

GROVE IN SIMCOE

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(AUTHOR'S NOTE: *When I first visited Simcoe in the summer of 1970, Mrs. Grove invited me to stay with her in the handsome white frame house north of town that Grove had bought in 1931, and which was still her home. She was then eighty, a tall, striking woman who enjoyed her attractive clothes and costume jewellery. She lived alone, did her own laundry, and still worked in the garden. Within the house, her customary seat was in an embrasure whose window looked out on the gravel driveway alongside the house and on the road going south to town. On the wall opposite her chair and above eye-level was a portrait of Phil, so that she saw him whenever she looked up. He was still there too.*

But there was an ambivalent quality about this communication. Some years before, she had had his large desk sawn in two; the parts were now in separate rooms. Her action had shocked some of the circle of old friends, but Professor and Mrs. Collin in London were not surprised. They had known of her lingering resentment at being wage earner and handmaiden to an ambition that had faded. On one occasion she had said to them, "I wanted babies and he left me books." To me she said that in the later years he would sit all day at the desk upstairs, retyping page after page of earlier work, sometimes changing a single word on a page, sometimes only a punctuation mark. The piles of used paper accumulated. Nevertheless, she enjoyed the attention and the activity that surrounded his reputation, and she was very generous in making arrangements for me with members of the old English Club and with those who were left of the naturalists who had been Grove's particular friends. She had asked one of them, Bill Kirkwood, a semi-professional photographer, to drive over to Simcoe to meet me. He gave me two of his pictures of Grove, one of Grove kneeling on the ground listening for bird songs, and the other — a cloudy one — of one of the New Year's gatherings of the naturalists in a cabin out of town. He also took a picture of Mrs. Grove and me outside the sunroom where we had breakfasts. When I returned in the fall, Mrs. Grove had been in hospital. I stayed in town and drove out each evening to report on what I had learned that day from the files of the Simcoe Reformer.

Everything that I gathered in Simcoe, tapes of conversations, notes from the Reformer, snapshots, even the piece of type from A Search for America that Mrs. Grove had given me, I deposited with the Grove Collection in the library of the University of Manitoba.)

GROVE LIVED LONGER IN SIMCOE than he lived anywhere else in Canada, but more than that, he *chose* to live there. By the time he moved to this attractive town in southern Ontario, he had lived in a variety of places in Canada: in the sixteen years that he spent in Manitoba he lived in eight places, determined each time by teaching opportunities, but partly also by the fact that he invariably quarrelled with school boards, and either resigned or was fired (usually he beat them to it). He had lived in rolling country near the Pembina Hills in the south, on flat prairie near the western edge, in a wooded frontier immigrant settlement, and in two broad valleys, one near the "Dusky Mountains" which was his attractive name for Riding Mountain, the other Rapid City, where he did most of his writing. From these rural settings he went in search of a lucrative career to the capital city of Canada.

More than that, he had travelled over most of Canada in the years of triumphal tours, 1928-29. From the tours, he knew Ontario quite well, he had been over the prairies, he had travelled through the rolling park land of Prince Albert and the magnificence of the Peace River country, he had seen the mountains and the ocean of Vancouver and Victoria, and in the spring of 1929 he toured the maritimes, parts of which he found "very beautiful."

But in all this great sweep, he rarely — disappointingly in a novelist — mentions the country that he was passing through. It was in Ontario, around Port Hope, that he gave a bit of detail when he wrote to his wife back in Rapid City, "I love this country with its cedars and white pines and apple orchards. . . . Living is cheaper here, too, than in the west." The first mention of Simcoe was not until towards the end of his tours, in February 1929, and that was to record a kindness done him.

I was so tired when I arrived at Simcoe yesterday that I could not finish this letter or mail it. I was billeted there with very nice people and was rude, I am afraid; for I went to bed after lunch and slept to within half an hour of the meeting. This morning they woke me at 4:30, but I turned over and fell asleep again. They let me sleep and meanwhile rustled a car which would take me to Brantford (25 m. away) where I caught this train so as to still get to Sarnia in ample time. I could sleep till 7:30. That was awfully good of them.

