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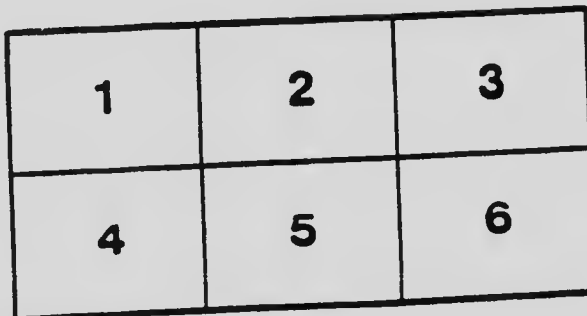
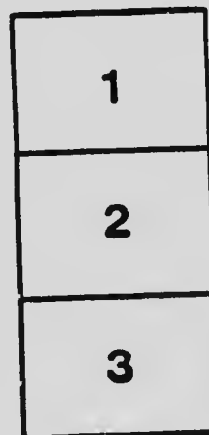
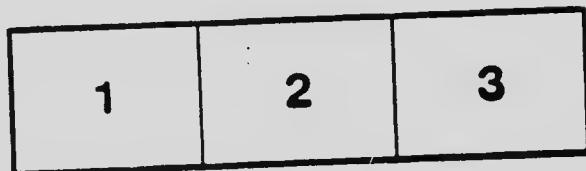
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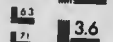
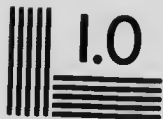
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and I
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*By the Author of
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JULIA AND I IN CANADA

CHAPTER I

I HAD always felt that what I chiefly needed to the improvement of my mind was travel, especially after spending the first thirty-seven years of life almost entirely in my native village, where the society, though very select, is, as Julia remarks, not as stimulating as it might be. Still I had never expected to take a journey of any kind, and it was something of a shock to me when I became convinced that my duty was pointing me on the road to Canada, a place of whose position north of the United States I had a vague geographical conception, while the chief fact in its connection with my mind was that the thermometer remained permanently fixed below zero for the chief part of the year.

It was, I repeat, in the nature of a shock to a middle-aged person like myself who has passed her whole life

in a quiet village, with few excitements or distractions, occupied all day in housekeeping, gardening or reading. Of social amenities I had enjoyed very few excepting the occasional calls of friends who drop in to tea at long intervals and the subject of whose conversation is confined to the church bazaar and detailed accounts of the chronic ailments from which some of our fellow-parishioners unfortunately suffer. So that to turn my back on all those small happenings which had hitherto made up for me the sum total of existence, to face towards the unknown and untried in a distant country required a good deal of both mental and physical effort, and I will not deny that I wept a little to myself when I clearly saw the inevitability of my departure for the land of snow and wild Indians, even though I knew they were kept now on Government reservations and had renounced their scalping habits in favour of agriculture and beadwork.

Julia, my sister, who has enjoyed the advantages of foreign travel, while I have had to stay at home and look after other people's comforts,—Julia, who is very modern in her ideas and a little impatient of the mental standard prevailing with us, was very pleased when I unfolded to her my project, receiving it with the utmost enthusiasm. She immediately proposed to accompany me to America and help me to settle in my new surroundings before she returned to England. As I had never in my life set foot on anything sea-going, while Julia, in pursuit of her former career as governess

in foreign families, had an intimate acquaintance with Channel crossings and the general ethics of travel I accepted her offer with relief, although at the same time I resented the advice she gave me in such quantities, for if I *am* inexperienced I don't want to be continually reminded of it.

"It's just the very thing for you, Priscilla," she said in her hard-hearted tactless fashion, "you've been stuck at home so long that you've never had a chance to see anything beyond our stupid village which is chiefly inhabited by the dearest old maids—yes, some of them wear trousers I know—never mind—the dearest old maids in the world, as Early Victorian as they can be and about as stimulating as cocoa. This journey is just come in time to save you from adding one more to the number. Oh, yes, I daresay they are nice old creatures, prattling about their geraniums and roses and pet dogs, and they think themselves wildly enterprising if they go up to London now and then by the Thursday excursion and spend the day at Harrod's Stores, coming back with a cushion cover or an afternoon tea-cloth at something three farthings which they might have just as well bought at home. I know you yourself are very intellectual and try to keep abreast of the great thoughts of the day, but it's no good attempting to live at second hand in books, your views of life get distorted and your ideas on many subjects are quite false."

