BETWEEN TWO FIRES

By Mrs. C. N. Williamson,

Author of "Lady Mary of the Dark House," "The Woman in Grey," "Queen Sweetheart," "Fortune's Sport," "The Barn Stormers," Etc.

CHAPTER I.

Told by Marion Sitgreaves, Niece of Sir Gordon Revelstoke, the Home Secretary.

What I Overheard Behind the Book-Screen.

I had slept even worse than usual that night, and by half-past seven o'clock I was so restless and frantic that I could have screamed. I knew that I wouldn't be called until nine, but I couldn't bear to lie still any longer, so I got up and went straight across the room to the mirror over the dressing-table. I looked hideous. There was no use trying to pretend I didn't.

My cousin, Margot Revelstoke, has a huge mirror in her bedroom. It is in three parts, like a screen, so that she can see herself from head to foot, repeated three times, as if there were three girls instead of one. But, then, Margot is a beauty, while I—I am only I. No doubt people think the less I see of myself the better I ought to be pleased—poor, wretched creature that I am, with my high shoulders that give almost the effect of a hunchback.

Sometimes I do succeed in making myself believe that I am almost pretty, or, at any rate, that I have some good points. But this was distinctly one of my bad mornings. My skin was yellow, there were ugly, dark hollows under my eyes, which made them seem more deep-set than ever, and I looked thirty if I looked a day, which is two years older than I really am—four years older than I confess to.

"What does it matter?" I said to myself, half aloud. "He doesn't care anything about me after all. He loves her. What difference does it make to anyone on earth whether I am ugly or pretty?"

But I was horribly sorry for myself, and I hated Margot. It is my nature to be jealous. I can't help it. Ever since my mother died, and Uncle Gordon brought me to live in his house, telling me I would be a nice companion for his "little Margot," I have hated her, but not as I do now. I only hated her at first because she was of importance, and I wasn't. I was the "poor relation," the pensioner, the plain creature whose duty it was to be grateful and subordinate, while she was the adored little spoilt darling who had a right to everything. I hated her because she was pretty and because people loved her, while they merely tolerated, or, worse still, pitied me.

She was eight and I was fourteen, when Uncle Gordon took me in—a petted child, while I was a gawky girl. But it didn't occur to me then to be consciously jealous of her fewer years. That came later—about the time when she made her debut, at eighteen. I was nearly twenty-four, and looked older. I had never had any youth. No man had ever loved me; I hadn't even had the chance of a mild flirtation. Margot had dozens of proposals. She didn't tell me about them, but I always knew, somehow, when a man was in love with her, until a year ago, when Noel Brent came into our lives.

He was so nice to me that I suppose I made a fool of myself, and misunderstood. No man had ever been so nice to me before. He gave me flowers and sweets, and when he had found out what books I liked best, he sometimes sent them to me. I can see now how he was sorry for me, and it didn't strike him that I might be like more fortunate women, and be capable of falling in love.

But I was. I was just like the others, except that I couldn't inspire love in return. I deceived myself for awhile and hoped, perhaps, he was one of the few men who think more about a woman's soul than her body. I was horribly in love, and for the first time; that's my excuse. And sometimes I was happy—until last night. It was then he confided to me, when we were sitting out a dance together (I can't dance, even if anyone would ask a little high-shouldered changeling-thing like me), that he meant to speak to Margot.

I don't know how it came out, exactly. Perhaps it suddenly dawned upon him that I cared, and he wanted to warm me as nicely as he could, without my guessing that he saw. But I felt as if I should die, for a moment. Everything turned black before my eyes, and the smile with which I'd been listening seemed to turn into a mask of ice—just as hard and cold. I would have stayed downstairs if I could (the dance was here, at our house) and watched to see what happened next, whether Margot accepted him or not. But I know when I've reached the limit of my endurance, and I didn't want a scene. My heart has always been rather weak, and it began beating so that it turned me sick and faint. When Noel had taken me back from the conservatory to my seat in the drawing-room, where I could see "the fun," I slipped away, only too sure that nobody would miss me, unless Margot should see that I had disappeared, and come running up to my room to ask if anything was the matter.