So the people of Simcoe had a certain quality about them, quite unlike the people of the nearby city of London, "about half the size of Winnipeg," Grove wrote, and went on, "This is a place I dislike. It's too 'swell' for me — that's the only word that fits. . . . If they dressed a little less perfectly and had a little less money and didn't put on such an air of culture — with nothing below — they'd be more my kind, though I can fence well enough with them." Besides, after his lecture there, "No more than 20 came to shake hands with me."

But apart from passing moods or chance encounters, there were with Grove certain constants, deep-seated desires, dreams of a certain kind of living.

One of them was to own some land — the longing of the European immigrant — which is a motif with Grove from the early works, *The Turn of the Year* and *A Search for America*, with the Tolstoyan figure of the natural man in organic unity with the soil. The concept weaves in and out of all of the later works, the concept of the god-knowing farmer, Grove's philosopher-king. As he wrote to Raymond Knister (5 November 1931), "as you know, [I] have long since decided that the country (not the small town, either, but the open country) is the place for me. I find that, of true intelligence, farmers have the lion's share on this continent; and the sooner they take direction of affairs into their hands, the better it will be."

Another constant in Grove's work was the "mansion," identified with "the white, range-line house," that appears in the very first thing that Grove published in Canada, *Over Prairie Trails*, where there is such a house alongside the road and the narrator says, "There hangs a story by this house. Maybe I shall one day tell it." The "mansion" is the symbol of achievement, a tribute to the spirit, the determination of the man who tilled the soil, the crown of all his efforts. In the huge sprawling manuscript of the trilogy "Latter Day Pioneers" that Grove assembled in the early twenties, the central part was titled "The White Range-Line House." It was Niels Lindstedt's "mansion," the shrine of his love for Ellen in *Settlers of the Marsh*, the book that finally came out of the trilogy. In Simcoe, or in the "open country" nearby, Grove found his white, range-line house, the mansion, on the corner lot, Lot no. 1, of concession 12. Not only was it a range-line house and white, it was also set in a grove of the cedar and spruce that had so delighted him at Port Hope. The dream of all his heroes had come into his own world of reality at Simcoe. It must surely have seemed to Grove a sign of destiny.

AND SO IN THE FALL OF 1931 he bought his land, forty acres, and his mansion. The Simcoe *Reformer* put it more prosaically, and didn't quite get the name right: "The corners near Old Windham have changed owners. James N. Knight has sold his house to F. P. Groves of Ottawa and moved to Victoria." Grove had already reached the high point of his acclaim across the country, and now he had the symbol to declare it. Still, a character, a role, had to go with this status, and it would not be the Tolstoyan, earth-smudged figure of the early books. The suitable tone was that of country gentry, in dress and in deportment. As one of his former Simcoe students said, he was "very tall, very spare, always beautifully dressed. He dressed almost in the English squire

clothes, the heavy tweeds, the heavy brown brogues. He was a very imposing man." And when Marcus Adeney and his wife visited the Groves "on a farm near Simcoe," they found that "practically filling the clothes closet in our room was a row of Harris tweeds — a multi-colored array of costumes suited to an exclusively country gentleman." Another symbol had emerged into reality; Grove at last could afford the clothes that were an obsession with him, harking back to the almost comical figure in *A Search for America* of the young immigrant Brandon arriving with his arms laden with coats, a sign of his affluent past.

