

The *Stronhold* was to sail early on Monday morning. On the Sunday evening Neville easily found a seat in a corner of the church which commanded a view of the Roys' pew. The church was only dimly lighted by lamps, and the light they shed was concentrated on the nave and chancel. Letitia's seat was within the limits of their rays, so that her face was plainly visible to Neville, who, in another aisle, was concealed by the shadow of intervening pillars.

Letitia sat between her father and Edgar. The mother had, as usual, stayed at home with the younger boys. Neville fancied that she looked pale, but his heart assured him that she had never, at any rate, looked more beautiful. When the service was over she turned to greet a friend, and, as he watched her lips part over her white teeth, and the delicate dimples that lurked round the corners of her mouth develop themselves one by one, he felt that he could give all for love and count the world well lost. But the impulse passed. Outside, in the friendly darkness of the night, he found an opportunity of softly touching her dress. Then he went quickly back to the church, where the man in charge was putting out the lights, and sought for Letitia's prayer-book. He read her name, "Letitia Roy," on the title-page, and the book was in his pocket when he hastened to join his ship.

No one, except perhaps her mother, quite understood Letitia the following winter. Once or twice a week she would go off to bed with a nervous headache, declaring that she could not stand the noise the boys made. There were songs she could not be persuaded to sing. Indeed, she scarcely touched the piano; and the sketches she had taken such pains with in the summer were tossed into the fire as worthless. On the other hand, she developed a passion for plain needlework, bending for hours over long seams.

"No wonder you have headaches," exclaimed Edgar, one night, when she had refused to go out with him. "Mother, tell her to put that work away."

Letitia threw it down, and burst into tears.

"Cannot you leave me alone!" she cried.

Mrs. Roy picked it up and folded it neatly when Letitia had left the room, and explained to Edgar that his sister was not very well, and that he had better take no notice of her.

But in a few minutes Letitia returned with her hat and cloak and declared that she was ready to go out. Edgar stared, but he put on his hat and overcoat without a word.

In after years Letitia hated to look back upon that winter. She plunged recklessly into all the gaiety of the little town, and, to the surprise of every one, she even engaged in a

pronounced flirtation with Tom Rickaby, the wildest young fellow in the place, and afterwards refused him with some ostentation. She threw over a friend of Edgar's with more compunction, and even with a little hesitation. Indeed, she did not give him a decisive answer until after it was known that the *Stronhold* was ordered home to England, and would not return to Alberta in the spring; so that although she was blamed by many people for having encouraged him, she was acquitted of merely coquetting with him in the absence of Lieutenant Neville, whose attentions, the previous summer, had not been unnoticed. Mrs. Roy said very little, but she planned effective measures. "John," she said to her husband in the spring, when he was preparing to go to Europe to renew his summer stock, "you must take Letitia with you."

"Letitia!" said Mr. Roy, with some surprise. "I had thought of taking Edgar and introducing him to the firms we deal with. It is time he took greater responsibility on himself."

"Well, take them both," urged Mrs. Roy.

"Do you really mean it? Do you know what it will cost?" he asked, after a few minutes' deliberation.

"I do mean it, John," said Mrs. Roy, with an emphasis that her husband never disregarded.

"Letitia is not well. She needs a thorough change, change of scene and change of thought. We'll manage to economize in some other way, but you let her and Edgar have a month in London together, and, if possible, send them over to Paris for a week."

Mr. Roy lifted his eyebrows and thrust out his lips — signs of dawning comprehension.

"You're bent on going it, madam," he said, after a pause. "Well, I suppose you've got your reasons, and it must be as you say."

VII.

So it came about that Letitia not only went with Edgar to Paris, but, when he and his father returned to Alberta, she remained in England, and paid a long visit to her mother's relatives. She fell once more under the influence of her maiden aunt, to whom she faithfully promised to send dried specimens of all the ferns and wild flowers that grew round Alberta. The months that she spent with Miss Wingate gave her an opportunity of studying the usefulness and independence of an old maid's life, and Letitia became so enamoured of it that, with a touch of her old enthusiasm, she at once planned out a somewhat similar career for herself. A way from Alberta her pride slowly recovered from the blow it had received, and she less reluctantly admitted her love for Neville. As soon as that was granted it clearly