

MY GLACIAL HERO.

BY SARA ELEANOR NICHOLSON.

MONTREAL, Wednesday, January 23, 1889.

Here we are, Auntie and I, comfortably ensconced at the Windsor Hotel, awaiting the carnival which commences next Monday. It was so fortunate Aunt Nellie prevailed on papa to let her carry me off from the trouble and worries of our large household and limited means, where I, as papa's eldest daughter, have to bear patiently his tantrums, which he doesn't mean, and his sharp speeches, at which, of course, he never expects anyone to take offence; then it is also my duty to patch and mend for the little brothers and sisters, and make two dollars do the duty of five. Oh, dear, those household accounts, what a sad bother they are! But never mind for the present, that is all over, and I am in Montreal, free to enjoy myself to my heart's content. It really is wonderful, though, how I got here. Aunt Nellie, my dear dead mother's only sister, arrived unexpectedly from England last week, and thinking me thin and overworked, by dint of coaxing papa and warning him that if I hadn't a holiday a decline would be my fate, she obtained his consent to my accompanying her to the carnival.

The dressing bell is just ringing, and if I expect to be in time for dinner I must stop writing and don my brave apparel.

Evening.

Now that I have put on my dressing gown and brushed my hair, I think it would be a good plan to sit by the fire awhile and write this evening's experience.

At dinner time Aunt Nellie came to see if I was ready to go down stairs, and when she entered the room my admiration was so great that I insisted on turning her round and round so as to get a good view of her pretty pale grey and pink gown, which fitted to perfection and suited her delicate colouring. It seems so strange to think she has been a widow ten years and is only thirty-two now. She was a great deal younger than mother, and her marriage was one of compulsion, as grandfather, who had lost all his money a short time before, and was partially paralyzed, had insisted on Aunt Nellie taking Mr. Armistage, who was very rich, middle-aged and commonplace.

Well, to resume the thread of my discourse, Auntie and I wended our way through the long corridors of the hotel to the dining-room, where we had great difficulty in obtaining seats, the crowd being so great on account of the approaching carnival. Well, at last we managed to get a table with an old lady of severe aspect, who stared at us in a most uncompromising manner, and finally broke the silence by demanding, in sepulchral tones:

"Are you two females travelling absolutely without a male escort, and did you enter this dining-room alone?"

Auntie sighed and admitted that we were unmanned, but that it was not our fault, and that a ravenous appetite had driven us from our lair to seek some necessary nourishment.

"Hum," said the old lady, snapping her iron jaw like a rat-trap. "Very wrong, very wrong, indeed; for myself I never attempt to travel without Peter; he's my husband, and I always allow him to accompany me."

Whether she always allowed the unhappy Peter to pay the bills as well we did not enquire, but turned all our attention on our dinner, which the waiter had just brought.

Heigh-ho! I'm so sleepy. If I don't look out I'll fall asleep and drop off my chair into the fire.

Saturday.

After breakfast Aunt Nellie and I went for a sleigh drive. Near St. James street we saw the snowshoers' arch in course of erection, and a large lion made of ice crouching near. Auntie and I thought between ourselves that His Majesty the King of Beasts looked more like a sheep than the Monarch of the Forest.

From St. James street we went to a fashionable modiste, where Auntie left orders for two lovely ball gowns, a dinner dress and visiting costume to be made for me, and then to crown all she took me to a furrier and presented me with such a beauty of a sealskin coat. I shan't know myself in all this finery, and expect to stand staring, like the little maid "that I've heard tell," and declare "This is none of me." Well, "fine feathers make fine birds."

Evening.

Our eccentric old lady did not sit at the table with us to-night. Probably she and "Peter" had a tête-à-tête meal—that is, provided she allowed him to share her festal board. Instead, we were shown to a table at which two men sat, who, from the cut of their clothes, I at once set down as English. One of them, a fine, soldierly looking man of forty, whose face belonged to that class of beauty described as "icily regular, splendidly null," quite took my fancy. The other, whom the older man called "Jack," was a good-looking young fellow about twenty-two years of age, with a dark complexion and brilliant hazel eyes, of which he seemed to make good use; for once, on looking up, I caught him scanning Aunt Nellie and me in a most critical manner. The old man, however, did not take the slightest notice, but coolly finished his soup before raising his eyes to see who was his vis-à-vis, but when he did so he gave such a violent start that Aunt Nellie instinctively raised her eyes also, and then half bowed. No word passed between them, however, and after dinner Auntie, instead of promenading the corridors with me, complained of a violent headache and went to her room. I have a

great mind to go and see if she is asleep, so for the present will write no more.