Julia has a brutal way of telling her relations what is wrong with them mentally, and diagnoses their

spiritual deficiencies and want of brain-tone with the glibness of a physician. To me this habit of hers is absolutely detestable even when she smiles all the time and pats me on the shoulder—to show her kindly feeling, I suppose.

I disapprove of many of Julia's ways. They irritate me. Although only four years younger than I am she refuses to descend as she calls it "the fatal decline into fatness, frumpishness, and hygienic boots," so she wears bright up-to-date head-gear, keeps slender by dint of exercise I suppose, for she certainly doesn't diet, waves her hair and supplements it when fashion demands and tells me I look "awful, simply awful" in the hats which I conscientiously trim myself. She says that's just what they look like—"conscientious" and "struggling under difficulties" and "hoping for better things by and by," and that they are the most depressing objects in the landscape. She absolutely ignores the fact that here again I have only been inspired by a sense of duty. It was not my fault that Aunt Susan, dead now for fifteen years, should have had during the last decade of her life one all-absorbing interest—attendance at bargain sales, and a delirious desire to buy everything that was "marked down," so that she had accumulated at the time of her lamented decease an unusually large stock of rather old-fashioned mourning, millinery, and dressmaking materials, which we, as her nieces and heirs-at-law, inherited. I always tried to use up some of Aunt Susan's trimmings whenever I

had a new frock, though I noticed the dressmaker always sighed and seemed slightly dubious whenever I produced them, while Julia frankly said that they gave the last touch of complete dowdiness to the clothes. One day to my horror I discovered my sister in a corner of the garden burning yards and yards of beautiful but antiquated jet trimming which must have cost a little fortune when new. I was vexed at Julia's wasteful recklessness.

"Why not give it to the deserving poor?" I remonstrated.

"Why, what have they done to deserve this?" she retorted, flinging another boxful into the heart of the flames, and I turned away in indignation, leaving her to pursue her work of reckless destruction undisturbed.

Julia and I each pursue our separate ideals in life, mutually disapproving. She tells me with her accustomed candour that by means of my beautiful self-sacrificing spirit I cultivate selfishness and parasitism in those I wish to benefit, while her theory about her own line of conduct is that if she tries to have a good time herself, she will be more likely to know how to give a good time to some one else. "Be good, but you'll get no fun" is one of her favourite mottoes. She says she hates stodgy people and thinks the world needs brisking up a little, especially the lower middle-class portion of it to which we belong.

But to return to Canada and my reasons for going there. Julia and I had continued to live quietly in

Aunt Susan's house on the little heritage she left us, when Jack, our only brother, who is fifteen years younger than I am and to whom I have always tried to be in the place of a mother, received an offer of a very promising position in some engineering works in Montreal. He had always been somewhat of an anxiety to me owing to his seeming inability to make much headway in the world, though he always declared that if he only got his chance he would get on all right. It was rather hard on him and certainly complicated matters that when the offer came he had just become engaged—with absolutely no prospects—to Poppy Skelton, a very nice girl with black hair and curly lashes, who promised to wait years and years for him if necessary. Of course he hated to go away and leave her just in the beginning of Love's Young Dream, but the firm in Canada sent callous and peremptory orders in a typewritten letter to the effect that they "wished Mr. John Floyd to enter upon his new duties not later than August 10th," which was in exactly three weeks' time. Jack was acutely distressed. He had hoped for a leave-taking of at least three or four months and would in the first spasm of grief have backed out of the bargain altogether if Poppy and I and Julia had not held him to it with both hands, Poppy promising to come out and marry him whenever he gave the word, while I told him I would follow in a few weeks, as soon in fact as I could wind up my affairs in England, and make a little home for him out there until his financial position permitted him

the luxury of matrimony. In the meantime he was to learn as much as he could about Canadian ways, and study rents, rates and taxes out there, advising me also as to the most necessary household articles to bring out.

