

TEN

THE STAR, ST. JOHN. N. B., SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4 1909

THE : LAUGHTER : OF : LIFE

A NOVEL

AND A VERY INTERESTING ONE.

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By MARIA ALBANESI

CHAPTER I.

Drusilla Heronworth paused when she got to the bend in the staircase and stood looking down on her sister with a faint smile on her lips. She was dressed for walking, and wore the most bewitching toque of silk, with a real gardenia pinned in it. There was a sable stole thrown loosely about her shoulders. She watched her sister moving slowly about the hall. Bertha Heronworth walked with a slight limp. A large tray filled with vases of flowers had been brought in and placed on one of the tables and Miss Heronworth was putting these vases in different corners.

The hall was a low-roofed, square-shaped apartment, having about it something of a farmhouse look. It was furnished in a comfortable homely kind of a way, and though not used exactly as a living room, possessed many comfortable chairs, and at least one restful corner, where one could read.

"You always put the flowers just where they ought to go," said Drusilla. "That bit of pink on your writing desk is simply lovely, Beth, and oh— with an appreciative sniff—how sweet something smells! What is it?"

The elder sister looked up at that charming figure leaning over the balustrade. "So, after all, you are going out," she said.

"Drusilla answered: "Yes, after all, I am going out. I don't want to go one little bit, but if I don't have a walk at least once every day I shall get so fat!" She gave a little sigh, then she said: "Beth, I'm ever so happy! I can't begin to tell you how happy I am."

Bertha Heronworth picked up some splendid specimens chrysanthemums and arranged them in the tall glass vase. "It is very cold this morning," she said, "and very damp. I hope you have on thick boots, Drusilla."

Drusilla laughed. "Oh! Beth, promise! I discuss to you about my happiness and you talk about my boots."

In the same breath she said: "Those specimens chrysanthemums are very magnificent, I suppose, but I don't care a pin about them, they are so grand and so artificial. Chrysanthemums always remind me of Aunt Edith."

"Where are you going?" asked her sister. Drusilla shrugged her shoulders. "I have no plan; I shall just wander unless you have something you want me to do."

Well, if you are only going for a walk, will you leave this note at the rectory, and some papers for me at the Cottage Hospital? I always send all the light literature there; it is so much appreciated."

Drusilla made a grimace and then said: "Yes, I don't mind. Must I go in?"

"They would be very glad to see you," said Bertha, "but don't bother, if you would rather not; just leave the papers at the gate."

Drusilla came down the last of the stairs very slowly. "Really and truly, there is no place like home," she observed. "After having been in all sorts of other people's houses, I am in a position to assert this positively. Beth, I shall never, never, never go away again!"

every bit of forty, that you do!" Then she laughed. "Is it true?" she asked. "Have I lost my looks? Would you take me to be forty or only thirty-nine, if you meant me for the first time? He truthful, Beth; I want to know the worst!"

"You haven't told me anything about your visit to Braske. Who was staying there? Anybody you liked very much? Your letters were most interesting, you know, naughty child."

"It was rather amusing," the girl answered languidly, after an imperceptible pause. "Kitty Deravan is such a good hostess, she is always contriving something new. We had a paper chase one night."

"One night?" "Yes," Drusilla laughed, and her eyes sparkled as at some delightful recollection; "we had to hunt with lanterns, of course, and so found ourselves in all sorts of extraordinary places. I think the village people thought we had gone mad. I really enjoyed it though, and all the wild doings, but still I am ever so glad to be home again. And the sweet of you, Beth, to be glad to have me back?"

But I knew you wanted me. Even if you have bought the most wonderful library in the world, and there is a mysterious and attractive young librarian to live on the premises, aren't I better than anybody or anything else? Now I am ready," Drusilla announced, "where are the papers, and have you anything else you want me to do?"

Bertha Heronworth shook her head as she tied up a number of illustrated papers in a stout roll. "Whilst she waited, Drusilla asked: "Beth, does Mr. Keston ever speak? I don't make him talk; he won't look at me. I suppose people who always live amongst books must get dull; but he is awfully clever, isn't he?"

Miss Heronworth said "Very quiet way, and there was the faintest note of restraint in her voice as she added: "And he is just the right sort of person to help me. I was so grateful to Mr. Lettbridge for sending him here; he won't stay very long."

"Oh!" said Drusilla lightly. "I don't mind how long he stays. He is certainly good to look at, even if he is dull, and perhaps I shall be able to wake him up a little before he goes. By the way, they were talking about your purchases at Braske. Lord Deravan declared the nation ought to be grateful to you, Beth, as all the good things in books and pictures seem to be going to America nowadays."