Before the mansion could be enjoyed, however, it had to be refurbished. Mrs. Grove told me that when she arrived from Ottawa with Leonard on his first birthday, October 14, and saw what her husband had bought, she was appalled, appalled at the extent of the land, at the huge barn awaiting dairy cows, and at the condition of the house. She was particularly alarmed that the door at the end of the upstairs hall opened onto nothingness; there was no balcony, no guard rail to keep a small boy from falling to the ground below. She had come from farming folk in Manitoba, but her husband was no farmer, he knew nothing about cows, and he was certainly no do-it-yourself carpenter. A great deal of work had to be done, and it all had to be paid for. Workmen were busy there for the first month. As Grove wrote Raymond Knister in mid-November, "we have had to refloor, replaster, repaper, repaint its interior; and now we have lovely rooms, 10 of them, but there is hardly anything in them." As for the spacious barn, in the same letter Grove said, "I get a certain stimulus out of a small herd of pure-bred Jersey cows which I have bought, again rather owing than owning them. We have lots to learn from cattle, as your probably know, and I am learning it."

When within weeks he was asked to speak at Lynn Valley, he spoke with great confidence. According to the *Simcoe Reformer*, "Mr. Frederick Philip Grove, famous Canadian author, lecturer and student of world affairs, delivered a stirring and thought-provoking address on 'The True Farmer.' He displayed a deep understanding of the aspirations of the tiller of the soil and argued convincingly for a well-populated countryside with contented standards of living. . . . Mr. Grove was ably introduced by Mr. Munro Landon, president of the Norfolk County Chamber of Commerce." Grove gave the same address to various groups for the next year or so, always insisting, "One can only live the true life in the open country."

Yet while Thoreau and Grove's other idols among the naturalists held that agriculture was the ideal existence, the root and crown of civilization, and the agriculturalist its finest product, still the educated, literary agriculturalist was the one who in himself contained the high goals of mankind.

One aspect of Grove — the Rousseau part — was the teacher, the educator. And before long some of the ten rooms of the handsome, spacious, recreated

house were being fitted to receive children into a kindergarten, advertised in the newspaper as "the Froebel Kindergarten." Froebel was the nineteenth-century German educator who began the whole *kindergarten* system and who coined the word. He was prohibited in Prussia for a time because his ideas were thought to be dangerously radical: he did not believe that school or learning for children should be a matter of discipline, hours, and benches. He thought a school should be a garden for children, a kindergarten, where they learned from nature, and played games — games that led to an understanding of Nature's laws and Nature's discipline and hence to arithmetic. Nature study and arithmetic were the core of this learning but the learning must come through "education not induction," a popular slogan that Grove was fond of — learning was a drawing out, not a putting in. As Leonard Grove remembered,

It was all a very pleasant, idyllic sort of time for me. I'd get up in the morning, and the car would bring a whole bunch of kids to play — really what it amounted to — and I was prepared for the condition that if all these kids were going to come to play with you, then you were going to have to play by sitting at a desk part of the time. It all seemed like a holiday to me.

It was indeed a Froebel kindergarten. What's more, the school made money, and there was no school board to contend with. Then in the summer of 1932, apart from the advertisements and information about the Froebel school, there was a separate notice in the *Reformer*: "Mr. F. P. Grove will open a bi-weekly class in conversational French (Wednesdays and Saturdays) on September 7 at 4 p.m., at his house on Highway 24. Children of all public school ages will be admitted. Fee \$2.50 per month."

Yet there was still need of intellectual stimulus, exchange, discussion with peers. In this aspect, too, Simcoe had advantages. It was only about one hundred miles from Toronto, where Grove could visit his university friends, Dr. Alexander, head of the English department, E. J. Pratt at whose home Grove stayed once in a while, and Barker Fairley of the German department and one of the active minds behind the *Canadian Forum*. Even closer, on the western side, was Richard Crouch in London, "the librarian of the rather famous public library," as Grove put it, in the city whose people in the mass he didn't care for. But this particular obliging friend meant a ready source of books. Grove owned surprisingly few books, and most of them were Everyman Library editions. He depended on friends and on libraries for books. He invited the Crouches over only a month after arriving in Simcoe.

