

"I relinquished such sports with my pinafores," answered the dominie, grandly.

It was very unjustifiable of Mr. Perrowne, but two things annoyed him; one being the fact that he was equally guilty with the lawyer, the other that Miss Du Plessis had deserted him for this prig of a schoolmaster. Loud enough to be heard by all, he remarked:—

"A very learned and distinguished man was once playing with some children, when he suddenly cried, 'Children, we must stop, for I see a fool coming.' What do you think of that, Captain?"

"Never said a truer word in your life," growled Mr. Thomas, and continued, "anything as calls itself a man and can't romp with the youngsters, nor give a joke and take it, had ought to be set in a high chair with a bib, let alone petticoats."

"He said pinnies, papa," Marjorie corrected.

"Pinnies or petticoats, it's all the same thing. Me and Terry here, old enough to be his fathers!"

"An' it 'ud be a grate 'anner for me, anyway, to be father to a foine, praper, illigant gintleman loike Mishter Wilkerson," put in the veteran, anxious to keep the peace. The embers, however, were smoking on both sides when little Marjorie ran up to the dominie and, taking his hand, said beseechingly: "Please don't scold the poor boys and girls, Wilks, because it was my fault—all my fault. I made them play. Now, put down your head and kiss me, and say, 'I forgive you this once, but don't you go to do it again'; just like papa says."

There was no help for it, though everybody laughed to hear the terror of the Sacheverell Street school called Wilks, and the grown-up people, girls and boys. The dominie had to repeat the formula and seal it with a kiss, when the perfidious child turned upon him very gravely, saying: "Now, sir, you can't speak, for you've done it your very own self." Thus it was that a storm was averted, and "drop the handkerchief" broke up in good nature.

"Corry," said his friend, "I'm going upstairs for my knapsack. You had better get yours, and prepare to follow our route. Colonel Morton and Miss Du Plessis are coming here, so that we, as entire strangers, ought no longer to intrude upon the hospitality of Mrs. Carruthers."

"All right, Wilks, my boy!" replied the tender-hearted lawyer, who felt as if his heart was breaking. In a few minutes the pedestrians descended ready for the road, when the Squire opened his office door and threw up his arms in amazement.

"What in aa conscience is the meanin' o' this?"

Wilkinson explained, and expressed a desire to find Mrs. Carruthers, that he might thank her for her kind hospitality.

"Here, gudewife, and aa ye four Marjories, and Miss Cecile," cried Carruthers, lustily, "come ye aa here, and garr thae twa wanderin' Jews bide."

Then there was a commotion, as the ladies flocked with the children into the hall, with many exclamations of astonishment and reproach, surrounding the recreant young men. Mr. Errol, the Captain, the veteran, and even Mr. Perrowne, came to learn what was the matter. When they heard the intentions of the pair, Mr. Thomas and the parson were prepared to make the most abject apologies to the dominie, who insisted that there was no necessity; on the contrary, he alone was to blame, but all that was past. Mrs. Carruthers would not hear of their going just as they were becoming so pleasantly acquainted, assured them that Bridesdale had ample accommodation, and commanded the veteran to form a company of his grandchildren and arrest the would-be deserters. Marjorie clung to her Eugene's right leg. Mr. Errol accused him of stealing away with his gloves, and finally the lawyer confided to Mrs. and Miss Carmichael that he didn't want to go a bit, was never happier in his life. Miss Du Plessis put a hand on the dominie's arm, a hand that tingled away in to his very heart, and said her uncle would be so disappointed when he arrived to find that his friends of Collingwood had not deemed him worth waiting for. Finally, the Squire took them both aside, and, speaking seriously, said he had no right selfishly to detain them, but the time was critical, poor Nash was away on a dangerous errand, and their services, already great and highly appreciated, might yet be of the greatest importance. Besides, after the fatigue and excitement of the past night, they were not fit to travel. The dominie confessed that, with all the excitement and possible danger, he had enjoyed himself amazingly, that his only motive for leaving was the fear of trespassing upon the kindness of Mrs. Carruthers, and that, if his humble services were of any value, he trusted the Squire would draw upon them to the utmost. The lawyer, hearing his companion's decision, wanted to give a wild Irish hurroo, but, checking himself, ground the Squire's right hand with his own kid-gloved afflicted member, as if he had been a long lost brother. When they next reached the hall, Miss Halbert was there taking in the situation with the other young ladies. She had already seen enough to know that neither of her fair companions was capable of properly addressing the culprits, so she made up for their deficiency, saying: "Go upstairs at once, you naughty boys, and take off these pads." The naughty boys ascended, with a strangely combined feeling of joy and smallness, and, when the knapsacks were removed, Coristine sank into a chair laughing. "O Lord, Wilks," he said, "she called them pads!"

