

CANADA.

Land of fertile valleys, and mountains high—
Whose rugged summits pierce the azure sky;
Land of flowery prairies spreading wide—
Through which the gentle streamlets smoothly glide—
Where the wild buffaloes in herds are found
O'er the noble red man's hunting ground.
Land of broad rivers, and mighty falls!
Whose roar each solemn thought recalls—
Land of fairy lakes, and inland seas,
Midst boundless forests of giant trees—
Where the pioneer's axe is never still—
A land indebted to his strength and skill!
Where men of many nations are united,
To which the bond and free are all invited—
For yet there's room enough for millions more;
Both rich and poor are welcome to her shore:
Where every Christian virtue is regarded,
And every honest effort is rewarded;
Where the old may rest and the young may roam
Contentedly within a peaceful home.
Watching the little lambs in merry play,
Where once the cruel bear in ambush lay.
And where the nimble hare, the buck and doe
The savage wolf had for their bitter foe!
Where burns are yearly filled with hay and grain.
Midst clear and fertile fields to till again.
Where the tenant and the squire are one—
Where the door to affluence is closed to none;
Land of clear blue sky and balmy breezes!
Land where the drifted snow so keenly freezes!
Where joyous travellers glide over hidden dells,
Charmed by the music of the merry bells.
Where cowards, traitors are not heard or seen;
Where all are loyal to our noble Queen:
Long may she live, of monarchs reign the chief—
Queen of the land of "Beaver and Maple leaf."

Brucebridge.

A. MACFIE.

JOAN:

A TALE,

BY

RHODA BROUGHTON,

AUTHOR OF

"Cometh up as a Flower," "Red as a Rose is she," etc.

PART I.

CHAPTER IV.

".....The little dogs and all,
Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, see they bark at me!"

It is not quite easy to make out the name at a glance, from the fact that, through lack of a renewal of paint, the P has nearly disappeared. Still, enough of it remains to prove that it once was there; enough to make Joan's sunk spirits rise again with a leap.

It is right, then! It is Portland Villa, at last. The landlord's instructions were correct. She puts out her hand to unlatch the gate; only to discover that it is off its hinges, and—to remedy this defect—is tightly tied up with string. She sets down her dressing-case in the road, while her fingers struggle to untie the manifold hard knots which guard the entrance to Mrs. Moberley's bower.

While she is thus employed she hears the scampering of many little feet on the gravelled drive, and from the house rushes forth a volley of dogs, one after another. There seem to be twenty, at least; but subsequent counting reduces them to six; all smallish; all apparently deeply, warmly hostile: all barking with a deafening volubility; all breathing wrath and indignation against the profane intruder who is tampering with their entrance-gates at ten o'clock at night. Their harmony accompanies her all the time that she is struggling with the knots. They also make it doubtful to her whether the bell which she has pulled on reaching the door has really rung. They bark themselves nearly off their own legs; and, if there were any dead in the neighbourhood, would infallibly wake them.

But their conversation has changed in tone. It no longer means enmity so much as excitement, agitation, half-welcome. Having smelt her clothes to be good and genteel, they have convinced themselves that in such a gown she cannot be come begging. Anyhow, theirs is the only welcome she seems likely to get; for, whether the bell rang or no, it is certain that nobody answers it. She rings again, and again waits. Nothing happens. Can it be the wrong day? Is it possible that they are all out—even the servants; and that this army of little dogs is keeping house alone?

She pulls out her aunt's letter from her pocket, and tries to decipher it by the starlight. "Monday, April 12th," as plain as Charles Wain above her head. If there be a mistake it is not hers. Emboldened by this fact, she rings a third time. After a considerable interval (not of silence, for the six dogs do not permit that, but of patient, dispirited waiting) she hears a slow and solid foot coming along the passage inside. A bolt is withdrawn; the door opens; a flood of light flows out from a lit hall, and a person—a female person—appears in the aperture.

"I suppose that Mrs. Mob—" begins Joan, then stops, for some lightning-quick intuition tells her that—wildly improbable as it seems—this is Mrs. Moberley.

"Why, I am Mrs. Moberley, my dear," says that lady, putting out both hands and drawing the girl in with them. "I did not think it could be you, because I did not hear any wheels; to tell you the truth, I think I must have been having forty winks—Hold your tongues, dogs! get away, Regy! get away, Algy! get away, Charlie! get away, Mr. Brown!"