Still, he needed conversation close at hand, and shortly he began the English Club, so that yet another group met in the spacious room north of town. The first subject of their study was Thomas Hardy, with Grove giving a paper on *Jude the Obscure*, and Mrs. Jackson, the treasurer of the club, one on *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. There were some twenty members at first, most of them

parents of the kindergarten children. By the fall of 1932, less than a year after it had started, the Club had gained such prominence that the *Reformer*, on September 22, featured the coming season's program on page one with headlines: "The Drama Will be Subject of Study This Year. Membership and Enthusiasm Increase." To the group now of 40, Grove gave the first paper, on J. M. Barrie's *Twelve-Pound Look*, Mrs. Ollerhead followed with Galsworthy's *The Fugitive*, Mr. W. P. Mackay, K.C. came next with Shaw's *Candida* (a splendid address, the *Reformer* reported). Mr. Frank Cook talked about "The Drama of the Restoration," and after Christmas they turned to Shakespeare's plays. For the next couple of years they concentrated on essayists: Macaulay, Bagehot, Arnold, Carlyle, Ruskin, Emerson, and in 1934 there was a paper on Thoreau by Munro Landon. Then the club seemed to outgrow its host — or perhaps it was too far to go on winter nights — and it moved into town and met in the Agriculture Office on Peel Street. While Grove was still often present, he was no longer in charge of it. The Club read contemporary authors: James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence (Grove gave a paper there), Aldous Huxley, and so forth. But during the winter of 1936-37, the English Club disappears from the paper, its place in the town's life taken by amateur dramatics and a travel club.

In the early thirties, however, the social life was further enhanced by the Carnegie lectures, organized by McMaster University. In that series, Arthur Lismer came to Simcoe and gave five illustrated lectures on "The Origins of the Italian Renaissance." Grove, as one of the local committee in charge of arrangements, introduced the speaker, and the *Reformer* reported, "Mr. Grove told of the origin of these lectures and of the need for a new appreciation of pictorial art in Canada. He referred in glowing terms to the work of Mr. Lismer as an education director of the Toronto Art Gallery, a member of the famous 'Group of Seven,' a creative artist and a scholar in the history of art."

Subsequently, shortly after the publication of *Fruits of the Earth*, Grove himself was appointed by McMaster as one of the Carnegie lecturers at Simcoe for 1933-34. His five lectures, the *Reformer* announced, would be on "How to Appreciate Literature"; on poetry, the drama, the short story, the novel, and finally, "The Application of Principles Discussed to Modern Literature." The lecture on poetry was largely concerned with Housman's *Shropshire Lad*, and Grove, along with others of the time, declared the poem "When I Was One and Twenty" to be "pure" poetry. There was a great debate on about what was pure poetry; it seemed that that was important to know. However, it was in the lecture on the novel that he really let himself go, and the *Reformer* reported it at length, March 15. After all, this was something that Grove was an authority on, having just received the Lorne Pierce medal two weeks earlier, when the *Reformer* had announced with pride, "Lorne Pierce Medal Comes to Citizen of Norfolk: 'Fruits of the Earth' won it. . . . The only Ontario citizen in the list of

awards made this year by the Royal Society of Canada." As for Grove on the novel, "The lecture was one of the best ever delivered in this town. . . he stated that narrative was the *sine qua non* of the novel. Dialogue may be eliminated and indirect speech resorted to, but narrative is essential." Further headlines followed in the *Reformer*, "Lecture on Novel Greatly Appreciated. Reappointment Asked." This prophet was certainly not without honour among the people of Simcoe.

THE INTELLECTUAL *literary* life was well looked after. But Simcoe had further riches, surely unexpected, for Grove the naturalist. This was in the exceptionally fascinating wild life of the Lynn Valley, together with a very active group of conservationists (they would be called "ecologists" now). At last Grove had friends, as he had never had in the west, and quite soon after he arrived in Simcoe, he and four others — "the five naturalists," Mrs. Grove called them — were going on outings through the Lynn Valley. They were Munro Landon, director of the Canadian Jersey Cattle Association and head of the local branch of the Ontario Field Naturalists; Professor J. W. Crow, who had been professor of horticulture at the nearby Ontario College of Agriculture at Guelph; Monty Smith, a banker, neighbour of the Landons, who had land a few miles west of town; Bill Kirkwood, a Scot who had worked for Landon as an immigrant boy, who had a machine shop and garage; and Grove.

