of heterosexual relationships. More generally, most Canadians felt that getting married, building a home, and raising a family was the chief purpose of living and the main route to happiness: "is not matrimony the highest state of earthly bliss?," asked Quebec's "Eastern Girl," after endorsing the matrimonial purpose of the Prim Rose column.[49] They typically saw *unwed* men and women, on the other hand, as failures.[50]

The desire to marry also stemmed from certain social pressures. Men and women were, after all, *expected* to marry. For Canadians who took their religion seriously, as most did, marriage was considered God's will, part of divine design. "When the Creator of the universe arranged things," wrote an Alberta correspondent, "he evidently intended that there should be neither bachelors [n]or old maids. He began pairing them off in the Garden of Eden, and has kept up the same equal proportion ever since."[51] Parents raised their daughters to believe that their ultimate goal in life should be marriage, children, and a home of their own and that they should do whatever was necessary to achieve this. They also told them they could benefit society most as wives and mothers, particularly by moulding the characters of their husbands and children along moral lines.[52] They told their sons, meanwhile, that it was their manly duty in life to become a "provider" for, and "protector" of, a special woman, who would, in turn, refine their rough-hewn characters and provide them with the encouragement and inspiration they needed to succeed in life.[53]

Some Canadians went even further and declared marriage a patriotic duty. How else, they asked, could Canada develop into a great country but through the marriage and procreation of its citizens? "Your page has a peculiar function of its own," an Ontario farmer told Prim Rose, "in drawing together the young men and maidens whose aim it is to make the land of the 'Maple Leaf' greater by the reason of their efforts."[54] She agreed, calling matrimony of "vital importance to the nation, and … worthy of attention and effort on the part of every man or woman who loves this great country of ours and desires to see it grow and prosper."[55] National greatness also required a *moral* population, and marriage helped here too. It would

have a civilizing effect, especially on men, whose inherently rough and intemperate personalities would benefit greatly from the steadying hand of a virtuous, loving wife.[56] Other patriots, of a more racial mindset, promoted marriage (and procreation) as necessary to prevent the country's dominant Anglo-Saxon race from being overtaken by large numbers of "inferior" east European and Asian immigrants. Fearing such "race suicide," one reader even proposed a tax on all unmarried Anglo-Saxon women.[57] Many more suggested a tax on *all* single persons, except those too poor, unhealthy, or ugly to attract potential spouses.[58] With so much riding on the institution of marriage, is it any wonder marriage rates rose in these years?[59] Or that those who remained single were stigmatized accordingly: unmarried men risked being called "dirty old bachelors," too selfish or cowardly to marry, and women unwed by age twenty-four were called, just as disparagingly, "old maids" or "spinsters," doomed to lives of misery, with only their cats and parrots to keep them company.[60]

None of this is meant to suggest that Canadians rushed into marriage at the first opportunity. Quite the opposite. Despite the strong desire and pressure to marry, they tread carefully when choosing a life partner. As we will see, they had definite ideas about the person they hoped to marry and, in theory at least, would not settle for less. When others accused them of being too lazy, fussy, or selfish to tie the knot, they invariably responded that they had yet to meet their "ideal" and would remain single until then.[61] Their caution was reinforced by the widely shared belief that for every person there was, somewhere on the planet, a so-called "affinity" or ideal person, chosen for them by God. When Canadians of this era spoke of a "match made in heaven," they meant it literally.[62]

Most also insisted that *love* was an absolute prerequisite, as they had for some time.[63] In their letters they described it, breathlessly, as "the grand passion," "the divine flame," and "a heaven-born gift," and were persuaded by the sentimental fiction and poetry of the day that true love between husband and wife had the power to render any hovel a palace and any marriage happy.[64] They would have been quick to applaud the resolve of the twenty-year-old postal clerk from Ontario who told readers of the *Family Herald* that "I believe in marrying for love, not for a title or an estate, for there can be no happiness with plenty of money only. There must be love.… Where love reigns supreme, you have the ideal home."[65] And they would have nodded approvingly upon reading Maud Cooke's pronouncement on the subject in her 1896 tome, *Social Etiquette*: "God's provisions for man's

happiness are boundless and endless, … yet a right love surpasses them all, and can render us all happier than our utmost imaginations can depict."[66]

In the absence of love, a number of young women (and men) renounced marriage altogether. "We are not anxious to get married as some girls seem to be," wrote Alberta's "Lauretta and Lusetta," and "will be perfectly willing to be old maids until the end of our lives if the right ones do not come along. We will never marry for anything but pure, unadulterated love."[67] To Lauretta and Lusetta, whose views were widely shared, it mattered not at what age a man and woman married (provided they were not too young, since love required maturity) or what their financial circumstances were, so long as there was love. Love conquered all. To die-hard romantics, in fact, it came before all else, even life itself. "Better a painful death in youth, or a lingering illness through a long life," declared another Albertan, herself on the verge of spinsterhood, "than to live a hideous, loveless marriage."[68] Such views often bordered on intolerance. "Marriage should always be the sequel of unselfish, pure, holy love," huffed Saskatchewan's somewhat ungallant "Sir Gallahad,"

> [and] I cannot understand how people consent to marry for money, or convenience, unless they are morally degraded. The natural laws of affinity, selection, and the like, forbid such unions and for no consideration, should we adopt any other standard or principle than love, in our matrimonial views.[69]

Choosing the right partner and falling in love, in turn, meant that romance could not be rushed, that couples should spend as long as necessary – at least a year – getting to know one another before getting engaged. "Marry in haste and repent at leisure," was a popular admonition.[70]

All of this might strike the modern reader as odd. How could our ancestors have been so demanding under the circumstances? How could they have afforded the luxury of such romantic idealism? Did the financial insecurity of single women and the intense loneliness of so many single frontier men not preclude such fastidiousness? It's true, some desperately lonely individuals were not the least bit fussy, like Nova Scotia's "Lonely Bayne," who wrote, simply, "Dear Friend Prim Rose – Please send me a wife"[71]; pioneering prairie bachelors and widowers with young children were not especially picky either. But most Canadians were. Exactly *why* is not clear, although the awareness that marriage was a life-long proposition

was one reason. Not only was divorce difficult to obtain – in most provinces it required the approval of Parliament and adultery was the minimum grounds – but most Canadians considered it sinful. They saw marriage, sanctioned and ordained by God, as a sacred "heavenly bond" not easily trifled with. As the "Good Book" said, "what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."[72] A leading etiquette manual of the day was just as insistent. "There are times when a legal separation is necessary," its author wrote, "but when people marry they marry for better or for worse, and if, unfortunately, it should be for worse, even that does not release them from the solemn vows which they have taken."[73] In short, when Canadians married, they knew it was for life and so, they chose carefully.

1

The Woman of His Dreams

If Canadian men were clear about one thing in their letters to the personal columns, it was about the qualities they wanted in a wife. True, some seem to have had few standards to speak of. Many bachelor farmers out West, for example, clearly became far less fastidious with each year of toiling away in lonely isolation. "I believe I could live with almost any one who could cook a good meal, wash the dishes, and not grumble because it had to be done" remarked one Alberta farmer.[1] At the other extreme were those who demanded *too* much from a potential partner – and who were reprimanded accordingly. Referring to the "ideal woman" such men described, one indignant female correspondent shot back,

> The list of qualities she must possess if she would aspire to be the wife of any one of these gentlemen is simply appalling: docility, amiability, cheerfulness, patience, education, intelligence, a graduate in the arts of music and cooking and everything else that goes to make up an angel and a housekeeper. When I read one of these 'What I want for a wife' letters, I am forced to exclaim: 'Has God – thou fool – worked solely for thy good, thy joy, thy pastime, thy attire, thy food?' I wonder, does it ever occur to one of these gentlemen to think of what a woman, who possesses all these qualities, might require in the form of a husband?[2]

Most men, however, were neither desperate nor delusional. They had a clear idea of what they wanted in a partner but defined their "ideal woman" realistically. They realized, as one bachelor put it, that "angels do not masquerade in physical forms."[3]

"Thoroughly domesticated"

So what qualities did Canadian men of this era find most appealing in the opposite sex? At the top of the list, simply by how often they mentioned it, was the so-called "domesticated" woman, who had the skills and dedication required to run a household: to cook, clean, sew, and care for children. At a time when most Canadians considered the home to be a woman's primary sphere, this preference was hardly surprising. How many men would have wanted a wife deficient in the "domestic arts" and unable to raise healthy and "proper" children? "My ideal has always been a neat, home-loving woman not ashamed of housework and proud of her cooking," wrote an Alberta homesteader. "I do not want a chore boy. I want a helpmate to look after my house and get my meals, while I labour in the fields to support and make 'our' surroundings comfortable."[4] Another bachelor, from B.C., was just as adamant. "The average girl of today," he complained, "is much fonder of dances and other forms of amusement than was the case in her mother's time, and as a result the wily bachelor often sees neglected homes, and dirty children. Then again, the pretty and desirable girl of today frequently becomes the unkempt and careless wife of tomorrow." His preference was for the "home-loving" girl.[5]

But did some men value the "home-loving" girl more than other men? Probably. The genuine bachelor – living on his own or with other bachelors, cooking his own meals and doing his own laundry for the first time – fell into this category.[6] So, too, did the many young men opening up the great West to settlement in these years, who had to juggle arduous farming or ranching duties with household chores. Wanting to devote themselves fully to the former, these pioneering bachelors were *especially* eager to secure a domesticated woman, preferably a farmer's daughter from the West itself. "Give me a Western girl, who is not too proud to be a farmer's wife," was a common refrain from the men in this region.[7] And when their gaze extended too far eastward, western girls were quick to bring the western boys into line. "There are a number of 'roses,' withering on the parent stem,

Mrs. Arthur Beales of Toronto typified the sort of woman most men prized above all in the pre-war years: the woman who knew her way around a kitchen. *Library and Archives Canada, Arthur Beales, Arthur Beales Fonds, PA-800211.*

in single blessedness, right here in Alberta," four young women reminded their bachelor neighbours, "[who] would gladly assist 'Dusty' or some of his brother bachelors to wash dishes and keep the shack in order." And such girls, they added, "are much more likely than their Eastern sisters to take kindly to life in a shack on the prairie."[8]

Such reminders were usually unnecessary, but they do suggest that women, no less than men, saw value in the "home-loving" girl. This was certainly true. Nor were women shy about advertising themselves as "thoroughly domesticated" to attract male correspondents.[9] Many, in fact, took great pride in their housekeeping abilities. "What can there be degrading about such work," asked one Ontario farmer's daughter, "when you are bringing your best to make the home attractive and lovely? And surely nothing nobler can engage the attention of any true girl than the

delightful task of making home 'the dearest spot in all the world.'"[10] Their letters also reveal contempt for women who *lacked* such abilities. "Deliver me from the girls who are proud of not knowing how to mend or to bake bread!," pleaded one exasperated mother, who said she was raising her sons to avoid such women at all costs.[11]

There were, of course, exceptions. "Leal" and "True," two bachelorettes from Ontario, expressed concern about the woman many men seemed to want, particularly out West. "The crying need of the Western bachelor is for a wife and one is prone to ask the question: in his mind are the terms 'wife' and 'housekeeper' synonymous? We would be sorry to think so but some of the letters lead us to that conclusion." They agreed that domestic qualifications were important but felt there was more to the perfect wife than being able to sew or make bread. "In their search for wives," they said, "let the bachelors of the West demand fewer domestic qualifications and look more closely to the qualities of mind and heart."[12] Leal and True aside, most Canadian women viewed their ability to run a household as a chief selling point in their bid to find a husband.

"Made of sterner and nobler stuff"

The male desire to marry, above all, a domesticated woman made them, in turn, leery of certain kinds of women. They had no patience for the lazy or "frivolous" woman, for example, the girl who shunned strenuous exertion in and around her home in favour of more leisurely pursuits, like reading trashy novels or gossiping with other women, or whose mind was continually preoccupied with her appearance. "How can a girl expect to keep the domestic machinery running smoothly," asked "Sam Weller" from Ontario,

> when her stock-in-trade consists of being able to get the latest pompadour effect in her hair, her waist compressed to the smallest possible circumference and to pound out on the piano the latest rag-time music? Her mind is filled with sentimental fiction of the Bertha M. Clay and Opie Reade style. To look nice and have a beau is all the essential.[13]

Mr. Weller's views were echoed by "Rara Avis" from northern Ontario. Like many other men he lambasted the "town girl" or "city-bred" woman, "who considers it almost savagery to live more than a hundred yards from a departmental store, opera house, etc., the girl who lounges about dressed up all the time, plays the piano, reads and does anything but work, while the dear old mother does it all."[14] These men lamented what they saw as the recent ascendancy of such "frivolous" women and the passing of women like their grandmothers, women "made of sterner and nobler stuff" who "were willing, for love's sake, to follow their husbands into the wilderness, enduring such privations as are unknown in these days."[15] This didn't mean, of course, that men wanted their wives to play the role of "slave" or "hired hand." "You do me an injustice," replied Alberta's "Mr. Witterly" to one such accusation, "in suggesting that I should allow [the prospective] Mrs. W. to fill the position of 'hired girl.' Nothing was farther from my thoughts when I mentioned industry as one of the qualities of my ideal. There would not be any question between Mr. and Mrs. W. as to how much work they would each do. They would be equal partners in everything."[16] In short, men wanted vigorous, energetic women, willing to do whatever it took to manage a household and, if necessary, help them with their own work, whether in the family business or on the farm. They did not want slaves. But they did not want "wax dolls" either.

And again, Canadian women were of similar mind. "Why should women be lazy when the fathers, husbands, brothers and sons have to work hard from morning to night?," asked the wife of an Ontario farmer. "We Canadian women despise a woman who wishes to be a wall flower letting her poor husband or father slave his fingers to the bone to give her ease."[17] Women were also quick to defend themselves against accusations of vanity and laziness. "Don't for one moment imagine," asserted "Lilian," another farmer's wife, that "we are wax-dolls who must be fetched and carried. Not a bit of it. All the girls of my wide acquaintance are quite capable and willing to exert themselves at many kinds of work."[18] Ontario's "Dickie" was no less defensive. "Some of the Western bachelors are too hard on Eastern girls," she wrote. "If we can play the piano, we also can milk cows, bake bread, … make butter, sew, and do housework."[19] To women like "Lilian" and "Dickie," the heroic pioneering grandmothers many men pined for had nothing over them.

"That most obnoxious of all ... bread-winning females"

Men also found women who held certain *occupations* to be undesirable. Their bias against marrying a "business girl," for example, was fairly strong. In this period the term "business girl" was synonymous with office worker or secretary, and many Canadians felt it was an occupation incompatible with domestic ability. They conceded that women had the right to *do* such work – at least while they were single – but felt office work distracted them from proper domestic training.[20] Businesswomen, themselves, disagreed. "A girl must be remarkably stupid," wrote a bookkeeper in a law firm, "if she cannot make 'good bread' or bake pies just because she happens to be a business woman." A Manitoba stenographer agreed. Despite the common perception "that business girls are of no use for wives and housekeepers," she said, "some of the smartest business girls have made the best wives, mothers and housekeepers." She added that she, herself, could "cook and keep house, having done so for five brothers."[21]

Nor did most men find female school teachers – or "school ma'arms" as they were called – appealing, and for mostly the same reason: poor housekeeping skills, especially the ability to cook a decent meal. "Some of the school teachers could be taught to cook by nine-tenths of the bachelors," wrote one of the latter.[22] As such, several writers warned men not to marry teachers. The strongest came from Manitoba's "Jack O'Brien," who provoked a small storm of controversy among Prim Rose readers with his comment that "if a man who has been at home while his sisters were learning housekeeping, knowingly and willfully marries a school ma'am, he ought to be arrested for attempted suicide.... No, boys! If you take my advice, leave the school ma'am for the city dude and get a good country girl who will be a true helpmate in every sense of the word."[23] Men also accused teachers of being vain, conceited, and flirtatious.[24]

Such criticisms were no trifling matter for single women. Although only a small percentage were actually teachers, a significant number of *working* women – about one in nine – *were* so employed, this being one of the few professions open to white, educated, middle-class women at the time.[25] Most of these women hoped to one day marry and start a family. But the likelihood of them doing so was damaged by the widespread perception – encouraged by letters like Mr. O'Brien's – that they were poor domestic

image not available

"Business girls," like this Hardisty, Alberta, stenographer (top) and this Cobourg, Ontario, sales clerk (bottom), were thought to have poor domestic skills. Bachelors were advised to avoid them. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA-2284-11, and Archives of Ontario, C 4-0-0-0-12.*

image not available

These "school marms" from Nesbit, Alberta, would have objected strenuously to the charge that they would make poor wives and mothers. Their training and duties, they believed, suggested otherwise. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, PA-3976-35.*

managers and would therefore make poor wives and mothers. It's no wonder, then, that so many of them spoke out forcefully in their own defence. "Bachelors of the West," declared one, "you say we cannot keep house, [but] how do you know? I wager any of you who have a 'school ma'am' for a friend or wife find she is just a human lovable woman like all others, and as capable."[26] In fact, teachers who wrote to the column believed they were ideally suited to be housewives. After all, their work taught them patience, problem-solving, how to care for young children, and how to maintain a clean and tidy classroom – all transferable skills. Furthermore, many of them insisted that because of their upbringing – on a farm or in a household full of male siblings – they already *had* the requisite domestic skills. "I belong to that most obnoxious of all orders of bread-winning females," declared another, but "I am a farmer's daughter, and can do any or all of the woman's share of work on a farm" and "can sew enough to make all my own clothes."[27] And even when they lacked such skills, teachers considered themselves intelligent enough to learn them easily enough.

"The Gentler Sex"

Next to domestication, a man wanted a "feminine" woman. Being feminine in this era meant a number of things, but above all it meant being modest or reserved and knowing one's place. Specifically, it meant acting in a restrained, graceful manner, dressing neatly but simply, and being happy with the role as housewife and mother. A number of men writing to the column were unequivocal in their preference for this type of woman. "Men don't, as a rule, admire the girl who can shoot, play football, talk slang, and who tries her best to be as masculine as possible in all her actions," wrote "Vox" from Manitoba. "Once a girl starts to compete with man in strength and agility, she ceases to be lovable and feminine and certainly she is not attractive, except as a curiosity.… Man admires first of all womanliness, and it is in the home that a woman looks most like herself.… [Her husband] expects her to admire him for his strength and to give him the right of protecting her."[28]

If men like "Vox" were adamant on this point – and they were – it was partly because women were changing. By the early 1900s they were no longer as confined to their home or (as domestic servants) to someone *else's* home. The recent spread of factories, department stores, and office buildings in towns and cities had created opportunities for large numbers of young women to enter the paid labour force for a few years before marrying: by 1901, one in four factory workers, and one in five clerical workers, was a woman. Many of these women were also living on their own for the first time, consorting regularly with people their own age, in large urban centres, well beyond the supervisory gaze of family and Church. This gave them a measure of freedom and independence they had never known. The result was the emergence of the "new woman" – bolder in manner and appearance, less prudish in matters of speech and sexuality, and less willing to accept her subordinate social status. The "new woman" demanded the right to earn her own money, wear less restrictive clothing, participate in sports, play a role on the public stage, and share the same legal rights as her brother or father, including the right to vote and hold office. "Brashness, irreverence and independence were among the notable qualities of the new woman," writes one historian. "[She] was both spirited and public-spirited."[29]

Based on her prim and proper appearance alone, this Erindale, Ontario, maiden would have met most men's definition of the ideal woman in the pre-war years. *Library and Archives Canada, R. S. Cassels, Richard Scougall Cassels Fonds, PA-123263.*

In time most Canadian men accepted and even embraced the new woman. In the early 1900s, they did not. They considered her a disruption to the natural order and a threat to woman's "privileged" position as keeper of the home and moral guardian of the family. "One of the most disquieting things that we see today," wrote a young male teacher from Ontario,

> is … the spirit of 'mannishness' that seems to be a part of some women.… I fully believe that the morality of the world would be higher today, were it not for the apparent desire of many women to adopt masculine manners. Men, as a class, admire those women most who are content to so live as to be worthy of the name 'the gentler sex.'… [They also admire] frankness, sincerity, spirit, courage, industry, etc.… I believe the woman who is content to remain in the home and inculcate these qualities into the character of those about her is fulfilling the divine law much better than she who seeks to go out into the world to 'make a name.'[30]

From Saskatchewan came a further plea to women to not abdicate their "proper sphere":

> The woman of today craves freedom, self-opinion, self-reliance (not to mention a vote) and for these mere masculine qualities she is prepared to sacrifice that most endearing of all her charms – winsomeness.… Let members of the gentler(?) sex recognize their limitations, concentrate their minds on those things which appertain to their own domain, taking heart with the truism, 'The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.' Let woman remember that her duty and privilege is to 'lighten and gladden the heart.'[31]

Such opinions found broad support across the country.

Canadians disagreed, however, on what exactly constituted "femininity." A number of correspondents – mostly working women – did not consider office or factory work, for example, to be "unwomanly."[32] Ranch women sometimes boasted of their ability to "throw a steer and tie him in four minutes, brand a colt, and handle the rope in all its forms" and still remain "ladylike."[33] And some argued that granting women the right to

own homesteads would not render them less feminine; it might even make them *more* desirable.[34] By stretching the definition of femininity in this way, these individuals, along with a handful of correspondents who challenged the legitimacy of a distinct female role and demeanour, were redefining the ideal woman along more modern lines. But they were clearly struggling against the current.

"Do not marry a suffragette"

At no time was this struggle more apparent than in the great debate that raged in the column, and in fact across the land, over the issue of woman's suffrage – over the right of women to vote. More correspondents commented on this issue than on any other, with approximately 60 per cent coming down firmly, in the pre-war years, on the *anti*-suffrage side. Their reasons were varied, but at the core of their opposition was the belief that suffrage would *de-feminize* women, that it would distract them from their "proper sphere" and strip them of their modesty, dignity, charm, selflessness, and other prized feminine attributes. Most men, like "Homo" of Saskatchewan, felt a woman's place was not in the polling booth but in the home, caring for and exerting her moral influence on husband and child: "If those few women of today, who are clamoring, shrieking, and wasting their time in a futile attempt to attain that which would be of little if any use to them would devote that time to their children, and other duties for which they were created, they would be rendering a far greater service to their sex."[35] Others worried about what women would lose by gaining the vote, including "the delicate reserve, the quaint propriety, [and] the exacting self-respect, etc. that," according to one Alberta bachelor, "should at all times characterize the true woman."[36]

Most Canadian women agreed. "Woman is man's equal in intellect," wrote a twenty-four-year-old Nova Scotian,

> but she does not show it when she leaves the sphere in which God placed her, as wife and mother, and endeavors to take her husband's place. She has as much to do in the affairs of the nation if she stays in the home and confines herself to making it a perfect one, to advise, to love, to cherish, to send out into the

> world clean-hearted, clear-headed husbands and sons, as if she went out in their place and voted.[37]

A former stenographer from Ontario, now keeping house for her father and eager to attract male correspondents, put it more succinctly: "I don't' think a woman should vote. I think her place is in the home."[38] In the pre-war marriage market, such women had a distinct advantage, for most men made it clear they wanted nothing to do with women who favoured suffrage.

Even less desirable was the so-called "suffragette" – the militant suffrage activist who resorted to disruptive or violent methods to advance her cause. "Whatever you do," warned one Ontario bachelor, "do not marry a suffragette."[39] Canadians were all too familiar with this brand of activist. They read frequently in their newspapers about the notorious "howling suffragettes" in Britain and the United States who marched in the streets, held hunger strikes, chained themselves to lampposts, and destroyed property. When readers of the *Family Herald* turned to the Prim Rose column for the week of June 4, 1913, the first thing they saw was a photograph of a church ablaze in London, England, displayed prominently in the centre of the page under the stark headline: "Suffragettes Burn Church." Canadians were appalled with such behaviour. They found it unwomanly in the extreme, and in their letters to the column they responded with uncharacteristic vituperation. "The conduct of these ladies, so called, is nothing short of disgraceful," snapped Saskatchewan's "Mere Man." A suffrage supporter from Ontario warned that "when women so unsex themselves as the suffragettes in England, with their fires, riots, and other unwomanly demonstrations, an administration such as these hysterical persons would make is much to be feared." A "business girl" from the same province called the suffragettes' actions "more those of heathen, than Christian women and a disgrace to our country and sex." And voicing a concern shared by most Canadians, one Alberta mother posed the simple question: "Should not a woman be gentle and womanly at all times?"[40]

Although most Canadians would have answered "yes," not everyone agreed suffrage *per se* would render a woman "unwomanly," any more than if she owned a homestead or worked in an office or factory.[41] "Was Victoria less a loving wife and tender mother because she was Queen?" asked a B.C. woman, "and … how would voting once in a year or so and attending a few political meetings cause a woman to neglect her home and family and all her higher duties?" Did men neglect *their* sphere – their jobs – asked

This 1910 cartoon from the Toronto *News* managed to capture both the pre-war feelings of most men towards female suffrage and the unladylike militancy that was said to have infected its supporters. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, C 301, 9999.*

another, simply because they had the right to vote? Several also pointed out that the definition of "womanliness" was constantly changing and that suffrage opponents should keep this in mind. "Most of the men seem perfectly sure that what is not customary is unwomanly," exclaimed "Woman" from Alberta. "What nonsense! Do they know that when Florence Nightingale and her companions first went out to nurse dying soldiers they were censured as doing something unwomanly" and that "here, at home, it is not very long ago when it was thought unwomanly to ride astride [a horse]?"[42]

Many Canadians, in fact, believed that suffrage would help women to *better* perform their feminine duties, by extending their nurturing and moral influences into the public realm. A woman who voted and held office could restrict the liquor trade and prostitution, improve working conditions for her sons and daughters, and secure cleaner supplies of water and milk, more

playgrounds, and more hygienic schools and neighbourhoods. "My ideal woman takes a great interest in the questions of the day," wrote one Alberta bachelor. "She believes in Woman's suffrage (though not of the militant kind) and takes an interest in all movements which affect the welfare of the nation."[43] This "maternal feminist" rationale, as historians like to call it, would eventually win out. But in the pre-war years it held little sway. Most Canadian men preferred the "old-fashioned" girl, and the old-fashioned girl did not vote.

"Refined and intelligent ... ladies preferred"

The third most important quality Canadian men valued in a woman was her ability to provide a husband with "cultured companionship." When a man returned from a day at the office or factory, or from toiling away in the field, forest, or on the water, not only did he want to return to a properly managed home – with a well-prepared meal on the table and with neatly dressed, well-behaved kids to greet him – but to a wife who could help him forget his troubles and lift his spirits. This meant, above all, a wife who was educated and well-read, someone he could talk to intelligently about his job or business or the issues of the day.[44]

She should not, however, be "bookish," as this would distract her from her domestic duties and her husband. Nor should her reading material consist of "light," trashy novels, as these did little to elevate the mind.[45] "The average man does not want one of those fluffy and very much dollified young women," wrote one Saskatchewan bachelor, "but rather one who without the least trouble can engage in the ordinary run of conversation and also can speak with intelligence on most subjects."[46] A fellow resident of that province, calling himself "Chick-a-Dee," put it less politely:

> The great majority of the [farm] girls around here are surprisingly ignorant and vulgar and can talk of very little beyond cows, pigs, and picnics. If you ask one of them if they are fond of reading they stare, their literature being confined to the comic page of a favourite paper. Music they know nothing of, flowers they laugh at, and if you use a word of more than six letters, it provokes another grin.[47]

Such women knew well enough how to keep house, he conceded, "but a man that would marry a girl just to get his house kept clean and his meals cooked is not a man, and I'm afraid he would come in for little of the true happiness of married life." This provoked a polite but firm reply from "A Farmer's Lassie" in Manitoba. "If Chick-a-Dee were here," she wrote, "he would find among the farmer's daughters girls not only well versed in farm work, but musical girls, who are able to converse on the topics of the day, as most of them here read their newspapers well."[48] Others came to the defence of rural bachelorettes as well, but either way the point was clear: men preferred educated, thinking women.

They also wanted women who were "refined." Sometimes this meant a woman who appreciated good literature and the beauties of nature, or who was artistic, but usually it meant someone with *musical* ability. In these years, the price of a woman who sang or played an instrument was "far above rubies." This is understandable. At a time when commercial recreation was limited, particularly outside the larger cities, and before the advent of radio or television, people had to make their own fun. Winters were particularly dreary, as the cold weather and shorter days meant more time indoors. The wife who could entertain her husband and family, by playing the piano or organ, was therefore considered a catch. For one B.C. man, the ideal woman, in addition to being "Christian" and well-educated, would be a musician, "so [that] the long evenings in this delightful climate can be spent with an occasional song at the organ or piano."[49] At the other end of the country a Nova Scotia man identified his ideal as one who could "talk intelligently about the world around us, or take her place at the piano and play the sweetest music with ease and grace," for in his view "there is no accomplishment more desirable than to be a good musician."[50] An Ontario bachelor summed up the prevailing view when he said that what bachelors wanted was "refined and intelligent … ladies."[51]

It's also clear that many correspondents, mostly women, thought these men were lying. They argued that men were not, in fact, drawn to women of refinement or intelligence, but to attractive and domesticated women – that they chose beauty and brawn over brains. Many of these letters, however, had an unmistakable tone of bitterness, as if written by someone who had been scorned or passed over. One over-thirty B.C. woman, for example, said most of her male acquaintances "do not want a woman with brains" because she would expose the fact that men were not as great as they

Many bachelors wanted a wife who was musical. A woman who could play the piano was therefore highly desirable. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, C 130-5-0-0-192.*

thought they were; and so they preferred "some light, airy, silly creature."[52] Another single woman, enrolled at a business college in Nova Scotia, was equally cynical:

> Why, only a few days ago a well-educated businessman said to me, 'What is the use for you to spend your money and time going to college.… You will only marry after a few years and don't you know that a pretty dress and bonnet appeal more to a man than all the knowledge you can acquire at college?' That man's idea, I think, is the rule, not the exception.… Were you ever at a reception or party where the 'fluffy dollified girls,' who could talk airy nothings and who would wear the most daring dresses, not even hesitating at the 'Tango rig,' [i.e. a risqué dance for its day] were the ones who received the 'lion's share' of attention? … Those girls will be chosen for wives, while their more modest and intelligent sisters will be 'left on the shelf.' Why is it? Is it because so many men are stupid, but so few blind? I know you will think I am an old maid with a 'sour' temper, because I was 'left on the shelf,' but I am not.[53]

Canadians wrote enough *disinterested* letters of this sort, however, to suggest that perhaps the cynics were on to something. An Alberta school teacher noted, matter of factly, that "men are more often taken in by the 'winsome smile' and smartness in small talk than are women" and that she had "often heard men laugh and make fun of a girl because she was, what they called 'literary.'"[54] A Saskatchewan office worker, put her scepticism to verse:

> Though I am not a beauty, I can tell you,
> I like to look quite neat from head to toe,
> I don't waste time, nor fill my head with nonsense,
> I would be useful, though not meant for show …
>
> But I have thought the men of my acquaintance,
> Prefer the girls with least amount of brain,
> The ones who giggle, laugh, and hint for ice-cream,
> Appear to have of beaux the longest train.[55]

Some men agreed. "The average man," wrote one B.C. bachelor, "does not want a thinking wife."[56]

So which side was right? This is hard to say. Maybe men who really did prefer the "airy, silly creature" to the cultured companion simply chose to keep their views to themselves, for fear of appearing superficial or condescending. On the other hand, the columns' correspondents were generally honest in their views – their searing comments on the suffragette proved as much. If they had had any bias against refined, educated women, therefore, they probably would have said so, as some did.[57] It's safe to say that in the *pre-war* years, at least, most men favoured the "cultured companion" over the "fluffy, dollified girl."

"… NOT A 'RAVING BEAUTY'"

This didn't mean that a woman's physical appearance meant nothing to a man. It did, but not to a great degree, and not in the ways the cynics thought. Rarely, for example, did men mention a preference for specific physical features, such as hair or eye colour. Yes, one Nova Scotian woman claimed to know a man "who met his bride-elect at the railway station" – having never laid eyes on her before – and who jettisoned the wedding "just because her hair happened to be red." But this fair-minded fellow was the exception.[58] Most men ranked a woman's looks well below her other qualities. Alberta's "Mountain Boy" spoke for most men (and women too) when he told the column's readers that,

> a man or woman is doing a very foolish thing to set their hearts on a person with certain good looks, regardless of character.… I think that beauty in anyone, if they have any beauty at all, is shown in their character. A girl or woman, who is loving and kind, is to be prized more than lands or gold.[59]

A young "Wife Seeker" in neighbouring New Brunswick drove home the point more forcefully – and apparently in all seriousness – when he requested the acquaintance of a "ladylike, moderately well educated woman, intelligent, willing to learn, healthy and [not] homely to a marked degree."[60] In fact, he may have found such a companion in a fellow Maritimer calling herself "Felicitas." Like many other women advertising for husbands

in the column, Felicitas made no effort to conceal her less-than-perfect appearance. "I would have been a pretty girl," she told readers,

> but am debarred from being so by a scar on my face. However, I have never found that that prevented me from making hosts of friends and sometimes more than friends, or from having plenty of partners, skating and dancing. Indeed, so many of my dearest friends are from among those who at first were indifferent to me, as I thought on account of my defect, that the fact that I am not a 'raving beauty' so to speak, drawing all men unto me by my perfection of good looks, has lost a good deal of its bitterness to me.[61]

If Felicitas's experience was as common as it seems, it merely confirms that being plain or ugly was not a serious obstacle to romance in these years. When Canadians insisted that "beauty is only skin deep" – a recurring expression in the columns – they meant it.[62]

This may come as a surprise to contemporary readers given the tremendous emphasis that our own culture places on physical beauty. We must remember, however, that in the years before Hollywood films and mass circulation magazines – with their glorification of surface beauty and sexual allure – North Americans were less superficial. They were also more religious and prudish, and this, too, made them value individual character over looks. So did the way they earned their living. Canada was still predominantly rural and agricultural, and to survive, many people produced goods or delivered services, whether this meant growing wheat, fishing for cod, building furniture, or selling dry goods in a general store. In this economy, people's skills, character, and brute strength naturally counted for more than their looks. This was especially true in the West, where legions of ambitious young men were opening up large swaths of land to farming and ranching at an unprecedented pace. For many of them, this meant choosing a wife with the skills and character necessary to build a successful farm or family business. If she also happened to have a pretty face, then all the better. But it was not a requirement.

If physical beauty carried little weight in the romantic calculations of most men before the war, some aspects of a woman's appearance they clearly did *not* care for. Foremost among these were excessive make-up and flashy clothing. "Kid" from Ontario, for example, wanted a "sensible girl."

Not "the young, simpering kind that tries to be impressive, in fact to win your affections at first sight. Of course the powdery kind are strictly out of it; powder is all right in its place … but it seems to me its place isn't on some giggling, red-nosed, freckle-faced girl in chunks." Turning to his mother in church one Sunday, he whispered "Miss _____ would be quite a nice girl if it wasn't for the white spots."[63]

Men were no more tolerant of women who wore brash clothing, especially the trendy feathered hats of the day. "Manitoulin Bill," although he favoured female suffrage, could not bear to think of women as Members of Parliament. "Fancy a woman sitting in Parliament," he wrote, "with a low cut waist [i.e. blouse], hobble skirt, a large hat with a feather hanging out behind and two or three hat pins that would make spears for seal killing. Women who wear the above clothing are not fit to have a vote. Their style shows what is in their heads."[64] Northern Ontario's "Rara Avis" shared his concern. "The present fashion in ladies hats" among "eastern girls," he said, "makes one wonder what the sex are coming to."[65] Why men like Bill and Rara Avis felt this way is not altogether clear. The etiquette of the day held that women should always strive for modesty of behaviour and appearance, which, among other things, meant avoiding "all extremes of fashion, as well as all eccentricities of style."[66] So perhaps men considered conspicuous fashions unladylike? Or perhaps they associated excessive make up and bold clothing with prostitutes? A few men implied as much. "Look at the vulgar and ridiculous fashions!" wrote "Mountaineer" from B.C.:

> If women would be more reserved and decent in their mode of dress and not so crazy to follow fashion, there would be a great deal less sin in the world. A woman when her true self is the purest, most respected thing in the world, but it is also possible for her to sink below all else.[67]

Such behaviour also smacked of vanity and superficiality, which in turn had serious implications in other areas. How proficient could a woman be at keeping house or carrying on an intelligent conversation, for example, if she spent an inordinate amount of time and mental energy on "the rouge pot" and the latest fashions? Not very. And how many young men, struggling to establish farms, businesses, or professions could afford to keep their wives in the latest fashions? Not many.[68]

These feather- and fur-bearing women, crossing a Toronto street in 1911, might have held some appeal to their city's more superficial bachelors, but most men, especially in rural areas, deplored the extravagance. *Courtesy City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 409.*

Many men also disliked the "sloppy," unkempt woman. One bachelor, who lived in a city boarding house, made this clear enough. "The girl of the house was good-looking," he wrote,

> but unattractive. In the morning she would serve us our breakfast wearing an old dirty skirt and a waist that must have belonged to her grandmother, it was so worn out, and there was a bill of separation between it and her skirt. Her hair was continually done up in braids and tea-lead until supper time, when she would frizz and clean up and scheme to get some of us to take her to the movies. She was a stunner when she did clean up.[69]

He, along with most men, preferred women who were plain-looking, neatly dressed, and well-groomed. Not only was this pleasing to the eye, but, more important, it conveyed the impression of substance and ability.[70]

"Such a lot of girls seem to be flirts"

Men also found certain *habits* objectionable. A number complained about the woman who chewed gum, for example. They considered this a "vulgar habit," and reports of its alleged prevalence among women in the western provinces prompted the normally taciturn Prim Rose to remark, "I have never seen nor heard of a 'lady' who was guilty of such an offence against good taste" and "was under the impression that the extraordinary practice prevailed only among the lowest classes, chiefly school boys."[71] Even more objectionable was the woman who "flirted" – who led a man to believe her intentions towards him were more romantic than they really were. This included the woman who sought the attention of a man despite having committed herself in some way to another. Flirting was considered basically dishonest. Even worse, it could take a toll on a man's emotions, leaving him broken-hearted. "Many a fellow can trace his downfall through a woman," complained one westerner. "I mean a flirt, and such a lot of girls seem to be flirts. They encourage the fellow for a time and make him think that he's all the world to her, and when she has had all the amusement she wants she gives him his dismissal."[72] Other female habits men found distasteful included smoking, drinking tea, eating sweets, and gossiping.

They rarely explained *why* they opposed such things, but they certainly left the impression their practitioners were behaving in an "unladylike" way.[73]

"Kind-hearted above all things"

Lastly, many men wanted a woman who was kind and generous, who was willing to sacrifice her own interests and happiness to help others, especially the less fortunate. Canadians had long prized female altruism – it went hand in hand with motherhood after all – but by the early 1900s they found it even *more* desirable. Rapid urbanization, the rise of large, mechanized factories, and the generally sluggish economic growth of the period combined to produce a myriad of social problems: slums, disease, unsafe workplaces, prostitution, and alcoholism, to name a few. Governments were slow to address these things, but middle-class Protestant women were not. In unprecedented numbers they formed and joined their own organizations to pressure politicians into restoring "order" to the industrial city, or they tried to do this themselves, through charitable organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union or Young Women's Christian Association. Canadians regarded these women as heroes, and the most prominent among them – like American social workers Jane Addams and Frances Willard – became cultural icons.[74] "When I think of some of the splendid women of today," gushed one Ontarian, "I feel very small to think I am only a humble man. What a privilege it is to meet such women, noble, pure and true, whose very lives are ones of hourly self-sacrifice."[75]

Just as significant were the romantic implications. Swept up by the idealistic, "progressive" spirit of the age, Canadian men came to desire in women the qualities of compassion and self-sacrifice exemplified by people like Addams and Willard. "My ideal of a good helpmate," wrote a Manitoba bachelor, "is one who would be anxious to help, whether in her own household or anyone else's, and she should be kind hearted above all things."[76] Some men had personal encounters with such women and were deeply affected. One Albertan, remembering a recent visit to Victoria, where he witnessed a female Salvation Army officer preaching on a street corner, was moved to poetry: "The fair city of Victoria has a very personal interest for me," he wrote, "for there dwelt one, a Canadian girl, more than passing fair, whose sweet voice rose nightly on the streets where men were wont to gather, in songs of invitation and praise –"

One whose image never shall depart,
Deep graven on this grateful heart,
While memory shall last.[77]

Women sang the praises of female kindness and altruism as loudly as men, perhaps louder. Many, like young "Juliet" from P.E.I., considered these qualities selling points in the marriage market. How "sweet" it was, she told Prim Rose readers, "to see a young girl give up her own pleasure, perhaps a drive or a walk with the man she thinks she loves, that she may lend a helping hand to those who need her assistance. She does not lose by this. The man, if he be the right kind of a man, will love her all the more."[78]

"A consistent Christian"

The Canadian bachelor's desire to marry a "kind" and "giving" woman may also reveal a certain *cultural* bias on his part. Is it possible he was really asking for a *Christian* woman? And did he find other cultural or ethnic traits desirable in a wife? It's easy to assume that the typical bachelor was, in fact, particular about such things, not least because nativism – a preference for the native-born over the foreign-born – was particularly strong in these years. The average Canadian man was white, Anglo-Saxon, and either Protestant or Catholic, and did not care much for persons of dissimilar background. As a child his parents had told him to keep clear of "foreigners," and had sometimes forbidden him from playing with them. He particularly disliked persons of southern and eastern European descent, or who were not white-skinned; the average Canadian woman, of course, felt the same.[79] His preferences were reinforced, moreover, by the eugenic assumptions of the day – popularized by doctors, psychiatrists, public health officials, social workers, and other experts – that relegated most non-Anglo-Saxons to an inferior biological status, physically and mentally.[80]

And indeed such prejudices did surface occasionally in the pages of the personal columns. Several writers made derogatory remarks, for example, about *native* women, whom they considered plain, uneducated, and unrefined. "How would a nice Indian squaw do for a wife?" asked one farmer sarcastically. "No! Not for me."[81] Others referred disparagingly to eastern and central European immigrants as "illiterate" and, in the case of Ukrainian men, "depraved."[82] A few writers also spoke solemnly about

the prospect of "race suicide," as Canada's "virile" men of the "northern races" remained bachelors in the maiden-challenged West while the "undesirable class of immigrants" in the region – Galicians, Ruthenians, and Doukhobours – got married and had children.[83] The most blatant expression of nativism in the columns was the 1910 exchange in the *Family Herald* between a "Woman" of Alberta and a "Mere Man" of Saskatchewan. The former accused lonely men of having low moral standards for being willing to marry, as a last resort, foreigners and natives. "How is it that white men will marry Indians, and few white women will? What of the standards the women have set up?" In his defence "Mere Man" replied that his protagonist,

> seems to forget the number of white women who have intermarried with the negro, a race generally conceded to be vastly inferior to the red man of America.... And, again, there is some excuse for the white man marrying an Indian in this western country, owing to the scarcity of the white woman at that period, for the mixed marriages are but few now; but can 'Woman' excuse her white sisters marrying negroes at the present day while there are so many bachelors of her own colour?[84]

That many writers soliciting correspondence from the opposite sex made a point of noting their own "fair complexion" or that of their ideal partner might also be construed as an attempt to limit the field of potential mates to their own racial group.

It is also worth noting, however, that only a handful of such unambiguously nativist letters appeared over the course of the columns' long history, that only one correspondent openly opposed inter-racial marriage, that men seemed more interested in "healthy," "clear," and "unpowdered" complexions than "fair" ones, and that several writers expressed more liberal views.[85] More important, Canadian men rarely mentioned ethnic or racial criteria in their solicitations to the columns. The request by an Englishman from Saskatchewan that he "would like to correspond with good, sensible English or Scotch girls" was rare.[86] A few men expressed a distaste for "foreign born" women, especially from Scandinavian countries and Russia; such women, they felt, were only good for hard labour on the farm and would not make good companions.[87] And several did praise

German women, because of their reputation for frugality and good housekeeping.[88] But again, such voices were few.

The only ethno-cultural criterion that Canadian men mentioned with any frequency was religion. Many added "Protestants preferred" to their requests for female correspondents, without specifying a particular denomination, and almost as many – especially in the Maritimes – requested "Catholic" correspondents. More common, by far, was for men to request a "christian" woman – a "true Christian" woman, as so many of them put it. This is hardly surprising. At that time women had prime responsibility for the moral instruction of the young and, by extension, for the moral well-being of western civilization. So which man would not want his wife to be "a good christian"? The era's near-obsession with social service – with creating "heaven on earth" as the saying went – increased the Christian woman's appeal that much more (or at least the woman who expressed her Christianity through helping others). And for men who opposed suffrage and suffragettes, the Christian woman was ideal because she knew her place and behaved like a "lady."[89]

But above all, men wanted Christian women for their "civilizing" influence, especially on themselves. In 1909, a Yukon miner told readers of the *Family Herald* that the many letters sent to him by the "virtuous" women of Canada had helped smooth his rough edges and fortify his resistance to temptation:

> Cut off as we are here from nearly all social and intellectual pleasures, you can hardly realize how much pleasure those pen friends bring to me, especially those of your sex. Here we seldom see anything but the 'camp followers,' but with a kindly word from time to time from ladies whom I know to be good, true and pure, life seems worth living; it is worth while to be a gentleman in every respect.[90]

To some men, finding a good Christian woman was, in fact, their key to personal salvation – the ticket to avoiding an eternity in hell. "I wish … to eulogize the girls of this great land," wrote a Manitoba university student, perhaps contemplating his future. "We men need more of their chastening and refining influence. There are hundreds of young men like myself, who need the sympathizing influence of the gentle sex to elevate, refine them and to beguile sorrow."[91] The message in such letters was clear:

Christian women helped make Christian men, and for many bachelors, this was important.

"'Canary Birds' or none!"

So who was "Miss Right" in the years leading up to World War I? Clearly she was many things. As lonely and needy as many single men were, especially in the countryside, they were not willing to settle for just anyone. They knew precisely the woman they wanted and made this clear in their letters to the personal columns. No one letter neatly summarized the main qualities they desired, but we can imagine what such a letter might have looked like:

> Dear Prim Rose,
>
> I am a 30-year-old farmer, Christian and well-established, who wishes to correspond with a member of the fair sex. She must be, above all, well-versed in the domestic arts and not averse to a bit of hard labour now and again, for there is always much to do on a farm. As such, I am not interested in corresponding with school ma'arms or business girls, or with frivolous girls who spend hours in front of the looking glass or shopping for new gowns in town. Indeed, physical appearance does not concern me, so long as she is neat and does not adorn herself with flashy clothes or excessive face powder. She must of course be womanly – gum chewers and suffragettes need not apply – and preferably well-educated, for I often find myself in need of intelligent companionship after a long day in the fields. Those who are musically inclined are especially welcome. Finally, I want a Christian woman. Her nationality is not important so long as she is loving and kind towards all living creatures. Such a woman would bring out the best in any man and could only make the world a better place. If any Eastern or Western girl matching this description should see fit to write to an old bachelor, my address is with Prim Rose.
>
> Typical Bachelor

This portrait is somewhat at variance with what historians have had to say about middle-class conceptions of femininity in these years. The ideal it expresses is, first of all, far more Victorian than we have been led to believe. As we have seen, especially from the debate over female suffrage, few men desired the independent, career-minded, and spirited "New Woman" heralded by the middle-class opinion-makers of the pre-war years; this would come later. Instead, they preferred the "home loving," reserved, and virtuous woman. Nor was their conception of the ideal woman this narrow. Historians have made much of a handful of desirable female qualities – domesticity and moral virtue in particular – but have said far less about the many *other* qualities the typical Canadian bachelor (and bachelorette for that matter) valued in a woman, such as her physical vigour, education, intelligence, musical ability, neatness, and kindness. And his list of *dislikes* was just as long.

But was there really such a thing as a "typical" bachelor? Would such an advertisement, and the ideal it described, not depend on where the man lived, his occupation, his ethnic background, even his age? Did the miner in Nelson, B.C., want the same woman as the lonely homesteader breaking sod in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, or the young clerk wrapping groceries in Newmarket, Ontario, or the fisher's son dropping nets off of Shelburne, Nova Scotia?

I can offer no definite answer to this question. The letters reveal only the writer's home province, occasionally his occupation, and even less often his age and ethnicity. Breaking the letters down by region – the Maritimes, central Canada, and the West – and (where possible) by occupation, does, however, reveal some subtle differences. The pioneering bachelor of the West, as I said, probably placed more emphasis on a woman's domestic abilities, mainly because he had so little time for household management. But he also wanted a woman who wasn't too proud or too lazy to help *outside* the home, with pioneering duties. B.C.'s "Hotcake Wonder," for example, wanted a wife "who would not be averse to coming out now and then and pulling a half hitch around a few stumps, just to get things started."[92] In fact, for many such men, only *Western* women would do. "In choosing my ideal," wrote a Saskatchewan farmer, "I would not cross the eastern boundary of Manitoba, for the simple reason that lots of eastern girls … cannot adapt themselves to circumstances peculiar to the West."[93] In a rousing verse entitled "Our Western Girls," a B.C. rancher expressed a similar bias:

Side by side with us ye stand,
helping with a gentle hand,
Tame our wild, free Western land,
  Brave, our Western Girls!
Snowy brow and eyes of blue;
Cheeks health-flushed, the rose's hue,
Ruby lips glist honeyed dew,
  Fair, Our Western girls![94]

These pioneer men of the West, being more isolated from friends and neighbours, were also *lonelier* than bachelors in the more developed regions, which might explain the higher premium they placed on the "cultured" and "cheerful" woman. Having to start a farm or ranch essentially from scratch, and with limited resources, they would have also valued more highly the thrifty, non-extravagant woman.[95]

Bachelors at the other end of the country had distinctive tastes too. Maritime men seemed to value a woman's *companionship* as much if not more than her domestic abilities. Many made a point of telling prospective wives that they didn't want a "servant" or "housekeeper," like their brothers out West appeared to want but someone with whom to share their joys and sorrows and, above all, their *ideas*.[96] Perhaps because his region had always held education in high esteem, the Maritime bachelor showed a particular appreciation for the intelligent and highly educated woman; so in his letters he often requested women of "culture and refinement."[97] This could also explain why Maritime bachelors seemed less opposed to marrying teachers, and why many matrimonially inclined Maritime *women* made such a show of their literary leanings and expertise.[98]

Less clear is why Maritime bachelors also seemed more partial to women from their own province and – from the number of times "Protestants preferred" and "Protestants only" appeared in their letters – of their own religion. Were they more xenophobic than men elsewhere? Possibly. The region did boast the highest percentage of native-born Canadians, after all. In a letter typical of the Maritime man's preferences, one P.E.I. farmer told Prim Rose that he "has not yet launched his barque on the sea of matrimony, and would enjoy correspondence with young ladies of the maritime Provinces, Protestant, educated and musical."[99]

The Canadian man's vision of the perfect woman was also shaped by his job. A farm boy, hired hand, or rancher, for example, naturally preferred

a woman raised on a farm – the proverbial "farmer's daughter."[100] He considered such a woman sturdy, healthy, and knowledgeable enough to meet the rigorous and varied demands of farm life. She could milk a cow, harness a horse, or stand behind a plough if necessary. "As for city girls," wrote "Bob" from Nova Scotia, "I don't think they would suit very well on a farm, as a cow might look at them, and then you would see them making a bee line for the house, rejoicing over their narrow escape."[101] Besides, the average city woman was frail and preoccupied with amusement and fashion. As for the urban "working girl" – much-maligned in her day – she had the added liability of being considered immoral.[102] For many men working in rural areas, in other words, "city and town-bred girls" need not have applied.

For men working in urban areas it was a different story. Factory workers, bank clerks, shopkeepers, professionals, and so on, did not care as much about a woman's sturdiness or her ability to milk a cow. Her other attributes, including her appearance, were more important. This could explain why Canadians regularly accused city men of being superficial, of favouring the made-up and fashionably dressed girl over the "sensible" one. It would also explain the occasional warnings issued – usually by country folk – for men to "avoid the mistakes prevalent in the cities, viz.: falling in love with the beautiful fairy with blue hair."[103] Canadians no doubt exaggerated the city boy's superficiality – the columns yield little evidence of this after all – but it's possible, given the greater superficiality of urban life in general, that he *was* more interested than the country boy in a woman's physical beauty.

These differences aside, Canadian men of this era displayed an unmistakable consensus about what constituted a good wife. Where they lived, the jobs they held, their religious beliefs – these things made little difference. As one Nova Scotia gentleman put it, "when a man returns from his work – whether it be in the field or the carpenter's shop, the lawyer's office or the merchant's counting-house, it matters not – and sits down to a meal, where the bread is soggy, the meat over done and the pies impenetrable if he has nothing worse he will have a fit of the blues."[104] Similarly, the forestry worker or farmer was just as determined to marry an educated, "refined" woman, for example, as the city banker or lawyer. When one woman brazenly suggested that what farmers needed most was wives of "brawn and muscle instead of intellect," she was quickly set straight. "She would almost lead one to believe," smirked one Ontario farmer, that "they ought to select a wife for the same qualities as they would buy a horse. I

think most farmers like a little intellect instead of great strength."[105] So yes, there *was* a typical bachelor.

That being said, almost all bachelors would have had to settle for something less than their ideal. Although parents tried to raise their daughters with the qualities men wanted, few women would have fit the bill exactly. It was, after all, a tall order. It was also a somewhat contradictory one. As one rural bachelor pointed out to another, "How long does my friend think the dainty fingers of his bride would retain their power to render Chopin with proper depth and feeling after starting to care for a dozen cows night and morning? Moreover, the cries of 'Chick, chick,' and "Co, bas' do not tend to bring out the silvery sweetness in a woman's voice. Nor does cooking improve the complexion."[106] Even worse, the ideal woman was getting harder to find. Many rural bachelors, in particular, complained that the young women they grew up with seemed increasingly to prefer *city* life – with its growing opportunities for paid employment, advanced schooling, and commercial pleasure – to the rigours of life on the farm and in the home. And these women were voting with their feet.

But Canadian bachelors were not easily dissuaded. Not only did they articulate precisely what they wanted in a wife but they refused to settle for less. Even in areas where men far outnumbered women, as in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and where loneliness and despair were intense, they remained steadfast.[107] "Some of us give up our treasured ideals very reluctantly," wrote one. "The Western bachelors … have ideals which they are not quick to sacrifice even though they are very anxious to marry. No doubt many of them would have married long ago but for that."[108] Another westerner, when told that he and his fellow bachelor farmers should not ask for too much in a wife – that they should be content with simple "sparrows" instead of refined, educated "canaries" – became indignant. "If we could be content with 'the sparrow,'" he shot back, "I could have secured one long ago.… No! Not for me. 'Canary Birds' or none!'"[109] Manitoba's "Bloomin' Yankee Boy" put the bachelors' case more succinctly: "if I don't find my ideal," he declared, "I will stay single the remainder of my days."[110] It was a time of idealism, and romance was clearly no exception.

2

The Man of Her Dreams

If it's clear what Canadian bachelors wanted in a partner in the early 1900s, it's *less* clear what Canadian maidens wanted. One reason is that women who wrote to the *Family Herald* were more reticent when it came to describing their ideal. Why? Maybe it was because they were expected to act modestly at all times, and describing their ideal man so publicly was, after all, somewhat brash. It was a form of solicitation, and many Canadians believed that women who solicited male correspondents through personal columns for romantic purposes were behaving unwomanly.[1] Or maybe women were simply less *discriminating* when it came to prospective husbands, as in "any man will do." Lacking the financial means to support themselves comfortably and terrified of becoming "Old Maids," most of them *had* to get married; marriage was both their livelihood and the key to complete social acceptance. Or perhaps they were tight-lipped because they had great faith in their ability (and obligation) to mould a man's character. As New Brunswick's "Plain Jane" put it, plainly, "Men will rise to meet the highest expectations of womankind, and will be what women demand of them.… I've seen men become ideal through the clever management of women. There is no over-estimating the power of women in making or marring men."[2] Such thinking was part of the mindset of the age and this, too, may have made women reticent about describing their ideal man. Why should a woman solicit a particular man, through the personal columns, when she could basically *create* her ideal man once married?

What women wanted in a man is also unclear because, when they did specify their preferences, they were less likely to be of one mind. In July 1909, a twenty-six-year-old B.C. fruit rancher, writing under the pen-name "Scarlett Pimpernel," suggested as much when he asked readers of the Prim Rose column: "What qualification does the average girl consider most essential in a prospective husband?," or "Does every girl have her own private ideal, each one differing as do their hats?"[3] The second question may have been closer to the truth. That being said, Canada's bachelorettes were clear about a few things.

"Willing to Work ..."

At the top of their wish list – and for the same practical reasons bachelors wanted a "domesticated" woman above all – was a man's ability to be a "good provider." At a time when wives were expected to stay at home and allow their husbands to be the breadwinners, it's no wonder a man's financial assets or earning potential were important considerations in many a single woman's romantic calculations. After all, a *mis*calculation in this regard could mean a lifetime of financial hardship. This didn't mean a man had to be *wealthy* – and many women made a point of emphasizing this – but it did mean he should be able to provide at least a basic level of subsistence. This requirement was implicit in their frequent use of words like "industrious," "hard-working," "frugal," and "ambitious" to describe their ideal man, but sometimes they stated it more directly: "No man should ask a woman to join her life to his," wrote "Marquita," "until he is at least half prepared to take care of her, that is, not supply her with luxuries, but necessities."[4] Alberta's "Petunia" went even further. Like many women, she wanted a man who could provide her with a "comfortable home," not unlike that in which she had been raised. "How can a man expect to bring a woman into a home that has only the bare necessities of life," she asked, "and expect her to remain there without getting lonely when he is away all day working on the land? ... I do not think that a man should ask a woman to do it, whether she is willing or not."[5]

Evidently many bachelors agreed, for they were forever telling other bachelors not to marry before they could afford to do so. "I think it is anything but manly," wrote one, "for a man to ask a girl to marry him before he has a fit place for her to live in."[6] "Instead of sitting by the fireside

reading novels and smoking cigars with his father's hard-earned money," wrote another, "the modern young man has got to get out and 'rustle' for his modern young lady until he has a home for her as good as her father's."[7] As such, many wife-seekers also made a habit of listing their real assets. Here is a typical "ad" from the "Condensed Letters" section of the Prim Rose column:

> W.R.R., Sask., landed in the West eight years ago with $250. He has now a half-section of land, all the farming machinery necessary, eleven fine horses and buildings that have cost upwards of $4000.… His habits are strictly temperate and he would like to correspond with 'a pleasant young lady of Ontario,' a Protestant.[8]

To a good many bachelors, in other words, size mattered – the size of their land, their homes, and their bank accounts.

Most women, however, were not as demanding (or blunt) as Marquita and Petunia, and not nearly as materialistic as some men thought. Most women, in fact, condemned greed and materialism as the source of many evils; they also said that money could not buy happiness.[9] Yes, they wanted to marry a good provider and move into a comfortable home, but most were willing to live a fairly modest lifestyle, provided there was love in the relationship and provided their husbands measured up in other respects. "My ideal man is one who is kind-hearted and willing to work," wrote a farmer's daughter. "If he has money, well and good; if he has not, I would think just as much of him, and would do all in my power to help along."[10] Ontario's "Happy-Go-Lucky" felt the same. Responding to a bachelor's accusation that women were only interested in a man's money and living a life of luxury, she set the record straight: "Ask the average girl her opinion, and if she tells the truth she will tell of a small cottage, a man who loves her and whom she loves, and after a time babies. This is a girl's dream of bliss."[11] Many women also emphasized their willingness to help "build up" a farm or a home with their prospective husbands, believing this could only strengthen their marriage.[12] Few women agreed with "Violette" from Ontario that "money doesn't matter at all," but at the same time, most did not exaggerate the importance of a man's wealth.[13] "I shan't marry for a home" was a common saying.

There were, of course, exceptions. Most daughters of upper-class families did not want (and were not allowed) to marry a man of modest means or limited prospects, even in the unlikely event they knew such a man; generally speaking, men and women of different social classes did not intermingle or inter-marry.[14] It seems, too, that older *widows* cared more about a man's financial assets, because they had children who needed supporting, or because they were too old to "start from scratch," building a home or farm, or because they had become accustomed to a higher standard of living.[15] But for the most part, women wanted men who could simply provide them with a suitable home and a decent standard of living.

To this requirement many added the stipulation that their future husbands be sufficiently "tough" or hardy. Wanting a "good provider" in a country still largely rural and agricultural perhaps implied as much, but some women made a point of stating it nonetheless. They wanted "strong and healthy" men, able to withstand the rigours of farming, lumbering, fishing, and other forms of outdoor work. This was particularly important to women raised in rural areas and intent on marrying a rural man. "What we want," wrote one such woman, "are educated, enthusiastic, energetic, good men and true, who are not afraid of hardened hands, nor 'face like the tan,' and when my 'alter ego' discovers me – as I expect he shall some day – I hope he may be one of such."[16]

Many women also equated toughness with courage. They wanted men unafraid of hard labour and hardship, men willing to take on the challenges of opening up new land, for example. Writing from Saskatchewan, one nineteen-year-old lamented the disappearance of such men:

> The young men now-a-days seem to be afraid of homesteading in a back place far from a railroad. But this I think is nonsense. Why can they not go out and endure the hardships as their fathers did before them? Far too often we see the modern young man sitting by the fireside reading novels and smoking cigars which his father's hard-earned money has provided.… I am just a young girl but I am beginning to fear that our young men of today are rather inclined to be chicken-hearted.[17]

Her fears would have not been allayed by the outpouring of grief from "Puir-Wee-Laddie," a young man from Manitoba, who in a fit of self-pity made the mistake of sharing his romantic woes and other hardships with

image not available

This Saskatchewan farmer epitomized the courage and physical prowess women so admired in men before the war. *Courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-2870-32.*

Prim Rose readers. For this, he received a sharp reprimand from a B.C. war veteran: "I want to offer you a few words of advice," wrote the veteran,

> Get a set of boxing gloves or dumb-bells and go in for some violent form of exercise. Your mind as well as body will become healthier. Don't think about girls. You will have lots of time to fall in love five years hence. Don't go round thinking this is a hard world. A boy of 21 has no right to think such things. Above all, don't weep. It's not manly, my boy. If the world gives you a knock, take it and smile. The place for people who cry is the cradle.[18]

Other bachelors, mostly out West, complained about the trials of homesteading, including long work days and intense loneliness. And although they elicited a measure of sympathy from the maidens of the east, they also drew scorn, for in some readers' eyes such whining demonstrated a lack of courage or manliness.[19] To many women, being a good provider required both physical *and* mental toughness.

