



This series has thus far contained sketches of Countess of Aberdeen, Mrs. George Kirkpatrick, Mrs. J. C. Patterson, Madame Chapleau and Madame Laurier.

It is between six and seven in the evening. It is also dinner hour and orchestral night at the Russell House. The great dining-hall is white and sparkling with fresh napery and glass. The waiters are moving swiftly, the tables are rapidly filling. The House rose from its afternoon sitting at six, and now members, Senators, newspaper men and all the quota of railway magnates, lobbyists, officials that wait upon a Governmental session are assembling to discuss affairs more palatable than the Budget. The lights are bright, the speech gayly murmurous, the music sweet and rhythmic.

Passing up the hall to his table comes the tall, familiar form of the Opposition leader, personally one of the highest esteemed and best-loved men in Parliament and throughout this country to-day,—and beside him one less known, but equally regarded by those who have had the opportunity and pleasure of meeting her,—the leader's wife,—Madame Laurier.

A picturesque, attractive and gentle little lady she is,—not really *petite*, but appearing so beside her tall husband.

Snowily grey hair brushed pompadour from a broad low brow; eyes giving one a delusive impression that they are brown—bright eyes they are and very honest,—a clear pallor of skin and pretty matronly plumpness, with always the air of busy kindliness about her,—this is Madame Laurier.

Instinctively we know something of her personality; it reveals itself, as character does, without the telling. She loves her home and is a queen of house-keepers; she is by nature quiet and reserved, is incapable of simulation, owns a clear and practical judgment, has a world of charity in her heart for all helpless creatures. She is cheery and bright, a lover of children and dumb things,—not given to mysticisms or pessimisms, but looking at life in a simple, wholesome way. Something in this fashion would a physiognomist speak, after a quiet glance at the comely face.

Madame Laurier is, by years of sessional residence, as well as by her husband's position, one of the leading ladies in the Ottawa season's social life; yet, while she concedes all courtesy to those of her husband's following, she makes no marked distinction. At her receptions, given at intervals through the session, she greets Conservatives with the same kindliness bestowed upon her own party, and, in all the amenities of hotel life, Madame Laurier takes little account of political bias; making and meeting all overtures with a simple and unaffected friendliness, thus establishing and confirming the *entente cordiale* which exists among the sessional ladies at the Russell.

The lady pauses here and there on her way through the dining hall to chat with one or another,—Senator's wife or member's pretty

daughter; to inquire concerning an invalid, make social appointment, or discuss some recent or approaching function,—and everywhere she is greeted with a brightening that betokens the regard in which she is held.

Madame Laurier is not a politician; beyond being interested as a devoted wife in all that concerns her husband, she has no schemes or wiliness for advancing any especial party cause,—she is too honest, too simply a home-lover and keeper to finesse. Her heart and interest lies rather in gentle charities.

Madame Laurier's home is in the little town of Arthabaskerville, half way between Montreal and Quebec. It is a quiet little place containing only some two thousand inhabitants. Yet, being a court center, it supports eleven law firms, the leading one being that in which Mr. Laurier is partner. Here the Opposition leader and his wife have lived for twenty-seven years in a pretty residence replete with comfort, whose doors are always open to greet the coming guest. To enter



MADAME LAURIER.

Madame Laurier's home is to step at once into a genuine living,—into an atmosphere of peace and trustfulness, of wide hospitality and kindliness.

Madame Laurier has no children, but missing their laughter she keeps her home sunny and cheery in other ways. She loves flowers and takes great pleasure in her greenhouses. She has her animal pets also; and these are carefully looked after during her stay in Ottawa. Indeed, her heart goes back in the midst of the social functions with many a thought of longing for the quiet home, the dumb pets and the gentle charities.

A story that came to me incidentally from one of her friends relates how one session she left Ottawa and all its gayeties in order to attend some duty or pleasure connected with a home of orphan girls,—a charity very dear to her in Athabaskerville.

After all it is the true woman life,—that of home-making and keeping,—a life bounded by charities and canopied with the blue of peace. Our dear foremothers lived thus in all the fragrance of gracious activities, pure benevolences and sweet content; and they earned that dearest and most expressive name of gentlewoman. FAITH FENTON.

THE COMMONPLACE SET.

Should you meet us some day in the city,
A man, early old, grave and grey,
And a quaint little maid, scarcely pretty,
In faded, old-fashioned array;
With hardly a glance you would pass us,
And straightway forget you had met
We two of the great struggling army—
The commonplace set.

Her scarce subdued childhood still lingers
In bearing, in look and in tone,
So close in her small gloveless fingers
She tenderly presses my own.
And we look in the wonderful windows
And somehow are wont to forget
We belong to the ranks of a toiling
And commonplace set.

When the sunset lights up the great river,
In the gold gleam we stand, I and she,
And watch the swift current which ever
Flows on to its guerdon—the sea;
And we try to imagine we likewise
May reach a fair future—and

yet
How small is our chance of promotion,
The commonplace set.

Sometimes I am tempted to wonder
If, given a chance and a start
Away from the tide which beats under
The bravest and stoutest of hearts,
We might not have done or been something;
And I stifle a sigh of regret
For the many who have so few chances,
The commonplace set.

It runs much like this: our ambition—
A cottage which nestles in trees,
And then, to complete the fair vision,
A garden with roses and bees,
And a flower bed with red and white borders
Of daisies and sweet mignonette;
We have not very lofty ideals,
We commonplace set.

But for us they are truly ideal;
And so we wend home in the dark,
Where the dream merges into the real,
And the daisies we plucked in the park
Are placed in a mug in the window—
An effort to help us forget
The bareness of life, which so stifles
The commonplace set.

—Lilian Claxton.

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