Bill Kirkwood, in talking about this time, said that Grove was "delighted with the plants that he saw here because we are in an area here on the border of the Carolinian zone. . . We have a greater variety of plant life in this hundred-mile-wide strip along the north of the lakes, than there is in any other part of the continent." The Lynn Valley was a favourite place to go because "the railway track parallels the river quite a lot of the distance. And we used to walk down the track which was the easiest access to it." The valley was also one of the flyways for bird migration, for which they had a good tutor in Munro Landon who knew "all the songs and all the birds." One spring morning along the railroad track, Kirkwood took a photograph, "We were looking for birds, and some bird songs were coming through, so everyone stopped and I remember Grove getting down on one knee, his walking stick in his hands with his hand on top of it, and he is listening very intently to hear the birds." On another occasion,

Grove knelt down beside a piece of ground and he scratched out a square foot on the ground and he said, 'I have come to the point where I can tell you everything that is in that square foot.' You know, he had studied the soil and the organisms and plants and so on to such a point that he was able to analyse that section. Now that is quite an achievement. — It was an interesting thing because this was one of the things that showed me the depth of Grove himself.

Munro Landon, talking of his memories of Grove, said,

I just like to think of him. I never had a brother but — he was more or less a partial brother, a fellow companionship, a fellow-feeling. . . . We walked through his fields and I sensed that he had an intimate feeling with nature, which of course attracted me. I've always been very close to nature of any sort. I think we — he thought and I thought pretty well the same about things. — And you see, he was an admirer of Thoreau and I used to be, very much so.

Landon also talked about the area in general and about Spooky Hollow, ten miles away, which the five explored. And there were the New Year's parties:

I remember for several years we'd have a party on New Year's Eve out in my neighbor's — Monty Smith's — cabin in his woods, and we'd each take something [Mrs. Landon sent a goose wrapped in a blanket in a big dish]. — Well, such a gathering as that would be worth while and they're very scarce through life.

Bill Kirkwood took along his camera, and there is a shadowy picture of the five men in the light of the fire at the New Year's party.

Unhappily there was a break in the group with the death of Professor Crow, of pneumonia, at age 53. Thereafter the group expanded into a Nature Club, which at Grove's suggestion was called the J. W. Crow Nature Club, whose aim was to establish a sanctuary in the valley. The aim was achieved early in 1940 when the area in the Lynn Valley was declared, "Crown Game Preserve, to be known as the J. W. Crow sanctuary." Grove paid Crow the highest compliment in his power when he likened him to Thoreau.

Grove got not only companionship from the naturalists, he also got expert advice on his cows from the president of the Jersey Cattle Club, and by 5 October 1936, the outside world came to know him in another guise: "Owned by F. P. Grove, Simcoe, Ontario, the Jersey cow, Spruce Lodge Sexta," who had "recently completed a record of 6,637 lbs. of milk, 378 lbs. of fat, with an average test of 5.70 percent at 2 years and 284 days of age, in 305 days." For a time he continued to make news among Jersey producers, and visitors to the Groves were shown to the barn where the records above each stall gave lineage, milk production, composition of fats, and so forth. Professor W. E. Collin and his wife, invited over from London, were thus entertained. Professor Collin was in the French department at the University of Western Ontario, and in 1936 had published a highly praised pioneer book about Canadian poetry, *The White Savannas*. Grove wanted Collin to do a book about him, but the desire was not mutual. Collin was working on a book about D. H. Lawrence.