"The Scum of England"

At least one kind of man stood little chance with single women in these years: the infamous "Remittance Man" of the Canadian West. Remittance men were typically of the British upper middle-class, who, for one reason or another, had proved an embarrassment to their families and had been sent to Canada to make something of themselves, farming or ranching; for this their parents gave them a regular allowance or "remittance."[20] These men quickly gained a bad reputation. Canadians considered them arrogant, pretentious, humourless, lazy, and, above all, useless. In his study of the remittance men, Mark Zuehlke observes that "they worked seldom, usually only when the latest installment from home had been too quickly squandered. Leisure was their strong suit."[21] Men writing to the personal columns were equally unforgiving. "There is a class of young Englishmen out here," asserted a B.C. rancher, "who are the most indolent, shiftless, dissipated and withal conceited to be found in any country."[22] Another called them "the scum of England" who "drift from one place to another making a bad name, and leaving a bad impression of their countrymen."[23] No less damning a picture was presented by a "Shantyman," who had the opportunity to observe them at close hand. These "English green-horns," he wrote,

> … receive a quarterly allowance from their father which they nearly always spend in beer. They have always had servants to wait on them. They say they can do anything, and are not afraid of hard work. As a matter of fact, they have never done a day's work in their lives, and don't know what work is. They won't work and they cannot work if they would because they don't know how, and they don't want to learn.[24]

Some correspondents defended these besieged bachelors, but not enough to change the general picture.

Women, specifically, had little to say about the remittance men, but, given the strong prevailing views and the fact that men and women agreed on most things in the columns, they probably felt the same. Young farm women, listening to their fathers and brothers disparage the remittance man around the dinner table and exposed to the many books and entertainments that satirized his lifestyle and personality, would not have placed him high

The Alberta remittance man in the middle of this unholy trinity of smoky gamblers personified the poor image accorded this particular brand of western bachelor. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA-5609-9.*

on their list of desirable men, not least because such men were said to lack drive and ability. One woman, from B.C.'s Okanagan Valley, remembered well the remittance men in her area. "They would work sometimes for men who owned land," she recalled. "I knew some of them. You didn't take them seriously as you knew they couldn't buy bacon and beans without the little income they got from Britain."[25] They could not be good providers, in other words.

"Not … merely a household drudge"

The only thing the remittance men had going for them, romantically, was their belief that farmers' wives should not do outside work – that they had enough work to do *inside* their homes. This appealed to Canadian woman

at the time because many worried about becoming "drudges" or "slaves" to husbands of limited means and high expectations. In other words, their ideal man was also not too demanding. "Every good woman should fall into line with her husband's station in life and try to make the home as happy as her ability will permit," wrote a Toronto stenographer, "but I think that a wife should be more of a companion to her husband, … and not be merely a household drudge to work from morning till night, with no leisure moments to herself for reading or music."[26] For this reason, women were especially anxious about marrying a farmer. They worried about the physical demands their farmer husbands might make of them, in terms of building a home, labouring in the fields, and caring for gardens and livestock, in addition to their usual household chores. "I believe in helping your husband as much as possible," said one Alberta woman, "but it seems to me a man should want to have a home to take his wife to, and if I were he, I would be ashamed to see my wife ploughing in the fields."[27] Even Prim Rose weighed in on this issue, agreeing with one Saskatchewan contributor who she felt was absolutely "right in demanding some time for rest and recreation," for "a man who is a man would be ashamed to have it said that his wife's drudgery is never done from morning till night." Like most Canadian women, she felt that a "real man" did not treat his wife like a slave.[28]

Because bachelors were already saying that they valued a woman's companionship almost as much as her domestic skills or work ethic, single women should have perhaps been less fearful on this score. Nevertheless, men tried to reassure them, especially western men hoping to lure single women from points eastward. "I have had enough respect for the other sex," wrote one, "to see that I would be doing a great injury to any woman if I should be base enough to persuade her to marry me only to become a domestic drudge. I am sorry … that such marriages are frequently contracted, but let me assure you that they are not characteristic of any true or honest man."[29] Another bachelor, from Saskatchewan, assured eastern women that, contrary to popular belief, western men were not looking for work machines as wives. "When we need an 'automatic' dish-washer we will engage a Chinaman, but when we desire a wife we will be prepared to give her the true love of a Canadian son, and the home comforts worthy of a Canadian daughter."[30] Some were even more to the point. "When I am lucky enough to get a wife," wrote "Union Jack" from the Northwest Territories, "I'll see that she does as little heavy work as possible."[31]

"He must be a thorough gentleman"

The ideal man of this era was also the *moral* man. The moral man – or "gentleman," as he was more commonly known – had a number of qualities women considered admirable. Chief among them was his ability to abstain from certain vices, especially alcohol. The consumption of alcohol, apart from being considered immoral and unchristian, had consequences that bore directly on women as wives and mothers. Money spent on booze meant less money for the family. It also meant husbands who, while under the influence or suffering its after-effects, were less productive at work, more likely to swear, fight, gamble, and succumb to prostitutes, and more prone to abuse their wives and children.[32] Nor were these far-fetched scenarios, as drinking was a serious problem in Canada at the time. By the early 1900s, every Canadian was drinking almost a gallon (or 4 litres) of hard alcohol a year. This was actually an improvement – Canadians consumed twice that amount in the 1870s – but now the consumption of *beer* was rising fast: from 2 gallons a year in 1870, Canadians were annually downing more than 7 gallons of their favourite brew by 1914.[33] The rough life was usually to blame. Faced with terrible working and living conditions, many factory workers, dockworkers, sailors, and general labourers found easy solace in the many taverns and saloons of Canada's expanding urban areas. So, too, did Canada's many itinerant labourers, most of them homesick single men who worked long hours, under difficult conditions, in the forests, fields, and mines of Canada's rugged frontier regions. For these men, drinking was often the only form of recreation.[34]

The phenomenon was especially noticeable in the West, where single men were more numerous and working conditions more difficult. Recreation and escapism aside, "bellying up to the bar" on pay day and being able to drink one's colleagues "under the table" were also marks of masculinity, ones that contributed to the rising rates of public drunkenness and crime along the raucous "whisky strips" of Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, and the region's other fast-growing cities.[35] Shortly after arriving in Saskatchewan from Ontario in 1907, a nineteen-year-old woman informed readers that "many of the young men and women [of the province] are well-trained, sociable beings, and we have a good number of them too. But I must say that a great number in our vicinity have intemperate habits."[36] A few months later a bachelor-farmer in Manitoba, having made

similar observations, issued a stern warning to the "young ladies thinking of [coming to] the West. Be very certain," he told them, "that your bachelor is not a slave to strong drink. That is the greatest curse in our beautiful West.… Of all the dirty habits and vices a man 'batching' acquires, … that is the hardest to cure, and it leads to the direst results."[37]

Partly as a result of such warnings, women made it clear that they didn't want a man who drank. Like the young woman from Leeds county, Ontario, they stipulated that their ideal man "should not use drink," and in their requests for male correspondents they often stipulated men "of temperate habits" or "total abstainers" only.[38] Another Ontario maiden, "Ella May," was especially insistent. Her ideal man, she said, was, "an honourable man, one who respects himself.… A man who … would not be found in a stupor for over indulgence in alcohol, or be heard using profane language." And by way of poetry, she told her fellow maidens to make male abstinence a pre-condition of romance:

> Don't marry a man to reform him,
> To repent it alas! when too late,
> The mission of wives least successful,
> Is the making of crooked lives straight,
> Make virtue the price of your favour,
> place wrong-doing under a ban,
> And let him who would win you and wed you,
> Prove himself in full measure, a man![39]

Many women of this generation believed in their power to reform men – to set them on the path of righteousness. Ella May was clearly not one of them.

Many women also considered *smoking* a vice, or, at least, a bad habit. Referring to a male correspondent called "Happy Jack," an Ontario woman spoke for many when she stated that "Happy Jack … has certainly formed a good habit when he can leave tobacco alone" and that "there is nothing more disagreeable than to be in the company of a man who uses it."[40] "Rae," also from Ontario, agreed. "I cannot see how any girl can favour tobacco," she said. "I do not despise a man for using it; he might have worse habits such as drinking, profanity, etc., but I cannot help admiring a man more who is fresh and clean, free from the odour of the weed."[41] Many women found smoking a disgusting habit.

But Rae's comments also suggest some ambivalence. And, in fact, women were far more tolerant of smoking than other male vices, as long as it was done in moderation. This was especially true of Western women, who came to realize, through regular observation, that not only was smoking widespread among the bachelors of their region but that it provided them with some comfort after a long day's work in the field or bush or in their moments of loneliness and homesickness. "The bachelors around here are numerous," wrote a farmer's daughter, "and as a rule they are good, honest, and brave men, worthy of any girl.… Most of them like their pipe, but don't be too hard, girls. If there is any comfort in it, let the poor fellows have it."[42] Many women also tolerated moderate tobacco use because they knew that they, themselves, had certain "bad" habits – like chewing gum or gossiping – and did not want to appear hypocritical.[43] Some women even *preferred* men who smoked (in moderation) to those who did not smoke at all, believing the former to be more amiable and easy-going.[44] "Besides," added "A Girl from the Golden West," tongue-in-cheek, "if they did not [smoke] they would talk all the more, and we [women] should not be able to get a word in corner-wise."[45] For most women, however, the ideal man did not smoke, even in moderation.

This bothered many bachelors, particularly out West. Stigmatized by the opposite sex as the country's most immoral bachelors, western men were quick to defend their vices and criticize the hypocrisy of their female accusers. The most spirited rebuke came from the aptly named "Weary Willie" of B.C. "I also indulge [in tobacco] now and then," he wrote

> but I know when to stop. I also know, or used to know, a number of very respectable (?) young ladies in my old home town down in Ontario, who wouldn't hesitate to smoke a cigarette or take a drink (soft?) if they thought no one was looking; and yet some of those same girls have the nerve to come out in the open and run down every unfortunate man that has to do with these wicked (?) things to forget the rest of his troubles.… I hope that your lady readers will get over their aversion to our bad habits and not judge us as 'no good' until they become better acquainted.… Because Westerners use tobacco and drink in moderation, they are not to be [considered] renegades from society.[46]

Some western men even argued that men who smoked and drank, albeit in moderation, were actually *more* desirable than those who abstained altogether. Such men, as one writer argued boldly, were more honest, open-minded, generous, chivalrous, and just plain "manly" than the self-righteous "Sissies" of the towns and cities.[47]

Most men, however, agreed with the women. Drinking, swearing, gambling, and even smoking were evils that true gentlemen did not indulge in. Not a single man, for example, defended the use of profanity in mixed company. Instead, they sided with Saskatchewan's "Sim," who stated that "most men, if they are worthy of the name at all, … will keep their mouths clean when in the company of women. They consider it a disgrace to swear in the presence of women."[48] Nor were bachelors much more tolerant of "King Alcohol" and "My Lady Nicotine" than the women they were trying to woo; when soliciting female correspondents, they often proclaimed that, above all, they were "total abstainers" from both.[49] Now whether such men were being entirely honest is debatable. Some probably claimed to be abstemious in order to appear more appealing to the opposite sex. "A number of your male correspondents seem to think," an Alberta bachelor told Prim Rose, "that it's a certain road to the good graces of the lady readers by stating that they are tea-totallers and non-smokers."[50] For the same reason, men sometimes encouraged other men to change their ways. Worried that western men were gaining an unsavory reputation among eastern women, one British Columbian told his fellow bachelors to clean up their act:

> It appears to me that 'Wrathy Spinster' [who recently criticized the habits of western bachelors] has visited a few untidy shacks and it is possible that she has seen some empty bottles under the bunk and too many evidences of tobacco on the floor to feel at home. Brothers, this is a great obstacle in the way of the girls. Get it removed. Brush up, wash up more. Practice self-denial, and have common sense.[51]

Whatever else most bachelors believed in their hearts about such "vices" as drinking and smoking, most knew full well that in the competitive marriage market the intemperate man stood little chance.

They knew, too, that moral-minded women also wanted *honest* men because, in their lists of desirable male qualities, many maidens included "truthfulness" and "sincerity." "The right sort of man from my point of

view," wrote "Sis" from B.C., "is one who does not use tobacco in any form, or alcohol in any form, one who is honorable in all things, and who's word is as good as his oath." And young "Viva" from Ontario said she admired "the man who is a real, true man under all circumstances, who will act the honest, true part at all times, and stand for the right through thick and thin."[52] One woman considered male honesty so important she was willing to endure the disapproval and curious stares of her class- and ethnic-conscious peers to be with such a man. Despite her wealth and upper-class English background, she had married a Russian immigrant labourer, with whom she proudly strolled the streets of Winnipeg in 1909, arm-in-arm. When asked by a close friend why she had married someone so far beneath her station in life, she was unequivocal:

> He is my lover, and dearest to me than anything in the world.… and I am proud of him, too, for he is honest and truthful, not only to me but to everybody, and I would rather die than to lose him.… I do not care what nationality a man is, as long as he is honest and truthful.[53]

Exactly *why* such women valued male honesty so much is unclear. Perhaps it was a reflection of the general idealism of the age, which seemed to infect more women than men; dishonest, self-serving behaviour rarely advanced the general good, after all. More likely, it reflected a belief that honest behaviour was in decline in an age of increasing competitiveness and greed.[54] "The true gentleman is today on the decrease," wrote one woman. "Scrupulous honesty, truthfulness in all things, and pureness of living are lamentably neglected."[55] "Viva" also noted that "it is hard in this world for a man who is striving for a livelihood not to take advantage of his neighbour or to use a little deceit to further his own interests." And another woman, convinced that "insincerity … [was] one of the evils of the present age," told readers to "be true to our friends and ourselves."[56] Whatever the reason, for many women the moral man was also the honest man.

"A … well-groomed, well-dressed person"

In addition to the quality of his mind, women were concerned about a man's appearance. His actual *physical* appearance mattered little, or why else would many men have been so flippantly self-deprecating about their looks? "I am young and strong," wrote "A Happy Bachelor" from Edmonton, "and although not ugly, would not be noticed in a crowd for my good looks." Saskatchewan's "Spring Heels Jack" was even blunter. "And for looks," he warned, "I have never stopped a Chinese funeral going down hill." Many others said their face would not stop a train or clock, and that they could "pass in a crowd, if the crowd is a large one."[57] There was the odd female request for men who are "handsome," "tall" or "broad-shouldered," but women who cared about a man's appearance were far more interested in his clothing and grooming. His clothes had to be neat and clean, his hair combed, his face shaven, and his whiskers trimmed. The ideal man was not slovenly. "A handsome, well-groomed, well-dressed person is one of the prettiest things that has been created," wrote a New Brunswick teacher. "Everyone cannot have the gift of the gods, but all can be clean and neat and have their dress made in the fashion of the day."[58]

Unfortunately, many men fell short of such standards. The bachelor-homesteaders and itinerant labourers of the West were particularly deficient. Their rugged and dirty work was partly to blame, but so were their living conditions. Most were isolated from "civilized" society, and their infrequent contact with people unlike themselves – women especially – made them indifferent to their appearance. Nor did many have the time or skill to repair or make their own clothing, or the money to purchase the latest fashions. The result was a sometimes ragged-looking individual, unpopular with the ladies. "I know of one bachelor," reported a farmer's wife from the West, "because his hair gets rather long once in a while (remember he lives twenty miles from a barber), his clothes baggy and his collar old-fashioned, the girls laugh at him."[59] Making a connection between slovenly appearance and immoral behaviour – as many did – another woman found the bachelors of her province equally wanting: "Many of your readers have commented on the careless habits which Western bachelors acquire," she wrote, "and really B.C. with all its aristocratic tone, is not an exception in this respect. Young men whom I have known in their eastern homes to

be … models of tidiness and neatness, I have seen here and on the prairie, week in, week out, unwashed and unshaven, forever in their overalls loafing around corners or in saloons."[60] Men were just as quick to note the western bachelor's shortcomings. "This spring a number of families came into this settlement with 3, 5, and even 7 daughters," he told readers,

> but how can anyone with any heart introduce our rough bachelors to these nice girls? I pity the men with my whole heart, but after living alone so long, they care very little indeed about their personal appearance, and wear the oldest clothes they have got, Sundays and weekdays.… Some, I know, have gone to college, yet they go about unshaven, looking very ragged and uncared for.[61]

Some women managed to see beyond all this to a man's character – "Looks are not the most important. It is character that counts in life" was a common remark – but many did not. A few even refused to receive sloppy-looking male callers in their homes.[62]

The female concern with male appearance provoked some criticism. Readers often accused women of being shallow, of not being able to distinguish a man's looks from his character. "I have been quite a close observer of people," wrote "Clover Bar" of Alberta, "and it seems to me that nowadays most of the girls are looking for a man that dresses well and is a smooth talker. Looks seem to be the only thing."[63] Similarly, an "Old Maid" from New Brunswick felt that "if a man works in an office and dresses well, that seems to be all that a girl requires in her husband nowadays."[64] This apparent preference for the dapper-looking man was just as disconcerting to bachelors. "Would someone tell me why so many women throw over good men and marry tramps?," asked a gentleman from Quebec:

> There are several middle-aged women of my acquaintance who have thrown over men of good character, now worth from twenty to forty thousand dollars, and married inferior specimens.… The young girls … are doing the same; one threw over a young civil engineer and married a fancy vest, a high collar and a smile that would not come off. One of my chums, a man of high character and college education was thrown over in this way.[65]

Another bachelor, from Ontario, sympathized. "Girls are often carried away by appearances and fine manners," he wrote, "overlooking, for these, the real worth of admirers who would be fond and faithful husbands."[66]

But were Canadian women really this superficial? Many probably were, especially in the towns and cities, where appearances tended to count for more, particularly in the work place. A number of observers commented on this at the time. Vice investigators in Toronto often criticized working-class girls for the money they spent on clothing; so did the girls' parents.[67] Members of the personal columns denounced the greater vanity of city folk, as well. One New Brunswick farm girl called the farmers of the West true men, "free, free, with a chance to be what God meant them to be, men, while their brothers in the city … are slaves to fashion and society."[68] In another instance, an Alberta farm girl reprimanded a male writer for suggesting that all young women were fashion-crazy. This wasn't true of *rural* women, she said, "and that is one great blessing these days, [for] it would be a hopeless failure trying to milk a cow with a hobble skirt on."[69] Meanwhile, an Ontario teacher complained that working-class girls refused to associate with her because she didn't dress as fashionably as they.[70] If these people were right and city-dwellers were, in fact, more concerned than their country cousins with appearances, then it follows that they were also more likely to judge *others* by such criteria. So city women probably *did* care less than women elsewhere about a man's personality than about his hair cut or the cut of his suit.[71]

But it is also possible that many women equated appearance with character. If they believed that "cleanliness is next to Godliness," as many North Americans did at the time and as several correspondents stated, then most women would have considered the unclean, unkempt man to be very *un*-Godly or immoral.[72] Some women, in other words, judged a man's character by his appearance. They would have assumed that a man who was tidy and clean was also living a "clean" life, a *Christian* life. Granted, no women articulated this assumption to the *Family Herald* or *Western Home Monthly*'s readers, but it was often implicit in their comments, and even more so in the constant coupling of "temperate" behaviour and "clean" appearance in their descriptions of the ideal man.[73]

There was a fine line, however, between looking good and vanity. Women (no less than men) had little tolerance for the latter and, therefore, for the so-called "dandy" obsessed with his looks. "How often I have laughed at the gallant youths who described in such glowing terms their

personal charms," smirked British Columbia's "Yorkshire Maid." "I always imagine them sitting before a mirror and glancing at it from time to time as they make the inventory."[74] Their intolerance of male vanity was especially strong when women defended themselves against similar charges. "'Kid' accuses us of a too profuse use of talcum [powder]," wrote Ontario's "Notta Kid," but

> Is he guiltless? Does he not pride himself on his own head of hair? He mentions 'rats,' but says nothing of wigs and toupees.… Blindly the average man follows the mode, parts his hair in the center, wears it long or short as the other do, and oh! the beard! Walk down the streets of your city, the first lord of creation that you meet has a bunch of whiskers on his chin, the next wears whiskers in front of his ears. He is accompanied by one with a Kruger-like fringe around his chin, closely resembling the icicle hanging from the eaves.… The hard shirt bosom, the stiff collar, the swallow-tailed coats, the silk hat, etc. Are they not as ridiculous as some articles of feminine apparel?[75]

These qualifications aside, it's clear that how a man dressed and groomed himself mattered to Canadian women. And men *knew* this, which is why in their "ads" for partners many made sure to mention their clean and neat appearance, and why they often exhorted their fellow bachelors to "clean themselves up … to look neat and tidy."[76]

"Above all kind-hearted"

Not only did women shun men "rough" in appearance, but also rough in *manners*. This was another requirement. They expected their future husbands to be kind and considerate, both to them and to others – to be "gentlemen" in the literal sense. "Juliet" of P.E.I. told readers that her ideal man "is an intelligent, kind-hearted man, above all kind-hearted."[77] Prim Rose agreed. "Is there anything more beautiful, more comforting and uplifting than gentleness?," she asked her readers. "Personally I never can forget a kind look, voice, or manner."[78] Few women placed this quality at the top of their list, like Juliet, but many made some mention of it in their

letters; words like "kind-hearted," "considerate," "thoughtful," and "tender" appeared often.[79]

Again, we can only speculate why this was so. Most women considered themselves "the weaker sex," physically and emotionally, so perhaps they wanted a man who would treat them gently, who would not abuse them physically or verbally, for example, and who would protect them from hardship, including strenuous or excessive labour. Historians also remind us that sexual harassment and assault were not uncommon in these years – especially against domestic servants – and that most of it originated from a woman's male acquaintances. Women were undoubtedly aware of this possibility, not least because men were widely assumed to be animals when it came to their libidos – that is, naturally lustful and lacking in sexual self-control – but also because the newspapers of the day gave ample and sensationalist coverage to male sexual crimes.[80] Because the husband was also the "head" of the family, legally and otherwise, it also made sense to marry a man who, as one woman put it, would be "a kind master in his home," especially as divorce was not a viable option.[81] And again, perhaps the idealism of the era played a role. A 1911 letter from an Albertan captured the *zeitgeist* of the age well: "It is one of the hopeful signs of our time," he wrote,

> that so many, both among the high and the lowly, the wealthy and those in humble circumstances, are giving so much of their time and talents to the service of their fellows. Overt against the materialism, the extravagance, the follies and sins of our age, is the brighter picture of men and women, of every rank and calling, giving themselves freely to the cause of humanity.[82]

His views were echoed by "Madeleine," a farmer's daughter from Ontario, who told readers that "'Life is what we make it,'" so "why not make it a brave journey filled with love, and kind thoughts and deeds, and not be too solicitous for the success of our business? If each of us were more unselfish, how beautiful life would be."[83] Perhaps these and other calls to "do unto others" made women – the era's leading social activists – value that much more the caring, compassionate man.[84]

The Great Debate

Much of what Canadian women found appealing in a man in these years, and much of what they disliked, was revealed in the great debate members of the Prim Rose column launched over the merits and demerits of the so-called "Western Man." No other issue in the column's long history, not even the suffragette issue, was as hotly debated as this one. And with good reason, for there was much at stake. The question was "would the Western bachelor make a suitable husband?," and the verdict had the potential to affect the romantic prospects of all Canadian bachelors.

The Pitch

The debate began innocently enough. In 1904, when the column first appeared, men from the West, along with men elsewhere, began writing in search of female correspondents who might one day become their wives. Most of these men were farmers, ranchers, miners, and railway and lumber camp workers, whose jobs and location prevented them from mingling with the opposite sex, who were in short supply as it was; in fact, many western men considered the shortage of single women their greatest hardship.[85] For these men, the column was a godsend – one of the few ways they had to "meet" single women. In it they could advertise themselves, hoping to catch the eye of some fair maiden, who, after obtaining the man's address from Prim Rose, might begin a formal correspondence with one or more of them. Or perhaps a man might be intrigued by a particular woman's letter to the column and *he* would initiate a letter exchange.

In their letters to the *Family Herald*, western men, like all male writers, emphasized their best qualities – naturally. They either insisted or implied, for example, that they would make good providers, insofar as they were obviously not afraid of the hard work necessary to make a living in their region and, in the case of ranchers and farmers, because they owned productive assets like land and livestock. In typical fashion, one Alberta bachelor-farmer informed female readers that he had a large house, on a large piece of land, with lots of lumber and water. "I think that ought to please most young ladies."[86] And when another writer suggested that western bachelors might not be good providers, she was quickly corrected. "Why cannot the Western bachelor build up a home just as good as, if not

better than your Eastern clerks or merchants?," asked a Saskatchewan bachelor, who further advised her to "take a trip out West and see some of the fine homes the Westerners are able to build out of the proceeds of herding cows."[87] Another bachelor, from Alberta, confirmed the Western Man's wherewithal: "these western bachelors are O.K., as far as I can see," he said, "and eastern girls need not hesitate to write to them. Being possessors of fine homesteads, … they would be a better choice than a sweet smiling eastern dude, who has only his day's labour before him."[88] Yet another westerner assured readers that he and his fellow bachelors would give their last crumb of food to provide for a woman.[89]

Western men also boasted of their superior housekeeping abilities. Being bachelors in the truest sense of the word – living on their own or with other single men – they had been forced to learn how to do many things for themselves, including cooking, cleaning, and sewing. As a result, they had acquired the skills necessary to help their potential wives with housework. As Saskatchewan's "Bulyea Bull Baster" put it, in a less-than-subtle pitch,

> I really think a fellow who has driven oxen for a few season, at the same time doing all the housework and cooking, even the baking, should make a most patient and useful husband. How nice for the wife after a hard day's washing to let hubby potter around the kitchen, set bread, and pound the steak for breakfast, etc. What do you think girls?[90]

Others were satisfied with simply listing their domestic abilities. "On wet days I will polish the stove, scrub floors and wash clothes, and all the dishes that I do not use through the week," boasted a "B.C. Bachelor." "I can mend my clothes, too."[91]

What's more, western men claimed to be more sympathetic to the burdens of the average housewife. They knew better than men from the cities or the eastern provinces, for example, about what it was like to be a housewife because they were going through it themselves. "Will a man who has had several years' experience of doing a woman's work," asked "Curly" from Alberta, "not better understand that a woman's work is not so easy, as men mostly think?"[92] The Western Man, as a result, was sure to be less demanding than the average husband. In fact, he *had* to be less demanding, argued another, given that women were in such short supply out West. In

image not available

These two Alberta bachelors, one washing clothes, the other churning butter and making bread, seem to be advertising their domestic abilities, perhaps hoping to lure eastern maidens with the promise of a less burdensome existence as the wife of a western man. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA-1789-4.*

such a "seller's market," men could not ask too much of women, who could easily find someone else if they did.[93] Given the Western Man's experience of having to carry the double burden of inside and outside work, often in lonely isolation, he would also *appreciate* his wife more. He wouldn't complain very much about his wife's cooking or cleaning abilities, for example, but would simply be grateful for not having to do as much of this as before and for having a companion with whom to share his once-lonely life.[94] For the many women concerned about being made "slaves" to their potential husbands, such arguments must have been particularly reassuring.

On top of all this, western men claimed to be men of the highest character. In particular, they said they had the courage and determination

necessary to leave behind the comforts and relationships of their family homes and start anew on the unforgiving western frontier. "Most of the bachelors out here now," wrote "A Yukon Prospector," "are the very best quality from eastern homes, as it takes plenty of ambition and self-denial to leave dear friends and the pleasure of the society of the pretty girls."[95] Yes, these men sometimes smoked and drank, and, yes, they often looked ragged. But beneath their sometimes rough exteriors, wrote another westerner, lay other admirable qualities, qualities less apparent in "their more fortunate and cultured [eastern] brothers": "honesty, brotherly love, … real interest in each other, and less selfishness and greed."[96] This, too, made the Western Man a prize.

Lastly, western men also considered themselves more virile or "manly" than other men. Granted, the term "manliness" was loosely defined in those days – it was also used to describe men of "temperate" habits, for example – but in part it meant toughness in the face of adversity. And western homesteaders, ranchers, lumberjacks, miners, and hired hands were no strangers to adversity. Many endured dangerous, back-breaking labour amidst often extreme weather conditions and harsh employers. The result was a region of men marked, to a greater degree than elsewhere, by physical strength, stamina, and fearlessness. One Alberta man stated flat out that in all his worldly travels "the average Western bachelor is the manliest man that I have come in contact with."[97] Another agreed, and at the same time expressed the Western Man's contempt for the effeminate men of the East. Western men, he asserted, were hardier and tougher: "the average chap who comes West wants to stay, if he is capable of taking care of himself; as for the other class, we don't want them here.… I wish to thank 'Prairie King' for his remarks. He knows what it is 'to be a man,' one who is not likely to freeze in harvest time."[98] An even more eloquent affirmation of western manliness was delivered by "Raisull," a young man from Weyburn, Saskatchewan, who had observed closely the bachelors in his area:

> I confidently predict that from this class of men, laboring under the many and diffuse difficulties of the pioneer, will arise the strongest element that has yet been known in national life on the American continent.… I believe that any young man coming to this country with a desire to build up a little kingdom of his own has enough of the right stuff in him to succeed anywhere, and the difficulties with which he meets will only

> tend to develop and strengthen those manly qualities which are necessary to the building up of a happy home.[99]

As Raisull's letter suggests, manliness also went hand in hand with the ability to be a good provider. Either way, it was yet another point in the Western Man's favour.

And if Canada's "bachelor maids" were still unconvinced, the Western Man was not beneath appealing to their compassion. Hoping some fair maiden would take pity on them (and apparently unaware that playing the "sympathy card" might weaken their manly image), some western bachelors wrote heartfelt letters describing the hardships they faced and, above all, their intense loneliness. "The greatest drawback and hardship," wrote "Long Tom" of Alberta, "has been loneliness.… When I was not very busy, and alone in my shack, I have felt lonely – almost unbearably so, until the weather changed or I should get busy enough to forget where I was. Then it was that I would have liked above all things to have had a true wife."[100] A more moving plea came from a "Quatsimo Pioneer" near Vancouver:

> Often in my loneliness in the stilly nights I stand in my cabin door and view Nature in her pomp and splendor … and yet I am alone to enjoy all these things.… The resources are here and the natural advantages are excellent.… This is going to be my home. But it is undeniably lonely in these backwoods of Vancouver. I have no companion and we scarcely ever see the face of a girl in this remote spot of the world.… Oh girls, would none of you care to come into this Western country and take up your abode with an honest, upright, ambitious, young bachelor?[101]

Some bachelors, like "Rocky Mountain Goat," put their laments to verse:

> I wonder if ever my lonely lot,
> will change for a better state,
> And if some sweet, compassionate maid,
> will pity my cheerless fate;
> Oh, for a woman's presence!
> Oh, for a woman's bread!

Oh, could I sell my potato crop,
And purchase a wife instead![102]

No doubt many of these men led difficult and genuinely lonely lives. But in a column devoted largely to finding life partners, one suspects that they also played up their situation to elicit the sympathy of single women. This was all the more evident when men of various occupations and locales tried to out -do each other in convincing eastern women that they, and not their peers, should be considered the poorest of the "poor" western bachelors.[103]

Some western bachelors even appealed to women's patriotism. They believed that in opening the West to settlement and developing its resources they were performing a patriotic duty – to both Canada and the British Empire – and that women should reward them, romantically, for doing so. In a fit of dramatic, rising prose, "Xanthoctrol" from Alberta told readers that all Canadians should be proud of the western pioneer men helping to build up the country. "Give three cheers for them," he declared, "and may they echo not only through the hills, but also through the ages, for it is these men that are raising cities in the West. May each one find a jewel like his own heart! Will you not give us a hand girls?"[104] Another westerner was equally chauvinistic. "Our ambition," he told eastern women, "is to own a landed home, a piece of the country over which floats the flag we love. To stand upon such a spot and realize that it is ours … puts into one's being such feeling of true independence, true manhood, and true Canadianism as no other possession does."[105]

And when the Western Man defined his patriotism in *imperialistic* terms, as many did, he sometimes tried to attract female correspondents with similarly Anglophilic sentiments. Yet another wife-seeking Alberta bachelor, after noting his recent service in the Boer War, told readers that "I have hung up the sword, … and have gone to the soil, and am now doing my little [bit] towards the building of the Empire."[106] Some even felt that eastern women had a *duty* to marry western men.[107] Evidently, patriotism was not only the "last refuge of scoundrels," but of lonely western bachelors as well.

The Response

But what effect did this regional wooing have on the single women of Canada? Did they, in fact, come to see western bachelors as desirable husbands? The answer is a qualified "yes." Most women who participated in the debate sang the praises of the Western Man. Some were no doubt persuaded by the comments of the men themselves. After all, which woman of that era would not have wanted a man claiming to be, among other things, ambitious, hard-working, brave, honest, giving, manly, propertied, domesticated, sympathetic to housewives, and unlikely to take her for granted? Others were influenced by the romantic image of the West and its white male inhabitants reflected in the novels and promotional literature of the period. Women reading *Janey Canuck in the West*, for example – Emily Murphy's popular 1910 account of her travels out West – would, by page eleven, have come across the first of many ringing endorsements of the Western Man:

> The real Westerner is well proportioned. He is tall, deep-chested, and lean in the flank. His body betrays, in every poise and motion, a daily life of activity in the open air. His glances are full of wist and warmth.… Every mother's son of them is a compendium of worldly wisdom and a marvel of human experience. What more does any country want?[108]

Writers described the region, itself, in equally romantic terms. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, an assortment of scientists, explorers, and government officials, hoping to encourage emigration to, and settlement of, the West, had written floridly about its agricultural potential, social equality, fair climate, and stunning beauty. This portrait of the West as a "utopia" was enhanced by the extensive travel literature about the region – such as William Butler's 1872 classic *The Great Lone Land: A Narrative of Travel and Adventure in the North-West of America* – and by the fiction of popular writers like American Fenimore Cooper and Canada's own Ralph Connor; the latter's exciting stories of heroic missionaries and Mounties taming the wild frontier left readers with the impression that the West was a place of great adventure and new beginnings.[109]

Indeed, if many women wanted to marry a Western Man, it was because so many of them were mesmerized by the romance of the region, by the promise of prosperity, adventure, beauty, and greatness offered in such (usually exaggerated) accounts. Young "Elizabeth" from Ontario was one of them. Describing herself as a "modest little country dressmaker," whose life was at times dull, she found it difficult to resist the West's powerful lure. "The West has cast its spell over me from afar," she told Prim Rose readers in the summer of 1911,

> and my eyes are turned towards the setting of the sun. If his bright rays could lead me to the golden land, my pet dream would be realized. The best blood of the country is flowing westward, eager and burning to reach the land so rich in promise – at least to those who are willing to sacrifice something in the present in order to realize something worth while in the future.[110]

She followed this with a request: "Is there any well read bachelor in the West who could find it in his heart to spend an evening now and then telling this little girl of the land of her dreams?"[111] A New Brunswick school teacher was also moved by the West's clarion call, and on one of her daily walks after school, she found herself pondering the region: "From books and visitors to … [the] Western country I have heard something," she said, "but I should also like to hear from those who are part of the West. The spirit of that immense land is calling and, someday maybe, I'll get there."[112]

Eastern women were just as taken with the Western Man. For one thing, they admired his self-reliance and ambition, particularly his strong desire to make something of himself, alone, in a new land. This was a quality Canadians valued highly at the time. They believed that urbanization and industrialization had, among other things, rendered men "soft." The Western Man, by comparison, harkened back to a more heroic pioneering age of fortitude and sacrifice – of "strenuous adventure" as one historian puts it.[113] "Faithful," a farmer's daughter from Ontario, was one of many drawn to such a larger-than-life figure: "When a man has courage and ambition to go out to a lonely homestead, or village, to open up a career for himself," she wrote, "and is obliged to encounter many difficulties and endure much loneliness, he is worth something. Most of us lack 'grit'

– Western Bachelor has lots of it. So all honour to the bachelors of the West! I have great admiration for them."[114]

But above all, women admired the Western Man's courage, particularly his willingness to leave behind all that he loved and all that was familiar to move to a strange land, alone, and start from scratch. "A man who goes out and does his homesteading duties alone," wrote "Pussy" from Ontario, "is a prize any girl might be proud of."[115] "An Irish Girl at Edmonton" agreed. "I prefer the Western bachelor to your Eastern men any day" she told "Eastern Maidens," for "there is more pluck in a man coming out here to endure the hardships and trials of Western life as compared with Eastern life. Men in the East … plod along from morning to night like 'Mike O'Rafferty's mule.'"[116]

Some women attributed the supposedly superior quality of the Western Man to the West itself. "It is the greatest character builder in the world," reported one Nova Scotian, upon returning from her visit to the region,

> and I think that in such a country one will find more self-made men and women than in any other corner of the globe, as there is nothing like being 'up against it' to bring out the grander and more sterling qualities of character. I certainly saw more of nature's nobleman during my stay out there than I have ever happened to meet before or since.[117]

Others believed the Western Man was also more *virtuous* than most men as a result of his close and constant contact with nature – with "God's handiwork." "A girl had much better trust herself and future happiness to the man of the prairies," wrote one, "than to some of the city men, for he has fewer temptations and nobler and grander surroundings, so near the heart of nature."[118] A number of women also applauded the Western Man's supposedly greater honesty, industriousness, kindness, and toughness, as well as his willingness to endure hardship for the sake of a noble cause, namely the development of the West and, by extension, the glory of the British Empire. Such qualities stood in stark contrast, they noted time and again, to the more vain and self-indulgent bachelors of the East.[119]

Drawn by the region and its perfect bachelors, Ontario and Maritime maidens swarmed to the West in these years.[120] Some took up positions as teachers and domestics, hoping to land themselves a husband. Others went as the newly minted brides of the western men they had "met" through

correspondence, or as a result of visits such men had made to their former eastern homes in search of wives. And many more *dreamed* of going West to marry one of these ideal specimens. "Home Bird," from the shores of Lake Erie, was one of them. She was much impressed by stories of the Western Man's industriousness, both inside and outside the house, and by what she had heard about the beautiful British Columbia landscape. "If all the B.C. bachelors are like 'A.G.' [a recent contributor] in the way of work," she declared, "I think it would pay me to go to B.C. I think he can do more than any man I have ever heard of. I wonder if he could still find time to send me some picture post-cards?"[121] Eight years later, a young "Nature Lover" from Nova Scotia, moved by more nationalistic concerns, had similar dreams. She, too, longed to see the "Golden West," "for I admire the independent, strong, masterful people who are building up the country," and "I should like to hear from … 'Ben Roy' … who is getting the best out of the western life and seeking what is really worth while."[122] In another instance, an entire group of "young Cape Breton girls" offered themselves to any group of western bachelors willing to pay for their passage to the West.[123]

Not all women, however, embraced the Western Man or his region. Some were skeptical about the glowing accolades and suspected that eastern maidens were not getting the full story. "We hear so much about the Western bachelors," wrote an Ontario teacher, but "are they really more worthy than our Ontario young men, or is it another case of the hills in the distance looking greener than the pastures at home?"[124] In particular, many were worried that they would have to do more housework (and farm work) than they were willing or able to do. "Would a westerner's wife be expected to do all the scrubbing, washing, etc?," asked a concerned eastern woman.[125] She further illustrated her concern with a poem in which each stanza ended with the line, "But we Eastern girls will stay here, East, Till we know what we're going out West for," as in

> Oh 'B.C.' bachelor, you may scrub your floor,
> And unfasten the latch of your rickety door,
> You may listen to the birds and attend your beast,
> But we Eastern girls will stay here, East,
> Till we know what we're going out West for.

"Alexandria," a Toronto stenographer, was wary, too. "I often wonder if they are really as lonely as they try to make us believe they are," she told the Prim Rose readers. "I am inclined to think that some of our Western bachelors at least, are getting just a wee bit selfish in their loneliness, in that a great many of them seem to want a wife solely for the comfort she will be in the way of doing the housework, milking the cows, darning the socks, and in reality acting more in the capacity of a housekeeper than a wife."[126] Behind such letters loomed the Canadian maiden's ever-present fear that she would become a slave or drudge to her husband.

If some women were merely unsure about what marrying a Western Man entailed, others were quite sure. They were sure that the western bachelor was looking only for a servant and that any wife of his would be much put upon.[127] They were sure they would be living in a tiny wooden shack, in the middle of nowhere, with no neighbours and few of the comforts to which they had become accustomed. And they were sure the Western Man was an incorrigible boor – slovenly in appearance, rough in manner, and ridden with vices.[128] Such certainties stemmed from novels of the period that sometimes portrayed Western men as hard-drinking, hard-living hunters, trappers, Indian fighters, and wild cowboys.[129] But they also stemmed from first-hand observation. B.C's "Lady Blanc," for example, warned women not to be fooled by the idealized image of the Western Man. In an eloquent, but brutal indictment she told the column's readers that,

> Girls who have been well cared for, tenderly brought up, highly educated, their surroundings and associates cultured and refined, gentle and kind, come out to this country and marry men whom they looked upon as heroes because of the entrancing and romantic stories of the West. Every Western man who has 'roughed it' they look upon in the light of a herd of fiction, with a grand nature, a beautiful and knightly deference to all womankind, gentle and kind, a 'Douglas, Douglas, tender and true.' And oh, the bitter heart-breaking awakening of the vast majority of them; their castle of dreams … is a great, desolate wreck that becomes a walled prison, a tomb from which there is no escape except through the door of the divorce court, from which all good women shrink as from

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To many eastern women in particular, this Alberta bachelor's decrepit shack (ca. 1912) was their worst nightmare. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA-1789-5.*

> some hideous monster, and which they will never resort to so long as human patience can endure.[130]

Even the editor was inclined to agree. "The opening up of a new country attracts a type of manhood that is not always of the gentlest," she said, "and for that reason your warning carries special weight."[131]

The Eastern Man's Counter-offensive

Alongside the handful of female detractors, a much larger backlash emerged against the Western Man. *Eastern* bachelors, faced with the exodus of so many eligible bachelorettes, angered by the frequent put-downs of eastern men in the column, and fed up with all the attention and sympathy Canadians were giving the "poor" western bachelor, launched a vigorous counter-offensive. Some told the western bachelors flat out to please confine their attention to the women of their *own* region; one New Brunswicker even warned of a "civil war if the Western bachelors succeed in luring all the best girls away from the older provinces."[132] Others simply implored

women to take a closer look at what the eastern bachelor had to offer. "Ladies, why not turn your attention for a while to the province down by the sea?," asked a neglected "Rufus Dhu" of Nova Scotia:

> You will find splendid men among the eastern bachelors who live along the rugged shores of old Cape Breton. You seem to be devoting all your attention to the western country and its … tillers of the soil.… Cape Breton has furnished premiers, senators, judges, lawyers, clergymen, doctors, novelists, poets, and men of all professions. Ladies, you are making a mistake in overlooking Cape Breton. I expect you imagine we are all fisher folks. If you will only investigate a little you will find that we are as intelligent and up-to-date in every particular as any class of people in any part of Canada.[133]

Next door, in New Brunswick, a twenty-one-year-old farmer made a similar, if somewhat more exasperated plea. "Now I myself have nothing personally against my brothers across the continent," he explained,

> but I simply want to tell them (and the girls) that the western bachelors are not 'the only birds in the wildwood,' nor the best birds either. To hear some of them boasting, who have just been in the west two or three years, one would imagine they were great business fellows.… It's all very well for the "[Wailing] Willies" to enlarge on the freedom, happiness, etc. of keeping house in a one-room shack for a perfect (oh, yes!) bachelor. But, girls, let me tell you, those fellows are not a bit more loyal, sympathetic or good, all the way [round] than the eastern boys.[134]

The tone of such letters was distinctly defensive and, for the most part, civil.

The greater part of the counter-offensive, however, was not. Driven by a combination of anger and desperation, most bachelors in Ontario and the Maritimes were less interested in singing their own praises than in destroying their adversary. The Western Man, they said, whined too much. He "has chosen that mode of living and gone into it as a business proposition," wrote Ontario's "Big Swede," so "he should accept the disagreeable along with the pleasures, and not cry about being lonely and having to wash the

dishes."[135] Like some eastern women, eastern bachelors also accused the Western Man of lying about what he had to offer. Was he really as proficient and ready to assist around the house as he said, for example, or was he really looking for a slave?[136] And did the Western Man not exaggerate his possessions and glorious lifestyle in order to lure young, naive women from their homes in the east? The well-travelled "Seeing is Believing" from Ontario certainly thought so:

> I have found this much-talked of [western] bachelor, uncouth and rough in manner, careless and unkempt in appearance, morose and stupid in mind, in many cases a mental derelict, probably brought about by the great shattering loneliness of the prairie. He has no 'Arcadia' … to offer the eastern maid. Poor, deluded eastern girl, beware! His numerous acres of rich growing land are probably about one-tenth of what he states; his abundance of stock, most likely two sorry looking nags, a couple of forlorn cows, a few straggling chickens, a dog, and a cat. His cosy little home is a rough little shack … devoid of furniture, except a few broken, dirty dishes, a rickety chair, a wobbly table … and plenty of dust and cold discomfort to complete the scene.… Eastern girl, do not wreck your future by becoming a western bachelor's wife or you will find your idol pure mud. Often in his affections the wife comes after his horse or dog.[137]

As if this wasn't enough, some eastern men also accused the Western bachelor of being immoral. A London, Ontario, gentleman, after complaining that "we Eastern bachelors feel rather thrown in the shade alongside the prominent Western bachelor," told readers that many western bachelors are "degraded, rough, sinful beings."[138] A few months later an "eastern" university student gave an equally generous assessment. He reported that he had known some western husbands to be cruel, unreliable, restless, and, in particular, immoral. "May Heaven help the woman who is deceived into marrying a drunkard, a gambler, or even worse," he warned.[139] Essentially, many eastern bachelors accused the Western Man of living in a state of semi-barbarism and of behaving similarly. How, they asked, could such a man ever make a suitable husband for the fair maidens of the East?

Ironically, criticism of the western bachelor sometimes came from western men themselves. Several told readers that the men of the West, with their many ribald jokes and stories, spoke "disrespectfully" of women. "A more widespread fault," wrote a Manitoba bachelor, "is profanity," and "then there are the victims of intemperance, and I know of drunkards not a few."[140] An Alberta cattle-rancher reported a similar lack of respect for women among his bachelor friends – including wife-battering – as well as a disregard for personal hygiene. "Lots of these bachelors are not fit to have a wife," he stated. "It however pays them to have someone to do their dirty work, also someone whom they can abuse – when they fell out of sorts – without fear of any suitable replies (This class of man usually washes [?] and shaves at the most once a week)."[141] Such comments infuriated the average western bachelor. "When I read those lines," fumed a B.C. farmer, "I felt a tingling shudder of resentment pass through every nerve.… If he is really one of the 'Western bachelors' he should be more careful of his words for they reflect upon himself."[142] Another irate bachelor told Prim Rose that "there are a good many bachelors in his vicinity who would be pleased to meet [a certain critic] … 'behind the barn' with his 'carpet-beater.'"[143]

Why some western bachelors sold out their brethren in this way is unclear. Perhaps some were of a different social class, and so wished to distance themselves from the "typical" western man in the eyes of eastern women. Or maybe they felt such women were being deceived and felt a moral obligation, based on what they had observed, to warn them. Either way, their criticisms lent credibility and weight to the eastern bachelor's counter-offensive.

In Defence of the Western Man

This barrage of criticism put the Western Man on the defensive, to be sure, but he didn't take it lying down. Too much was at stake. "As everything is fair in love as in war," wrote "One 'o them" from Saskatchewan, "our Eastern antagonist has a perfect right to use his own way of annihilating us. But we are not easily put out of business."[144] And so began the grand defence of the Western Man.

Western bachelors reiterated, first of all, that they could (in time, at least) provide their future wives with decent homes, and not just decrepit shacks. "I know young men in this district who started out with nothing

but their head and a pair of willing hands," wrote a Saskatchewan bachelor-homesteader, "but today are in very comfortable circumstances. These are the men, 'Prim Rose,' that often write to you and request the correspondence of some Eastern girl, with a view to matrimony."[145] Another Saskatchewan bachelor agreed. The Western Man "has every chance to make his way in the world," he asserted, "providing he isn't a shirker. Has the eastern young man any better chance of prospering than the man on the prairie? Certainly not!"[146] Nor did such men expect their wives to work day and night, cooking, cleaning, or milking dozens of cows, without any amusement or time for themselves.[147]

As for the Western Man's often ragged appearance and general untidiness, this was true enough, conceded many a writer, but unfair. "That he is slovenly and shiftless, and in a very short time gets to look like a tramp instead of a tiller of the soil is only too true," wrote one western bachelor. "I do object, though, and very strenuously, to make him an object of ridicule, as he is in a measure a victim of circumstances, and almost entirely at the mercy of his surroundings."[148] That being said, a number of writers argued that the Western Man was as "refined" as the easterner in many ways. "I have lots of friends scattered over the West," observed "A Heilan' Laddie' from Ontario, "and many of them are men of considerable culture and education.… Barring Doukhobors, etc., the farmers of the West are more refined and better educated than those of the East."[149] One such farmer, originally from Ontario, now living in Alberta, confirmed this. Speaking for his fellow transplanted Ontarians, he wrote, "I cannot see why any of us should be more stupid than when we left the East. We have just as good a chance of learning the latest news. In this district we have church, Sunday school, literary societies, athletic clubs, farmers' unions, and everything that will add to our pleasure." In short, the Western Man was not the sharpest-looking bachelor in Canada, but neither was he "of rough character and stupid mind," as his critics alleged.[150]

Western Men were just as quick to defend their manners and morality. According to Alberta's "Cowboy II,"

> the Cowboys are not what the ten cent novels would lead a person to believe.… I have never met a better bunch of fellows in all my travels.… The majority of them come of good families and are well-educated; and although they are rough and ready on the ranch or 'round up,' put them among ladies and I

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Typical of the sort of home the West's bachelor-homesteaders could offer a woman – at least in the early years – was Clarence Rinehart's primitive, but tidy, "homestead shack" in Bottrel, Alberta (ca. 1916), to which his female friend, Nellie Crow, paid a visit that summer. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA-4143-1.*

> can safely say that they will behave and be just as polite as the average city man.[151]

A fellow Albertan, agreed. Yes western bachelors were rough around the edges, he said, and yes they indulged occasionally in alcohol, tobacco, and profanity, but this was understandable given their circumstances. At root, he insisted, they were good men and would make good husbands, for "in these men I have found hearts of gold, true friendship, honour and gentlemanly straight-forwardness."[152] Some westerners even tried using their moral shortcomings to their romantic advantage. They argued that if the Western Man was uncivilized in some ways, was this not all the more reason for women of the East to marry one, in order to bring him up to standard? "He needs … the ennobling influence of woman to bring out the best that is in him," argued "Wilkins" from the West, who pointed to his friend "Jimmy" as proof. Jimmy always combed his hair and dressed more neatly after receiving a letter from his "girl" in the East.[153]

Women, too, came to the defence of the Western Man, particularly those with husbands, sons, or brothers in the West. These women were offended by the ridicule and aspersions cast upon their loved ones and insisted that the western bachelors, on the whole, were of the finest quality in every respect – as good, if not better than the eastern bachelors. They applauded, above all, the Western Man's "grit." "Any one who is spirited and courageous enough to build a home for himself in the Great West, where there are so many difficulties to contend with," wrote one farmer's daughter from Ontario, "is surely worthy of a good helpmate, and any Eastern girl should be proud to have such a man for a friend"; such men were "real men."[154] They commended him, as well, for his gentlemanly qualities and overall refinement. "I have rarely met or seen any who did not respect woman," wrote Saskatchewan's "Prairie Rose." "Some perhaps were rather uncouth and quite uncongenial. Others were gentlemen by nature. I think it is quite as possible to find men of refinement, integrity, and intelligence among the Western bachelor farmers and ranchers as elsewhere."[155] After all, she added, "many of them come from cultured, refined homes in the Eastern provinces or England." Only in the cities, with their many saloons and pool rooms – of which the cities of the East had plenty – would one be likely to encounter the animal-like bachelor so maligned by the Eastern Man and others.

It was a long and, at times, emotional debate. But what effect did it have on how Canadian women perceived the Western Man? Did he retain the affection of the average eastern maiden? In the end, it was likely a zero-sum game. That is, for every woman scared off by the eastern bachelor's assault against his western rival, just as many were probably drawn in by the Western Man's initial pitch and the subsequent comments of his defenders. More important is what the debate tells us about the Canadian woman's idea of the perfect husband in these years. It tells us that she wanted a man who was industrious, ambitious, and tough enough to make something of himself; who would not treat her like a slave; who displayed evidence of high moral character; who was clean and neat in appearance; and who showed kindness and compassion to all living things. To many women, the Western Man epitomized such qualities. To others, he did not.

Returning, then, to "Scarlett Pimpernel's" question of 1909: did "every girl have her own private ideal, each one differing as do their hats?" The answer is "no." It's true that women were somewhat less forward than men in describing their ideal. It's also true that (like single men) their definition

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Perhaps to dispel the myth of the beastly western man, this group of 1907 Alberta bachelors looks particularly spiffy. Their well-groomed appearance certainly would have appealed to the region's relatively rare bachelorettes and to the abundant but more wary maidens farther east. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA-128-10.*

of the ideal spouse depended to some extent on their class and where they lived. Upper-class women and "city girls," for instance, were more likely to value a man's wealth, appearance, and "refinement," and to place less importance on his toughness or physical strength; unaccustomed to, and fearful of, the demands of farm life, they also favoured a less demanding, urban-based man.[156] Women of the western provinces, meanwhile, placed less emphasis on a man's morality.

Despite differences, however, many Canadian women – perhaps most – could agree on a single definition of the ideal man.It was, moreover, a definition that historians have so far failed to identify fully. By examining elite sources of gender construction, they have identified only the narrow "official" version of the ideal man: the morally upright, physically fit, race-minded, and socially conscious man. In fact, Canadian women sought this and much more. Above all they sought husbands who would be good providers, possessed sufficient quantities of physical and mental fortitude,

would not treat them as slaves, were honest in their social dealings, demonstrated kindness and consideration, and – last but not least – kept themselves "clean and neat" in appearance.

No one writer captured the essence of this pre-war ideal exactly, but a few came close. In 1905 a young Ontario woman told readers that her ideal man "should be tall, strong, straight, fairly good-looking, healthy and neat in appearance … brave enough to shield those who would look to him for help and able to bear the cares and trials of life … tender-hearted … honest … filled with ambition to succeed … [and] he should not use strong drink."[157] Several years later, a "Cowboy Girl" from Saskatchewan rounded out the picture by telling readers that "if a man refused to serve King Alcohol or My Lady Nicotine, is incapable of a mean or dishonest action, and has too much respect for a woman to permit her to do any hard work, while he sits idly looking at her, he is worthy of a good girl's love and life-long devotion."[158] For the average Canadian woman, this was the picture of the perfect man. This was the man of her dreams.

3

The Do's and Don'ts of Romance

As important as finding the ideal partner was following the proper *rules* in doing so. This was especially true for "polite society" – for members of the middle and upper classes eager to distinguish themselves from the "rougher" classes. But Canadians of more humble backgrounds, perhaps aspiring to middle-class respectability, felt the need as well. And, once again, the *Family Herald* was there to help. The editor of the Prim Rose column, as it happened, was also available to answer questions about romance etiquette, which she did in a separate column until 1914.[1] Although her advice was always precise and consistent, the basis of her expertise is not entirely clear; it likely came from the British, American, and Canadian etiquette books she sometimes recommended to readers. More certain is that many young Canadians depended on her to guide them through the perilous waters of romance. In fact, with the magazine's circulation surpassing 200,000 by 1930, she was probably their most important written source of romance etiquette in these years.[2] No doubt they also sought guidance from the general etiquette manuals popular at the time – such as Maud Cooke's dauntingly thorough *Social Etiquette*, published by McDermid and Logan of London, Ontario, in 1896, and the more concise *Manners* issued by Toronto's McClelland & Stewart in 1914 – but these were not nearly as

detailed as Prim Rose when it came to romance.[3] Considered alongside her advice, however, they help provide a fascinating snapshot of Canadian romance etiquette before the Great War, from the first advances to the proposal of marriage.

First Moves

The first thing Prim Rose made clear about young romance was that it should not take place before a girl turned eighteen, the age at which she "came of age" and, if she was of the upper-class, made her "debut" as an eligible bachelorette at a "coming out" party; men were not supposed to pursue girls younger than this and girls were not supposed to accept their advances. "A girl is not permitted to receive attentions from young men," she explained to a girl "Only Fifteen," "until she has put on long dresses and put up her hair and been introduced to society," usually between the ages eighteen and twenty.[4] Only twice, and somewhat cryptically, did Prim Rose explain why. She told one inquirer that "it injures her [marriage] prospects to do so, as few mothers will encourage their young daughters to associate with a girl who has been talked about in connection with a young man before her debut."[5] She told another that "a girl should not be allowed to think or speak of an 'admirer' until she is at least eighteen years of age. To do so before that would make a bad impression, and careful mothers would not wish her to associate with their daughters."[6] Presumably a girl needed other girls to introduce her to their male friends and relatives or to at least vouch for her character. If her female friends shunned her, however, her marriage prospects would suffer.

Prim Rose gave only two exceptions to this rule: if an under-aged couple was accompanied on their date by a chaperone – perhaps an "an older girl friend or sister" – or if they were together in "a small place and among intimate friends," presumably in someone's home.[7] She also said it was permissible for a close male friend of similar age to occasionally escort an under-aged girl from church, provided he had the permission of the girl's parents. But he "should not feel offended if they do [object]," added Prim Rose, "because on general principles, it is not advisable to allow a young girl to be seen much in public with a friend of the other sex."[8]

Once a young woman was eligible to receive male attention, it was then usually up to the man to make the first move; as Prim Rose said many

times, a true gentleman "never compels a lady to take the initiative."[9] This almost always meant seeking an "introduction" to a woman through a third person, typically another man (unless, of course, the woman was a long-time acquaintance). At a social gathering, for example, a man wanting to meet a certain woman might ask a mutual friend to make the introduction. The friend, unless he was a close friend or relative of the woman, would first secure her permission for the introduction, for "it is a privilege to be introduced to a lady," said Prim Rose, and "a self-respecting girl does not admit anyone to the favour unless satisfied that he is in every way deserving of it." If she agreed, the friend would proceed with the introduction, making sure to introduce the man to the woman, as in "Miss *X*, may I introduce Mr. Blank?" or "This is Mr. Blank, Miss *X*."[10] The man would then say something like "I am delighted to make your acquaintance." In response, the woman would not shake the man's hand – presumably this would be too familiar at this point – but would say something cordial. Usually she would say "How are you?," and the conversation would proceed from there.[11] Several etiquette manuals recommended that both man and woman also *bow* to each other (with the man bowing more "deeply") and that the woman, in response to the man's grateful greeting, respond either in silence, with a slight smile, or with "a murmured thank you," since she was the one granting the privilege of the introduction.[12]

But what if a man saw a woman on the street who caught his fancy? How could he secure the proper introduction? This was precisely the dilemma of "Diffident" from Vancouver, who wanted to meet "nice" women in his city but was loath to approach them on the street without knowing, through a proper introduction, whether they were of high moral character. Prim Rose suggested a combination of networking and covert action: "The next time a sweet face attracts you on the street," she told him, "follow the owner at a respectful distance" to find out where she lives, and then try to strike up a friendship with her father or brother, who might invite him to the house and introduce him to her.[13] He might also ask his clergyman to introduce him to the family.

Only in rare instances could bachelors avoid the introduction ritual, such as when a man and woman *worked* together. "If a man has met a young girl frequently enough during office hours to be on rather friendly terms with her," wrote Prim Rose, "he may venture to ask her to accompany him to a concert, or to suggest that an invitation to call at her home would be regarded as a favour.... There may [also] be an opportunity of walking

home with the girl, or of seeing her on Sunday after church."[14] The etiquette of approaching the "working girl," in other words, was less formal. Otherwise, the introduction was mandatory.

