

mind by Bateson thrusting a picture postcard under my nose. In a neat woman's hand was written this somewhat cryptic message:

"Hemlock Cove, July 9th.

"Cousin Charlie—The person alluded to arrived yesterday and took aunt's first floor front. He doesn't even know of my existence yet, though we sit at the same table. Going to be difficult work I fear. Madge."

"She was game!" chuckled Bateson in explanation. "Thought it would be heaps of fun. She's going to send me a daily report."

And the next day there was another card. It said: "Very little progress. I dropped my handkerchief right in front of him and the brute pretended not to notice, so I had to retrieve it myself. I think he's horrid."

The next message was almost as discouraging. It read: "Went out boating in the bay alone last evening and dropped an oar—purposely. Then I called 'help, help!' at the top of my lungs, but that creature (who was sitting on a log on the shore) merely rose and walked on a few paces. I called again. He stopped, looked, listened, and 'passed by on the other side!' One of the boys towed me in. He has nice eyes—Mr. J. I

mean. Too bad he always wears such a gloomy expression."

A day or two intervened and then Charlie received another message:

"We have made a start! Mr. J. asked me to pass the butter this morning at breakfast."

"They're coming along like a house on fire," I remarked sarcastically.

"Oh, leave it to Madge," rejoined Bateson, cheerfully. "What that girl can't do isn't worth doing."

And, as if to reward and justify his faith, the next report ran thus:

"Mr. J. remarked to me—on his own initiative, mind you!—that this was going to be a beautiful day. I agreed. Then he went fishing with a copy of Plutarch's Lives and a can of fishworms. I took my sketching materials and wandered up to the bluffs. We met accidentally on purpose just at sunset and he told me that his luck had been poor. Nevertheless, he did not look greatly cast down. I wonder why!"

"Poor Janes!" sighed Charlie, in mock pity. "He's knee-deep already and doesn't know it."

Madge's next card said: "Rained today. Mr. J. read Browning's Ring and Book to me all morning on the piazza. In the afternoon he asked me to play chess with him in the living room by

the fire. He became so profoundly engrossed he forgot the tea hour. So did I. P.S.—He certainly has nice eyes."

"Look out, Bateson," I said, shaking my head. "This affair may get beyond you and your cousin. You'd better write and tell her not to let it go too far. The fire of love when once lighted —"

"Too far? With him? I'd like to see that salamander in so far he'd forget his own name! I owe it to him for the times he's sneered at me and my 'susceptibility,' as he calls it. No sir! Let the good work go on."

The next report did not serve to ease my mind either: "Mr. J. is writing to ask for another week or ten days. Says the air up here is doing him worlds of good. I tried to propose last night but my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth. Somehow—well I don't think I'll ever be able to! Do put in a good word for him with the chief, Charlie dear."

The chief, who liked old workhorse Janes immensely, readily granted him extra leave, and then, most unaccountably, Madge's postcard messages abruptly ceased. Charlie bewailed her fickleness and lack of interest, while I felt relieved, and the days passed until my own holidays came due. I decided to

take a run up to Hemlock Cove myself. I am very fond of canoeing.

As we docked on a warm July afternoon, I cast a glance about among the assembled campers and tourists who had come down to the little wharf for the only real excitement the day provided—the steamer's arrival. I don't know just what I expected to see. Perhaps in the back of my mind there had been a notion that Janes and Madge would be there. But they were not.

I found Mrs. Bradley's luxurious little summer hotel and took a room. Then I strolled down to the beach and wandered along the fringe of pine woods for a distance of several hundred yards. I was in search of a good canoe and finally, after a short negotiation with the old man up at the 'Point,' I secured one and was about to push out into the bay when a girl in a white skirt and a red and black striped blazer rounded the cliff. One glance at her convinced me that it was none other than Miss Allison. Hadn't Charlie called her a pippin? And Charles was a connoisseur where feminine loveliness is concerned! I sprang out of the canoe and proceeded across the strip of sand to meet her.

"Miss Allison?" I queried, doffing my panama.

She looked at me and smiled, but in a puzzled way. "I'm in the same bank as your cousin Charlie Bateson," I explained. "My name is Bert Livingstone."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I've heard Charlie speak of you." We shook hands.

"Er—I say, you know, what have you done with poor old Janes? Has he gone the limit?" I enquired, as we pursued the path up the hill.

She stopped, looked sharply at me, and laughed in a way that was good to see.

"So you know? Charlie told you?"

"He did. He has shown me all those daily reports, and we've enjoyed the little farce immensely, though I confess I became somewhat uneasy after you had twice mentioned Janes' eyes. I thought—er—that is—"

"You thought I was in danger of —"

"Well you see," I hastened to explain, "the joke was to be on him, not you! And I was afraid perhaps it might turn out the other way. Pardon my bluntness."

"Oh I pardon everything. I'm feeling awfully like a guardian angel these days. My heart is brimming over with satisfaction and peace and pride. You see I've just consummated a great coup—and didn't know it!"

I looked at her, thoroughly mystified.

"You know," she resumed, "Mr. Janes and I were getting along together about as rapidly as a pair of lifelong enemies. Then one day I happened to mention—a name."

"A name?" I echoed, as she paused. "Whose name?"

"The name of my best girl friend, Isobel Emerson. I just happened to remark that she would be here in a day or two. It was at luncheon. Mr. Janes glanced sharply and eagerly at me. A dull red climbed up his cheeks, and he looked as though he wanted to say something. But he closed his lips tightly and looked down at his plate."

"And who is this Miss Emerson?" I asked.

"She's a girl he met in the West five years ago. They loved and quarrelled and separated. She gave him back his ring and he went to another town and eventually came East. But don't imagine I learned all this at once. I contrived to mention her name again in his presence. It was the day he had gone fishing and caught nothing. You will recollect that it was just after this he wrote for an extension of holidays."

"I should have imagined he'd want to flee," I said. "He's such a woman-hater."

"I think these years must have taught him a few things. At any rate, he stayed right on, and stuck to me closer than a brother. Anyway the quarrel they had was such a silly one. Isobel told me something of it. You see I'm engaged to her brother Tom."

Miss Allison blushed charmingly, and stooped to pluck a daisy.

"Ah!" I observed. "And didn't you feel a prick of conscience?"

"Oh Tom won't care. I'm going to make him a full confession when I see him. He's coming next week."

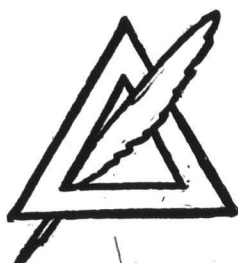


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