

Star-Guided.

KATHERINE E. CONWAY. We have seen His Star in the East, and have come to adore Him— King of the kings of the earth, and none is before Him. Show us where He abideth—love without measure. We would see at His holy feet, with the wealth of our treasure. Long have we followed the star—at last it is resting O'er His abode. We are slow, for all our hastening. Minutes move laden-winged as the quest is ending. And the misty morn'g shows with path and fulfillment blending. Is it for this we've left power and place and treasure. The clinging wives and the little ones, the paths of our kindly pleasures. O, the changing and losing and dying, 'gainst our returning. Naught to be ours as of old for all of our yearning. King—a silencing babel Queen-Mother?— Maiden lowly. Palace—a cave in the rock—yet, Lord, Almighty, All-holy. We see through the veil—Thou art God and none is before Thee. And we've seen Thy Star in the East, and we've come to adore Thee! What shall we have, O King, for our thrones forsaken?— Sudden their lips are mute and their spirits shaken. Is it the Christ-Child's answer—Are they divine? Aught of a living woe in His eyes' clear shining? Ah, beyond the hearts of rock, love's patient laboring. Beyond the sword and the blood, the pang of the martyr's dying. The Christ-Child waited again—King, Victor, and who is before Him?— Steadfast they follow His Star, and now in Heaven they adore Him! —Catholic Union and Times.

A WOMAN OF CULTURE.

CHAPTER VIII. A PLEASURE-PARTY.

A plain, old-fashioned, solid brick building on the northern outskirts of the city was the residence of Mrs. Strachan, a lady whose name has recently been mentioned in connection with a toboggan party. She was a Scotch lady of good family, a brisk, angular, but matronly woman, with the practical good sense and shrewdness of her race developed to a high degree, possessing the rarest spirit of fun, and being an ardent promoter of every species of innocent, vigorous, local recreation. Hence her snow-shoe expedition to a distant hollow where the lovers of tobogganning might find, amid remote and picturesque scenery, a hill sufficiently steep and long to ensure a thorough enjoyment of their favorite sport. A party of ladies and gentlemen, all in the first, or at least the second, flush of youth, was assembled on the snow-covered lawn of Mrs. Strachan's residence at an early hour on Thursday morning, and among them, conspicuous by the bloom of her cheeks, and the shimmer of her hair, and the quiet abandon of her manner, was our pretty Olivia, the impulsive bit of sweetness which had drawn the greatest catch of the season, the Irish baronet, from the gilded and artificial toys hanging round within easy reach of his hand. She was full of life and vivacity this morning. Her eyes were sparkling, and her lips were sweetly curved into a real Cupid's bow, as she ordered or commanded or scolded her meek baronet, to the other damsels, or brow beat the meeker youth whom she had honored with the position of assistant. The ladies were having their ungainly shoes put on, and the length of time which the gentlemen were allowing themselves for the operation had driven Mrs. Strachan, a most punctual and exacting woman, into a state of high indignation. "Ten o'clock," she shouted from the veranda, "and not ready yet, gentlemen! Sir Stanley, you had a most obstinate backle there, and I command you to pass it over to Mr. Crawford and let me see time in putting on your own. Miss Fullerton, how can you tolerate such awkwardness?" "It is very cold," said Olivia, with a sidelong glance at the lady. "They can't work very well with cold fingers." "But they couldn't go more slowly if they had no fingers and were working in silk," answered Mrs. Strachan. "It is silk," said the baronet, very red in the face with indignation. "Or illusion," put in Mr. Crawford, sighing, driven secretly by his own despair to make a pun which nobody understood. "The cold has no effect on your flattery, gentlemen," said Mrs. Strachan. "I give you every one just five minutes to get to the front gate. The toboggans have gone ahead by wagon an hour ago." The lady's hat was respected, and with a great deal of laughing, and running, tripping and thither, and entanglement of straps and dresses, the whole party, thirty in number, assembled at the front gate. Mrs. Strachan was there in a short dress and snow-shoes. Though forty or over, she was not the slowest of foot nor the least skilled in a walk of this kind, and the four miles to be travelled within the next two hours, up hill and down dale, had no more terrors for her than for the youngest of her friends. They started at once, after the hostess, who had constituted herself general of the expedition, had given out the information that there was to be a moon that night, that they were to start for home at seven o'clock, and that the first gentleman who allowed his lady to fall—a most ignominious event—fell himself—the very height of disgrace—would be subject to a heavy fine. The day was a delightful one, there being to wind, any amount of sun and blue heaven, and crusted snow which lay so deep that only the fences were to be seen along the road. The road itself would have been lost but for the track which the advance-sleikh had made, and they could follow the trail as it wound down the valley and entered the woods on the hill beyond. Walking on snow-shoes is not the most graceful movement in the world, although skilled and practised walkers go through the performance with an enviable ease and repose of manner. The legs are spread out and the toes turned in, and the forward movement is an insinuating, gliding process after the fashion of skating, but without a particle of its poetry. Mrs. Strachan's party were perfectly at home on the shoes. The members were thinking more of one another than of the special unloveliness of their manner of walking. The jest and laugh passed through the merry crowd, and an occa-