The doctor arrived in time for dinner, and reported three wounded men instead of one. Two had pistol wounds

that had evidently been attended to from the first, the other had a gunshot in the back, and must have dragged himself a long way after it, for he was almost gone with loss of blood. "That'll be the chiel' puir Nash fired at wi' Ben's gun," said Carruthers.

"Can your wife put me and Fanny up for the night, John?" asked the doctor, looking serious.

"Just delighted to do so," replied the Squire; "we have more space than we know how to fill."

"I must tell you why. These rough fellows at the Encampment are furious, and one of them, in his gratitude, warned me, on no account, to be in or near your house to-night."

"Doctor, that's another thing. I have no right to let you risk yourself and Miss Fanny in time of danger in my house."

"But we will, John. Come here, Fanny!" Telling his daughter the circumstances, the doctor asked her decision, and she at once answered: "Of course, Mr. Carruthers, we shall stay. Papa has two pistols in his gig, and, if necessary, will lend me one. I am a good shot, am I not, papa?"

"Yes, John, she has a fine eye and nerve for a mark."

At the dinner table Doctor Halbert conversed with the pedestrians about the scenery they had passed through, and recommended them, by all means, not to fail in visiting the Flanders' lakes. He informed them that they constituted a long and perplexing chain, being more like a long continuous sheet of water, narrowing every here and there into straits, affording little more than room enough for two boats to pass through, than an actual succession of lakes. To penetrate far in would be dangerous, but his guide had informed him that no visitors to the first three ran any risk of interference.

"By the bye, Miss Cecile," interrupted the Squire, "some of these lakes are your property, are they not?"

"Yes, Mr. Carruthers," the lady replied; "but they would be so no longer if a very kind friend had not paid the taxes for them."

"Hoot toot, lassie, what's the taxes on a bittock o' wild land and useless water?"

"I should like above all things to see these lakes," remarked the dominie.

"Do you know," said Mr. Perrowne, "for so long a time as I have been in Flanders, I have never seen the lakes. One down't like to go alowne, you know."

"I say we go this afternoon," proposed the lawyer.

"I'm with you, sir," responded the minister. "We'll drop cricket and golf, the day, Perrowne." Then in a whisper to Carruthers, "I'm anxious about poor Nash."

"Then, meenister, see that ye aa tak' your revolvers and cartridges. I can supply you and Perrowne."

Coristine proposed to botanize, but did not care to detain the expedition by continually opening his knapsack, nor to incommode himself with the burden of the strap press. He regretted that he had not brought his vasculum, when Miss Carmichael spoke up, and said that she would furnish him with one when the party was ready to start. After dinner the company lounged for half an hour on the verandah and in the garden. There the Captain made up his mind to go with the exploring party, and take charge of Richards' scow on the first lake, that being the only craft available. Ben Toner came round from the kitchen and asked the Squire if he had anything for him to do, as Sylvanus wanted to stay with old man Newcome and read the Bible to him.

"Do you know the lakes, Toner?" asked Mr. Carruthers.

"If you don't mind Squier, I'd sooner you'd call me Ben."

"Well, Ben, then?"

"Yaas, leastways I've ben at the laiuk as is nighes ta han."

"Do you mind taking your gun, and looking out for sport with these gentlemen?"

"They isn't nawthin I'd laike bettr'en that."

So, Ben got his gun and ammunition, and the Captain was furnished with a stout walking-cane loaded in the head. The two parsons, the dominie, and the lawyer had pistols in their pockets. When ready to start, Miss Carmichael came up to Coristine carrying some mysterious object behind her back. Rapidly bringing it forward, she threw a thick green cord over the lawyer's shoulders, from which depended a brown black japanned tin candle-box. Of course, it was an accident that the cord was short, and that Coristine bent his head just as the fair damsel stood on tiptoe to adjust the improvised vasculum.

"I hope I didn't hurt you with my awkwardness, Miss Carmichael," pleaded the penitent knight of the order of the candle-box.

"Not at all, Mr. Coristine, it was my fault. I am afraid your nose suffered."

"Ha! ha!" chuckled the Captain, "young fellows can stand a lot o' that sort o' punishment. Reefs o' that kind don't do human vessels no harm."

