

Mr. Rickaby, the place, and after ostentation. She with more cometh. But she did not give way to despair and hesitancy because her day was past. The decisive answer she regarded the sublime serenities and devotion to unselfish service which characterized her maiden aunt, the more attractive grew such a career for herself. She would henceforth be the stay of her parents, the guide of her brothers. In order to be able to help the latter to develop whatever musical and artistic tastes they might possess, she forced herself to renew her old pursuits, and unselfishly made a point of taking lessons both in music and painting. Such efforts worked their own cure in time. Life was not to be barren. If an absorbing passion was denied, a variety of minor interests might be consciously cultivated, which, in time, would take its place.

It was in this exalted mood that Letitia returned home after a year's absence. Her mother laughed at her wisdom and her ardor, but nevertheless encouraged her to carry out her plans. She was content to have recovered her blithe, sunny-tempered daughter.

"Why, you look younger than when you went away, Letty, and you are prettier than ever," said Mrs. Whyte, with the not unpleasant patronage of an old friend.

"You can get out of the ruts. You have no cares on your shoulder," said Mrs. Roberts, with a plaintive sigh. Mrs. Roberts had been a school chum of Letitia. She had married early, and four young children now claimed all her thoughts and attention.

"Do you call this little woman a care, Belle?" said Letitia, lifting her godchild to her knee. "In a few years she will be the greatest help and comfort to you, and I shall be a lonely old maid. I am the one to be pitied."

"You an old maid!" said Belle, derisively. "I shall believe it when I see it."

"I shall be twenty-five next birthday," said Letitia, seriously.

Very few old maids were to be found in western towns, and it was, perhaps, because Letitia was the nearest approach to the real thing that Alberta possessed that, as years went on, so much attention was paid her. No party was considered complete without Miss Roy, or "Miss Letty," as it gradually became the custom to call her. As the boys married, and it came to pass that little children once more played about the cottage, Mrs. Roy tolerated for them the use of the more easily pronounced diminutive; but she herself continued to speak of her daughter as Letitia. In time she made a charming chaperon. But chaperons may be wooed as well as girls; and if, by degrees,

the young fellows that she had known in pinafors approached her as a friend and confidante in their love-affairs, there still remained plenty of bachelors with whom Miss Letty was a favorite toast. As years went on, of course their ranks were thinned, and one by one they dropped out of Letitia's circle. The ships, however, of the Pacific squadron, one or two of which were always stationed near Alberta, supplied men who temporarily filled their places, and the interest attached to novelty competed pleasantly for her favor with old associations.

But the time came—it was when Letitia was about thirty-five—when only one permanent admirer, so to speak, was left. In numbers Letitia had found safety. When all counteracting and disturbing influences were removed, she found herself defenseless and exposed to an obstinate attack. It was inferred by all that the day was not far distant when Letitia would yield.

Mr. Joseph Hobday was a man of substance, both materially and physically. He had come to the province as a contractor for the railway that was to unite the outlying Pacific province with the busy, prosperous cities of the East, and by successful enterprises and investments he had amassed a considerable fortune. He did not seek to disguise his admiration for Miss Letty, and from the day of their first acquaintance he enrolled himself among her followers. He was not a man of many words. He loved his pipe, his glass of toddy, and his game of cribbage; but had Miss Letty demanded the sacrifice, he would no doubt have been found willing to give up all three in exchange for her society. It was one of Letitia's charms, however, that from her no such exactions need be dreaded. It was only in the winter months that Mr. Hobday could pursue his courtship. In the summer he was camping with his engineers in the lonely recesses of the mountains. The news was scanty that penetrated the high valleys through which the iron rails were perseveringly making their way, and another man might have grown impatient of the solitude, fearing lest the prize he sought to gain would be snatched up in his absence. Mr. Hobday, however, had a comfortable belief in himself. In the past he had never hazarded his fortune upon a single stroke of luck, or trusted to the flash of genius. He had been content to wait, to advance slowly, and to win his way by persistent determination. When, again and again, after months of silence, he returned to Alberta and found Miss Letty still Miss Letty, it was only natural that he should still more hopefully expect to appropriate to himself the comfort and charm of her constant companionship. Apathetic as he may have appeared to younger men,