"I think I am lucky. Happily for me," said Miss Heronworth, "negotiations had been commenced between Lord Caroby and myself some time before his death, and he had left expressed wishes that I should be given the first chance; otherwise I am not sure that I should have got this library. Of course," she added, laughing with a little nervousness, "the purchase has meant a very big sum of money, but Mr. Lettbridge regards it in the light of a very excellent investment."

"I don't think it matters what Mr. Lettbridge thinks," said Drusilla coolly. "So long as you are satisfied; and, as you are, I am sure that you have at least spent a little money to please yourself. You are always doing more than enough for other people, goodness knows!"

The roll of newspapers was tied securely, and Bertha Heronworth weighed it in her hand a little anxiously. "I hope it won't be too heavy for you, and, Drusilla, don't go across the fields; there is really a nasty wind to-day; keep to the road."

"Haven't you any other errands?" asked Drusilla. She paused on her way out. "Look here, when I come back, can't I write some letters for you? You really ought to have a secretary. Beth, if I'm no good, why can't Mr. Keston help you?"

"Letters never bother me, as you know," answered Bertha. "Heronworth; "and there is more in the library than you can imagine. Lord Caroby was an enthusiastic collector, but he never made the smallest effort to have his books put in proper order. From what Mr. Keston tells me, they seem to have been sent here massed together in extraordinary confusion. Then there is a great quantity of valuable manuscripts, and these must be properly tabulated and fixed in cases; and, of course, I want a really good catalogue."

"Things which will keep Mr. Keston pretty busy. Well, if I can't help you perhaps I can help him. I have come home resolved to do all sorts of sensible things. You know, Beth, it is really true I began to be useful."

"There are so many useful people in the world," said the elder sister. "Good-bye, don't get into mischief."

"Mischief!" echoed Drusilla. "Good heavens! Don't you realize that I am a virtuous person? Why, if all the Ten Commandments were spread out before me now I should refuse to break one. Honour bright! I should!"

She blew a kiss to her sister and turned away, passing to the back portion of the house, where she whistled to the dogs. As they came tumbling

about her she said meditatively to herself: "Mischief! Happily there is not a ghost of a chance of doing anything foolish down here. Now if I had stayed on at Braske, it might have been a different thing! I am glad I insisted upon coming away, and yet— As she started on her walk she gave a little sigh, followed by a little laugh. "Mischief can't be very sweet," she said, "sometimes."

The dogs made havoc of her trim serge skirt. They were wild with joy at the prospect of going for a walk with her; but first of all, there were so many people who wanted to have a word with Miss Drusilla.

The younger sister was in fact adored by the household, whilst Bertha Heronworth, with a few exceptions, commanded respect rather than love—a touch of irony which so frequently fashions the comings and goings of everyday life.

It was not merely a duty, but a source of personal pleasure with Miss Heronworth to interest herself in one and all about her. She knew all the various ailments of her various servants; she remembered the number and the condition of their relations; she allied herself with them sympathetically, and studied them in every way; yet she never once obtained from them that wholehearted appreciation which they lavished upon Drusilla.

Bertha Heronworth, for instance, would never have dreamed of peeping into the kitchen except when she considered it convenient to be received. Drusilla walked in just whenever she felt inclined. On this particular occasion she perched herself on the corner of the big kitchen table, whilst the tribe of dogs (swayed out of this domain as a general rule by the autocratic mistress of the household) about with dirty paws on the red-tiled floor which had just been scrubbed.

It was only after Drusilla had eaten a small home-made cake, which she did not want, and had swallowed half a glass of milk, which she loathed, simply because she was expected to do these things, that she realized the condition of the floor. But she was sorry, and she said she was sorry so prettily, that the cook was prepared to go down on her knees there and then and take up the mud stains just to ease Miss Drusilla's mind.

From the kitchen the girl went to the stables, and as she was crossing the courtyard a man wheeled swiftly past her on a bicycle. He took off his cap as he saw the younger Miss Heronworth, and Drusilla smiled and nodded.

"So the bookworm does come out of his lair every now and then," she said to herself. "I wonder where he is going."

(To be continued.)

