

An Unconventional Confidence

Proof That it is Not Well to Make Rash Vow

By L. M. MONTGOMERY

THE Girl in Black-and-yellow ran frantically down the grey road under the pines. There was nobody to see her, but she would have run if all Halifax had been looking on. For had she not on the loveliest new hat—a "creation" in yellow chiffon with big black choux—and a dress to match? And was there not a shower coming straight from the hills across the harbour?

Down at the end of the long, resinous avenue the Girl saw the shore road, with the pavilion shutting out the view of the harbour's mouth. Below the pavilion, clean-shaven George's Island guarded the town like a sturdy bull-dog, and beyond it were the wooded hills, already lost in a mist of rain.

"Oh, I shall be too late," moaned the girl. But she held her hat steady with one hand, and ran on. If she could only reach the pavilion in time! It was a neck-and-neck race between the rain and the Girl, but the Girl won. Just as she flew out upon the shore road, a tall Young Man came pelting down the latter, and they both dashed up the steps of the pavilion together, as the rain swooped down upon them and blotted George's Island and the smoky town and the purple banks of the Eastern Passage from view.

The pavilion was small at the best of times, and just now the rain was beating into it on two sides, leaving only one dry corner. Into this the Girl moved. She was flushed and triumphant. The Young Man thought that in all his life he had never seen anyone so pretty.

"I'm so glad I didn't get my hat wet," said the Girl, breathlessly, as she straightened it with a careful hand, and wondered if she looked very blown and blowsy.

"It would have been a pity," admitted the Young Man. "It is a very pretty hat."

"Pretty!" The Girl looked the scorn her voice expressed. "Anyone can have a pretty hat. Our cook has one. This is a creation."

"Of course," said the Young Man, humbly. "I ought to have known. But I am very stupid."

"Well, I suppose a mere man couldn't be expected to understand exactly," said the Girl, graciously.

She smiled at him in a friendly fashion, and he smiled back. The Girl thought that she had never seen such lovely brown eyes before. He could not be a Haligonian. She was sure she knew all the nice young men with brown eyes in Halifax.

"Please sit down," she said, plaintively. "I'm tired."

The Young Man smiled again at the idea of his sitting down because the Girl was tired. But he sat down, and so did she, on the only dry seat to be found.

"Goodness knows how long this rain will last," said the Girl, making herself comfortable and picturesque, "but I shall stay here until it clears up, if it rains for a week. I will not have my hat spoiled. I suppose I shouldn't have put it on. Beatrix said it was going to rain. Beatrix is such a horribly good prophet. I detest people who are good prophets, don't you?"

"I think that they are responsible for all the evils that they predict," said the Young Man, solemnly.

"That is just what I told Beatrix. And I was determined to put on this hat and come out to the park to-day. I simply had to be alone, and I knew I'd be alone out here. Everybody else would be at the football game. By the way, why aren't you there?"

"I wasn't even aware that there was a football game on hand," said the Young Man, as if he knew he ought to be ashamed of his ignorance, and was.

"Dear me," said the Girl, pityingly. "Where can you have been not to have heard of it? It's between the Dalhousie team and the Wanderers. Almost everybody here is on the Wanderers' side, because they are Haligonians, but I am not. I like the college boys best. Beatrix says that it is just because of my innate contrariness. Last year I simply screamed myself hoarse with enthusiasm. The Dalhousie team won the trophy."

"If you are so interested in the game, it is a wonder you didn't go to see it yourself," said the Young Man, boldly.

"Well I just couldn't," said the Girl, with a sigh. "If anybody had ever told me that there would be a football game in Halifax, and that I would elect to prow about myself in the park, instead of going to it, I'd have laughed them to scorn. Even Beatrix would never have dared to prophesy that. But you see it has happened. I was too crumpled up in my mind to care about football to-day. I had to come here and have it out with myself. That is why I put on my hat. I thought, perhaps, I might get through with my mental gymnastics in time to go to the game afterwards. But I didn't. It is just maddening, too. I got this hat and dress on purpose to wear it. They're black and yellow, you see—the Dalhousie colours. It was my own idea. I was



"I Am so Glad I Did Not Get My Hat Wet."

Drawn by A. Keelor.

sure it would make a sensation. But I couldn't go to the game and take any interest in it, feeling as I do, could I, now?"