During this speech Miss Dering is regarding her aunt with an intensity of gaze hardly com-

patible with her usual good manners; but, indeed, it is difficult to look at Mrs. Moberley on a first introduction in any other way than intensely.

Mrs. Moberley is certainly startlingly fat; but so you may say are many ladies, who, having outlived the thinning excitements of girlhood, take life easily, relish their food, and lapse without much difficulty into slumber. But Mrs. Moberley's is not that tight, compact, well-busked fat which, to one class of minds, is not without its attractiveness. Hers is of the unsteady order that destroys all landmarks and laughs at boundary-lines. Mrs. Moberley is absolutely without any shape at all.

"I do not know what Sarah can be thinking of not to have answered the bell!" she goes on, as she recloses the door and fastens the bolt; "but I suspect the fact is, that she is at her supper; and as I always say to the girls, it is my belief that, if the last trump were to sound while she was at her supper, she would wait till she had finished before she would attend to it—ha! ha!" Her very laugh is fat. If your eyes were shut you could swear that it had not proceeded from a slight person.

Joan is speechless. She is thinking that she no longer wonders at Wolferstan's wish that she could see her aunt. Certainly she is well worth seeing.

"But where are your things, child? what have you done with your luggage?" continues Mrs. Moberley, recovering from her mirth, and preparing to reopen the door; "are they outside?"

"I had to leave them at the station; I could not get a fly—there was not one."

"No fly!" repeats her aunt, in high and staccato accents of astonishment; "why, what had become of the fly from the Railway Inn? they have a very good fly there—quite a smart one; the girls always say that you could not tell it from a private carriage at a little distance."

"It was out."

"And—you—walked—all—the—way! Three miles and a half if it is a step" (opening her eyes as widely as the encroachments of her cheeks will let her).

"No, I did not," replies Joan, with an hysterical laugh, for she has eaten but one bun all day, is faint and most weary, and it is so much worse than she had expected. "I came in a butcher's cart as far as the Cancer Hospital."

"In a butcher's cart!" (lifting up hands and eyes). "This will be a fine story for the girls; I am afraid they will never let you hear the last of it. I wonder—in a tone of quickened interest—"was it our butcher? You did not happen to notice the name on the cart, did you?"

"I never thought of looking," replies Joan, still struggling with a most painful inclination to laugh violently and cry violently at the same moment. "I do not think that he could have been yours, though; he did not seem to know you when I mentioned your name."

"In a butcher's cart!" repeats Mrs. Moberley, still chuckling with fat relish; "it was lucky it was night, was not it? people would have stared to see a stylish girl like you perched up in a butcher's cart, would not they?"

All this time they have been in the passage; but now Mrs. Moberley puts her arm round her niece—first giving her several hearty kisses—and begins to lead her toward the interior of the bower. But the passage is narrow; and, on the peril of becoming wedged between the walls, they have to part company and enter the drawing-room in single file.

Joan had thought that her heart was already so low down that it would be impossible to abase it any farther, but the sight of the drawing-room undeceives her. It is not that it is shabby, though it is that too in a very high degree, but there are many worse things than shabbiness. It is the air of slipshod finery about it which so utterly capsize the poor remnant of Joan's spirits. A white paper, freely starred with large (once gold) heavenly bodies; many ornaments of a shelly, sparry nature, inexpensively florid; an impression of much cheap pink ribbon and gobbler-stitch lace; and—though the month is wealthy April—not a flower, with the exception of a giant bunch of artificial ones under a glass shade.

"This is the drawing-room!" says Mrs. Moberley, introducing it with an air of pleased proprietorship; "we have not laid out much money upon it, for the excellent reason that we have not had much to lay—ha! ha! but the girls have managed to make it look pretty smart too, have not they?"

"They have indeed," replies Joan, emphatically, looking round with rather a moonstruck air, and taking in many details of wool, of beads, of red Bohemian glass, which at the first coup-d'œil had escaped her notice.

"In a butcher's cart," repeats Mrs. Moberley, again resuming her chuckle, and sinking down into a chair in order the more luxuriously to enjoy it; "it really is the richest thing I ever heard! The girls meant to have gone and met you to-day—they had put their hats on, on purpose—when—who should come in but Micky—Micky Brand, you know; or, rather, of course you do not know, and whisked them off to tea at the Barracks!"

"Yes!" Her eyes strayed to the dogs, who, now silent, and consenting to her adoption into the family, are sitting all six in row, very closely before the low fire, and, occasionally overcome by sleep, falling against each other.