Just as I was getting into bed she did come, but I wouldn't let her in. Such a short time had passed since I left Noel that, as he had several dances with other girls before his next with Margot, he couldn't have spoken to her yet, so there would be no news to hear; and I couldn't very well ask whether, if Noel Brent proposed, she would accept him or not. Therefore, it was not worth while to harrow myself up with a sight of her face, and I called through the door that I was all right, only too tired to sit up.

If I had opened the door and she had come in looking perfectly beautiful and perfectly happy, I was in a mood to have killed her. Never had I known what it was to hate before. I should have loved to cut her face with a knife until it was so frightful that even mine would have been lovely beside it.

With such black bitterness in my heart, it is no wonder that I couldn't sleep. I didn't close my eyes until dawn had turned my curtained windows into pale grey squares, and then I only dropped into a troubled doze for an hour. About five I waked up with a start, and for a minute couldn't remember the cause for that awful, leaden weight on my heart. But by the end of the minute it had all come back—the dead misery and hopelessness.

When I had looked at myself in the glass on getting up at half-past seven I had the sensation of stifling. My knees trembled, and I felt weak, and very, very old. I would not ring for the maid whose services I shared with Margot, for I was afraid she would notice that something was queer about me, and tell my cousin. So I bathed; and afterwards when I had slipped on my wrapper, I pushed back the curtains from one of the two half-open windows.

My only conscious reason for going to the window was the terrible wish for more light and air; but I am superstitious, and I shall always believe that some subtle influence sent me there at that particular instant. I had scarcely sent a glance over the quiet square, when I saw a hansom drive quickly round the corner and draw up at the pavement in front of our door.

By this time it was after eight; still, it was early for people to be arriving in hansoms. Vaguely curious, I hid behind the curtains and waited to see who would get out. To my intense surprise I saw Noel Brent jump hastily down, hand the cabman his fare, and run up the two or three steps of the porch. He was dressed in grey travelling clothes, therefore he must be leaving town, though in our talk last night he had said nothing about going away—in fact, now that I came to think of it, he had mentioned an engagement to lunch at Price's with an old Oxford chum.

I began to feel very much excited. So far as I could see, the only possible explanation of his early call was that Margot and he were engaged, and he had come to let her know that he was suddenly called out of town. Still, even so, it was odd that he should appear at a little after eight, and seemed almost like taking a liberty—the last thing that Noel Brent would ever do.

I only waited long enough at the window to make sure that he didn't merely stop at the door for a minute and go off again. As soon as I was certain that he had come into the house I hurried to dress as quickly as I could. I twisted up my hair—my one beauty, anyhow—and got into the things which were simplest to put on, a skirt and blouse. It did not take me ten minutes to do all this.

My room was next to Margot's, and I had to pass her door on my way to the stairs. As I did so it occurred to me that I might as well find out whether she were there, or had gone down to seek Noel.

I tapped very lightly, but loud enough for her to hear if she were awake. There was no answer, and after hesitating a few seconds I softly turned the knob (I knew that Margot slept with her door unlocked) and peeped in.

Now I always have my curtains closely drawn and my windows half-shut at night; but Margot has a ridiculous love for all the light she can get, even when she's asleep. Uncle Gordon used to call her his "sunshine child" when she was a little thing, because she basked in it so; and besides, in those days when quantities of bright yellow hair used to be cascading over her shoulders, the name seemed rather appropriate in more ways than one. But her hair is many shades darker now. Except in the light it is almost brown, not so very much prettier than mine, except that there's more gold in it, and it's naturally curly and somewhat heavier.

This morning the sunshine was streaming into her room as usual, and there she lay in bed, fast asleep, with that long, bright hair of hers hanging in a thick curly tail over the pillow, and her half-bare arms thrown over her head. Margot sleeps like a child, with her lips just parted, and looks about twelve instead of twenty-two. She has very long eyelashes, which are darker than her hair, and her skin keeps the brilliant rose-and-white it had when I knew her first as a tiny thing; so that to anyone who loved the girl there would be something particularly sweet about her when she slept. But I don't love her, and I hated her so that my heart began to beat very fast and half choked me. I closed the door as quietly as I had opened it, and went slowly tiptoeing downstairs.

