



The O.A.C. Grounds and new Mardonald buildings at Guelph. (Courtesy of the O.A.C. Review.)

WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK

By Carroll W. Rankin, in *The Youths' Companion*

"I HATE a collar-band that's too wide!" muttered Alma, critically inspecting the neatly made waist, the result of her mother's three days of patient labor. These sleeves aren't half full enough, and I wanted hooks, not buttons; I never get what I want."

Wearily Mrs. Boyce, however, paid no heed. An open letter fluttered from her hand. She dropped it lightly into the nearest chair. "It's your Granduncle Timothy!" she gasped.

"Dead?" asked Alma.

"No," replied Mrs. Boyce. "He's coming to spend six weeks with us."

"Is it our turn?" asked Alma.

"Yes," said Mrs. Boyce, "it's past our turn."

Poor Mrs. Boyce was greatly perturbed. She had spent a trying morning with grumbling Alma, and although trying mornings with that inconsiderate young person were no novelty, their frequent recurrence made them no easier to bear. Granduncle Timothy's news found the poor badgered lady quite unfitted for the receiving of unexpected evil tidings.

Indeed, close association with Alma when the girl was having her wardrobe replenished would have unfitted anybody for anything. In the first place, there was the choosing of the goods, a fearfully trying process, for no material, however, beautiful, was precisely the shade that Alma had set her affections on. Mrs. Boyce, who had supposed herself, until disillusioned by Alma, fairly skilful with her needle, always did the family dress-making. For sweet-tempered, easily pleased Ruth, two years older than Alma, the task was a genuine pleasure; but sewing for the younger girl was a burden almost too great to be borne.

During her small girlhood Alma had been delicate, and it must be confessed, decidedly ill-tempered.

As she grew older she grew

stronger, but, unfortunately, so did her temper. There were moments—usually when she was among strangers—when she was fairly amiable, but there were other moments when the girl's outbursts of acute dissatisfaction drove, harassed Mrs. Boyce to the verge of nervous prostration.

"I'd rather have every tooth in my head extracted," the poor lady had confided to Ruth that morning, "than make that tan etamine for Alma, but she was so dissatisfied the last time I employed a seamstress that I'm simply afraid to try it again."

"Are you going to make it like my blue taffeta?" Ruth had asked.

"No," Alma says she doesn't like the pleats, that she won't have tucks, ruffles or bias folds, and that off-the-shoulder effects are going out."

"What does she want?"

"Well, so far," said discouraged Mrs. Boyce, "she has spent three hundred and sixty-four days a year mentioning things she doesn't want, so she hasn't had any time left to say what she does like. She's precisely like your father's Uncle Timothy. I suppose I spoiled her when she was little. If I had it all to do over again I'd bring her up very differently."

At that moment a peevish voice floated down the stairway. "Mother," it wailed, fretfully, "did I hear you say you were going to make tomato soup for dinner? I'm just sick of tomato soup!"

"What kind do you want?" asked far too tolerant Mrs. Boyce.

"Oh, I don't know," Alma had returned, impatiently. "Anything but tomato or bean or pea or mutton or—"

"How would you like potato soup?"

"I hate potato soup. Isn't there some kind we've never had?"

Afterward, for almost two hours, Mrs. Boyce, with fashion-plates and patterns all round her, had gazed despairingly at the tan etamine. For

the same length of time Alma had disapproved of every suggestion her mother had offered. Then came Uncle Timothy's unexpected letter.

Uncle Timothy was, if such a thing were possible, even lazier to please than was Alma. Possibly there was some slight excuse for irascibility in his case, for from infancy he had been troubled with nervous dyspepsia.

Naturally, he was not a desirable visitor, which was peculiarly unfortunate, for visiting was poor Uncle Timothy's only occupation.

Invariably it was Uncle Timothy's inconvenient habit to announce his coming by one train and to arrive on the next, giving the prospective host or hostess no opportunity to escape the threatened visit. His letters never failed to fill the recipient with consternation; yet Uncle Timothy led a respectable, upright life, had no vice except the one vice of universal dissatisfaction with everybody and everything, and was scrupulously neat in appearance. He was old, he had no children of his own, and each one of his flock of grown-up nieces and nephews felt he was entitled to consideration and tolerance; but entertaining Uncle Timothy was certainly more a duty than a pleasure.

Mrs. Boyce lived farthest from Uncle Timothy. He had spent some ever-to-be-forgotten weeks with the nervous little woman when Ruth was eight years old, but for eleven years she had, owing to distance, escaped a second visit.

Now she was to have six weeks of Uncle Timothy—too much for any woman to contemplate with equanimity. At first she sat limp and dejected. Presently she began absent-mindedly to snip Uncle Timothy's letter into tiny fragments. It looked to the two girls, who were busy with their embroidery, as if their dismayed mother were deeply engaged in making plans for the comfort of the coming guest, but they were mistaken.

"Girls," said Mrs. Boyce, rising suddenly, and in her agitation scattering a small snowdrift of paper on the rug, "I know it's cowardly, but I ought to be ashamed of myself—but—but I'm all worn out. I haven't a scrap of courage, and—girls, I'm going to run away!"

"Run away!" echoed Alma.

"Yes—to your Aunt Emily's. Really, girls, I haven't the courage to plan meals for your Uncle Timothy. I—I just can't do it. You've kept house before, and Hannah is perfectly competent to do all the cooking. I ought to—O dear! I've been sewing too steadily, or something. It isn't right of me, but—I'm not able to stand Uncle Timothy!"

"You shan't have to," said Ruth, gathering her mother into her strong young arms and presenting a rounded shoulder to be wept upon. You may be perfectly easy in your mind, mother. I'll look after Uncle Timothy. There, you've had a lovely cry. Now let's go pack your trunk. It'll certainly do you good to go to Aunt Emily's."

Mrs. Boyce departed at noon. When Uncle Timothy arrived, an hour later, he looked at Ruth and said, "Humph!" Then he looked at Alma, and said "Humph!" again, but there was a vast difference in the two "humphs."

"You've a sort of dried-apple countenance, haven't you?" said the always brutally frank old man, eyeing Alma with quick disapproval. "Got a peevish disposition, I guess."

From the very first moment Alma's sullen eyes blued themselves with an odd, irresistible fascination upon Uncle Timothy's wry countenance. It

(Continued on Page 61.)