"He—would—not—take 'no,'" continues Mrs. Moberley, slowly; "he is so droll, is Micky; a vast deal of dry humor about him! I am sure that you and he will get on like a house on fire; I can see that you are just the sort of girl he will take to at once."

"Am I?" (with a sickly smile).

Joan is angry with herself for being so monosyllabic, but her tongue refuses to frame any words longer than "yes" or "no." There is one monosyllabic word, indeed, which her whole soul is crying aloud, but her lips do not venture to utter it, and that word is "tea."

"He is in the 170th, you know," pursues Mrs. Moberley, warming with her theme. "I did not mention to you in my letter that Helmsley was a garrison town; I thought it would be a little surprise for you!" She is looking at her with such an air of good-natured expectancy, as she makes this exciting revelation, that Joan is really and honestly sorry that she cannot look more exhilarated by it. "A regiment is the making of a country place, is it not?" continues her aunt complacently; "and these are a very dashing set of fellows, they keep us all alive!"

Joan is saved from the necessity of answering a question to which she feels so incapable of making a satisfactory response, by the behavior of the dogs, who in a moment are all awake and on their legs, barking again with hardly less violent unanimity than that with which they greeted Miss Dering.

"Hold your tongues, dogs!" cries Mrs. Moberley; "hold your tongue, Mr. Brown! you are always the ringleader!" But small heed pays Mr. Brown. With one flying leap he is out of the window, followed by his five brothers and sisters; and all are barking their hearts out at their ease in the starlight. "It is the girls!" explains Mrs. Moberley; "I think I hear a man's voice too, do not you? I believe it is Micky; he said he should very likely come to make his bow to you, but I took it for a joke."

By this time the dogs' clamor is hushed. They are evidently apologizing for their mistake.

"Do not go yet!" cries a high young voice outside; "it is quite early! come in and have some brandy and soda-water!"

"Do not offer what you have not got," cries Mrs. Moberley, raising her voice, and laughingly calling through the window; "there is no soda-water in the house!"

"I modify my invitation, then," replies the young voice; "come in and have some brandy without the soda-water!" (laughing also).

But this Bacchanalian offer is apparently declined; for, after a few seconds of further parley, carried on in too low a key to be overheard, the Miss Moberleys enter the house and the room alone.

"What have you done with Micky?" cries their mother, eagerly. "Why did you not bring him in?"

"He would not come," replies one of the girls; "he said he had not time; but we think that it was because he had his mess-jacket on; he knows that it is not becoming!"

"Evidently anxious to make a good impression at first sight!" says Mrs. Moberley, and they all laugh—all but Joan.

Mirth is indeed far from Miss Dering's thoughts. At the present moment she is occupied in gazing at her two first-cousins with hardly less intensity than that which marked her first view of their mother. And yet they are of no uncommon type. Had she seen them officiating in the Helmsley refreshment-room, or behind the counter at the fancy repository in the little town near Dering, she would have passed them without an observation. It is as first-cousins—her first cousins—that they strike her as so astounding. First-cousins! in such hats! such jackets! such ear-rings! such beads! and with such a trolloping length of uncurled curls down their backs! Had you told her that Mr. Brown and Algy were her first cousins, it would have seemed to her less surprising.

"I dare say you do not know which is which!" says Mrs. Moberley, following the direction of her niece's eyes, and regarding her progeny with a contained pride. "I dare say you are trying to make out which is Bell, and which is Di, without my telling you. Do you see much likeness between them?" she goes on a moment later, as Joan still maintains a stupefied silence; "some say they might be twins, others do not see it. I suppose—with a good-natured glance round the room, comprehensively inclusive—"I suppose there is a family look among us all."

"We are not at all alike really," cries the younger, least bearded, least vivid-looking of the two girls, in an anxious voice; "if we seem so at first it goes off after a while."

"I am sorry we were not back in time to receive you," says the other, sitting down and taking off her hat. "Diana and I meant to have gone to meet you; we were just setting off, when—mother has told you?—he came on purpose—he gave us no peace."

"I dare say you were very glad," says Diana, bluntly. "We should have crowded you up; I dare say that there was not more than enough room for you and your boxes in the fly?"

"The fly, indeed!" cries Mrs. Moberley, beginning to laugh again, "a fine fly!—It is evident that they are not in the secret. Is not it, Joan?"

