

"Over hill, over dale,
Through bush, through brier,
Over park, over pale."

We are scrupulous to avoid trespassing upon one another's "claims," and we spoke Kipling's jungle lingo, and called each cluster a "kill." Down we went between the spruces and the cedars on the sunny slope, dragging inconsequently, we women, with our skirts, the wrack of last season's vegetation. We looked piercingly to left and to right, and where the uninitiated would least have felt warranted we stopped and brought forth our treasures. Our feet rustled through the crispness of the brown leaves, and, save for this sound and the occasional ecstatic calls to one another, nothing broke the silence but the rare song of a bird. This was my return, my first return, to the woods since the autumn. The trees still stretched their arms, brown and lean, to the heavens, but their look of resignation was gone, and expectancy and an indefinable joyousness had replaced it. The buds on the maples covered each twig like a series of rosettes, pink and bristling. Here and there were branches of shrubs strangely spotted with white, looking as if the winter and not the spring held still the sceptre. Nothing was green but the pines and the cedars, and low down in hollows the first tender foliage of the wood flowers. In the open, where the ground was clear and dry, the hepaticas bloomed in clusters close to the earth, as if reluctant to leave her. They are of many shades of pink, pale to the most vivid, and again they are blue as the spring sky smiling down into their modest eyes.

These flowers may be seen as one walks, but the arbutus obeys the wood spirit still, and veils her beauty.

Do not, I counsel you, stand when you hunt the arbutus. You will not find her unless you become lowly as she. Kneel where the dull brownish leaves of the plant show among the pine needles and the brush. Then begin to turn back, and turn back slowly and patiently. It is worth while, for tracing the dull, hairy stems to where the leaves show, you lift them, and there, white and pure, or blushing as from the exposure, are the tiny blossoms so faint, so rare, and, oh, so satisfying. You are triumphant now; you break the stem; the treasure is yours; but pray be provident for the future. Do not disturb the root; use the knife, so that next spring you may experience the same delight. It is marvellous how the blossoms evade one. They keep close covert, indeed; but it is a still-hunting over which no horrors hang. This morning, as I sat watching, watching, I imagined the arbutus knew I was looking for her. Now and then I caught sight of the tip of a spray looking very much like a pretty enticement to come closer. Then I slid down the slope and opened up the unseemly coverings gently, and the flower seemed to rejoice, and I quieted the misgiving I always have in plucking the arbutus with the thought that my hunting brought to it salvation.

Oh, charming hours, when we may slip life's leash and spring into an ideal world where we may hunt so graciously! Oh, charming flower, the most desirable of the forest's living things, milkwhite, or purple with love's wound. Fetch me that flower!

PHAROS.

Toronto, April, 1895.

The Prayer Question at the Meeting of the Women's National Council.

AS was naturally to be expected, some misapprehension has arisen in some quarters concerning the vote of the Women's National Council, which resulted in a majority in favour of the use of silent prayer alone; and the fact that the proposed addition of the audible repetition of the Lord's Prayer was not carried, seems to have presented itself to some as a reason why such organizations earnestly religious in their aims, should not remain connected with the Federation. This seems to me to arise from a misunderstanding both of the basis on which the Council is founded and of the circumstances and reasons which led to the large vote against what must seem to most people so appropriate and becoming a proposal.

A few words of not superfluous explanation may perhaps come most gracefully from the defeated side, and the present writer, who was one of the advocates of the introduction of united audible prayer in addition to silent prayer,

may be in the better position to place the matter in its true light, thus possibly satisfying some whose religious scruples are disturbed about the action of the Council. Now, it would be most unjust to represent the majority who voted against audible prayer as in any degree compromising their religious convictions in so doing. Indeed, the speakers on that side emphatically stated their own decided religious position, as well as their love and value for the Lord's Prayer in particular, as used in religious services. The question was *not* one as to the use of the Lord's Prayer, but as to the relative advisability of audible and of silent prayer. The opponents of the first honestly believed that, at this general annual gathering of representatives of many local Councils, with a *personnel* very diversely composed, embracing persons of widely differing religious views, the practice of opening with silent prayer would be the most appropriate manner of unitedly invoking the Divine blessing. It must be remembered that there never was for a moment a question as to the propriety of opening with prayer. The recognition of dependence on the Divine blessing, and the petition for that blessing, were from the first secured by providing for an interval of decorous and solemn silent prayer. The amendment proposed originated with one of the Local Councils which had adopted the practice at its own meetings, where it had been found satisfactory to all. The opposition was led by another Local Council which had been of the first to adopt the practice, but had found practical difficulties in the way arising from the fact that a number of earnest and conscientious members of the Council, owing to ecclesiastical differences, could not join with others in the *audible* repetition of even the Lord's Prayer without doing violence to their own conviction of duty. This is undoubtedly much to be regretted in an age when a groundwork of religious unity is so much desired; yet it is the fact, and it is better to face it. Without going into the matter further, it is easy to understand why much of the opposition came from the Province of Quebec, the difficulty being at bottom the same which underlies the unhappy complications of our Public School system, and its final settlement must lie with the religious authorities in the first place.

Now, as the very basis of the federated Council of Women is the application of the Golden Rule of Christianity to all relations of life, and as no one can maintain that the practice of audible prayer at such meetings is binding on the conscience of any, while we are expressly commanded to refrain from anything forcing the conscience of even the weakest brother or sister there can hardly be any doubt in the minds of most earnest and intelligent Christians that, appropriate and beautiful and inspiring as it would be to begin these general meetings with the audible repetition of the Lord's Prayer, it is yet more in accordance with the spirit of Christ and of our holy religion, to waive our preferences and unite, as we can unite, in *silent* prayer, rather than force our own desires on the unwilling at the risk of wounding some sensitive conscience, or of excluding from so promising a Union some who, while they have a natural difficulty about audible prayer, are willing to join with heart and soul in endeavouring to secure the fulfilment of the very prayer which they cannot unite with others in repeating. In endeavouring to carry out the *law of love* we shall find our truest centre of union, and so long as the Council continues to carry on its work in this spirit it cannot be unworthy of the confidence and support of any Christian woman.

FIDELIS.

Parisian Affairs.

A KIND of full dress debate on the part of the Socialists and Extremists has taken place respecting the French fleet going to Kiel. It is one of those debates that do no good, but a great deal of harm; they keep the people in a state of irritation and lash them up to a return of the 1870-71 hates. The Government maintained that in accepting the invitation to go to Kiel—Denmark's Alsace—it only discharged an act of international politeness. But why not refuse to go as Germany declined to come to our international exhibitions? replied the anti-Teutons. Russia came in for a few hard hits, and the question was asked, "If an alliance, yea or nay, existed between France and Russia?" Of course that was evaded. The whole debate was very delicate. No one desires to know, if an alliance exists, what