I was glad that she was asleep instead of talking to Noel, but his early visit was more puzzling than ever. If he had sent up word to Margot she would have received it before this, for he must now have been in the house a quarter of an hour. Whatever I meant to do—and I wasn't quite certain yet what that would be—it must be done soon, for almost any minute now our maid, Potter, might go to Margot's room to wake her. Margot gets up earlier than I do, for she always goes down to breakfast with Uncle Gordon at a quarter to ten, while I, being delicate, usually take mine in my room after my bath.

As I've just said, I hadn't entirely made up my mind what to do; but somehow I was determined to find out why Noel Brent was in the house—a secret which would very likely be kept from me (if it really were a secret, as I vaguely suspected) unless I were clever enough to discover it for myself.

I was picking my way downstairs so noiselessly I didn't want to be seen or heard by any of the servants if I could help it, or by Uncle Gordon, in case he were receiving Noel. I didn't even know where the visitor might be; whether in one of the drawing-rooms, or Margot's boudoir, or Uncle Gordon's study, or the library; or whether he and my uncle were having an early breakfast together in the dining-room. But just as I had reached the turn of the stairs and the landing where the grandfather's clock stands, the electric door bell rang, and one of the footmen went quickly across the hall. I could see without being seen if I flattened myself against the wall, and I did so.

Then came another surprise for me. Henry let in Lord Reckworth, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs. He was promptly escorted to the door of Uncle Gordon's study; and so I had received the hint I had been wanting, for I could not doubt there was some connection between the two extraordinarily early visits, and that Noel was already in the same room, probably closeted with my uncle

"What can it all mean?" I said to myself, as—when Henry was out of sight—I went on down the stairs.

Noel Brent had nothing whatever to do with politics at present, though I knew that he had parliamentary ambitions which would probably be fulfilled shortly, as he was clever, and had some influence, though not much money. Meanwhile, however, he was only a fine-looking young man of twenty-nine or thirty—to me the best looking on earth—of good birth and education, who had made a name, and become something of a social lion because of a remarkable book he had written about an equally remarkable climbing exploit in the Himilayas. Why should he be called into private consultation with the Home Secretary and the Foreign Secretary between eight and nine in the morning?—or was the meeting between the two elderly men and the young one to be friendly and unofficial?

Perhaps my hopeless love for him and my gnawing jealousy of Margot had made me morbid; but I could not banish the conviction that somehow the mysterious affair was connected with Noel's wish to marry my cousin; and suddenly an exciting idea darted into my brain. What if, having asked Uncle Gordon's consent to the engagement, he was now being arraigned before an informal court of justice for some flagrant misdeed in the past, before our knowledge of him began? Suppose that Lord Reckworth was in possession of the secret, and Noel was to be put upon his defence in the presence of Margot's father?

I didn't know enough about men's code of honor to decide whether this could or could not be, but the fancy fired my imagination. If I could hear anything about Noel and manage to disgust Margot with him, their love story might be nipped i nthe bud, for Margot is rather an odd girl. She expects too much of a man she cares for. She wants to be all or nothing, and though she has the reputation of being so sweet-natured she is as proud as Lucifer himself. I know, too, that rumors of past flirtations and "wildnesses" of Noel's, which I had taken care she should hear, had annoyed and distressed her, though she had tried her hardest not to show that she cared.

Now, if I could get hold of something really outrageous—something which he could not wholly deny if charged with it—just at this crisis of her feeling, it might put an end to Noel Brent's chances with Margot. Then—well, I am not much for such a man to turn to; yet many a heart is caught in the rebound.

The door of the study was tightly closed, but a cautious experiment with the handle told me that it was not locked. Indeed, why should it be locked? My uncle had had all his servants for years; he had no reason to fear spies in his own household.

By dint of great patience I got the door open without a sound. I dared attempt this because of the screen which stands in the room a few feet distant from the door. Uncle Gordon suffers from neuralgia, and though he likes fresh air he objects to draughts. Therefore, to obtain the one without the other in the study, where he spends so much of his time when at home sitting at a desk near the window which is opposite the door he has had a large screen made according to his own design. Margot and I call it the "book-screen," for it is book-shelves as well as screen.

