

growing difficult, in the lengthening days of the Golden Year.

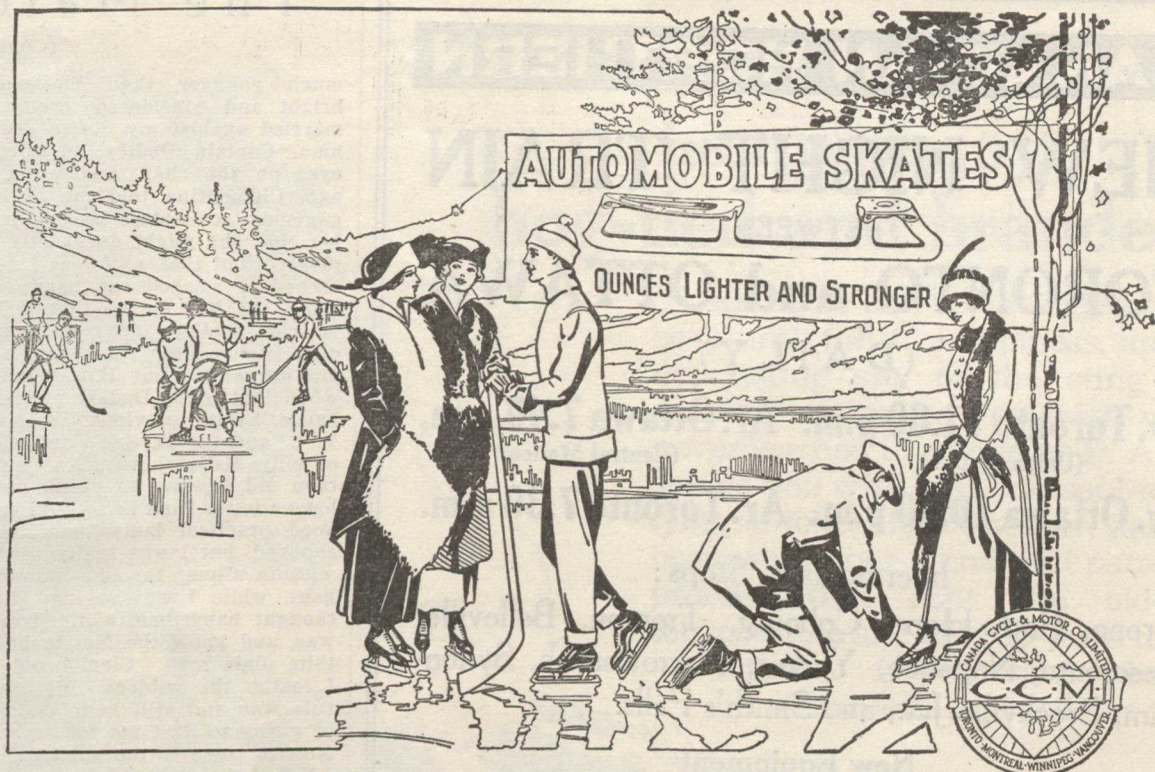
Drawing Blank Cheques.

Of course, you start as we all do, with lots of smart dresses, everything brand new in the house, and a balance in the bank. With the hired girl to do all the dirty work, your dear hands never need be soiled. You dawdle about the housework, and set the tea-cups a-tinkling amongst your friends in the afternoon, and you are just able to look your very best when John comes home from the day's work. You have the energy to meet him with a hop, skip and jump, three kisses and a bear hug; dinner is served on the fine new linen, with all the new plate a-gleaming, and John—the dear soul—considers it the best of jokes that you have paid spring chicken prices for old hens, or reduced a leg of lamb, at 1s. 2d. per lb. to a cinder. After, you get the red lamp-shade going, sit with the soft light playing on his favourite dimple, and tell John what a little gentleman he is. Or perhaps he insists on you sitting on his knee and he tells you how he could nurse you for hours, what a fairy you seem to be, how much better you are than other women, and generally convinces you that you are the best little lady on God's green earth.

Of course, it does not last. You are still drawing blank cheques on the bank. You are not paying, but simply continuing to receive. The little housemaid suddenly turns into an ordinary girl who can just do so much work and no more. And you find she eats—eats things worth real money, such as eggs at ten for a shilling and bread at four-pence a loaf. A gas-cooker which easily does such a lot of work, produces, in addition to grilled steak and omelette, a heavy quarterly bill. Beautiful linen costs real money at the laundry, if it is to remain beautiful. Lamb, at 1s. 2d. per lb. is too expensive to burn into a cinder, and is really bought for eating purposes. Your pretty new blouses give out and more new blouses cost money. You find, with increasing shock, that no one can make a decent tailor-made costume for less than six guineas—real matter of fact coins working out at twenty-one honest shillings to the guinea. The young wife finds out lots of little things of this nature.

The First Quarrel.

JOHN—he pays. With a laugh, of course—dear John! Little Doodlekins or Doodlekins is a wonder child still. She cannot have the experience of her mother or—his. His mother. Just about here, he begins to remember his mother. And you, dear heart—you had never heard of his mother. There had been only one mother in the world—yours. When you discover his mother, you cry and win. He pays with a laugh. Then you discover his mother again, cry and—lose. He pays without laughing, and does not kiss your wet face and call each tear a liquid diamond. Somewhere about here occurs the first quarrel. You make it up and begin again—May sunshine gleaming through April showers. But somehow, John seems to stay later at the office, and when he gets home, he is tired and really cannot think of dandling you on his knee. Nor does he stop at home every night, hear the favourite ballads, and kiss the pet dimple on your face. He is not so eager to get away from the men who want either his money or his job. You think he is neglecting little Doodlekins, but really he is growing keen on getting after the money and the jobs of the men who are after him. It is the only way he can see of making up for your shortcomings. Then you begin to sew—little garments for no apparent reason. You sew alone. John is more thoughtful now, loathes the red lamp-shade, wants white light and reads the trade papers dealing with matters relating to his job. He begins to talk vainly of the way he got the Brook Contract over the heads of the rascally Push, Hardup, and Havem gang. When he talks like that, he looks as if he could kill things and you wonder how you ever dreamed he was a little gentleman.



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