Tuesday.

I have not been able to look on your fair white face, dear Diary, since Saturday, we have been on such a rush. On Sunday morning Aunt Nellie's head ached too badly for her to get up, so that I was obliged to go down to breakfast alone. The dark young man was the only occupant of the table, and as I sat down opposite him I saw him peep over the top of his newspaper, and on being caught, duck his head and diligently continue reading. Just about this time a funny incident occurred which makes me laugh to think of. A waiter who had not served us before came over to me, and seeing how literally wrapt in his paper master "Jack" was, approached me and asked what I would like to order, and on being told disappeared for a quarter of an hour, after which time he returned, tray in hand, and placed it before me. Judge of my astonishment when I saw he had duplicated my order. After setting two cups, a teapot, sugar bowl and cream pitcher before me, he requested me in strong Milesian accents to "Poor a cup o' tay out for the gentleman!"

"Perhaps he doesn't care for tea," I said in an undertone to the waiter, who quickly replied:

"Sure, m'am, if you pour it out for him he couldn't help drinking it, if it was cowld poison itself. Then in a lower tone, "Long life to you, m'am; I knew you for a bride the minute I clapt eyes on ye!"

At this moment the newspaper opposite me began to crackle and wobble in such an extraordinary manner that I knew the gentleman inside must be quite as convulsed with laughter as the sharer of his table. How Auntie laughed when I told her the story. She says the older man, whom I call "My Glacial Hero," is Major Savile, and that she used to know him long ago, but that they had a difference of opinion on some matter, and had not met for a great many years until last night. The younger man, she thinks, must be Jack Scarlett, whom she used to know in his pinafore days. After breakfast I went to church, and on the way back to the hotel I saw before me the Colonel's stiff military figure. As I ran up the steps he held the hotel door open for me, and raised his hat as I passed. A flicker of a smile lit up his countenance, and I knew from that that Jack had told him of the episode of the breakfast table.

On Monday we went to see the entrance of the Governor-General into the city and the manning of the snowshoers' arch. The bitter cold rather took away from the enjoyment of the morning, and the jostling by the crowd was quite a trial to one's temper. Sitting by the warm fireside, I am quite glad I went, but at the time Aunt Nellie and I were quite savage at the idea of wilfully freezing ourselves. That evening we went to the Ice Palace, where the Governor-General declared the Carnival open.

What a wonderful structure the Ice Palace is, reminding one of Cowper's description of the one built for the Empress Catherine of Russia:

No forest fell

When thou wouldst build; but thou didst hew the floods
And make thy marble of the glassy wave.
Silently as a dream the fabric rose,
No sound of hammer nor of saw was there.
Ice upon ice, the well adjusted parts
Were soon conjoined; nor other cement asked
Than water interfused to make them one.
Lamps gracefully disposed and of all hues
Illumined every side; a watery light
Gleaned through the clear transparency that seemed
Another moon new risen or meteor fall'n
From heaven to earth of lambent flame serene.

I went this morning to the rink and practised skating for some time. While there I met Mr. Cameron, an old friend of ours, from Halifax, who is in Montreal for the carnival, and we had great fun waltzing together on the ice. Just in the middle of a pirouette I caught a glimpse of that Jack staring at me. In confusion I stumbled, and would have had a nasty tumble but for Mr. Cameron, who caught me. I wish to goodness that Jack's eyes wouldn't laugh that way.

Auntie and "My Glacial Hero" must have had a big row while they were about it; for I never saw two people more determined to keep out of each other's sight, and just because they try not to meet they invariably come face to face in all sorts of unexpected places. I wonder whose fault the quarrel was and what it was all about.

My visiting dress was sent home to-day at luncheon time, and I wore it at an "At Home" this afternoon with my sealskin coat and new black velvet hat. Auntie said I looked nice'y, and that she was much pleased with my appearance.

The "At Home" was given by Mrs. Montmorency, and the rooms were simply crowded. Auntie and I were standing near the door talking to our hostess, when she suddenly turned round to a man who had just entered and said: "Major Savile, I want to introduce you to a countrywoman of your own, Mrs. Armytage; probably she would like some tea, which you can get in the other room." Then turning to that Jack, who had followed Major Savile into the room, she introduced him to me as Sir John Scarlett. The idea of that Jack being a "Sir," I can't get over it. Despite the grandeur of his title, though, he is just too nice for anything—quite the nicest man I've ever met. He wants me to teach him to waltz on his skates to-morrow morning, as he says he became quite enamoured of the exercise while watching it to-day.