The Background Check

Another hurdle men faced prior to any romantic relationship was the background check. Some etiquette manuals, and no doubt many parents, warned young women to reject the attentions of men whose "past life" and "present circumstances" they knew little about. They warned them, in particular, about men who lacked industry and ambition, spent beyond their means, held women in low regard, and were prone to immoral "dissipation" in all its forms. "Better go down to your grave a 'forlorn spinster' than marry such a man," wrote Cooke.[15] This meant that a man with romantic intentions had to provide proof of his good character and prospects, which he did with a reference letter or with a verbal reassurance from someone who knew him well; this was necessary to prevent him from deceiving a potential girlfriend and her parents. In fact, parents, or a guardian, usually solicited such information, but it could be done by the woman herself, if necessary. As Prim Rose explained,

> It is the duty of parents and guardians to make the necessary inquiries about the character, standing and prospects of their future sons-in-law, and when a girl has no one to whom this task can be confided, she is of course bound to undertake it herself. It is not at all a difficult one, because an honourable man recognizes the propriety of the action and is only too willing to furnish the desired information. Any show of reluctance or annoyance in this connection is a suspicious circumstance from which a girl is justified in concluding that there is a screw loose somewhere.[16]

The background check was especially important when a woman was carrying on a long-distance relationship – a "courtship by correspondence" essentially – and the man was unknown in her community. Eastern women corresponding with western bachelors, for instance, were warned many times by the column's readers and by Prim Rose herself to not meet or

accept any proposition from such men without first finding out more about them; this included getting reference letters from reputable persons in the man's community.[17]

In addition, a man who wanted to spend time with a woman had to get the approval of her parents. To do this, he could either meet with the parents, after first stating his intentions towards their daughter, or he could simply gauge their reaction to his romantic overtures, including requests to visit their daughter at her home. If the parents did not discourage these overtures – welcoming him into their home, for example – he could assume they approved and that he was free to pursue the relationship further.[18]

Courtship

Once a man had secured the introduction, passed the background check, and gained the approval of a woman's parents, he became one of her male "acquaintances" and could then seek her company in various ways. In other words, he could begin "courting" her, becoming one of her boyfriends or "suitors." There was, incidentally, no limit to the number of suitors a woman could have at one time. A common contemporary expression referred to the number of "pearls on a string" a woman had – that is, the number of suitors or admirers. According to Prim Rose, the more pearls the better, as this increased a woman's chances of securing a marriage proposal. Only when a suitor appeared *serious* about advancing a relationship (and the woman agreed, of course) should she begin to limit the field by discouraging other suitors.[19]

Knowing when a man was serious, however, was not always easy. Men often gave small gifts to their girlfriends – typically candy, flowers, or books – or paid a lot of attention to them in other ways. "Were these signs that a suitor was serious?," asked "Red Wing." "No," said Prim Rose. This was simply typical male behaviour, driven by the man's desire to have a good time. "As many young men pay attentions to girls who are agreeable and who give entertainments, simply with the idea of enjoying themselves," she told her, "it would be too much to expect the girls to take such attentions very seriously and to discourage other admirers. Until her engagement is announced, the girl of many friends is privileged to enjoy the attentions of all who please her."[20]

The same held true for a man. Provided he wasn't engaged to be married, he was free to associate with whomever he wished among his women friends. But what if a man had committed himself in some *other* way to a particular woman, by professing his love for her, for example? Would he still be permitted to have more than one girlfriend, wondered some readers? In a rare display of inconsistency, Prim Rose provided contradictory advice. In the spring of 1907 she said "yes." "If the man's letters [of reference] are satisfactory in every other way," she told a concerned woman, "the girl need not feel uneasy on hearing of his many girl friends in town.... He may even have another girl correspondent without failing in loyalty to the one he professes to love."[21] Two weeks later, however, she told another inquirer that "a man is at liberty to cultivate the friendship of a number of girls at the same time before making a choice of one as a life partner" and "until he makes a declaration of love or an offer of marriage, a girl has no right to consider that she is entitled to all his devotion."[22] Generally speaking, however, single men and women were not expected to be "faithful" to one another during courtship. Rather, they were expected to "play the field" – to keep their options open – in order to maximize the pool of potential life partners.

i. Chance Encounters

Playing the field was easy enough. The opportunities for romantic interaction prior to and during courtship were, with a few notable exceptions, many and varied.[23] But each came with its own set of rules. The most common interaction was probably the chance encounter, as when couples met on the street or at a social function. If a woman saw one of her male friends on the street, for example, she would not approach him or gesture to him. This would be unladylike. But if he happened to see *her*, and wanted to talk, there would be no harm in her indulging him.[24] He would not, however, keep her standing in one spot. Instead, and unless they were close friends, he had to ask permission to accompany her, as in "Will you allow me to walk with you" or "May I come with you?"[25] Nor should he forget, upon first meeting her, to bow and raise (or tip) his hat, a gesture of politeness and respect that applied to all heterosexual social encounters.[26]

Dances and balls were also common venues for chance encounters, with rules governing heterosexual interaction here too. Before a bachelor could approach a female friend, for example, he had to wait for her signal or

recognition – usually a bow or a smile; she could withhold such recognition as a way of "discontinuing an undesirable acquaintance," said Prim Rose, but should only exercise this right in "extreme cases."[27] Her recognition secured, the man could either begin a conversation or ask her to dance.[28] If she accepted, he would be sure to thank her at the end of the dance for the pleasure, and she would respond (as she would after a *skate* with a man) by inclining her head and smiling, or by expressing her enjoyment of the dance. She also made sure not to give more than *three* dances to any man other than her fiancé; to dance "too frequently" with one man, even one's fiancé, wrote another etiquette adviser, was "ill-mannered and indiscreet."[29] And if she declined, she did so politely, by saying "I am sorry, I am afraid I feel too tired to dance this one," or "I am sorry, I am engaged [to dance with another]."[30] What's more, she wasn't supposed to say "no" and then immediately grant the favour to another man. "A girl is not obliged to dance with a partner she dislikes," explained Prim Rose,

> but unless she has good reason to object to him, it would be very rude to excuse herself from dancing with one acquaintance, and directly after to give the dance he asked for to a partner she preferred. Self-denial has to be practiced in the ballroom as elsewhere, and a well-bred girl is careful to wound the feelings of none, though she sometimes has to sacrifice her own pleasure to avoid doing so.[31]

Maud Cooke agreed. "Young ladies must never refuse to dance with one gentleman, and afterward give the same dance to a more favoured suitor," she said. "Nothing so quickly speaks of ill-breeding as this course."[32] Being a "lady" meant being sensitive to the feelings of others.

In fact, how a woman responded to romantic advances during chance encounters, whether at a dance or elsewhere, was important. First of all, she was expected to respond either formally or informally depending on how well she knew the man. If they were good friends, she could accept the advance with pleasure or reject it with regret unreservedly and informally. If they were mere acquaintances, more formality was in order, as in "I shall be very pleased, Mr. Blank" or "I am sorry, Mr. Blank. I have already made other arrangements. Another time I hope I may have the pleasure." If she disliked the man and wished to discourage further advances, she needed to be more serious and firm, but without being rude.[33] Second, a woman had

to be friendly and polite at all times. So, for example, "when a man asks for the pleasure of a dance," Prim Rose told one inquirer,

> it is usual to say 'Yes', or 'No', in the prettiest way you know how. Don't be afraid to look pleased if you mean to grant the request. A good many young girls make that mistake, but it is not good manners.... The least stiffness or indifference is taken as a hint that his attentions are unwelcome, and he promptly discontinues them to bestow them where they will be more graciously received.[34]

The same advice applied when a man invited a woman on an outing. "It would be in very poor taste to accept an invitation to a concert in an indifferent manner," she told another. "A well-bred girl is never afraid of appearing pleased to accept a favour. She thanks a man quite cordially for an invitation to attend any kind of an entertainment, and shows that she is frankly appreciative of his kindness."[35]

Clearly Prim Rose was concerned that women not burn their romantic bridges by appearing in any way indifferent to male advances. At a time when women desired marriage above all else, this advice was understandable. Women could not afford to harm their chances through rude, unfriendly, or apathetic behaviour. In fact, the only time a woman should appear standoffish with a man, said Prim Rose, was if he was paying her *insufficient* attention. When "Sorrowful Sue" complained that a male friend had done just that at a recent function, Prim Rose told her to appear "cool and indifferent when the man next attempts to monopolize her society, not seeming angry or resentful, but merely uninterested. A man of that type generally appreciates women in proportion as he finds it difficult to win their favour."[36] In other words, she should "play hard to get."

ii. Calling

Although chance encounters could occur anytime, they were usually the first step in a romantic relationship. If they went well, they would invariably be followed by more deliberate interaction, usually initiated by the man, in the form of a "date." Such pre-meditated interaction signalled that a relationship had entered the courtship stage, in which the man became the girl's suitor. He would normally begin his "suit" by "calling" on a

woman at her home, usually with her prior permission and with her parents present.[37] He might try dropping by *without* her permission, if he felt confident he would be well-received, but this was risky and required special measures. "A man may take the risk of calling on a lady whom he has met but once," wrote Prim Rose, "if her manner has seemed friendly and encouraging," but if he did, he had to immediately seek her blessing. He might say, for example, "I hope you will not think me very bold to come and see you without asking permission." If she responded in a "stiff or indifferent" way, he would be wise, said Prim Rose, to "make his visit very brief."[38]

A woman *was* permitted to ask a man to call on her, even if she had only met him once, "providing he is known to be a desirable acquaintance."[39] This was one of the few romantic initiatives open to a single woman, and she had two proper ways of doing it: she could either have her mother send an invitation to the man ("very young ladies" do not extend invitations, wrote Maud Cooke) or she could extend the invitation herself, in person, by saying "I would be glad to see you at my home" on a particular day, or "I should like you to meet my mother (or father)."[40] Either way, the man was expected to visit no later than a week after the invitation, or risk appearing discourteous.[41]

As for the visit itself, Prim Rose (and others) had little to say. What she did say, however, was directed largely at the woman. It was the woman's role, for example, to play the gracious and doting host. "He should be made at home in your household, and visit you in your own living room" or "drawing room," she told a "High School Girl," and he should be entertained in ways intended to secure his continued interest:

> Some [men] enjoy a quiet game of cards or chess, and others are happiest discussing a favourite hobby – football, or snapshotting, music, art or literature. Find out their preferences and indulge them. Give them nice things to eat.… Admire their new hats and their neckties and ask their advice.[42]

The couple could also use the occasion to discuss future outings together, "with mother to help in the planning, and to say when the party shall be made up of three people [i.e. chaperoned] and when it need only be of two."[43] What's more, if the visit occurred during the evening, the couple had to be supervised by a member of the girl's family, a point on which Prim Rose

In the pre-war years, "calling" was the most common method of courtship. Here, Saskatchewan's Joe Zeman is "going courting." *Library and Archives Canada, Fred Taylor, Joe Zeman Collection, C-030797.*

was firm: "If there is a mutual attachment between the young people, and if it meets with the approval of her family, they may sometimes be left for half-an-hour or so together, but under no circumstances should their elders retire for the night leaving them in the drawing-room unchaperoned."[44] For the same reason, one manual advised women living on their own, in a boarding house, to receive male callers in the "public drawing room" instead of their living quarters.[45]

At the end of the visit, and if the woman had enjoyed the man's company, she could suggest, as part of her farewell greeting, a return visit; she might say "Good bye and come again," for example. Such an invitation, however, should probably come from the woman's mother, who could also disallow any future visits if she felt the man was unsuitable based on his "appearance, manners, or occupation."[46] Either way, the woman would not escort her gentleman caller to the front door – "it is in bad taste for her to go any further than the drawing-room door with him," observed *Manners* – except if he was an "intimate" friend or the front door was difficult to open.[47]

A typical pre-war "date" for a young Ontario couple: spending time decorously in the family parlour, within view and earshot of the woman's parents or older siblings. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, C 7-2-0-2-11.*

Women, however, did not call on men, except for "business" purposes – if the man was a colleague or employer – or if she had received an invitation from the man's parents.[48] Otherwise, any visit to a bachelor's home would entail a loss of "respect" for the woman, even if she was his fiancée. "A lady may always call on another lady with whom she is on calling terms," stated Prim Rose, "but she must never call on a man under any circumstances, outside of business.… If the object of the visit is to see the bachelor friend residing in the house, it would be an undignified proceeding, resulting in loss of respect on the part of those taking cognizance of the matter."[49] The only way a single woman could get away with such a visit was with a bit of deception. She could, for example, make such a visit on the pretext of calling on a "lady friend," such as the man's mother or sister. This, said Prim Rose, was acceptable.[50] Of course where a bachelor lived *alone*, any visit would be scandalous. "An invitation under those circumstances," warned Prim Rose, "would be an insult," and "a young girl who

Two hopeful eastern Ontario maidens await gentleman callers in the parlour of their home. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, C 130-5-0-0-138.*

would accept such an invitation would forfeit the esteem and respect of all her acquaintances."[51]

iii. Dating

The other main courtship ritual was, of course, going out on a "date." And again, the experts told men to take the initiative. This was, in part, a practical matter: most women lacked the means to ask men out on dates involving any expense and could not simply assume their dates would pay. But mostly it was a matter of custom. So men did the asking. Prim Rose didn't specify how men should go about doing this – presumably a verbal request was enough – but Cooke, writing a full decade earlier, advised a formal invitation, "written in the third-person, upon white note-paper of the best quality, with an envelope to match," to which the woman was expected to respond immediately, also in writing.[52]

For most middle- and upper-class couples, a date usually meant going to dinner, the theatre, a dance, a concert, on a walk or drive, or for a skate. For such public outings, Prim Rose laid down a number of general rules. When out for a walk, for example, men should walk closest to the road or curb, thereby leaving the safer side to the woman.[53] For largely the same reason – "the convenience and protection of the lady" – they were to lead the way in certain situations, such as getting off the streetcar first to help the woman dismount, and locating seats in church or at the theatre.[54]

In other instances, male leadership was meant to preserve the supposedly delicate female ego. One etiquette manual recommended that in restaurants, for example, the man should do all the ordering, to save his date "the slight embarrassment it may be for her to make her own selection."[55] A man escorting a woman to a dance was told to be equally attentive to his date's feelings. Not only would he make sure to dance the first dance with her, as well as the one immediately before supper, but at all other times he would find suitable dance partners for her; he would also make sure not to dance with another woman unless his date was also on the dance floor or engaged in conversation elsewhere. At no time, in other words, should he appear to be neglecting her.[56]

Typical of the modest Victorian mindset, the experts also instructed couples to be "reserved" in public. Cooke was blunt on this point. "There is no surer mark of a well-bred man or woman," she said, "than proper and dignified conduct in public.… Loud and boisterous talking, immoderate

laughing and forward and pushing conduct are always marks of bad breeding," particularly in women.[57] Prim Rose offered similar advice. "A young girl should walk most circumspectly on the street," she told a "Bonny Lady," "especially when with a companion of the other sex. It should be impossible from their demeanor for a stranger to determine the relationship between them."[58] As a further sign of modesty, the experts told men and women not to address each other by their first names. "It does not do a girl any harm to build a little wall of reserve around herself," explained Prim Rose, "and the free use of Christian names should be avoided except in the case of intimate friends," or if the couple was engaged.[59]

iv. Conversation

Rules existed even for courtship conversation, and, like so many other aspects of romance etiquette, they applied especially to women. Basically, the etiquette gurus told women to be seen and not heard. "The usual topics of conversation among young men and women," wrote Prim Rose, "are their favourite amusements and occupations. Most men like to talk about themselves, and a woman needs only to be a willing and sympathetic listener to earn their admiration."[60] It was even more important a woman not appear too bright. Appearing knowledgeable was fine, she told a "Country Girl," but

> in society … earnest conversation on profound subjects is not encouraged. One is expected to be cheerful, sympathetic and entertaining, rather than instructive. A sense of humour is the most valuable asset for any one seeking popularity. Most young men like simpler cordial hospitality and a cheerful attitude towards life in general. They also like to speak of themselves – to a sympathetic listener.[61]

She advised women to receive compliments in cordial silence as well. "The most graceful way to receive a compliment," she said, "is in silence, but with a smile and slight inclination of the head by way of acknowledgment."[62] At least one manual also spoke of certain "conversational sins" women should avoid. "Young ladies, especially," wrote Cooke, "should beware of establishing any reputation for punning," and "the too common habit of

exaggeration, on the part of so many school girls and young ladies, is also to be deplored." The speech of "true ladies," after all, was unobtrusive.[63]

v. Gift-giving

Prim Rose had a lot more to say about another romantic exchange: gift-giving. Both the giver and (especially) the gift were important considerations. As regards the giver, the etiquette followed a predictable pattern: it was the man who generally did the giving. On this point, Prim Rose was clear: "A lady should not send a gift, however trifling, to a gentleman unless the conditions are unusual, as when she is under obligation to him which she is unable to repay.… Ordinarily a lady would not send a gift to an acquaintance or even a friend of the other sex unless she were engaged to him."[64] Nor should a woman return the favour. If a boyfriend gave her a card or present on her birthday, for example, she might respond simply by inviting him to her home – nothing more. Only if she knew him "very well" might she give him a gift, and then only on a special occasion, like his birthday or Christmas. What's more, the gift had to be both practical and, well, manly. A nice store-bought handkerchief would do fine, said Prim Rose. So would a "silver pencil or penholder." Women did a lot of sewing then, so a piece of handiwork would also do, provided it was not "fancy work," but "something plain and solid, without frills and fusses to make him say, 'What on earth is it?' – perhaps a silk tie, or towels, or "strong sofa pillows."[65]

Men had to be careful too. First they had to ask themselves, "Should I send a gift?" After all, giving a single woman a gift usually implied a serious romantic commitment. Even a small "thank you" gift, like a bouquet of flowers or a book, in appreciation for having been entertained in her home, could easily be misinterpreted as a desire for marriage. As Prim Rose explained, "many girls, as well as their mothers, too readily assume that an act of courtesy is the beginning of courtship."[66]

Before sending a gift, therefore, young men who valued their "single blessedness" should make their intentions clear to either the woman or her mother. If a man *was* interested in courtship, however, he next had to ask himself (or Prim Rose), "What kind of gift should I give?" Again, the rule was clear: during the courtship stage, the gift should be small and inexpensive. "A young man's gifts to a girl," wrote Prim Rose, "might be a book, music, flowers, a picture, perhaps any odd little curio the shops show.…

And is it necessary to add to the list 'candies', chocolates, all sorts of goodies in dainty boxes? There may be a girl who would not be pleased with the latter, but she doesn't live in Canada."[67] Valuable gifts, such as jewellery or clothing, however, were out of the question, except if the couple was engaged. "A well-brought-up girl does not accept presents of any value from young men," asserted Prim Rose, "nor do well-brought-up young men take the liberty of offering them."[68] Why, she never said, but she did imply that such gifts were too "personal" and that jewellery, in particular, was almost the equivalent of an engagement ring. Unstated, perhaps, is the concern that a man who gave valuable gifts to his girlfriend expected certain *physical* favours in return, and that a woman who accepted such gifts would feel pressured to oblige. Such an arrangement would look like prostitution, or "occasional prostitution," as the middle-class moral reformers of the era liked to call it.[69]

vi. Chaperones

The most important aspect of courtship etiquette, however, was chaperonage: having a third person – usually an older sister or mother – accompany the couple in public. Or as Prim Rose put it, simply: "in society a young girl is not allowed to appear at any function in the company of a young man friend without a chaperone, even in the day time."[70] In lieu of a chaperone, being part of a group of young men and women on an outing would suffice, as there would be little chance of the couple being alone; the other members of the group would, in effect, constitute the chaperonage.[71] The only other time a couple could dispense with the chaperone was if they were well-enough acquainted and merely wished to take a walk together – provided it was still light out. The chaperone rule only applied, however, to "well-bred" women "in good society" and not to "girls of a common class," as long as the latter felt comfortable with the arrangement.[72] "If the young people are not in society," said Prim Rose, "the services of a chaperone [may be] dispensed with, but only if there is reason to feel the highest confidence in the man."[73] Widows were also exempt.

But why was chaperonage necessary at all? Judging from the number of times Prim Rose had to explain the rule, this was obviously something many young readers wondered about. It was necessary, she explained, for several reasons: first, it provided a woman with protection, from unscrupulous suitors making unwanted and inappropriate physical advances, and

Here, against the spectacular backdrop of romantic Niagara Falls in 1907, William James Sr. and "friend" stroll together, but respectfully apart. The gentleman following close behind may be their chaperone, unless the couple was well enough acquainted to be without one. *Courtesy City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 3506.*

Where couples went courting with other couples, the chaperone rule could be relaxed. "Group courtship" scenes such as this group picnic in Ottawa were common in pre-war Canada. *Library and Archives Canada, James or May Ballantyne, James Ballantyne Fonds, PA-133794.*

also from her *own* "thoughtlessness" or "recklessness"; this would explain Prim Rose's emphasis (and that of certain etiquette books) on the need for chaperones "after dark" especially.[74] Second, chaperones preserved a woman's image of chastity. Prim Rose was cryptic on this point, merely telling women that it was not "good form" for them to be seen in public with men, unchaperoned, and that they risked losing suitors' "respect" if they were. But the author of *Manners* was more specific. In her advice to single women who went on bicycle rides with men, she warned that true ladies didn't "ride off alone after dark, nor take long rides in the evening attended only by an escort," and during *daylight* hours "will avoid stopping to rest under the trees and in out of the way places, [for] … too much care cannot be taken, especially by young girls, as to appearances."[75]

Most important, chaperonage protected a woman's reputation. Because appearing in public with a male acquaintance, unchaperoned, was a *faux pas* in higher social circles – it was considered undignified – a chaperoned outing precluded any gossip or unflattering comments from the woman's female friends. Such comments could harm the woman's social standing and, in turn, alienate other suitors. A "common girl," on the other hand, had little social standing to lose and so had more freedom in this respect. Even so, warned Prim Rose, if such a woman had any ambitions at all to climb the social ladder, she had best abide by the chaperone rule or else risk facing the gossip and its results. "It must always be borne in mind," she wrote, "that a girl who adopts the manners or the usages of 'Bohemia' cannot expect to be approved of by conventional mothers and daughters, so she must be prepared to take the consequences of exclusion from their society."[76]

At no time was the chaperone rule more important than when a man invited a woman to go for a "drive" in his car. As the popularity of automobiles spread and they became, in effect, mobile "Love Seats" – one critic called them "house[s] of prostitution on wheels" – they eventually shouldered much of the blame for the so-called decline of adolescent morality. But even when the automobile was in its infancy, Canadians understood its romantic possibilities and "perils." Certainly Prim Rose did, for she made a point of emphasizing that single women of *all* classes should never accompany men on automobile drives without a chaperone, especially after dark. "It may be perfectly safe," she said, "or it may not. The risk is too great to be incurred except in some emergency" and "many a girl has bitterly rued her own imprudence in this direction."[77]

Just as perilous as too few people on a driving date was too *many*. A crowded automobile, Prim Rose insisted, was rife with danger. First of all, it posed a hazard to a woman's dignity. "Under no circumstances – short of an earthquake – should two girls agree to drive with two men in a one-seated vehicle," she asserted, for "to do so would be to forfeit their own self-respect and the respect of their companions."[78] Furthermore, the physical closeness of the vehicle's mixed-company occupants presented a *moral* hazard:

> The practice of overcrowding a small vehicle is a very reprehensible one. There is nothing to recommend it. It is uncomfortable, undignified, and dangerous.... No really nice girl

image not available

In the pre-war years, Prim Rose considered unchaperoned automobile outings such as this morally dangerous and advised young women against them. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA-1665-7.*

> would countenance such an arrangement as sitting on the knee of another person in a carriage, nor would she allow any one but a child to sit on her knee.[79]

Either way, such transgressions debased a woman's reputation and weakened her marital prospects.[80]

vii. Physical Intimacy

If a concern about physical intimacy lay behind part of the chaperonage rule, it also coloured much of courtship etiquette in general. Generally speaking, any physical contact between single men and women (or "familiarity," as it was called), prior to engagement, was strictly forbidden; "it is considered vulgar to reveal any sign of intimacy in public," wrote Prim Rose.[81] This included even the benign act of walking arm-in-arm. The

The physical distance between the bachelors and maidens of these Ontario couples says much about the prudishness of the pre-war years. Physical contact between unmarried couples was unacceptable, especially in public. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, C 130-5-0-0-108.*

only time a "well-bred" woman could accept a man's arm was after dark, when few could witness such a brazen display of intimacy, and only if her escort was protecting her from some hazard, such as a slippery pavement or a crowd, or if she was debilitated in some way; even in such "emergencies," a woman would not take a man's arm, but would wait until it was offered. And when crossing the street, she added, a man "should not touch a woman's arm to assist her, unless she is old or infirm or there is danger."[82] The rules were only slightly more lenient for engaged couples. "After dark, a man walking with his fiancée may take her arm," said Prim Rose, "as this gives a slight assistance to a lady," but "he would do so in a dignified way, not as if he were caressing her, which would be very bad form and would make her appear common. It would be unpardonable to put his arm around her waist in any public place."[83] In short, and except for dancing – which most Canadians considered good, clean fun – the arbiters of romance strongly discouraged public displays of physical contact between men and women, particularly in the light of day.[84]

Of course, Prim Rose and the others found more amorous forms of physical contact, public or otherwise, even less tolerable. Kissing, for example, was "an unpardonable familiarity before an engagement," she snapped, and "very few men would care to become engaged to a girl who would countenance it"; the same went for holding hands, hugging, and caressing.[85] These were really the outer limits of the "physical liberties" most couples contemplated, and from the many inquiries she received on the subject, Prim Rose was well aware that many couples wanted to take them. She was aware, in particular, that men were making physical advances on their girlfriends, or pressuring them to engage in certain activities, and that they were not sure how to respond. A young Ontario woman, for example, complained to Prim Rose about the "familiarity" shown by a male friend. "I prefer my young man to help me when help is necessary," she wrote, but "otherwise I prefer him to keep his hands off. Am I right or wrong, and how shall I tell him?"[86] Prim Rose was outraged:

> Only a vulgar or an unprincipled man attempts familiarity towards a young girl to whom he is not engaged. A gentleman or any well-brought up youth feels too deep a respect for any girl whom he likes or admires to urge her to do anything unbecoming or of which her parents would disapprove. It is regrettably true that many frivolous and unscrupulous men do

> not hesitate to assume a lover-like attitude to trusting and ignorant girls, who are too ready to be deceived by a man paying them such attentions.[87]

In other words, a "well-bred man" would not make physical demands of his girlfriend. He wouldn't even *ask* a woman he wasn't engaged to if, for example, he could kiss her. This would be "equivalent to an insult."[88]

At the same time, Prim Rose encouraged women to resist their boyfriends' pressure and to rebuff any physical advances. "Before her engagement," she told one inquirer, "a self-respecting girl will not allow a young man to indulge in any familiarities whatever, such as holding her hand, putting his arm around her, etc."[89] If she did, the consequences could be dire:

> It is true that many girls in sheer innocence and ignorance of possible consequences think it is 'just fun' to be kissed or caressed by a young man when no one is looking. Unfortunately, the 'fun' often leads to bitter repentance and heartbreakings, and when too late the girl would give worlds to undo the harm wrought in the first moment of folly.[90]

Prim Rose even told women how to respond to unwanted advances. "A girl can easily check the least tendency to undue familiarity," she explained, "by merely looking surprised and bringing the interview to as speedy a termination as possible. If a man has merely been indiscreet and thoughtless, he will promptly apologize when reminded of his fault"; if this fails, she should simply "tell him plainly, [and] he will most likely see the matter as you wish him to."[91] "But what if he ends the courtship because of her stance?," asked several women. Not to worry, Prim Rose assured them, for such a man is not worth having. "The man who fails to appreciate and honour and safeguard the innocence and delicacy of feeling of a young girl before their engagement," she said, "will certainly not make a model husband."[92] Nor could he care much for his girlfriend – other than physically – if he is willing to end the relationship over the issue. If he is truly a gentleman, however, he will respect her all the more for her stance, for her "modesty and dignity."[93]

More interesting are the reasons Prim Rose gave for her advice: by withholding physical affection until she was engaged, a woman found out

if her suitor really cared for her, or if he was only interested in physical gratification. She also avoided the "humiliation" that would inevitably follow from granting physical liberties to a man she did not eventually marry, as well as the perception that she was – to use an opprobrious modern term – "used goods."[94] Most important, said Prim Rose, physical abstention preserved a woman's "honour" and "dignity," and therefore her image in the eyes of her suitor and potential suitors; to all concerned, she remained "a lady." Permitting physical contact, however, made her appear "coarse-minded" or "common," "as if she belonged to quite a different class."[95]

But for all of her talk about women protecting their honour, dignity, modesty, and innocence, by denying their boyfriends physical pleasures, this wasn't the main reason for Prim Rose's advice. If it were, she would not have made the distinction between engaged and pre-engaged couples – condoning some "familiarity" for the former, but not the latter – for surely a woman's modesty, innocence, and so on, were equally vulnerable in either case. Rather, she told women to withhold physical favours mainly to better their chances of securing a marriage proposal. As she told one inquirer, "when a man realizes that the only way to acquire the right to kiss the girl he loves is by becoming formally engaged to her, he will not take long to secure the right."[96] "Nothing hastens an engagement," she told another correspondent, "like a determination on the girl's part to withhold all the privileges claimed by a lover until an offer of marriage has been made and accepted."[97] In other words, Prim Rose advised women to use their bodies as bait to elicit a marriage commitment from men.

viii. Correspondence

Almost as unacceptable as physical intimacy during courtship was the exchange of letters. "It is better that a man and woman should not correspond until they are engaged to be married," said Prim Rose, "or at least have an understanding."[98] This was necessary for the woman's protection. Letters, after all, represented a permanent record of an association, and certain associations could prove embarrassing to an unsuspecting woman – if the man turned out to be an unsavoury character, for example. So might the letters' more *personal* contents, which could come to light long after the woman's feelings and the relationship had changed. "Some young men" might also share the contents of their girlfriend's letters with other men. This, too, could prove embarrassing.[99]

If an unengaged couple did begin corresponding, however, they had to observe a particular etiquette. In fact, the rules governing this simple ritual were excessive, even by the fastidious standards of the day. "In writing letters," noted one etiquette manual, "certain and specific rules of etiquette … hold *despotic sway*, and unless one is acquainted with these, he must be considered by those who are, as more or less uncultivated."[100] To begin with, the man was expected to initiate the process. Either he would ask the woman, in person, to write to him or, more likely, he would write first, usually after first getting her permission to do so.[101] A woman, however, would never ask a man to write to her; this "would be rather lacking in delicacy and good taste" said Prim Rose. Nor would she *open* a correspondence with a man, "except in some emergency," such as "unconquerable shyness" on the man's part; otherwise, "only a foolish girl seeks to begin a correspondence with a man friend."[102]

Before a woman could begin what was, in effect, a correspondence courtship, however, she had to get permission from her parents, who were responsible for protecting her from undesirable suitors; this was especially necessary when the relationship was primarily a long-distance one and where the man was unknown in the woman's community. She had to make sure, as well, to write nothing in her letters "to which they [her parents] might take exception" and had to allow her parents to read the letters she received, at least until she was twenty-five.[103] Even so, Prim Rose advised unengaged couples to exchange letters no more than "once or twice a month."[104]

Just as important were the contents of the letters. Men were instructed to be courteous and respectful, as always, but women were told to be this, and more. In particular, they were told to be dignified and reserved at all times, which essentially meant avoiding personal comments, gossip, and jokes. "The only way a lady might injure herself by writing letters," wrote Prim Rose, "is to descend to flippancy, familiarity, or personalities such as are only permissible among relatives or very intimate friends. But a 'lady' does not usually forget her dignity to that extent."[105] In another instance, Prim Rose told an inquirer that "in writing to a man, the greatest reserve and delicacy should be maintained. This does not mean that a letter should be stiff and formal. It may be cheery and amusing, but not undignified, familiar, or sentimental."[106] A letter of the wrong sort would not only reflect badly on the woman, making her appear less than ladylike, but might also come back to haunt her. "The occasional note, gracefully worded, may

be safely sent to any male acquaintance or friend," suggested Prim Rose, but a letter that "becomes confidential or intimate may be produced at an inconvenient time."[107] She gave no examples, but implied that a woman's documented feelings might one day be used against her, after those feelings had changed.

For reasons unstated, Prim Rose also advised *men* to be somewhat reserved in their letters. The letters should be "friendly, but formal," she said, and offered the following sample:

> Dear Miss Brown,
>
> You were kind enough to say I might write to you, and I am glad to avail myself of the privilege. First, I must thank you and all the family for the charming hospitality which made my visit to your home such a real pleasure.… Since my return I have been hard at work, etc, etc.…
> Please give my regards to your family. I hope for the honour of a reply before long.…
>
> Your sincerely,
> Mr. Blank[108]

The opening and closing of such a letter, however, depended on the degree of intimacy between the couple. Unless the woman had granted her suitor the privilege of addressing her by her Christian name, he would open with "Dear" so-and-so and would close with "Yours sincerely" or "Yours faithfully," except where the couple was close, in which case he would sign it "Yours very faithfully," or "With love, yours affectionately"; presumably a woman had the right to do the same.[109] And as far as when he might expect a reply, he should be patient. "A lady is not expected to reply as promptly as a man," she told one anxious fellow, "so no offence should be taken if two or even three weeks elapse without bringing the desired missive."[110]

Perhaps the strangest rule Prim Rose felt obliged to emphasize concerned women giving photographs of themselves to their suitors, or being photographed with them. She strongly advised against both practices. Her explanation, however, was unclear. "Giving one's photograph to a young man is … a very foolish act," she told "Motherless Jane":

> Its usual fate is to be displayed on his dressing-table with a number of others, or to be thrown in a bureau drawer where it is soon forgotten – or occasionally inspected by a curious chambermaid.… Girls should keep this fact in mind. It will help them to be prudent about scattering proofs of their regard in various directions.[111]

What Prim Rose was probably saying is that a lady's *image* – like a lady herself – should not be treated so cavalierly. More understandable was her warning about being photographed with a man. Should the man be found to be unsavoury, such a photograph could prove awkward or embarrassing. "Not long ago I was shown a photograph of a defaulting bank employee in a group with two young girls," she wrote. "The authorities were trying to trace his whereabouts by following up his connection with these girls – rather an unpleasant situation for the latter to find themselves in."[112] In short, a single woman, especially one "aspiring to social recognition," had to exercise great caution in the presence of a camera and should only give her picture to her fiancé or a near relative.[113]

Engagement

After courtship came engagement. After all, when a man began courting a woman, everyone expected he would eventually propose marriage and that she would agree. When a woman accepted a man's invitation to accompany him on various outings, noted Prim Rose, it was "an indication that his suit is favoured and he may take an early opportunity of making a formal offer of marriage."[114] Indeed "it would be an impertinence to ask the consent of the parents to court their daughter and subsequently to decide that the girl would not do for a wife."[115] Courtship, in other words, was a serious business; once entered into, it was an almost certain prelude to marriage.

When a suitor was "quite sure" of his feelings towards his girlfriend, and those of his girlfriend towards him, and provided he was (or would soon be) in a position to *support* a wife, he would profess his love for her and propose marriage.[116] What's more, he would not be vague about his feelings and would not usually do one without the other. "It is not fair to a girl to make love to her without becoming engaged," Prim Rose told a "Bashful Bachelor," and "a man should not be faint-hearted about his wooing, [for]

nothing pleases a woman more than a straightforward avowal of love and admiration for her."[117] He was also expected do these things without delay. There was, after all, his girlfriend's *health* to consider. "A long period of suspense and uncertainty," wrote Prim Rose, without elaborating, "is very injurious to a girl's health and spirits."[118] It could also prove harmful in other respects:

> When a man's attentions to a girl become marked so that their names are coupled together and other men kept at a distance, it is quite time for him to reveal his intentions. It is very embarrassing for a girl to be unable to say whether a devoted admirer is in love with her or not, and it is unfair to spoil the chances of other men and perhaps prevent the girl from making a satisfactory marriage.[119]

Prim Rose also considered an expeditious proposal a show of respect. "Kubelik, the violinist, was engaged to his present wife ten minutes after he was introduced to her," she told one writer. "The average man makes up his mind more slowly, but the sooner he offers marriage to the girl of his choice, the higher the compliment to the lady."[120]

As for the proposal itself, "it is a very simple thing," she said. "All that is necessary is to tell the girl you love her very much and want her to be your wife." The man might say, for example, "'Mary, you know I love you. Do you think you could be happy as my wife?,'" or "'I love you better than any one else in the world. I want you for my wife.'"[121] If the woman said "no," she should be courteous about it and also provide an explanation. Cooke's counsel was similar. "A woman must always remember that a proposal of marriage is the highest honour a man can pay her, and, if she must refuse it, to do so in such a fashion as to spare his feelings as much as possible."[122] If the proposal took her by surprise and she was unsure how to respond, she should defer her answer, telling her suitor that "the matter is too important to be decided without reflection."[123] Even so, said Prim Rose, her suitor would be fully justified in ending the relationship and directing his affections elsewhere.

If the woman said "yes," but was under twenty-one – the age of majority – the man then needed the consent of her parents. This consent was likely a formality, for had the parents disapproved of him as a potential son-in-law they would have made their feelings known early in the courtship.[124]

Nevertheless, said Prim Rose, he had to observe a certain etiquette. In his meeting with the parents, and without his fiancée present,

> the man states simply that he has had the good fortune to win her affections, and that he hopes for the approval of her parents. He then gives an account of his position and prospects, mentions how soon he will be ready to marry, and describes briefly the kind of home he expects to offer his bride. If the parents decide favourably, he thanks them and asks to be allowed to make known their decision to his fiancée at once. It is customary after a few words of congratulation, to leave the young couple together to enjoy their new happiness and to seal the engagement in the time-honoured way.[125]

But parents could withhold their consent, if they felt, for example, that the man was incapable of supporting their daughter. They might also do so if they felt the period of engagement was too long. "A girl's family are naturally opposed to a long engagement," wrote Prim Rose. "It is inconvenient for them in many ways, and makes the girl a subject for gossip and comment to an extent that becomes very tiresome to her relations"; generally speaking, anything more than a year was too long.[126] And whether or not the underage daughter agreed with her parents' decision, she would have no choice but to abide by it and retract her acceptance of the marriage proposal.

When a woman turned twenty-one, of course, she no longer needed her parents' consent to marry. But Prim Rose advised her to seek this consent anyway, out of love and respect for them, especially if she still lived at home. If her parents disapproved of the engagement, but for reasons the daughter felt were poor, she should feel free to marry without their consent. If, however, she considered her parents' objections valid, she should "at least wait for some time to see whether it will be possible for her to give up the lover who is considered unworthy of her."[127] Either way, securing the approval of a woman's parents to the union was an indispensable ritual, regardless of her age or living circumstances.[128]

With parental approval secured, and within a day or two after the proposal, the man would then give his fiancée an engagement ring. The ring was a visible reminder of the couple's duty to one another as well as a signal to others of their bond. Prim Rose did not recommend, however, that the

woman choose the ring, "as she would naturally select the most costly one shown by the jeweler, and perhaps one beyond the means of the buyer."[129] Once purchased, the man was to give the ring to his fiancée informally, quietly slipping it on the third finger of her left hand "the first time the lovers meet tête-à-tête after their engagement has been sanctioned by the girl's parents."[130] Only then would the man inform his own family of the engagement. They would, in turn, congratulate his fiancée, either in writing or in person, and welcome her into the family. Otherwise no official announcement was made, and no formal affair or reception was held to mark the occasion. Relatives and friends of the couple would be told of the engagement informally, through notes or in person, and could either visit the bride or send congratulatory cards or flowers.[131]

Once a couple became engaged, the rules of romance changed. Because each was now more firmly bound to the other, for example, they were not permitted to "pay or accept attentions" from the opposite sex as much as before.[132] "When a girl becomes engaged," explained Prim Rose,

> she *usually* declines the attentions of her other men friends, giving her fiancé the preference on every occasion. When he is not at liberty to accompany her, she may accept an offer of escort from an intimate friend, but not from the same friend on *successive* occasions, as that might cause jealousy or even gossip.... [And] it would not be fair to her fiancé if a girl received young men visitors *frequently* alone. Neither should she carry on a *regular* correspondence with other young men.[133]

An engaged man was bound by the same restriction. At dances, for example, he could not dance with any woman he pleased. In particular, he could not appear to be courting another woman. So if his fiancée was dancing with another man, and "if he wishes to flatter … [her]," said Prim Rose, "he will devote himself to the elder ladies, or to the quiet girls who are not much in request." He could only dance with the "prettiest" and "gayist" girls if they were the hosts.[134]

Although engaged couples surrendered certain freedoms, they gained others: they could call each other by their given names, exchange photographs of themselves, correspond freely and less formally, and could see each other without a chaperone.[135] The gift-giving rule changed too. The man still did most of the gift-giving, but the more expensive and personal

items were no longer off-limits. He could now give his fiancée "kid gloves, a lace handkerchief, articles of jewellery, silver accessories for the work bag, dressing-table, or desk, a handsome purse or shopping bag, a dainty clock, a silver photo frame, a cut glass flower vase, or any dainty article which he thinks she will like."[136] Prim Rose said nothing about what a woman could give her fiancé – presumably something small, but manly, as before – but engagement clearly had its material advantages.

One area where the rules of engagement changed little was physical intimacy. Here men were still expected to take the initiative. "Even when engaged, a well-bred girl never makes advances to her future husband," wrote Prim Rose. "Modesty and a becoming reserve should characterize all her actions. It is the man's part to take the initiative," and for her "to invite endearments would probably displease, and certainly disappoint him."[137] Not that Prim Rose *encouraged* male initiative. Despite her belief that women should reward their boyfriends physically for proposing marriage, she placed strict limits on what those rewards should be. Some handholding and kissing was fine – "a certain amount of silliness is allowed to engaged couples" she told one reader[138] – but overt and excessive displays of affection were inappropriate for true gentlemen and ladies. She advised engaged couples, when amongst others, "to act with discretion":

> It is quite possible for a man to show every conceivable attention to his fiancée, and yet avoid committing the slightest offence against good taste. Without being capricious or exacting, an engaged girl should maintain a pleasing reserve, and cultivate in herself the deeper graces of true sympathy.[139]

Even in private, said Prim Rose, a woman should be "incessantly watchful and firm" in dealing with the inevitable male quest for physical gratification.[140] If she wasn't, she would forfeit her fiancé's respect and drive him away. "In most European countries an engaged man would not dare to ask the privileges which a fiancé in England and America claims as a matter of course," she told one inquirer, and

> if a girl permitted or encouraged him to do so, she would forfeit his respect and he would not care to marry her. Our conventions are not so strict, and parents seem to take for granted that after engagement a young man may kiss and caress his

> sweetheart as often as he feels inclined to do so. Too much freedom in this direction is undesirable and dangerous. A girl who does not wish to cheapen herself in the eyes of her love will be modest and reserved during the whole period of engagement, so that her bridegroom will indeed be eager for his wedding day.[141]

As for sexual intercourse, she told engaged couples they should wait until their wedding day. Couples should "not … anticipate the happiness which it will be theirs to enjoy unreservedly after marriage," and men who expected their fiancées to have sex with them before then were thinking only of their own selfish needs.[142]

Disengagement

Sometimes, however, the much-anticipated day never came. Although engagement was almost always followed by marriage, engagements could be broken. If the man's financial prospects changed, for example, the woman might reconsider her commitment or her parents might withdraw their consent. If one of the partners refused to stop seeing, or corresponding with, members of the opposite sex, this, too, was grounds for disengagement.[143] Or perhaps the feelings of one, or both, of the partners had changed; and as Prim Rose said, "no self-respecting man or woman … wants to be deceived by a continued pretense of love that has ceased to exist."[144] Nor should a man or woman's commitment to marry someone for whom their feelings had changed come before their long-term happiness. Better to remain single, she told readers, "than in an unfortunate union which is bound to grow more and more irksome as the years go by."[145]

Fortunately for all concerned, the process of disengagement was governed (for once) by a few simple rules. It was to be effected, first of all, by a gracious letter from either person. This letter "should be very carefully worded to produce an effect of kindness and dignity," explained Prim Rose:

> If the man takes the initiative, the note should breathe deep respect for the lady, and express regret for the pain the contents may cause her. The writer should also thank her for the

> confidence reposed in him and other past favours, and ask to be permitted to wish her much future happiness and to have the privilege of serving her as a friend on any occasion his services may be required.[146]

"If a quarrel has preceded the final rupture," she hastened to add, "the working of the note will be more formal."[147] Prim Rose said nothing more about the note's contents, but Cooke felt that a *woman* who broke an engagement might want to cite her reasons, so as to not seem capricious, whereas a man should do so only if the reason was a change in his financial circumstances; blaming his fiancée for his decision would be unchivalrous.[148] The engagement broken, the woman would then collect the gifts her fiancé had given her and return them to him "by special messenger or by express"; he would, in turn, acknowledge receipt of these gifts.[149] Each person would then be free to go their separate way.

What, then, can be said about romance etiquette before the Great War? It was certainly complex. The Victorian and early Edwardian years were known for their ornateness and clutter – in style, in decor, in manners – and romance etiquette was no exception. The long list of rules also illustrates the era's fondness for regulating personal behaviour, particularly morals.[150] As a result, almost every aspect of romance was subjected to a specific code of behaviour, from how a couple behaved on a date to their exchange of letters, gifts, and conversation. To the young men and women of the time, especially those in the highest social circles, the legalities of romance must have seemed truly daunting.

More important is what these rules tell us about the assumptions of those who promoted and, in turn, followed them. These individuals assumed, for example, that men should take the initiative. As Prim Rose said more than once, "a man always likes and respects a woman much more for letting him go more than half-way in making any advances."[151] So it was up to bachelors to initiate relationships, courtship, gift-giving, correspondence, physical intimacy, and engagement; men made the moves, women responded. Perhaps this was to be expected in a highly paternalistic social

order, where men came first, both by law and by custom. More likely, men took the initiative because they revered women for their supposedly innate special qualities, like compassion and moral rectitude. A true "ladylike" woman was, therefore, a prize to be pursued, and, while in their presence, said Prim Rose, men were to adopt an attitude of "extreme respect and deference under all circumstances."[152] Because Canadian society considered the average woman almost royalty, in other words, it was natural that men did the "wooing."

Given the exalted position of women, and their presumed frailty and innocence, the rule-makers and their followers also assumed that single women needed protection. They needed protection against dangers to their person. So men were expected to walk closest to the road when escorting them, offer them their arms in hazardous or uncomfortable situations, and not delay in making their feelings known and proposing marriage. They needed protection against pernicious gossip that might harm their social standing and marital prospects. And so there were rules about women calling on, being photographed with, and appearing in public with men. And to preserve their honour and sexual purity, they needed protection from the lascivious advances of their boyfriends; hence the chaperone requirement and the strict rules about physical intimacy. Where a double standard existed in the romance rules, it was usually rooted in the need to safeguard the physical and moral well-being of the "fair sex."

Perhaps the most prominent feature of pre-war romance etiquette, however, was the power it assigned to a young woman's parents. This power was substantial, especially among the middle and upper classes. Among other things, a mother had the power to either delay or advance her daughter's "debut" and could, along with her husband, deny invitations to male or female callers, refuse to consent to potential suitors they deemed unsuitable, establish curfews for outings, and withhold her consent to marriage. Sometimes parental authority was absolute, as when the girl was underage or still lived in her parent's home. In most cases it was merely powerful, based as it was on the widespread belief that children had to "respect" their parents by obeying their wishes. Or as Prim Rose told one inquirer flat out, "it is contrary to good breeding and to the Christian conception of filial duty to ignore a parent's wishes, especially in an open and flagrant manner."[153] Either way, pre-war parents exercised an enormous influence over the romantic destinies of their children. Granted, this influence was weaker than in the previous century, when youth had spent more time at home

than among their peers, but it was still strong.[154] This sometimes made romance difficult. So did the many rules and stifling formality of courtship. But these were minor irritations. In the quest for romance, Canadians of this generation faced much greater difficulties.

4

Courtship Hardship

Historians have told us much about the hardships of Canadians in the early 1900s. They have told us that for all of its growth and promise, Canada was not a paradise: many workers suffered low wages, dangerous working conditions, recurring unemployment, and uncaring, if not repressive bosses; aboriginals, visible minorities, immigrants, Catholics, and Jews faced discrimination and hostility from the native-born; women of all classes and ethnic backgrounds were treated as second-class citizens before the law; rural depopulation in central and eastern Canada splintered families and eroded communities, while rapid urbanization and industrial growth produced congested, dirty, and unhealthy cities. These hardships were all very real.

Historians have said little, however, about the *romantic* hardships of the time. And yet these, too, were very real.[1] Canadians would have found things like poverty and discrimination easier to endure alongside someone special with whom they could share their troubles. In the spring of 1906, a lonely westerner sent a poem to the *Family Herald* called "The Bachelor's Complaint." Two of the verses went as follows:

> "When plunged in deep and dire distress,
> When anxious cares my heart oppress,
> Who whispers hope of happiness?
> Nobody

> When sickness comes in sorrow's train,
> And grief distracts the fevered brain,
> Who sympathizes with my pain?
> Nobody"[2]

This bachelor was determined to find a wife, as were many others. And women wanted husbands. But finding and keeping that "special someone" was often difficult. For many Canadians, the road to the altar was strewn with obstacles and painful bumps, and, for some, the journey ended unhappily.

Lonely Hearts

In the quest for romance, the most hard-pressed individual was, like our lonely poet friend, the western bachelor. As opportunities for making a good living, farming or fishing, declined in Canada's more settled regions in the early 1900s, many men heeded the popular cry "Go west, young man!" and moved to the "Golden West" to take up homesteads; in the two decades before the Great War, over 350,000 Canadians from eastern and central Canada moved to region, most of them men.[3] The bachelor-homesteader's goal was to put in a few years of hard work – clearing his land, planting crops, erecting buildings, raising livestock – in order to earn enough money to "afford" a wife, perhaps a girlfriend he had left behind and promised to one day marry. If he wasn't financially secure, she might decline, or her parents might forbid her to marry. For many men it was also a matter of pride: they considered it less than manly to marry before being able to support a wife in comfortable circumstances.[4]

But things didn't always work out as planned. Farming in the West was more difficult than elsewhere – the growing season shorter, the markets more remote, the farm labour more scarce. This meant it took longer for men to get established. Over 40 per cent of homesteaders, in fact, failed to "prove up" – that is, acquire title to their free quarter-section of land by developing thirty acres and establishing a $300 home within three years. In the infamous Palliser Triangle region of southern Saskatchewan and Alberta, the land was so dry that most of the original homesteaders eventually gave up.[5] "There are many men who want to make a decent home first," wrote

a B.C. bachelor, "but hard times come, and they have to struggle along in difficulties."[6] By the time they did get established, eight or nine years may have passed, and with them the opportunity of finding a wife: the pool of prospective mates got smaller, men lost touch with women "back home," and many eastern girlfriends simply got tired of waiting and married someone else.[7] "Now that we have better surroundings," lamented an Alberta bachelor in 1920, "the girls we knew at home are nearly all married or gone elsewhere."[8] Looking back from the age of fifty, B.C.'s "Dan C.," who had postponed marriage until he had built a comfortable home, was even more distraught: "It is only now that I see that I then made the biggest mistake of my life."[9]

Even when a western farmer or rancher was able to establish himself quickly, or didn't consider it a prerequisite to marriage, he still faced some difficult romantic realities. The most serious was one not seen in Canada since the early days of New France: namely, a severe shortage of women. The massive male migration of the early 1900s created a surplus of single women in central Canada and the Maritimes, and a shortage in the newly opened West and B.C. In 1904, when the West was still called the North-West, the editor of the *Western Home Monthly*'s (*WHM*) soon-to-be-established matrimonial column announced that,

> every while the post brings me a semi-confidential letter from a young farmer in the North-West – sometimes from a middle-aged or an old one – setting forth that the writer, though in a position to marry, and in every sense willing, is shut off from the possibility of sharing his heart and home with a suitable partner because there are literally none within a radius of a hundred miles of his lonely ranch or homestead.[10]

Over the next ten to fifteen years, the West's bachelors would send an unending flow of such letters to the magazine's editor, and to the *Family Herald's* Prim Rose as well, complaining, not about the region's harsh climate and terrain, or about freight rates, tariffs, eastern banks, or the West's political powerlessness, but about the dearth of "marriageable women"; to most bachelors, this was the West's "greatest drawback and hardship."[11] A frequent observation, this from Alberta's "Highland Mac," was that "there are only three girls within a radius of ten miles of my home, and they are redskins, so I haven't much chance to fall in love, have I?"[12] It may have

image not available

Maurice Ingeveld of Millarville, Alberta, looks a bit forlorn as he sits in his one-room log cabin in 1908. It was spring, after all, and, like other young men, his fancy may have turned to love. He was just one among many lonely western bachelors. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA-227-8.*

been a cliché, but the phrase "one girl for every ten bachelors" was common currency among the West's exasperated bachelors.

The reality wasn't far off. In 1911, men outnumbered women in the rural areas of the West by a substantial 46 per cent; in Alberta, the figure was 64 per cent.[13] In such circumstances, even the mere *sight* of a woman could arouse intense interest. One day a Saskatchewan farmer noticed a car driving past his farm carrying what appeared to be two "ladies." Having not seen a female for six months, he hurried down his long driveway towards the road, "but as they passed quickly," he recalled, "I didn't have time to get out to the gate to see what they looked like."[14] A few years earlier "An Eastern Girl Out West" told Prim Rose readers of the reception she

Bachelors outnumbered maidens in Canada's rural areas, especially in the West. In part to commiserate, the practice of men doubling-up on the homestead was common, as were "Bachelors Homes" – boarding houses essentially – like this unique "Bachelor's Hall" boat house in Vancouver, ca. 1900. *Library and Archives Canada, Howard Morton Brown Collection, C-000365.*

had received upon her arrival in the region: "I have come to Saskatchewan and I find myself in a settlement where bachelors predominate, who look upon me with the blank amazement comparable only to the young school boy, who visits a city dime museum and sees for the first time a snake-charmer gracefully twining the venomous reptile about her body."[15] The shortage of single women abated as the West filled up – the surplus of men over women in rural areas fell to 26 per cent in the 1920s – but westerners continued to report a noticeable surplus of "Jacks" over "Jills" in these years, particularly outside the cities. "Having resided in some nine different localities," wrote a Saskatchewan woman in 1918, "and having been in touch with hundreds of people in many others, I emphatically deny that

girls are plentiful in country districts."[16] Two years earlier, after an Alberta woman requested male correspondents from the Prim Rose column, she received "over seventy replies, largely from lonely men seeking wives."[17] Sometimes the Western Man's frustrations got the better of him. Claiming to speak for most B.C. bachelors, one man told Prim Rose readers that "we, too, are learning that somewhere in the near future things will be different, that is, when the C.P.R. ships into this country *girls*, instead of Chinks and Hindoos."[18] More often, lonely bachelors simply lamented the situation and expressed the hope that more families with young girls would soon move into their district.

The situation was better for the "hired man," some of whom worked for farmers with eligible daughters or domestic servants. But we still know too little about the romantic lives of these men – who constituted 20 per cent of the West's bachelors – to say for sure. Perhaps their poor economic prospects, along with their reputation for shiftlessness, vulgarity, and immorality, offset any romantic advantages they enjoyed over the bachelor farmers and ranchers? When one hired man asked permission to marry his employer's daughter, the farmer told him to "Get off the farm! … He said I was no damn good, had no prospects, no money, I was just a drifter off the boat, and there was going to be no marriage to a drifter." In the public mind, the hired man was often associated with the hordes of rowdy young men from eastern Canada who took the "harvest train" west each fall to help with the annual harvest and sometimes molested or harassed women along the way. All we know for sure is that the hired man was far less likely to marry.[19]

The shortage of single women meant, in turn, intense competition among the region's bachelors. "I do not like baching," wrote "De Wolfe" from Alberta's Peace River district. "There is only one girl living near me, but as there are about twenty young men courting her, I am afraid I will have to continue baching." A fellow Albertan was equally disillusioned. "I have been baching for a couple of years," he wrote, "but am getting tired of it. I have a nice … car, but whenever I go to take a girl out for a drive, I have to go ten or fifteen miles, and when I get there, sometimes there are three or four cars ahead of me, so it's too late."[20] What's more, families who moved into the region, and had eligible daughters, found themselves besieged with offers of help from nearby bachelors eager to attract the daughters' attention.[21]

The West's single women did not stay single for long. Sisters who accompanied their brothers to the West, ostensibly to serve as helpmates, were soon married, while migrating eastern teachers and domestic servants quickly found themselves the object of regular male visitors. "Nowhere in the world does a girl queen it more than out here," wrote one B.C. farmer. "She counts her admirers like sand on the seashore, gets engaged about twice a year, and is petted and spoiled till no good for a wife or a mother."[22] This, too, caused frustration for the western bachelor. "I am baching on a homestead and have been now for three years," wrote one Manitoban, "not because I am in love with it, but because I am compelled to, as there are no girls at all around here, and if one does come around here the first thing you hear is of her getting married."[23] Another Manitoban complained that "the girls that do condescend to come out here are grabbed so quickly by the city bachelors that we slower farmers have no chance at all."[24] Sizing up the grim situation, many men simply resigned themselves to perpetual bachelorhood, others to marrying a "half-breed" or "foreigner."[25]

The scarcity of women wasn't just a regional problem; it was a problem in rural areas generally. The rapid growth of Canadian cities in the late nineteenth century created many new employment and recreational opportunities that acted as a powerful magnet for rural residents. Between 1890 and 1920, half a million Canadians left the rural areas of central Canada and the Maritimes.[26] Most were young women, drawn to places like Toronto, Hamilton, Montreal, and Halifax in search of jobs and eager to sample the cities' commercial amusements. The result was a shortage of eligible women in rural areas and a surplus in urban areas, a situation aggravated during the winter months, when bored young women escaped the countryside temporarily for the more exciting towns and cities nearby.[27] By the 1920s, rural men in their twenties outnumbered rural women in the same age group by 9 per cent. In urban areas, the reverse was true.[28]

To make matters worse, the revival of the resource sector, particularly mining and lumbering, meant that many bachelors were moving in the *opposite* direction – into the bush, where women were even scarcer. "We have a jolly lot of boys in the camp," wrote a timekeeper in a large Ontario lumber camp, but "there are none of the fair sex for miles around to invite to our musical entertainments, or to share in the grand repasts our cook provides." One such cook, in northern B.C., admitted that "it is rather lonely sometimes when we do not see any women for four and five months at a time," and a bachelor from northern Ontario reminded readers that

"like the West, 'New Ontario' is newly settled and consequently there are very few girls here."[29]

Women, too, were affected by the migratory habits of Canadians in these years. With so many men heading west or into the bush, young women in central and eastern Canada found themselves vying for the attention of relatively fewer bachelors. "If bachelors are in the majority in the West," wrote a Nova Scotia teacher, "they are very much in the minority in the East.… In the town where I taught last year there were not more than ten or twelve young men … while there were more than ten times that number of very nice girls, all of whom are well educated, refined and good housekeepers."[30] Twenty-one-year-old "Buddie" was one of many Ontario maidens who lodged a similar complaint. "What a funny world this seems to be," she mused. "Some parts of it seem to be all bachelors, especially the West. Why don't they come east where there are too many girls and not enough men to go around?"[31] "Buddie" was likely familiar with the folk song "The Poor Little Girls of Ontario," part of which referred to the male exodus she and many others mourned:

> One by one they all clear out,
> Thinking to better themselves, no doubt,
> Caring little how far they go,
> From the poor little girls of Ontario.[32]

Nevertheless, eastern women did not face nearly the same scarcity of the opposite sex as western men. The West, although it was filling up quickly, was still a frontier region, with comparatively few women spread over its huge expanse; eastern Canada, by comparison, was a smaller, more settled region where large numbers of men could still be found. In other words, marital prospects were far better for eastern women than for western men.

The shortage of women in the West, and in rural areas elsewhere, was made worse by the relatively few opportunities single men in those areas had to *meet* women and to socialize with them. The average western bachelor seems to have liked the West very much but would have agreed with the Saskatchewan farmer who told the *Family Herald* that "one thing is lacking, and that is better social opportunities." "Once in a while there is a social gathering of some kind," wrote another, "but even then one is alone 95 per cent of the time."[33] The western bachelor could not hope to encounter a woman simply by going for a walk or hopping on a streetcar, like he

could if he lived in a large town or city; usually he needed to saddle up a horse or walk a long way to visit a farmer's daughter or domestic servant, or a female teacher who might be boarding nearby.

More serious was the absence of meeting places. Many smaller communities in the West did not yet have churches, for example, and for their religious services they relied on the occasional visits of touring ministers, who set up shop temporarily in a local schoolhouse or parishioner's home.[34] Romantically, this was important, since in most communities across Canada religious institutions were the focal point of social life – "the meeting place, the social centre of the community," one rural resident recalled.[35] A popular venue for heterosexual interaction, as it had been for years, was the local church, where young people could get acquainted after Sunday services or at church-sponsored suppers or dances. "The churches were where you met the girls," recalled a former railroad worker. "That's where everything started."[36] But for many young westerners, this was simply not an option. As late as 1930, residents of rural Saskatchewan and Alberta had to travel at least seven kilometres to the nearest church.[37]

The only regular social gatherings available to many western bachelors were dances. These were usually held in a town hall or one-room school house, as often as once a week or as infrequently as every few months. Even when they were held regularly, however, the number of bachelors in attendance greatly outnumbered the number of maids. Writing from B.C. in 1907, "The Similkameen Bachelor" told Prim Rose readers that there were few marriageable women for the fruit farmers, miners, and ranchers of his district. "In winter many dances are given and quite a few stag dances à la gramophone style," he admitted, "but … one rarely sees more than six young ladies to about thirty bachelors."[38] Facing a similar situation, an Alberta bachelor reported that "there are lots of dances around here, but a man must either dance with an old lady or else a child." Another complained that "the only pleasure we have here is a few dances and box socials. We go to the dances and take turns with the young married men, holding their babies and dancing with their wives and little daughters." At many dances across the West in these years men were forced to dance with *each other*.[39]

Men of the rural West had other opportunities, besides dances, to meet and court women: garden parties, picnics, agricultural fairs, baseball games, and church "socials" in summer and fall; skating, sledding, and card parties during the winter months; and year-round music, singing, and discussion

Dances were a popular venue in which to meet and begin courting a potential mate, but in less-populated areas they were infrequently held. Perhaps for this reason, the 1911 "Quadrille Party Ball" in St. John's, Alberta, seems to have drawn a large and well-attired crowd. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA-4182-4.*

groups organized by young people themselves. But such opportunities were necessarily limited in any pioneering region. "We all agree that for young people to get acquainted is a real problem," wrote a Quebec woman,

> Young people's clubs, debating societies, etc., are excellent, and serve the purpose admirably, in general, where they exist. But in remote and new districts such as abound in the West these institutions rarely exist, or do not meet the case, so that the problem for many of our young men to find a life partner is a serious one.[40]

Both the intense popularity of the personal columns and the mass migration of young people to urban centres speak, at least in part, to the lack of romantic venues in turn-of-the-century rural Canada, particularly the West.