Julia, who is unnecessarily extravagant and has no idea of true economy, insisted on presenting Jack with new travelling trunks, though there were some good old leather ones of my grandfather's lying up in the attic, but I heard her muttering something about "not handicapping the poor boy at the start like that," and I must say Jack was pleased, and said that first impressions meant a good deal to a man's career.

The last few days before his departure were rather horrid. Everybody fictitiously cheerful, gulping down their emotions and Poppy running in and out all day and walking round the garden with her lover in the moonlight while Julia and I, quite tired out with preparations, yawned our heads off with weariness and wished that our duties as chaperones would have allowed us to go to bed, leaving the young people to their sweet oblivion of time and propriety.

I thought that Jack might have been a little more considerate of *my* feelings those last few days, but Julia says that boys and girls of that age never are and it's of no use to expect it, we must console ourselves with the thought that we were the same—I know *I* never was whatever Julia may have been—and that Jack's sons and daughters will be just as trying to him when

their day comes. It may be true, but it did not console me in the least for his neglect.

Everybody had told us that Jack must absolutely have a fur-lined coat to help him withstand Canadian winters, but we found all the prices in the catalogues quite prohibitive, and Julia declared the sheepskin coats worn with the wool inside by German droschky-drivers were exactly what he wanted and was with difficulty prevented from writing to a German friend to procure a suitable one for him, but Jack positively refused to wear sheepskin and said he preferred to freeze, and just when they were being rather disagreeable and personal to each other about it I bethought me of an old fur-lined mantle of Aunt Susan's which had been hanging in the cupboard for years, so I took it downstairs to show them and to distract their minds.

"You goose," said Julia, "why didn't you bring it out before, what's the use of squabbling over sheepskin when you've got grey squirrel eating its head off in the wardrobe?"

I feel annoyed with Julia when she talks like that, especially as she sweeps aside in the rudest way possible all explanations of mine, which she characterizes as "laborious," but the upshot of it was we sent the cloak to our local furrier, who has a great reputation in his own line and Jack's tailor made a special top coat for the fur lining and when a beaver collar (at an additional expense of fourteen shillings) was added the result was very fine. When it came home by the carrier,

although it was one of the most close and suffocatingly hot days of the year, we all tried it on in turn, and Jack sat for half an hour in it opposite the wardrobe looking-glass studying the effect from every point of view, while Poppy and the rest of us hovered round admiringly. We all agreed that it gave him a look of prosperity and financial success which was of good omen for the future.

I will not dwell on those dreadful hours preceding Jack's departure, nor describe in detail the poor boy wandering from place to place looking dismally at his old fishing-rods and stamp-albums and treasured schoolboy rubbish which it was impossible to take with him. We had decided not to accompany him to Liverpool, and it would have been quite unbearable to see his face at the window of the train grow smaller and smaller in the distance as it moved out of the station, if we had not been comforted by the thought of following him in a few weeks' time. Poppy, of course, was not coming with us, but she bore the parting very pluckily none the less.

We began preparations at once for our departure, and Julia as usual scoffed at my desire to utilize what she called "a lot of worm-eaten old wooden boxes." This is one of the many points on which Julia and I differ. She prefers novelty and change, while I cling to the old and the accustomed; something which has the aroma and association of bygone days still surrounding it, but when I mentioned this to my sister she retorted that "aroma and association with one's

ancestors was all right in things that were stable and fixed in one place, but even if they didn't fall to pieces on the way there was no reason why grandmamma's bonnet-boxes should be bumped about in their old age on board ship." Although I had ceded to her desire about Jack's trunks I was adamant in this instance, so she sulkily began packing the old wooden boxes, tying them up afterwards with a very unnecessary amount of strong cord and laying stress on the fact that it was no use trying to nail them up, as the nails wouldn't hold in the rotten wood.