Major Savile and Aunt Nellie ignored their introduction and would have nothing to say to each other. Certainly it was awkward for these poor things; but it must have been a very, very serious quarrel which would make

Auntie, who is generally so gentle and loving, so determined to ignore his presence. I am perfectly certain it was all the "icily regular, splendidly null" man's fault.

Friday.

We are to have a great ball in the hotel this evening, to which Aunt Nellie and I are going. Auntie's dress is to be black velvet, and mine white tulle trimmed with sprays of elder flowers and white heather.

Last night we went to the theatre with a party of Americans to see a play called "Paul Kavar," the scene of which is laid during the Reign of Terror in France, and was so well acted that we all returned to the hotel in a very creepy-crawley, nervous condition.

Oh! I forgot to say that Jack and I had a most delightful morning at the rink, and that he skates remarkably well, but knows nothing whatever about waltzing.

He must be an awful tease, judging from a trick he told me he and a friend played on his sister, who is strikingly like him in appearance. It happened when he was eighteen, so that may serve as an excuse. She was wild about horses, and one day, knowing that she was expected on the hunting field, he managed to steal her riding habit, and by dint of much squeezing got himself into it, and when dressed, calling a dust of powder and a touch of rouge to his aid, he looked a most fascinating girl. Whip in hand, he descended the staircase, and at the hall door met his companion, who hurried him down the avenue to where he had hidden two horses, which the wretches mounted in hot haste for fear of discovery. As they rode along, both puffing away at cigarettes, and looking altogether a wee bit rapid, they met several members of the Hunt, who seemed a little bewildered at the young lady's behaviour. But, very fortunately for the poor sister, her mother finding what great distress she was in about the loss of the habit, lent one of hers, so that she was able to accompany her father to the meet. Just before they came up with the hounds they fortunately encountered the two scapegraces, who were sent home in disgrace. It seems so funny to think his sister is engaged now to the very man who helped to play the trick on her.

Saturday.

I am so tired after the ball that I have not made the slightest effort to get up out of bed, although it is now past eleven o'clock. What a ball that was, to be sure! Shall I ever forget it? No, never. The music was just too lovely, and one couldn't help dancing every time the band played. I know it was dreadful, but I gave that Jack seven dances, and Auntie is not at all pleased, and when I told her I wouldn't do it again she said that probably I'd never get the chance. Somehow or other, though, dear Diary, I think I shall; for last night he asked me, when I said my home was in Halifax, whether I would be glad to see him if he came there, and when I answered in the affirmative he told me that in March he intends spending a few weeks, before leaving for England, with Captain Brown, who is stationed in Halifax. Won't it be fun! We had such a long talk about England, and about his home. He told me his mother died two years ago, and his father, of whom he was passionately fond, about a year since, so that he is now head of the house. His only sister is to be married next May, and is at present in London visiting her future mother-in-law and deep in the delights of trousseau shopping.

"My Glacial Hero" did not put in an appearance last night, and when I asked Sir John—I suppose I must give him the benefit of his title—where he was, he answered that the Major did not care for balls and gaiety of that kind, and then added:

"Don't imagine, though, from my speech, that he is an awful muff, for he is out-and-out the finest fellow it has ever been my lot to fall in with. But the fact of the matter is an unfortunate love affair has darkened his whole life."

I wonder what can be the matter with poor dear Aunt Nellie. Last night I tore my dress and ran to Auntie's room to get a needle and thread, thinking she was down stairs. Just as I opened the door I caught a glimpse of her kneeling by the window, her head bowed on her hands, crying as though her heart would break. Of course I quietly shut the door and went to my own room, where I accomplished my mending without Aunt Nellie ever knowing I had seen her.

(To be continued.)

THE STAGE.

At the Academy of Music, Montreal, The McDowells have been scoring a triumph. They were greeted last week with full houses every evening. Mr. and Mrs. McDowell (Fanny Reeves) are old-time favourites here, and have lost none of their charm and attractiveness. On Friday night, in "Our Regiment," they appeared to particular advantage. Their support is good—Miss Arthur being especially vivacious and winning. This young lady plays the part of Vera, the heroine, in "Moths," in which she displays great histrionic ability. This week the same company are occupying the Academy boards. They gave "The Private Secretary," "Moths," and "Our Boys," Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday respectively, and Thursday "The Two Orphans." Pygmalion and Galatea is day on the bills for Friday. The performance of Mr. and Mrs. McDowell and Miss Arthur in this beautiful play is very highly spoken of by those who witnessed it in Ottawa, and we bespeak for them a full house on this occasion. Saturday the ever popular "Shaughraun" will be given, in which Mr. McDowell has made himself famous.