Women were more abundant in the towns and cities, of course, along with places to find them: restaurants, theatres, nickelodeons, dance halls, skating rinks, stores, streetcars. But most rural bachelors could not take advantage of this. Men who lived and worked in isolated settings, whether on the farm, in the bush, or on water could not easily leave their jobs to visit the nearest town.[41] Even rural businessmen had trouble finding the time to court. "The trouble with us bachelors," wrote the owner of a B.C. lumber company, "is that we are out looking after our business most of the time and when we come to town we only stay from a week to a month and therefore don't get acquainted with the girls."[42]

Again, the situation was worse for the western bachelor. Western farmers and ranchers were extremely busy, especially during the spring and summer months. Farmers had ploughing, seeding, and harvesting to do, as well as repairing farm equipment, and feeding and butchering livestock; and homesteaders, as mentioned, had only three years in which to "prove up." Ranchers, meanwhile, were constantly moving livestock around in search of better water and pasture, maintaining the health of their herds, repairing fences, and keeping a vigilante eye out for cattle rustlers. Both were year-round occupations that left the region's "sod-busters" and cowboys – who also had to cook their own meals and maintain their primitive shacks – little free time.[43] As a result, explained one bachelor, they "don't have time to go a-courting"; or by the time their day's work was done, said another, they were too tired "to go chasing the girls."[44]

The typical western bachelor also lived far from a town or city. Speaking for a group of recent British immigrants living on a string of farms he dubbed "Bachelor Avenue," one Manitoban explained their predicament:

> We are twenty miles from the nearest town and there is not a girl within that mileage … that came of age, so we haven't much chance to fall in with the Canadian girl so far.… It's not that we are shy, or backward; no, not at all. It's the distance that lies between us and the fair sex, and our stock, which is increasing daily, that robs us of the opportunity.[45]

Owning a car made things easier, but before the 1920s not many bachelors could afford one. Rural roads were not the best in any case – snow-covered in winter and muddy in spring or after a rainfall. During the winter months, in particular, many bachelors became virtual prisoners of the

prairie, stranded in their snow-bound shacks for months on end.[46] Only when the railroad came to their area were they able to visit urban areas more often. "Things look a little brighter now for the single fellows," announced one Saskatchewan bachelor gleefully, in 1914, "as the railroad will be finished this coming summer, and a person will be able to go out and come in a little quicker than by oxen."[47] But the railroads were slow in coming, almost always lagging behind the rapidly expanding settlement. Until 1916, most residents of Saskatchewan and Alberta lived more than sixteen kilometres from the nearest railroad. Nor could most settlers afford the cost of railway transportation in the early years.[48]

Even when the Western Man made it to town, however, he might not meet many eligible women. Rural depopulation and female scarcity across the region meant that many western towns simply had few of them.[49] Describing a Christmas dinner he shared with fifty other bachelors in a town 250 kilometres west of Edmonton, "Handy Andy" remarked ruefully that "of course, none of the fair sex were present except the two waitresses.… The dinner was all that could be desired and the company in good humour, but oh, the longing for a weel kent [i.e., familiar] face!"[50] Recalling the situation in Regina in the 1910s, another bachelor said,

> There were no girls. They were just starting to work in offices, they operated the telephones, worked in cafés and in some of the stores. But they disappeared out of circulation at 6 o'clock and you never saw them again until the next day. Talk about a man's world! Regina was certainly it.[51]

The Western Man faced the added difficulty of obtaining "introductions" to women. How was he to secure these when he was a virtual stranger to the townspeople?[52]

Snobbery was a problem too. The West contained many sons of upper-class British families – the infamous remittance men – and some of these bachelors complained that the women they met were not of the sort their upbringing had led them to desire. The typical Canadian bachelor wanted an educated and refined mate, but some bachelors demanded more. "There must be many Englishmen, like myself," wrote an English-born "gentleman,"

image not available

Here, members of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police detachment in Coutts, Alberta, spend another Christmas dinner in their barracks without female companionship. Their facial expressions tell the story well enough. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA-2436-4.*

> dotted over the country, on the shady side of thirty, of good family and education, bred and accustomed to constant social intercourse with highly educated women.… Such [men] … never lose the desire for intercourse with women of their own ways of thought. That is too much a part of their intimate selves by heritage and the usage of years.[53]

Of course snobbery cut both ways. Many western men complained that the women in their region looked down upon the typical farmer or rancher and, instead, favoured the well-dressed, well-groomed city man – the "snap" or "dude." "I do not mingle much with … girls," wrote a "Lonely Cow Rancher" from Saskatchewan. "The girls around here are not the kind I like. They are generally too stuck-up; won't speak to you unless you are dressed up to kill."[54] Others put their laments to verse:

My farm's a section big and something more,
yet each fair maid my humble suit disdaineth,
to favour those who 'clerk' within the store....
I can't compete against their silly chatter,
Nor match their wondrous collars nor their cuffs,
And painfully I wonder what's the matter,
That I get all cold shoulders and rebuffs.[55]

Even if the average western bachelor could have spent more time in town, in other words, his chances of finding a partner were slim.

He did, however, have another option. The Western Man could always make a trip back east, to his former home, to find a wife. A popular prairie tune of the day reminded him of this option:

So farewell to Alberta, farewell to the West,
It's backwards I'll go to the girl I love best.
I'll go back to the east and get me a wife,
And never eat cornbread the rest of my life.[56]

And some men *did* make visits back home, usually during the less hectic fall and winter months. Or they attended one of the week-long summertime ("At Home") gatherings some eastern towns organized to unite western bachelors and eastern maidens.[57] But such excursions were problematic. Not many farmers or ranchers, for example, could afford to leave their businesses for long. Who would care for their livestock or land while they were gone? Responding to the frequent criticism that the Western Man was simply too *lazy* to find a wife, a "Lonely Bachelor" from Saskatchewan defended his bachelor brethren: the average farmer, he wrote, "cannot get anyone to look after his stock in summer. He must work. In winter he must care for them, thus he is tied down from year to year. Not one of them lives alone from choice." Another bachelor, from Alberta, was more blunt: "A man intent on making a good comfortable home and a little money has no time to go gadding about the country to look for a young woman."[58]

And could the young westerner, struggling to establish himself financially, even *afford* extended visits back home?: the train fare, boarding houses, meals, entertainments. "One lady friend has been wondering why the bachelors don't come down East and find the girls," wrote an Alberta bachelor. "Does our friend realize what the expenses of such an undertaking

would be and the uncertainty of it?"[59] Most western bachelors could not afford such extravagances; money was tight in the pre-war years, which is why many prairie farmers spent the winter months chopping down trees or mining or worked part-time in the summer on threshing or railroad construction crews – they needed the extra money.[60] It was often years before the western bachelor could take a "holiday" back East, and, by then, as mentioned, his chances of finding a partner were slim, especially if his old circle of friends had disappeared.[61]

A more realistic option for western bachelors was to "meet" a woman through the personal columns. And for thousands of lonely westerners, this was the preferred method. In fact, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of these columns to Canada's rural bachelors generally. For many it was their only way of "meeting" women and, through follow-up correspondence, getting to know them better. "The correspondence page is their only salvation," wrote one bachelor of such men; another called it "a Godsend."[62] But western bachelors were especially grateful. "Through your valuable assistance," an Alberta man told the editor of the *WHM*,

> I have already got several lady correspondents with a view to matrimony. Your help is much needed indeed sir by many of us lonely bachelors who have not the necessary time to leave our homes and stock on a wife hunting expedition. I thank you for your kindness in offering me space in your excellent magazine to advertise for a wife.[63]

So popular were the personal columns in the West that female correspondents regularly reported being swamped by letters from the region's eager bachelors.[64] And many a paper courtship was begun in this way, in which correspondents exchanged letters and photographs of themselves, and sometimes even locks of hair. Couples usually met face-to-face before committing themselves to marriage, but some men even *proposed* by mail. More bashful western bachelors, too embarrassed to openly solicit wives, used the columns to advertise for a "housekeeper." The columns were also popular with men from other regions, and with single women in the central and eastern provinces.[65]

But the mail-order approach to finding a life partner presented a problem: many Canadians criticized those who used it on the grounds that it constituted a serious breach of convention. The critics had two main

objections. One was that marriage-minded women who corresponded with men they had never been personally introduced to were acting "unmaidenly" and that men would think less of them for it. "I don't think any man would respect a girl who commenced a correspondence with him in hopes he would invite her to marry him," declared "Greta" from New Brunswick. "Let us have all the fun possible, but let us not forget the dignity of Canadian womanhood in the pursuit of it."[66] The other, more common objection was that couples could not possibly get to know each other well enough by mail. Some critics conceded that the columns might be used without much harm to "introduce" men and women to each other, but anything more intimate, especially a marriage proposal, was risky and would likely result in an unhappy union. Even worse, writers might try to deceive one another, by embellishing or lying about their attributes. Some felt this risk could be lessened by exchanging reference letters, or hiring a detective to investigate the other person. But the skeptics remained skeptical: "You certainly run an awful risk if you think it is sufficient to become acquainted through these correspondence columns," warned one. "No, no, be sure to get a personal acquaintance first, my friends. This life is too short for lottery."[67]

Proponents of correspondence courtship responded with a valiant defence. Women insisted that as long as their letters were not "too personal" they were not acting unwomanly, and that correspondence forced men to judge them on their *non*-physical attributes. Both sexes, meanwhile, praised correspondence as a boon to the many bashful, tongue-tied individuals among them. They argued, as well, that it was just as easy, perhaps easier, to determine a person's character from a letter than from face-to-face conversation. Many also reported having met their spouses through the columns and assured readers they could not be happier. Their main point, however, was that they really had no choice – that given their circumstances, courtship by correspondence was their only viable option. "About corresponding with a view to matrimony," wrote an "English Widow" from Winnipeg, no "right-minded person need be ashamed of having met husband or wife in that way. In a country such as this, with its enormous distances and its many hard-working and lonely men living so far from civilization and home comforts, it is next to impossible for everyone to find a mate in the ordinary and usually recognized way."[68] That such arguments had to be made at all shows the pressures single people faced to conform to more traditional methods of courtship. Those who refused paid a price, not only

in social disapprobation, but also in shame, for there was clearly a stigma attached to using anything resembling a matrimonial bureau to find a partner; men felt less like true men, women less like true women.[69]

The Western Man's already impressive romantic difficulties were made even worse by his legendary bashfulness. And, once again, he had company. The affliction was common to bachelors across the country – and to women as well. Writing under the pseudonym, "Bashful," an Ontario woman thinking of going west to help her bachelor brother informed Prim Rose readers that "all that deters me is the thought of bread-baking, and the fear of the prairie wolves, though I'm not quite sure which would frighten me the most to meet on the prairie, a wolf, or a Western bachelor. I'm mortally afraid of boys." More common was the phrase, uttered by many a bachelor, that "I'm rather afraid of Canadian girls."[70] This shyness prevented men and women from attending social gatherings. And it was another reason so many men and women chose correspondence as their preferred method of courtship – although some were even shy about this: in their letters to the columns, they often asked the opposite sex to "write first," and one bachelor was so shy he asked his friend's wife to write to the column *for* him![71]

Although bashfulness transcended time, place, and gender, it was especially strong among *rural* bachelors. Unlike their urban counterparts, these men were more isolated – on their farms and ranches, in their tiny fishing villages, on their ships at sea, or in their mining and logging camps. This, and the solitariness of their work, meant less frequent contact with other people, particularly women, and therefore a greater degree of shyness or awkwardness when among others. One B.C. logger's experience was typical: "the only time I see the girls," he wrote, "is when I don my glad rags and make my semi-annual trip to town, and then I feel like blushing when a girl waits on me at the hotel table."[72] The situation was worse for the western bachelor-homesteader, because of his greater isolation. "I know a great many bachelors," a Manitoban farmer told the *Family Herald*'s readers, "and most of them stay in their shacks and don't go out any place for fear they would meet a girl, they are so shy." "The bachelors 'round here are very shy," wrote another Manitoban. "When they see a petticoat flying in the breeze, they hardly know what to do, whether to run or not."[73] At summertime "garden parties" such men could be found behind the house, smoking and talking to each other about wheat, livestock, and the weather "instead of playing croquet with the pretty girls present."[74] And the longer

they went without seeing or speaking to a woman, the more bashful they became.[75]

Some men also said that the years of baching in the West had rendered them incapable of wooing the opposite sex, especially the more "cultured" woman from back home. Lacking female company, they had become more withdrawn, could no longer carry on a proper conversation with women, and even *feared* them. One desperate Alberta bachelor asked the *Family Herald*'s readers for help:

> Admitting that our slow minds now have little conception of this 'lost home' element; that the subtle mental prize so essential to social success is to us like the dim remembrance of a forgotten dream; that the weeks of time have nearly smothered the flower of chivalry, planted by the environment of our eastern homes, how and by what means may these dormant faculties be brought to life? Methinks if we are privileged to meet in their own homes the cultured, accomplished girls, fresh from their eastern environment, that some of us may awaken … and see life as God and nature would have us see them.[76]

Less lyrically, a fellow recluse from neighbouring Saskatchewan reported a similar phenomenon. "I often wonder what prank Fate wished to play on me," he wrote,

> by setting me down on the prairie far from the 'madding crowd.' One certainly gets dull with not having the companionship of the fair sex which is obtainable in the large towns. The monotony of the life, I think has a deteriorating effect on one's mind. One loses all the art of conversation when in such monotony.[77]

Some bachelors also asked Prim Rose for help, including any books she knew of that might improve their conversational skills.

Even worse, many western men felt their isolation and rough jobs had made them coarse in manners and intemperate in habits, traits not conducive to winning over the "fair sex." They were probably right. Lumbermen, who worked up to one hundred kilometres from the nearest town, in primitive conditions, and sometimes went six months without seeing a

woman, were especially prone to this. "Whatever may have been his training previously," reported an "Ex-Lumberman" from Saskatchewan, "his language and manners become gradually coarsened. It is inevitable." When the lumber worker eventually did visit a town, he tried hard to befriend the opposite sex:

> I have seen him go into the book store to buy magazines or trinkets for the sake of feasting his eyes on the girl who sold them. Or to the post office to buy stamps, which he did not need, for the sake of getting a few words with the fair one who waited there as to the time when mails were made up, etc. Or see him on the hotel plaza watching the ladies … passing up and down the street. He looks on joyfully, hopefully, with the best instincts of his being awakened, looking forward to the time when he shall have a house of his own and a fair damsel to make it home.[78]

But the lumberman could not easily shed his coarse ways: he eventually joined his fellow lumberjacks in a bar, and any refinement left in him completely disappeared; this happened to 90 per cent of his former colleagues, said "Ex-Lumberman." For bachelors lucky enough to work and live close to town, on the other hand, "their vices are not so prominent, nor their orgies so wild." This put them at less of a disadvantage, romantically. What's more, the disadvantage was self-perpetuating, for the longer a man went without the "softening and elevating influence of the fair sex," said another bachelor, the coarser he became.[79]

Rules of the Game

If isolation, time constraints, bashfulness, and the scarcity of potential partners were serious obstacles for many lovesick Canadians, social convention was another. As discussed in chapter 3, young men and women had to follow an elaborate set of rules prior to and during courtship. Although these rules *facilitated* romance in some ways – not least by providing guidelines for novice romantics – they were also limiting. Among other things, men and women had to be at least eighteen (or nearly so) before dating;[80] they had to secure their parents' permission to date a particular person; and unless

engaged, they could not be alone together, touch each other in affectionate ways, or even *write* to each other. They also faced the unwritten rule that kept men and women from getting romantically involved with individuals outside their social class or ethnic group. These rules applied to almost everyone but were more strictly enforced for children of the upper classes and particular ethnic groups.[81]

Rules also existed for each sex. A man had to seek an introduction to a woman and, if he wanted to court her, had to furnish proof of his good character and job prospects, and also secure her parents' approval. Above all, he was expected to take the initiative, whether this meant finding a girlfriend, asking her out, initiating correspondence, giving gifts, or proposing marriage. What's more, one wrong move by the man at any point in this process could send the wrong signal about his intentions or leave a poor impression of his character. A woman, meanwhile, had to behave a certain way in a man's company – from giving the proper gestures of appreciation to lending a sympathetic ear to her suitor's discursive ramblings. Most important, she was to make no romantic overtures but had to let herself be wooed and won over. To do otherwise was unladylike.

From a contemporary perspective, such rules seem impossibly restrictive. But did Canadians think so at the time? Did aspiring romantics consider them a hardship? Presumably they did, but it's hard to know for sure because Canadians of that era did not usually complain about their problems and had no patience for those who did. About the only thing they complained about consistently – in the *WHM* and *Family Herald*, at least – was their loneliness. Even then, readers often told such individuals to stop whining and "buck up." The approach to life was definitely more stoic than today.

More important, most Canadians *approved* of the rules. In particular, they felt it was a man's role to seek out a woman and to request her company; men who felt otherwise were deemed "lazy" and "backward." "Men want good wives and they will get them if they deserve them," wrote one Albertan, but

> they must remember that 'no man e'er gained a happy life by chance or yawned it into being with a wish' [paraphrased from a poem, "Night Seven," by E. Young]. A good wife is a prize and must be won. One bachelor correspondent writes that he cannot spend the time from the farm to look for a wife. Did

> he get his farm without spending both time and money? Did he ever get anything worth having without spending time and money? How much more important is the getting of a good wife? … It's their duty to get out and look for them if wanted.[82]

Canadians felt the same about other aspects of romance. When Alberta's "Bashful Kid" boldly suggested that perhaps girls should ask *boys* out to dances, he received two curt responses: eighteen-year-old "Dimples" reminded him that "it is the boys' place to ask the girls," and sixteen-year-old "Cutie Curls" told him that "if the boys have not got the 'spunk' to ask the girls, they don't deserve to have the girls."[83] Some writers were even less bashful. "I really think some men want the girls to make the advances," wrote a Saskatchewan woman, "and that is why they remain bachelors. But these are not true men. They are slackers in life's duty."[84] And about young women (under 20) who solicited male correspondents in the personal columns, one man felt that "the mother of a girl who does so, should give her a good spanking, and keep her more occupied learning what a young girl ought to know."[85]

Nevertheless, some Canadians disliked the rules. Bachelors sometimes complained, for example, about the "introduction" requirement. It was usually easy for a man to secure an introduction to a woman by befriending someone she knew, perhaps a brother or her father, or a fellow bachelor. But what if he found himself in a situation where he wanted to meet a woman but had no such intermediary, like at a public dance or on a city street? Most men were afraid to approach a woman on their own in such instances for fear, as one man put it, of being "set down as a 'bounder' or even a 'masher'" (i.e., a molester), or without knowing in advance whether the woman was of proper moral character.[86] Nor did all men agree with the proscription of physical intimacy before marriage. This is clear from the number of women who asked Prim Rose how to deal with their boyfriends' advances, and from writers (mostly women) who denounced such "flirtatious" tendencies in men, and from poems like this, by an anonymous Prim Rose contributor:

> One stormy morn I chanced to meet,
> A lassie in the town;
> Her locks were like the ripened wheat,
> Her laughing eyes were brown,

I watched her, as she tripped along,
till madness filled my brain,
and then – and then – I know 'twas wrong,
I kissed her in the rain.[87]

Some bachelors were also upset that society expected them to finance the courtship process – to pay for their outings with women – even if it meant going into debt. Too many women were taking advantage of the situation, they argued.[88]

More common, however, was their complaint about always having to take the initiative; quite a few would have been happy to let the women do this. Many western bachelors, for instance, encouraged eastern women to come West in search of husbands rather than wait for men to go East, as the "womanly woman" was supposed to do. Just as many men, hoping to correspond with certain women whose letters to the personal columns had caught their eye, asked the women to "write first."[89] In May 1913, Prim Rose told readers of a letter she had received from a Saskatchewan man who "begs correspondence of the fair sex … and wishes to make it understood that he considers that there is far too much regard for outward form and convention."[90] Another Saskatchewan bachelor told *WHM* readers, with stark ambivalence, that "some girls think it is the man's place to write first. Well, it really is, but I think it is just as much theirs."[91]

Some bachelors favoured even bolder female moves. "I think if the girls ask the boys to come and take them to picnics and dances, etc.," suggested one, "there wouldn't be so many lonely girls and boys in the West. But they won't do that; they expect the boys to have all the 'spunk.' In my opinion they will have to wait a long time for boys of my set to come around."[92] A few even wanted women to propose marriage. In 1905, B.C.'s "Intruder" informed Prim Rose readers that "a great many bachelors in this country want the girls to ask them" to marry, while "George" from Manitoba felt that "in these modern days of feminine advancement … custom should not step in and prohibit woman from assuming the initiative" in such matters.[93] It's no wonder, then, that many bachelors eagerly anticipated Leap Years, when women had the customary right to propose marriage and make other, less brazen advances. Whether many women actually did so, except in jest, is doubtful – conventional etiquette's hold was too strong. Yet the fact that so many men *mentioned* Leap Year in their letters, even half-jokingly, suggests a strong desire for a bit of role reversal.

Such unconventional ideas raised the ire of a few readers. P.E.I.'s "Little Phil," in response to the suggestion that eastern women head West in search of a husband, for example, was a little indignant – and no doubt a little worried. "Marriage … is a good deal of a chance game," he wrote, "but for Melinda May to pack her trunk to go West in response to numerous unceremonious invitations to hunt out a life partner among the thrifty tillers of a virgin soil, it becomes a veritable lottery. What a sorry figure the poor girl must cut as she marches miles upon miles in black mud to her ankles in search of her groom!" In "Little Phil's" part of Canada, by contrast, "a man with an eye open to matrimony secures an introduction to his intended 'better half,' pays her his regards, and waits for some encouragement before making further advances along his chosen line of operation. His is no blank invitation amounting almost to a beckoning."[94] The Western Man's response was non-apologetic: he and his fellow soil tillers were simply too busy to search for a wife. What's more, they were shy. This exchange amounted to little – a minor scuffle, really – but it did show how the hardships and socially challenged personalities of Canada's country bachelors (particularly out West) made them more critical than their city cousins of the romance rules.

The Canadian bachelorette had reason to complain, too. Society expected her to be modest, reserved, and dignified in a bachelor's presence, but at the same time show enough interest to encourage his advances. This put her in a quandary. If she kept her feelings in check, she risked sending out a message of indifference, or worse; this could drive away a potential suitor. If, on the other hand, she was *too* friendly, or sentimental, or fawning, people might accuse her of either "flirting" (leading men on), or "setting her cap" for a man (trying to ensnare him), which was unwomanly; what's more, the man might misconstrue her friendliness as romantic interest when none existed.[95] It was a fine balancing act, and some women found it frustrating. "What are we girls to do?," asked one woman, in response to "Lonesome Ernie's" accusation that convivial women were leading men on. "If we speak civilly to a man, or pretend to see him, he thinks he is sought after. If we do otherwise, we are called conceited. When you look at it that way, Ernie, you will see what we are up against."[96]

Nor did the modest, reserved woman take any romantic initiative; for her to actively seek romance was unfeminine. "A truly 'nice' girl has a horror of doing anything forward or unmaidenly," wrote a "Young Mother" from Ontario. "Her very soul may yearn for the love of a home of her

own, but even her longing will not conquer her sense of self-respect."[97] And so, with few exceptions, a single woman was not supposed to approach men, ask for dates, initiate correspondence (or correspond *at all* with strange men), propose marriage, or try to win them over, except through the subtle presentation of her charm, grace, good sense, and other "feminine" qualities; at most, she could advertise her availability by pinning up the back of her hair.[98]

For a woman to even *place* herself in a situation that might improve her chances of catching a man's eye was problematic. In these years, a "respectable" middle- or upper-class woman did not usually go out alone to commercial amusements or entertainments, for example, lest she appear to be trolling for men; the only women who did were working-class women and prostitutes, whom Canadians often saw as one and the same. Yes, the working girl had more chances to meet men – at movie theatres, dance halls, and other amusements – but with opportunity came risk. In some cities, police arrested her for vagrancy if they found her unchaperoned after dark, whether in a tavern or dance hall, or just strolling in a park. And if she indulged too enthusiastically in the city's "immoral" amusements, day *or* night, the courts might incarcerate her for "sexual delinquency."[99] Even for working in a factory or office, or for simply sending letters to the personal columns, she had to defend herself against charges of "cap setting," of working or writing just to meet men. This is why women correspondents often prefaced their letters to the personal columns with assurances that they were only "writing for fun" and were not "matrimonially inclined," even when it was obvious that they were advertising for a husband.[100] Nor was a woman supposed to relocate in search of a husband – to go West, for instance – as this was tantamount to "hunting" for a partner, a distinctly male prerogative. "Let the man come, 'woo and win' his fair bride in her own house and neighbourhood," declared another young mother.[101] Men were to be the hunters, women the prey.

Indeed, of all the conventions Canada's single women had to contend with, this maiden-as-passive-prey rule was no doubt the most frustrating. Men could travel far and wide in search of a partner, and, in fact, were *expected* to do so. Most women, however, could only wait and hope they would be noticed and pursued. They could do little else to advance their romantic prospects without seeming unwomanly, risking arrest, or having to contrive "chance" encounters; and Leap Year, as mentioned, was not a serious option. "Some of us poor women cannot help being old maids,"

Women of the middle and upper classes could not move about as freely as men in search of a spouse. The etiquette of the day decreed as much. Like Kingston's Miss Kemp, they spent much time simply waiting in their parlours for men to call. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, C 130-4-0-0-1.*

wrote "Jean" from Ontario in 1914, "but … when a man takes it into his head he wants to marry, he can … go forth and declare his wants, and find out for himself what Dame Fortune has in store for him, whereas women – well, you know what we have to do, just wait!"[102] Another frustrated bachelorette echoed the sentiment: "If I were a man I would be so persistent in my wooing that the lassie would just have to love me," she wrote, "but as I am the lassie, and not the laddie, I will have to calmly sit, and await the day when my Prince Charming will come riding by."[103] And even if he did come riding by, a woman was at her boyfriend's mercy. She had to wait patiently, sometimes for years, for his marriage proposal – a proposal that did not always come.[104]

The situation was especially grim for women without older brothers, since brothers played a key role, unwittingly or not, in introducing their sisters to their male acquaintances. "The brotherless girl often has comparatively few chances of meeting eligibles," explained Prim Rose. "She cannot ignore the formalities that with the aid of a brother are swept aside as though they did not exist.… It is the girl with a brother or two who is unhandicapped. She does not have to do any planning. Everything is done for her, and all without connivance or even knowledge that it is being done." A single girl's *mother*, on the other hand, was a poor match-maker, "for the eye of discernment decries in her the scheming mother-in-law of the future."[105] In an age when the difference between the eligible maiden and the much-dreaded "old maid" was only a few years, many women resented their lack of control over their romantic fate.

Not all women, however, accepted these restrictions. Urged on by desperate western bachelors and driven by the fear of becoming spinsters, a number of equally desperate bachelorettes found ways to bend or skirt the rules. Many flouted convention in the personal columns, for example, by openly soliciting male correspondents for romantic purposes, by initiating correspondence, and by writing to men they had never met.[106] Consider the blunt advertisement of one B.C. woman:

> Here is one woman, of good education, not unpleasing appearance, thoroughly domesticated, capable, energetic, used to and fond of a country life, companionable and amiable, who would gladly correspond with a view to matrimony. This seems very crude, does it not, Prim Rose, but at any rate it is very much to the point.[107]

In another instance, a young Ontario "businesswoman" told Prim Rose readers that "I agree with 'Northern Pearl' when she says she likes to get away from the conventionalities of society and shock people by writing to someone she doesn't know and never expects to see."[108] Some writers found such behaviour scandalous. "I am surprised to see how many children … are reading these columns and asking for correspondence," wrote an Alberta man, "and some of these little girls go so far as to ask certain boys to correspond with them."[109]

But most women were more subtle and disingenuous. Using pen-names, they solicited male correspondence under the guise of seeking

merely pen pals, or information about a particular region, or to simply "cheer up" lonely bachelors. A 1908 letter from an Ontario stenographer was typical. After flaunting her qualities as a potential wife, she reassured readers that,

> I do not wish to get married; in fact, I intend to be an old maid, but I would like to correspond with some of the lonely bachelors.… [I] do not object to dancing but would not like a man who drinks, chews tobacco or takes sugar in his tea. I do not live on a farm but think I could learn to milk the cows. I … want to come out West and would like to be acquainted with some of the people, especially the boys, before I come.[110]

Many women also kept their activities hidden from friends and family. "I was thinking of the time when I secretly sent a request to your columns for bachelor correspondents," wrote one such woman,

> I say secretly, for I did not let any one in the house know, not even The Boy and The Girl [i.e., her younger siblings]. I received a few letters, I think four, some I answered. How surreptitiously I carried those letters with me … hidden in my dress, for fear The Boy and The Girl might see them and what would they think of their 'Big Sister' if they knew she was sending letters to forlorn bachelors, strangers to her?[111]

Evidently many single women valued the personal columns as one of the few forums in which they could actively seek romance.

This suggests that the columns helped expand what historian Peter Ward has called the "courtship space" or "territory" of women. Ward argues that for much of the nineteenth century men's opportunities for meeting potential spouses were greater than for women. Whereas women were confined principally to their homes, to which they had to *attract* potential suitors, and also had less freedom to create romantic encounters, men could "roam at will" in search of single women and also had more power to initiate courtship, such as through "calling" on women in their homes.[112] This is not an altogether convincing argument. Not only does it seem to apply almost exclusively to the urban upper class, but it also understates the courtship territory that single women carved out for themselves, by inviting men to

private parties and, through their mothers, to their homes for tea, meals, or strolls. In short, nineteenth-century women could "roam by invitation" as extensively as men could roam on foot or horse-and-buggy. And they expanded their courtship space even further by attending church and community events with relatives and by visiting the homes of men they wished to court on the pretext of visiting the men's sisters.

Ward is on more solid ground, however, when he argues that by the late 1800s women's courtship space – even among the more confined Anglo-Saxon elite – came to resemble more closely that of men. As young women moved in large numbers from rural to urban areas, and then into the workplaces, universities, and social reform clubs of Canada's burgeoning cities, their opportunities to meet men, outside their own homes or boarding houses and beyond the strict supervisory gaze of family and community, expanded tremendously. The appearance of personal columns like *Prim Rose at Home* had a similar effect: they provided an additional space in which women seeking suitors could be "seen" and heard. What's more, because they allowed women to effectively *solicit* male correspondents, either openly or disingenuously, the columns were another way that single women defied courtship convention in these years.

Women also challenged convention in more brazen ways. Many of them, for example, *did* go hunting for husbands (apart from perusing the personal columns). Exact numbers are hard to come by, but many took to the road in search of mates: they accompanied their homestead-bound brothers to the West, left home to take up jobs, and spent time with relatives in other parts of Canada. A New Brunswick woman recalled going West to find a husband because single men were scarce in her home town. "I know just sitting there on the train … there were three other girls like me going out the West to visit or cook for their brothers and I know they had marriage in mind. I mean, you don't fish in a pond with no fish in it, do you?"[113] At other times they went as visitors, perhaps in response to advertisements by "respectable ladies" in distant communities who promised to provide accommodations, chaperone services, and introductions to bachelors in their area. Even when other motives played a role – such as the quest for adventure or to earn a living – romance was usually a key consideration. Many rural and small-town women, meanwhile, took to the road closest at hand, strolling alone along country lanes or the main street of their town in the hopes of being "picked up."[114]

A handful of women also chaffed at the restrictions on physical intimacy. In the personal columns they did so by requesting "affectionate" boyfriends and by regretting that they had "never been kissed."[115] Urban working girls did so by doing close-contact dances with strange men at dance halls, skating arm-in-arm with them at ice and roller rinks, and letting such men – and male co-workers, too – take physical liberties.[116] Even *rural* women sometimes crossed the line, frolicking with men in a park bush or empty schoolhouse at night. "In rural Ontario," writes one historian, "the berry patch could provide the same opportunity for sexual danger or sexual pleasure as the most raucous urban dance hall."[117]

Women broke other rules, too. A few admitted to "dropping in" on men unexpectedly, wooing them through shameless flattery, and sharing the cost of outings. Nor did a courted woman necessarily have to wait forever for a marriage proposal. If she was bold and crafty enough, she could divine her boyfriend's intentions by carefully revealing her feelings about marriage and gauging his response. If it was encouraging, she would wait; if not, she would move on to a more serious suitor.[118] Sometimes the methods women used to circumvent society's strict conventions were highly inventive. Women who worked in egg-packing plants, for example, often wrote their names and addresses on the eggs in pencil, while women in matchbox factories slipped pieces of paper into matchboxes, hoping some distant bachelor would write to them. Sometimes this unusual marketing ploy – which brought new meaning to egg cartons labelled "strictly fresh" – resulted in marriage.[119]

Another restriction on the romantic freedom of Canadians, without question, was parental power. Although parents in some ways *encouraged* romance, by debuting their daughters, inviting potential suitors or debutantes to their home, or playing the match-making role, they could also be a hindrance and a hardship to young people. After all, it was up to parents to decide *when* they would debut their daughter, whether they would agree to introduce a particular man to her, whether he would be allowed to call on her or escort her somewhere, whether she would be allowed to write to him, and – if she was under twenty-one – whether she could accept his marriage proposal. Even after a son or daughter reached the age of majority, however, parents continued to have considerable influence over their children's romantic lives, particularly when the children lived at home. Years later, an English-Protestant man from Winnipeg recalled the unwelcome intervention of his girlfriend's French-Catholic parents when they found

out he planned to marry her: "She told me they were sending her to the convent at St. Norbert. I couldn't believe it.… I told her I loved her and I knew she loved me and we'd get married right away.… She cried a lot but she said no, she had to become a nun.… I was very bitter about that."[120] Parents also monitored courtship: they watched over the young couple in their home, screened the man's letters to their daughter, and reserved the right to end the relationship if they felt him to be unsuitable.[121] The adult supervisory gaze was particularly intense in rural areas, where commercial amusements were limited and where courtship, as a result, consisted mainly of male visits to female homes. Rural communities were also in the habit of watching the activities of young couples and reporting any transgressions to parents.[122]

Few young people complained about any of this. Most believed they should respect and obey their parents' wishes, not least because their parents were presumably wiser, more experienced in the ways of romance, and, in general, knew "what was best" for them. There were, however, dissenting voices – mostly female. "It is no uncommon thing," reported one prairie bachelor, "to hear the young women in my district complain of the seemingly harsh discipline of their mother, when she says they can't have all they want, but they never seem to realize that their mother is the best one fitted to know what will be most beneficial to them."[123] Perhaps one of these women was "A Young Sufferer," who begged the *WHM*'s readers for help in dealing with her mother's strict rules:

> I am a young girl, twenty years of age. I have a good mother, but I believe she is far too strict.… I am never allowed to accept any invitations from any gentleman friend, no matter how good their character may be. I am never allowed to accept any invitations to a dance or to the theatre. If I do, I must deceive my mother by telling her evil untruths – which I very much dislike to do. If I wish to meet any gentlemen it must be at some hour when 'good people' should be asleep in their beds. Now don't you think it is hard on any moral young girl, who cannot enjoy enough freedom in her home, that she can bring a young man in to meet her parents honestly and openly, but has to meet him herself at an hour when her parents believe her asleep in her bed – this is deceiving too.… Surely going to a theatre, or occasionally a dance, cannot be the cause of

> many girls and men leading immoral lives! Our parents were all young once, but seem to forget it. Now, I love my parents and try to obey them. I do not deserve to be kept tight.[124]

Few women (or men) of this era had the courage to admit they had deceived a parent, and even those who sympathized with "A Young Sufferer" decried her deceit. That she did so was proof of the hardship she had endured at the hands of her parents, and which most women suffered more quietly.

Parental intervention was typically less draconian. It usually involved dictating the timing of rituals, like the "coming out" party or wedding day, or disapproving of suitors they felt had poor financial prospects, even when the couple had great affection for one another. Still, interventions of this sort sometimes caused bachelors to break their engagements and led at least one to vow he would never marry. "In early life I loved a woman and a man loves only once," he told Prim Rose readers. "We were entirely suited to each other, and I think could have gone through life in double harness without a jar or a jolt, but through no fault of either, we were never permitted to marry."[125]

Unfortunately, the options for these aggrieved romantics were limited. They could succumb to their parents' wishes – as most invariably did – or wait until they were old enough to live on their own, when they could defy their parents by seeing or marrying someone their parents had disapproved of; this happened, too, and more frequently as opportunities for women to live on their own (in a city or town) grew.[126] The price of such defiance, however, was usually steep. It meant alienating family, and sometimes friends as well. When a friend asked him to be the "best man" at his wedding, Montreal's Robert Hale refused. "The girl is only 20 years old," he explained to his girlfriend, "and her father has refused to give his consent, but the fellow says they have decided to go ahead. I told him I was sorry but I would have nothing to do with it."[127]

Or, a couple could defy their parents by doing things on the sly. They might date secretly, for example, like "A Young Sufferer." But the risk of exposure was high, especially in small communities, and the potential consequences – in the way of public shame and even harsher parental discipline – unpleasant; fathers sometimes beat their defiant daughters.[128] A more common form of deceit was courting by correspondence. The personal columns, in particular, provided a useful method of avoiding parental

supervision and interference, and a number of young Canadians preferred correspondence courtship for this reason. "Dare Devil Jack," for one, came to favour this method after being chased down the road one day by the father of a girl he was seeing behind her parents' back.[129]

Love Hurts

Lovesick Canadians may have been able to skirt the *rules* of romance to some degree, but they could not always avoid its pain; this was another, and more timeless, hardship. Actually, we are lucky to have any evidence of this at all. Canadians of this era did not like to burden others with their troubles, and most men were reluctant to criticize the "nobler sex" for fear of appearing unchivalrous; others kept their sad tales to themselves out of embarrassment, or to not discourage the pursuit of marriage by the young. Nevertheless, a number of Canadians *did* share their sad tales, or those of others, and their stories – sometimes brief and cryptic, other times woefully detailed – reveal the meaning of heartache for this generation.

The most common source of heartache was flirting. This was the practice of being friendly or "amorous" with a member of the opposite sex to the point where romantic intentions were implied, but not intended; essentially it meant "leading someone on." So, for example, a man or woman in an advanced stage of courtship – maybe even engaged – who sought or accepted the romantic attentions of another was a flirt. So was the person who moved effortlessly from one partner to the next, caring little for the feelings he or she may have bruised along the way, and the man who repeatedly requested a woman's company without stating his intentions up front. Canadians deplored such behaviour. They felt that any relationship (even by correspondence) that did not have marriage as its ultimate goal – that was pursued for self-gratification or "just for fun," in other words – was cruel, unfair to serious-minded individuals, and perhaps even immoral. Flirting not only had the potential to break hearts and, where men were the culprits, keep more earnest suitors at bay, but even worse, it smacked of promiscuity.[130] Ontario's "Cousin Mike" summed up the prevailing view:

> For no other object than the choice of a life companion should any intercourse having the appearance of courtship be permitted or indulged in. The affections are too tender and sacred

> to be trifled with. Those who do it should be ranked among thieves, robbers, and murderers. He who steals affections without a return of similar affections, steals that which is dearer than life and more precious than wealth. Flirting is an outrage upon the most holy and exalted feeling of the human soul and the most sacred and important relation of life. It is demoralizing in its tendency and base in its character.[131]

This was easily the harshest indictment of flirting in the personal columns, but Canadians wrote many more. And although most spoke in general terms about the pitfalls of flirting, the bitter tone of some letters suggests they were also speaking from personal experience. "Some of the girls out here are a little cruel sometimes," wrote a Saskatchewan bachelor. "They flirt with too many of the young bachelors and do not give it up before they have done real harm."[132]

These comments further suggest that women did more flirting than men. This is possible. Men certainly *complained* more about flirtatious women. But why would a woman have done more flirting? Perhaps she felt she had more to gain from it. Yes, she risked being labelled unwomanly, or worse (as mentioned, middle-class reformers called women who provided men with physical "favours" in exchange for gifts or a good time "occasional prostitutes").[133] But maybe this was outweighed by the presents (chocolates, jewellery, clothing) and amusements (dances, dinners, shows, automobile rides) that men offered her in return for her company and that she could not otherwise afford. No woman admitted to being so mercenary, although some undoubtedly were. More likely, she used flirtation to better her chances of gaining a suitor; being overly friendly with many men did have this effect, and some "old maids" even regretted *not* having flirted for this reason.[134] And where a woman already *had* a suitor, perhaps flirting with other men was a form of insurance, in case her suitor failed to propose or took too long to do so. In short, maybe flirting was a way for women to improve the romantic odds stacked against them.

As much as Canadians hated flirtation, however, they considered it a *mild* form of deception. Their hearts were more likely to be broken by less common, but more egregious acts of deception. Most often this took the form of a broken commitment. Many members of the personal columns spoke of a boyfriend or girlfriend who had professed love for them, for example, or had asked (or agreed) to marry them, but who had then run

off with another, or were already committed to another; they said, in short, that their partners had been unfaithful or "faithless." A "Heart-Broken" Ontario woman told readers about a friend who was wooed by a suitor with books and flowers until she fell in love with him, only to one day find that he had disappeared. A year later she found out he had married someone else and left town. "Heart-Broken" had had a similar courting disaster:

> Could I only tell you the blissful days spent in Harry's company, how his loving words thrilled me, after he had asked me to be his wife. We were to be married in two weeks, when alas! he married another girl very quietly, who lived not two miles from my home.… I shall never love a man again.… After a year's time I was able to take my own place in life, but not before. Can you blame me if I do not trust any man now?[135]

In a few cases, individuals were left "standing at the altar," or nearly so. "When I was about 22," recalled a Manitoba bachelor,

> I became engaged to a young lady of whom I certainly thought a great deal, and she professed to return my love. Well, the wedding day was set, and when it came I started for her father's house, where the ceremony was to be performed. I had about twenty miles to cover, and when I arrived there I found that the bird had flown the previous evening with a former sweetheart.[136]

Such betrayals caused much heartache. But sometimes the consequences were direr. "Heart-Broken" told readers that her girlfriend "was never the same happy girl again. Her interest in life was gone; she grew weaker and weaker and in a month's time died in my arms, just as the summer sun was sinking slowly out of sight." Another writer told of a friend who had committed suicide after learning his girlfriend had been unfaithful.[137] And when they didn't actually die of a broken heart, some jilted lovers at least *considered* suicide, or took to drinking, or became seriously depressed.[138]

Another deception was misrepresentation. Several correspondents told of someone they knew who was led to believe that a prospective spouse was something he or she was not. Prim Rose cited the example of an Ontario woman she knew who had corresponded with a western widower. The

couple eventually exchanged photographs, but the gentleman "sent her the photograph of a younger and better-looking man as his own. The girl went out west to marry him and was rather amazed to find that her 'young man' was a widower of 40, with half a dozen half-breed children."[139] A British Columbian reported a similar deception:

> I stood on a [railway] station platform some years ago and saw a farmer, a small man about sixty, with 'Ginger' whiskers, meet his 'correspondence' bride, a comely widow of 35. I shall never forget the look of disappointment and disgust on that poor woman's face. I heard the story of their married life several years later and it was pitiful.[140]

Some individuals also lied about their character. "I know instances of young men in Ontario," wrote one woman, "whose characters were so well known that no girl would have them, so they, by mail, decoyed some strange girls to marry them."[141] In addition, Prim Rose told readers that "for one man who is frank enough to state all his faults in a letter for publication, I have no doubt there are nine or ten hardly less faulty who do not mind disguising the fact until after marriage," and that "more than one poor little wife has confided to me that she would have died rather than marry the man whom she had ignorantly chosen."[142] Such cases lent weight to the arguments against courtship by correspondence, but they also illustrated one of the pitfalls of courtship itself.[143]

Of course not all, or even most, heartbreak stemmed from deception. Much of it resulted from the unpredictability of romance. A relationship usually ended, for example, because one side no longer wanted to continue it, either because the person was unhappy or had met someone else. Couples who had courted by correspondence sometimes broke up when they finally met face-to-face because one person didn't like how the other person looked (one can only imagine the pain *this* must have caused).[144] Often changing circumstances were to blame. It was common for men who went west, for example, to leave behind girlfriends they had promised to one day marry. Unfortunately, time, distance, and second thoughts took their toll on some of these relationships; often girlfriends just got tired of waiting.[145] And sometimes relationships ended because parents said they should. In one issue of the *Family Herald*, Prim Rose noted that "Simon" of Ontario "writes of two unfortunate affairs of the heart; in the first, she

gave up her lover at her parents' wish [and] in the second, the 'young man was persuaded away by his parents'."[146]

Other romantics suffered the pain of missed opportunity. Saskatchewan's "Downhearted" was one of them. In the pages of the Prim Rose column he spoke tenderly of a woman he had cared little for at first,

> but after a few months … [I] found that life seemed dull and empty when she was not near me. After a year had passed I found my love for her was very deep. I did not know how deep till I asked her to marry me and she said 'No.' She admitted that she loved me a little at first, but after a time it died away.… I have got a pain that no doctor can cure.[147]

Several individuals regretted the time they had spent learning a trade or getting an advanced education instead of marrying. "I am forty three," wrote B.C.'s "Queenslander," a recent British immigrant,

> and twenty years ago I thought I should marry quite young. But I have never married. I had the absolutely useless English public school and university 'education'.… And with it all I was absolutely cut apart from girls, and then at twenty I went to the colonies where I met no girls. Then when romance did not come naturally, I searched again and again for a certain fair type of beauty, not often seen in England.… When I was young, one pretty, fair, laughing girl chum would have been worth more to me than all the boys and masters at Harrow School – all the men and dons at Cambridge. Now I go on alone.[148]

Western bachelors found themselves in a similar predicament when they chose to spend years preparing a home and livelihood before proposing marriage. In other cases, smitten men were unable to muster the courage to approach or seek an introduction to the "apple of their eye." Such men spent years wondering "what might have been," and at least one devoted his life to travelling about in search of the woman he had let slip through his fingers.[149] Others felt they had missed their chance by simply *neglecting* romance, so that when they were finally ready for it, they were too old.[150]

These individuals felt their loss deeply, and some carried the heartache and regret with them for years.

It's clear, therefore, that romance often came with hardship. This was especially true for Canadians in rural areas – the West in particular – whose chances of finding a life partner were slimmer because of their peculiar circumstances: isolation, a scarcity of the opposite sex, and limited opportunities for heterosexual interaction. In addition, aspiring romantics had many *rules* to follow. These rules were restrictive, especially for women, and the penalties for non-compliance could be harsh. And even when romance did occur, it might not go well; deception and misjudgment, as we've seen, could bring heartache and sometimes lifelong regret.

We need not be unduly negative, however, about romance in these years, courtship in particular. After all, most young people accepted the courtship process without complaint. And those who did not found ways around it: rural bachelors encouraged greater female initiative; women used the personal columns (and other methods) to find and court men they had never met; couples met secretly, without their parents' knowledge; and they sometimes indulged in more physical intimacy than the rules allowed.

These rebels were, in fact, *changing* the rules. Through their defiance they were transforming courtship into "dating," a more casual, less rule-bound, less structured stage on the road to marriage. They were making romance "modern," easier. By the 1910s, members of the personal columns noted that it was increasingly common to see men and women spending time together "just for fun" – that is, without the obligation of marriage. In 1911, as if heralding a new era for romance, the aptly named "Platonic" served notice to the *WHM*'s female readers: "Every girl should bear this in mind," he said, "that a man may desire friendship [with a woman] without in the least having any serious intentions of marrying her" and that "exactly the same thing applies to man. He must not interpret a girl's friendship for anything deeper than is shown."[151] "A Young Farmer's Wife" from Manitoba opposed the trend but had to concede that "modern courtship" involved women accepting the attentions of men "for pure love of pleasure and of being admired," without taking these attentions too seriously. "Much less do they care the least bit for the man, otherwise than as a friend."[152]

Restrictive attitudes towards women began to ease as well. "Are not the views of the writer … who said it was unmaidenly for girls to correspond with men they have not met, rather narrow?", asked a male correspondent in 1913. "The restrictions and conventions of fifty years ago are

surely out of place in the present practical and intensely material age."[153] The First World War accelerated the modernization of romance. Its impact on Canadian romance would also make the courtship hardships of the pre-war years seem trifling.

5

Love and War

On June 28, 1914, a university student assassinated the heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, setting off a chain of events that culminated in the outbreak of the First World War five weeks later. Britain was among the leading belligerents and Canada, as one of her colonies, was automatically at war as well. But she was not a reluctant partner. Driven above all by a burning Anglo-British patriotism, Canada responded willingly and enthusiastically to Britain's call for help. Between 1914 and 1918, over 600,000 Canadians served overseas with the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). Many more did their duty at home, replacing enlisted men in the work force, producing war materiel, buying war bonds, conserving scarce materials, and raising money and supplies for the troops. It was a total war effort and, for a nation of only eight million, an impressive one.

More important, Canada's participation had serious repercussions. This was especially true for the thousands of Canadians killed and maimed, but it was no less true for Canada itself. Among other things, the war exacerbated the country's already wide ethnic, class, and regional divisions, extended the reach of government, abrogated civil liberties, produced new rights for Canadian women, solidified Canada's sense of nationhood, and advanced its status as an independent country. These were significant changes, and historians have documented them well. Less apparent, however, are the war's *romantic* effects.[1]

The Decline of Romance

It is often said that the first casualty of war is the truth. More likely, it is romance. The war did not kill romance, of course, and for some Canadians it actually *created* romance. But, generally speaking, it did decline. How could it not have? With so many Canadians now preoccupied with "doing their bit," this was inevitable.

Enlistment was the first problem. With thousands of men signing up to go overseas, the opportunities for new romance to develop or for existing relationships to flourish – at least on the home front – were much reduced. Over one-third of eligible men aged eighteen to forty-five, 80 per cent of them single, enlisted; one-quarter went overseas.[2] This represented a significant dislocation or absence of husbands and eligible bachelors on the home front. Many young women told readers of the personal columns that, because of the shortage of men in their area, few dances or parties were being held. A Saskatchewan woman's comment that "I am very fond of dancing, but we do not have many dances now as all the boys have gone to the war" was typical.[3] And when such activities did take place, including tennis parties in summer and skating parties in winter, females now dominated.[4] The shortage of young men was especially acute in rural areas. Farmers' sons who did not enlist would, by 1915, leave to take up jobs in urban factories. Or they found work in the bush. "My home is about twelve miles from town," wrote another sad Saskatchewan maiden, "and we generally have a pleasant time during the winter, but this year all the boys who have not gone to the front have gone to the lumber woods. So you see it leaves the girls quite handicapped."[5]

Romantic opportunities were just as limited on the battle front. The average soldier spent most of his time in or close to the front lines, where women were naturally scarce; he often went months without seeing a civilian, let alone an eligible bachelorette. He was also constantly on the move – from training camps to the front, and then from one sector of the front to another – which made it difficult to forge any deep romantic relationships. Regular female contact was limited to the middle-aged *mademoiselle* and her teenage daughter who offered him beer (and usually nothing more) at the local French pub or *estaminet*, or sold him fruits and chocolate in baskets close to his camp; if he was in quarantine or a prisoner of war, even this limited heterosexual contact was impossible. Occasionally he met the

Soldiers overseas had some contact with local women. Here a French woman sells oranges to Canadian troops returning to camp. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, C 224-0-0-9-49.*

daughters of the farm families he billeted with behind the lines, but these girls were usually just that – girls – and he rarely stayed very long in one place anyway.[6] "I only wish to heaven there were some nice women that I could hang up for tea out here," complained one officer. "One gets so tired of the constant society of the male."[7] Enlisted men complained too. "Dear Editor," wrote "A Lonely Westerner" from the trenches,

> I would like to correspond with someone who is a reader of your paper, preferably of the feminine persuasion.… The past few years I spent in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and what recollections I have of good times spent out there, dancing, skating and fall suppers filled in many of the lonely evenings. You can quite understand how we feel out here. No girls, shows, or an evening at the Orpheum! No! Nothing but war, war, war![8]

Romantic opportunities were greater for men who required extended hospitalization, but their injuries often limited romantic activities, like strolls and outings. So did frequent changes of hospitals.[9]

Only when a soldier went "on leave" could he pursue romance. Unfortunately, leaves were rare and short. Enlisted men received weekend passes once a month and extended leaves once a year. Furthermore, the extended leaves never lasted more than ten days – too little time, in other words, to form more than superficial attachments, especially if some of that time was spent visiting relatives in the British Isles.[10] One soldier told his brother about a nurse he had visited in London on his way back to the front. "Say, Ramsey, she is one of the nicest girls I have seen in a long, long time and I wish I could have seen more of her."[11] Another complained to his sister of having little time to spend with his new bride. "I was granted a week-end pass to visit Gertie last Sat.," he wrote, but "it was only from Sat. noon till 10:30 Sunday night, so that was not very long, was it? Especially when I had to ride the thirty miles there on a bicycle."[12] Some men defied such restrictions, but not many: unauthorized leaves or a tardy return from an *authorized* one could mean anything from being tied to a wagon wheel to facing a court martial.[13] So few were the opportunities for heterosexual contact, in fact, that at army- or YMCA-sponsored events soldiers spent much of their time dancing with each *other* or admiring female impersonators. Indeed, some of the latter cross-dressed so convincingly, said one soldier, they "caused many a gallant heart to flutter."[14]

Distance was another problem. Many enlisted men left behind girlfriends, fiancées, and wives, and for such couples normal romantic relations were badly disrupted. Obviously they could no longer spend time together. "There was such a thing as just doing nothing but going to afternoon teas and dances and parties," recalled one Red Cross volunteer, "[but] that was *out*! In the first place, all our beaux were overseas."[15] What's more, couples with no plans to marry anytime soon suddenly faced a difficult decision: marry right away, before the man left for overseas, or delay it until he returned, *if* he returned. Many chose the first option. "I was surprised to hear of the many weddings among M.A.C. [Manitoba Agricultural College] people," wrote a former student to his girlfriend. "I did not know that Salkeld & Miss Park were even thinking of such a step."[16] For such couples, premature marriage was a chance to experience one of life's special rituals – including sex – in the face of an uncertain future. This same uncertainty, and the inability of soldiers to provide for or attend to their wives in the

'Marie' and 'Tony' of "The Dumbells" – a much-loved troupe of performing soldiers in France – stirred the hearts of many a lonesome member of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. *Library and Archives Canada, Canada Dept. of National Defence Collection, PA-005738.*

usual way, led other couples to *postpone* marriage.[17] Either way, the physical separation caused by the war altered plans and forced Canadians to put their romantic relationships on hold, usually for years.

Correspondence bridged the distance between couples somewhat. "I want you to know that I write to you so often because it seems a little like being with you," wrote one soldier to his sweetheart. "It seems the same way when I hear from you"; men also sent gifts or battleground "souvenirs" to their partners.[18] Under wartime conditions, however, such exchanges were a poor substitute for personal contact: mail to the front was often delayed or lost, as troops moved from place to place, and soldiers had trouble finding writing paper or keeping it clean (and dry) in their overloaded packs. "Have not had a letter from you since I last wrote," complained one soldier to his wife, "probably owing to the fact that we have been on the move & the mail has not caught up."[19] Knowing their letters home were being read by security-minded censors did not help, as it made soldiers less honest about their feelings.[20] Even the letters soldiers received from their sweethearts were but fleeting reminders of their long-distance relationships. Mushy letters might fall into the wrong hands – and sometimes did – and soldiers had no space to store them anyway. And so, after reading them over a few times, they destroyed them.[21] Meanwhile, many relationships that hadn't reached the correspondence stage before the man went overseas ended entirely, since Canadians considered correspondence a prerogative of couples in serious courtship only.[22]

A less common way for couples to reduce the distance between them was to get closer to one another. Before the Canadian government removed this option in 1917, for safety reasons, 30,000 girlfriends and wives (usually officers' wives) followed their men overseas, where they stayed with their English relatives and contributed to the war effort in some way.[23] These couples were undoubtedly happier than most, for at least they saw each other when the boyfriend or husband was "on leave," or more frequently, if he was stationed in an English training camp or recuperating in hospital. But most couples were not this fortunate.

Then there was the question of time. The great effort Canadians undertook to win the war necessarily limited the time they could spend pursuing or cultivating romance. Many young women, for example, took up positions in the work force vacated by enlisted men; especially in the war-related industries, like munitions and farming, these jobs involved long hours and hard labour, which left less time and energy for romance.[24] And

This Canadian sentry at his post in France was lucky enough to get mail. Many soldiers did not, or not frequently enough, and their romantic relationships suffered. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, C 224-0-0-10-11.*

young women in rural areas, whose brothers went off to war, now had more work to do around the farm, to the detriment of their social lives.[25] Older women, meanwhile, turned their attention to volunteer work; they used their free time to raise money, encourage enlistment, and above all, prepare bandages and articles of clothing for the troops. "One thing this war is teaching us," wrote "Isabel" in the spring of 1918,

> [is] that the Canadian men and women are noble and brave. The men are gone to fight for liberty and righteousness, the women are bravely keeping the home fires burning, and in every spare moment are knitting. Formerly on the streets of any city you would meet women with a dog under their arm, or led by a string. But now it is the knitting bag.[26]

One young woman put the matter more succinctly: "the time I used to spend skating I now spend knitting."[27]

Men doing their bit on the home front also faced longer hours and heavier responsibilities. This was particularly true in the countryside, where farmers lost much of their help when their hired hands enlisted. Young female volunteers from the cities and towns – "farmerettes" – alleviated the problem somewhat by picking fruit and vegetables during the summer, but it wasn't enough. Even before the war, most struggling bachelor-farmers lacked time for romantic pursuits; with the wartime labour shortage and higher demand for food to feed the troops, they had even less. "Your account of Field Days and Picnics … makes me almost envious," wrote one farmer to a female friend, "as I have answered the call from the land rather than that from social gatherings this summer, much though I would have preferred the latter."[28] And when advised by Prim Rose readers to go East in search of a wife, an Alberta farmer replied, "this is all easy enough to say, but how can a man go East when help is so scarce?"[29]

Soldiers were equally pressed for time. When they weren't fighting in the front lines, or moving from one battle location to the next, or trudging to and from their billets, they were kept busy with chores: digging and repairing trenches, fixing roads, burying dead comrades, transporting supplies, cleaning weapons, drilling and parading. Amidst this flurry of activity some soldiers did manage to keep up a regular correspondence with wives and girlfriends, but most did not, and they were always apologizing

A vigorous day or night's work at the front, digging tunnels or repairing trenches, often left soldiers with little energy to write to sweethearts or to even *contemplate* romance. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, C 224-0-0-10-15.*

for it. "You have lately had good reason to give me a calling down for not corresponding very regularly," wrote one soldier to his girl:

> I have not written very much lately. Yesterday I wrote my first letter home since I wrote to you last so you see how negligent I have been. Since coming out of the trenches for our divisional rest as it is called I have been busier than when in actual soldiering life and I have not done all the writing I expected to do.[30]

In lieu of letters, busy soldiers resorted to sending "field cards" – short, non-confidential postcards necessarily devoid of sentiment.