Of course I had made a list of all the household articles which civilization demands, confining myself strictly to what I thought indispensable to a house, remorselessly lopping off all the luxuries of life and reluctantly striking off the list the few books and pictures I had hoped to take ; but at an early stage of the packing I discovered that obviously the chief part of our luggage must consist of blankets, for four blankets completely filled our largest trunk and in view of the rigorous Canadian climate I had decided that three blankets and an eiderdown for each bed was the smallest amount of covering with which we could maintain an adequate degree of warmth. I took the opportunity of Julia's absence for two days in London to get on with my packing, as I was growing tired of her frequent interference. All the same it was disquieting to find that so much of our cubic feet of trunk allowance was swallowed up by blankets leaving an insignificant

space for other equally necessary and bulky articles, but I pondered the problem alone, saying nothing to Julia on her return until the next morning when she appeared after breakfast with pillows, cushions, knives, silver (at least it is only electroplate excepting half a dozen teaspoons), towels, pillow-cases, tablecloths and other indispensable things.

"Julia," I said faintly, "I'm sorry, but there's no more room in the boxes, I've only my cabin trunk left for my clothes as it is, but perhaps I can get a few things in between——" She did not let me finish.

"What's in the boxes?" she demanded curtly.

"Blankets," I replied; "they take an awful lot of room."

"Of course they do," said Julia; "any fool could tell you that. Out with them"; and she began tossing them out on the floor.

"But, Julia," I remonstrated, "with a climate like that we *must* be provided with warm things." Julia continued to haul out blankets, leaving the boxes empty.

"My dear Priscilla," she said in that patronizing tone of hers, "you haven't the most elementary idea of packing. Things like blankets pack themselves."

"How?" I demanded angrily, feeling more and more how insufferable Julia's airs of superiority were becoming.

"Why you just make 'em into a bundle with the eiderdown quilts in the middle, wrap one or two rugs

outside—we've heaps of rugs—tie up as tightly as possible with cord and put a strap round—it's quite simple. You don't need boxes for blankets, they won't smash."

"A nice mess they'll be in," I retorted, with a vision of Atlantic waves pouring over our bed-coverings, "but do as you like; I'll leave it to you as you're so clever."

Julia smiled, ignoring the irony of the remark and put aside one or two blankets, substituting in their places woollen rugs of which we had several; she then introduced a small folding table and two folding chairs in the middle "to give it backbone," and filled up any unevenness with a few cushions, making in the end, I must say, a very compact neat bundle.

"We can have that in our cabin," she said, "as all cabin luggage is free. Now I've another idea," and she took two pillows, which without asking me she had covered with green linen, and rolled them up in our travelling rugs.

"We shall want an extra pillow in our berths I expect, and they'll do for our deck chairs and for the beds when we get there," she remarked as she tucked in the ends of the straps, fixing a label on them in a final, decisive kind of way as though we were leaving England the next day, though there were still three weeks before we started.

"When a thing's done, it's done, and you don't need to worry about it any more," said Julia firmly, putting

the bundles in the "Wanted" heap, while I went on with the "Not Wanted" boxes.

I had had a serious skirmish with her about the tickets, as she wanted to travel first class while I as sternly refused to countenance such needless extravagance. Julia said that when she was on the sea she wanted all the comforts that money could buy and lots more that it couldn't. I dare say she did. She is very fond of her own comfort. At last we compromised on a second-class four-berth outside cabin to ourselves, and I still can't see why, if she expected to be so ill all the time, she should have laid such stress on the "class of people" to be met travelling second, as, if one lies helpless in a berth, oblivious to all external surroundings, the social status of fellow-passengers can hardly be of much importance one way or the other.

I had also concealed from Julia up to the last possible moment my intention of taking "Peter," my little wire-haired terrier, with me to the New World. Peter and I had never been separated in our lives and at a time when so many links with the past had to be snapped, I was determined to hold on tightly to my dog, cost what it might. Of course Julia looked dubious when she heard that I had already taken Peter's ticket on the *Patrician*, and depicted in moving terms the discomforts of a journey encumbered by a dog and the misery to the dog on board ship.

