

common seals by their erect position, their fins being more like limbs and not useless fins by the side of the animal, and only of use to them when in the water.

The otarid therefore are less fish-like, the back fins coming forward like feet when in an erect position.

At the close of the last and during the early part of the present century fur seals existed in countless numbers in many parts of the world, but the greed and stupidity of men have succeeded in reducing their numbers in most regions. Fortunately, both for science and for commerce, the seal rookeries of the Prybelloff

Islands in Behring Sea have been placed under such restrictions as to render the animal slaughter compensated by the number of births.

It appears that of the total number of sea-bears about half are males, and the other half females, but all of these do not mix with the females, as they are kept off by the stronger males, and herd by themselves; it is these bachelor seals which are alone allowed to be killed in the Prybelloff.

(To be continued.)



THE SEA BEAR OR FUR SEAL.

LIFE IN WOMEN'S CHAMBERS: A MOTHER'S IMPRESSION.

CHAPTER I.



HERE is no doubt about the growing fascination of the life described in our title, especially for the imaginations of many of our younger lassies whose lines have been lain hitherto in undeniably pleasant places.

As lately as the spring of last year it was my good fortune to receive an invitation to stay for a fortnight with an old school-friend whose eldest daughter had just finished her three years' course at the University, and was generally supposed to have come home now "for good." And assuredly hers was a home in which any gentle, bright-natured woman might have felt it good to be.

An old, sun-warmed Shropshire Hall, with the gables and black, crossing timbers that declare its near kinship to the homes of picturesque Cheshire, far enough in the country to secure the young green of the trees and hedgerows from all contamination of smoke, near enough to the town to admit easily of attendance at lectures or concerts, and for those unemancipated enough to desire it, of shopping, both pleasant and profitable.

The home within walls, moreover, was as attractive as its outward surroundings. Its master and mistress were never more content than when their house was filled with young people, whose number often doubled their own contingent of five; three boys and two girls, if Hetty and Jack, who were twenty-two and nineteen respectively, may be included under that heading.

The dignity too that can only come to a household whose head is deservedly honoured by the community of which it forms a part belonged to it in no scant measure. On all hands it was acknowledged that among the landowners of the country-side few interpreted their public and private duties in as generous a spirit or fulfilled them more conscientiously than Major Bramston. His gentle wife also, my Nita of the old days, aided and abetted his every kindly scheme, and with her children had been wont to throw herself heartily into all the best activities of the villages in the valley.

When Hetty at eighteen had elected to go to College, there had been much pleading against it on the part of her younger friends, and many useful openings for work, of necessity, set on one side at least for the time. But her father and mother had stood by her in her desire for a better equipment for life, and had spared her bright presence in the home as ungrudgingly as they could.

But when I arrived at the Hall to begin my visit in the proud capacity of "Auntie"—elect, if not actual, of all the younger people gathered under its roof, I found Hetty, with the honour of her diploma still fresh upon her, in a flushed and determined mood that allowed little or no room for persuasion. Her father was perplexed and grave, her mother almost tearful, and the rest of the family generally in distracted opposition.

She had been offered work through a College friend under the auspices of one of the many semi-scientific, semi-charitable associations bent on the redemption of the East End of London, and had set her heart on accepting it forthwith, and on "living in chambers."

Half an hour's quiet talk with her, however, easily revealed the fact that, kind-hearted lassie as Hetty was, it was the latter part of her programme that had especially fired her imagination.

"Just think, auntie! Two dear little rooms of my own, four storeys up on the lift, to manage them just as I choose, to be absolutely free to come and go, to live my own life!"

She drew a deep breath and threw out her arms with a swimmer's motion as if she already felt herself instinct with new powers of being.

I could hardly help laughing. Hetty's curly fair hair, dear dimpled little face and radiant blue eyes, seemed so strangely out of place in the solitary surrounding she desired so earnestly. I knew it. She did not. But as the days went by I began to realise, as did her mother, that nothing but that knowledge would ever bring back to her her old content in her home and the much good work that lay ready to her hand there, or even enable her to give herself to it in any way sufficiently to secure her her own self-respect.

So it was decided that Hetty should try her plan for a year; but as I watched the change that came over her mother's face when the decision was made I wondered if ever the younger generation will appreciate the length and breadth and depth and height of the love, faith and self-sacrifice which they are continually demanding and often richly receiving from the elder.

No. 17A, St. Edward's Chambers, W., was to form the direction of Hetty's letters henceforward. Her father provided her with thirty pounds for her furnishing, and smiled a little sadly at her eager petition "to be compelled to live on my own earnings." In the first excitement of her victory she had no thought but of securing it to the last straw.

"Let me go up by myself, mother. Mary," her college friend, "has promised to take me into her den until I have made my own fit to live in; and I want to manage everything for

myself and then to have you come and see me when I'm settled."

"Mary," while the chief instigator of Hetty's new and unwelcome ambitions had, notwithstanding, been a frequent and favourite guest at the Hall. And although her heart was heavy "mother" said "yes" bravely to this request also.

"Why do Mary and Hetty always speak as if a den were the most delightful-sounding place in the world?" asked practical Bessie, who was sixteen and abhorred nonsensical notions.

"I expect Hetty's room will look just about as much like a den as Hetty looks like a wild beast," replied Jack with a grim twist of the corners of his mouth. "Now if she had seen some of our fellow's places at Rugby! Bird's nests and snakes in bottles on the window-sill, live mice and a hedgehog, and perhaps a tame toad or a tortoise crawling about the floor, half a chemical laboratory in one corner and a muddle of geological specimens in another, ink, crumbs, papers, dust over everything and not a clean rag, or a handkerchief even, two days after a fellow's washing had come in—she might talk about a den. But, bless me, a girl couldn't let herself be comfortable if she tried! I can just imagine what Hetty's show will be like. Not a chair strong enough to bear sitting down on, tables that upset the first time you go near them, with a lamp on one and half a hundred tea-cups on another, curtains enough to smother a fellow, pictures that can't or won't stay straight on the walls, cushions to take up all the available space left, and foot-stools kicking about on purpose to trip you up—bah!"

Jack stayed his enumeration for want of breath, and for once Bessie forbore to take up the cudgels on behalf of her fellow-womenkind.

It must be confessed that Hetty's den when fully equipped would have gone far to justify her brother's sarcasms, although irrational as he would have declared it, its essentially feminine weaknesses afforded her, if not physical comfort, an exquisite mental satisfaction that far out-balanced any other consideration.

St. Edward's Chambers for women loomed large as a red brick pile even in the wide and many-mansioned street of which it formed a part. It probably contained nearly a hundred inhabitants, as eager and self-conscious in their quest of life as ever Hetty had been.