Books line the study from floor to ceiling, round all four walls, save for the one door and the two windows; and as they had overflowed their bounds, the book-screen provided space for many volumes which had been homeless. Now, if I stood behind the book-screen there was not a corner of the room from which I could be detected. Of course, if anyone else came in I might be seen by that person, unless I had time to dart behind the door as it opened, concealing myself from a superficial glance in the folds of a heavy embroidered velvet portiere which was habitually drawn back. But I hoped that no one else would come in; and in any case I was willing to run the risk.

I had only three or four steps to take from the door to the hiding-place I had chosen behind the book-screen, and I had scarcely settled myself when I heard Lord Reckworth's voice speaking.

"Mr. Brent," he said, "Sir Gordon tells me that you are the man I want. In fact, the man for a mission of grave importance."

"I need hardly say that I am honored," Noel replied, in that indescribably delightful voice of his, which I think was the first thing to win me. Or was it his eyes—those wide, grey eyes, set rather far apart between the white of the broad forehead and the brown of the dear, strong, brave face.

"Brent knows nothing yet," said Uncle Gordon. "I thought of him for you last night, after our conversation, and when you seemed ready to fall in with the suggestion I told him to call between eight and half-past in the morning, so that there would be time for him to proceed without delay in case you came to an agreement. Of course I entered into no explanations, except that he must be prepared for an immediate journey to France. The rest I left to you, Reckworth."

"You could get off by the next train, Mr. Brent?" inquired the Foreign Secretary.

"I could," answered Noel. "I merely await instructions and your decision that I'm the right man. I think it's only fair to tell you, though, that I'm no diplomatist."

"It is partly because you are not a diplomatist, and would not be suspected by those who are watching this affair to have a hand in it, that you are the man chosen for the mission," said Lord Reckworth. "Partly that and partly because you are said to be already on friendly terms with our agent in this ticklish business across the Channel—Mademoiselle Juliette de Nevers."

I pricked up my ears at the name, and I would have given a good deal to see Noel's face at that moment. I should have liked to see those of the other men, too, and find out whether there was a sly twinkle of amusement in their middle-aged eyes.

Noel Brent's flirtation with Mademoiselle de Nevers, when she was in London, had been common gossip, so of course Lord Reckworth and Uncle Gordon must have heard of it. And it struck me as a good joke that Margot's father should be instrumental in sending the man who wanted to marry his daughter back to the famous Russo-French beauty of the footlights. But perhaps there was method in the Home Secretary's madness; there generally is, I have found.

"I knew Mademoiselle de Nevers when she and her company were playing in England a year ago, or rather more," said Noel, as coolly as if he had been speaking of an ordinary acquaintance. "But I have not met her since then, so perhaps I am hardly justified in calling myself a friend of hers. I am surprised to hear that she dabbles in politics. I thought her devoted exclusively to the stage."

The foreign secretary laughed. "Mademoiselle de Nevers is one of those rare women who can keep other people's secrets as well as her own. All women can do the latter. And she is not an actress for nothing. But if you are going to help in this matter it is only fair to give you our full confidence. Mademoiselle de Nevers has for several years done yeoman's service for Great Britain."

"A political spy!" exclaimed Noel, with something of repulsion in his voice. (If he were turned against that gorgeous creature, with whom he had once been at least half in love, by the news that she was in the pay of the British government, what would be his opinion of me if he could know what I was doing at this moment, and what use I meant to make of my information? But I hoped that he would never know.)

"We don't call her such hard names," said Lord Reckworth, laughing again. "And you very likely know that she hasn't really a drop of French blood in her veins, so that she isn't guilty of treachery to her own country."

"I know that her father was a Pole, who escaped from Siberia, and took the name of de Nevers, in France, because of some property which was willed to him by a person of that name. And I know that her mother was an English-woman."

"Then you certainly know a great deal more of mademoiselle than the outside world knows," exclaimed the Foreign Secretary. "She is generally believed to be Russian and French, as you are no doubt aware; and that impression is very much to our advantage in certain transactions past, present, and—I was on the point of adding—'to come'; but mademoiselle assures us that, in the affair of the present moment, she is serving us positively for the last time. In fact, if the affair goes safely through she will be married and retire into private life—from the political as well as the theatrical stage."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Noel. And again I should have liked to see the expression on his face. "She will marry! But only if this affair goes through?"