"Have you tried to realize?" she said, "what it will be to have Peter on a lead in that crowd of people all

encumbered with luggage and each one wanting to be first on board? No, I'm sure you haven't, or you wouldn't have thought of such an insensate proceeding. Poor Peter!" and she stroked him tenderly "Poor old Peter! you've a *dreadful* time before you—you poor old thing." Peter licked her nose and she gave him a piece of the bread and butter she was eating, which is quite against her principles as she *never* feeds dogs at table.

"There's no quarantine for dogs in Canada," I said hopefully, but Julia with the fervour of an inspired Cassandra continued none the less to prophesy dire catastrophes which the future held for us and Peter. One day she depicted him, fallen overboard in mid-Atlantic, vainly struggling to paddle after the steamer till he "sank to rise no more," but as she afterwards mentioned the improbability of our obtaining any lodgings in Montreal "with a dog in tow," must have dismissed this harrowing possibility.

"How much did his ticket cost?" she asked.

"Two pounds," I said gently, while Peter looked at us both inquiringly out of his nice brown eyes.

"It's an insensate idea," repeated Julia. "I can't bear to think of the poor animal getting lost in Montreal and taken to the Home for Lost Dogs and cremated next day. It's a shame."

CHAPTER II

AS soon as the news of our impending departure became known, friends and acquaintances kept constantly arriving at the most inopportune moments to bid us farewell. Some were people whom we had not seen for ten years, "and didn't care if we never saw them for another ten" as Julia tartly remarked, but, obviously inspired by the most benevolent feelings, they appeared unexpectedly and disconcertingly, wearing self-conscious smiles, just at the unhappy moment when, tired, dirty and dishevelled, we were wrestling with the straps of our heavy luggage, or perhaps they reached our garden gate as we breathlessly buttoned our gloves while rushing down the path with the intention of going into town by the next train to buy warm under-clothing and other necessities.

Of course we had to wreathe our faces in welcoming smiles and "bear it with Christian patience," as Julia phrased it, though neither Christianity nor patience was conspicuously apparent in her attitude to the guests, but she helped me to entertain them to the best of my exhausted ability and we plied them with tea

and polite conversation, keeping an eye on the time-piece so that they should be sure not to miss the next train back again.

They all gave us a good deal of advice about Canada—second-hand advice, as none of them had ever been there—and it was strange how every one persisted in the idea that we were going out farming to the wild west, so that by force of constant reiteration we became almost to believe it ourselves and to wonder if we ought not to spend some time in the study of agricultural problems before starting for the New World. Julia did indeed buy a pamphlet on the rearing of pigs and a treatise on bacon-curing in case Jack should decide later on to take up land. She declared that she had been able to mentally assimilate the contents of these books in five minutes and acquired a good deal of theoretical knowledge on kindred subjects in the same "tabloid form" as she called it.

When for the sixth time she was asked if she understood how to milk, she replied that she had no doubt she could if she tried and that she fully intended to take the earliest opportunity of going into the streets of Montreal with a lasso and compelling the first cow she caught to come and submit to the operation. I think it was wrong of Julia to say this to Miss Styche of all people, because that lady evidently believed it and gave a gasp of mingled admiration and despair.

"You're a regular dare-devil, Miss Floyd, if I may be excused the expression," she said, "just the person to

emigrate, I'm sure." And Julia smiled and said she thought so herself.

Another lady told us cheerful stories of the experiences of a cousin of her husband's who together with his sister became demented by the extreme severity of the Canadian winter, and Julia and I looked at each other furtively, with secret misgivings as to the other's brain resistance of climatic influences.

The one visitor whose attitude of mind was really invigorating and optimistic, though Julia had groaned on seeing her bonnet pass the window on the way to our front door, was old Mrs. Faraway, who assumed with calm conviction that our journey, so far from being undertaken for dear Jack's welfare, was simply and solely a deep-laid matrimonial scheme for our own benefit.

