

After some pressing the old man read, in a mumbling fashion, the lines which had cost him so much mental pain. "Ladies an' gentlemen an' frien's," he began. "Wud ye no' jist ca' them a' frien's?" his wife mildly suggested. "That wud be ower fameeliar. The gentry wudna like it, though they're few." "Weel, jist say 'Ladies an' gentlemen.'" "Tits, wife! D'ye want the neighbours to think I'm makin' a mock o' them?" "Weel, weel; ha'e it yer ain way. Peter."

"Ye dinna need to get huffy, Marget. I'm no' huffy. But I dinna want ye to say the wrang thing."

"That's the reason I'm sayin' 'Ladies an' gentlemen an' frien's.' It includes everybody."

"Except yer enemies," she said in a poor attempt to be jocular. "My! but ye're pernickety! Is 't you or me that's to mak' the presentation?" Mrs. McBean swallowed her natural desire for the last word, sighed, and requested her man to proceed. About five minutes later he did so.

"Ladies an' gentlemen an' frien's, it gives me great plesure an' satisfaction to behold ye a' gethered together on this important occasion." (This was a quotation from a speech to which Mr. McBean had listened some years previously. He now wished he had listened more attentively.) "As each o' ye has

gi'es him the maist unspeakable plesure an' satisfaction to get it."

Mr. McBean paused and drew a long breath.

"That's a' I've got wrote," he said, and eyed his spouse as if waiting for her opinion.

It was slow in coming. Mrs. McBean felt that all was not right with the speech, yet for the life of her she could not have stated definitely what was wrong.

"Ha'e ye set yer heart on speakin' about the meenister's satisfaction?" she ventured timidly at last. "Wud it no' be best to let him speak for himsel' about that, Peter?"

"What's wrang wi' me speakin' about it? Is 't no' the truth?"

"Ou, ay, I suppose it's the truth, but—"

"Oh, anything to please ye! I'll score it out! Is there anything else that's wrang?"

"Na, na. . . . But I was wonderin' if he wud like ye tellin' everybody about the uncle an' the siller teapot. Ye see—"

"Anything else?" cried Mr. McBean in a voice that seemed to burst from his chest.

"Na, na, Peter. Yer speech is rale fine—"

"That's no' the speech; it's merely the introductory remarks."

Mrs. McBean gasped, and recovered herself.



Group of Cree Indians at Berens River, Lake Winnipeg. Grandson of the great Chief Peguis in white coat.

had the plesure an' satisfaction o' subscribin' for this bewtiful an' gorgeous bookcase for oor honoured an' beloved meenister's simmy-jubilee, ye are a' aware o' the reason for this getherin' an' presentation. Ye are dootless surprised an' astonished to behold sich a bewtiful an' gorgeous bookcase for yer money, an' I've got to explain that, if it hadna been for Maister Drummond giein' five pound—five pound!—the bookcase wud ha'e been a lot inferior. Ye a' ken—"

"D'ye think ye should speak aboot the five pound frae Maister Drummond, Peter?" put in Mrs. McBean.

"What wey should I no' speak aboot it?" he asked with some asprity.

Mrs. McBean found it impossible to express her objection, and presently begged him to continue.

"Ye a' ken," he resumed, "hoo weel aff we are wi' oor honoured an' beloved meenister, the Reverend Maister Shelbrook, which has labored amongst us for exactly five-an'-twenty year. He cam' to us a young man, wi' sma' experience, but noo he's aulder an' wiser. We're rale proud o' him an' his honoured and beloved wife an' faymily. He preferred a bookcase to a siller teapot, etcetera, his wife's uncle havin' providet the same, accordin' to his last will an' testament. An' so, ladies an' gentlemen an' frien's, I arise for to say that it gi'es us a' the maist unspeakable plesure an' satisfaction to present him wi' sich a bewtiful an' gorgeous bookcase, an' I'm sure it

"Weel, it's rale fine, whatever it is. . . . But—but d'ye think ye need to speak aboot the meenister bein' aulder an' wiser nor when he cam' first to the kirk? Mind ye, I'm no sayin' there's onything wrang—Oh Peter!"

The exclamation was full of dismay caused by the sight of the old man crumpling up the paper and flinging it into the fire.

"Oh, Peter!"

"I hope ye're pleased noo!" he said, half resentful, half ashamed. "Ye'll maybe explain at the meetin' on Friday that ye didna conseeder ma speech fit to be spoke. I wash ma han's o' the business. They can get some ither body to mak' the presentation. . . . I'm gaun to ma bed."

"Oh, Peter!" she sighed.

But he refused to return to the subject. Mr. McBean slept badly that night, and Mrs. McBean slept not at all. Frequently he muttered in his sleep, and she caught such phrases as "honoured and beloved," "unspeakable plesure an' satisfaction," "gorgeous bookcase." The old woman was distressed and sore afraid. She knew that her man would never seek the assistance of his neighbours—not that she desired him to do so, for she had some pride of her own. But she dreaded, for his sake, any blundering or breakdown on the great occasion; and still more—far more—she dreaded the effect of the strain on his mind. It seemed to her that he was a different

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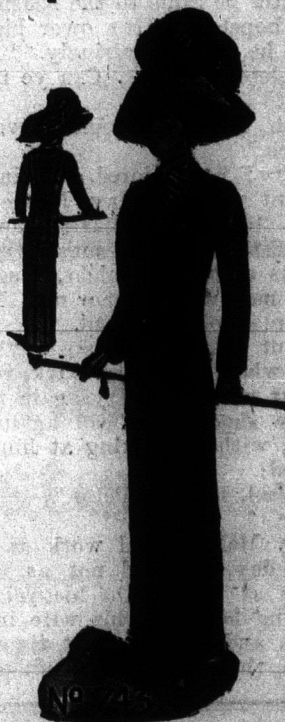
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