"If it doesn't go through I'm afraid that will be the end of things generally for poor Mademoiselle de Nevers and for her fiance. It is an extraordinary complication—romantic and sensational in the extreme. But that only concerns us indirectly. When you meet her, if she chooses to take you into her confidence concerning certain private affairs which are so strangely mixed up with the gravest political issues, she is at perfect liberty to do so. I will only say now, however, that if you wish to do Mademoiselle de Nevers a service of incalculable value—a service for which she should be grateful all her life—you will do your best to put into her hands tonight at the Elysee Palace Hotel, a small packet which I now entrust to you. Should it by any misadventure be lost, probably Mademoiselle de Nevers would kill herself" (the Foreign Secretary said this in a calm tone as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world). "Altogether I don't need to impress it upon you, Mr. Brent, that you will need to guard the packet as if it were your own life."

"Something more than my own life," Noel answered gravely. "Yet it sounds simple enough. To cross over to France, travel on to Paris, and deliver a parcel to a friend at the Elysee Palace Hotel."

"Then it sounds simpler than it is," said Lord Reckworth. "In fact, nothing could well be more difficult. The contents of this envelope only reached me last night, when it was at once shown to the Prime Minister. This morning I received a cypher telegram from Mademoiselle de Nevers warning me that a certain Count Ipanoff, of the Russian embassy in Paris, whom she lately refused to marry, suspects that something is on foot. She does not know how much he guesses, or what action he may have taken, but one thing is sure—every boat and train between London and Paris will be watched even more closely than usual. A known agent of our government would certainly not get through. Now, I don't need to charge you that this business must be mentioned to no one—no one at all—and you will begin to understand why I was anxious to get hold of someone who would be the right man, yet would not necessarily be regarded with suspicion. As for me, I took every means to escape observation when I left home half an hour ago. I think I succeeded; but one can't be sure. Sir Gordon's door may very likely be under espionage now."

"We can satisfy ourselves as to that," said my uncle. "One can look out through these curtains without being seen. I have one or two peep-holes which have proved rather convenient at times."

I didn't stir, though I heard the pushing back of a chair; for I knew that to go to the window facing the square they need not come near the book screen.

"There is a fellow out there," Uncle Gordon announced a moment later. "He's talking to a cabman, and may be an ordinary 'tout.' But there's something curiously alert about him for that sort of person, and twice since I've been at the window he's glanced this way. What do you make of him, Reckworth?"

"I make this of him," exclaimed the Foreign Secretary. "That I'm pretty sure (though he's disguised now) that he's a French spy who used to hang about our embassy when I was an attache in Paris. I never forget a face."

"That settles it, Brent," said Uncle Gordon. "We'll have to smuggle you out, somehow, or the fat's in the fire. Luckily you came before Lord Reckworth, and if he was followed here you haven't yet been seen. So far, so good. Do you mind sacrificing your moustache?"

"Not in such a good cause," returned Noel, laughing.

"Then I think I've hit upon the trick by which we shall dodge the French hornets and get off without a sting. You must leave this house in the livery of a footman, and so by devious ways you get back to your own place and change. It's only a quarter-past nine now. You have plenty of time to catch the eleven o'clock train at Charing Cross."

I dared wait for no more. Swiftly and quietly I darted to the door, softly opened it, shut it again, and had passed the landing on the stairs before I heard their voices in the hall.

Already I had made up my mind what to say to Margot. It was as if they had played into my hands.

(To be Continued.)

HOW CAPITALISTS VIEW MINING LAWS

ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE CONVENTION

W. S. Robinson Tells How the Association's Work Will Affect Eastern Investors.

Just before the close of the Provincial Mining Association's convention in this city Wm. J. Robinson asked permission to address the gathering. His speech setting forth as it does the attitude of outside capitalists with respect to this province was a very interesting one.

Mr. Robinson represents Eastern capital. At different times in the columns of the Times there has appeared references to a gigantic dredging scheme which was to be carried out on the Poorfarm property in the Atlin district. This scheme has at its back of necessity a vast amount of capital. The representative of those interests is Mr. Robinson, who has visited the place and made arrangements for the installation of the plant.