So she encouraged us with a succession of anecdotes about her husband's nieces, who appeared to have travelled by sea to an unusual extent and the phenomenally devastating nature of whose conquests of the masculine heart while on board ship she seemed hardly to expect us to believe.

That similar triumphs would mark our progress to America she had not the least doubt, for Mrs. Faraway had "hooked" (the word is Julia's not mine) her husband rather late in life and she was never tired of inciting other lonely spinsters out of the depths of her own experience to do likewise. That proposals would be showered upon us like rain as soon as we were two days

out of port and had recovered from sea-sickness she was touchingly certain and gave us many "tips" (again the word is Julia's) as to the most alluring line of conduct to be pursued with that end in view.

"Now mind you don't be too snappy and independent," she said to me; "be a bit clinging and helpless, that's what men like in women."

"Helpless I'm sure we shall be," said Julia, laughing, "but I expect most of our clinging will be done to the stewardess."

"Oh no," said Mrs. Faraway reassuringly in warm, round, insinuating tones, "You'll soon get over that and be all right in a day or two, there'll be lots of opportunities on deck, now be sure and send me word how many you get and tell me all about them, won't you? I shan't be at all surprised to hear that neither of you are ever coming back again. Oh, you'll pick up husbands, sure enough;" and she said goodbye, her placid face smiling benignly upon us both.

"Shameless old woman!" exclaimed Julia when she was gone, "to imagine for a moment we should reveal our hearts' inmost secrets for her vulture-like curiosity to batten upon."

Remedies for sea-sickness and counsels as to the best method of avoiding this scourge of travellers upon the high seas were thrust upon us to a bewildering extent, for nearly every one who came had at some time or other been on salt water, if only in a fishing boat off Scarborough. They were curiously equally divided

into two camps, the one urging us to keep on deck as much as possible while the other just as vehemently besought us to remain in our berths as the horizontal position was the only hope.

Mrs. Murgatroyd, who is described by Julia as "arch and lively" brought us pills of a peculiarly deadly character compounded of the four most virulent poisons known to modern science. They began with strychnine and ended with one whose name I cannot remember, but it was, Mrs. Murgatroyd told us triumphantly, the one "that Crippen used to poison his wife," but if we took two of them four hours before going on board and two at the moment of setting foot on deck and two when the boat started we need have no further anxiety but could face the stormiest weather without qualms.

Julia accented the pills with gratitude, putting them carefully in her travelling bag and promising to faithfully follow directions and let Mrs. Murgatroyd know results. In fact, she promised to try so many remedies that although I regretted her disregard of the truth I was relieved to find that most of them were put into a dark cupboard on the stairs where, for all I know, they still remain.

It had always struck me as very strange that whatever subject Julia began to discuss with Mrs. Murgatroyd the conversation inevitably veered round to the question of women's suffrage, of which movement Julia, though disapproving of extreme militant tactics, was an ardent advocate, while Mrs. Murgatroyd was

heavily and supinely "anti," meeting all Julia's arguments with the remark that she "declined to be governed by women," which statement she reiterated at intervals with an air of self-satisfied finality.

On this occasion when she brought the pills she was however full of her own affairs and bemoaned at great length her bad luck in having suffered financially from fraudulent trustees and improvident male relatives who left their affairs in a great tangle and mortgaged their property up to vanishing point.

"It has been my invariable experience," she said in the rather didactic conversational tone she assumes sometimes and quite unconscious of the opening she was about to give to Julia, "my invariable experience to find women so much more honourable and straightforward in business affairs than men. A widow left in the power of trustees seems to come off very badly indeed—very badly."

Julia smiled her brilliant smile—she cultivates a smile even when bored to death, which I never do, I like people to know exactly how I feel—and proceeded to demonstrate to Mrs. Murgatroyd her own inconsistency.

