

A fortnight. Yet never a word came through to break the silence. Her mood varied now between keen expectation and the most dreadful despair. Something had happened to the ship in which Jerrold had sailed. Or he had been taken worse, and had perhaps died before port was reached. Oh, it was awful! She could not bear much more. The weather did not help her. Day after day the rain came down with a steady persistence that could surely be matched nowhere save in old England. On the mainland keen winds were blowing, and the ground was covered in snow. The sun shone every day, though it had a cold brilliance without warmth. But the strip of sea running between the mainland and the island made a great difference; what was cold brilliance in one place was damp gloom in the other.

Uncle Sep was mending slowly. He was able now to leave his bed for a few hours every day. But Mrs. Bailey had been taken ill, and Cynthia knew that, when the news of Jerrold's arrival in Canada did come, she would not be able to go to meet him, because she would not be able to leave Uncle Sep. She had to leave him alone for two or three hours every day, while she went to do her neighbourly duty for Mrs. Bailey. But she always came back along the trail with a keen dread at heart lest anything had gone wrong with the old man during her absence.