sional chorus from the gentlemen gave food for amusement and criticism to the ladies. The country along their line of march was thinly inhabited. A log-but in a clearing, out of sight but for the smoke curling from the chimney, an occasional chopper with his axe moving over his shoulder, or the first traveller moving off, ward laboriously through the great drift, were the only living objects that crossed their path. They were under no restraint, and felt all the better for it. They laughed to the full extent of their lungs, singly, doubly, and in chorus. They talked very loud and all together, and the general, a very model of etiquette at home, was foremost in discarding rules here. Olivia walked with a cavalier on each side to guard against accidents—Sir Stanley, by autocratic and indifferent in his bearing, and Mr. Crawford meeker than the proverbial lamb. As a matter of course she petted the latter as he grew meeker, and snubbed on every occasion the proud baronet, who never would understand the drift of such performances from one whom he loved. "There's something hurting my foot," said she when the first half-mile had been passed. "It is the very shoe which you put on, Sir Stanley." "Then we must stop and arrange it," said he in a matter-of-fact way and not with the air of one who had committed an unpardonable blunder. "Here is a suitable spot." An old tree, with a gnarled and obstinate root thrust upward, lay in their path. She sat down in a net, and called Mr. Crawford to make the required changes. "You did the other one so well, Mr. Crawford. I couldn't trust it to Sir Stanley, for I would be sure to sit down at the end of the next mile." The baronet was in no way disturbed, and presently the general's commanding eye had caught sight of them, and her commanding voice was heard from a distance expressing loud disgust at their sluggishness. "Gentlemen," said she, "you seem too many for that young lady. I shall condemn her to a post beside myself if you break ranks again." "Not I," Sir Stanley shouted back gravely. "Crawford it was that did the mischief," and "Crawford did it!" screamed the crowd, until the meek youth was overwhelmed with shame. Olivia did not know with whom to be angry most. "The old ogre!" whispered she to her cavaliers; "she seems determined to have this journey without incident. Mr. Crawford, but that I do not wish to expose you to a fine, I would fall at the first opportunity." "I am extremely grateful," murmured Mr. Crawford. "Mrs. Strachan is not to blame," said the baronet. "She does not wish to have her rules upset to suit the whims of every one. What a pretty sight is that old farmhouse half buried in the snow near the woods!" No one responded. "I feel humbled," Olivia thought, "at this calm fashion of walking over me. Does he know that he shall be punished for every one of his idle words?" He might have known, but it was quite evident he didn't care. They walked on in silence until an accident took place and the party was brought to a stand still. A lady in the front rank had stumbled and fallen, and three or four gentlemen were establishing the unfortunate on her feet, her cavalier guilty and shame-faced the while. "It's the general herself," cried enthusiastic Crawford. "She'll not have a word for the rest of the day, if most of us do not suffer the same accident." Olivia looked up at the baronet. "You might begin, Sir Stanley," she said. "I will be sure," answered he, pulling his waistcoat with extra indifference, "that the ladies would take upon them to give the task of placing me upright again. I would tumble over a precipice. Otherwise, it would be too absurd. Perhaps Crawford would be more obliging." "Would you, sir?" she asked. "I wonder that you ask," replied the gentleman reproachfully. "I wonder, too," said Olivia. "You are both very thimble. How far is it to the hollow yet?" "Two miles more." There was another long silence, until a second commotion in the laughing crowd ahead brought the whole party to a halt. A gentleman had lost his footing and gone headlong into a drift. His ornamented feet were sticking in the air, and every one was laughing, even the indignant general, who had not yet recovered from the chagrin of her own unexpected and ludicrous fall. "Four accidents in two and a half miles," said Crawford. At that rate there is a fair chance of an upset for every one between this and our return." "But we are going to have a moon," said Olivia. "That will add to the number of catastrophes," said the baronet. "By the light of the moon is the most forgetful, if the most entrancing, time for the average young man. He never looks for obstructions then." "I shall dismiss you both if that is the case," Olivia replied. "I wish to be taken care of. Pardon me, Mr. Crawford, for having to turn you away. Perhaps you are an exception to the average young man." "I am afraid not, Miss Fullerton. The moon does affect me, even in daylight occasionally." "What a pity! But here are the woods." The party had left the road, and ascending fairy-like over burnt fences and hollows filled with snow, was entering the water silence of a forest. Olivia did wish to grow sentimental over the loneliness of the scene. The branches above their heads bent low under the weight of the snow-mantle, upon which the sun at times dropped a ray of its brilliancy. The old trunks, straight as savages are wont to be, rose from a wondrously smooth but hollowed floor, and like pillars, seemed to support the interlaced roof of above. There was no apparent outlet, and they seemed to follow no regular path, the party winding in and out through the tree-labyrinth, with laughter and song, under the guidance of the general. "It wouldn't be much of a surprise to meet an old Druid wandering here some day," said Crawford, venturing after