At the sound of her own Christian name (and after all what else is her own aunt likely to call

her?) Joan gives a slight and involuntary shudder, but it passes harmless and unobserved amid the fire of question, answer, ejaculation, and retort, that now ensues.

"You must have passed us on the road," says Bell, presently. "Did you notice? we were walking two and two; Diana and Micky in front, and I and another officer behind: we did not see you, but then"—laughing affectedly—"you were in the very last place where we should ever have thought of looking for you."

"Did it jolt very badly?" asks Diana, fixing upon her cousin's small wan face a pair of honest and very well-opened eyes, filled with compassionate inquiry; "worse than a 'bus' were you much shaken? you look so tired!" The genuine, rough pity of her tone goes higher upsetting Miss Dering than all her former discomfitures. The tears rush to her eyes.

"It has been a long day," she says, faltering; "I set off early."

"And have you had nothing to eat?" cries Diana, turning her quick eyes round the room, in search of those signs of conviviality which are conspicuous by their absence; "no tea? nothing?" Then, as Joan observes an embarrassed silence, she goes on—her healthy cheeks flushing a little—"There is never much to eat or drink in this house, and what there is is not at all appetizing, but at least we can give you some tea."

So saying, she hastily leaves the room. It is some time—to Joan it seems a very long time—before she returns. At length, however, she reappears, bearing in her hands a tray, and with a face so very heightened and deepened in tint as sufficiently proves that she herself has been the cook.

"The servants had gone to bed," she says apologetically; "the fire was nearly out, and the kettle would not boil. Come, Joan"—eyeing rather ruefully the sorry fare—"I am sorry that there is nothing more inviting, but it is the best we have."

Joan obeys, nothing loath. The tea is very weak and rather smoky, and it is clear that one need go no farther than an English hedge for its original home; the bread is very stale, and the butter very salt, but, to a person who within the last twenty-four hours has refreshed herself with but one cup of coffee and one bun, few drinks do not seem to be nectar, few viands do not taste succulently.

It is a long, long while after Miss Dering has come to the end of her meagre refreshment, before the idea of going to bed presents itself to the minds of Mrs. Moberley or her daughters. At last, at last—a very long last—and when Joan can no longer hinder her tired head from sinking forward on her breast in uncomfortable jerky slumber, there comes a lull—a talk of going to bed, a dawdling, chattering preparation for carrying the idea into execution, and lastly a lighting of candles.

"Good-night, Joan," says her aunt, holding both her hands and looking at her with good-natured eyes, which evidently once were large, but which now, through the dishonest usurpation of her cheeks of territory not belonging to them, are decidedly small. "I hope we shall see more red in these cheeks to-morrow. Your mother used to have such a fine color, quite as high as Bell's, if not higher; often and often people have asked me if she were not painted." A moment later: "Do not trouble to get up to breakfast to-morrow, child—we often do not; we never have any particular breakfast hour—only just as any of us feel inclined. This is Liberty Hall, my dear, Liberty Hall." So saying, she looses her niece's little chill hands, and nodding her head several times disappears into her bower, while Joan, escorted by her two cousins, drags her weary legs up the narrow deal staircase of "Liberty Hall."

"This is your room," says Diana, throwing open a door and waving her flat candlestick about, so as to exhibit its dimensions, "the guest-chamber of Liberty Hall," with a little sarcastic mimicking of her mother's tone. "I will not say that I hope you will find it comfortable, because I know you will not."

"There is a bed," answers Joan, with a small smile of utter weariness; "that seems to me the only thing of the least importance just now."

But, if she imagines that this broad hint will rid her of the company of her relatives, she is greatly mistaken. Diana sets down the candle, and Arabella seats herself upon a cane-bottomed chair. To hide her disappointment Joan walks to the window.

"You have the best view in the house," says Arabella, complacently; "you can see everything that goes along the road better even than from the drawing-room."

But it is air, not view, that Miss Dering craves. The room feels close and confined. She throws up the sash, which instantly and clamorously falls down again.

"It always does that," says Arabella, composedly; "there has been something odd about it for months. It keeps open pretty well with a bit of wood; there generally is a bit of wood, but of course Sarah has lost it."

She sets the candlestick on the floor as she speaks, and all three girls grovel on all-fours on the carpet in search of the missing wedge. By-and-by Joan finds it under the washhand-stand, and with it the decrepit window is propped open to admit the gentle April winds.

"I know you are longing for us to go," says Diana, brusquely, when this feat is accomplished.—"Come along, Bell, come, it is