Romance not only declined as a fact during the war – for purely logistical reasons – but it also declined *culturally*: as Canadians turned their thoughts to serving king and country, their interest in romance fell. "The whole country was in flames about the war," recalled one woman. "You couldn't talk about anything else.… Everything was subservient to the war."[31] This cultural shift was apparent in the decision of some Canadians to give up courtship activities like dances, dinners, and movies in order to concentrate on the war effort. No one expressed this attitude more forcefully in the personal columns than a woman calling herself "Pocahontas." For "Pocahontas," the war came before personal pleasure:

> I work from 8 in the morning till 10 or 11 at night for a man whose sons are all in khaki, no holidays either and I take no wage. What is money, pleasure, or anything when all our loved ones are fighting and dying for us? Can we enjoy it? No. My only pleasure is working for the Red Cross and writing to our dear lads, who … are the roof that protects us.[32]

Many Canadians also considered it disrespectful for normal courtship activities to continue while others were making great sacrifices for the war; they stopped going to dinners, dances, and other amusements and urged others to do the same.[33]

Some even favoured the postponement of marriage until war's end, or at least until couples had done their bit. "We have had years of prosperity and happiness until the awful war came upon us," wrote one B.C. woman. "Many were careless and frivolous and even today one often finds a careless style of living.… The object of life is not completed in marriage, as many of our men and women seem to think," but in service to a higher cause.[34] Those who did opt for wartime marriage, meanwhile, were careful to keep it simple. As one Toronto woman told her soldier fiancé, who planned to return to Canada for their wedding, "it will not be necessary, Dearest, to have a 'best man' at a quiet wedding like ours will be. I certainly would not like any fuss. It would put me out completely. Also it is very bad form in these times."[35] Another wartime bride recalled that "like so many war time marriages, we were married very quietly," while on leave in Ottawa, at the home of a superior officer.[36]

The cultural subordination of romance to war was most apparent in the willingness of so many women to surrender their boyfriends, fiancés,

Many Canadian couples who married during the war did so with little fanfare. The solemn expressions of newly-weds Edward and Ivy Buckwell of Fort Mcleod, Alberta, convey the gravity of the times and the uncertainty of their future together. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA-5617-8.*

and husbands, and those of others, to the battlefields of Europe. Eagle-eyed patriotic women roamed the streets of many Canadian towns and cities searching for "slackers": men in civilian clothes who appeared to be shirking their duty. When found, they thrust white feathers into the hands of such men and pinned white ribbons to their lapels – badges of cowardice.[37] More common were their pronouncements urging other women to persuade their boyfriends and husbands to don the khaki. Patriotic women filled the pages of the *WHM* and *Family Herald* with their admonitions: "We girls should aid our brave lads in every way we can," declared "Patriotism" from Nova Scotia, "and never, under any consideration, say anything to keep them from doing their duty. Rather let us applaud them for giving their best for the sake of their country's honor."[38] From the other end of the country, B.C.'s delightfully named "Tipperary Mary," agreed. "There is no time like the present," she wrote,

> for a young man to show that he is made of the right stuff. After the war is over, and our boys come back victorious, will not the 'stay-at-homes' feel humiliated …? Are there any girls who are influencing their [boy]friends to stay at home? Will they like you better for being the cause of their humiliation? Does your own conscience not bother you? There is a duty for us right here.[39]

Nor did women have any patience for those who felt otherwise. When one correspondent, "Miss Pride," dared sympathize with women who discouraged their loved ones from enlisting, an incredulous "Maid of the North" demanded to know "Is 'Miss Pride' a Canadian?"

> I hope not. I dislike to think that any of our Canadian girls would be so devoid of love for country as to say she did not blame girls preventing young men from going to the war. Oh, Canadian girls, do you not realize that the very existence of our native land is threatened with destruction? … It is up to us to show our true womanhood by giving up loved ones, if necessary, for our Canada, our Motherland.[40]

What she and many other women were saying, essentially, was that their romantic attachments meant very little compared to the greater cause their sweethearts would be fighting and dying for.

Canadian men were no less patriotic. Bombarded with patriotic propaganda at every turn, eager to prove their manliness, and convinced the war would be a short, glorious affair, they rushed to join the colours. "When the war broke out," recalled one soldier, "the country went mad! People were singing on the streets and roads. Everybody wanted to be a hero, everybody wanted to go to war.… I wanted to be a hero too."[41] A young teacher in Toronto, having just been granted a leave of absence to enlist, was delighted. "How wonderfully the way has been opened for me towards the final realization of my desire to enlist!," he confided to his diary. "What seemed an idle dream a year ago will soon be an accomplished fact."[42]

Nor did many men later regret having enlisted. Even when their initial enthusiasm for war had waned, their original sense of duty and manly obligation remained. Most felt like Private Robert Hale, who, after nearly three years in uniform, told his girlfriend that "I am glad … I came over here with one of the first bunches Alice, because as you say, I would not have been happy at home and men were needed here."[43] Their conviction was fortified by the patriotic songs they sang while in uniform. A popular tune with Moncton's 145th Battalion included the verse,

> Oh, I'm so happy in my prime, and I'm merry all the time.
> but it's not a soldier's life for to have a steady wife,
> So give me Canada for mine.[44]

Another song, often sung at recruitment meetings, was even less apologetic:

> Fare you well, I must go, little darling,
> For this hurting is hard, dear, to bear,
> For the boys in the trenches are calling,
> I must go, my duty calls me there!
> Dry those tears from your eyes, little darling,
> You must smile and be brave while I'm gone,
> For I'll come back to you
> When my fighting days are through
> And the war for our liberty is won.[45]

A Toronto soldier kisses his girlfriend (or possibly wife), goodbye at the train station. *City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 830.*

By their eagerness to enlist and their lack of remorse, Canadian men proved they were as willing as Canadian women to put their nation's interests ahead of their romantic interests.

Once they reached the battlefield, moreover, the realities of war ensured that romance remained a secondary concern. A soldier in the line thought mainly about staying alive, keeping warm, burying dead comrades, and getting enough sleep. And while he prepared for attacks and raids across the unforgivable terrain of "no man's land," he tried to suppress thoughts of home and loved ones; he had to focus on the life-and-death task at hand. Listening one evening to his men sing songs about "the land of their dreams," the Senior Chaplain of the First Canadian Division, Reverend Canon Scott, struggled to keep his emotions in check. "I took care not to let the men know that I was ever moved by such sentimentalism. We were out to fight the Germans, and on that one object we had to concentrate all our thoughts to the obliteration of private emotions."[46]

Only *behind* the line could a soldier afford to let his thoughts wander farther afield, especially in the evenings, when he wrote to his sweetheart, read and re-read her letters, and gazed at her photograph. But more mundane concerns always intruded: finding a place to sleep, taking the long-awaited bath, securing clean clothing, looking for food and refreshments, cleaning his pack, polishing his buttons for inspection, and getting a decent night's sleep. This busy routine sometimes left him at a loss for words. "Can hardly know how to write without talking of war," wrote a soldier to his sister. "It seems that everything I can think of here has something to do with war and it is a fact, the little town we are now in and all the towns around here have all been taken over by the Military authorities."[47] Even in his *dreams* of home he sometimes found it hard to keep images of war at bay. "I don't dream very much," one soldier told his girlfriend, who confessed she dreamt of him occasionally, "but when I do I am generally dodging whiz-bangs [i.e., shells] and trench mortars."[48]

No matter where a soldier was, the death and destruction that surrounded him and the dismal, almost surreal conditions of trench warfare were hardly conducive to making future plans or even harbouring romantic thoughts. Determined to take one day at a time and frequently filled with despair, many soldiers turned their backs on romance. Some did this by refusing to marry their fiancées or by denouncing the idea of marriage in wartime; Private Hale's declaration that "it is just madness for a fellow to think of getting married now," reflected a common attitude.[49] Others spurned romance by refusing to discuss future plans with their sweethearts.[50] Or, to minimize their loved one's potential grief, they deliberately kept their romantic feelings in check and advised their mates to do the same. "I am a dangerous one to be serious with," one soldier warned his new fiancée. "There is no reason why this evening or tomorrow I should [not] get in the way of a shell and so cause unnecessary regrets. I want you to love me, … but I don't want you to really care. I want in return to amuse and interest you. I don't want to cause you any anxiety or sorrow."[51] In this instance, regrettably, the advice was sound.

For some soldiers, the harsh conditions and their sheer exhaustion conspired to sap whatever sentimentalism they once had. "I am often amazed at the way our feelings have been dulled," wrote an officer to his father in Montreal. "One hears that all these poor fellows [i.e., his comrades] have gone … and [we] carry on as usual."[52] At the same time he told his sister that "these days I see sunset and sunrise nearly every day, but one is

nearly always too weary to notice the beauties of the latter."[53] For others, like Private John McArthur, conditions at the front produced bitterness and irritability. "Some of my letters may seem very cool," he apologized to his girlfriend, but "it isn't easy to write loving letters over here when one's moods are not always the sweetest and the conditions we live under somewhat rotten. However I … hope you are sometimes able to read love between the lines."[54] And sometimes soldiers tried *not* to let their thoughts wander into the romantic realm. Commenting on the Reverend Canon Scott, recuperating in a hospital bed next to his, Lieutenant-Colonel Agar Adamson told his wife that "he really is a charming old snob of the old school. He calls his dog 'Bitch Billy,' as he considers female names distracting in war time"; for the same reason, Adamson himself thought it unwise for men to have their wives or fiancées nearby, as this was bound to render them less effective.[55] Only on leave or when hospitalized could men devote more than a passing thought to romance.[56]

A small, but vociferous group of Canadians went one step further. To these people romance wasn't simply of secondary concern, it was intolerable. At a time when thousands were giving their lives on the killing fields of France and Belgium, many civilians considered romance a distraction and an extravagance. They demanded, therefore, that in addition to rationing scarce materials like butter and sugar, Canadians also ration romance, starting with visits to dances, movies, and restaurants. After all, expenditures for such "foolish frivolities" deprived needy soldiers of food and money. "One would think every expensive dish or selfish tea would, and should, choke you," said a "Win-the-War" pamphlet seeking aid for POWs, "if you could visualize those gaunt, hunger stricken, forsaken forms, waiting like famished animals for the food you waste."[57] Contributors to the personals were equally concerned. "Walking along two of the main streets, one night," wrote an Ontario woman, "I counted more than a dozen moving picture shows, and people were streaming in and out by hundreds.… Should we not endeavour in some way to help in the Great Cause rather than spend time and money on our own amusement?"[58] A "Soldier's Friend" from B.C. agreed. She urged her fellow bachelorettes to encourage enlistment even though it would mean less romance. "We will sacrifice all our good times in the winter evenings," she declared. "This is not time for pleasure, but to be serious"; some even insisted the war would not end until *dancing* ended.[59] True, the patriots did not object *entirely* to heterosexual amusements. Many agreed they were a necessary outlet for war-related tension,

anxiety, and overwork, and a way of maintaining morale. Amusements for patriotic purposes, such as dances and card parties to raise money for the Red Cross – they usually condoned these as well.[60] But, generally speaking, many considered romance inappropriate in wartime.

In some quarters, even the mere mention of romance could provoke a strong reaction. Witness the tirade unleashed by "A City Girl" in the February 1916 issue of the *Western Home Monthly*:

> At a time like this when the very existence of the Empire is threatened, it is remarkable to note the general sense of empty-headedness which appears to prevail amongst a large number of the readers who contribute to your columns. In the December issue, for instance, we have a man worrying because he escorted a young lady home in a thunderstorm, and she did not thank him. I very much doubt whether this particular piece of information is of any particular interest to anybody except himself. Surely, in times like these, the other readers of your magazine should not be forced to read such piffle.... Surely it would be more fitting for your correspondents to take a more serious tone, and write and tell us just exactly what they are doing for their country, instead of babbling about dark eyebrows and fluffy hair. The average individual is too serious minded now-a-days to be irritated by reading ridiculous sentiments, and it does not seem fair that a few shallow-minded boys and girls should be allowed to thrust their views on unimportant matters upon the rest of *The Western Home Monthly* readers.[61]

Most members of the personal columns were not nearly as scathing. But they agreed with the message.[62]

Victors and Casualties

Although the war caused a general decline in romance, it did not affect the love lives and romantic prospects of Canadians equally. Certain groups were affected less than others. Some even benefitted. There were, in other words, relative winners and losers.

Over Here

On the home front, the main beneficiaries were single men who did not, or could not, enlist.[63] With so many young men going off to war, a dearth of eligible bachelors emerged, and soon the number of single women far outnumbered the number of single men, an imbalance accentuated by the rising number of war widows. This meant that any remaining bachelors – provided, of course, they were not "shirkers" – suddenly found themselves in high demand and with a greater pool of potential mates from which to choose. For this group of men, the war years must have been paradise. One young factory worker recalled asking that a telephone to be installed in his Winnipeg boarding house,

> because all the girls used to have to call me up at work. And I was very popular because, with all the men in the army, any sixteen- or seventeen-year-old boy had so many girlfriends he didn't know what to do with them all. So girls I didn't know at all would call me up at work and talk to me and kid me along in the hope that I would make a date with them and take them to the show, because … girls just didn't go to the show alone.[64]

His recollection, and the comments of bachelors in the personal columns, also suggests that bachelors didn't need to work as hard to attract women, a fact corroborated by several female correspondents in the *Family Herald*. "It seems to me," wrote one, that "in most cases today it is the girls who do the courting, not the men."[65]

The sudden surplus of single women was particularly welcome to the "lonely western bachelor" of pre-war days, whose isolation and work had long hindered his romantic prospects. Granted, wartime production consumed much of his spare time, as mentioned, but his chances of finding a partner, either on his days off in town or through the correspondence columns, were now much better. Browsing the Prim Rose column in May 1918, for instance, he would have been pleased to read the following solicitation from a farmer's daughter in New Brunswick:

> Fifteen of the young men of this town have already paid the supreme sacrifice and are sleeping somewhere in France or Belgium, while ten others are in military hospitals and the

> remaining few are somewhere on the western front doing their 'bit.' I would be pleased to correspond with Western Bachelors between twenty and twenty-five.[66]

At the same time, western men who wrote to the column and were suspected of being single found themselves swamped with unsolicited female correspondence.[67] Another Maritime maiden summed up the happy condition of the western bachelor: "There is so much work, they surely cannot be very lonely, and if they are, there are so many maidens these days that they need not be so for long."[68] Older bachelors benefitted too. Many had given up hope of ever marrying, but the wartime surplus of women – including thousands of war widows closer to their own age – gave them a second chance. War widows sent many letters to the personal columns, and the older bachelors were quick to respond.[69]

A select group of home-front *women* also benefitted romantically from the war, despite the shortage of eligible bachelors. Perhaps the most fortunate were those who lived close to army training camps. In addition to the main camp at Valcartier, just north of Quebec City, the federal government established forty-four smaller camps across the country (and seven aerodromes), each containing between 200 and 12,000 men.[70] For single women in nearby towns, it was a bonanza. A woman from Pembroke, Ontario, recalled that when the First Canadian Tunneling Company set up camp in nearby Petawawa, "the soldiers were received with warm hospitality by the people of the town, particularly the local girls, who were delighted to find so many fine-looking young men in uniform on the streets."[71] What's more, the girls enjoyed close contact with these men: in the camp's canteens, where they volunteered to sell them "comforts" like pie and ice cream; at soldier's clubs in town, also staffed by volunteers; at movie theatres and dances; at regimental concerts; and even in their private homes, when their parents entertained soldiers. Local service clubs augmented romantic opportunities by setting up specialized recreational facilities for the men. In Port Elgin, New Brunswick, for example, where the 145th Infantry Battalion was training, the local IODE (Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire) established "entertainment rooms" that, according to one soldier, "provided a popular, cozy, meeting place for Major Wood's boys and Port Elgin's female population."[72] From such brief encounters, including the officers' "farewell dance" at the town hall, romances developed.

The war created romantic opportunities for some, including men and women working side by side in the munitions industry. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, C 334-1-5-0-18.*

Young women who entered the work force for the first time also reaped romantic benefits, particularly in jobs involving greater contact with male co-workers and customers. This was especially true for the thirty-five thousand, mostly single, women who replaced enlisted men in the metal industries and munitions plants of Ontario and Quebec, and for the thousands more who entered war-related industries like steel and cement production. Granted, the noisy and busy factory floor wasn't the ideal setting for romance to flourish, especially when safety required strict attention to one's work. Opportunities for forging such relationships multiplied nonetheless, as they did for the thousands of women who moved into the service sector, as bank tellers, street car conductors, and office clerks.

Unfortunately, we know little about the romantic lives of these women. Few left diaries or memoirs, and the letters they sent brothers, cousins, and

The wartime influx of "farmerettes" into rural areas was undoubtedly welcomed by lonely farm boys. *Courtesy City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1244, Item 640A.*

sweethearts at the front, describing their experiences on the job, did not survive. But we do know a few things. We know that new relationships were formed, sometimes of an illicit nature, as between factory men and female co-workers with husbands overseas, and that bosses sometimes caught male and female munitions workers "fooling around" on site.[73] We know that men sometimes made advances on women in their new positions. An article in Kingston's *Daily British Whig* on female streetcar conductors, for example, observed that "they are very business-like in appearance, and in the performance of their duties they will stand no nonsense from any of the male passengers who are of a 'flirty' nature, which responds to the attractiveness of the Limestone City's conductorettes."[74] And we know that the patriotic efforts women made – both as paid employees and as volunteers – drew the admiration and romantic attention of many men. "I would like

to receive letters from some of our fair members around my own age who are doing their bit towards production," wrote a B.C. bachelor to the *Family Herald*, while from the trenches "Gunshot Bill" informed readers that "the farmerettes in overalls have a big place in my heart and I am proud to see the way the Canadian girls are coming forward to help and do their bit in the great war"; nor did such women shy away from emphasizing their patriotic efforts when it came to soliciting male correspondents.[75]

Over There

There were winners on the war front as well. Soldiers, despite the romantic limitations they faced – the frequent moves, the infrequent leaves, a lack of time – benefitted in several ways. The biggest was probably their sudden desirability to the opposite sex. To many, if not most home-front women, the Canadian soldier embodied virtues they found irresistible: strength, courage, honour, and patriotism, not to mention smartness of appearance. And so they sang his praises in the pages of the personals and requested his correspondence. "I would be glad to hear from … any laddies in Khaki," wrote one young woman from Manitoba. "They're the lads for me." Often coupled with comments like "I greatly admire the boys in khaki," and "every boy in khaki is a hero in my sight," such requests were common.[76] To the average woman, the ideal man was now the *fighting* man.

This was, in fact, obvious from the moment a man enlisted. Photos of soldiers alongside their beaming girlfriends or fiancées betrayed the intense pride women felt for their "soldier boys." Crowds of admiring women looked on as raw recruits paraded through the streets of their towns and cities. And throngs of young women stood on train station platforms and piers to give their heroes – in addition to rousing send offs – their mailing addresses and generous servings of affection.[77] A member of the First Canadian Siege Battery that left from Halifax in 1915 told his mother that "of course the sweethearts of the battery were there to see the last of the temporary loves, and I have a picture of Pony Moore going down the gang plank at least six times to kiss his girls goodbye."[78] Nor were soldiers oblivious to their new desirability. "Should any eligible young man read this letter who had not as yet thought of 'joining up,'" wrote a recent enlistee to the Prim Rose column,

> let me strongly advise him to do so at once. It is surprising how different one feels directly [after] one 'gets into the clothes'.... You feel better and cleaner, and more a man in every way. And it may have been my imagination, as I am by no means a ladies' man, but I thought the girls seemed to regard me more approvingly than hitherto.[79]

Prim Rose was quick to confirm his suspicions. "Congratulations on your enlistment," she replied. "Of course the girls approve."[80]

The adulation continued after the men disembarked in England. Many young women writing to the *WHM* and *Family Herald* said they preferred to correspond with soldiers overseas. A "Khaki Girl's" request – that "I would like to correspond with a 'A Soldier' and any other soldier who would care to write to me … as I am very fond of the boys in khaki" – was typical.[81] They also besieged soldiers with letters. "You must have published my name around there something terrible," one soldier told his sister, "by the way the girls have been swamping me with letters lately."[82] It's true that many of these letters (and the "comfort parcels" women sent as well) were inspired by feelings of patriotism: women wanted to boost the soldiers' spirits and ease their discomfort. Often, however, they were a sign of romantic interest. As Private Robert Brown explained to his mother, about a parcel he received from a girl he barely knew in his hometown of Brockville, Ontario, "You will probably wonder at my getting such a parcel from such a source … but I believe she has more than one friend at the front in whom she takes an interest, and like other girls I have heard about, she seems to make much of the soldier part of it – anyone at the front fighting seems to appeal."[83] A girlfriend of Brown's sister, after hearing tales of his battlefield exploits and seeing a photo of him, wrote to him as well, and requested a photo for herself: "She *must* have one of these pictures, so, as Gladys [his sister] would not part with one, she … must help herself to one. She has also written to me two or three times and sent a picture of herself.... That is another example of this sort of hero worship I spoke of."[84] Private Brown's situation was hardly unique. It also highlights the purely *physical* appeal of soldiers. Many young women who saw photos of their girlfriends' dashing brothers or cousins in uniform took a sudden romantic interest. "Oh! how I admire the boys in khaki," confessed one such woman. "They look so manly."[85] Not everyone was pleased. With a discernible note of envy, one farmer told readers of the *WHM* that "some of the young ladies think more

The man in uniform held great romantic appeal. These two Alberta members of the 31st Battalion, CEF, would soon find themselves the centre of much female adulation, both at home and in the cities of England, Belgium, and France. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA-3456-4.*

of the looks of a suit of khaki than of the thing it stands for. The uniform is what gets their eye."[86]

The desirability of the uniformed Canadian male helped offset some of the barriers he faced to overseas romance. In addition to lack of opportunity and time – the main obstacles – the average soldier had to contend with the language barrier between himself and local women (except in England, of course), a certain "coolness" from Belgian women for some reason, and, worst of all, a reputation for being wild – European citizens often mistook Canadian soldiers for natives on the warpath. On top of all this, many soldiers had a low opinion of both English and French women, whose enthusiasm for consuming alcohol in public they found particularly distasteful.[87]

These hindrances aside, Canadian soldiers enjoyed certain romantic advantages. The biggest, without question, was their appeal to European women. Perhaps it was their "spiffy" uniforms, adorned as they were with flags, badges, and polished buttons. Perhaps it was the shortage of male competition, with so many of the youngest and fittest French and British soldiers already dead. Or maybe it was the high esteem in which all soldiers were held, particularly colonial soldiers, who risked their lives for England and France. One Saskatchewan veteran remembered with fondness the English women he met while recuperating from his wounds. "I was only a few days in the hospital and knew dozens of 'em. 'Over There' the girls thought any man wearing 'Canada' on his shoulder straps was 'Jake.'"[88] Private Bertram Cox reported a similar phenomenon. "Next to the ever present subject of 'war,'" he told his mother, "the topic of the moment, is 'leave.' The boys are going and others coming back, every day, with great accounts of their trips. Evidently, the girls are just as keen on '*les soldats*' as ever."[89] Some of these women simply wanted someone to pay for their lunch or silk stockings – the proverbial "gold digger" – or a "trip to Canada" as the wife of a Canadian soldier.[90] Still, Canadian soldiers were popular.

English women found them especially appealing. Writing of his experiences in London, Lieutenant Bert Drader told his aunt that "it would take about three months to see all through the place, and it don't make any difference which way you turn, the girls are as thick as mosquitoes and quite as affectionate."[91] Escorting her soldier-brother through London's busy streets, Pembroke's Grace Morris noticed this too. "Sometimes, as we walked about London, I found it necessary to act as a sort of bodyguard for my handsome brother," she wrote in her diary, as "the streets seemed to

be awash with eager females anxious to comfort lonely soldiers."[92] These comments also suggest that single women were abundant in European cities. And they were. Canadian soldiers, on leave from training camps in England and from the front lines, encountered them everywhere: in stores, theatres, restaurants, hotel lounges, boarding houses, YMCA canteens, on their sight-seeing tours, and in the streets. Visiting London for the first time, one soldier couldn't help notice that the streets were full of "khaki, khaki everywhere, always attached to a woman," and "women, women, women.... [I] never knew there were so many."[93] Another described London as "a bachelor's paradise for sure."[94]

Inevitably, the combination of so many women eager to be with Canadian soldiers and large numbers of war-weary soldiers hungry for female companionship produced an abundance of romantic encounters. Usually these took the form of an evening outing, where a soldier escorted a woman to dinner, a dance, or a show, or simply accompanied her on a moonlit stroll; picnics in the countryside were also common. Many encounters, however, were unplanned. A soldier might meet a woman on a sight-seeing tour or in a public place and strike up a conversation or offer to share a drink or meal with her; often she asked him back to her home for dinner or tea. Such encounters were necessarily brief and usually superficial, but sometimes they led to more lasting relationships. On their return to the front, for example, many soldiers began writing to the women they had met on leave, or visited them again; one soldier's observation, that "most soldiers had a girl at every corner," was not far off the mark. And sometimes they fell in love and married.[95] Whatever the outcome, for Canadian soldiers on leave, the opportunities for romance – not to mention paid sex – were abundant and close at hand. For the typical Canadian serviceman, in his mid-twenties and fresh off the farm, it was one of the few silver linings of his time overseas.

Meanwhile, soldiers who found themselves in an English hospital recuperating from their wounds – known as "picking up a Blighty" – had the advantage of regular contact with young nurses and sympathetic female visitors. Granted, the typical army hospital wasn't the ideal setting for romance: the sickly odour of gangrene hung in the air most of the time, nurses were usually swamped with work, and soldiers were not in the best physical or mental condition to woo a nurse or any other woman. Furthermore, stays were usually short.[96] But bedside romances did develop, as nurses took their patients on "walks" through the hospital grounds and

accompanied them to shows in town; they also mingled with them at hospital dances and parties. Such budding romances were usually discreet. But not always. Writing for *Maclean's* magazine about his experiences at Epsom Downs convalescent camp in England, Private George Pearson told readers that,

> even the British nurses forsook all attempt at decorum and openly romped with their charges. A nurse holds commissioned rank in the army. But at Epsom, as the night grew on, it was no unusual sight to see a skirted officer hugging the shadows of the wall as she gave a leg up [i.e., a kiss] to each individual of a long queue of convalescent Canadians returning from an evening's deviltry in the town. And these officers usually giggled in a very unsoldier-like manner.[97]

Hospitalized soldiers also benefitted from the visits of sympathetic women; these women usually had some connection to the hospital and volunteered to take patients on drives through the English countryside. Many of these hospital courtships ended in marriage, perhaps because convalescing soldiers had more time than soldiers on leave to fall in love. "It appears 'wounded, Blighty, marriage' is becoming a popular pass time with our fellows," wrote one soldier in his diary.[98]

Of course, romantic opportunities on the war front cut two ways: opportunities for soldiers were at the same time opportunities for certain women. And, in fact, the other group that fared well under the circumstances was Canada's overseas nurses. These were either full-fledged nurses, more commonly called Nursing Sisters, or their untrained assistants, known as Voluntary Aid Detachment nurses or VADs. About 2,500 Nursing Sisters, all single and over twenty, served overseas. They worked mostly in general hospitals but could also be found at training camps in England, on hospital ships and trains, and in the Casualty Clearing Stations near the battlefields.[99] Like the soldiers they cared for, these women benefitted romantically in two ways. First, they were extremely popular with men because of their patriotic and often heroic efforts to bring comfort to, and facilitate the recovery of, the hundreds of wounded men that passed under their care each day. Nurses were highly dedicated to their jobs and unfailingly kind and helpful to their patients. Soldiers noticed. In a note his

nurse asked him to write in her journal, one Canadian summed up his own feelings and those of his comrades:

> Just a ray of sunshine
> Given by a look,
> From the kindly owner
> Of this little book.
>
> She always made me happy
> When in my little cot,
> Her ever-smiling countenance
> Will never be forgot.[100]

If soldiers agreed on anything, it was that the "angels in white" who cared for them were heroines, pure and simple.

Canadian nurses also benefitted from their close contact with many single men, wounded or otherwise. This contact took place mainly in the recovery wards, as nurses changed dressings on wounds, administered morphine, gave soldiers cigarettes, wrote letters for them, talked with them, and held their hand. It is no surprise that many a soldier, already predisposed to worshiping the saintly figure who attended his every need, quickly fell for his caring and always pleasant nurse. "Patients had a habit of falling in love with you," recalled one nurse. "They were so glad to … have young girls around who weren't too hard to look at and who were kind, who helped them."[101] Sometimes the nurse-patient interaction occurred in more congenial settings, as when nurses invited recovering soldiers to tea or dances in their mess tent or took them on picnics or for walks. Either way, the result was the same: smitten soldiers. One such soldier recalled the time he spent at a convalescent hospital in England. "I was given the use of a pony & cart," he told his aunt, "and every nice day was taken for a drive, accompanied by a V.A.D. Sister to whom I grew very much attached. She was an angel, and the boys all called her their Little Ray of Sunshine."[102]

Nurses also spent time with men other than those under their care. They worked closely with the male orderlies in their wards, for instance, and with the doctors ("medical officers"), who often chaperoned them on their sight-seeing tours.[103] It was also common for a soldier on leave to visit a convalescing comrade or a female relative working at the hospital, who in turn introduced him to nurses. One nurse recalled the day a "very

Two nursing sisters tend to a wounded Canadian soldier at the No. 2 Hospital in France but would not have been oblivious to the soldier's handsome male visitor at his bedside. *Library and Archives Canada, Edward Kidd, W. L. Kidd Collection, PA-149305.*

handsome Canadian Army Officer" walked into her ward and offered his hand. He was the brother of a friend of hers from Owen Sound, and "like a flash I remembered the broad shouldered defenseman of the Wiarton Redmen Hockey team.… I had just met my future husband."[104] They also mingled with soldiers and officers from nearby camps, at hospital dances and Sunday afternoon teas, concerts at divisional headquarters, and battalion sporting events; Christmas and New Year's Eve dinner-dances were particularly gala events, involving a festive concoction of nurses, officers, and soldiers.[105] Nurses benefitted further from the camaraderie they shared with soldiers, and from often being the only women that soldiers came in close contact with between leaves. Nurses went on leaves too, of course, to Paris, Boulogne, London, or whichever city was closest to their posting; those lucky enough to be stationed in or near large cities were able to visit them in the evenings or on their days off. These cities were usually brimming with soldiers and officers on leave, and here, too – at cafés, restaurants, concerts, and tourist attractions – they met men.[106]

The high esteem in which nurses were held by most men, combined with the many men they met during and after working hours, created ample opportunities for romance. It's true that the army supervised and restricted the social activities of its nurses more so than its soldiers, to safeguard their physical and especially *moral* well-being – in at least one hospital, nurses needed permission slips to go shopping in town.[107] But military authorities could not prevent romance. Nurses regularly accepted offers from patients, soldiers, and officers to see movies or plays in town or to dine with them.[108] One soldier remembers walking home with his buddies after a movie in a French village and noticing the "scenes of philandery along the road at nightfall" between VADs and officers.[109] Former patients dropped by to visit their nurses and ask them out. And some pilots dropped love letters from planes to their amused nurse girlfriends below, telling them, as one nurse recalled, "where they had been, and when they'd be back, and 'hope you'd be at a little dance,' or something like that."[110] Romances and life-long partnerships developed from such encounters, often enough that it became a running joke that wounded men invariably fell in love with and married their nurses, particularly if they were good-looking.[111]

Casualties

If some Canadians survived the war romantically, however, or even prospered by it, many more did not. There were casualties, in other words. Chief among them were the wives and girlfriends Canadian soldiers left behind. These women experienced a range of emotions during the war, few of them positive. They were certainly lonely. "I am one of the girls left behind in a quiet little place, now half empty because of the war," wrote a young domestic servant. "Not that I am not happy with the people I am with, but at times I feel so lonely."[112] Ontario's "Lonely Girl" felt the same. "Many of the young men in this town have enlisted," she wrote, "and so many moving away makes us feel very lonely"; each was hoping for some male correspondence to cheer them up.[113] Also from Ontario came this anguished and oft-repeated complaint from a soldier's wife:

> The soldiers' wives are not credited enough for their bravery, let alone the hardships they go through.… If they had the aching heart of the soldier's wife, it would do them not to speak of the other trials. I often think I can't stand it any longer, then I

> think of what my dear husband is going through for us, and it gives me heart.[114]

Even when (or *especially* when) they attended social functions, like showers, weddings, and outings with other couples, or moved into their parents' home, wives missed their husbands terribly; the loneliness was strongest for those without family nearby, for new brides not yet accustomed to living on their own, and for women in remote rural areas, where loneliness was *already* a problem.[115] Sadly, many women remained lonely for the rest of their lives. "So many of the boys were sacrificed in that war," recalls one widow, "that my chances of having another husband were just not there. I was lucky to even have *one* husband. Hundreds and hundreds of women my age and a bit older never did get married, never had the opportunity to be married, because the loss was so bad."[116]

Many women complained, as well, that they were bored, that with all the boys off to war, "times are dull" – a familiar refrain among young women in particular. "I have done quite a bit of skating this winter," wrote an eighteen-year-old Toronto girl to her aunt, "and am only sorry we won't get much more. Things are getting shocking when the youngest in the family goes to rinks, shows, and concerts with the same boy. Such is my case."[117] Working women, accustomed to having more men around the office, shop, or bank, also found life less exciting.[118] And soldiers' wives were particularly hard-pressed, lacking even the *option* of another man's company, unless they were willing to flout societal norms and their marriage vows – few were.[119] Nor could women relieve their boredom by attending social events alone. The etiquette of the day, though weakened by the turmoil of war, still prescribed that men escort women to and from such events. Married women, in particular, became virtual prisoners of war.[120]

But above all, Canadian women were anxious. When they soon realized that the war was no great, glorious adventure, but an insatiable meat-grinder, claiming and maiming young men at a phenomenal rate – the average life span of front-line infantry was twelve months – women spent many waking hours worrying about their sweethearts.[121] Writing to the *Family Herald*, "A Very Lonely Girl," with her fiancé at the front, summed up the feelings of most: "so many of the boys I knew are listed in the 'killed in action' columns these days, it makes me tremble for the safety of the one who is dearer to me than my own life."[122] They worried when they didn't hear from their men regularly, a common problem given the inconsistency

of the mails. "My Own Dearest Hubby," wrote one woman, "I was so glad to get your letter last Monday morning to say you were in rest camp, but my dearest I have had no news since then. I am sure you have been in the trenches dear again. I do hope I shall have news in the morning. It is so worrying love."[123] And most of all, they worried about receiving word their men had been killed. Girlfriends trembled as they perused the casualty lists in their local paper or on the telegraph office window, and wives lived in mortal fear of receiving a condolence letter or official telegram with the dreaded opening, "I sincerely regret to inform you...." Just spotting the "telegraph boy" walking down the street was terrifying, and many women were "absolutely ... petrified every time the telephone rang."[124]

Canadian women also had more prosaic, if no less troubling worries. Would their men continue to like or love them, for example? This question tormented them, and soldiers were forever trying to reassure their partners. "Do you really think, Alice, that I don't like you as much as I used to?," asked one soldier. "Well dear, you are making a great mistake, because I love you now just as much as I did when I was at home."[125] Soldiers also had to reassure their sweethearts that they were not seeing other women or being unfaithful in other ways. "I want you to know that I am not fooling with any girls in England," Private Hale told his girl, straight out. "You are my own little girl and, dear, one is enough for me. I have not seen a girl in England who could compare at all with my little Canadian rose. Now do you trust me dear?"[126] Rumours of infidelity on the war front were rife, and Canadian women worried.

Worse than the constant anxiety, of course, was the sadness and grief women felt upon hearing of their partner's death. Society expected women who had lost loved ones to present a brave front and "carry on" – to hide their grief, at least in public, so as to not lower the morale of others.[127] But some simply couldn't do it, like the twenty-year-old Nova Scotian who in 1917 poured her heart out to the *Family Herald's* readers:

> I come to tell you I have received that dreaded message saying my dear husband was killed in action ... at Vimy Ridge. Oh! I am so heart-broke. For where is the silver lining to this dark cloud? ... I have the consolation of knowing my husband died a noble death. And when I think of the other sad hearts in Canada it makes it easier to bear. Our future prospects were

> bright, as we had a nice farm to move on when he returned. But now all these plans have vanished.[128]

Many more women suffered privately and, despite the soothing words of friends and relatives, were often inconsolable. "I feel as though my heart would break," confessed a British Columbia girl to her mother, for "he was all the world to me."

> I have never given a thought to another man – and oh how dearly I loved my boy. I cannot realize that I shall never see his bonny face again and that he will never hold me in his arms again and call me his little sweetheart. We have loved each other for a long time now, and in his last letter he said he would be back very soon and claim me for his wife. How happy it made me – and now I can never be his wife. I feel as though life is worth nothing to me now. I long to go to him. He wants me – I can hear him calling me in the night when all is quiet. Oh, how it hurts me to think of my darling, my Percy – lying out there, so far from those he loves.[129]

Some grieving women were able to distract themselves by keeping busy with war-related activities. But this was simply grief deferred, and on Armistice Day, when the bells rang and the whistles blew in towns and villages across Canada, announcing the end of the terrible conflict, many women were faced with the painful and final realization that their loved ones would not return. "In little rooms all over the land," wrote a nurse in her diary that day, "mothers, sisters and sweethearts were silently weeping for those who would not come back."[130]

Soldiers felt such emotions, too. As preoccupied as they were with war-related matters, and as much as they tried to suppress romantic thoughts, they did experience moments of longing for the wives and girlfriends they had left behind, or craved female correspondence. Bored with trench life and the constant company of other men, they, too, desired heterosexual companionship. And like the women at home, they often felt anxiety. Would there be any eligible women left to marry when they returned? Would their girlfriends or fiancées get impatient with waiting and leave them for another? Were their sweethearts being faithful to them? And if so, would they still want them when they returned? "Won't it be hell if I have

changed so much for the worse that she won't like me any more?," Private Douglas Buckley asked his brother-in-law. "I hope I haven't." Others felt bitterness and guilt at having to postpone marriage or at not being around to "care for" their wives.[131] Soldiers were romantic casualties, too, in other words. But not to the same extent. They did not have to worry, for example, that the lives of their mates were in danger, and few soldiers were concerned about infidelity, especially with young men so scarce on the home front.

In one respect, however, the war made casualties of soldiers and home-front women in equal measure: it damaged relationships. The main problem was trying to sustain romance over a great distance and over many months, if not years. The lack of personal and regular contact was bound to weaken existing relationships, especially if either party encountered desirable alternatives close at hand; it meant that couples could not express or reaffirm their feelings towards one another as regularly or personally as before. Correspondence helped little. In fact, it often made things worse. The unreliability of the mail, for example, produced misunderstandings. Delayed or lost letters were often interpreted by one partner as proof that the other no longer cared as much; this sometimes provoked an unwarranted "calling down" from the aggrieved party, creating further tension.[132] Or when a sent letter wasn't received, the intended recipient might interpret this as a desire on the sender's part to discontinue the relationship and would stop writing. The sender would, in turn, assume the same, resulting in a break-up – either temporary or permanent. This is exactly what happened to Private Nelson Campbell and his girlfriend Muriel Macfie. "I never dreamt of hearing from you again," he wrote in 1918. "You say you answered my last letter, well I never received no reply and I thought you had found something better to do with more sport attached to it than writing to one of the [*Hun straffers*].... So you think I was seeing so many girls in England that I forgot about you. Oh, nothing like that."[133] And sometimes the letters themselves were misunderstood. Because couples often suppressed romantic sentiments, this was occasionally misinterpreted by one partner as a change in feelings of the other.[134]

Wartime pressures strained relationships too. The great sacrifices Canadians made for the war effort left many men and women angry and irritable, and sometimes they took out their frustrations on their partners. One officer admitted as much to his wife: "It may be the irregular hours for eating and sleeping," he told her, referring to his fellow officers, but

"we all agree that we are much more irritable and annoyed at little things. [Colonel] Buller says it would be a gallant act for any girl to marry him."[135] Several letters later, he gave first-hand evidence of his own foul disposition. Sleep-deprived, bitter about being in the line during Christmas, and annoyed with his wife's whining about what he considered minor problems – like "the Daughters of the Empire cannot agree upon the proper method of running a soldier's soup kitchen on the home front" – he lashed out in uncharacteristic fashion: "I have rather pounded the subject to death, my dear old girl, but you must not worry me for a short time. I want your affection and to say pretty things. If you don't feel like saying them, then don't write to me till you can."[136] In other instances, partners felt they were getting insufficient recognition or understanding from each other for the sacrifices they were making and the hardships they were enduring.[137] The very fact of men *enlisting* caused tension in some cases. Most women supported their partner's decision to enlist, but some felt their men were abandoning them – placing personal glory ahead of love – and told them so.[138]

Infidelity was another sore point. Couples separated for long periods and lonely for the company of the opposite sex occasionally succumbed to temptation. This seems to have been common among soldiers, and it took various forms, from simply flirting or going out with other women, to visiting prostitutes and committing bigamy. Out of guilt, or because their sweethearts had gotten word through a third party, soldiers often confessed their transgressions. Or perhaps it was the *soldier* who received news of his partner's infidelity – this happened too. Either way, it caused wounded feelings and anger for the aggrieved.[139] Even *suspicions* of infidelity were enough to cause irreparable damage. "It is sure good to hear from you often," wrote one soldier to his sister, "especially since Marion [his fiancée] has quit writing. I do not know the reason.… I expect someone has been telling her yarns about me, and she believed them rather than me, so I intend to write soon and tell her to break our engagement."[140]

Under normal circumstances, many couples would have resolved their differences; under wartime conditions, they often proved fatal: broken engagements, and even divorce, were not unheard of.[141] More often, relationships ended because girlfriends and fiancées simply grew tired of waiting and worrying, or because they had met someone they liked better. Others lost hope of ever again seeing their husband or boyfriends alive, or healthy, and decided to end the relationship for these reasons. The result was usually a "Dear Johnny" letter to some unfortunate soldier, or a letter from

a relative or close friend telling him his girl had married someone else. Soldiers sent letters, too.[142] "There must be a large number of girls and fellows who have been parted by this scrap," wrote Private Hale to his girl, Alice. "I think some of them will patch up their troubles don't you think? … Please let us mend ours."[143] He and Alice did eventually mend their troubles, marrying in 1920, but many did not.

The only other sizeable group to lose ground during the war, romantically, were home-front men deemed "slackers." Urged by patriotic organizations and individuals to shun men who avoided doing their bit, and influenced by their own burning patriotism, most Canadian women made it clear that they wanted nothing to do with "shirkers," that such so-called "men" were unworthy of their attentions or affections.[144] For many women who wrote to the personal columns, a slacker was a man not in uniform, and they cheered the uncompromising views of B.C.'s "Francisco":

> If any soldier boy or anyone who in the near future intends wearing the 'khaki' should chance to see this letter and feel that a letter occasionally from me while doing their duty for King and Country might cheer them up, I shall be glad to write them. But no one who is not or does not intend being a soldier need write, as I have neither time nor inclination to write to them.[145]

"Pocahontas" from the prairies was just as adamant: "I would not be seen with a civilian unless he wore the rejection button or had a reasonable excuse for being here."[146]

Such attitudes were widely shared – particularly among women with brothers at the front – and bachelors without uniforms felt the effect. "We read many letters on your page about young ladies telling boys they ought to be at the front," wrote one luckless B.C. bachelor. "I have been told this more than once, and many of my old [girl]friends have quit writing because I have not gone."[147] Many others complained, often bitterly, that women were discriminating against them because they were not in uniform. "I think some of the girls are very unfair to those that are left at home," wrote "Sunny Joe," a heartbroken farmer from New Brunswick.

> We have no chance where there are soldiers around. The soldiers will get the girls every time. I have had some experience

> in that line myself. There was one I would have started my life on. We were engaged to be married in a short time but she was taken by a uniform. So now it is all off. I try to keep up heart but it is pretty hard.[148]

Many of these men were western farmers and ranchers, the same individuals women had applauded (and desired) before the war for their patriotism as nation-builders. The new state of affairs must have been devastating to them. As western bachelors they continued to face many liabilities, and now Canadians were accusing them of disloyalty, cowardice, and profiteering. Once again, the "Western Man" was on the defensive.[149]

Of course, not all women drew the line at men in uniform. Many, especially in rural areas, knew full well that farmers and ranchers were serving the war effort and did not deserve to be called slackers. "It is ridiculous," wrote Manitoba's aptly named "Spitfire," in her defence of these "soldiers of the soil,"

> for some girls to say they would not be seen with a civilian and 'He ought to be wearing khaki.' Of course, there are exceptions, but there ought to be a decided difference made between the boys and men doing their bit on the farm and the real 'shirker.' Boys under twenty-one (I think) are physically unfit and are better at home helping the Empire here.… [The] Allies have to be fed, and is it not our farmers who are doing it?[150]

Other women argued that men had other legitimate reasons for not enlisting, like a physical disability or having to care for dependent parents and siblings.

One thing all women agreed on, however, was that the man who did absolutely *nothing* for the war effort was truly the most objectionable. "The real slackers," declared another outspoken Manitoban, "are the idle loafers who hang around the towns and attend all the ball games and hockey matches and try to win the affections of some girl whose soldier-boy has left all to go and fight.… For them I have nothing but contempt."[151] As a result, any physically fit bachelor thought to be shirking his duty found himself at a distinct disadvantage. If he had a girlfriend or fiancée, he lost esteem in her eyes, if not worse, and, if unattached, he was deprived of female company and correspondence. He could not appear at social functions

or public amusements without women asking "Why are you not at the war?" He could not even walk down the street without receiving their cold stares and shoulders. "I was coming home from work a few days ago," wrote a returned soldier from Ontario, "and met a lassie coming in the opposite direction. She wore a badge so I could see that she had some dear one overseas, but the way she looked at me seemed to say: 'You're a slacker.' Tonight we met again, and this time I had a service button, and you would have smiled to see her changed expression."[152]

Aware, as always, of the romantic calculus of the moment, bachelors writing to the personal columns – and no doubt *most* bachelors – responded to the situation by either playing up their wartime service or emphasizing their intention to enlist soon ("after the harvest," for instance). And if they were *not* in uniform they defended themselves against charges that they were shirkers and pleaded with women to understand.[153] It is remarkable, in fact, just how much a man's romantic success in these years depended on his patriotism – how the ideal man came to be defined so narrowly. But it was, and men who failed to measure up suffered accordingly.

The foregoing list of romantic casualties is not exhaustive. It excludes several groups we know little about. What about *female* shirkers, for example? Did men shun women who did not appear to be doing their bit or, even worse, who refused to give up their extravagant, "frivolous" ways while others were making sacrifices? Commenting on the fashions of some women in his prairie town – large feathered hats, tightly laced dresses, high heels – one man asked Prim Rose readers, "Is it civilized to dress up in this kind of garb? Where is the old-fashioned girl with the good, plain ideas of dress?"[154] "Who are the real shirkers?," asked another. "I have heard some of my girl friends discussing the 'boys at home,' and condemning them for not enlisting, while they, themselves, are simply worrying over styles and fashions; they simply couldn't find time to knit a pair of socks for their friends who are already fighting."[155]

And how did the war affect the romantic prospects of Canada's many veterans? How many relationships were pre-empted, cut short, or strained by the physical and emotional disabilities many soldiers incurred overseas, or by the drinking problems some developed? Did eligible women come to see soldiers differently once stories of their heavy drinking, smoking, and gambling began making their way back to the home front? How did the legendary restlessness of veterans affect their desire and ability to hold down a steady job and "settle down" to married life? And what about their

awful memories of the war? "I knew that whatever fortune was to befall me in my efforts to re-establish myself in civilian life," recalled one veteran, "the burden of memories which the past years had imposed upon me, could never again be dropped."[156] Did such memories, along with the irritability and impatience they produced, affect their romantic relationships? These are intriguing questions, the answers to which await further research.

More certain is the war's impact on other groups and on romance generally. This impact was substantial. The heavy demands of war separated thousands of men and women for up to four years and left them with little time to pursue or enjoy one another. This was one of the hard realities of total war. To most Canadians, however, it mattered little, for they were willing to put matters of the heart behind them for the time being. After all, larger issues were at stake – the Empire, freedom, civilization itself. And so, men marched willingly off to war, with their sweethearts' blessings and encouragement; soldiers and civilians gave less thought to romance; patriots urged Canadians to devote their energies to war rather than romance; and some demanded an end to romance altogether, until victory was secure. Welcome or not, these developments amounted to a withering of romance for the years 1914 to 1918.

But the effects of war are never even, and so it was with romance as well; within the context of romantic decline, some Canadians won and some lost. Patriotic bachelors facing less competition at home; single women near training camps or entering the work force; soldiers and nurses on leave and in hospitals – these Canadians did better than most. Women with men overseas; couples separated by time and space; and men on the home front deemed slackers – these individuals, and possibly others, lost out.

Whichever side of the ledger they had ended up on, however, most citizens welcomed the return of peace as a chance to resume their love lives. With the signing of the Armistice, thoughts on both sides of the Atlantic turned quickly to romance. Soldiers made bets on how long it would take before they married. Couples spoke about their plans for the future. And soldiers like Private Blom, writing from France, imagined what it would be like seeing their "girls" again:

> I am just coming out of the train now and I have seen a little girl who is looking around for me on the platform – and I am going to give her one long kiss and then hurry my baggage into a taxi so that we can get away to a place where we can be

> alone.… And then I will take you in my arms and you will put your arms round my neck and I will hold you very tight and look into your eyes … and I will put my lips to yours and close my eyes and I will stay like that.[157]

With the return of Canada's soldiers and nurses to Canadian soil, old relationships resumed, long-deferred weddings were celebrated, and new relationships – some begun by correspondence during the war – flourished. Romance may have been a casualty of the Great War, but the patient seems to have recovered quickly.

Epilogue

The New Order

If World War I shook the very foundations of Canadian romance, its effect on *postwar* romance was arguably just as great. How could it not be so? An event that altered so dramatically the roles of men and women and that left in its wake so much death and destruction was bound to affect how people perceived and conducted romance thereafter. And if World War I was, in fact, the birthplace of "modern culture" – of a more liberal, secular, rebellious, and experimental mindset – as many historians contend,[1] how could it have not affected heterosexual romance as well?

Unfortunately, we know little about postwar Canadian romance. Perhaps it's because evidence of popular attitudes and behaviour has been (as always) hard to find. The personal columns are not terribly useful either. Not only did fewer people use them after the war, but those who did said less about matters of the heart. The reasons for this are clear enough. With so many leisure activities available after the war, including radio and sports, letter-writing became less the recreational pastime it once was. More important, as Canadians continued to pour into urban areas from the countryside, and as the number of roads and cars grew, and especially as commercial amusements flourished, opportunities for romance multiplied, even in rural areas. As a result, Canadians relied less on the personal columns to find partners. At best, the columns point to *trends* in postwar romance, as do some of the existing studies of the period. Still, these trends, taken together, suggest nothing less than the emergence of a new romantic order

in Canada, one in which the ideal partner was substantially recast and the rules of romance rewritten.

The New Man

Identifying how women defined the ideal man after the war is not easy. That's because those who wrote to the *Family Herald* and *Western Home Monthly* basically stopped specifying the qualities they wanted in a husband. The only exception was their lingering adulation of soldiers and the Western Man. In the immediate postwar years, many women requested correspondence from "returned soldiers," and some desired no other. "I lost my boy over there at the Somme," wrote one, "and no one will ever take his place but a true blue Canadian soldier, if I will ever be able to get any"; others met up with soldiers they had begun corresponding with during the war.[2] Canadian veterans, in turn, were eager to trade on their wartime service for romantic purposes. In fact, it was usually the first thing they mentioned in their letters: the years spent overseas, the adventures, the medals won, even their injuries. Some went further, suggesting they deserved more "credit" from the fair sex than men who had merely served on the home front.[3]

This blatant self-promotion continued well into the mid-twenties, even when it became clear that Canadian women were no longer as interested in a man's wartime sacrifices. Female adulation of the patriotic Canadian man waned considerably after 1921, as wartime patriotism itself waned and, perhaps, as the *image* of veterans deteriorated. Indeed, this image had begun to crumble during the war itself. In his study of community responses to the war – in Guelph, Lethbridge, and Trois-Rivières – Robert Rutherdale demonstrates the public's growing fear of veterans, based on newspaper reports of the returned man's propensity to public brawling, drunken rowdiness, and radicalism as well as his high incidence of venereal disease, tuberculosis, and mental instability. "Unfavourable depictions of troops began to appear," he writes, "stories of boisterous rank-and-filers, of men infected by tuberculosis, or of hardened men back from Europe supposedly corrupted by radical politics."[4] The widely reported week-long riot in Toronto in August 1918, in which angry veterans destroyed parts of the city's Greek community in response to an alleged slight against one of their own, did little to dispel the image. Nor did stories that circulated *after*

the war about the savagery and carousing of soldiers at the front, behaviour that in some instances carried over into civilian life, especially the penchant for drinking and smoking. "Now that they had seen 'Paree,'" writes one historian, of veterans generally, "it was difficult to keep them in check."[5]

No doubt this behaviour disturbed some people. Referring to the veterans in her city, a young Ottawa woman reported that "it sometimes makes me ashamed of my country to see how some of these fellows are treated, socially."[6] Veterans were disturbed with their new image as well. "I served in the artillery in France," wrote one, under the ironic moniker "Reckless 33," and "I have heard some girls around here giving a very bad opinion to the boys who waded the mud over there. I have decided to ask some girl who still has faith in us fellows to write to me as I am lonely."[7] Another veteran recalled that "there was a lot of ill feeling. We came home at a time when there was no sense of appreciation. 'The war is over. Those guys were over there to have a good time.' That was in the minds of some people. Veterans were not treated all that well."[8] Add to this reckless image the restlessness of soldiers, their trouble holding down jobs, and the limited employment opportunities for those with debilitating injuries, and we can understand why the patriotic man's stock soon plummeted in the postwar romance market.[9]

In the war's wake, many Canadian women continued to admire, as well, the Western Man – his virility, his courage, and his patriotism in building up the country – as well as the wonderful West itself. This was especially true of Maritime maidens (for some reason), like Nova Scotia's "Bashful Twenty-Two," who praised the Western bachelors "for the work they are doing," admired "their pluck," and envied "them their privilege of living in the great West."[10] Nourished by the exciting adventure stories of Zane Grey, Ralph Connor, Nellie McClung, and Gene Stratton Porter, many young women from central and eastern Canada remained entranced by the romance of the region and by its manly, heroic inhabitants.[11] This infatuation never entirely disappeared, but after 1921, and except for the occasional request for letters from "Mounties" or "cowboys," it was less noticeable.

What, then, constituted the ideal man in the 1920s? Since so few women bothered to articulate this, we can only infer such qualities from what they *stopped* asking for and, even more, from the comments of bachelors trying to attract women through the personal columns. Women stopped requesting, for example, men of high moral standing – who did not smoke, drink, or

gamble; after the war, and in part *because of* the war, they were more tolerant of such one-time "vices." Canadian bachelors had picked up certain bad habits in Europe and most women seem to have resigned themselves to this. "The rest rooms of skating rinks, dance halls, and house parties get so thick with smoke," wrote a Saskatchewan woman about the many veterans now smoking in public, that "one can hardly see the other.… There are very few young men around here who have not been 'Over There,' and we girls and mothers sympathize with them, for we know they have to have their smoke as well as their meals."[12] Some deplored the new male morality – "most young men of today think that they cannot be sports unless they smoke cigarettes and drink," fumed Ontario's "Miss Timid. "Where is the manly young man of yesterday?" – but hers was a rare example of the moralism that had so strongly defined the ideal man before the war, but that now only survived in pockets, mostly rural.[13]

Nor did women seem as concerned about a man's *financial* standing or prospects, or about how "ambitious" he was. Of course some men insisted otherwise, accusing women of being essentially "gold diggers." But such accusations were no more common than before, and there was little evidence, from the letters women wrote to the columns, to back them up; in fact, a number of women emphatically denied this.[14] Nor did men advertise themselves in such terms as much as before.

Only in one respect did a man's real assets seem to matter: car ownership. No woman actually said so in her request for male correspondents, but it's clear that in the 1920s, women (like men) loved joy-riding in cars. And because few women earned enough to afford their own, they had to depend on boyfriends for such recreation. "Extravagant courtship seems to be again the order of the day," wrote a *Family Herald* columnist in 1920, "and there is also much truth in the complaint of the young man that no girl wants him unless he owns a car!"[15] What's more, from the frequency with which men boasted of owning a car (or complained about *not* having one), it is obvious *they*, at least, considered it a romantic asset of the highest order. "Many a boy has met what [*sic*] he considers the right one," observed an "Ex-Soldier" from Manitoba,

> and still he is unable to carry out his wishes. He may have [a] nice home waiting for her, but she doesn't take to him for the simple reason that he has no motor car in which to drive her around. A car costs money and young farmers have a better use

image not available

Owning a vehicle, especially at this early date (ca. 1914), gave a man a distinct advantage in the romance market. Perhaps that's why this dapper-looking Calgary bachelor seems so happy. *Courtesy Glenbow Archives, NA 5262-101.*

> for their money than spending it in such an expensive luxury. How many boys have been disappointed in this way?[16]

A salmon fisher from B.C. was dubious about all this. "I am sure the girls don't marry for the sake of the car," he told Prim Rose readers. But many bachelors evidently agreed with "Ex-soldier." In their solicitation of female correspondents, those lucky enough to own their own cars often made a point of saying so – "I have a Hudson Super Six-cylinder car and I would like Cupid to help me find a fair chauffer [*sic*]" declared a Manitoba farmer's son – while those not similarly endowed were apologetic.[17]

If a woman did want a man with wheels, however, it wasn't because she equated car ownership with wealth but because she associated it with pleasure. And this was what the ideal man likely boiled down to after the war. Without wanting to put too fine a point on it – postwar women, as mentioned, were tight-lipped about their ideal man – what she probably

admired most in a man was his lighter side. Why else would matrimonially minded men spend so much time listing the leisure activities they enjoyed most, while saying little about their characters, appearance, or financial assets? Was it because they knew that women now wanted a man who liked to dance, skate, travel, go for drives, take photographs, play music, ride horseback, and hunt? Typical postwar male "advertisements" include that from B.C.'s "Jolly Sport," a young farmer who sought to entice women by emphasizing his fondness for "sports of all kinds, such as boating, motoring, swimming, and … reading," and Ontario's "Dancer," who told female readers that "I like swimming, canoeing, tennis, baseball and dancing."[18] Even older bachelors sensed the changing winds. "Now I am not sweet sixteen, have seen twice that and a little more," wrote a Saskatchewan bachelor, "but I can enjoy myself just as much as those at sixteen and can get around just as fast."[19] For the same reason, many men spoke about how much *travelling* they had done and, therefore, how many stories they could tell prospective girlfriends about the exotic places they had visited; several women also solicited men of this sort.[20]

The 'Modern Girl'

What men looked for in a woman changed as well. Two weeks before the start of World War I, an Ontario bachelor had submitted a poem to the *Family Herald* called "Wanted – a Wife." The last verse went as follows:

> A commonsense creature, but still with a mind,
> to teach and to guide, exalted, refined –
> A sort of angel and housemaid combined.[21]

This was what most men wanted in 1914. *After* the war, they wanted something different. In their letters to the columns, when they specified any qualities at all, they stopped emphasizing a woman's domestic abilities, femininity, "refinement," or virtue; nor, therefore, did they show as much distaste for the working woman or the advocate of women's rights. For the average Canadian bachelor, in other words, the woman of his dreams was no longer first and foremost a "lady."

This change did not happen overnight. It began in the 1910s when some men began showing a preference for the "fluffy and dollified" woman;

that is, for the good-looking woman who was, as well, less reserved with her feelings and affections – who was, in fact, coquettish. In her lively account of high-society romance in wartime Ottawa, Sandra Gwyn tells of a revealing incident in 1916. Ethel Chadwick, one of the city's socialite debutantes, complains to her diary that her boyfriends are passing her over for a new kind of woman, a more daring, affectionate, and scantily dressed woman who loved to dance vigorously all night and was not above a bit of silliness. The Ottawa newspapers had affectionately dubbed such women "naughty women," but Chadwick wasn't amused. To protest the attention the city's eligible bachelors were paying these women, she and her sister began boycotting social functions at which such women appeared. When one of her boyfriends asked why, she said, "How would you and Duff like it if *we* started throwing our arms around your necks?," to which he replied, simply, "We should like it." For their principled stand, Chadwick and her sister gained little from their boyfriends, except the nickname "The Prudish Pickles."[22]

In the 1920s, even more men embraced the "naughty woman," both figuratively and literally. In their letters to the columns, they spoke less about wanting to marry the domesticated, modest, pure, christian "lady" of yesteryear and more about the out-going, athletic, fun-loving, daring, and affectionate woman who had emerged in the 1910s and whom Canadians now called the "Modern Girl." They especially wanted a woman who knew how to have fun. When "Bonnie" told Prim Rose readers that young women should "stay at home and not go chasing after pleasure," she was quickly challenged by B.C.'s "Sage Brush Jack." "Now does she think every girl or woman should do the same as she does?," he asked.

> Those days are gone forever, and my idea is this: why should not a girl have all the pleasure she can get while single, as she will only be a girl once. Now 'Bonnie' leave that to the girls.… Just because you can't dance and are a home-loving person and like a quiet life, that is no reason why all girls should be the same.[23]

Alberta's "Bachelor Rancher" agreed completely. "I never could see how a woman could stay in the house day after day and never get any outdoor sports of any kind," he said. "There is nothing I like better than to see a woman who likes to ride horseback, drive a car, or go on camping trips

Reminiscent of Ottawa's wartime "Naughty Nine," these 1920s dancers at Toronto's Hippodrome symbolized both the hedonistic spirit of the postwar years and the open, affectionate type of woman that more young men found appealing. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, F 1075-13, H 574.*

and enjoy it."[24] The postwar bachelor was also attracted to the fun-loving woman because she enjoyed a man's company for its own sake and not as a prelude to marriage. As the aptly named "Happy-Go-Lucky" told readers of the *Western Home Monthly* in April 1920, "I like the free jolly girl who can have a good time wherever she may be, and not the one who thinks she must not look at a boy unless she intends to marry him."[25] Any of these men would have gladly traded places with a certain western rancher who, a month before, had stopped along the road to help a stranded woman with motorcycle troubles. "She was daintily clad," he recalled happily, "with a very, very short skirt; her hair was bobbed, and she wore no hat. I mended her motorcycle, and she went on her way singing a vaudeville ballad."[26]

Even more noticeable was how many single women now advertised themselves strictly by their leisure pursuits and interests. A New Brunswick farm girl's comment that "I am very fond of coasting, skating, and snowshoeing, also music, dancing, knitting and crocheting" was typical.[27] So was that of Alberta's "Brunette," who told prospective male correspondents that "I play hockey, tennis, and golf and I enjoy swimming and horseback riding. I can do any of the latest dances."[28] That so many women chose to play up their fun-loving side in these years – as opposed to their domestic skills, as before – was partly a reflection of changing male desires: they knew what men wanted.