The Young Man said, of course, she couldn't. It was utterly out of the question. The Girl smiled. Without a smile, she was charming; with a smile, she was adorable.

"I like to have my opinions bolstered up. Do you know, I want to tell you something? May I?"

"You may, I'll never tell anyone as long as I live," said the Young Man, solemnly.

"I don't know you, and you don't know me. That is why I want to tell you about it. I must tell somebody, and if I told anybody I know, they'd tell it all over Halifax! It is dreadful to be talking to you like this. Beatrix would have three fits, one after the other, if she saw me. But Beatrix is a slave to conventionality. I glory in discarding it at times. You don't mind, do you?"

"Not at all," said the Young Man, sincerely. The

Girl sighed. Then she started to tell her story.

"I have reached that point where I must have a confidant, or go crazy. Once I could tell things to Beatrix. That was before she got engaged. Now she tells everything to him. There is no earthly way of preventing her. I've tried them all. So nowadays, when I get into trouble, I tell it out loud to myself in the glass. It's a relief, you know. But that is no good now. I want to tell it to somebody who can say things back. Will you promise to say things back?"

The Young Man assured her that he would, when the proper time came.

"Very well. But please don't look at me while I'm telling you. I'll be sure to blush in places. When Beatrix wants to be particularly aggravating she says I have lost the art of blushing. But that is only her way of putting it, you know. Sometimes I blush dreadfully."

The Young Man dragged his eyes from the face under the black and yellow hat, and fastened them on a crooked pine tree that hung out over the bank.

"Well," began the Girl, "the root of the whole trouble is simply this. There is a young man in England. I always think of him as the Creature. He is the son of a man who was father's especial crony in boyhood, before father emigrated to Canada. Worse than that, he comes of a family which has contracted a vile habit of marrying into our family. It has come down through the ages so long that it has become chronic. Father left most of his musty traditions in England, but he brought this pet one with him. He and his friend agreed that the latter's son should marry one of father's daughters. It ought to have been Beatrix—she is the eldest. But Beatrix had a pug nose. So father settled on me. From my earliest recollection I have been given to understand that just as soon as I grew up there would be a ready-made husband imported from England for me. I was doomed to it from my cradle. Now," said the Girl, with a tragic gesture, "I ask you, could anything be more hopelessly, appallingly stupid and devoid of romance than that?"

The Young Man shook his head, but did not look at her.

"It's pretty bad," he admitted.

"You see," said the Girl, pathetically, "the shadow of it has been over my whole life. Of course, when I was a very little girl I didn't mind it so much. It was such a long way off and lots of things might happen. The Creature might run away with some other girl—or I might have the smallpox—or Beatrix's nose might be straight when she grew up. And if Beatrix's nose were straight she'd be a great deal prettier than I am. But nothing did happen—and her nose is puggier than ever. Then when I grew up things were horrid. I never could have a single little bit of fun. And Beatrix had such a good time! She had scores of lovers, in spite of her nose. To be sure she's engaged now—and he's a horrid fady little creature. But he is her own choice. She wasn't told that there was a man in England whom she must marry by and by, when he got sufficiently reconciled to the idea to come and ask her. Oh, it makes me furious!"

"Is—is there—anyone else?" asked the Young Man, hesitatingly.

"Oh, dear, me. How could there be? Why, you know, I couldn't have the tiniest flirtation with another man when I was as good as engaged to the Creature. That is one of my grievances. Just think how much fun I've missed! I used to rage to Beatrix about it, but she would tell me that I ought to be thankful to have the chance of making such

a good match—the Creature is rich, you know, and clever. As if I cared how clever or rich he is! Beatrix made me so cross that I gave up saying anything, and sulked by myself. So they think I'm quite reconciled to it, but I'm not."

"He might be very nice after all," suggested the Young Man.

"Nice! That isn't the point. Oh, don't you see? But no, you're a man—you can't understand. You must just take my word for it. The whole thing makes me furious. But I haven't told you the worst. The Creature is on his way out to Canada now. He may arrive here any minute. And they are all so aggravatingly delighted over it."

"What do you suppose he feels like?" asked the Young Man, reflectively.

"Well," said the Girl, frankly. "I've been too much taken up with my own feelings to worry about his. But I daresay they are pretty much like

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