Then there was Grove, "the famous author." In the white range-line house, there was a room at the top of the stairs, looking south toward the town, in it a large desk with a supply of sharpened pencils upon it. Here he spent many hours. But the writing had not been going well. He had published only one book, *Fruits of the Earth*, in 1933, and that he had completed before he left Manitoba. He

had rewritten his ant-book by the end of 1933, but he couldn't find a publisher for it. Apart from the occasional lecture to clubs in Toronto or London, a few radio talks in Brantford, and such like, there was little coming in to support the gentleman farmer and his establishment. Even the school was falling off, though the Groves had given up the kindergarten and had shifted to regular public school grades and courses. However, after this dry time, the years 1937 and 1938 seem to have been years of great writing activity, profitable or not.

In 1937 Grove wrote *Two Generations*, another farm novel, which he called "the first of my 'pleasant' books, the first Ontario novel which I have written. . . . It even has a 'happy ending'." Then followed the massive, cloudy work, *The Master of the Mill*, set for the most part in northwestern Ontario, a novel of industry and its power, an attempt at something like Thomas Mann's saga of an industrial family in Germany, *Buddenbrooks*. (Mrs. Grove told me that before they left Ottawa to come to Simcoe, in the winter of 1930-31, Grove had insisted on her reading *Buddenbrooks* in German, a task that she did not relish.) Then in September 1938, with some excitement, Grove began an extension of his one big success. He wrote Richard Crouch that he had "suddenly been seized with the inspiration of working up and consolidating the sequel of *A Search for America*. . . . All day long I write; at night I read what I have written." But the excitement was not sustained; he didn't complete *In Search of Myself* until 1940.

The only one of these three books set in Simcoe is *Two Generations*, subtitled "A Story of Present Day Ontario," present day being 1928-29, shortly before Grove arrived there and about ten years before the actual time of writing. It's a tired novel, the language is often stilted, conversations are unnatural, most of the characters paper-thin. It's a stereotyped story of an autocratic father whose children rebel against him, they prove their abilities, he loses his money in the stock market, he is humbled, they are forgiving and generous, and all ends well — more or less. There are Grove's persistent themes: the generation gap, the supremacy of the farmer in the structure of society (though here there is occasional laughter at it), the transition from a horse-and-man-based agriculture to one of industry and machines, the shifting of society's biological basis in the brother-sister relationship ("we are mutants," the girl tells her mother), and of course the *I/not I* theme, the essence of the individual which is "the abiding substratum" and unchangeable. There are the recurring characters: the matriarch who would emerge even more strongly in *Master of the Mill*, the exotic woman, the temptress, Clara Vogel in *Settlers of the Marsh*, Sybil in *The Master of the Mill*, here a professional dancer, "an alien bird" though not evil. And the two main figures, Ralph Patterson the father and Phil his son, who is the most ardent rebel.

Ralph Patterson is curiously ambivalent: though only forty-five, an age when Grove's heroes usually start a new life, he is physically vigorous and prosperous,

yet he is the counterpart of old John Elliott in *Our Daily Bread*, his work done, no challenge left, grown querulous and exacting. He thinks of himself as Tennyson's aged Ulysses, a feeling of the futility of life upon him. Nevertheless, he is determined to thwart the ambition of Phil, nineteen, to go to university and become an astronomer, even though that occupation is a worthy one and in harmony with nature. Phil, defying his father, says, "Remember how you lifted me to the branch of a tree, as a toddler, and let me hang there by my hands?" — an incident that Phil Branden told of *his* father, and that the other Phil, Phil Grove, told of his. Ralph was the rebel at Phil's age; all are one. And of course, Grove is presenting himself in both characters: the mature man, the acclaim gone, life turned flat, and the young man striking out to make his own way. When Barker Fairley reviewed this book in the *Canadian Forum*, he remarked on the double quality, and Grove wrote him, "The child hanging on the tree; the boy accepting the cigar — is myself; and it was not without a sort of sly irony that I named him Philip. So, in a way, there, too, is autobiography."