All miners from the Atlin camp regard the undertaking as the greatest which has been promoted in that country. The Poorfarm property is a vast flat, which is believed to contain rich deposits of placer gold. The intention is to put a dredge at work, which will scoop its canals ahead of it. The dirt is at the same time searched for gold. Mr. Robinson is an energetic representative, and intends having the dredge operating this season.

In his address before the association he said:

"Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Convention: I became very much interested the beginning of last year in the mining resources of British Columbia. I have been in the bond and banking business for a number of years in close contact with a large amount of capital, and having met a gentleman coming from the Atlin district, who came to my office with a letter of introduction from a large responsible firm in the state of Pennsylvania, and being introduced to me as a reliable man, it was then I heard the story of this wonderful mining camp, and I came to Atlin last year in order to investigate for myself the statements which he made.

"When the notice of this association's meeting came to my address in Philadelphia, notwithstanding the fact I am a very busy man, I determined to steal a few days out of my busy life to cross the continent, and take a long arduous trip to keep in touch, and meet the men who were interested in the mining development of this great province. And gentlemen, I am glad I have come, because it has never been my pleasure to meet a more earnest, sincere and intelligent body of men assembled in a convention. I have been wonderfully impressed with the remarkable fairness of this convention, with the broad liberality of ideas expressed by the men on this floor, and the small percentage of personal prejudicial accusations. I have been very much impressed with the sincere and earnest desire of the men to get down to some adequate basis on which they could work for the best interests of the province, and have been very much impressed with the fact that little personal enmities, and the little personal gratifications have not been emphasized.

"In regard to the deliberations of this body, you gentlemen do not adequately appreciate what it really means. I have talked to capital in the East, with which I am in touch, in regard to the mineral resources of British Columbia. These gentlemen all admit you have the most remarkable mineral country in the world, and I have talked with men, with millions of dollars to invest, and while they all admit you have these most remarkable mineral deposits, and are most anxious to invest their money under proper conditions, yet at the same time when this subject has been approached to them of investing in your province, they turn up your Placer Mining Act. They say: We have no doubt in regard to the mineral wealth of British Columbia, but it is not for us to put our capital into a country where the Placer Act is so ambiguous, as they do not know what security they have.

"When I received the notice of this meeting, I said: The mining men of British Columbia are waking up, and I am going to go to the awakening. Now, gentlemen, you realize as well as I do that the one thing which is necessary to the development of this great country is capital. You cannot do very much without it, and I know capitalists that have come into this country earnest and sincere, with the purpose of development, and the conditions which have been laid upon them have been so intense they have had to retire from the field. You gentlemen have no conception of the effect that the deliberations of this body are having upon the whole entire East. I am sending out the papers every day to my different correspondents, and these men throughout the East are telling the people that the province of British Columbia is holding out an inducement, and opening a gate for the first time to the capital of the world, telling them to come over to Macedonia and help us. (Cheers.)

"Gentlemen, the question of the crown granting of placer leases is one of the most important propositions which you have had before you, and I want to say this, and it is to your credit, that you have deliberated and passed upon that question as you should, and you have offered stability of title as a security for the investment of capital, and I concur in it.

"One of the other important points which has been spoken of by your Hon. Premier has been the 2 per cent. tax. Gentlemen, I think it is wrong at all times to put a tax on success. There is nothing original in failure, but there is a whole lot of originality in success. It is too bad to say to a man who has worked hard, and is able to make a small amount of money over and above the amount of money expended in the development of his claims, that he has to pay a 2 per cent. tax on his success, while the lazy or the unsuccessful man is allowed to go Scot free. Another thing gentlemen I want to say, and that is that the 2 per cent. tax puts a premium upon dishonesty. The government of this province received, I believe, $80,000 as the result of the 2 per cent. tax, the most ridiculous thing which has ever been heard of. I know from my own personal knowledge where men have accumulated through their hard labors and diggings an immense amount of gold in Atlin, and they would boast of the fact in Seattle that they paid no 2 per cent. tax. I say that the government under the crown granting of placer claims will receive a larger revenue than they ever received before, by an equitable taxation on the lands so crown granted.