Many postwar bachelors also wanted a bolder or "spunkier" woman, a woman not afraid to speak her mind, show some initiative, and be more independent. Men used to dismiss such women as "flirts," tomboys, or worse, but by the 1920s they called them, affectionately, "jolly girls."[29] And the jolly girls were in demand. When a man calling himself "Solitaire" dared criticize such women, a twenty-two-year-old office worker from Ontario delivered a sharp rebuke:

> I suppose every generation have some busybodies that feel it their duty to uphold the traditions of their grandparents. At a dance, can you imagine the boys flocking around a girl in a long, plain dress, tightly screwed-back hair, eyes downcast, with not a line of conversation and blushing every time she's spoken to! Why 'Solitaire' would be the first to flee from that corner if he had even gone near it in the first place.[30]

Her letter prompted a Swedish-Canadian bachelor to ask Prim Rose readers, "who would flock around a girl like the one she describes when we can have the modern girl? Not I!"[31] Given such views, girls who were *not* modern naturally felt disadvantaged, like Ontario's "Bashful Betty." "I would like to get some good [male] correspondents," she wrote in 1921, "but I am rather bashful, and do not like to write first – though they say bashful girls are not the style – so, of course, I am out of it."[32]

But how many men actually came to prefer the "modern girl" over the so-called "old-fashioned" girl, like "Bashful Betty"? At first, not many. As more women joined the work force during the war – often doing "men's work" and wearing similar uniforms as men – and gained the right to vote and hold office, the traditional definition of how a woman should look

and behave, and to which activities she should confine herself, was further eroded. Even more than before, women – especially young women – saw themselves as not very different from men. They considered themselves entitled, therefore, to not only the same legal rights, but to the same *social* rights, including the right to swear, smoke, drink, play sports, wear practical clothing, and have sex before marriage. More generally, the war produced feelings of anger and cynicism. Canadians of all classes came to believe their leaders had made serious mistakes, both at home and abroad. The horrendous cost of the war, as well as its failure to settle much of anything in the end, damaged Canadians' faith in the old order; traditional beliefs, including notions of proper feminine behaviour, were largely discredited. What's more, young people who had witnessed first hand the horrors of trench warfare, or were close to someone who had, now felt the older generation had nothing more to teach them about life.

In this atmosphere of changing gender roles and widespread cynicism, the modern girl was born. But not without controversy. Canadians who clung to a more traditional definition of womanhood were at first appalled. Many bachelors accused the modern girl – and her more objectionable relative, the "flapper" – of being frivolous, vain, immoral, and obsessed with fun. Rural bachelors were especially critical. "I see a number of letters on your page from bachelors who seem to have a grudge against 'the modern girl'," wrote a farmer's son. "For my part, I'll say that I can't understand them [i.e., modern girls] at all. They seem to think of nothing else but having a good time. Of course, there are a few girls who seem to think seriously of life and love, but in my opinion these are the exception."[33] The modern girl's detractors disliked her appearance in particular: the bobbed hair, the "short" skirts (up to mid-calf by 1924!), the short pants (called "knickers"), and above all, her fondness for "powder" and "paint." "What is wrong with the young girl of today?," demanded one bachelor. "Are they [*sic*] not satisfied with the face that was given them?"[34] He and several others asked the "painted dolls" in the city to please *not* write them. At least one felt such women should be spanked.[35]

Many country girls objected to such criticisms. To compete with their city cousins in the romance game, they argued, they needed make-up. A Cape Breton stenographer asked one critic "just how many men of today he could find who would take a girl out for the evening if she didn't have enough powder on to take the shine off her face. I am afraid that he wouldn't find many."[36] Another, more bitter, Nova Scotian made the same

point. "How many of the every day girls without powder and without paint get chances to go car-riding, fishing and picnicking?," she demanded to know.

> Are there many … young men of today who do not look for 'dolls' and remark 'How cute that girl or this girl is,' wondering who she is and wishing for an introduction to her? How many girls who are dressed neat and clean, no paint or powder in their 'swagger bags' would give anything to go for a walk to pass away an evening and would give no [buts] about going to the Pictures or to a dance? You will often see young men, who claim to be gentlemen, driving a car and who meet respectable girls from the middle class – but Oh! No – they do not invite these to go car riding. They would much prefer picking up some 'fairy' from the street and taking *her.*[37]

In short, many women (and some men) argued that, despite male objections to the "fussed up" woman, who not only used make up but also bobbed her hair and wore short skirts, when it came right down to it, this was who they wanted.[38]

And by the mid-twenties, they were probably right. By this point men had stopped criticizing the modern girl in the pages of the Prim Rose column (the *Western Home Monthly*'s column ended in 1924). More often, they praised her and sought her company.[39] In his letter to the *Family Herald* in 1926 a Saskatchewan gentleman summed up the new romantic reality. "The modern girl," he observed,

> appears to be very much more popular than the staid old-fashioned girl who in nine cases out of ten is obliged to play wallflower while her frivolous sister gets all the beaux. The average bachelor, even if he is on the shady side of forty, considers it quite romantic to escort this flashy be-powdered girl about, while if he used his common sense he would take up with her staid sister who would make him a far better partner in this world of work and woe. I think the dress of the modern girl is sensible. Compare grand-mother's hoop skirt, mother's crossing sweeper, and the hobble skirt of a few years back with the medium length skirt of the girl of today.[40]

And when a woman calling herself "A Flapper" wondered if "boys like girls with bobbed hair," such as herself, she was "swamped with replies, many more than I can answer for a long time," replies presumably from admirers; other self-styled "flappers" received similar attention.[41] Nor, judging from the observation of one farmer, were *rural* bachelors any less taken by the modern girl as the decade wore on. "If a city girl comes to the country to visit or to attend a dance," he wrote, "the country boys will nearly break their necks to meet her and leave their own girls to sit in the corner."[42]

None of this is meant to suggest, of course, that Canadian bachelors became strictly superficial by the late 1920s. Yes, they valued a woman's outward appearance more than before (like women themselves),[43] and they sometimes complimented the modern girl's grooming and fashions. But they were just as attracted, probably more so, to her fun-loving and extroverted personality. Beyond this, most men – and most women, too – adopted a more non-judgmental, "live and let live" attitude towards the opposite sex. Whether their potential mate lived up to certain ideals of neatness, fortitude, honesty, or morality mattered far less than before; their relative silence about such things in the personal columns suggests as much. A New Brunswick bachelor expressed this more modern attitude best in his response to another bachelor's criticism of the modern girl's appearance. "Cheer up," he wrote in 1926, "this is a New year. 'Wonders will never cease.' There are lots of nice young ladies who will never 'bob their hair' nor wear knickers come what may, while on the other hand there are lots of nice young ladies who have done so. Now I think for my part that everyone should suit herself."[44] By the time Manitoba's middle-aged "Plough Boy" wondered out loud, in 1929, whether "there are still girls who do not paint?," most men, like our New Brunswick friend, did not care.[45]

But how do we explain this transformation? Why did Canadians become, in effect, less *idealistic* in their romantic tastes? Here we can only speculate. The main attribute young men and women now seemed to prize in each other, for example, was a fun-loving personality. Why? Maybe they were just following the advice of postwar marriage experts, who now recommended "companionate" marriages, where man and woman were physically and emotionally compatible with one another – chums basically.[46] More likely they were responding to the new hedonism of the age. "Since the actual cessation of hostilities," wrote a columnist for the *Halifax Herald* in 1920, "there has certainly swept over the face of civilization an extraordinary wave of irresponsibility – an obstinate and determined refusal to

take life seriously or see in it anything but a kaleidoscopic panorama from which each and every one must snatch as many of the cold fragments as possible in as short a time as possible."[47]

The roots of this hedonism are complex and need not concern us much. Suffice to say that after years of crusading for one idealistic cause or another, including a war that left 60,000 of their countrymen dead and many more debilitated, Canadians were ready to indulge in less serious pursuits. The war had also proved that life could be fleeting and should therefore be enjoyed to the fullest *now*. This desire to get more out of life was made easier by the return of prosperity in the mid-twenties and, even more, by the emergence of new forms of recreation, in both town and country, including radios, cinemas, spectator sports, and cheaper automobiles. The dancing-obsessed flapper, who "stayed out late, danced close, and necked and petted without feeling imposed upon," was the most visible symbol of the new hedonism, but by the 1920s *many* Canadians believed that life should be about more than just working, serving one's community (or country), and helping to create better world; it should also be about having fun.[48]

Canadians expressed this hedonism in words. "I agree with 'A Flapper' when she speaks about people who think of nothing else but work from morning till night," wrote one veteran. "I like to mix the work a little with play."[49] But mostly, they expressed it in deeds, particularly their insatiable appetite for movies, dancing, and other amusements. In 1928, lamenting the marked drop in attendance at his local church, a Toronto parishioner complained to his pastor that "the cinema or picture show, the automobile, the radio and jazz, as well as other things, have all had an effect on home life, drawing young people particularly away by themselves for entertainment."[50] A year earlier a Saskatchewan school teacher lodged a similar complaint with readers of the *Family Herald*. After noting that high ideals were "so palpably lacking in so many young people nowadays," she asked "what do you think girls? Can you find many young men, or old ones either, in your neighbourhood who know as much about hard work and ideals as they do about 'petting parties' and the like?"[51] These comments suggested that Canada's youth were *especially* eager to "seize the day." Having lost so many of their peers in the trenches of Belgium and France, this was hardly surprising. Speaking for her generation, a young Nova Scotian asked Prim Rose readers "Why not let youth have its fling? We are only young once.... So, why not 'jazz' and motor, etc., to our heart's content, while we have the chance? We grow old fast enough."[52] And in response to critics of dancing,

Here are two examples of the 1920s "Modern Girl": a free-spirited, boyish woman (left) and the daring, bare-armed "Miss K. McCarthy" (right), both of Ontario. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, F 1075-13, H 1026 and F 1075-13, H 936.*

a "Soldier's Sister" told readers, more poignantly, to "'Dance while you may: another day will bring enough of sorrow.'"[53] The "Jazz Age" had arrived, and with it came a less idealistic definition of the ideal partner. A bachelor or maid who could answer "yes" to the question "Can you jazz?" was now the prize catch.

If the Great War produced much of the hedonism that by the 1920s made bachelors and maidens want more fun-loving companions, so, too, did it affect the definition of the ideal woman. By placing young women in unconventional roles, the war had helped further liberate them from Victorian definitions of "femininity." It had helped create the "modern girl" – independent, playful, high-spirited, and affectionate. And as the modern girl emerged, she not only came to be accepted by Canadian men, but eventually to be *desired*; popular depictions of modern girls and flappers in movies and magazines only increased her allure.[54]

But if women were changing, and by doing so creating a male "demand" for themselves, they were also *responding* to male demand, to the male desire for a new kind of woman. And here, again, the war was important. Men who knew they might be dead the next day – men like Ethel Chadwick's Ottawa boyfriends – lost patience with women who, out of traditional female modesty, held their emotions and affections in check. Their experiences overseas changed their expectations of women even more. While on leave in wide-open cities like London and Boulogne, Canadian soldiers and officers had easy access to risqué theatrical performances and to "women of easy virtue"; they indulged heavily in both.[55] And in restaurants and dance halls they met spunkier, less reserved women, women rarely encumbered with chaperones and who didn't seem to mind having their hair pulled or legs pinched by inebriated soldiers.[56] Many Canadians were drawn to *English* women in particular (those not prone to public drunkenness anyway), whom they found friendlier, more playful, and less prudish than women back home. Many veterans commented on this, none more directly than an "Ex-Sergeant":

> Before the war I noticed that the average Canadian girl was just a little bit independent, and was not willing to come halfway. Now, in England (and I think that most of the boys who have been there will back me up in what I say), the average girl is altogether different in that respect. She is so much

By the 1920s, young Canadians admired the fun-loving qualities of the opposite sex, especially a willingness to dance. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, F 1075-13, H 571.*

warmer-hearted and loveable, and I am sure more sincere, that it is no wonder the boys were so attracted and made so many matches. Although I have the very greatest respect for the Canadian girls, I know, to be perfectly candid, I must say that I prefer the English girl.[57]

English women, it seems, were also keen on having fun with men without necessarily seeking a commitment of marriage. "They make themselves at home with everyone," another veteran recalled fondly, "and do not think that every boy they meet is wanting to marry them."[58] Soldiers found the *appearance* of British women appealing as well, the fact that on the streets of London, for example, they wore bobbed hair and more revealing clothing.[59] It is no surprise, then, that when Canadian soldiers returned home, they sought a more modern woman, and that many Canadian women, in turn, obliged.

The New Romance

The same modernizing and martial forces that changed what postwar Canadians looked for in a partner also changed the "where" and "how" of romance. Certainly the *venues* changed.[60] By the 1920s, young couples spent less time in parlours and on front porches, sipping tea and lemonade under the watchful eye of parents and older siblings, or at church-sponsored events like picnics and dances, under the supervision of the community. The rapid growth of commercial amusements and the greater access to cars and roads took courtship into more anonymous and secluded places, usually outside the community, like dance halls, amusement parks, and especially movie theatres.[61] One veteran, on his return to the West, immediately purchased a Model T Ford. "I did my courting in it," he recalled. "I think that was probably the best car Henry Ford ever made. It put a lot of people on the road. You know, getting them off the farms and out where the lights are bright."[62] By the 1920s, a couple's favourite pastime was "going out."[63]

The workplace became a more common venue for romance as well, or at least for *budding* romance. As young middle-class women continued to enter the work force after the war – by 1930, one-third of women aged fifteen to twenty-four were working – they began to enjoy a romantic advantage working-class "city girls" had enjoyed for years: regular contact with eligible bachelors in unsupervised, non-familial settings. As writer Gertrude Pringle observed in 1932, somewhat ruefully, "the men the modern maid meets are both more numerous and of a more varied type than those her grandmother knew. Today even the well-to-do girl seeks a career, and in search of one sometimes finds instead – a husband."[64] Sharply dressed and tastefully "made up" female stenographers, telephone operators, bank

In the early 1900s, new commercial amusements provided aspiring romantics with more opportunities to meet people and allowed couples to get better acquainted in anonymous settings. Here a couple enjoys "The Whip" at Toronto's Hanlan's Point amusement park in the summer of 1930. *Courtesy City of Toronto Archives, TTC Fonds, Series 71, Item 7722.*

tellers, and sales clerks met men on the job, on the streets and public transit to and from work, and in restaurants and parks during their lunch breaks. And after work, of course, working women could sample a wide array of commercial amusements, where intermingling with strange men was common and where romance took root. In such places, writes one historian, "young men and women mingled easily, flirted with one another, made dates, and stole time together," and they did so without parents, siblings, or relatives breathing down their neck.[65]

It is also clear that by this point romance itself had changed – its rules, its rituals. Simply put, it had become more casual. This process began shortly before the war, when young people started to reject the strict Victorian values and rules with which they had been raised, including a conventional

approach to romance. No surer sign of this rejection was the sharp decline in the number of etiquette inquiries they sent to Prim Rose after 1910. By the time the war began, her Etiquette Column was essentially dead.

There were other signs. At house parties and school dances, young people were doing more risqué dances, involving more bodily contact, like the tango, the one-step, and the bunny hop.[66] Just as troubling to many adults was that authority figures were not monitoring this interaction as closely as before. The chaperone, for example, was becoming a symbolic figure, particularly at smaller functions. In "the present dancing mania," wrote etiquette expert Emily Holt in 1915, "there seems to be a growing laxity in the matter of chaperons. Perhaps this is largely because everybody dances now – chaperons and all – and people have begun to suspect that the average matron's oversight of her charge is not to be taken seriously." Holt recommended the continued use of chaperones at large balls "of a public – not to say promiscuous – nature" and "in strict society" where a man escorts a woman to the theatre or some other entertainment. But she acknowledged that the "hostess" had replaced individual chaperones at private and semi-private dances, as well as "Bachelor's Teas."[67] Some middle-class women, following in the footsteps of their working-class sisters, had also begun spending time with single men in public, unchaperoned and for reasons other than securing a marriage proposal. Meanwhile, vigorous efforts by parents and school authorities to regulate the behaviour of their young charges often came to naught; boys and girls increasingly found ways to see each other privately.[68]

These changes stemmed, in part, from the closer and more regular contact between the sexes in the early 1900s, as women entered the labour market and, to a lesser extent, universities. In urban areas, working women who lived on their own in boarding houses shared meals with the men who lived alongside them and, after working hours, mixed freely with men in restaurants, dance halls, and movie theatres. This, too, made romantic interaction less formal. "I can remember when it was considered necessary for those of the opposite sexes to be *introduced* before they considered themselves acquainted," complained Toronto's pre-eminent moral reformer, C. S. Clark.[69]

The growing ease with which men and women interacted before the war was also a result of women becoming more independent. A woman who lived on her own – as more women were doing – or who contributed part of her wages to her family's income, was less vulnerable to parental

pressures to abide by a traditional code of romantic conduct. "Working girls," as mentioned, allowed strange men who treated them to amusements to "take liberties," even in public; some also asked men for dates.[70]

The war did much to advance the new romance. Because of their circumstances, fighting men overseas and working women on the home front became less inhibited towards one another. Soldiers who had grown used to more casual and affectionate relations with European women expected a similar *modus operandi* on their return. The West's "Lonely Lieutenant" was one of them. "I became so greatly accustomed to the great sociability of army life," he proclaimed to readers of the *Western Home Monthly* in 1919, "that I cannot refrain from taking any steps possible, however unconventional, to endeavour to form some lady friends. I expect many of the returned soldiers will do likewise! Perhaps this step on my part is because a part of my service was in the R-otten F-lirting C-rowd!"[71] Women, who had assumed new positions in the labour force and whose new economic independence emboldened them to set their *own* rules, seem to have been receptive. The "naughty women" of Ottawa and elsewhere certainly were, and writers to the personal columns couldn't help noticing, sometimes with regret, that women were taking the romantic initiative more than before. "The men of today expect the girls to meet them a little more than half way," complained Manitoba's "Girl of Today," "and although men are going to be very scarce after this awful war, I do hope we girls will not have to do the courting."[72]

That couples might never see each other again – this, too, made them willing to discard traditional etiquette, particularly the proscription against physical affection in public. The modern middle-class maidens of Ottawa understood, writes Gwyn, "that when the smell of death was in the air, chaffing, the occasional peck on the cheek, and allowing oneself to be addressed by one's first name were no longer enough," and that "men familiar with the horrors of war … and men just about to depart to encounter them, could no longer be expected to behave as [traditional gentlemen]."[73] For the same reason, young people increasingly favoured premarital sex. "To young people who had seen how quickly the promise of 'forever' could be shattered," writes another historian, "waiting for marriage seemed ridiculous."[74]

Attitudes and practices continued to change in the postwar years. By the twenties, Canadians considered it even more acceptable, for example, for unmarried men and women – and not just those of the working class – to see each other, socially, "just for fun." Before the war, Canadians felt

The war accelerated the move away from strict Victorian etiquette. A boisterous scene like this, from the wartime wedding of Ottawa's Colonel Hogarth, would likely not have occurred in the pre-war years. *Library and Archives Canada, Canada Dept. of National Defence Collection, PA-008238.*

there were two kinds of single women: those who went out with men because they wanted to get married and those who did so because they were prostitutes, either full-time or "occasional." After the war, this distinction no longer held. Comments like this, from a bachelor to the *Western Home Monthly* in the spring of 1920, inaugurated a new romantic order:

> I notice there has been some discussion this last while about the frivolous kind of girls who go with the boys for the good time they get only. Now I think some of our readers have been rather hard on these kind of girls. Myself I think it is quite all right for a girl to go out with a boy for an evening, and have a

> good time, even if they don't ever intend to get married and I also think a great many will agree with me when I say a young fellow is a great deal better off with the company of a girl than with a bunch of his chums.[75]

Several women agreed. "Girls should not be tied to their mothers' apron-string until they are 'tied up' to the man they marry," declared Dardanella later that year. "I certainly like an evening with a boy friend."[76] For most young people, marriage was still the ultimate goal, but it was no longer the *only* purpose of romance. After the war, suitors became boyfriends and courtship was replaced by dating.[77]

More Canadians also felt that when young men and women spent time together, the etiquette that formerly governed their interaction need not be as strict, that couples did not need to be as reserved, for example, or as cautious in their choice of words or subject matter.[78] The best testament to this came from a thirty-nine-year-old Saskatchewan bachelor-farmer in 1925. "I think that the girls of today are O.K.," he told Prim Rose readers.

> They might not be like our mothers or grandmothers, but times change and the clinging female of mid-Victorian days has passed along with the dandified gentleman who proposed on his knees, one hand clasping his fair one's hand the other pressed over his heart. I can just imagine the girl of today's answer to such a proposal. 'Get up old top, don't be foolish.' Common sense is putting old man romance where he belongs. The modern young folk are much more frank with each other and are therefore much more able to get acquainted with each other's real selves than in the old days when they had to stand on ceremony in each other's presence in the company of a staid chaperone.[79]

As part of the new openness between the sexes, women also did more *flirting*. This was even true of student nurses, traditionally the most modest and wholesome of all single women – another sure sign of the times.[80]

Postwar Canadians were also less opposed to premarital physical intimacy. Before the war, adults told young women to protect their chastity at all costs – even if it meant dying at the hands of a male assailant – and they considered women who had premarital sex *willingly* to be essentially

prostitutes, and shunned them.[81] By the 1920s, Canadians still favoured premarital female chastity, but not nearly as much. Several articles appeared in the *Halifax Herald* in 1920, for example, supporting the right of men and women to live together outside of marriage, mainly so they could "sow their wild oats" before committing themselves to a single partner; finding someone they were sexually compatible with would mean a more stable marriage.[82] How many couples actually did so is unclear, but Canadians were definitely less inhibited physically. "The girls were more free, permissive, the men more daring," recalled one bachelor.[83] More "necking" and "petting" took place in secluded spots, often in parked automobiles and in the darkened corners of dance halls and cinemas – "pleasure palaces" indeed.[84]

Some historians have said that, because men were now *paying* more for such outings, they expected physical affection in return. Possibly, but women seem to have been more than willing; after all, being "modern" meant kissing as many boys, and as often, as possible. This affection seems to have been more *public* as well. In 1926, an Ontario resident of a YWCA boarding house told Prim Rose readers that the men who dated her fellow residents liked to linger outside the front door after a date, hoping for the "Good Night" kiss.[85] Why would men linger if they knew a kiss wasn't forthcoming? We also know that premarital sex rose in the 1920s, along with the percentage of illegitimate births.[86] And from the few etiquette inquiries Prim Rose received after the war, it is clear that when men spent time in their girlfriend's parlour in the evening, not only were they trying to kiss their girlfriends more often, but they were also asking if they could turn off the lamps.[87]

All of this makes sense. The war, as mentioned, had accelerated the arrival of looser sexual mores, with free-wheeling veterans, in particular, bringing back habits Canadian youth were quick to imitate.[88] Heavily sexualized American films and novels in the 1920s furthered the process. So, too, did the popularization of Freudian sexual ideas, namely that sex was necessary for mental health and that females, too, had sexual needs, needs that should not only be accepted but encouraged.[89] Members of the personal columns remained silent about physical intimacy, but historians have shown that Canadian youth, even in rural areas, were not immune to such influences, especially as American pop culture infiltrated Canadian radios, magazines, and movie theatres; in their appearance and behaviour, young Canadians sought to emulate Hollywood's sex gods and goddesses, as they

By the 1920s, public displays of physical intimacy between man and woman were not as proscribed as before. *Library and Archives Canada, Albert Vandewiele Fonds, PA-126674.*

had the veterans.[90] Nor were they entirely immune to the "pleasure principle" that America's "flaming youth" embraced so passionately after the war – the revolutionary idea that physical pleasure was not sinful, but good.[91]

Then there was the matter of romantic initiative. This had long been a male prerogative, but after the war Canadians questioned this, too. Signs appeared that they were willing to grant women more romantic initiative, and that women were taking it. In 1924 a Nova Scotia school teacher told

the *Family Herald*'s perennially lonely western bachelors to "cheer up; you know this is leap year, and the modern girl isn't considered … to be a very shy one, so your chances are good."[92] More revealing is that women who wrote to the personal columns in the 1920s, especially working-class and professional women, were far more likely than before to solicit male correspondents and to not be called "unladylike" for doing so. Some Canadians felt that women, having proved themselves the equal of men during the war, even had the right to propose marriage. "Why shouldn't they?," asked a B.C. bachelor:

> The time has gone when women were looked upon as the silent member of the firm. Public opinion, through Parliament, has given them the franchise, admitted them to seats in the Government, and to positions of responsibility in every day business life and to the pulpit. In a word, women have equal rights with men. Why, then, should they not have the right [or] privilege of proposing if they wish to?[93]

Lonely rural bachelors were, as usual, the strongest proponents of this radical idea, but even Prim Rose came around. "The experiment of letting the women choose their husbands might be worth trying," she said. "This dull old world moves on apace these days, and the time may come when woman will be the chooser instead of the chosen."[94] Some women availed themselves of this right; many more were at least bolder in *eliciting* proposals. More significant is that many Canadians no longer considered the idea preposterous.[95] True, most still believed men should make the first moves, romantically – "If a man hasn't grit enough to propose he deserves to stay single" remained a common sentiment – but fewer than before.[96]

Further proof that Canada had entered a new age of romance was the etiquette advice dispensed after the war. The rule keepers, being older than the youth they directed their advice at, had always been more conservative. After the war, they displayed a more relaxed approach. Gertrude Pringle's *Etiquette in Canada* is a good example. Published in 1932 and a mainstay of Canadian social etiquette into the 1950s, it said little about romance etiquette specifically. What it did say, however, was revealing. It noted, for instance, that high-society women were no longer as likely to be formally "debuted" at age eighteen, in part because they had already indulged in romance; "from the age of sixteen," wrote Pringle, "girls attend 'not-out'

dances and theatre parties." And men and women were interacting less formally on such occasions. "There used to be a strict rule that no man should ever introduce a man to a lady without first obtaining her permission," she wrote, "but at private dances young men now introduce their men friends to young women without any such formality." It was now also acceptable for a couple to spend the entire evening dancing together without appearing rude or "conspicuous"; they no longer had to limit their dances together to a certain number. And as for the traditional chaperone – the courtship cop of the pre-war years – Pringle put it thus: "to mention chaperons in an age when young women fly, motor, and travel unattended from one end of the globe to the other, seems unnecessary." With respect to dances, specifically, she noted that "many a girl goes accompanied by only her partner of the evening, who drives her there and home again."[97] Yes, Pringle still expected men to take the romantic initiative, to protect their dates in hazardous situations, and to show them deference – by opening doors for them, removing their hats in their presence, not smoking without their permission, and so on. She expected them to act as "gentlemen" in other words. But clearly she had made some concessions to new romantic realities and more often than not appeared to be *reporting* the rules rather than prescribing them – another sign that youth were now calling the shots.

Unfortunately, we know little about what Canada's leading rule-maker, Prim Rose, thought about all this, her "Etiquette" column having more or less expired by the war. But what little we do know is equally revealing. In 1914, for example, Prim Rose had written that "only a foolish girl seeks to begin a correspondence with a man friend." Five years later, in a rare etiquette inquiry, this from someone asking who should write first, the boy or the girl, she replied, simply, "Either. It does not matter who writes first."[98] She also softened her position on dating. Before the war she had said that girls should not have suitors before age eighteen. After the war she was asked if a girl "Almost Eighteen" could go out with men. Yes, "'Almost Eighteen' might certainly go out with a boy friend," she replied, "if he is a very nice boy, and her mother knows all about it."[99] What about a sixteen-year-old girl? This was fine too. "A young man might take a girl of sixteen to the right kind of picture show," as long as he didn't put his arm around her; nor did she mention chaperones in either instance.[100] And what about conversation? In the pre-war years Prim Rose had laid down fairly specific guidelines about what young men and women should say to one another, but in the more permissive early twenties she was telling

Compared to the stiff and (literally) distant courting couples of the pre-war years, this group of happy picnic-goers on the Toronto Islands in 1923 is practically having an orgy. *Courtesy Archives of Ontario, F 1075-13, H 658.*

couples that the topics of conversation could be almost anything. And when a New Brunswick girl asked her how she should greet her boyfriend after a long absence, Prim Rose told her to not "do and say everything by rule. Be natural, and say the words that rise to your lips, if you feel sure they are suggested by kindness and consideration for the other person."[101] Few comments marked more starkly the cultural distance Prim Rose, and others like her, had travelled in just a few years time.

It would be wrong, however, to exaggerate the changes in Canadian romance after the war. Not only is the picture incomplete, but the continuities are important too. In rural areas and among Catholics and many immigrants, for example, older forms of romance persisted, with couples more likely to "date" in parlours and at church-sponsored events, to avoid

pre-marital physical intimacy, and to face strong parental and community supervision, including chaperonage.[102] Consider, as well, the plea from Nova Scotia's "Lonely Maiden," in one of the last appearances of the Prim Rose column:

> Dear Prim Rose,
>
> I am a girl living with my mother who is a widow. We live in the country, where it's very lonely for two women alone. We have a small farm four miles from town. It is a very pretty place in summer but horrid in winter. I am thirty-four years old and a brunette. So come on all members, get busy and write to a lonesome pal, the men around my own age especially.[103]

"Lonely Maiden's" boldness in soliciting a mate and in offering to be his "pal" was a sign of the times. Her loneliness and her desire for romance, however, were timeless. For all the modernization that occurred during and after the war, in other words – in the partners Canadians sought and how they behaved in pursuit of such partners – Canadian romance remained unchanged in fundamental ways: most Canadians still craved heterosexual companionship; their ultimate goal was still the life-long bond of marriage; they still considered *love* a prerequisite to such a union; they continued to suffer from loneliness, heartache, strict rules, and other hardships; and their love lives continued to be shaped by forces beyond their control, including, very soon, Depression and more war. Modern romance may have emerged from the ashes of World War I, among other things, but it rested firmly on foundations that had been laid long before – and would remain long after.

Glossary

I have determined the meaning of these words mostly from their context – that is, from the many letters I used in my research – and, in part, from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, Tenth Edition.

affinity: a true love; a soul mate

bachelor: a man, usually unmarried, keeping house for himself, sometimes with other bachelors

backward: shy; bashful; diffident

benedict: a newly married man, after a long bachelorhood

cap-setting: trying to ensnare or lure a man into marriage; hunting for a husband

chaffing: good-natured teasing; joking around

double up: to get married

double-harness: married

fall in with: to get to know (someone)

flirting: leading someone to believe you have romantic feelings for him/her

forward: bold, almost pushy

fussing: caressing or kissing

to get changed: to get married

hitched: married

in earnest about: to love (someone)

jake: great; wonderful; terrific

to jazz: to dance

love-making: courting

to make love: to profess one's love for someone; to court

old maid:	unmarried woman, at least twenty-three years old, who typically lives at home and cares for parents (reputed to own many cats as well)
petting:	caressing or kissing
prude:	a woman who conceals her romantic feelings or shows excessive reserve; who is standoffish, or has little contact, with men
slow:	not aggressive, bold, or determined enough in seeking a mate
to spoon:	older word for petting; to talk amorously
spunk:	courage in pursuit of romance
to tie the knot:	to get married
to trifle:	to toy with someone's emotions; to flirt
well-fixed:	prosperous; well off

Notes

Introduction: Why Romance?

1 10 March 1913, p. 6.

2 Exceptions include Paul and Audrey Grescoe, *The Book of Love Letters: Canadian Kinship, Friendship, and Romance* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2005); Charles Fisher, ed., *Dearest Émilie: The Love-Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier to Madame Emilie Lavergne* (Toronto: NC Press, 1989); and my own collection, *Only the Lonely: Finding Romance in the Personal Columns of Canada's Western Home Monthly 1905–1924* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2000). Several good collections of letters between individual soldiers and their home-front sweethearts during World War I have also been published. Perhaps the best is N. Christie, ed., *Letters of Agar Adamson 1914 to 1919* (Ottawa: CEF Books, 1997).

3 Ward, *Courtship, Love and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century English Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).

4 Ward argues, for example, that women's "courtship territory" – that is, the physical spaces or venues in which they were most likely to meet men – was more circumscribed than for men, but this is illogical, for a courtship space is, by definition, a place where men and women could interact; it would have to have been equal for both sexes. What he probably means to say is that men had more freedom than women to seek out partners and were therefore more likely to find a partner.

5 In his Introduction, Ward states that he draws "heavily on … the diaries and letters written and read by ordinary men and women," but this is an exaggeration in my view. A few sentences later he concedes that criticisms such as mine "cannot be dismissed out of hand. For one thing, written records come from the literate population and their use inevitably creates a bias toward the higher social strata" and that "even among the literate, the papers of the noteworthy are more likely to survive than those of ordinary folk." Ward, 5–6.

6 *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation-building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008).

7 Ibid., especially 6–9, 21–22, 27, 53–54, 78. Less convincing is Carter's claim that inter-racial marriage was widely proscribed, by medical experts, government officials, and the like. Not only does she provide few examples of this, but her observation that the Territorial government tried to force white men to *marry*, rather than just live with, native women (to ensure child support in the event of desertion) undermines the argument. Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, 68–71.

8 Dubinsky, *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880–1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), ch. 5.

9 Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasures of the City, 1880–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995). Strange's book is an excellent source of information on the efforts of middle-class purity crusaders in Toronto to protect the morality of working girls from the "evils" of city life, but it addresses the issue of romance only indirectly, mostly in its discussion of the greater opportunities for private and unsupervised heterosexual interaction in the city. On the extensive efforts of middle-class spokespersons to protect the chastity of rural women of the West in the same period, see Terry Chapman, "Women, Sex, and Marriage in Western Canada, 1890–1920," *Alberta History* 33, no. 4 (Autumn 1985): 1–12.

10 Gidney, "Dating and Gating: The Moral Regulation of Men and Women at Victoria and University Colleges, University of Toronto, 1920–1960," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 41 (Spring 2007): 138–60.

11 McPherson's study is particularly useful in pointing out the more forward and sexualized behaviour of student nurses towards male patients after World War I. McPherson, "'The Case of the Kissing Nurse': Femininity, Sexuality, and Canadian Nursing, 1900–1970," in McPherson et al., *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1999), 179–98.

12 Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth: Adolescence and the Making of Modern Canada, 1920 to 1950* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), ch. 3.

13 Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919–1939* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988), 84 (quote).

14 Baillargeon, "Beyond Romance: Courtship and Marriage in Montreal between the Wars," in Strong-Boag, ed., *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, 4th ed., 205–19. Baillargeon bases her conclusions on interviews with thirty women.

15 Catherine Gidney, "The Dredger's Daughter: Courtship and Marriage in the Baptist Community of Welland, Ontario, 1934–1944," *Labour/Le Travail* 54 (2004): 121–50.

16 Suzanne Morton, "The June Bride as the Working-Class Bride," in Ian Radforth and Laurel Macdowell, eds., *Canadian Working Class History*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2000), 408–25.

17 Silverman, "Women's Perceptions of Marriage on the Alberta Frontier," in David Jones and Ian MacPherson, eds., *Building Beyond the Homestead* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1988), 49–64. Another brief, though less useful portrait of frontier courtship and marriage – in 1880s British Columbia – is found in Jean Barman's *Sojourning Sisters: the Lives and Letters of Jessie and Annie McQueen* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 66–85. Unfortunately, lively narrative far exceeds trenchant analysis in this account.

18 Danysk, "'A Bachelor's Paradise': Homesteaders, Hired Hands, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1880–1930," in Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Mouat, eds., *Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996), 154–85. For a contrary portrait of a rural P.E.I. couple in the 1890s, see Michael Bliss, "A Farmer Takes a Wife: The Courtship of George Haslam and Lucy Palmer, 1892–1894," *Island Magazine* 1995 (38): 1–6. Although bachelorhood and spinsterhood are

in some ways the embodiment of *non*-romance, or failed romance, their numbers and experiences add some perspective to the subject and should not be ignored. The only other study of this group that I'm aware of is Michele Stairs' brief analysis of P.E.I. in the late nineteenth century, "*Matthews and Marillas*: Bachelors and Spinsters in Prince Edward Island in 1881," in Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie, eds., *Mapping the Margins: The Family and Social Discipline in Canada, 1700–1975* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), 247–70.

19 Joy Parr, "Gender History and Historical Practice," in Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld, eds., *Gender and History in Canada* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1996), 8–15; Kathryn McPherson et al., "Introduction: Conceptualizing Canada's Gendered Pasts," in McPherson et al., eds., *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2.

20 Lynne Marks' study of associational life and leisure in three late-nineteenth-century Ontario towns, for example, emphasizes the tensions that existed between the "rough" masculinity of young, single, mostly working-class men, with their penchant for loafing, drinking, gambling, and profanity, and the "respectable" masculinity of their married, church-going male elders. *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth Century Small-Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 81–106. Carolyn Strange's work on middle-class Protestant efforts to regulate the leisure activities of Toronto's "working girls" in the early 1900s reveals a similar dichotomy among women. *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 53–88, 116–43. For a discussion of the conflict between working-class and middle-class concepts of masculinity in the sporting world in the early 1900s, see Colin Howell, "A Manly Sport: Baseball and the Social Construction of Masculinity," in Parr and Rosenfeld, eds., *Gender and History in Canada*, 187–210.

21 Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 87, 94; Cecilia Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women: The Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Upper Canada, 1791–1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 154, 158–66; Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, 21; Christina Simmons, "Modern Sexuality and the Myth of Victorian Repression," in Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons, eds., *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 159; Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, ch. 3; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 262–63; Michael Smith, "Graceful Athleticism or Robust Womanhood: The Sporting Culture in Victorian Nova Scotia, 1870–1914," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 23 (1988): 120–37.

22 Mariana Valverde, "`When the Mother of the Race is Free': Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism," in Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde, eds., *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 3–26; G. Davies, "The Literary 'New Woman' and Social Activism in Maritime Literature, 1880–1920," in Suzanne Morton and Janet Guildford, eds., *Separate Spheres: Women's Worlds in the 19th-century Maritimes* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994), 234–45; Wayne Roberts, "'Rocking the Cradle for the World': The New Woman and Maternal Feminism, Toronto 1877–1914," in Linda Kealey, ed., *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s* (Toronto: Women's Educational Press, 1979), 16–17, quote on 16;

Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 176–77, 263–66.

23 John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 197–98, 200, 229; Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 177–78; Simmons, "Modern Sexuality," 165–68.

24 Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 81–106; Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women*, 146–61; Judith Fingard, "Masculinity, Fraternity, and Respectability in Halifax at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," in Parr and Rosenfeld, eds., *Gender and History*, 215.

25 Howell, "A Manly Sport," 203; S. Maynard, "Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History," in *Labour/Le Travail* 23, no. 1 (1989): 159–70; Bryan Palmer, "The Culture of Control," in Michael Cross and Gregory Kealey, eds., *Canada's Age of Industry, 1849–1896* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1985), 135; Craig Heron, "The Crisis of the Craftsman: Hamilton's Metal Workers in the Early Twentieth Century," in Michael Piva, ed., *A History of Ontario: Selected Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1988), 132.

26 Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women*, 141–72; Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 83–86, 109–21, 126; Fingard, "Masculinity, Fraternity, and Respectability," 215.

27 On rising moral standards, see Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, especially chs. 5, 6; on the new culture of athleticism, see Howell, "A Manly Sport," 192, and Smith, "Graceful Athleticism"; on the growth of martial and imperial spirit, see A.B. McKillop, "Marching as to War: Elements of Ontario Undergraduate Culture, 1880–1914," in Paul Axelrod and J. Reid, eds., *Youth University and Canadian Society: Essays in the Social History of Higher Education* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 75–93; and on the liberalization of sexuality, see D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, ch. 8, and Simmons, "Modern Sexuality," 164.

28 By 1930, the *Family Herald's* circulation was over 200,000, making it the most popular "farm-and-family" magazine of the era. The *Western Home Monthly*'s circulation was half that. Fraser Sutherland, *The Monthly Epic: A History of Canadian Magazines* (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1989), 118, 160.

29 2 July 1913, p. 6. For similar accounts, see 23 May 1906, 9 ("Alan Buchanan"); 2 October 1907, 9 ("Diffident"); 27 November 1907, 9 ("Canadian Wild Rose"); 26 June 1912, 9 ("Quinte"); and 3 April 1912, 9 ("Cotton Top").

30 The editors of both magazines admitted as much. 9 September 1908, 9; *Western Home Monthly* (hereafter *WHM*), June 1906, 10.

31 I found no personal columns in any of the other main periodicals of this period: *Canadian Courier*, *Canadian Home Journal*, *Canadian Magazine*, *Maclean's*, and *Saturday Night*. Nor did I find one in the *Toronto Daily Star*. The *Toronto Daily News* did have a "Want Ads" section in the early 1900s, containing a few requests for correspondents of the opposite sex, but these ads were brief.

32 14 March 1906, 9.

33 To avoid similar misunderstandings among my readers, I have provided a Glossary of romantic terms and phrases.

34 As Prim Rose told her readers, "the purpose of these columns is to reflect life as it really is in all parts of the Dominion and among all classes." 25 March 1908, 9.

35 Here is the distribution of population by province, alongside the distribution of letters in the *Family Herald* by province, averaged for the period 1911 to 1924:

	Population (%)	Letters (%)
P.E.I.	1.2	1.4
Nova Scotia	6.4	11.5
New Brunswick	4.6	5.0
Quebec	26.9	3.8
Ontario	33.9	25.0
Manitoba	6.7	6.8
Saskatchewan	7.7	16.8
Alberta	6.0	17.3
B.C.	5.8	12.5
Yukon	0.08	0.23
N.W.T.	0.09	–

Seventeen per cent of the letters in the sample were from the *Western Home Monthly*, and the distribution, by region, was as follows: Maritimes (2%), central Canada (8%), prairies (81%), B.C. (5%), foreign (5%).

36 Donald Kerr and Derek Holdsworth, eds., *Historical Atlas of Canada: Addressing the Twentieth Century*, vol. III (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), plate 27. In 1901, 62 per cent of Canadians lived in rural areas. By 1931, the number had fallen to 47 per cent. *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series A67–69.

37 As of 1931, when records of such things began, 57 per cent of Canadians claimed English as their mother tongue. Moreover, for the period 1901 to 1931, an average of 84 per cent were either British (55%) or French (29%) in origin, and the percentage who were Canadian-born, British-born, and other foreign-born were 77, 12, and 11 respectively. As well, a proportion of French-Canadians and "other foreign born" would have been bilingual – that is, able to read and write English. By 1931, for example, almost one third of French Quebecers were bilingual. In short, the representativeness of the columns extends beyond the 57 per cent of Canadians whose mother tongue was English. *Historical Statistics of Canada*, A125–63, 185–237, 260–69; Paul Linteau et al., *Quebec: A History 1867–1929* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1983), 51.

38 *WHM*, January 1910, 17.

39 27 July 1921, 26.

40 Historians have been unable to provide definitive portraits of the ideal mate because the sources they have had to work with have been so few and so elitist. This has led some to conclude, incorrectly, that there *was* no common ideal mate – that there were as many ideal mates as there were individuals. See, for instance, Ellen Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 201–2.

41 By the 1930s, the circulation of the *Family Herald* was 217,000. Sutherland, *The Monthly Epic: A History of Canadian Magazines* (Markham: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1989), 118.

42 Few studies of Canadian sexual attitudes and behaviour exist for this period. The best are Jay Cassels, *The Secret Plague: Venereal Disease in Canada, 1838–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), ch. 4; Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*; and James Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1971). Michael Bliss, "Pure Books on Avoided Subjects': Pre-Freudian Sexual Ideas in Canada," in *Historical Papers*, 1970, pp. 89–108, is also useful. On homosexuality, see Gary Kinsman,

The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1987). For American sexuality, see Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*.

43 *WHM*, May 1914 ("Honey Dew").

44 Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking Press, 2005), 198. There were, of course, exceptions. Métis and native parents still arranged the marriages of their offspring (or *tried* to) as did immigrant parents from eastern and southern Europe. Silverman, "Women's Perceptions," 55; Barry Broadfoot, *Next-Year Country: Voices of Prairie People*, rev. ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994), 103.

45 For the strongest indictments, see 22 March 1911, 11 ("Sodbreaker"); 29 March 1911, 11 ("Sympathizer"); 16 July 1913, 6 ("Mountain Girl"); and 23 November 1910, 11 ("Winnipeg").

46 10 September 1913, 6 ("Mustard") and 12 November 1913, 8 ("Mother") (quotes); 5 June 1912, 9 ("Gypsy"); 6 August 1913, 6 ("P.J.K."); 18 February 1914, 6 ("Cymro II").

47 4 January 1911, 11 ("Mademoiselle"); and 8 February 1913, 11 ("Cyclopa") in Condensed Letters; 27 April 1910, 11 ("Woman"); 27 April 1910, 11 ("Grey-Eyed Widow"); 29 June 1910, 11 ("Portia"). For a particularly harsh attack on marriage as slavery, see 8 July 1914, 6 ("Florella"). The new employment opportunities for women account, in no small way, for the declining marriage rate among women in the late nineteenth century. Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage*, 51.

48 Coontz, *Marriage, a History*, 185.

49 16 May 1906, 9. The family magazines of these years conveyed the same message: marriage guaranteed life-long happiness. The glorification of marriage was, in fact, a worldwide phenomenon carried over from the previous century. Chapman, "Women, Sex, and Marriage," 1; Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, 172–73.

50 See, for example, 16 September 1908, 9 ("Mystic V.I."); 21 May 1913, 6 ("Jack"); 4 January 1911, 11 ("Manitoba Maid"); 27 December 1911, 11 ("Faith"); 29 January 1913, 6 ("Lumber Jack"); 29 January 1913, 6 ("No Account Bachelor"); 10 December 1913, 8 ("Teddy of Ontario"); 11 February 1914, 6 ("W.P.").

51 19 May 1909, 11 ("The Broncho") (quote). This letter is also a strong indictment of bachelorhood. See also 22 September 1909, 9 ("Merrie Anne"); 13 October 1909, 9 ("Barney"); 2 March 1910, 11 ("W.G."); and 10 December 1924, 32 ("Mickey the Third").

52 30 August 1905, 6. See also 5 June 1907, 9 ("An E.T. Business Girl"); 5 June 1912, 9 ("Stenographer"); 25 January 1911, 13 ("Single Blessedness"); 26 April 1911, 11 ("Tried and True"); 16 April 1913, 6 ("Jane Ann"). For a harsh critique of how girls were raised with such single-minded purpose, see 7 January 1914, 6 ("Independent Thinker"). For the instruction of boys, see 8 February 1913, 11 ("Ulster Scot"); 31 May 1911, 11 ("Cornella"); and 27 September 1911, 11 ("Plain Jane").

53 29 April 1914, 6 ("Ideal"); 8 October 1913, 6 ("D.R."); 17 August 1910, 9 ("Pocket Gopher"); 13 April 1910, 11 ("Bonnie Lad"); 13 April 1910, 11 ("A Newspaper Correspondent"); 9 October 1912, 11 ("Constance"); 16 October 1912, 11 ("Monitor"); 30 July 1913, 6 ("Love Sick Kid"); 14 May 1913, 6 ("Jayhawker").

54 21 October 1908, 9 ("House Comfort"). See also 30 January 1906, 8 ("A.H. Olmage"); 1 July 1908, 9 ("Miss M.C."); 21 October 1908, 9

("House Comfort"); 12 May 1909, 11 ("Miles Standish").

55 30 August 1905, 6.

56 Saskatchewan's "Harry O," for example, wrote that "some of these men in Western Canada are looking forward to the time when they will have wives who will help them to be nobler and purer." 22 April 1914, 6. See also 8 April 1908, 9 ("Riverdalite"); 29 April 1908, 9 ("B.C. Bachelor"); 7 October 1908, 9 ("Penelope"); 16 March 1910, 11 ("E. Pluribus Unum"); 25 May 1910, 9 ("Constance"); 16 August 1911, 9 ("Scotchy"); 14 May 1913, 6 ("Jayhawker"); 17 September 1913, 6 ("Adam"); 25 March 1914, 6 ("Not for Long").

57 See 25 March 1908, 9 ("One of the Old Guard"); 30 January 1907, 9 ("Yukon Prospector"); 16 October 1907, 9 ("Rising Sun"); 16 September 1908, 9 ("Bonnie Dundee"); 27 April 1910, 11 ("Notta Doctor").

58 27 April 1910, 11 ("Notta Doctor"); 14 September 1910, 9 ("Lawley"). The call for a bachelor tax was especially strong in western Canada, and in the American West, too; the state of Montana introduced such a tax ($3 for single men over 21) in 1922. Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, 82.

59 In the 1910s alone, the percentage of marriage-aged women and men (age 15 and over) who married rose from 52 and 57 per cent respectively, to 57 and 59 per cent, and in the early 1900s the proportion of married women, specifically, rose to the highest level in half a century. Alison Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History,* 2nd ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace, 1996), Table A. 2, 468; Beth Light and Joy Parr, eds., *Canadian Women on the Move, 1867–1920* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1983), 109.

60 *WHM*, May 1908, 22; 1 May 1907, 9 (Condensed Letters); 17 January 1906, 8 ("Sour Dough"); 7 August 1907, 9 ("An English Bachelor"); 18 July 1906, 9 ("The Man from Glengarry"); 19 May 1909, 11 ("The Broncho"); 26 May 1909, 11 ("A Girl Pioneer"); 28 December 1910, 11 ("Billy Button"); Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, 168. In the late 1800s, some Canadians – Quebec clerical leaders in particular – saw bachelors as a force for disorder as well. See O. Hubert, "The Invention of the Margin as an Invention of the Family," in Christie and Gauvreau, eds., *Mapping the Margins*, 183–208. The image of "spinsterhood" did improve, however, in the early 1900s, as unmarried women channeled their energies into social reform causes and demonstrated more independence in general, making their state of singleness appear more deliberate than forced. Nor did unmarried Canadians in P.E.I., whose families relied more heavily on their contributions to the family farm, carry the same stigma as those in other provinces. A. B. McKillop, *The Spinster and the Prophet: Florence Deeks, H.G. Wells, and the Mystery of the Purloined Past* (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter and Ross, 2000), 46–47; Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 252; Stairs, "Matthews and Marillas," 247–67.

61 See, for example, 29 November 1905, 9 ("Locksley Hall"); 26 October 1910, 11 ("School Trustee"); and *WHM*, July 1907, 15 ("Trixie").

62 See, for example, 8 April 1914, 6 ("Western Bachelor") and 4 September 1912, 9 ("Lonesome Manitoba" in Condensed Letters).

63 Peter Ward notes that love was the most common basis of marriage throughout English Canada in the nineteenth century. *Courtship, Love and Marriage*, 59, 149, 165. This was also true in Europe and the rest of North America. Coontz, *Marriage,*

A History, 162, 179–80; Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 196–97.

64 Much of the highly sentimental "romantic" fiction Canadians read at this time presented an idealized vision of life – life as it *should* be, not as it was. Those writing in the romantic style were optimistic about life. So although fictional couples experienced hardship and difficulties, in the end they found eternal love and happiness in each other's arms. Even the inexpensive "dime novels" of the era, produced in the United States and sold widely in Canada, although they helped subvert traditional definitions of proper female behaviour during courtship – especially for working women – ended with couples happily married. G. Roper, "New Forces: New Fiction 1880–1920," in Alfred Bailey et al., eds., *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 1: 279–90; F. Carr, "All for Love: Gender, Class, and the Woman's Dime Novel in Nineteenth-Century America," (Ph.D. diss., George Mason University, 2003).

65 9 September 1908, 9 ("Snowball"). The *WHM* and *Family Herald* contain too many references to the necessity and beneficence of love to cite, but a perusal of the *Family Herald* from January to July 1913, and the *WHM* from May to November 1906, yields an unusually high number of testimonials.

66 Maud Cooke, *Social Etiquette, or, Manners and customs of polite society: containing rules of etiquette for all occasions* (London, ON: McDermid & Logan, 1896), 117. At one time, however, romantic love between man and woman, to the extent it distracted them from religious devotion, was feared and shunned as a form of idolatry. Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, 179.

67 *WHM*, October 1907, 17. See also 3 November 1909, 9 ("The Middle One of Five"); *WHM*, January 1908, 15 (no name); 5 June 1912, 9 ("Alone"); 17 October 1906, 9 ("Bonny Jean"); 28 November 1906, 7 ("Timid Old Maid"); 24 February 1909, 11 ("Honey Boy"); and Silverman, "Women's Perceptions," 55, who cites the recollection of one Alberta woman: "My mother used to be worried. I was seventeen, going on eighteen. She was worried that I was going to be an old maid. She says, 'You're too choosey; you're picky.' I says, 'If I live to be forty I won't marry unless it's the one I love.'"

68 *WHM*, August 1907, 16 ("Busy Bee"). See also *WHM*, November 1906, 8 ("Lonely"); 26 June 1907, 9 ("Desperandum"); 18 August 1909, 9 ("Gooseberry"); 9 February 1910, 11 ("Married"); and 19 April 1911, 11 ("Gatzka"). Elaine Silverman has argued that "frontier women" in Alberta married solely for reasons of economic security, but this is simplistic. Although it was a consideration in choosing a husband, it was only one among many – including love – and arguably not the most important. Silverman, "Women's Perceptions."

69 27 October 1909, 9.

70 Azoulay, *Only the Lonely*, 82, 129–30. See also 9 January 1907, 9 ("Uncle Silas"); and 29 October 1913, 8 ("Somewhere"). Although the courtship period was generally long, there were exceptions. The desperately lonely bachelors of the West, for example, seem to have been more impatient, judging from the high number of domestic servants who received marriage proposals within weeks of their arrival in the region. Light and Parr, *Canadian Women on the Move*, 110.

71 29 January 1913, 6.

72 2 March 1910, 11 ("W.G.") (quote). See also 28 December 1910, 11 ("Another Rosebud"); 7 January 1914, 6 ("Woman with a Vote"); James Snell, "'The White Life for Two': The Defence of Marriage and Sexual Morality in Canada, 1890–1914," in Bettina Bradbury, ed., *Canadian Family History: Selected Readings* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1992), 381–400; Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, 24–25, 56–57. In this period, only one in a thousand Canadians was divorced. Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 468.

73 *Manners* (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, ca. 1914), 49. Sarah Carter notes that women were *especially* reluctant to seek divorce, because of the stigma attached, the impoverishment that was bound to follow, and the possible loss of child custody. Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, 25–26.

1: The Woman of His Dreams

1 17 April 1907, 9 ("Irish"). According to Prim Rose, "Another Albertan" reported that "there are 20 to 30 bachelors in his township, all looking for wives.… He says after 'baching' two years he would eat anything and not grumble as long as a member of the fair sex cooked it for him." 13 November 1907, 9 (Condensed Letters).

2 28 February 1912, 11 ("Juna").

3 5 March 1913, 6 ("A Meek Bachelor").

4 4 March 1914, 6 ("McAdam").

5 15 October 1913, 6 ("Good Intentions"). See also 9 June 1909, 11 ("Papa") and 14 October 1908, 9 ("In Earnest").

6 I am using the term "bachelor" to mean an unmarried man. At the time, however, it usually meant a single man living on his own or with other single men, or even a married man in similar circumstances who was working the land in preparation for the arrival of his wife and family. Danysk, "'A Bachelor's Paradise'" 157.

7 11 April 1906, 9 ("Young Bruin"). See also 3 June 1906, 9 ("Young Benedict"). It seems that *widowers*, with young children to care for, also preferred potential wives with domestic ability.

8 21 February 1906, 9 ("A Bunch of Prairie Wild Flowers"). See also 11 July 1906, 9 ("Stupid") and 4 September 1907, 9 ("Red Rose").

9 The editor noted, for example, that "A Highland Lassie" from New Brunswick, "refined, educated, sympathetic, and thoroughly domesticated, would like to correspond with a nice bachelor or widower in good position, between the ages of 40 and 50 years." 5 September 1906, 9 (Condensed Letters).

10 9 May 1906, 9 ("Scottie").

11 6 March 1912, 11 ("Canadian Wife"). See also 30 July 1913, 6 ("Grumble"), who said that men want a wife "who can cook. What girl can't, who is brought up on a farm? Of course, I don't refer to those who are living in towns, who loll away their time either reading some frivolous work or spend their evenings at balls, whist parties or tennis courts."

12 23 September 1908, 9.

13 10 April 1907, 9. See also 23 September 1908, 9 ("Jack of All Trades"), who noted that many of the young women of his day "care for nothing but to gad and dress, [and] care nothing for literature or the beauties of nature." The kinds of women needed in the West, he said, are those who would be willing to do vigorous farm work in the fresh

country air and "stop idly strumming the piano, making lace, and wasting time on other make-believe occupations."

14 26 January 1910, 11 ("Rara Avis"). In a similar vein, "Riverdalite" from Ontario, asked "Isn't it better to enjoy the free serene life of a single man, than run the lottery risk of marrying a giddy, frivolous creature, who is entirely ignorant of the duties of house keeping, with little or no regard for the serious dignity of life, and consumed by thoughts that never rise above the ten-cent novel or the ball-room?" 12 February 1908, 9.

15 27 May 1908, 9 ("Bee Bee"). See also 12 August 1908, 9 ("Simon Tappertit").

16 1 November 1911, 11. See 20 September 1911, 11 ("L.B."), for the accusation.

17 21 September 1910, 11 ("Farmer's Daughter, Wife and Mother"). See also 26 February 1913, 6 ("Farmer's Daughter of the Prairie").

18 14 May 1913, 6.

19 16 January 1907, 9. See also 5 December 1906, 9 ("Sweet Nora O'Neill").

20 See 31 January 1912, 11 ("Eccentric").

21 16 December 1908, 9 ("Ontario Bookkeeper"); 11 November 1908, 9 ("Steno").

22 18 April 1906, 9 ("Another Bachelor"). See also 20 August 1913, 6 ("Trefoil"), who notes, statistically, the bias among western farmers against marrying teachers.

23 27 February 1907, 9. See also 22 January 1908, 9 ("Opeongo") for a similar perspective.

24 See letters from "Bawn," either 25 March 1908, 9 or 8 April 1908, 9; 15 April 1908, 9 ("Rouge Gorge"); 30 December 1908, 9 ("A Mere Man"); 8 March 1911, 13 ("Man in the Street").

25 Teaching was the second most common employment for women, after domestic service. Prentice et al., *Canadian Women*, 133, 475.

26 22 May 1907, 9 ("Samantha Jenkins").

27 8 April 1908, 9 ("Lehrer") (quote). See also 11 November 1908, 9 ("A Canadian Teacher"), 8 August 1906, 9 ("Lenora"), 27 March 1907, 9 ("Marguerite"), 3 April 1907, 9 ("Hawthorne"), and October 24, 1906, 9 ("Glengary Girl").

28 22 January 1908, 9. See also "Germanicus," who complained that "women these days seem frequently to strive to attract attention by loud talk and flashy dress! Anything to be admired by serious, thoughtful men is denounced as old-fashioned and out-of-date," and "Mountaineer," who didn't care "for the forward type of woman" and "would rather have a quiet, reserved woman." 28 May 1913, 6. For a representative female voice, see "Mother of Six," who felt that "a girl who voiced her opinions would be a 'slim' candidate for matrimony.… Women know this, and they show their wisdom by silence." 20 May 1914, 6.

29 Roberts, "'Rocking the Cradle for the World,'" 16 (quote); Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, 194–95. In 1901, 13 per cent of all gainfully employed workers were women. This rose to 15 per cent by 1921. Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 130, 133, 474.

30 22 April 1908, 9 ("Moralist").

31 10 November 1909, 9. See also 29 June 1910, 11 ("Crank"), 6 July 1910, 9 ("Hayseed"), and 5 August 1908, 9 ("Men's Rights").

32 "If we feel that office work appeals to us more strongly than any other

kind," wrote a Quebec office worker, "why should we not have the liberty to engage in it, without being considered unwomanly?" 4 August 1909, 11 ("Gussie"). See also 23 April 1913, 6 ("Dew Drop"); 30 April 1913, 6 ("Donald Dinny"); 3 April 1912, 9 ("Working"); and 12 March 1913, 6 ("Rosebud").

33 14 February 1912, 11 ("Broncho Buster").

34 See 27 December 1911, 11 ("Equality"), and 3 January 1912, 11 ("W. Jay").

35 1 June 1910, 9.

36 7 December 1910, 11 ("Toghrul Beg").

37 24 December 1913, 8 ("Just Another").

38 2 July 1913, 6 ("Daddy's Housekeeper").

39 10 December 1913, 8 ("Teddy of Oliver") (quote). See also 14 May 1913, 6 ("Slow Match"); 10 September 1913, 6 ("Orangeman"); and 8 October 1913, 6 ("The Honble Will").

40 7 September 1910, 9 ("Mere Man"); 6 May 1914, 6 ("A. Lawar"); 10 December 1913, 8 ("June"); 27 August 1913, 6 ("Contented Woman"). See also 4 January 1911, 11 ("Gatzka"), 9 February 1910, 11 ("Married"), and 3 December 1913, 11 ("Prairie Girl II").

41 At this time, women were not allowed to own homesteads, except as widows.

42 31 August 1910, 9 ("Mugweed"); 26 October 1910, 11 ("Merry Jane"); 30 November 1910, 11 ("Woman"). See also 12 October 1910, 11 ("Wife and Mother") and 28 December 1910, 11 ("Billy Button").

43 25 October 1911, 11 ("Terra Nova").

44 One man recalled that a lot of the farm boys in his area of the West married girls who, unlike themselves, had graduated from high school because these girls were able to do the math required for the farm's accounts. Barry Broadfoot, *The Pioneer Years, 1895–1914* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1976), 184.