This is not the kind of novel that Thomas Hardy wrote, in which people grow out of the place in which they live; in fact, Simcoe itself is mentioned only briefly, in a few sentences. Yet when the book came out there was quite a stir in Simcoe; people were sure that they recognized the Landon family in the fictional Pattersons: Patterson was a dairy farmer, his house was brick, and "profusely gabled and broken by porches," his farm was on the outskirts of town, his eldest son was in the nursery business, he had two families — four children now about twenty, and two very young ones — and their neighbour across the street was a banker. But then, Grove too had a farm about two miles from town, he bred cattle, and the Groves also had two families, young Leonard about the age of the Landon boy, and the daughter who would have been the age of the older Landons had she lived. And so there is a double play.

But the Pattersons, unlike either the Landons or the Groves, had two farms; the other one, belonging to Mrs. Patterson, sixteen miles south of the home farm, was in Sleepy Hollow. Sleepy Hollow is one of the main features — even a main character — of the book. Grove has a set piece to introduce it:

Sleepy Hollow, as everybody called the place, was appropriately named. . . . an almost circular hollow surrounded on all sides by hills, some of them wooded, some cleared. Under the westerling sun the whole place, sunk in the hills, had an air of breathless and uncanny quietude. . . . Since for nearly a quarter century the place had not been inhabited for any length of time, it had become a veritable sanctuary of wild life. Here one could still meet an occasional deer; and here were many rabbits, marmots, snakes, frogs, and toads; but above all there were birds, many of them of the rarer kind: catbird, red-breasted nuthatch, cardinal, brown thrasher, red-start, towhee, tanager and many others, the ruby-crowned kinglet among those that were spring and fall transients.

So speaks Grove the naturalist, and when Mrs. Grove took me there, the awesome quiet was still unbroken. But Sleepy Hollow is not just a geographical phenomenon; it is an integral part of the novel as the matriarchal refuge and sustenance. There is another passage that involves the brother-sister unit that goes beneath surface description and gives us a glimpse of what the Simcoe area meant to Grove:

A vague longing crept into them, like an all-pervading woe; a desire to be one with the universe, to cease being separate individualities. Both, in the strange weird light of the waning day, felt forlorn, and with the sadness of life, vaguely full of the pain of things, as if *they* were the consciousness of the universe. As though rooting himself into the soil, Phil raised his arms, like the arms of a pine, and crisped his fingers. 'Hide here!' he called under his breath, 'And never come out.'

BUT THE TIMES WERE GROWING DARKER. Although friends were kind, and each summer the *Reformer* had notes about the Groves holidaying with the Collins at their cottage in Georgian Bay or with the Crouches in Rondeau Park, yet friends could not make up for income, and the publishing world was hard hit by the depression. Sales, and therefore royalties were small, and publishing a new book was a major gamble. Then, too, Grove's health began to fail. In 1939, on doctor's orders, he gave up all pretence at farming and rented his land out, except for what the house and barn stood on. He could no longer enjoy the outings with the naturalists. As Munro Landon said, "I think he was in pain quite a lot of the time. He'd sit down on the railroad tracks to rest. And then his hearing was defective. He couldn't hear the birds like the rest of us. It all helped to make him bitter." Grove grew more irascible, discipline in the school became harsh, students were few.

A much greater darkness was coming. On August 3, 1939, the *Reformer* had a banner headline, "12,000 Unemployed Invade Norfolk." A month later, September 5, another banner, "WAR ENVELOPES EUROPE." Grove was filled with self-pity in his letters to Pierce about getting books published, "Nothing worse could have happened than this cursed war." And, "I fully realize that these are abnormal times. Nobody in Canada suffers more than I do." Yet in 1939 he was given an honorary membership in the Canadian Authors' Association, and in 1941, under Pierce's sponsorship, he was elected to the Royal Society of Canada. Recognition was not lacking. Money was.