"I want to say gentlemen that you have made my task very easy, and I believe if the executive committee will do the work that you gentlemen have begun, and if the government of this country, recognizing this great general demand for an amendment to the Placer and Mineral Acts, will immediately, speedily and fairly give to the capitalistic class in the United States, or in Canada, the opportunities which they are asking for to come in and put their money in your country, that you will see in a short time British Columbia at the top of the list as the greatest mineral producing country under the sun to-day.

"Gentlemen, I am sensible to the courtesy which you have extended to me in allowing me to speak on this floor this morning, not being a delegate, but I want to say, although I am not a delegate my heart and my soul and my interests are in the mining industry of British Columbia, and I am putting into the Atlin district this year a large amount of machinery, installing a big electrical power plant, and the most modern mining dredge that has ever been put in by any mining company to work the placers of the Atlin district, and I have been asked when I started out here by a number of men who have said: 'Mr. Robinson, if when you go out there, and find that those fellows are reasonable and want to give the adequate security, why I think we can give you all the capital you want for any honest, legitimate mining proposition.' (Hear, hear.)

"The question which comes before us to-day, and one which we cannot get over, is this. Each one of us who have been engaged in mining enterprise know something about the trials and tribulations which we have had. I know in the Atlin camp this year there has been litigation after litigation. The placer miner felt himself aggrieved, and the hydraulic miner had to stop work because he was interfered with in the development of his claims. Now the point we want to get at is the absolute unanimity of idea for success, and you may then be assured of a glorious future for British Columbia. I thank you gentlemen for this courtesy which you have extended to me. (Applause.)"

DEATH OF MRS. DUPONT.

An Old Resident of This City Passed Away Last Night.

The death of Mrs. Margaret Jessie Dupont, wife of Major C. T. Dupont, removes one of the oldest and most highly respected residents of this city. For some years Mrs. Dupont has been a sufferer from chronic bronchitis. On Tuesday morning last her condition became precarious. At the advanced age of 84 years her constitution had not the vitality to throw off the attack, which terminated fatally Tuesday about midnight.

The deceased was a native of Halifax. She belonged to one of the oldest families of Eastern Canada. In 1859 she was married in her native city to Major Dupont. For some time after her marriage she lived in that city, later coming to a point near Lake Superior, where her husband occupied the position of Indian agent. About 25 years ago she came to Victoria, and has ever since been a resident of this city.

Mrs. Dupont was a lady of high intellectual attainments, possessing a great taste for literature; her reading embraced a very wide range of subjects. Even up to the time of her last sickness she valued her books among her dearest companions, and when unable to read herself she took deep enjoyment out of being read to. She had a wonderful memory, which, added to her great taste for reading, made her a most interesting conversationalist.

The funeral will take place on Friday at 10.30 a. m. from her late residence, Stadacona, and at 11 a. m. at Christ Church Cathedral.

EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE

In the City Schools—The Figures Exceed Those of January.

The attendance in the city schools in the month just past has been very satisfactory. The results as furnished by the city superintendent are especially gratifying in view of the fact that February is not among the likeliest months of the school year for record-breaking. The percentage was 90.77 against 90.54 for January, and it is quite probable that March will show an equal increase over February. As a matter of fact the attendance from the commencement of the school year has been splendid. Only once has it been less than 90 per cent., while in November and December, two of the worst months of the year, it has exceeded this figure. January's figures were as follows: Number present, 2,763; average attendance, 2,501.63; percentage, 90.54. February's statistics are:

	No. Pres.	Av. At.	P. C.
High School	199	179.78	90.34
Boys' Central	486	443.39	91.19
Girls' School	447	402.68	90.08
North Ward	453	403.83	89.14
South Park	395	362.96	91.89
Victoria West	293	268.61	92.01
Spring Ridge	146	135.81	93.02
Hillside	119	107.47	90.31
Kingston Street	124	114.10	92.01
Rock Bay	93	81.34	87.46
	2,755	2,500.78	90.77

—Rabbi H. Cohen, of the congregation Emanu-el, is shortly to leave Victoria. He has accepted a call from Tacoma, and will leave here at the beginning of next week to be formally introduced to his new congregation on Tuesday. He takes over his new pastoral duties at the expiration of his term of ministry in this city in August. During his residence here Rabbi Cohen has made a host of friends, who will greatly regret seeing him leave the city.