45 See 31 May 1905, 6 ("A.G."); 5 July 1905, 6 ("Sunshine"); 31 May 1905, 6 ("A Young Farmer"); and 15 November 1905, 6 ("Lonely Bachelor").

46 18 February 1914, 6 ("D'Allegro").

47 20 June 1906, 9. See also 5 August 1908, 9 ("Blue Nose Boy"), 3 May 1905 ("Algoma Bachelor"), 13 March 1907, 9 ("Rob the Rover"), and 4 February 1914, 6 ("Husband and Chum"). Several of these correspondents cited a preference for the presumably more cultured "eastern" girl over the "western girl."

48 18 July 1906, 9. For a similar defence, see also 17 October 1906, 9 ("The Mother's Hope") and 18 November 1908, 9 ("Rosey Raffles").

49 24 June 1908, 9 ("O.K").

50 30 January 1907, 9 ("Shocks"). See also 4 August 1909, 11 ("A Welsh Boy"), who said that "of all things else, my partner must be a good musician." Given the prevalence of such views, women not musically inclined felt themselves to be at a distinct disadvantage. "I would be glad to correspond with some of the Western bachelors," lamented one such woman, from Quebec, "but they all seem to want a girl who can sing and play, so that I am denied the pleasure." 9 September 1908, 9 (Condensed Letters).

51 17 October 1906, 9 ("Ontario Bachelor").

52 14 April 1909, 11 ("Idealist").

53 1 April 1914, 6 (“Studious”). See also 7 January 1914, 6 (“Bluestocking”).

54 19 November 1913, 8 (“School Teacher II”).

55 15 December 1909, 11 (“Just Me”). See also 19 November 1913, 8 (“Matron”) and 24 December 1913, 8 (“Cinderella”).

56 22 October 1913, 8 (“Conifer”).

57 Several men objected to women who were “bookish.” See note 44, and 15 May 1912, 9 (“Twenty Three”).

58 18 June 1913, 6 (“Nova Scotia Girl”).

59 1 October 1913, 6. See also 7 January 1914, 6 (“Bright Sunshine”); and *WHM*, April 1912, 94 (“Man of Saskatchewan”).

60 20 August 1913, p. 6.

61 21 August 1912, 9. See also 25 June 1913, 6 (“Arabella”); *WHM*, March 1909, 14 (“Canterbury Bell”); and *WHM*, January 1909, 14 (“A Shy Lass”).

62 See, for example, the letter from “Catalina” (1 May 1907, 9), who wrote that “beauty of form and feature does not always accompany purity of heart. Pure noble thoughts beautify any face, while … faults and vices … disfigure it.” See also 29 October 1913, 8 (“Semper Idem”).

63 13 January 1909, 9. See also 28 January 1914, 6 (“Manitoulin Bill”).

64 28 January 1914, 6.

65 26 January 1910, 11 (“Rara Avis”).

66 *Manners*, 51, 57.

67 22 April 1914, 6 (“Mountaineer II”). In his lively study of prostitution in the West in these years, journalist James Gray observed that “when fallen women went on shopping tours” in the raucous town of Calgary in the early 1900s, “they went in a style that scandalized all the respectable ladies who crossed their paths.” *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Saskatoon: Prairie Books, 1986), 132.

68 4 October 1911, 9 (“Patricia”).

69 24 June 1914, 6 (“Greenhorn”). See also 13 January 1909, 9 (“Kid”), and 10 November 1909, 9 (“Professional”).

70 As always, some correspondents doubted men’s sincerity on this point. One young woman, for example, believed that men were not really looking for a “practical, everyday wife,” but for the “stylishly-dressed” woman. “Men ridicule fashions,” she wrote, “but let ever so charming a girl go modestly dressed to mingle in the gay throng and at once you will behold the wall-flower of the evening!” Given the strong language most men used to dismiss the heavily made-up or fashion-conscious woman, however, and in view of their other preferences, their comments ring sincere enough. 10 August 1910, 9 (“Eastern Tom-Boy”).

71 23 May 1906, 9. See also 29 May 1907, 9 (“Yorkshire Tyke”) and editor’s reply.

72 26 August 1908, 9 (“A Man of the West”). See also 23 October 1912, 11 (“Pipe Dream”) and 5 March 1913, 6 (“Steadfast”).

73 See, for example, 7 August 1907, 9 (“Saskatonian”); 8 September 1909, 9 (“Eastern Lawyer”); 6 December 1905, 6 (“Still Another Bachelor”); and 5 March 1913, 6 (“Steadfast”).

74 The historical literature on female social reform efforts in the period 1880 to 1920 is extensive. A good place to start, however, is with Linda Kealey, ed., *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada* (Toronto: Women’s Educational Press, 1979), which brings together a number of early articles on the subject. Also useful is Veronica

Strong-Boag's *The Parliament of Women: The National Council of Women of Canada* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1976), which examines the largest women's organization of the era.

75 2 March 1910, 11 ("W.G.").

76 22 August 1906, 9. See also 21 October 1908, 9 ("House Comfort").

77 17 August 1910, 9 ("Morning Albertan").

78 12 June 1907, 9. See also 1 November 1911, 11 ("Black Eyes") and 1 August 1906, 9 ("Gray Eyes").

79 Daphne Read, ed., *The Great War and Canadian Society: An Oral History* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1978), 88. Two excellent studies of nativism in the early 1900s, in western Canada, are Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982) and Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990). For an overview of Canadian attitudes towards non-native Canadians in the twentieth century, see Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896–1994* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995).

80 The most comprehensive study of the Canadian eugenics movement is Angus McLaren, *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada, 1885–1945* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990).

81 9 September 1908, 9 ("Westward Ho!"). See also 18 March 1908, 9 ("Uno Hoo"), 16 February 1910, 11 ("Highland Mac"), and 15 May 1912, 9 ("Florence Nightingale"). In western Canada, writes Sarah Carter, "the white men who married Aboriginal women were derisively labelled 'squaw men.'" Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, 68.

82 See 6 March 1907, 9 ("Laddies A' Co' Garth"); 10 July 1907, 9 ("Mignonne"); and *WHM*, February 1906, 49 ("Heather Jock").

83 See 30 January 1907, 9 ("Yukon Prospector"); 25 March 1908, 9 ("One of the Old Guard"); and 10 December 1910, 124 ("Diago").

84 17 August 1910, 9 and 7 September 1910, 9.

85 The argument against inter-racial marriage was made by a fellow calling himself "Viking," who argued that husbands and wives of different skin colour were bound to have a different "mental make-up … which sooner or later may lead to contrary viewpoints on daily questions and finally even to marital disaster." 19 March 1924, 32. This aside, Sarah Carter's contention that such attitudes "were exemplified in colonial discourses that denounced race-mixing" is not borne out by the grandest "discourse" of the day – namely the personal columns. Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, 6. For liberal views of natives and foreigners, see 5 March 1913, 6 ("I.W.W.") and 25 December 1907, 9 ("Canadian Nell").

86 18 February 1914, 6. Many Scotch men did, however, request Scotch women as correspondents. In fact, Scottish correspondents were really the only clannish group in the column. See, for instance, 14 December 1921, 26 ("Scotland's Pride"). That ethnicity (as opposed to religion) figured only slightly in the romantic criteria of Canadian men (and women) is echoed in Ward's study of marriage in nineteenth-century English Canada, where ethnic criteria became less important over time. By the 1890s, only 25 per cent of Canadians were marrying someone of their own nationality – down from 50 per cent at

mid-century. Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage*, 62.

87 See 9 October 1907, 9 ("A Defender of the Foreigners") and 10 November 1909, 9 ("Pat").

88 See 21 September 1910, 11 ("Booster"), 12 October 1910, 11 ("Darwinius"), and 26 July 1911, 9 ("Swede").

89 Coontz, *Marriage, a History*, 165; 22 April 1908, 9 ("Moralist"); 10 December 1913, 8 ("June"); 2 July 1913, 6 ("Reform"); 24 December 1913, 8 ("Scotch Canadian"); *WHM*, October 1909, 19 ("Scotland Yet"); *WHM*, May 1908, 22 (no name); *WHM*, October 1913, 70 ("Rose Bush").

90 17 February 1909, 11 ("Unknown Wellwisher"). See also 5 August 1908, 9 ("A Blue Nose Boy"); 4 November 1908, 9 ("Nuff Sed"); 23 June 1909, 9 ("Sim"); 15 February 1913, 11 ("Indian Head"); and 12 February 1908, 9 ("Barnie"). Ellen Rothman found a similar attitude among *American* men in these years, specifically with respect to the male sex drive: that they wanted and respected women who rebuffed their sexual advances. *Hearts and Hands*, 188.

91 16 December 1908, 9 ("Rex").

92 17 December 1913, 8. See also 23 September 1908, 9 ("Another Pioneer"); 25 April 1906, 9 ("Scottie"); and 5 March 1913, 6 ("I.W.W.").

93 11 April 1906, 9 ("Young Bruin").

94 7 November 1906, 9 ("A B.C. Rancher"). Female suffrage arrived first in the western provinces, though in their letters western men seemed no more supportive of suffrage in these years than men elsewhere in Canada. Only B.C. men showed stronger support for suffrage, and also for adventurous women eager to take on the great outdoors.

95 See 15 February 1911, 13 ("New B.C.") and 4 December 1912, 11 ("Bushwacker").

96 See, for example, 3 June 1906, 9 ("Maritimus"); 16 January 1907, 9 ("Jerry Jinks"); and 27 October 1909, 9 ("Nil Desperandum").

97 See, for example, 30 January 1907, 9 ("Shocks"), who stressed that "the ideal wife should have, if possible, a college education, or at least a very good common education." See also 12 September 1908, 9 ("Universitas"). For an indication of how much respect was accorded to teaching and scholarship in the region, historically, see D.C. Harvey, "The Intellectual Awakening of Nova Scotia," and A.G. Bailey, "Creative Movements in the Culture of the Maritime Provinces," in George Rawlyk, ed., *Historical Essays on the Atlantic Provinces* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967), 99–121, 239–40. And on the religious rivalries that gave rise to many institutions of higher learning during the colonial period, see W.S. MacNutt, *The Atlantic Provinces: The Emergence of Colonial Society* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965), 165–68.

98 Two good examples are 12 February 1908, 9 ("Agricola") and 22 May 1912, 9 ("St. Cecilia").

99 1 May 1912, 9 (Condensed Letters).

100 That Canadians tended to marry within their own class was as true in the nineteenth century as it was in the early twentieth, at least in English Canada. Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage*, 60.

101 28 May 1913, 6.

102 See, for example, 28 May 1913, 6 ("Agitator"), and 3 June 1906, 9 ("Young Benedict"). For the self-righteous views of urban middle-class

Protestants, see Carolyn Strange's rich and fascinating book, *Toronto's Girl Problem*.

103 10 March 1909, 11 ("Canyon Orator"). See also 17 July 1912, 9 and 14 July 1909, 9 ("Scarlett Pimpernel").

104 30 January 1907, 9 ("Shocks").

105 6 May 1914, 6 ("Huronian").

106 22 July 1908, 9 ("Plato").

107 Azoulay, *Only the Lonely*, 7–20.

108 12 February 1908, 9 ("Barnie").

109 9 September 1908, 9 ("Westward Ho!"). Further evidence of this was furnished by a B.C. teacher ("School Marm"), familiar with the habits of bachelors, who noted that "most of the bachelors seem to be great readers, and are remarkably well-informed, so much so that ordinary girls who think of little but cooking and dressing themselves, and the house, are not always interesting to them." 10 November 1909, 9.

110 18 January 1911, 11. See also 24 March 1909, 11 ("Hielan' Laddie"); 24 March 1909, 11 ("Beau Brocade"); 22 October 1913, 8 ("Conifer"); and 31 July 1907, 9 ("Jim").

2: The Man of Her Dreams

1 See chapter 4.

2 27 September 1911, 11. See also 1 November 1911, 11 ("Black Eyes"), who believed that "women have their share in the making of the ideal man."

3 14 July 1909, 9.

4 26 August 1908, 9. See also 4 October 1905, 6 ("Miss Columbus"); 22 November 1905, 6 ("Eastern Jewel"); 28 February 1906, 9 ("Bluenose"); 29 January 1913, 6 ("Happy-go-lucky"); and 14 October 1908, 9 ("Modest Mary"), who felt that "land" was an important asset of a desirable man.

5 25 June 1913, 6. See also 17 January 1906 ("Holly"), 8.

6 18 April 1906, 9 ("Another Bachelor"). One bachelor-homesteader, from Saskatchewan, told Prim Rose readers that bachelors were common in the West because "the men out here want to be in good circumstances so as to give the woman as much luxury as they can to keep her from getting lonely; and to do so they must have a pretty big crop." 26 March 1913, 6 ("Ben Roy").

7 23 September 1908, 9 ("Another Pioneer").

8 3 April 1907, 9. See also 7 July 1909, 9 ("Gideon"); 7 April 1909, 11 ("Defender"); and 8 November 1905, 6 ("Happy Bachelor").

9 See, for example, 27 July 1910, 9 ("Condensed Letters"), and 8 June 1910, 11 ("Homebird").

10 4 September 1907, 9 ("Red Rose").

11 29 January 1913, 6. See also 3 August 1910, 9 ("Eastern Tom-Boy"), and 18 July 1906, 9 ("Mandrake").

12 See 1 November 1905, 6 ("Maple Leaf" and "A True Manitoban").

13 8 November 1905, 6. In a 1910 survey of 250 *American* women, only 2 per cent considered wealth important to a happy marriage. Cited in "The Ideal Husband," *Family Herald*, 21 December 1910, 11. What's more, the North American definition of the ideal man may have changed since the nineteenth century, when being a good provider was the central aspect of manly virtue. Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, 168, 188.

14 Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled*, 85; Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth*, 74; Ward, *Courtship, Love,*

and Marriage, 61–2, 68–9; Karen Dubinsky, "'Maidenly Girls' or 'Designing Women'?: The Crime of Seduction in Turn-of-the-Century Ontario," in Iacovetta and Valverde, eds., *Gender Conflicts*, 43–4. For examples of upper-class snobbery in the personal columns, see 17 February 1909, 11 ("Miss Somebody"), and Prim Rose's comments in the same issue.

15 See, for example, "Condensed Letters," 16 February 1910, 11 ("A Lonely Englishwoman"), and 7 June 1911, 11 ("Lancashire Lass").

16 12 August 1908, 9 ("Girl with the Apron"). See also 27 September 1905, 6 ("A Lover of Nature"); 14 May 1913, 6 ("Ess 24"); and 4 October 1905, 6 ("Miss Columbus").

17 29 July 1908, 9 ("Zenobia the Fearless").

18 29 September 1909, 9 ("Veteran").

19 8 June 1910, 11 ("Mother"); 1 December 1909, 9 ("A Dane in B.C.").

20 Mark Zuehlke, *Scoundrels, Dreamers and Second Sons: British Remittance Men in the Canadian West*, 2nd ed (Toronto: Dundurn, 2001), 9–26. The poor reputation of Englishman extended beyond the rural West. Apparently, many urban factories and stores had signs that read: "No Englishman need apply." Cited in Read, ed., *The Great War and Canadian Society*, 75.

21 Zuehlke, *Scoundrels, Dreamers and Second Sons*, 9.

22 7 November 1906, 9 ("A B.C. Rancher").

23 16 January 1907, 9 ("British Fair Play").

24 15 January 1908, 9.

25 Cited in Zuehlke, *Scoundrels*, 69.

26 18 August 1909, 9 ("Alexandria").

27 11 May 1910, 11 ("A Western Girl").

28 15 January 1908, 9. See also 21 August 1907, 9 ("Homely Meg"); 26 November 1913, 8, "Condensed Letters" ("Happy Violet"); 11 November 1908, 9 ("Steno"); and 4 March 1908, 9 ("Canadian Nell").

29 19 March 1913, 6 ("Traveler").

30 7 August 1907, 9 ("Saskatonian"). From what we know about such matters, the men who wrote such reassuring letters were likely telling the truth. Only male immigrant farmers from continental Europe were likely to expect their wives to toil long hours on the farm and at the same time fulfill their domestic duties. Joe Cherwinski, "Early Working-Class Life on the Prairies," in R. D. Francis and H. Palmer, eds., *The Prairie West: Historical Readings* (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1992), 547.

31 12 July 1905, 6 ("Union Jack");9 January 1907, 9 ("Uncle Silas"); and 10 April 1907, 9 ("Up and Down").

32 For a personal account, see 19 September 1906, 9 ("A Hired Woman").

33 Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003), 80–81.

34 18 March 1908, 9 ("Uno Hoo"); 25 November 1908, 9 ("A Man of the West"); James Gray, *Booze: When Whisky Ruled the West* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1995), 76.

35 Gray, *Booze*, 76, and *Red Lights on the Prairies*, 183.

36 10 January 1907, 6 ("Pink Cheeks"). See also 29 August 1906, 9 ("Kinistino").

37 8 November 1905, 6 ("Agricola Manitoba Bachelor").

38 27 September 1905, 6 ("A Lover of Nature"); 7 January 1914, 6 ("Bright Sunshine"); 2 September 1908, 9 ("Optimistic Nellie"); and 28 November 1906, 7 ("Minnehaha"). See also "Condensed Letters" section of any issue.

39 17 January 1906, 6.

40 14 November 1906, 9.

41 1 August 1906, 9. See also 11 July 1906, 9 ("A Spunky Wife"), and 27 December 1905, 6 ("Sarah Otis Monticello").

42 18 August 1909, 9 ("Gooseberry"). See also 19 February 1908, 9 ("True Western Maid"); 11 July 1906, 9 ("Happy Bee"); and 21 February 1906, 9 ("Blanquette"). For the bachelor's point of view, see 27 April 1907, 9 ("Quo Vadis") and 14 August 1907, 9 ("Pathfinder").

43 See 14 November 1906, 9 ("Mollie"), and 28 February 1906, 9 ("Lottie").

44 25 March 1908, 9 ("One of the Old Guard").

45 20 March 1907, 9.

46 7 February 1906, 8. See also 25 November 1908, 9 ("A Man of the West").

47 28 August 1907, 9 ("Veni, Vidi, vici"). See also 22 April 1914, 6 ("Black Sheep"), who stated that "my experience from seven years of homestead life is that those men who are not too narrow-minded to smoke, drink, etc. make by far the best husbands."

48 23 June 1909, 9.

49 See, for example, 6 August 1913, 6 ("Home Lover"); 15 June 1905, 6 ("Betty"); 14 February 1906, 8 ("Jack O'Brien"); 22 January 1908, 9 ("A Soldier's Boy").

50 31 July 1907, 9 ("Sahile Bahadur").

51 15 June 1905, 6 ("Betty").

52 21 June 1905, 6; 7 July 1909, 9. See also 16 June 1909, 9 ("Ein Bauer Maedchen"), and 4 October 1905, 6 ("Miss Columbus").

53 13 January 1909, 9 ("A Spectacle Wearer").

54 An excellent study of the emerging social criticism in this period, as it pertained to the exploitative nature of the capitalist system in particular, is Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), especially chapters 7 and 8; see also Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), ch. 7, who discusses the anti-materialist and anti-capitalist views of prominent Canadian imperialists like Andrew Macphail and Stephen Leacock.

55 11 July 1906, 9 ("Leamington Spa").

56 2 August 1911, 9 ("Grey Eyes"). See also 3 June 1906, 9 ("Old, Old Maid").

57 *WHM*, November 1906, 8, and January 1909, 14.

58 25 August 1909, 9 ("East Wind"). See also 1 August 1906, 9 ("A Widow").

59 3 July 1907, 9 ("A Farmer's Happy Wife").

60 29 April 1908, 9 ("B.W.X.").

61 2 January 1907, 9 ("Peggasis").

62 29 July 1908, 9 ("Western Teacher") (quote). See also 30 December 1908, 9 ("Con Amore"); 1 May 1907, 9 ("Condensed Letters").

63 21 August 1907, 9.

64 9 March 1910, 11.

65 2 July 1913, 6 ("44-40 Winchester").

66 9 January 1907, 9 ("A Lonely Bachelor").

67 Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 48, 135–37.

68 17 February 1909, 11 ("Lonely Lapwing").

69 23 April 1913, 6 ("Forfar lass").

70 8 March 1911, 13 ("Pleasant Valley Maid").

71 See, for example, the letter from Ontario's "Old, Old Maid" (3 June 1906, 9), who notes how many non-working city women get drawn in by a man's "dapper" looks. Working women like herself, however, were in a better position to judge their male co-workers' personalities.

72 For the link between immorality and uncleanliness in the minds of the era's social reformers and moral "purity" crusaders, see Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, ch. 6.

73 See 29 April 1908, 9 ("B.W.X."); 11 December 1907, 11 ("An Autumn Idyll"); 20 September 1905, 6 ("Sunflower"); and 27 September 1905, 6 ("A Lover of Nature").

74 27 July 1910, 9.

75 22 September 1909, 9. See also 3 July 1907, 9 ("Shy Ann"); and 3 June 1906, 9 ("Old, Old Maid").

76 See, for example, 10 July 1907, 9 ("The Skipper"); 15 April 1914, 6 ("East Anglican"); and 15 June 1905, 6 ("Betty").

77 12 June 1907, 9.

78 6 June 1906, 9 (response to "Lindy Lee"). See also 19 July 1911, 9 ("Lady Blanc"), who urges mothers to raise their sons to be courteous, gentle, and tender towards women.

79 See, for example, 4 March 1914, 6 ("Dixie"); 29 July 1908, 9 ("Western Teacher"); and 27 September 1911, 11 ("Plain Jane").

80 Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 37, 132; Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 33, 36, 54, 62, 151–56.

81 9 March 1910, 11 ("Old Maid").

82 19 April 1911, 11 ("Morning Alberta").

83 28 January 1914, 6.

84 See, for example, 3 July 1907, 9, the poem by "L," called "A Girl's Ideal," which includes the following verse: "He has sympathy deep and tender/ for the weak on life's stormy sea/ With a hand out-stretched to the tempest-tossed/ Like the Master on Galileo."

85 The ratio of adult men (over twenty-one) to adult women on the prairies in 1911 was 138:100 in Manitoba, 181:100 in Saskatchewan, and 184:100 in Alberta. In some districts it was as high as ten men for each woman. Azoulay, *Only the Lonely*, 7–9, 163 n. 3.

86 8 November 1905, 6 ("Happy Bachelor"). See also 3 April 1907, 9 ("W.R.R."); 15 January 1908, 9 ("Sursam Corda"); and 8 September 1909, 9 ("A Two and a Half").

87 4 September 1907, 9 ("Straightforward").

88 15 August 1906, 9 ("An Adviser").

89 27 June 1906, 9 ("Broady"). See also 20 February 1907, 9 ("Ox-Breaker").

90 26 June 1907, 9.

91 12 April 1905, 6. See also 8 November 1905, 6 ("Happy Bachelor"); 6 September 1905, 6 ("A Yukon Prospector"); 15 November 1905, 6 ("Lonely Bachelor"); and 29 August 1906, 9 ("Jubilate Deo"). Historian Cecilia Danysk has argued that western bachelors heralded their *helplessness* in domestic matters – to affirm their essentially "masculine" identity – but the letters in the personal columns suggest otherwise.

Danysk, "'A Bachelor's Paradise,'" 165.

92 23 August 1905, 6. See also 20 February 1907, 9 ("Ox-Breaker").

93 2 January 1907, 9 ("Ever Hopeful").

94 23 August 1905, 6 ("Curly"); 6 September 1905, 6 ("Yukon Prospector").

95 6 September 1905, 6.

96 16 May 1906, 9 ("S.E.T."). See also 25 July 1906, 9 ("Rolling Stone").

97 27 June 1906, 9 ("Braody").

98 30 October 1907, 9 ("Don Pedro").

99 6 November 1907, 9.

100 12 August 1908, 9.

101 25 September 1907, 9.

102 30 June 1909, 9 ("Rocky Mountain Goat").

103 See 22 April 1908, 9 ("Prospector"), and 21 November 1906, 7 ("Phonograpphicus").

104 6 May 1908, 9.

105 19 August 1908, 9 ("Leek"). See also 29 June 1910, 11 ("The Foreigner"), and 13 October 1909, 9 ("Barney").

106 10 March 1909, 11 ("J.L.").

107 See, for example, 12 February 1908, 9 ("Barnie"). Some women felt this too. See 30 January 1906, 8 ("[Mrs.] A.H. Olmage").

108 Emily Murphy, *Janey Canuck in the West* (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1910), 11. Her sensuous and heroic description of Western lumberjacks is too good to not mention: "There is nothing of the milksop about them. Forest blood ever runs hotly. A man who wields an axe breathes deeply, and tingles with life in every vein. He drinks life from the pines and highly ozonised atmosphere. He has health and energy to throw away in a superabundance of vitality. The life is calculated to produce hardy, self-reliant, and self-poised men." 90.

109 Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 302–4. For an excellent overview of efforts of railway and government officials, and others, to "sell" the West to prospective emigrants, see Ronald Rees, *New and Naked Land: Making the Prairies Home* (Saskatoon: Prairie Books, 1988), 4–27. British emigration societies also highlighted the region's romantic possibilities – literally – by informing prospective female emigrants that their chances of finding a husband were very good. Lisa Chilton, *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860s–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 88–89.

110 5 July 1911, 9.

111 See also 2 April 1913, 6, "Condensed Letters" ("Lonely Ann").

112 18 November 1914, 7 ("Peppin").

113 For some elite observers, the rise of cities and industry had more serious implications: it rendered the Anglo-Saxon race less vigorous and thus more likely to weaken the British Empire. Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 178–81.

114 18 November 1908, 9.

115 4 March 1914, 6.

116 29 November 1905, 6. See also 8 November 1905, 6 ("A Bachelor's Friend"); 14 November 1906, 9 ("Topsy"); and 27 December 1905, 6 ("Marguerite").

117 17 July 1912, 9 ("Honey Bunch").

118 18 November 1908, 9 ("Rosey Raffles").

119 See 26 June 1907, 9 ("Desperandum"); 17 July 1907,

9 ("Mankunwar"); 11 December 1907, 11 ("An Eastern Girl in the West"); 15 January 1908, 9 ("Cousin Con");17 February 1909, 11 ("Lonely Lapwing"); and 8 September 1909, 9 ("A Merry Widow").

120 I have been unable to determine the exact number of women who moved to western Canada from points east, but from Ontario alone, 250,000 men and women made the move in the period 1891 to 1914. Even if only 15 per cent of these were women, the number (38,000) would be impressive. About 35,000 Maritimers migrated to the West in this period. Kerr and Holdsworth, *Historical Atlas of Canada: Addressing the Twentieth Century*, Plate 27.

121 17 May 1905, 6.

122 14 May 1913, 6.

123 9 October 1907, 9 ("Condensed Letters").

124 21 November 1906, 7. See also 30 August 1905, 6 ("Lover of Music"), and 13 September 1905, 6 ("Tommy").

125 6 September 1905, 6 ("Perplexity").

126 18 August 1909, 9.

127 See 4 October 1905, 6 ("Icabod's Auntie"), and 25 October 1905, 6 ("Tabasco Sauce").

128 1 May 1907, 9 ("Miss Happy-Go-Lucky"); 5 February 1913, 6 ("Saskatchewan Sunbeam").

129 "Phils," 9 June 1909, 11; 18 March 1908, 9 ("Uno Hoo").

130 19 July 1911, 9.

131 19 July 1911, 9. See also 8 November 1905, 6 ("A Foolish Maiden Fancy Free").

132 See "Condensed Letters" for 17 October 1906, 9, 21 May 1913, 6, and 25 April 1906, 9 (quote); 23 October 1918, 10 ("Patiently Waiting").

133 22 September 1909, 9.

134 31 July 1907, 9 ("Jim"). See also 19 January 1910, 11 ("Rough and Ready"); 24 March 1909, 11 ("Delphl"); 11 August 1909, 9 ("Teddy"); and 3 June 1906, 9 ("Maritimus").

135 26 June 1907, 9.

136 10 April 1907, 9 ("Doc"); 22 July 1908, 9 ("Plato"); and 22 December 1909, 11 ("Captain of the Pinafore").

137 20 May 1914, 6. See also 22 July 1908, 9 ("Plato").

138 2 January 1907, 9 ("Defender").

139 10 April 1907, 9.

140 14 February 1906, 8 ("Wife Seeker").

141 31 July 1907, 9 ("Sahile Bahadur"). See also 18 December 1912, 11 ("Professor"); 22 April 1914, 6 ("Harry O"); and 2 September 1908, 9 ("Longshanks").

142 7 July 1909, 9 ("The Man Behind the Hoe"). See also 15 April 1914, 6 ("Disgusted").

143 4 September 1907, 9 ("Pleasant Pete").

144 26 August 1908, 9.

145 17 November 1909, 9 ("Tubal Cain").

146 18 March 1914, 6 ("Acrostic"). See also 5 March 1913, 6 ("Short Stop").

147 26 August 1908, 9 ("One o' Them"). See also 5 March 1913, 6 ("Chip"); 7 August 1907, 9 ("Saskatonian"); and 2 July 1913, 6 ("B.C. Vancouverite").

148 13 May 1908, 9 ("Wilkins").

149 24 March 1909, 11.

150 4 June 1914, 6 ("For a Square Deal"). See also 18 March 1908, 9 ("Uno Hoo"), who spoke highly of ranchers as refined beings.

151 7 May 1913, 6. See also the letter from "Patriot," 17 April 1912, 9, who also defends the cowboys.

152 25 July 1906, 9 ("Rolling Stone"). See also 15 September 1909, 9 ("D'Artagnan"); 27 June 1906, 9 ("Braody"); and 15 April 1914, 6 ("Disgusted").

153 13 May 1908, 9. In her recent study of Victorian and post-Victorian female emigration societies, historian Lisa Chilton notes that a key objective of British imperialists was to populate colonial frontiers with respectable middle-class "gentlewomen" whose civilizing influence could help keep men in line. "For those who wished to turn frontier spaces into civilized outposts of the British Empire," she writes, "the absence of appropriately respected female settlers was a central aspect of the frontier problem." *Agents of Empire*, 69.

154 25 March 1908, 9. See also 3 June 1914, 6 ("Orange Blossom"); 13 November 1907, 9 ("Eleanor"); and 23 August 1911, 9 ("A Canadian Woman").

155 22 August 1906, 9. See also 15 July 1908, 9 ("A Railroad girl"), and 27 October 1909, 9 ("Thelma").

156 For an example of the bias of upper-class women, see 17 February 1909, 11 ("Miss Somebody").

157 27 September 1905, 6.

158 29 January 1908, 9 ("Condensed Letters").

3: The Dos and Don'ts of Romance

1 The column began in April 1906. Prior to this, Prim Rose's etiquette advice appeared in the "Condensed Letters" section of her regular column or in articles on the same page. The etiquette column ended in 1914. It re-appeared briefly, but sporadically, in 1916–17.

2 In the United States, by contrast, the etiquette advice of the early 1900s was disseminated primarily to the middle-class. Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 8, 15.

3 The following books – Cooke, *Social etiquette*; *Manners*; and E. Holt, *Encyclopedia of etiquette: what to write, what to wear, what to do, what to say: a book of manners for everyday use* (New York: Syndicate Publishing Co., 1915, rev. ed.; first published by Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1901), which went through many editions up to 1926 and was also reprinted by a Toronto firm in 1901 – appear to have been the main etiquette books of this period. They were easily accessible to most Canadians through their local library; the *Manners* book was also "recommended by the minister of Education for Use in School Libraries in Ontario." I have drawn on these books to clarify or supplement details mentioned by Prim Rose in her etiquette column and, occasionally, to highlight differences.

4 2 December 1908, 9; 28 August 1907, 9 (quote).

5 29 May 1907, 9.

6 6 February 1907, 9.

7 24 July 1912, 9; 15 May 1912, 9.

8 5 June 1907, 9 (quote); 4 August 1909, 11.

9 8 December 1909, 9.

10 16 May 1906, 9 (quote); see also 10 August 1910, 9; *Manners*, 9; Holt, *Encyclopedia of Etiquette*, 8. Maud Cooke repeated this rule but felt that women should be careful about refusing introductions, as it might

cause embarrassment for the man. *Social Etiquette*, 26, 251.

11 6 December 1916, 9. According to Prim Rose, "she may say almost anything except 'pleased to meet you.'"

12 Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 28; Holt, *Encyclopedia of Etiquette*, 4, 376. Holt also said that it was the woman's role to initiate a bow (or not), and that "under no circumstances can a gentleman refuse to return a woman's bow."

13 2 October 1907, 9.

14 28 November 1906, 7.

15 Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 120–21.

16 17 January 1906, 6.

17 14 February 1906, 8.

18 18 August 1909, 9.

19 1 September 1909, 9; 17 September 1919, 11. See also Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 122.

20 Ibid.

21 27 March 1907, 9.

22 10 April 1907, 9.

23 Rural bachelors, especially in the West, had far fewer opportunities to socialize with eligible women. See chapter 4.

24 4 August 1909, 11.

25 2 October 1907, 9 (quote); 23 November 1910, 11.

26 28 November 1906, 7; 16 October 1912, 11; *Manners*, 52; Holt, *Encyclopedia of Etiquette*, 376. When encountering a woman *indoors*, a man was supposed to remove his hat entirely.

27 29 November 1916, 9. Apparently no female signal was required when a man wished to ask a woman's permission to escort her home after church services. "It is not necessary to wait for her recognition," Prim Rose told one inquirer. "Just ask her bravely," and if she refuses "just say you are sorry, and take your leave quite cheerfully and pleasantly." 11 October 1916, 9.

28 2 October 1907, 9 (quote); 15 May 1907, 9. Holt said that a man introduced to a woman was *required* to request a dance or "otherwise pay them some attention." Holt, *Encyclopedia of Etiquette*, 157.

29 There was a minor discrepancy on this point between Prim Rose and the etiquette books. Both *Manners* and *Social Etiquette* placed a limit of *two* on the number of times a man should ask the same woman to dance (even if the couple was engaged, said one), but Prim Rose implicitly placed no such limits, limiting only the number of dances a woman could *accept* from the same man. *Manners*, 39; Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 252; Holt, *Encyclopedia of Etiquette*, 152 (quote).

30 25 August 1909, 9; 27 November 1907, 9; 17 March 1909, 11 (quote).

31 27 November 1907, 9.

32 Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 252.

33 12 February 1908, 9. See also *Manners*, 39.

34 28 November 1906, 7.

35 27 January 1909, 11.

36 6 March 1907, 9.

37 3 December 1913, 11. Prim Rose felt it was acceptable for a man to ask if he could call on a woman, but this was at odds with an older social etiquette manual. Cooke's *Social Etiquette* of 1896 stated that "a gentleman, as a rule, should not ask a lady for permission to call upon her. It is very easy for her, if she desires his company, to say 'I receive Thursdays,' or 'I shall be at home Monday'" 75. Emily Holt added a further wrinkle

by noting that rural men could call on Sunday mornings, whereas urban men had to wait until the afternoon. Holt, *Encyclopedia of Etiquette*, 18.

38 24 July 1907, 9 (quote); 5 June 1907, 9.

39 3 March 1909, 11. Holt qualified this rule. "In fashionable society," she wrote, "a single woman, until she has had several years of social experience, does not invite young men to call upon her," but has her mother or chaperone do it. Other women, however, were not bound by this rule. *Encyclopedia of Etiquette*, 26.

40 11 March 1908 (quote), 9; 29 August 1906, 9; Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 75.

41 *Manners*, 11.

42 10 April 1907, 9.

43 16 October 1912, 11.

44 26 December 1906, 9.

45 *Manners*, 90.

46 29 August 1906, 9; 26 December 1906, 9 (quote).

47 26 December 1906 9; *Manners*, 87.

48 29 August 1906, 9.

49 15 April 1908, 9; *Manners*, 89.

50 15 April 1908, 9.

51 29 August 1906, 9.

52 Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 331.

53 17 July 1907, 9.

54 14 February 1912, 11; 5 June 1907, 9; *Manners*, 53. When a woman planned to sit in her family's pew, however, or if an usher showed the way at the theatre, she would *precede* her escort.

55 *Manners*, 35.

56 Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 245.

57 Ibid., 329.

58 4 September 1907, 9. The writer of *Manners* emphasized, in the introduction, that the essence of a "well-bred person" was modesty and restraint with respect to emotions, gestures, and clothing. *Manners*, 7.

59 22 June 1910, 11 (quote); 15 April 1908, 9.

60 25 July 1906, 9.

61 10 April 1907, 9.

62 24 October 1906, 9.

63 Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 48.

64 11 July 1906, 9.

65 16 October 1912, 11 and 12 December 1906, 9 (quotes); 4 July 1906, 9; 24 October 1906, 9.

66 2 December 1908, 9.

67 16 October 1912, 11; 26 December 1906, 9; *Manners*, 86.

68 12 December 1906, 9. 4 August 1909, 11. Cooke stated that "expensive presents … are not in the best taste," even between engaged persons. *Social Etiquette*, 124.

69 10 June 1914, 9; Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 89–91, 121.

70 28 October 1908, 9 (quote); 24 October 1906, 9.

71 The *Manners* book was more strict: "no really fashionable party [of young people] is made up without a chaperone." In fact, the writer recommended two or three married women as chaperones for such a gathering. *Manners*, 47–48.

72 7 July 1909, 9; 21 August 1907, 9 (quote); *Manners*, 54. Generally speaking, women, whether escorted or not, were not supposed to attend *any* public function or amusement unchaperoned. Cooke insisted on a chaperone in such instances, as did Prim Rose (except for tennis, croquet, and tea parties), but the

Manners book – reflecting, perhaps, the more liberal norms of the post-Victorian era – felt that two female friends *could* do so, with some restrictions. "Two women may attend, with perfect propriety, a place of amusement without an escort," it noted, but "they should be under such circumstances exceptionally quiet in their manners and their dress." As for simply appearing in public, the experts advised women to not be seen on the streets, alone, after dark. *Manners*, 89; Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 256, 336; "Chaperonage," *Family Herald*, 1 February 1905, 6.

73 28 October 1908, 9 (quote); *Manners*, 48. An exception to the chaperone rule, and a sign of the growing independence of middle- and upper-class women, was a bicycle ride with a man. This seems to have been acceptable, as long as women rode their bikes in a genteel, lady-like way. Strong-Boag, "The Canadian Campaign for Woman Suffrage," *Canada's Visual History* (Ottawa: National Film Board, 1994); Roberts, "'Rocking the Cradle for the World,'" 16.

74 1 September 1909, 9; *Manners*, 53, 57.

75 28 October 1908, 9; 29 May 1907, 9; *Manners*, 57. The latter also noted, not unlike Prim Rose, that "there is very great harm in young girls meeting young men in secret; the men will have no respect for the girls, and nothing but mortification for the girls will be the result." *Manners*, 87.

76 21 August 1907, 9; 11 March 1908, 9; 6 March 1907, 9; 24 November 1909, 9; 17 April 1907, 9 (quote).

77 7 July 1909, 9 (quote); 11 March 1908, 9. The "house of prostitution" reference is cited in Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, 200.

78 29 August 1906, 9. See also 6 March 1907, 9.

79 4 August 1909, 11.

80 6 March 1907, 9.

81 29 August 1906, 9. See also Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 331.

82 23 November 1910, 11 (quote). See also 4 July 1906, 9 and 11 July 1906, 9. Holt was less strict on this point. She allowed that "after nightfall" a woman could accept a man's arm, provided "she does not hook her arm through his, as is too often the ungraceful habit." *Encyclopedia of Etiquette*, 378.

83 4 September 1907, 9.

84 See Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 35, in which the author discourages all forms of public affection, even towards children. On Canadian attitudes towards dancing, see Azoulay, *Only the Lonely*, 109–26.

85 29 August 1906, 9.

86 1 November 1916, 9. In those days, western society assumed that men had uncontrollable sexual urges and that it was up to women – considered asexual and inherently "pure" – to help men keep their urges in check. Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 184–88.

87 29 August 1906, 9. At the time, the term "lover-like" described a person who professed his or her love for a member of the opposite sex; it did not imply sexual relations.

88 12 December 1906, 9.

89 7 July 1909, 9.

90 6 February 1907, 9 (quote). See also 31 March 1909, 11 and 24 October 1906, 9. Prim Rose did distinguish, in one instance, between "accepted suitors" and "casual admirers." She felt women could be more "intimate" with the former. 10 April 1907, 9.

91 24 October 1906, 9; 1 November 1916, 9.

92 Ibid.

93 29 August 1906, 9; 4 September 1907, 9. The *Ladies Home Journal* gave similar advice in 1892, albeit to American girls. "Young men soon lose their respect for a girl," it warned, "exactly in proportion as she allows them any familiarity." Cited in Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 192.

94 Prim Rose never used the term "used goods" but implied as much when she said physical laxity "cheapened" a woman. See 6 February 1907, 9; 7 July 1909, 9; 4 September 1907, 9.

95 7 April 1909, 11; 31 March 1909, 11; 1 September 1909, 9 (quote).

96 6 February 1907, 9 ("The Last Rose").

97 31 March 1909, 11 (quote). See also 14 November 1906, 9; 31 March 1909, 11; 28 April 1909, 11.

98 11 July 1906, 9. See also 11 March 1908, 9.

99 9 March 1910, 11; 26 August 1914, 9. Cooke advised couples to burn most of their letters once they had answered them. *Social Etiquette*, 465. Coontz says women did, in fact, write more restrained love letters in these years "because a woman's reputation suffered more if she expressed her love to a man she ended up not marrying." *Marriage, A History*, 179.

100 *Manners*, 27. Emphasis added.

101 Prim Rose may have relaxed this rule over time, for in 1914 she told an inquirer, "there is no rule as to who shall write first." 29 April 1914, 6.

102 11 July 1906, 9, and 26 August 1914, 9 (quotes). See also 11 August 1909, 9; 15 May 1907, 9; 10 March 1909, 11. Male bashfulness was also one of the few excuses a woman could use for initiating a *conversation* with a single man, if she happened to be seated next to him at a party, for example. 3 March 1909, 11.

103 26 July 1905, 6 (quote); 29 August 1906, 9; 23 January 1907, 9; Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 449.

104 1 September 1909, 9.

105 17 January 1906, 8.

106 12 September 1906, 9.

107 14 November 1906, 9.

108 12 June 1907, 9.

109 12 May 1909, 11 (quotes); 10 June 1914, 9.

110 12 June 1907, 9.

111 11 March 1908, 9.

112 12 December 1906, 9.

113 7 July 1909, 9.

114 14 August 1907, 9. By convention, women had the right to propose marriage in Leap Years. Prim Rose acknowledged this "strange theoretical" right, but discouraged its use. "It is far preferable," she wrote, "for the proposal to come from the male side." "The Leap Year Privilege," 19 February 1908, 9.

115 18 August 1909, 9.

116 The procedure was slightly different for correspondence courtship. First the man professed his love, indirectly, and if his girlfriend reciprocated, he proposed marriage. 15 May 1907, 9.

117 18 August 1909, 9. Again, some discrepancy existed between Prim Rose and Cooke. Reflecting, perhaps, the more reserved Victorian persona, Cooke said that strong expressions of love or affection should be avoided during courtship: "extravagance of feeling should be carefully repressed as an offence against good breeding." *Social Etiquette*, 116.

118 28 April 1909, 11.

119 11 August 1909, 9.

120 23 June 1909, 9.

121 Ibid.

122 25 August 1909, 9. Cooke laid out a somewhat more formal method of proposing, which does not appear in either the *Family Herald* or the other etiquette books and likely fell out of style by the early 1900s. She recommended the man's proposal and the woman's acceptance be done in writing, where the man promises to love and provide for the woman in exchange for her promise to reciprocate his love. The document or contract containing this exchange of vows would then be signed by witnesses and followed by an exchange of keepsakes – a ring for her, a locket for him. *Social Etiquette*, 124 (quote), 127–28.

123 Ibid. See also 28 November 1906, 7.

124 18 August 1909, 9. Men did not usually request consent, however, from their *own* parents – only their blessing. Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage*, 128.

125 23 June 1909, 9.

126 13 October 1909, 9; 26 August 1908, 9 (quote); 12 May 1909, 11. Maud Cooke also advised against a long engagement. She felt it could foster a "coolness of feeling" between the couple. *Social Etiquette*, 134. In the previous century, by contrast, engagements seem to have lasted two to three years. Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage.*

127 11 August 1909, 9; 13 October 1909, 9; 13 October 1909, 9 (quote).

128 21 November 1906, 7; 18 September 1907, 9.

129 16 January 1907, 9.

130 18 September 1907, 9. It was acceptable, if unusual, for women to return the favour, but Prim Rose discouraged the practice; men who wore jewellery, she said, were "vulgar" and "second-rate." 16 October 1907, 9.

131 21 November 1906, 7; 23 June 1909, 9; 17 April 1907, 9.

132 This was even true for couples not formally engaged, but who had merely exchanged expressions of love and agreed to one day marry. 28 April 1909, 11; Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 133.

133 20 January 1909, 11; emphasis added.

134 22 May 1907, 9.

135 Even engaged couples, however, were not completely chaperone-free. One manual noted that "if a young girl were very ill, there would be no impropriety in her mother bringing her betrothed to see her, although, of course, the mother would remain in the room during his visit." *Manners*, 89.

136 14 August 1907, 9.

137 31 October 1906, 11.

138 7 July 1909, 9. Maud Cooke was even less permissive in her advice, recommending that relations between engaged couples remain "intellectual" rather than "affectional." To do otherwise, she stated, somewhat vaguely, was physically dangerous: "Allow no amatory excitement, no frenzied, delirious intoxication with it; for its violence, like every other, must react only to exhaust and paralyze itself by its own excesses." *Social Etiquette*, p126, 131 (quote).

139 31 July 1907, 9, and 5 December 1906, 9.

140 5 February 1908, 9.

141 5 December 1906, 9 (quote); 5 February 1908, 9.

142 5 December 1906, 9 (quote); 31 July 1907, 9.

143 12 December 1906, 9; 14 October 1908, 9; "When to Break an Engagement", 5 April 1905, 6.

144 15 March 1905, 6.

145 Ibid. See also "When to Break an Engagement," 5 April 1905, 6.

146 20 February 1907, 9.

147 Ibid.

148 Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 135.

149 26 August 1908, 9; Cooke, *Social Etiquette*, 136.

150 The most comprehensive overview of moral regulation in these years is Carolyn Strange and Tina Loo, *Making Good: Law and Moral Regulation in Canada, 1867–1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

151 11 July 1906, 9.

152 4 September 1907, 9.

153 21 August 1907, 9.

154 By the early 1900s, writes one historian, "young people belonged ever more to a peer society where parents had less opportunity, and less authority, to take an active part in the lives of their young-adult offspring." Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 223.

4: Courtship Hardship

1 A partial exception to the sentimentalism of the existing literature on Canadian romance is Karen Dubinsky's study of sexual violence in rural and northern Ontario for the period 1880 to 1929, which, although it has little to do with romance, does contain a brief section on the phenomenon of date rape. As she points out, however, women were much more likely to be sexually assaulted by a member of their household or a relative than by a boyfriend. *Improper Advances*, 46–9, 58.

2 16 May 1906, 9 (anonymous).

3 Kerr and Holdsworth, eds., *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Plate 27.

4 In typical fashion, one bachelor-farmer told the Prim Rose column's readers that "I think it is anything but manly and certainly it is cowardly for a man to ask a girl to marry him before he has a fit place for her to live in." 18 April 1906, 9 ("Another Bachelor"). See also *WHM*, February 1909, 11 ("Handy Andy") and 14 ("Two Lonely Bachelors"); 10 May 1905, 6 ("A Young Bachelor"); 19 February 1913, 6 ("Lumber Jack"); 9 July 1913, 6 ("K.R.R."); and 10 April 1907, 9 ("Up and Down").

5 In Alberta, 60 per cent of homesteaders failed to prove up. Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 306, 309; W. Eggleston, "The Old Homestead: Romance and Reality," in Francis and Palmer, eds., *The Prairie West*, 348; and Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 68.

6 9 May 1917, 7 ("One of the Bunch") (quote). See also 26 March 1913, 6 ("Ben Roy").

7 See, for example, the following heart-felt letters from older bachelors: *WHM*, 7 January 1920, 12 ("Doctor"); 31 July 1918, 9 ("Prairie Kid"); 29 October 1913, 8 ("Still Thinker"); 30 January 1918, 9 ("Logic"). See also the letter from an Ontario farmer's daughter who confirms that women could wait around for western bachelors to propose: 19 December 1923, 44 ("Cecilia").

8 22 December 1920, 28 ("Timothy").

9 11 June 1913, 6. For similar tales of regret, see 22 January 1913 ("M.R.N.S."); 16 October 1912, 11 ("Monitor"); and 16 October 1912, 11 ("Onlooker").

10 *WHM*, November 1904, 11.

11 11 September 1907, 9 ("Overalls"); 12 August 1908, 9 ("Long Tom") (quote); 6 January 1915, 6 ("H.R.L. and H.L.W."); 17 December 1913, 8 ("The Hotcake Wonder").

12 16 February 1910, 11. For similar comments, see 18 March 1908, 9 ("Uno Hoo"); *WHM*, February 1909, 14 ("Pipe Dream") and May 1911, 87 ("Reggie").

13 C. A. Dawson, *Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces: The Social Side of the Settlement Process* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1940), 309.

14 *WHM*, December 1911, 106 ("Contented though Single").

15 11 December 1907, 11.

16 13 March 1918, 7 ("Thinking Friend"). See also 20 March 1918, 7 ("Chinook") and 15 May 1918, 7 ("Hope"); 18 February 1920, 12 ("Back Fire"); 13 April 1921, 26 (name illegible); 20 July 1921, 26 ("Accumulating"); 4 April 1923, 28 ("Battling Vimy"); and 30 July 1924, 32 ("K"), all of whom complain about the serious dearth of young women where they live.

17 4 October 1916, 9 ("Leicester"). See also 20 March 1918, 7 ("Justice to One and All" and "Farmer") and 1 May 1918, 7 ("Want to Know").

18 6 March 1907, 9 ("Laddies A' Co' Garth"). Emphasis added.

19 Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, 83. There is evidence that hired men had relationships with farmers' daughters and with domestic servants, but some farm families did not want their daughters mingling with such men, including ranch hands (i.e., cowboys). Furthermore, several correspondents, including Prim Rose herself, made disparaging comments about hired men. Danysk, "'A Bachelor's Paradise,'" 167–69; Broadfoot, *The Pioneer Years*, 20, 132, 223, 399–400 (quote); Cherwinski, "Early Working-Class Life on the Prairies," 547. For strong indictments of hired men, see the editor's response to "Hired Man" letter, 13 December 1905, 6; 28 August 1907, 9 ("English Cockney"); 11 December 1907. 11 ("An Autumn Idyll"); and 18 March 1908, 9 ("A Scottish Nomad").

20 4 April 1917, 7; 16 October 1918, 10 ("Watching and Waiting"). See also 22 October 1913, 8 ("Gas City"); 29 July 1908, 9 ("True Blue"); 9 April 1913, 6 ("Square Deal"); and 26 March 1913, 6 ("Bud").

21 30 September 1908, 9 ("Talum Shud").

22 31 May 1905, 6 ("B.C. Farmer") (quote). One westerner, whose parents took in a teacher as a boarder, recalled that on Sunday evenings "every bachelor [in the area] would come to visit the teacher. Sometimes there would be eight or ten of them there." Cited in Broadfoot, *The Pioneer Years*, 301. See also 28 July 1909, 9 ("Lancashire Lad").

23 29 August 1917, 7 ("Brown Eyes"). See also 12 January 1916, 9 ("Pete Bentley"); 6 May 1914, 6 ("Sandy Jim"); 18 September 1907, 9 ("The Loneliest One"); and, for a first-hand account, 1 May 1918, 7 ("Miss Billie").

24 30 May 1906, 9 ("Another Bachelor"). See also 20 September 1905, 6 ("Blooming Bachelor").

25 1 August 1917, 7 ("Broncho Buster"); 22 August 1917, 7 ("Lonely Bachelor"); *WHM*, July 1906, 22 ("Alphas").

26 A more accurate measure of rural depopulation is the change in population numbers for rural areas. Most federal constituencies in southern Ontario, for example, lost at least 10 per cent of their population. The same thing happened in the

Maritimes, except northern New Brunswick and, in the early 1900s, eastern New Brunswick. One student of the phenomenon writes that "almost all rural districts outside the West lost population through out-migration, and generally on a scale that offset natural increase, resulting in absolute declines in population." Kerr and Holdsworth, eds., *Historical Atlas*, Plate 28.

27 In 1911, the Toronto *Globe* reported, with a palpable sense of alarm, that "there is scarcely a county in Ontario devoted chiefly to agriculture in which there are not many more men than women." "The Girl and the Farm," 23 December 1911. Cited in Jeffrey Keshen and Suzanne Morton, eds., *Material Memory: Documents in Post-Confederation Canada* (Toronto: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998), 87. As well, the Prim Rose column for 1905 and 1906 is full of letters discussing the rural exodus. See also 24 June 1908, 9 ("Thoughtful"); *WHM*, April 1916, 61 ("Starlight"), and January 1923, 28 ("Mavourneen").

28 F. H. Leacy, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, 2nd ed. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1983), Series A94-109. Statistics are not available for the years before 1921. In 1931, 17 per cent of rural men aged 45 to 49 were unmarried, compared with only 7 percent of rural women of the same age group. Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 121, and Table A. 1; Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, Appendix A, 217.

29 16 May 1917, 7 ("Happy Hooligan"); 25 August 1909, 9 ("Prince Rupert"); 10 December 1913, 8 ("Teddy of Oliver"). See also 27 October 1909, 9 ("Nil Desperandum"); 10 September 1913, 6 ("Banjo Jim"); 4 October 1911, 9 ("Farmer's Mother"); and 8 August 1906, 9 ("Will-o-wisp"); 6 February 1918, 9 ("Fisherman").

30 4 November 1908, 9 ("A Little Brownie"). See also "Condensed Letters," 5 June 1907, 9 ("Ellen"); 8 June 1910, 11 ("Straw Berry"); 5 May 1909, 11 ("Miss Helen"); and 14 January 1914, 6 ("Dorothy").

31 26 June 1918, 7. See also 12 June 1912, 9 ("Audrey"), 7 May 1913, 6 ("Beautiful lass of somewhere"); 13 November 1907, 9 ("A Little Canadian Girl"); and 30 August 1905, 6 ("Young Mother"). Evidently, Ontario farm bachelorettes had been lamenting this situation for years. See the excellent poem written in 1880 by a young woman from Norfolk County, in Dubinsky, "'Maidenly Girls,'" 53.

32 Cited in E. Lapp, "When Ontario Girls Were Going West," *Ontario History* 60, no. 2 (June 1968): 71.

33 23 December 1908, 9 ("Champion"); 19 January 1910, 11 ("Ballymaccarett"). See also 18 March 1908, 9 ("Uno Hoo"); 9 June 1909, 11 ("Phils"); and *WHM*, October 1911, 79 ("Olympic") and April 1916, 61 ("Chronic Kicker").

34 Dawson, *Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces*, 67, 216. See also the comments of "Gallant Little Wales," 22 April 1908, 9.

35 Read, *The Great War and Canadian Society*, 44.

36 Cited in Broadfoot, *The Pioneer Years*, 258. Whether, on balance, the church *enhanced* romantic opportunities is debatable. One could easily argue, for example, that Canada's Protestant churches, in their successful drive to replace commercial and recreational activities on Sundays with solemn church services and social visits (the Lord's Day Act of 1906, for example) actually *reduced* opportunities for romantic heterosexual interaction. "Throughout the greater part of the prairie region," noted one 1930 study, "the official day of rest has come to

be marked by closed moving picture theatres, deserted athletic grounds, and absence of organized sports." And sometimes anti-romanticism was precisely the motive. The various boys and girls clubs established under church auspices, for example, such as the CGIT (Canadian Girls in Training), were set up in part to give teenagers something to think about besides their girlfriends and boyfriends. Dawson, *Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces*, 66, 243 (quote).

37 Dawson, *Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces*, 220–21.

38 25 September 1907, 9. See also 20 March 1918, 7 ("Justice to One and All").

39 4 April 1917, 7 ("De Wolfe") and 18 December 1918, 8 ("Southerner, 2") (quotes); 7 July 1909, 9 ("Shorty Mac"); 1 May 1918, 7 ("Want to Know"); 16 October 1918, 10 ("Watching and Waiting"); 18 July 1917, 7 ("Prairie Lee").

40 21 February 1917, 7 ("Easterner,"). For similar observations, see 12 February 1913, 6 ("Aunt Mary"); 10 December 1919, 12 ("Mae); 11 June 1919, 12 ("Sarah Ann"); *WHM*, July 1910, 91 ("From Ontario"); November 1915, 53 ("Vesta"). See also Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 117.

41 25 July 1917, 7 ("Shepherd Boy"); 3 November 1909, 9 ("Sailor"); 27 October 1909, 9 ("Nil Desperandum").

42 *WHM*, January 1908, 14 ("White Pine").

43 Barry Broadfoot, *Next-Year Country: Voices of Prairie People*, rev. ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994), 250–58; Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 66.

44 9 May 1917, 7 ("One of the bunch") (quote); 31 May 1905, 6 ("B.C. Farmer") (quote). See also 13 June 1917, 7 ("Gay Lad"); 4 September 1918, 10 ("Thirty-eight Years"); *WHM*, February 1909, 14 ("Two Lonely Bachelors"); Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 66.

45 29 August 1917, 7 ("Newtown Ardtoe").

46 7 December 1910, 11 ("Daisy"); 29 May 1907, 9 ("Saskatchewan Jack"); 9 January 1918, 9 ("LEM" and "Prairie Chicken"). For an excellent description of the loneliness and isolation of early prairie settlers, see Rees, *New and Naked Land*, 62–7. By 1913, the ratio of people to cars in Canada was 160 to 1. *Canadian Encyclopedia* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1999), 166.

47 *WHM*, February 1914, 62 ("Thirty Two"). See also May 1915, 61 ("Silent Alf").

48 An early study found that western settlement usually preceded railways by at least five years. W. A. Mackintosh, *Prairie Settlement: The Geographical Setting* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1934), 53–54, 62.

49 The surplus of men over women in the urban centres of the West peaked in 1911 at 33 per cent, before falling to 3 per cent in the 1920s. Dawson, *Pioneering in the Prairie Provinces*, 309.

50 19 February 1913, 6. See also 21 December 1910, 11 ("Little Ned").

51 Cited in Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies*, 76.

52 4 July 1923, 28 ("Lumberjack 2").

53 1 June 1910, 9 ("An Isolated One").

54 16 May 1906, 9. See also 21 August 1907, 9 ("Clover Bar"); 25 August 1909, 9 ("Nobody's Bachelor"); 18 February 1914, 6 ("Elad Wollem"); 15 April 1914, 6 ("Cockney Canuck"); and 2 July 1913, 6 ("Batchy Bum").

55 4 August 1909, 11 ("Dion").

56 The song was called "The Alberta Homesteader." Danysk, "'A Bachelor's Paradise,'" 158.

57 *WHM*, September 1910, 83 ("Carrots"); 23 August 1905, 6 ("Little Forest"); 23 March 1910, 11 ("Not in it"); 27 June 1906, 9 ("Country Cousin").

58 22 August 1917, 7; *WHM*, March 1906, 39 ("Young Bachelor No. 2"). See also 2 January 1918, 9 ("Sydobemos Gnilrad"); 12 February 1919, 10 ("Frozen up 35"); 22 December 1920, 28 ("Timothy"); and *WHM*, July 1908, 14 ("Dolphin").

59 10 October 1917, 7 ("Lonesome"). See also 1 June 1910, 9 ("An Isolated One"); 6 February 1907, 9 ("Rolling Stone"); and 24 May 1911, 11 ("Broncho Buster").

60 As late as the 1930s, three-quarters of prairies farmers supplemented their income with such part-time work. Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 319.

61 4 September 1918, 10 ("Thirty-Eight Years"); 30 January 1918, 9 ("Logic").

62 *WHM*, May 1912, 93 ("Defense"); 10 July 1907, 9 ("New Chum").

63 *WHM*, April 1906, 14 ("Alberta Boy").

64 *WHM*, August 1909, 20 ("Laughing Water"); December 1908, 22 ("Rosemary"); April 1910, 83 ("Prairie Girl"); 1 June 1910, 9 ("Nourmahal"); 10 May 1911, 11 ("A Happy Primrose"). One woman received 200 responses from men to her published letter. 17 March 1909, 11 ("Optimistic Nellie").

65 4 October 1905, 6 ("B.A.M."); 20 September 1905, 6 ("A Roving Bachelor").

66 15 May 1907, 9. See also 30 April 1913, 6 ("Conservative"); 19 March 1913, 6 (Condensed Letters); 3 May 1905, 6 ("Girls' Friend").

67 *WHM*, March 1907, 14 (quote). See also 12 February 1908, 9 ("Barnies"); 30 October 1907, 9 ("Kathleen Mavourneen"); 28 July 1909, 9 ("Lancashire Lad").

68 27 May 1908, 9. See also 30 April 1913, 6 ("English Violet").

69 See 11 October 1905, 6 ("Mae"), who expresses her fear of losing men's respect by writing to the column. See also 17 October 1906, 9 ("The Mother's Hope") who notes that young people sometimes did not admit to writing to the personal columns. And see 3 August 1910, 9 ("Eastern Tom-Boy") and *WHM*, July 1909 ("Editor's note").

70 13 February 1907, 9 (quote); 8 November 1911, 11 ("Roderick Dhu") (quote). See also 29 January 1913, 6 ("Believing").

71 3 July 1907, 9 ("A Farmer's Happy Wife"). See also 27 February 1918, 9 ("Gus-to-No"); 11 June 1913, 6 ("Irish Pat"); and *WHM*, December 1906, 66 ("Ambitious").