How to Avoid Sea Sickness

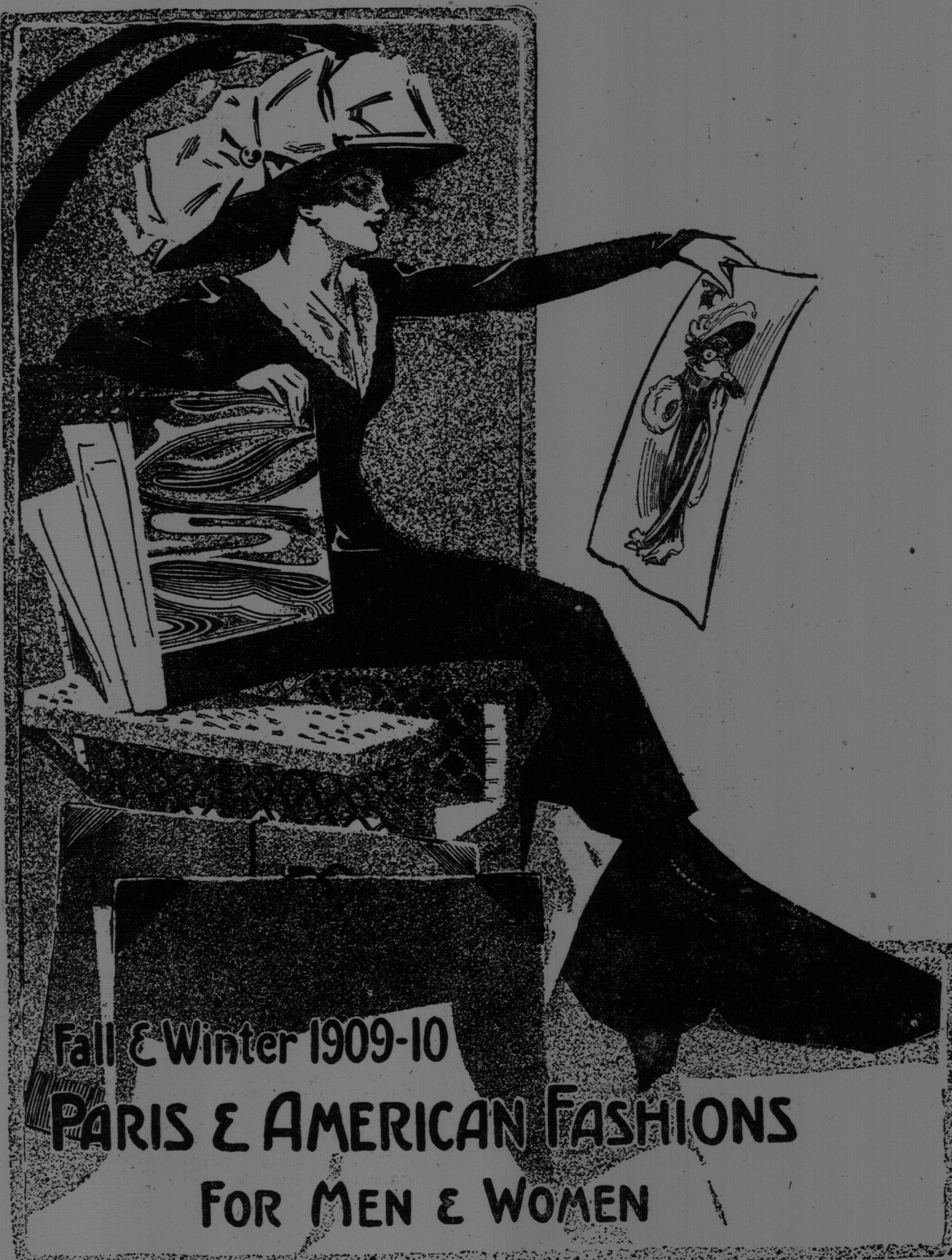
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For sale and recommended in St. John by A. Chagnon, M. D., N. B., Moore, Royal Pharmacy and G. A. Riecker.

DANIEL W. MERSEUREAU. There died at Bridgetown, N. S., Sept. 2nd, Daniel Wood Merseureau, aged 84 years. Mr. Merseureau was a former resident of Ellerslie, N. B., but having retired from business six years ago he removed to Bridgetown with his wife and daughter, Miss Dora. In one short year and a half their happy home was saddened by the death of Mr. Merseureau, who passed away January 5th, 1905.

Mr. Merseureau was a descendant of the Loyalist family, being a son of the late John Van Horne and Margaret Wood Merseureau and grandson of Judge Lawrence Merseureau, the first judge to sit upon the bench of the Supreme Court of New Brunswick after the separation of the two provinces. He is survived by four daughters—Mrs. Alfred E. Hart of St. John, Mrs. Gilbert Hayward, Mrs. J. W. Peters and Miss Dora B. of Bridgetown, N. S.

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