

her place. Edgar was always the first to hear news, and one night he went home with the report that a telegram had been received from headquarters. He blurted it out at once, expecting it would excite great interest. But Letitia, who had been singing, began slowly to put her music in order without saying a word, and Mrs. Roy so promptly rebuked the boys for some piece of carelessness of which they one and all protested they had not been guilty, that, in the animated discussion which followed, Edgar's news was overlooked. The following day Neville called and confirmed the report. He openly expressed his regret, and, under the circumstances, seemed to expect the invitation to remain to dinner that Mrs. Roy at once gave him.

"Would you like to have one of our new little dogs to take with you, Mr. Neville?" asked Johnnie, the youngest of the family, and the only one who was called by a pet name, the excuse being that his father had monopolized "John." "I will give you one, if you like."

"Come and look at them," urged Alfred. "They are running about in the yard."

"You had better go with them, Letitia," said her mother, noticing that she was in doubt.

Neville admired the two little black dogs that scampered round and round the boys' legs, and, being asked to suggest names for them, christened them Flip and Flounce on the spot. He said that he was afraid they might get seasick on the ship, as they were not accustomed to sailing, and that the boys had better keep them for him until next summer, and meanwhile take them out in the boat as frequently as possible. The boys accepted his advice, and ran off to tell their mother of the arrangement, and to see if she approved of it.

Letitia and Neville loitered in the flower-garden instead of returning to the drawing-room; but neither of them referred to the approaching separation. It was uppermost in Letitia's mind, however, all the time, and she was scarcely as buoyant and gay as usual, although the matter-of-course way in which Neville spoke of his return next summer had lightened the load that had weighed upon her spirits since the previous evening. She was glad to be rid of that horrible sickening sensation which she had then experienced for the first time.

"Would n't it be pleasant to sit here?" said Neville, pointing to the bamboo chairs on the veranda.

Letitia assented. It would be much pleasanter than going indoors.

From the veranda they overlooked the little harbor, on one side of which clustered the wharves and warehouses of the town. On the other side, which was more rocky, there were only the scattered huts of the Indian Reserve.

A sailing vessel from England, which had weathered the storms of the Cape, was being slowly towed in. Its dingy paint and battered aspect were in strong contrast to the trim smartness of an American revenue-cutter that lay at anchor. Neville called Letitia's attention to this, and she, in her turn, commented on some sealing-boats, the first of the season, that had returned from Bering Sea. The conversation remained in these safe channels, into which it had casually drifted, until the six-o'clock whistles sounded from the town workshops. Ten minutes later Mr. Roy and Edgar might be expected from the store. Neville pushed back his chair, and rose to stretch his limbs. As Letitia shook from her lap the petals of a chrysanthemum that she had been pulling to pieces in an absent-minded way, Neville smilingly referred to her destructiveness. Letitia gaily retorted. Mr. Roy and Edgar presently waved their hands and nodded to them from the sidewalk.

"Hullo! how d'ye do?" cried Mr. Roy, when he came within speaking distance. "I hear you're off to the south. I wish I were going along with you."

"Yes," said Neville; "our sailing-orders came last night, I'm sorry to say. I've had an awfully jolly time here."

Letitia was sufficiently accustomed to boys' slang not to wince at the "awfully jolly." It was the masculine way of describing everything delightful.

"I hope I shall be lucky enough to get back next summer," continued Neville, with characteristic buoyancy.

"When do you sail?" asked Edgar.

"That is n't settled," said Neville. "But I think I've a month's grace. It will take nearly that length of time to prepare."

When he spoke of the month's grace he turned with a slight, possibly unconscious, movement toward Letitia. Letitia rejoiced. These half-betrayals are often the food upon which love nourishes itself.

IV.

DURING that month of grace Neville talked with so much regret of his departure, and looked forward with so much certainty to a return the following summer, that the weight at Letitia's heart almost entirely disappeared. Her laughter echoed her words as gaily as ever, and bewitching smiles illuminated her face. Neville visibly rejoiced in her presence. The autumn days were calm and serene; but a crispness in the air, out of the sunshine, and an occasional touch of frost at night, were reminders that winter was approaching. Letitia had occasional reminders, too, of the approach of