72 4 August 1909, 11 ("Timberwolf").

73 23 August 1905, 6, ("Happy Jay") (quote); *WHM*, February 1909, 14 ("Beecham's Pill") (quote). See also 26 August 1908, 9 ("Just Me"); 8 November 1911, 11, ("Roderick Dhu"); 31 July 1918, 9 ("Prairie Kid").

74 26 May 1909, 11 ("The Lone and Level Lands") (quote). See also 18 August 1909, 9 ("Cow Puncher"); 28 November 1917, 7 ("Bashful Bach").

75 *WHM*, March 1909, 15 ("Royal Homesteader"); *WHM*, December 1911, 106 ("Contented Though Single"); *WHM*, 4 June 1913, 6 ("Boy from the East"); 29 October 1919, 12 ("Bridget"); 9 March 1921, 26 ("Yorkshire Tyke").

76 11 October 1905, 6 ("Anonymous").

77 14 August 1907, 9 ("Pathfinder"). See also 17 December 1913, 8 (Condensed Letters), and 7 May 1913, 6 (Condensed Letters).

78 14 August 1907, 9.

79 23 December 1908, 9 ("Champion"); 30 March 1921, 26 ("Masquaqua").

80 Note that the term "dating" only appeared in the 1890s, and then only as a working-class slang term. Not until the 1910s did it become a respectable term. It is being used here to mean, essentially, middle- and upper-class courting.

81 Read, *The Great War*, 82; 21 May 1913, 6 ("Sourdough II"); Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 209.

82 *WHM*, April 1906, 14. See also 26 September 1917, 7 ("S.D."); 22 August 1917, 7 ("W.H. Sproule"); 14 August 1918, 9 ("In Earnest");3 May 1905, 6 ("Girls' Friend"); and *WHM*, July 1906, 20 ("Bachelor Girl").

83 *WHM*, October 1918, 46; December 1918, 62. See also February 1910, 22 ("Goo-Goo Eyes").

84 31 October 1917, 7 ("Saskie").

85 *WHM*, August 1919, 38 ("Not a Crank").

86 2 October 1907, 9 ("Diffident"); 18 April 1917, 9 ("Sundog");4 August 1909, 11 ("Timberwolf").

87 11 May 1910, 11. See also August 1914, 62 ("Sunset Bill"); 2 November 1910, 11 ("Contentment"); 21 January 1914, 6 ("Twilight"); 13 May 1914, 6 ("Kathie A. Canadian"); *WHM*, January 1915 ("Sammy"); June 1907, 16 ("Wokapa Boy"); December 1914, 70 ("Brunette"); July 1915, 47 ("Tot Bot"); Grace Craig, *But This Is Our War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 22.

88 19 February 1913, 6 ("Cantab"); 8 January 1913, 6 ("Ex R.N.W.M.P."); 19 February 1913, 6 ("Lumber Jack"); 2 April 1913, 6 ("One of Them"); 30 April 1913, 6 ("S.B.O.").

89 Half the letters in the *Family Herald*'s "Condensed Letters" section for January 1910, for example, are from men asking women to write first. See also *WHM*, August 1909, 20 ("Forget Me Quick"), and August 1907, 18 ("Another Scotch Lassie").

90 28 May 1913, 6.

91 *WHM*, June 1907, 17 ("Angeleno"). See also *WHM*, November 1908, 16 ("Cingalee") and January 1909, 15 ("A Juggler").

92 *WHM*, August 1918, 46 ("Bashful Kid"). See also *WHM*, December 1906, 67 ("Jack and John"). One man felt women should be less reserved in expressing their romantic feelings as well. 8 April 1908, 9 ("Junius").

93 3 May 1905, 6. See also 27 May 1908, 9 ("Plough Pilot"); 2 September 1914, 9 ("Geo. E.").

94 18 September 1907, 9. For another critique of this practice, see *WHM*, August 1909, 20 ("Forget Me Quick").

95 29 August 1906, 9 ("Sister"); 12 August 1908, 9 ("Match-making Brothers"); 1 April 1908, 9 ("Bawn").

96 *WHM*, August 1916 35. See also 29 August 1906, 9 ("Sister"); and *WHM*, April 1914, 69 ("Farmer's Daughter"), who complains about boys calling her "stuck up" for her reserve.

97 30 August 1905, 6. See also 30 December 1908, 9 ("Con Amore").

98 According to one reader, "when a girl puts up her back hair, she's looking for a young man." 30 September 1908, 9 ("Red Wing").

99 Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 56–7, 93, 116–20, 133–34, 147.

100 5 March 1913, 6 ("Emerald Isle"); 12 March 1913, 6 ("Aunt Melinda"); 21 May 1913, 6 ("Stenographer"); 10 February 1909, 11 ("Hoosier School Marm"); *WHM*, July 1909, 36 ("Seldom Seen").

101 *WHM*, June 1909, 21 ("A Young Wife and Mother"). See also 1 November 1905, 6 ("B Man"); 6 September 1905, 6 ("Yukon Prospector" and "Perplexity"); and 3 May 1905, 6 ("Girls' Friend").

102 14 January 1914, 6.

103 See also 17 June 1908, 9 ("Biddy McGinn"). See also 27 November 1907, 9 ("Canadian Wild Rose"); 11 December 1918,8 ("Gift of Britain"); comments by Prim Rose, 11 September 1918, 10; and for sympathetic male views, 18 December 1907, 9 ("Down Easter"); 7 May 1913, 6 ("Widower"); and *WHM*, October 1910, 76 ("Globe Trotter").

104 See, for example, 27 August 1919, 12 ("Thirty").

105 12 August 1908, 9 ("Match-making Brothers"). See also 13 November 1907, 9 ("Aenone").

106 The *WHM* usually published, in each issue, a list of letters forwarded on behalf of readers. In 1907–08, for example, at least 15 per cent of the letters it forwarded were from women to men.

107 23 September 1908, 9 ("Multum in Parvo"). See also the excellent letter by "Sobersides," 17 May 1911, 11.

108 29 April 1914, 6 ("Hopeful Ida"). See also 8 July 1908, 9 ("Medallion"); 18 June 1913, 6 ("Nova Scotia Girl"); 5 November 1913, 8 ("Pickles II"); *WHM*, January 1907, 12 ("Penelope").

109 *WHM*, January 1910, 19 ("St. Nick"). See also May 1908, 19 ("Lonely").

110 May 1908, 18.

111 10 March 1909, 11 ("Amethyst"). See also 1 July 1908, 9 ("Katie"); 10 May 1911, 11 ("A Happy Primrose").

112 Ward, *Courtship, Love and Marriage*, 64–89.

113 Cited in Broadfoot, *Next-Year Country*, 221; 29 January 1913, 6 ("School Ma'am"). See also Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 118, who cites an 1880 poem written by an Ontario girl lamenting the departure of all her boyfriends to the Northwest and expressing her determination to follow them. Some women also applied to men in the personal columns for jobs as housekeepers when, in fact, they were applying for positions as wives. See 24 September 1919, 12 ("The Old Doctor").

114 1 February 1911, 13 ("An English Daisy"); 23 September 1908, 9 ("Agenda"); 19 August 1908, 9 ("A Mountain Goat"); 13 December 1905 ("Fuzz and Buzz"); 21 August 1918, 10 ("Friendless"); Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 117.

115 *WHM*, September 1908, 14 ("Arrah Wanna"); July 1910, 94–95 ("Wild Rose"); June 1911, 84 ("Lily of the Valley").

116 Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 123–24. This behaviour was just as common among American working-class women. See K. Peiss, "'Charity Girls' and City Pleasures: Historical Notes on Working-Class Sexuality, 1880–1920," in Kathryn Sklar and Thomas Dublin, eds., *Women and Power in American History: A Reader* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991), and D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 194–200.

117 Dubinsky, "'Maidenly Girls'," 57 (quote); Broadfoot, *The Pioneer Years*, 256–57. See also Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 117.

118 24 September 1919, 12 ("The Old Doctor").

119 1 October 1913, 6 ("Land of the Midnight Sun"); 26 May 1909, 11 ("A Pioneer Girl"); 27 August 1913, 6 ("Scotchman").

120 Cited in Broadfoot, *Next-Year Country*, 108. For other examples, see Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth*, 74, and Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous*, 92. See also 12 February 1913, 6 ("Faithful Wife") and 26 September 1917, 7 ("Shy Irma"). The latter claimed that to avoid family conflict "the majority of girls," herself included, married the men their parents wished them to marry.

121 See, for example, 4 September 1907, 9 ("A.O.L.E."), who told Prim Rose readers that "I have read letters from more than fifty different bachelors that were sent to my daughters." Further proof of parental power is the fact that parents who disapproved of their daughter's boyfriend sometimes charged him with the crime of "seduction" – of tricking their daughter into having sex by promising to marry her – as a way of breaking up the relationship, even when they had no proof. Dubinsky, "'Maidenly Girls'," 46.

122 Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 122. Peter Ward says that by the 1900s parental power over their daughters' marriage plans had "largely disappeared." This is a dubious claim, particularly in view of the substantial power parents wielded over courtship. Parents were unlikely to veto marriage plans if they had already approved of the suitor. And as Denise Baillargeon tells us, even as late as the 1930s, Catholic parents in Montreal had unquestioned authority over whom their daughters chose as suitors. Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage*, 136; Baillargeon, "Beyond Romance," 208.

123 3 February 1909, 11 ("Prodigal"). This is in accord with Rothman's findings in the United States. "The last decades of the nineteenth century," she writes, "were a time when middle-class women involved themselves in the courtships of their male *and* female children," especially the latter. *Hearts and Hands*, 218.

124 *WHM*, July 1913, 87. See also *WHM*, October 1913, 71 ("Blondy").

125 19 May 1909, 11 ("Onlooker"). See also 31 July 1907, 9 (Condensed Letters); *WHM*, March 1914, 70 ("Jemima").

126 It is also possible that a working-class woman had more freedom in her choice of partner, as some have suggested, because her family ties were weaker and her family's property (that she, and therefore her husband, might inherit) less substantial. Light and Parr, *Canadian Women on the Move*, 110.

127 Hale to Alice, 16 June 1915, *The Canadian Letters and Images Project (CLIP)*, Malaspina University-College, www.canadianletters.ca (accessed November 2006).

128 Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 15.

129 *WHM*, December 1907, 30. See also 9 February 1910, 11 ("Married").

130 5 March 1913, 6 ("Steadfast"); 22 April 1914, 6 ("Farm Hand"); *WHM*, March 1914, 68 ("Trixie") and May 1910, 91 ("Toddy").

131 3 February 1915, 7.

132 24 July 1918, 7 ("L'Homme qui rit"). See also 26 August 1908, 9 ("Man of the West"); 23 October 1912, 11 ("Pipe Dream"); April 1919, 54 ("Contented Bach"); ; 13 September 1911, 11 ("Grasshopper Bill"); *WHM*, January 1909, 15 ("A Nova Scotia Lad") and July 1915, 47 ("Tob Bot").

133 In the United States, such women were labelled "charity girls" and strictly speaking, their behaviour could not be called "romantic." Although romance might *develop*

out of such relationships, the main purpose of such women was to acquire goods and entertainments they could not otherwise afford. Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, 192; Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 205.

134 3 August 1910, 9 ("Eastern Tomboy"); 7 August 1918, 9 ("City Girl"); 5 May 1915, 7 ("Belge-Francais").

135 16 December 1908, 9. See also 23 June 1909, 9 ("B.C. Bachelor"); *WHM*, June 1910, 75 ("Disconsolate"); and Broadfoot, *The Pioneer Years*, 342.

136 12 May 1909, 11 ("Benedict"). See also 28 October 1908, 9 ("Helm-A-Lee"); 23 September 1908, 9 ("Eagle Eye"); and for a particularly touching tale of betrayal, 8 April 1908, 9 ("Bluebell").

137 26 July 1916, 7 ("Mary Ann").

138 29 August 1906, 9 ("A Lady Reader"); 20 January 1909, 11 ("Puir-Wee-Laddie"); 1 January 1908, 9 ("Tilly Slow Boy").

139 28 March 1906, 9.

140 14 January 1914, 6 ("Widdyman").

141 22 April 1914, 6 ("Farm Hand").

142 13 December 1905, 6.

143 Historians remind us that deception could also take the form of "seduction," where a man promised to marry a woman if she agreed to have sex with him, but then reneged on the promise. Not only was seduction a federal crime, but it could damage a woman's "chaste" reputation and, in some cases, leave her to bear the stigma and financial burden of an illegitimate child; such deception was common, and many women, in Ontario at least, sued their seducers under this law. Dubinsky, "'Maidenly Girls,'" 43; Chapman, "Women, Sex, and Marriage in Western Canada," 6–7.

144 13 January 1909, 9 ("Gwalla's Son"); 9 March 1910, 11 ("Mary of Argyle").

145 11 August 1909, 9 ("A Voice from the Klondike"); 17 April 1918, 7 ("Silent Al"); 17 June 1908, 9 ("Westward Ho"); 22 June 1910, 11 ("Deserted One"); 29 October 1913, 8 ("Still Thinker"); 19 February 1913, 6 ("Idle Thoughts").

146 27 December 1911, 11 (Condensed Letters).

147 11 September 1918, 10.

148 26 July 1916, 7.

149 1 October 1913, 6 ("Dum Spiro, Spero").

150 2 November 1910, 11 ("Peggie Winn"); 6 March 1918, 7 ("Dry Goods"); 29 October 1913, 8 ("Still Thinker").

151 12 July 1911, 9. See also 30 April 1913, 6 ("Apron String"); *WHM*, October 1909, 20 ("Gandy"); April 1914, 69 ("Farmer's Daughter").

152 6 September 1911, 9.

153 24 September 1913, 6 ("Kismet") (quote). See also 5 November 1913, 8 ("Pickles II"); 14 January 1914, 6 ("Widdyman"); *WHM*, April 1909, 16 ("College Kid").

5: Love and War

1 The only study of Canadian wartime romance, albeit from a biographical and upper-crust perspective, is Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A Private View of Canadians in the Great War* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1992).

2 Kerr and Holdsworth, *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Plate 26; Desmond

Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993), Appendix.

3 *Family Herald,* 19 July 1916, 7 ("A Lass from Kent") (quote). See also *WHM*, 17 February 1917, 53 ("A Soldier's Friend"); *Family Herald*, 20 December 1916, 7 ("Twenty-Four"); 13 December 1916, 7 ("Queen of Sheba"); 18 April 1917, 9 ("Loving Cup"); and 8 January 1919, 10 ("Golden Eagle").

4 Grace Craig, *But This Is Our War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 61.

5 *Family Herald*, 26 January 1916, 9 ("Country Lass") (quote). The shortage of men in rural areas worsened over time. "By 1918," write Ramsay Cook and Craig Brown, "rising wage scales in urban industries had attracted so many young men to the cities from rural areas, that rural depopulation … appeared to reach crisis proportions." *Canada 1896–1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974), 241.

6 James Pedley, M.C. *Only This: A War Retrospect 1917–1918* (Ottawa: CEF Books, 1999), 176; J. Macfie, ed., *Letters Home* (Parry Sound, ON: n.p., 1990), 61; Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1985), 138.

7 Christie, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 265.

8 *WHM*, October 1916, 55 ("A Lonely Westerner"). See also the excellent letter from "Gunner D. W. Gilbert," *Family Herald*, 28 August 1918, 10.

9 Michael Benedict, ed., *Canada at War: From the Archives of Maclean's* (Toronto: Penguin, 1998), 9.

10 John (Jack) Ellis to Catherine (Kitty), 21 January 1917, *The Canadian Letters and Images Project (CLIP)*, Malaspina University-College, www.canadianletters.ca (accessed November 2006); Desmond Morton and Jack Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War 1914–1919* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989), 57; Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, 234.

11 Craig, *But This is Our War*, 95–96.

12 Jack Brown to Olga Brown, 7 September 1918, *CLIP*.

13 Christie, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 20, 125; Morton and Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon*, 49.

14 William Mathieson, *My Grandfather's War: Canadians Remember the First World War 1914–1918* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1981), 80–5; Frederick Scott, *The Great War as I Saw It*, 3d ed. (Ottawa: CEF Books, 1999), 144; Jack to Kitty, 21 January 1917, *CLIP*; John McArthur to Hazel, 17 February 1917, *CLIP*.

15 Cited in Read, *The Great War*, 185.

16 Charles (Dick) Richardson to Edna, 23 February 1917, *CLIP*.

17 Louis Duff to Aunt Lily, 3 November 1917, *Canadian Military Heritage Program (CMHP)*; Alexander Matier to Aunt Lil, 8 January 1918, *CMHP*; *Family Herald*, 4 December 1918, 6 ("Bachelor Brit").

18 John McArthur to Hazel, 31 December 1916, *CLIP*.

19 James Evans to wife, 25 August 1918, *CLIP*.

20 Louis Keene, *'Crumps': The Plain Story of a Canadian Who Went"* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917), 72. See also Jack to Kitty, 11 February 1917, and Murray Wellington to Margaret Munroe, 23 June 1918, *CLIP*.

21 John Newton to wife, 7 November 1917; Robert Hale to Alice, 23 May 1915; and John McArthur to Hazel, 31 December 1916, *CLIP*.

22 For an example of a Canadian soldier who refused to write to his former girlfriends for fear they would interpret his correspondence as a serious romantic commitment, see Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 208.

23 James Evans to wife, 15 October 1915, *CLIP*; Craig, *But This is Our War*, 97–120; Christie, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 174, 237; Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 107.

24 Ceta Ramkhalawansingh, "Women during the Great War," in Janice Acton, ed., *Women at Work, Ontario 1850–1930* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1974), 279–83; Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 144.

25 Macfie, *Letters Home*, 108–9.

26 *WHM*, April 1918, 47.

27 *Family Herald*, 2 May 1917, 7. See also *Family Herald*, 20 December 1916, 7 ("Twenty-Four"), and 4 October 1916, 9 ("Tom-All-Alone").

28 11 July 1915, *CLIP*.

29 *Family Herald*, 2 January 1918, 9 ("Sydobemos Gnilrad"). See also *WHM*, December 1918, 62 ("Lonely Boy"). That Canadians had less time for romantic matters was clear, as well, from the abrupt contraction of the personal columns during the war; the number of letters in the *Western Home Monthly*, for example, fell by half. For correspondents who blame the war for this, see *WHM*, April 1918, 47 ("Isabel"), June 1918, 46 ("Kentish Hop"), and August 1918, 47 ("A Farmer").

30 Charles Richardson (Dick) to Edna, 23 February 1917, *CLIP*. See also *Family Herald*, 7 April 1915, 7 ("Soldier"); Jack to Kitty, 29 April 1917, *CLIP*; Private Frederick McNulty to his sister, Min, 19 August 1918, "*For King and Country: Canada's Soldiers in the Great War*," (*KC*) www.kingandempire.com (accessed November 2006); Grescoe, *The Book of Love Letters*, 299; Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, 144–45.

31 Cited in Read, *The Great War*, 187.

32 *WHM*, November 1917, 63 ("Pocahontas").

33 *WHM*, September 1918, 46 ("Sky Scraper"), August 1916, 35 ("Restless"), and September 1918, 46 ("Sammy"); *Family Herald*, 29 August 1917, 7 ("Crank"), 17 May 1916, 9 ("Old Fashioned Girl"), and 30 January 1918, 9 ("Officer").

34 *Family Herald*, 30 January 1918, 9 ("Virginia").

35 Marie Beastall to Fred Milthorp, 12 December 1917, *CLIP*.

36 Katherine Wilson-Simmie, *Lights Out: A Canadian Nursing Sister's Tale* (Belleville, ON: Mika Publishing, 1981), 163.

37 Read, *The Great War*, 93; Ian Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 114.

38 *Family Herald*, 29 September 1915, 7.

39 5 July 1916, 7. For the best examples, see *Family Herald*, 17 November 1915, 7 ("Soldier's Sister"), 10 May 1916, 9 ("Soldier Lass"), 29 September 1915, 7 ("Sincerity"), 15 November 1916, 7 ("Marie"), and 8 September 1915, 7 ("Khaki Girl").

40 15 September 1915, 7. See also *Family Herald*, 29 September 1915, 7 ("Mollie"), and 5 April 1916, 7 ("Francisco").

41 Cited in Read, *The Great War*, 90.

42 Donald MacPherson, *A Soldier's Diary: The WWI Diaries of Donald MacPherson* (St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing, 2001), p10-11.

43 Hale to Alice, 9 December 1917, *CLIP*. See also James Evans to wife, 29 March 1918, *CLIP*, and Private

Douglas Buckley, who was engaged to be married, but who wrote to his sister that "I would not change my ragged old suit of khaki for one of mufti, for anything." Buckley to Abbie Tory, 1915 (quote), and Buckley to John Tory, 29 August 1915. I am very grateful to my friend Phil Buckley for granting me access to his grandfather's letters.

44 David Beatty, *Memories of the Forgotten War: The World War I Diary of Pte. V.E. Goodwin* (Port Elgin: Baie Verte Editions, 1986), 15.

45 Cited in Read, *The Great War*, 103.

46 Scott, *The Great War*, 105. See also Mathieson, *My Grandfather's War*, 177.

47 Irwin and Orwell Ennis to Lilian, 22 October 1915, *KC*.

48 Charles Richardson to Edna, 1 October 1916, *CLIP*. See also G. Reid, ed., *Poor Bloody Murder: Personal Memoirs of the First World War* (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1980), 101.

49 Hale to Alice, 15 May 1915, *CLIP*. See also Basil to father, 11 November 1916, in Craig, *But This is Our War*, 96–7; and Wellington Murray Dennis to Margaret Munroe, 4 May 1917, *CLIP*.

50 See John McArthur to Hazel, 31 December 1916 and Wellington Murray Dennis to Margaret Munroe, 5 August 1915, *CLIP*.

51 Grescoe, *The Book of Love Letters*, 286.

52 June 1916, 45.

53 Maurice Pope, *Letters from the Front 1914–1919* (Toronto: Pope and Co., 1993), 48. See also the article by Pearson for *Maclean's*, which notes that men suppressed sentimental thoughts while at the front, in Benedict, *Canada at War*, 6–7.

54 McArthur to Hazel, 31 December 1916, *CLIP*. See also McArthur to Hazel, 2 November 1916.

55 Christie, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 245, 296 (quote).

56 Private George Pearson wrote in *Maclean's* that "there is more room for time and sentiment in the hospital than out there," at the front, and "the mind reverts back to what it has seen and seeks sentiment in quick relief." Benedict, *Canada at War*, 6. See also *Family Herald*, 27 February 1918, 9 ("See It Through").

57 Barbara Wilson, ed., *Ontario and the First World War 1914–1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 126.

58 *Family Herald*, 13 December 1916, 7 ("Cussadoona").

59 *Family Herald*, 13 October 1915, 7 (quote); *WHM*, October 1918, 46 ("Sunshine").

60 See *WHM*, April 1916, 61 ("Rocky", "Chronic Kicker"), and November 1918, 47 ("Kentish Hop"), for spirited defences of dancing. See also letters in June 1918 issue of *WHM*, 46–7.

61 *WHM*, February 1916, 53.

62 See *WHM*, April 1916, 60 ("A Nova Scotian" and "One Willing to Serve"), and August 1916, 25 ("Restless").

63 To enlist, males had to be eighteen, able to shoot, and physically fit, and, until August 1915, married men needed the permission of their wives. Morton and Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon*, 9.

64 Cited in Read, *The Great War*, 190. See also *Family Herald*, 30 October 1918, 10 ("Lanky").

65 *Family Herald*, 22 May 1918, 7 ("Only a Girl"). See also the letter from "Canadian Lily," who lambasts a fellow for his suggestion that bachelors avail themselves of all the single women enlisted men left behind. *Family Herald*, 4 December 1918, 8.

66 *Family Herald*, 15 May 1918, 7 ("Constance").

67 See, for example, *Family Herald*, 25 December 1918, 8 ("Old Ex-Soldier").

68 *Family Herald*, 14 August 1918, 9 ("Sapphire").

69 See, for example, *Family Herald*, 21 March 1917, 7 ("Excelsiora"); 23 January 1918, 9 ("Snowshoe Jim"); 23 January 1918, 9 ("Old Soldier"); and 3 July 1918 issue, 7. Bachelors also solicited letters from war widows specifically.

70 Kerr and Holdsworth, *Historical Atlas of Canada*, Plate 26.

71 Craig, *But This is Our War*, 31.

72 Ibid., 30–61, 131; *Family Herald*, 13 September 1916, 7 ("Charmian"); Beatty, *Memories*, 5 (quote).

73 Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 144–45; Ramkhalawansingh, "Women during the Great War," 275–79; Read, *The Great War*, 154–56; *And We Knew How to Dance: Women in World War One* (Ottawa: National Film Board, 1994).

74 Wilson, *Ontario and the First World War*, 143.

75 *Family Herald*, 3 July 1918, 7 ("A Willing Worker") (quote); *WHM*, November 1918, 47; see also *Family Herald*, 10 May 1916, 9 ("Ex-Farmer"), 31 January 1917, 7 ("Occidental"), and 3 November 1915, 7 ("Canadian Mac"). On patriotic women seeking male correspondents, see *Family Herald*, 25 October 1916, 7 ("A Buxom School Ma'am") and 15 May 1918, 7 ("My Rosary").

76 *Family Herald*, 3 January 1917, 7 ("Dutchy") (quote). See also *WHM*, June 1917, 45 ("Spitfire"), April 1918, 54 ("Pocahontas"); *Family Herald*, 12 July 1916, 7 ("Woodland Nymph"), 22 September 1915, 7 ("Canadian Lass"), and 10 May 1915, 11 ("Nurse").

77 *WHM*, 16 June 1915, 7 ("A City Girl"); Bertram Cox to Mamma, 23 September 1916, *CLIP*; Macfie, *Letters Home*, 72.

78 P. Rogers, ed., *Gunner Ferguson's Diary* (Hantsport, NS, Lancelot Press, 1985), 17–18.

79 *Family Herald*, 12 April 1916, 9 ("Jan Ridd"). See also *WHM*, 16 July 1916, 46 ("Ameysth").

80 Ibid.

81 *WHM*, February 1918, 47. See also *WHM*, April 1917, 54 ("Pocahontas"), January 1918, 46 ("Shamrock"); *Family Herald*, 23 February 1916, 7 ("N.B. Butterfly"), 15 March 1916, 7 ("Sunlight Sue").

82 Macfie, *Letters Home*, 78.

83 Robert Brown to Mother, 24 June 1917, *CLIP*. See also letter from Winthrop McClare to his sister Helen, 29 November 1916, in D. McClare, ed., *The Letters of a Young Canadian Soldier During World War I* (Dartmouth: Brook House Press, 2000), 67.

84 Robert Brown to Mother, 24 June 1917, *CLIP*. Emphasis added.

85 *Family Herald*, 1 November 1916, 9 ("Vivian"). See also Jack Brown to his sister Olga, 16 February 1917; Charles Richardson to Edna, 23 December 1915; and Curtie Allin to Joe McCartney, 8 March 1918, *CLIP*.

86 *WHM*, August 1917, 38 ("Bonehead").

87 Macfie, *Letters Home*, 39; Fred Milthorpe to Miss Beastall, 28 November 1917, *CLIP*; ; Reginald Roy, ed., *The Journal of Private Fraser 1914–1918, Canadian Expeditionary Force* (Ottawa: CEF Books, 1998), 126; Scott, *The Great War*, 144; George Kempling Diary, 27 August

1916, *CLIP*; Roderick Todd to Mother, 30 December 1917; William Mclellan to Marg, 11 November 1918; Howard Thorburn to Dad, 5 February 1918; John McLean to Mother, 27 September 1916; and William Calder to Mother, 8 October 1916, *CLIP*.

88 *Family Herald*, 17 March 1920, 12 ("Vimy Ridge").

89 Bertram Cox to Mother, 24 October 1918, *CLIP*.

90 Bertram Cox to Mother, 24 October 1918, and to Murrill and Ella, 12 April 1919; Robert Hale to Alice, 13 March 1915; William Calder to Father, 1 March 1917; and James Bennett to Garnet, 30 October 1918 (quote), *CLIP*; Rogers, *Gunner Ferguson's Diary*, 130; Keene, '*Crumps*,' 37.

91 Bert Drader to Aunt Becca, 12 July 1916, *CLIP*.

92 Craig, *But This is Our War*, 94.

93 *More Letters from Billy* (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild, and Stewart, 1917), 28.

94 Rogers, *Gunner Ferguson's Diary*, 35. See also Clarence Gass to James, 3 December 1916 and William Gullen to Girlee, 31 August 1916, *CLIP*.

95 The number of English war brides in Canada may have been as high as 30,000. 1 October 1919, 12 ("Just Me"); Gordon MacKay to Jessie, 23 May 1917 (quote), *CLIP*. See also Macfie, *Letters Home*, 45; Christie, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 104–112; McClare, *The Letters*, 104; Jack to Olga, 7 September 1918, *CLIP*; and Rogers, *Gunner Ferguson's Diary*, 35.

96 Precise statistics on the length of hospital stays are hard to come by. The main hospitals, attached to each division of the Canadian Corps, were known as Casualty Clearing Stations, and according to one historian, 80 per cent of soldiers passed through them in less than a week. At the same time, however, the same historian notes that infection from wounds was recurrent and "contributed to long periods of hospital care and convalescence." Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, 187–95.

97 Benedict, *Canada at War*, 10. See also K. Fosters, "*Memoirs of the Great War, 1915–1918*," who alludes coyly to his bedside physical intimacy with nurses. *CLIP*.

98 Roy, *The Journal of Private Fraser*, 72. See also Cecil to Lily, 8 March 1916, in "Letters Home: World War I Letters of the Duff and Morrison Families of Saskatchewan," *Canadian Military History Project* (*CMHP*), www.rootsweb.com/~canmil/ww1/letters/ index.htm?o_xid=0039432393&o_lid=0039432393 (accessed November 2006); William Mclellan to Marg, 11 November 1918, and Alexander Matier to Aunt Lil, 8 January 1918, *CLIP*.

99 Susan Mann, "Introduction," in Mann, ed., *The War Diary of Clare Gass 1915–1918* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); Charlotte Gray, *Canada: A Portrait in Letters 1800–2000* (Doubleday Canada, 2003), 312; Gerald Nicholson, *Canada's Nursing Sisters* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1975), 10.

100 Mathieson, *My Grandfather's War*, 147.

101 Cited in Read, *The Great War*, 147. See also Fosters, "Memoirs of the Great War, 1915–1918"; Mathieson, *My Grandfather's War*, 144"; Nicholson, *Canada's Nursing Sisters*, *passim*.

102 Alexander Matier to Aunt Lil, 8 January 1918, *CLIP*.

103 "Nursing Sister Enjoys Ride on Camels," *Cobourg World*, 13 August 1915, in *CLIP*.

104 Wilson-Simmie, *Lights Out*, 146.

105 Mann, "Introduction," xxv; Andrew Wilson Diary, 10 July 1918, *CLIP*; Gilroy to Emily, 12 September 1917, and Clarence Gass to Lilian, 31 January 1917, *CLIP*.

106 Nicholson, *Canada's Nursing Sisters*, *passim*; Wilson-Simmie, *Lights Out*, 117–19; Mann, "Introduction."

107 Mann, xxxiii, 74; Wilson-Simmie, *Lights Out*, 31.

108 Mathieson, *My Grandfather's War*, 152–60.

109 Pedley, *Only This*, 6.

110 Cited in Read, *The Great War*, 148 (quote). Wilbert Gilroy to Father, 12 November 1916, *CLIP*.

111 Roderick Anderson to Mother, 16 February 1917; Roderick to Todd, 24 March 1917; William Calder to Father, 20 March 1916, *CLIP*; Macfie, *Letters Home*, 131; Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled*, 100. Information on the wartime experiences of Canadian nurses is limited. Although many kept diaries and sent letters home, few of these artifacts are yet available to researchers.

112 *Family Herald*, 3 March 1915, 7 ("Hope III"). See also *Family Herald*, 22 September 1915, 7 ("Canadian Lass").

113 *Family Herald*, 13 June 1917, 7.

114 *Family Herald*, 6 June 1917, 7 ("Irish Mollie"). See also *Family Herald*, 25 April 1917, 9 ("May flower"); 21 March 1917, 7 ("Isafold"); 12 January 1916, 9 ("White Cloud"), and 27 March 1918, 7 ("Prairie").

115 Hale to Alice, 16 June and 22 June, 1915; Ethel Drader to Mother, 2 July 1916; Alice Leighton to Arthur, 29 September 1915, *CLIP*.

116 Cited in Read, *The Great War*, 217. Emphasis added. See also 212–13 for a similar account, and Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 202, for the war's effect on Ottawa debutantes whose boyfriends had been killed overseas.

117 Jean to Aunty Lily, 26 February 1915, *CMHP*. See also the recollections of a Manitoba teacher, 16 March 1921, 26 ("Twenty One").

118 Bertram Cox to Leila, 25 March 1918, *CLIP*.

119 Alice Leighton to Arthur, 4 November 1915, *CLIP*; Read, *The Great War*, 189–91.

120 Read, *The Great War*, 189–90; Hale to Alice, 3 June 1915, *CLIP*.

121 Gray, *Canada*, 304.

122 30 October 1918, 10.

123 Kitty to Jack, 29 April/17, *CLIP*. See also Evans to wife, 13 August 1918, and John Newton to wife, *CLIP*; and *Family Herald*, 15 November 1916, 7 ("Khaki Puss").

124 Mathieson, *My Grandfather's War*, 256; Cited in Read, *The Great War*, 181, 192 (quote); *Family Herald*, 14 November 1917, 7 ("Peggy"); Craig, *But This is Our War*, x. The constant anxiety took its toll, aging women several years in some instances. See Bertram Cox to Mamma, 12 April 1918, *CLIP*.

125 Hale to Alice, 28 July 1915, *CLIP*. See also Evans to wife, 28 May 1918, *CLIP*, and *Family Herald*, 30 October 1918, 10 ("A Very Lonely Girl").

126 Robert Hale to Alice, 11 April 1915 (quote), 10 May 1915, and 15 May 1915, *CLIP*. See also Charles Richardson to mother, 21 December 1916; Hale to Alice, 28 July 1915; Jack Brown to Olga, 8 April 1917 and 20 May 1917; and John McArthur to Hazel, 17 December 1916, *CLIP*.

127 Wilson-Simmie, *Lights Out*, 134; John Thompson, *The Harvests of War* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979; repr. 1983), 111; Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 162. One young woman wrote, "it's hard to watch a troop train with its swarming mass of men in khaki steam away, when someone that is near and dear to you is amongst that crowd of cheering, shouting men. But such is life in war time. Keep smiling, and don't let the shoulders sag; that's the only way to be a soldier's wife, sweetheart, or sister." *Family Herald*, 1 November 1916, 9 ("Khaki Ruth"). See also 7 August 1918, 9 ("Yank").

128 *Family Herald*, 1 August 1917, 7 ("Mayflower Lover") (quote). See also *Family Herald*, 10 January 1917, 7 ("Excelsiora"); and 13 December 1916, 7 ("Slim").

129 Mathieson, *My Grandfather's War*, 263–64. See also Ellen to William Cunliffe, 29 October 1916, *CLIP*.

130 Wilson-Simmie, *Lights Out*, 167 (quote); Christie, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 349; *Family Herald*, 30 August 1916, 7 ("A Vancouver Kid") and 8 January 1919, 10 ("A War Widow").

131 Buckley to John Tory, 6 March 1916 (quote), Buckley Correspondence. The evidence for men's emotions is substantial. The best examples are found in: Christie, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 174, 208, 237; Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, 236; *WHM*, October 1916, 54 ("Far Overseas"), November 1918, 47 ("Gunshot Bill"); Robert Hale to Alice, 3 June 1915, 4 June 1917, 14 October 1917, 8 November 1917; Bertram Cox to Jack, 15 August 1917; Roderick Todd to mother, 24 March 1917; Peter Newman to Mary, 21 May 1916; Murray Wellington to Margaret Munroe, 5 July 1917, *CLIP*; and Mathieson, *My Grandfather's War*, 74. For the best example of a heartsick soldier, see the touching correspondence between John Ellis and his wife Kitty, *CLIP*.

132 James Evans to wife, 8 July 1918; Charles Richardson to Edna, 23 February 1917, *CLIP*.

133 Macfie, *Letters Home*, 168. See also Hale to Alice, 14 October 1917, for a similar situation.

134 John McArthur to Hazel, 2 November 1916; Archie MacKinnon to Jeanie Gregson, 19 November 1916, *CLIP*.

135 Christie, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 174.

136 Ibid., 244. See also John MacArthur to Hazel, 31 December 1916, *CLIP*.

137 Christie, *Letters of Agar Adamson*, 364.

138 Hale to Alice, 28 July 1915, *CLIP*.

139 Robert Hale to Alice, 9 February 1917, and 28 July 1915; John McArthur to Hazel, 11 February 1917, *CLIP*.

140 Jack Brown to Olga, 25 February 1918, *CLIP*.

141 The pre-war divorce figure was 40 per year, but by the early 1920s it had soared to 500 annually. The incidence of simple abandonment, which cost less and was easier, was much higher. Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldier's families in the Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 162.

142 Robert Hale to Alice, 3 June 1915, and Bertram Cox to Leila Cox, 15 August 1917, *CLIP*; Rogers, *Gunner Ferguson's Diary*, 13; Corporal John (Cannon) Stothers to Steve Stothers, 12 January 1918, *KC; Family Herald*, 21 May 1919, 10 ("Ancient"), 2 July 1919, 12 ("Loyalla, Alberta"), 13 August 1919, 12 ("Ontario Girl 3"), and 16 July 1919, 12 ("Pro et Contra").

143 Robert Hale to Alice, 9 December 1917, *CLIP*.

144 Read, *The Great War*, 93; Miller, *Our Glory and Our Grief*, 112–114; Wilson, *Ontario and the First World War*, 20, 124; *Family Herald*, 11 August 1915, 7 ("Jock").

145 *Family Herald*, 5 April 1916, 7.

146 *WHM*, April 1917, 54. See also *WHM*, August 1917, 39 ("Irish Brown Eyes"); *Family Herald*, 25 August 1915, 7 ("Soldiers' Sympathizer"); 26 July 1916, 7 ("Military Maid"); and 11 April 1917, 7 ("Independent Susy").

147 *Family Herald*, 14 March 1917, 7 ("Happy Canuck").

148 *Family Herald*, 9 October 1918, 10. See also 29 August 1917, 7 ("Worcester Sauce") and 20 October 1915, 7 ("Jock II").

149 *Family Herald*, 5 April 1916, 7 ("Rider of the Plains"); 31 January 1917, 7 ("Wild Rose"); 28 November 1917, 7 ("Sad and Weary").

150 *WHM*, February 1917, 55. See also *WHM*, September 1916, 42 ("Farmer's Girl"); July 1917, 61 ("Irish Norah"); May 1915, 63 ("Northern Girl"); and *Family Herald*, 31 January 1917, 7 ("Wild Rose").

151 *Family Herald*, 21 March 1917, 7 ("Nobody's Own"). See also 30 August 1916, 7 ("Vancouver Kid").

152 *Family Herald*, 25 April 1917, 9 ("A merry kit Bag"). See also *Family Herald*, 3 January 1917, 7 ("Nimrod") and 20 October 1915, 7 ("Jock II").

153 See, for example, *Family Herald*, 26 July 1916, 7 ("Shanty Boy"); 20 September 1916, 7 ("Happy Soldier"); 5 July 1916, 7 ("Jack the Trapper"); 6 October 1915, 7 ("Westerner"); 7 June 1916, 7 ("Mother's Boy"); *WHM*, June 1917, 46 ("A Mere Boy") and April 1918, 46 ("A Sport").

154 *Family Herald*, 16 September 1914, 9 ("Texas Bill").

155 *Family Herald*, 11 April 1917, 7 ("Independent Susy").

156 Norm Christie, ed., *Not Mentioned in Despatches: The Memoir of Fred Bagnall, 14th Battalion, C.E.F. 1914–1917* (Ottawa: CEF Books, 2005), 149; Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 431.

157 Mathieson, *My Grandfather's War*, 102 (quote); Murray Wellington to Margaret Munroe, 23 June 1918, *CLIP*; Macfie, *Letters Home*, 167; Pope, *Letters from the Front*, 144–45; *Family Herald*, 30 April 1919, 10 ("Amiens"), 16 April 1919, 10 ("A Nobleman"), and 5 February 1919, 10 ("Cuich in Rhi").

Epilogue: The New Order

1 See, for example, Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Denys, 1989); Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); and G. Martel, "Generals Die in Bed: Modern Warfare and the Origins of Modernist Culture," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 16 (1981): 2–13.

2 27 August 1919, 12 ("Maple Leaf") (quote). See also letters in 4 December 1918, 8; 15 January 1919, 10 ("Midget"); 12 February 1919, 10 ("Rural Sunflower"); 30 April 1919, 10 ("Autumn Leaves"); 2 April 1919, 10 ("Ruby"); 23 April 1919, 10 ("Miss Joe"); 27 July 1921, 26 ("Dimples"); 19 November 1919, 12 ("Jolly Kid").

3 See, for example, 18 December 1918, 8 ("Englishman"); 25 December 1918, 8 ("Seek"); 26 November 1919, 12 ("All Alone"); 16 July 1924, 32 ("Homesteader, 2"); 26 August 1925, 32 ("Tid bits"); *WHM*, November 1919, 63 ("Newcomer").

4 Rutherdale, *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 240–49, 245 (quote).

5 Ibid., 247; Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 258 (quote); Martel, "Generals Die in Bed," 7–8.

6 5 February 1919, 10 ("Just a Girl, 2"); 11 June 1919, 12 ("Bantam").

7 27 April 1927, 32 (quote); Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled*, 93.

8 Cited in Mathieson, *My Grandfather's War*, 314. For a similar recollection, see Read, *The Great War and Canadian Society*, 205. In truth, we still know little about the postwar image of Canadian soldiers. Jonathan Vance's fine study of the intellectual legacy of the war, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and The First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), says much about how Canadians remembered the war, but little about their views of those who fought in it.

9 The postwar pages of the Prim Rose column are full of letters from veterans who express their wanderlust. Many veterans' letters also assure prospective female correspondents that, despite their disabilities, they are as fit to work and play as any man. See, for example, 5 November 1919, 12 ("Sporting Mac" and "Lonely Dick"), and 10 December 1919, 12 ("Ex-Corporal").

10 23 April 1919, 10 (quote). See also 28 May 1919, 10 ("Phern" and "Rosebud"); 7 March 1928, 39 ("Juanita"); 21 April 1920, 12 ("Sunshine Ray"); 10 June 1925, 32 ("Gopher Rancher").

11 21 December 1928, 32 ("Schoolmarm, 21"); 7 March 1928, 39 ("Juanita"); 28 March 1928, 35 ("Pine Maiden"); 29 February 1928, 39 ("Meg 22"); 20 June 1928, 35 ("Understanding Heart"); 17 October 1928, 35 ("Pal of the Wind"). In the 1920s, however, the popular fiction on western Canada became less flattering. Writers now glorified city life and depicted farm life as monotonous and boring. Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 314.

12 4 May 1921, 26 ("A Westerner").

13 24 October 1923, 28. See also 3 January 1923, 28 ("Brown-eyed Anna").

14 For the denials, see 26 December 1923, 32 ("Lou Gubrious"); 19 December 1923, 44 ("Cecilia"); 20 February 1924, 32 ("Mystery 21"); 1 April 1925, 32 ("Western Girl"). For a humorous exception (and gold-digging *par excellence*), see 22 October 1924, 32 ("Spitfire 2").

15 "The Hostess," 4 Feb 1920, 11.

16 19 January 1921, 26 ("Ex-Soldier"). Other men made similar observations. See 17 March 1920, 12 ("Vimy Ridge"); 8 November 1922, 28 ("Sap Head"); 5 November 1919, 12 ("Willow Ridge"); 9 August 1922, 28 ("Hopeful"); 18 June 1924, 32 ("Veldt").

17 12 May 1920, 12 ("Grandpa") (quote); *WHM*, September 1920, 62 ("Steve") (quote); 23 December 1925, 32 ("Six-Foot-Four"); 22 April 1925, 32 ("Frenchy"); 10 February 1926, 32 ("Douglas").

18 6 October 1920, 28 (quote); 22 July 1925, 32 (quote). See also 13 December 1922, 28 ("Onward"); 16 December 1925, 32 ("Willie of the Wildwood"); 24 September 1919, 12 ("Hopeful Billie"); 15 October 1919, 12 ("Mr. Jiggs"); 17 December 1919, 12 ("Heartfree"); 26 January 1921, 26 ("Uncle Josh"); 8 June 1921, 26 ("Country Booster"); 30 July 1924, 32 ("A Sport"). And from the *Western Home Monthly*, see May 1920, 62 ("Love Sick Farmer" and "Violin Lover"), and November 1920, 71 ("Cowpuncher").

19 *WHM*, April 1923, 63 ("Yankee doodle Boy").

20 See, for example, 27 January 1926, 32 ("Uno"); 28 January 1925, 32 ("Forest Roamer"); 26 January 1927, 32 ("Sailor-Farmer"); 28 January 1925, 32 ("Sweet William 24"). For female examples, see 29 April 1925, 32 ("Just 24") and 24 November 1926, 32 ("Just Twenty"). The latter wrote: "Will 'Lone Wolf' please write as I am very anxious to hear about his travels in foreign lands?"

21 19 August 1914, 6 ("Muskoka Wanderer").

22 Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 191–93.

23 29 April 1925, 32.

24 20 June 1928, 35. See also 16 May 1923, 28 ("Ja-da"); 8 July 1925, 32 ("Huron Friend"); and *WHM*, March 1924, 40 ("Barrie 22").

25 *WHM*, May 1920, 62. See also *WHM*, October 1920, 63 ("Irish") and July 1920, 63 ("Lonesome"). One historian argues, as well, that the greater prosperity and leisure time of the 1920s made even the *working-class* bachelor value more highly the fun-loving qualities of a prospective wife, as opposed to her domestic abilities or wage-earning potential. Morton, "The June Bride," 408–25.

26 "The Hostess," 7 April 1920, 11.

27 19 March 1919, 10 ("Jingle Bells"). See also 28 May 1919, 10 ("Red Miss"); 2 March 1921, 26 ("Sporty" and "B"); 8 November 1922, 28 ("A Young Bookkeeper"); 30 May 1923, 28 ("The Whistler"); 6 June 1923, 28 ("Farmerette"); 4 February 1920, 12 ("Alberta"); 2 March 1921, 26 ("Vampey"); 20 October 1926, 28 ("Jazz Baby"); 24 March 1926, 32 ("Modern Girl"). The pages of the *Western Home Monthly* are full of similar letters. For the best examples, see September 1921, 31 ("Wild Rose 2"); October 1921, 61 ("Mecanno"); and July 1924, 36 ("Just a Western Girl").

28 14 December 1927, 32.

29 See 16 November 1921, 26 ("Slippery"); 2 February 1921, 26 ("Gollywog"); 30 April 1924, 32 ("Count Me In"); 24 September 1924, 39 ("Fair Ball").

30 16 December 1925, 32 ("Josephine").

31 20 January 1926, 32 ("Supporter"). See also 30 December 1925, 30 ("Brain Wave"); 24 November 1926, 32 ("Knight of the Key"); 14 October 1925, 32 ("Mr. Pratt"); 6 December 1922, 28 ("M.G."); and 19 March 1924, 32 ("Chunda Lal").

32 2 February 1921, 26.

33 Note the predominance of such letters in the early 1920s: 30 April 1924, 32 ("Young Hopeful 3") (quote); 13 July 1921, 26 ("Bantam"); 11 August 1920, 12 ("Chesterfield"); 14 December 1921, 26 ("Filer"); 30 August 1922, 28 ("Valley Dweller"); 10 December 1924, 32 ("Observer"); 2 March 1921, 26 ("Hillside"); 6 July 1921, 26 ("Canadian"); 6 February 1924, 32 ("Bachelor 36"); 29 July 1925, 32 ("Poplar Bluff").

34 21 March 1923, 28 ("Get 'Em").

35 *WHM*, January 1922, 37 ("Just a Canuck"). See also 16 March 1921, 26 ("Buddie"); 9 November 1921, 26 ("Farmer John"); 30 May 1923, 28 ("Plough Boy"); 14 February 1923, 28 ("Broken Dishes").

36 8 June 1921, 26 ("A Forget-Me-Not"). See also 11 May 1921, 26 ("Dream Girl").

37 1 November 1922, 28 ("Always a Pal"). Emphasis added.

38 See 13 June 1923, 28 ("Sans Souci"); 16 December 1925, 32 ("Josephine"); 28 May 1924, 32 ("Contented Pete"); 28 March 1923, 28 ("Sliver"); 6 August 1924, 32 ("Not Bobbed");

4 February 1920, 12 ("Pearl of Worth").; *WHM*, October 1922, 61 ("Onoway"); *WHM*, December 1922, 77 ("Jazz Baby"). At least one women's magazine noted that because flappers were so physically appealing, women over forty risked divorce should their husbands come in contact with such women. Cited in Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled*, 85.

39 See, for example, 20 January 1926, 32 ("One Who Knows"); 6 August 1924, 32 ("Meteor"); 27 January 1926, 32 ("Phoenix"); 10 February 1926, 32 ("Bachelor Me"); 8 July 1925, 32 ("Montana Cowboy"); 10 February 1926, 32 ("Alkill"); 3 February 1926, 32 ("Busy Farmer");30 December 1925, 30 ("Brain Wave"); *WHM*, August 1922, 44 ("Rover"). Perhaps the best comment came from a writer called "Whiz Bang": "I noticed in the last issue that 'A Flapper' wanted to know if boys like girls with their hair bobbed. Why, of course they do. It improves their looks a hundred per cent." *WHM*, February 1923, 51.

40 10 February 1926, 32 ("Mutton Chops").

41 *WHM*, December 1922, 77; *WHM*, April 1923, 63 (quote). See also *WHM*, September 1923, 65 (Editor's Notes) and 22 August 1928, 35 ("Fifty and Bobbed").

42 20 April 1927, 32 ("Silent Chauffeur").

43 In her study of interwar Canadian women, Veronica Strong-Boag discusses the powerful effect of beauty advertising on women, and how girls were raised to attract potential husbands by concentrating, above all, on their physical attractiveness. "No more than their mothers," she writes, "could they entirely ignore the barrage of advertising directed at female Canadians of all ages that insisted [as one 1932 soap ad did] that 'You are in a Beauty Contest every day of Your Life.'" *The New Day Recalled*, 12 (quote), 86; see also Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 226.

44 27 January 1926, 32 ("I'm the Guy"). See also 3 February 1926, 32 ("Pau-Puk-Keewis"); 18 April 1923, 28 ("Palo Alto"); *WHM*, December 1923, 35 ("Huckleberry Finn").

45 16 January 1929, 41.

46 C. Simmons, "Modern Sexuality," 162, 168; "Make Marriage a Prosperous Partnership," *Family Herald*, 2 June 1920, 11; Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, 202.

47 "Debating Sexuality in Halifax, 1920: Mrs. Donald Shaw and Others," in Ian McKay, ed., *The Challenge of Modernity: A Reader on Post-Confederation Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992), 336, 343 (quote).

48 Simmons, "Modern Sexuality," 168. Canadian historians have said little about this important postwar social and cultural development, but the following sources are useful, at least in demonstrating the extent of the hedonism: Alan Seager and John Thompson, *Canada 1922–1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1985), 58–75, 176–80; and James Gray, *The Roar of the Twenties* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975).

49 *WHM*, February 1923, 51 ("Whiz Bang"). See also 2 May 1923, 28 ("O Be Joyful 2"); 16 May 1928, 35 ("Western Dreamer"); 19 March 1924, 32 ("Gloom Chaser"); 29 October 1924, 32 ("Meteor").

50 Cited in David Marshall, *Secularizing the Faith: Canadian Protestant Clergy and the Crisis of Belief, 1850–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 197. See also 10 December 1924, 32 ("Cheerful Westerner"); 2 December 1925, 32 ("Old-fashioned Girl"); 7 December 1927, 32 ("Madam of Sunnydale");

17 October 1923, 28 ("An Old-Fashioned Colleen").

51 21 December 1927, 32 ("Schoolmarm"). See also 13 July 1921, 26 ("Bantam"), who notes that "this seems to me to be an age of speed. Was there ever a time when people were in such a hustle and bustle after money and pleasure?" What's more, university presidents across Canada began receiving complaints in the 1920s about the excessive carousing of their students. James Pitsula, "Student Life at Regina College in the 1920s," in Axelrod and Reid, *Youth, University, and Canadian Society*, 122–23.

52 11 October 1922, 28 ("Queen of Hearts"); 22 February 1928, 39 ("Bluenose Girl, 24"). See also 20 June 1928, 35 ("Bachelor Rancher"); *WHM*, June 1923, 56 ("Punch and Judy").

53 *WHM*, June 1919, 54.

54 Strong-Boag says "the flapper" was the predominant image of women in the popular culture of the 1920s. *The New Day Recalled*, 7.

55 Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 425.

56 Ibid., 219, 222.

57 *WHM*, December 1919, 70. See also *WHM*, June 1920, 63 ("A Pioneer Wife"); 17 March 1920, 12 ("Vimy Ridge"); 29 May 1929, 41 ("Bramshott").

58 *WHM*, December 1919, 70 ("Tolerable").

59 Gwyn, *Tapestry of War*, 158, 174, 220–23.

60 Dance halls and movie theatres spread to rural areas as well and were popular among youth. 6 June 1923, 28 ("Rose"); Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth*, 76; Seager and Thompson, *Canada 1922–1939*, 176.

61 Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth*, 71–2; Baillargeon, "Beyond Romance," 206. One historian argues that American courtship became more "public" in these years – less focused on men calling on women in their homes and more on going out to commercial amusements. But one could easily argue it became more "private" as well, in that couples could more easily escape adult supervision, especially in cars and movie theatres. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 13–14. On the desire of postwar youth to spend leisure time away from their homes and families, see Cynthia Comacchio, "Dancing to Perdition: Adolescence and Leisure in Interwar English Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32 (1997): 3–4. According to Ellen Rothman, American youth felt the same urge. *Hearts and Hands*, 292.

62 Cited in Broadfoot, *Next-Year Country*, 65.

63 This change took place even earlier for the average *working class* couple, who before the war spent little time inside the crowded, drab confines of the typical working-class home. Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 116–17. This was just as true in the United States. See Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 17, and Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 203.

64 Gertrude Pringle, *Etiquette in Canada: The Blue Book of Canadian Social Usage* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1932), 22; Dubinsky, *Improper Advances*, 116–17, discusses briefly the opportunities of working-class women for heterosexual interaction on the job.

65 D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 194–95.

66 McKillop, "Marching as to War," 88.

67 Holt, *Encyclopedia of Etiquette*, 168, 258, 352; McKillop, "Marching as to War," 88. The token chaperone

was also an American phenomenon. Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 210.

68 Holt, *Encyclopedia of Etiquette*, 19; Simmons, "Modern Sexuality," 159–60; Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 212.

69 Cited in Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem*, 120. Emphasis added. See also Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage*, 86–87. This is not to say that heterosexual interaction was entirely without regulation or adult supervision. Boarding houses, apartments, and universities, for example, often had strict rules about how their male and female occupants interacted. But as Rothman writes about the average university dean, for example, "there was little she could do to keep them out of the dance halls and movie theatres." Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 209, 211 (quote).

70 Strange, *Toronto's Girls Problem*, 123, 126; Ward, *Courtship, Love, and Marriage*, 124; Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, 192. In 1912, 40 per cent of single women in Toronto were living on their own.

71 *WHM*, January 1919, 62. See also 11 February 1920, 12 ("Lens") and 14 December 1921, 26 ("Jack Canuck"), both from former soldiers.

72 21 March 1917, 7. For a similar observation, see 22 May 1918, 7 ("Only a Girl").

73 Gwyn, 193 (quote), and 446.

74 Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth*, 69.

75 *WHM*, May 1920, 62. See also *WHM*, November 1920, 71 ("Cowpuncher").

76 *WHM*, November 1920, 71. See also *WHM*, July 1920, 63 ("Hokus Pokus"); 3 June 1925, 32 ("Unbobbed Girl").

77 Some historians adopt a different nomenclature here. Bailey, for example, does not distinguish between dating and courtship, but defines courtship broadly to *include* dating, and other activities. I, on the other hand, define courtship narrowly, as a specific form of romantic interaction that predominated in the pre-war years (with all its customs and its presumption of marriage), but which dating eventually replaced. Defining courtship broadly, in my view, leaves no adequate label for the uniqueness of pre-war romance, to which Bailey applies the term "calling," but that amounted to much more. Even the term "courtship" fell out of use by the 1920s. Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 285.

78 Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth*, 72.

79 30 December 1925, 30 ("Brain Wave").

80 McPherson, "'The Case of the Kissing Nurse,'"184–88.

81 Chapman, "Women, Sex, and Marriage," 1–12.

82 "Debating Sexuality in Halifax," 333–36; Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, 203.

83 Cited in Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth*, 69. See also the letter from Hilda Willison to Art Stromberg, 30 August 1926, in which she discourages marriage by reminding him that if he remained single he could "take out any girl you wished" and "pet to your soul's satisfaction." Gresco, *The Book of Love Letters*, 61. For newspaper reports of "petting parties" and sex at high school dances, see Comacchio, "Dancing to Perdition," 8–9, and Rothman, *Hands and Hearts*, 295.

84 Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled*, 32; Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 282; Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 21, 81. See also 10 January 1923, 28 ("Diffident"), who reported that

flappers were exchanging sexual favours with men in automobiles, to the peril of both.

85 7 July 1926, 28 ("June Rain").

86 Comacchio, *The Dominion of Youth*, 77–81. The percentage of illegitimate births (as a percentage of all live births) rose from 2% to 3.2% in the 1920s. Leacy, *Historical Statistics of Canada*, Series B1-14. Studies of American behaviour revealed that in the 1920s, 92% of college women girls admitted to engaging in "petting" – caressing body parts below the neck – and that one-third to one-half of young women had had premarital sex, twice the rate of their parents' generation. Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, 200.

87 See "Etiquette" column for 12 November 1919, 11, and 1 October 1919, 11.

88 Pitsula, "Student Life at Regina College," 122.

89 Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled*, 87; Simmons, "Modern Sexuality," 162; Coontz, *Marriage, A History*, 197–98; Rothman, *Hearts and Hands*, 242.

90 Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled*, 70; Pitsula, "Student Life at Regina College," 134–35; Thompson and Seager, *Canada 1922–1939*, 179.

91 According to Beth Bailey, "necking and petting were public conventions" among American youth in the twenties, "expected elements in any romantic relationship between a boy and a girl." *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 81.

92 13 February 1924, 32 ("Pedigoguess"). The changes of the 1920s likely had less impact on rural, Catholic, and immigrant youth, for whom chaperonage and other traditional rituals remained common, but we still cannot say for sure. Comacchio's study, *The Dominion of Youth*, 75–77, offers some possible answers, but she bases her conclusions on only a handful of examples. James Pitsula notes, however, that students from rural Saskatchewan who attended Regina College, a residential high school, were not nearly as reckless and rebellious as students from Regina itself. "Student Life at Regina College," 122–39.

93 30 July 1924, 32 ("K") (quote). See also 1 October 1919, 12 ("Edward"); 10 September 1924, 32 ("Snap"); 10 September 1924, 32 ("Queer Nut"); 26 March 1924, 32 ("Neptune"); 14 May 1924, 32 ("Prissy Doan"); 11 June 1924, 32 ("Fiddling Nero"); 6 August 1924, 32 ("Meteor"); and 3 December 1924, 36 ("Sixteen Years a Widower").

94 "The Hostess," 31 March 1920, 11. The "Hostess" and Prim Rose were one and the same.

95 See, for example, 7 December 1921, 26 ("Happy Bachelor"); 31 January 1923, 28 ("Spuds"); 8 October 1924, 32 ("Silver Sands"); and 3 June 1925, 32 ("Vulcan").

96 17 September 1924, 32 ("Gallinipper) (quote). See also 16 July 1924, 32 ("Lorraine"); 2 July 1924, 32 ("Garden Grubber"); 30 July 1924, 32 ("Tomboy-Tommy"); and 22 October 1924, 32 ("Nancy 33").

97 Pringle, *Etiquette in Canada*, 15, 124, 199, 204. The absence of chaperones at parties was confirmed by three young flappers in a shocking 1922 exposé, in *Maclean's* magazine, of the flapper lifestyle. Prentice, *Canadian Women*, 262.

98 3 September 1919, 11.

99 17 September 1919, 11.

100 15 October 1919, 11.

101 1 October 1919, 11; 12 May 1920, 11 (quote).

102 Gidney, “The Dredger’s Daughter,” 8; Baillargeon, “Beyond Romance,” 206–08; Comacchio, “Dancing to Perdition,” 4.

103 29 May 1929, 41 (“Lonesome Pal”).

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What was romance like for Canadians a century ago? What qualities did marriageable men and women look for in prospective mates? How did they find suitable partners in difficult circumstances such as frontier isolation and parental disapproval, and when they did, how did courtship proceed in the immediate post-Victorian era, when traditional romantic ideals and etiquette were colliding with the modern realities faced by ordinary people?

Searching for answers, Dan Azoulay has turned to a variety of primary sources, in particular letters to the "correspondence columns" of two leading periodicals of the era, Montreal's *Family Herald and Weekly Star*, and Winnipeg's *Western Home Monthly*. Examining over 20,000 such letters, Azoulay has produced the first full-length study of Canadian romance in the years 1900 to 1930, a period that witnessed dramatic changes, including massive immigration, rapid urbanization and industrialization, western settlement, a world war that killed and maimed hundreds of thousands of young Canadians, and a virtual revolution in morals and manners.

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