Wilkinson was getting sick of the Captain and his aggressive vulgarity. Coristine didn't mind him; anybody belonging to Miss Carmichael was, for the present, delightful. Nevertheless, for marching purposes, he fell in with Toner, while the Captain accompanied Mr. Errol, and Wilkinson, Mr. Perrowne. They had six miles to tramp, which took them a good hour and a-half. The Captain discussed navigation in Scripture times with the minister, and decided that the Jews might have been good at punting round, but were a poor seafaring lot. The dominie

and the parson were deep in the philosophy of the affections, in the course of which excursus the former quoted the words:—

Like Dian's kiss, unasked, unsought,
Love gives itself, it is not bought,
Nor voice nor sound betrays
Its deep, impassioned gaze.

It comes, the beautiful, the free,
The crown of all humanity,
In silence and alone,
To seek the elected one.

Mr. Perrowne was struck with these verses, and, taking out his note book, begged that his companion would repeat them, as he recorded their sublime sentiment for future use. They then proceeded to eulogize Miss Du Plessis, of whom the parson formed a very high estimate, which he qualified by the statement that, were he not in holy orders, he would say Miss Fanny Halbert was more fun and ever so much jollier. Mr. Wilkinson really could not say, speaking conscientiously and without reserve, that he regarded jollity as an essential element in true womanhood. In his estimation it sank the peculiar grace and sacred dignity of the sex too nearly to a level with ordinary prosaic humanity. Mr. Perrowne concurred in a measure, but thought it was awfully nice for men of serious occupations, like the dominie and himself, to have somebody to liven them up a little; not too much, down't you know, but just enough to dispel the blues. The lawyer interrogated Toner. "Well, Ben, have you got any news of your young lady?"

"Yaas, Doctor."

"Never mind calling me doctor, Ben, because I'm not one yet. My name is Coristine."

"Then, Mr. Corsten, I heern from old man Newcome as Serlizer's out in that there Slec Campin the laiuks. She's cookin' for twainty dollars a month, and that's tarble good wages for gals, ef so be she gets her money all right."

"Not a very nice place for a good girl to be, Ben."

"No, it ain't; log roll and timber slide the hull consarn."

"These are queer expressions you've got."

"Yaas, Mr. Corsten, I waynt and promised that there priest as looked like Mr. Nash, guais it must ha' bin his brother, as I wouldn't sweaur no moer. And now, it keeps my mind workin' mornin' and night, so'st to know what to spit out when I'm raiul mad and hopen."

"It must be quite an anxiety to you, Ben."

"Anxiety? It's wearin' my life away. I've got a bit of a rest jest now on loggin' and lumberin', but them words 'll soon be used up."

"What's to hinder you repeating them, or leaving them out altogether? I hardly ever feel the need of them."

"It's the way you're broughten up, like your food. What 'ud do you for dinner, wouldn't be nigh enough for me. Same ways in speakin', they must be something to fill your talk out."

"Swearing is a poor business, Ben. Our Saviour, when He was on earth, said, Swear not at all."

"Is that in the Bible, Mr. Corsten?"

"Yes."

"Wall, it may be in some, but t'aint in the one Sylvanus was readin' to old man Newcome, fer that says in black and white as Jesus cussed the barrn fig tree, and I'd laike to know what's odds between cussin' and swearin'. It stands to reason and natur that He wouldn't go and tell folks not to do things He did Himself; don't it?"

"If you had read the chapters, there are two of them, that tell the story of the fig tree, you would have found that the disciples called it cursing when it was only a quiet saying: 'Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth.' You wouldn't call that cursing, would you?"

"O my, no, that ain't wuth callin' a cuss; they ain't no cuss about it. Now, fer whole souled, brimstun heeled cuss words, they's —"

"Never mind telling me any. They wouldn't do me any good, and the clergyman forward there might hear them."

"Do these clergy belong to the Church?"

"They both think they do in different ways, but, strange to say, neither of them belongs to your Church."

"Wall, I ain't got no quarrel 'em. I guais all the good folks 'll get to Heaven somehow."

"Amen!" answered the lawyer, and the conversation ended.

(To be continued.)

THE POLITICAL SITUATION—III.

I AM dealing with the causes of the Government victories in the bye-elections, and only one more remains to be considered, probably the most potent of all. In order it is:—

6. Absence of public opinion. It is not the first time I have had occasion to make this indictment against the Canadian people, and it is a topic that cannot be too frequently or too earnestly brought to the attention of the public. It was the lack of a sound and healthy public opinion that enabled the Government to carry the bye-elections. After the revelations of last session the people would have declared emphatically in favour of a change if there had been anything like a sense of right and wrong present among the masses. No such thing as a public conscience in political matters exists in Canada to-day. There is public opinion in every other line of action except the political field, and the worst feature is