Grove made one more attempt at entering another career. In the provincial election of 1943, he made his bid for public life. The first mention of him in this contest was characteristic. Evidently Grove had written a testy letter to the editor

of the *Reformer*, for on Monday, July 26, there was a piece on the front page entitled, "A Third Candidate," and continuing,

Our attention has been drawn to the fact that in our article on 'The Coming Election,' which appeared in our Thursday's issue, we mentioned only the candidates of the two old parties; another candidate is now in the field in the person of Mr. F. P. Grove, representing the new party of the CCF. We had no wish to slight Mr. Grove who, we believe, is also an honourable, upright man; but our article was actually written before he became a candidate.

On another page was the paid advertisement, "Forward with the CCF. Farmer-Labour Party. Vote Frederick P. Grove, Public meeting Friday, July 30." Grove hadn't given himself much time to campaign; on August 5, the *Reformer* published the election results. Grove received over 2,100 votes, but each of the other candidates polled over 7,000. Grove was elected honorary president of the local CCF club, and he shared the platform with Agnes McPhail at a meeting in January 1944, but he was not going to find an income in politics.

In March 1944, a moment of cheer came when Grove became the beneficiary, through Pelham Edgar's unflagging efforts, of the Canadian Writers' Foundation fund, and from that time until the end of the year of his death, the Groves received \$100 a month — a most welcome income in those days of depression and war. In April he suffered the first of his strokes, but in December Macmillan brought out *The Master of the Mill*, the first book that Grove had published in five years. It was the beginning of a small spate of publishing under the enthusiastic championing of Ellen Elliott, who had been appointed a director of Macmillan Canada after the death of Hugh Eayrs. She published *In Search of Myself* in 1946, and *Consider Her Ways* in 1947. Before the first was published, Grove received an honorary degree from the University of Manitoba from which he had graduated in 1922. After the second, he received the Governor General's award for non-fiction, for the *Search*.

Ellen Elliott nearly lost her job because of the displeasure of the London office that she had taken on these several books, none of which was likely to have a popular sale. As she recalled Grove she said,

Of course in a way he was an unfortunate man with his manner. He seemed — arrogant. But when I got to know him, I realised that he really wasn't like that at all. This was a defence. You see, he always had an enemy — it goes all through — not always people. The countryside, the weather, the storms. You see, those books about the prairies, he's fighting the elements. You find that thread all through his books.

If the publishers in Toronto — and I'm not speaking just for Macmillans — if they hadn't had their imported lines that they carried, their educational books, authorised texts, they wouldn't have had any money to take a flutter on a Canadian author. You could never get that across to authors. I'm sure we never got it across to Grove. He thought we were holding out against him — all the publishers,

not just one, but all of them. — Now I knew them; I knew all the people in those companies at the time. I know what we did; we did our best for Grove.

There were lighter moments. She recalled a publisher's party at the Macmillan offices during the war, when Grove arrived early:

So I took him into Hugh Eayrs' office and I sat him down in an arm chair, and I said to the girls, Get him a bottle of wine to keep him happy. So he sat there in this chair with his drink, with the door open, and he so enjoyed it. Watching us all get ready for the party. He just sat there with a sort of benign smile on his face, you know, 'At last, I'm one of the family.' You could feel it. He was so happy, so relaxed. I don't think I ever saw him *look* more at ease. He was quite a character, he was. He was a prickly personality.

And then she recalled the times when, after his final stroke, she went down to Simcoe:

I remember once when I went there, he was beginning to get over the stroke, he could sit in the chair, but he had to be helped to move, because it affected all one side and his speech. And you know, it was difficult talking to him because he would say something, but this paralysis — I suppose he would see a blank look on my face, that I wasn't getting what he was saying, and the tears would come in his eyes.

The days of wan hope continued for well over a year. Grove died 19 August 1948, but he was not buried in Simcoe. His body was taken by train on the long journey to Rapid City where he was buried beside Phyllis May, the daughter whom he had greatly loved. Grove had made his final choice.

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