much reflection, upon a remark which he had heard made under similar circumstances. "With long, white hair," said Olivia, brightening, "and the most secret and terrible eyes." "It's a more practical and useful inhabitant," said the baronet, flinging a pine cone at a squirrel and hitting Mrs. Strachan instead. Olivia laughed at the general's surprise when the mist lighted on her own head. "You were more prosaic than you intended, Sir Stanley," said she. "Now be good enough to say something poetical and appropriate. Aren't you really touched by all this winter loveliness?" "Of course," cried the bold nobleman, with a direct and unmistakable glance into his lady's eyes. "It is a temple with something of the heretical about it, for the worshippers take things comfortably and there is neither altar nor priest. If there were we might do rash things, I fear." "If she will be so kindly foolish," he thought, "I ask what may be the rash things." But she was too wary, and although her upward look was very innocent and engaging, she could not resist making some fun out of his words. "There isn't an organ, and the choir is poor." "The real choir have gone south for sake of their voices. But haven't they the musical silence. And sufficient wind will make an organ of the trees." "Ah! that will do," said she. "There's something too realistic in your poetry; it would plain prose." They would have gone on wordless for the rest of the journey had not the fifth accident occurred. Crawford, finding himself at a loss to take part in the conversation, and perceiving its drift in despair, had wandered aside to enjoy his own gloomy thoughts alone. A hidden twig caused him to run generally in the air, and he appeared in a drift so deep that he went out of sight altogether. The evident astonishment and nervousness of the gentlemen at this mishap filled the ladies with alarm. Some lost their footing in consequence of the excitement. Demoralization seized upon the party, and for a few minutes the general's powers and the general's temper were severely tried. Olivia sat on a convenient stump and laughed in her sleeve. The appearance of the inverted ones was too comical for the gravest to resist laughing, and in spite of young Crawford's danger and the general's severe countenance, and the tears of some of the more impressionable ladies, Miss Olivia laughed quietly. Mr. Crawford was more unfortunate beneath the snow than he had been above it, for his shoes had slipped under a pile of brushwood and would not release themselves until a bitter jack-knife battle had been begun and ended, while the gentlemen tugged at his body. The good-humor of the party received from this event too violent a shock to permit of chaffing the unfortunate Crawford. Each endeavored to calm his own disturbed soul, and to check the rising anger against the author of so many misfortunes. Olivia would have been daunted if she could have restrained her desire to laugh, but she dared not open her mouth. When they left the woods Staring Hollow was before them. A stout log-house with three apartments had been hired for their accommodation at the foot of the long hill, and its puffing chimney in the vale below carried the gayest and cheeriest of messages to the tired and disgusted snow-men. There was a general rush for the toboggans. The ladies whipped their own shoes with great agility, and were ready and eager to take their places without assistance. The gentlemen fought hilariously at the wagon, and the general, half angry, yet compelled to laugh at the bovishness of old boys, shouted and ordered in vain. Sir Stanley was wicked enough to seize upon a toboggan of the largest size, and to fill it, too, with a mixed crowd, much to Olivia's disgust. Yet he was careful not to bite his own head off in teasing Olivia. He sat in the rear, and in front of him, and Crawford in front of her; and, unheard of this meek cavalier, the baronet whispered various pleasant things over her shoulder. The rush down the hill was brief but full of intense pleasure. There is little time given even on the longest hill to analyze the sensations of a toboggan ride. Yet he was careful not to bite his own head off in teasing Olivia. He sat in the rear, and in front of him, and Crawford in front of her; and, unheard of this meek cavalier, the baronet whispered various pleasant things over her shoulder. The rush down the hill was brief but full of intense pleasure. There is little time given even on the longest hill to analyze the sensations of a toboggan ride. Yet he was careful not to bite his own head off in teasing Olivia. He sat in the rear, and in front of him, and Crawford in front of her; and, unheard of this meek cavalier, the baronet whispered various pleasant things over her shoulder. 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