

that the meal was ready in the kitchen for the men, and the tea sufficiently strong and hot. How they could drink it was to her a mystery; however suffocating the weather, the inevitable boiling tea must be the accompaniment of every meal, transferred from the stove to their cups, and thence down their throats in the course of a minute or two. It cooled them, they said, and Agnes could not deny that it might be so, but she had never been able to try the experiment. She thought it must be a characteristic of Canadians to possess throats insensible to heat, for even of those who occasionally took tea with her, she had remarked that most could dispose of two cups of tea long before her first was cool enough to taste; and on her first visit to Mrs. Valleau, that lady had twice asked her "whether her tea was not to her liking," because she did not drink it like the rest.

Her household tasks completed, she was seated at the open door, gasping over a piece of work she was anxious to finish, when Miss Valleau opened the gate and came up the path.

"I thought I'd come and see how you were bearing the heat," said that young lady, as she sat down on the steps of the veranda and threw her hat on the floor. "Isn't it awful?"

"Come out of the sun directly," said Agnes. "I only wonder you did not get a sunstroke on the way. How could you venture out?"

"Oh, you know I don't feel the heat like you—I'm quite cool. Well you *do* look—I think there's going to be a storm soon. But that isn't what I came to say; if you looked at the moon last night you would know that much. Escott's coming home to-night for a while. You'll see him at church; I'll make him go with me. Oh, I do so wonder how you'll like him!"

"Indeed if to-morrow is like to-day, you will not see me at church," said Agnes. "I could not exist through the service in heat like this."

"Then I shall bring Escott to see you. I couldn't have him go without your seeing him; he can only stay a short while, and he can't come again for ever so long, they have so much to do in the office, and Win-

chester is so far off; I always did wish he had settled nearer."

Here Miss Valleau came to a pause, perhaps for want of breath.

"So you won't go to church to-morrow?" she pursued. "I wonder you like to lose Mr. Haltaine's sermon. But perhaps he preaches you one at home, when he comes. If you were not such a color already, I suppose you'd blush now."

"I wonder you like to talk such nonsense," said Miss Vining.

"Well you can't deny that he does come here every Sunday!" cried Miss Minnie, "and of course he comes to see *you*."

"Why should he not come to see my brother and Mrs. Vining?"

"He never came to see Mr. Vining once a year, before you came; and Mrs. Vining is a widow and out of the question, though I don't exactly know that she'd like to hear me say so. No it's you. Not a doubt of it."

"Come and have some cherries, Minnie," said Agnes, to put an end to a subject which was not agreeable. Miss Valleau's jests contained too much truth to be pleasant. Mr. Haltaine did come every Sunday, and Agnes was conscious that she enjoyed his society, and looked forward to his visits as her chief pleasure.

He had discovered that it was quite possible to come to Philip's house after church and spend an hour or two, and yet leave ample time for his drive home, but whether he came on Agnes' account was doubtful; she did not flatter herself that he did. He did not distinguish her by any particular attention; indeed, he seemed to bestow more on Mrs. Vining than on her, who did not scruple to receive it, or attempt to deny that it gave her pleasure. She had great faith in the power of her lovely face and fascinating manner, and believed that few would be insensible to their influence; and Agnes, fully conscious of her own inferior charms, was quite willing to allow her all the admiration she could wish. If she had sometimes thought that Mr. Haltaine talked to her in a different strain from that which he used to Louisa, she had considered it as a proof that he rated her understanding higher, which she knew to be just; but she also knew too well the difference