ITCHING, BURNING SKIN DISEASES CURED FOR THIRTY-FIVE CENTS.—Dr. Agnew's Ointment relieves in one day, and cures Tetter, Salt Rheum, Scald Head, Eczema, Barber's Itch, Ulcers, Blotches and all eruptions of the skin. It is soothing and quieting and acts like magic in the cure of all baby humors. 35c. Sold by Jackson & Co. and Hall & Co.—47.

MMENSE OPPORTUNITY.

For Getting a Beautiful Watch and Chain Free.—No Money Required. Every man, Woman, Boy of Girl Has the Same Opportunity Under Our System.

In order to have Dr. Arnold's English Toxin Pills placed in the hands of all persons suffering from bad health we make the following most liberal offer:

If you will send us your name and address and agree to sell for us twelve boxes of Dr. Arnold's English Toxin Pills at 25c. per box, we will give you ABSOLUTELY FREE A BEAUTIFUL WATCH AND CHAIN in either Ladies' or Gents' size, or your choice of twenty other premiums such as fine sets of Jewelry, Rings, Violins, Mandolins, Tea Sets, Sateen Skirts, Cameras, etc. Remember we DON'T WANT ANY MONEY until after you sell the Pills and you don't have to sell any more than 12 boxes to get the premiums. This is a bona fide offer from a reliable concern that has given thousands of dollars worth of premiums to agents all over the country. Remember also that Dr. Arnold's English Toxin Pills are a well known remedy for all diseases of the kidney and bladder, Bright's disease, diabetes, rheumatism, nervous troubles and female complaints, and are for sale by all first class druggists and dealers in medicines in all parts of the world. You have only to show them to sell them. You are not offering something that the people don't know. Our watches are the regular standard size for Ladies or Gentlemen in Nickel or Gun Metal Cases with handsome illuminated dials and reliable time-keepers, watches such as no lady or gentleman need be ashamed to carry, and they will be sent absolutely Free to all who sell only twelve boxes of these wonderful Toxin Pills. Write at once and be the first in your locality to earn one of those beautiful watches and chain. As soon as we receive your letter or post card we will send you post paid twelve boxes, together with our Illustrated Catalogue and beautifully colored card with your name and address on as our authorized agent. Bear in mind that you will not be asked to sell any more than the 12 boxes and we DON'T WANT ANY MONEY until after you have sold them. We bear all the expense and are only making this liberal offer as a method of advertising Dr. Arnold's English Toxin Pills. Don't delay, write at once and earn a beautiful present for yourself for Christmas. Address ARNOLD MEDICINE CO., Dept. 122, 50 Adelaide street east, Toronto, Ont.

BAD BLOOD.

Miss Mary M. Allan, Acton, Ont., says.—For nearly a year I was troubled with pimples on my face. I tried several remedies but none of them seemed to help me until I got Burdock Blood Bitters. I think it is a great remedy for bad blood, and take pleasure in letting you know that it did me more good than all the other remedies I tried.

DYSPEPSIA.

Miss Alberta Murray, Campbellton, N.B., says.—For five years I was troubled with Dyspepsia, and whenever I ate anything I suffered untold agony. My parents got numerous medicines for me but they did me no good. I saw Burdock Blood Bitters advertised and something seemed to say, "get a bottle." I did so, and to my surprise before I finished the bottle I found relief. I took all told 3 bottles, and have had no return of the trouble.

B.B.B. Cures Boils, Salt Rheum, Erysipelas, and all Skin Diseases.

Burdock BLOOD BITTERS

HEADACHES.

Mrs. Peter Bondreau, Glen Levit, N.B., says.—It is with pleasure and gratitude that I can testify to the wonderful power of Burdock Blood Bitters. My daughter was ailing for three years with headache and run down system. I tried several kinds of medicine but to no effect. At last a friend urged me to try B.B.B. for her, and after using two bottles she was like another being. I can never praise it enough. It is a God-send to all.

CONSTIPATION.

Miss Nellie Huggan, Merigonish, N.S., says.—I was troubled with constipation for a year and tried different medicines, but they did me no good. I then took Burdock Blood Bitters and it cured me so that I have not been troubled since.

Mr. Whorten Barkley, Morrisburg, Ont., says.—I took three bottles of Burdock Blood Bitters for constipation and found a complete cure effected.