"Now you see. Your own experience has shown you that women can be business-like and men both unbusiness-like and fraudulent, yet you are afraid of the consequences if a few women should get into Parliament and help the men to govern. Do you then imagine that the men who now form our House of Commons

scintillate brain-power and practise rectitude and upright dealing to a greater extent than women would do? Why," answering her own question while Mrs. Murgatroyd groped in her brain for a reply which evaded her, "the average M.P. is one of the greatest frauds existing. I've known six or seven myself personally and talked with them to try and extract an expression of whatever ideas they might possess. My dear woman, they had positively no ideas on any subject whatever excepting the ones their party told them they ought to have. The Liberals were as bad as the Conservatives; the only one from whom I could obtain an original thought was a Labour Member I once met at a missionary meeting—how he got there I can't imagine—and yet you'd rather see these numskulls"—Julia's language is always vigorous and sometimes picturesque—"muddling the affairs of the Empire as they do, rather than have the stimulating presence of a few brainy women among them."

"But," stammered Mrs. Murgatroyd helplessly, "I've met one or two M.P.'s who were—well, not clever exactly—but quite—you know—intelligent—at least—one of them talked all the time to me about his wife's pet monkey—I suppose he wanted a rest from politics—and the other seemed a bit vague about what his party really did want, but anyway they were quite nice men—to be sure one of them—the one whose wife had a monkey—was afterwards accused of something—I forget what—embezzlement or forgery or—well, I

forget—so of course he had to resign, but——” she stopped and Julia smiled encouragingly.

“ Yes, it seems as though we'd both met the average M.P. Look at our own member Mr. Glotbury, he's a dear old gentleman, gets returned at every election as a Liberal, though I happen to know that privately his views are ultra-Conservative and he'd go miles to toady to a Lord—couldn't make a speech on anything political to save his life and is as harmless and necessary to the country as a cat. He prances about at Y.M.C.A. dances and is so affable and good-tempered that he is universally beloved by both political parties—well, couldn't the average woman do as well as that? She could vote with her party and be amiable and smiling, couldn't she? And what difference does it make to a party whether its supporters wear trousers or hobble skirts or crinolines? Queen Victoria managed all right, didn't she? Better than her ancestors the Georges? ”

“ Ye-es,” returned Mrs. Murgatroyd, still groping, “ but woman's sphere, you know—the home—the fire-side—the family ”—she stopped, feeling, I suppose, the unoriginality of her arguments.

“ Very well, then, take woman, every woman and put her into a home of her own if you can—I suppose what you mean by 'home' implies a hus' and—well, give her a husband, take her out of her hospitals where she ministers to the sick and suffering, out of her workshops and factories and offices, will the men be willing to carry

on her work instead so as to leave her free to perform her functions as wife and mother? Has your experience led you to think that they will gladly take up the world's drudgery in her place so that she may sit by the fireside. Look at men in drapers' shops. Is that women's work or not? Yet men stick to it because there's money in drapery goods. They leave the worst-paid things to women."

It was lucky that the arrival of the postman helped to stem the flow of Julia's eloquence, for Mrs. Murgatroyd was growing restive.

"If," continued Julia, opening a letter as she spoke, "if a woman wishes to be a doctor, then every man thinks she would be better in her natural sphere at home by the fireside, but if she wants to be a nurse then they don't mind, it's a very noble womanly occupation and doesn't compete with men,—oh, I say—Priscilla! Think what we're being let in for, we've got to chaperone a French girl as far as Montreal. She's travelling in the *Patrician* from Liverpool and her aunt wants me just to look after her a bit, says she's very pretty and amiable—*très jolie et bien gentille*—you shall take her under your wing and improve your French. You'll need it in Montreal. Her name is Marie Laronde."

"Oh, do they speak French in Montreal?" inquired Mrs. Murgatroyd, "I'd forgotten about that, oh yes—of course—it used to belong to the French, didn't it? Wolfe and Montcalm and the heights of Abraham. I learned all about it at school. Most interesting. How

funny for you to have to speak French! I wonder what she'll be like, your French young lady? She'll be rather a nuisance, won't she?"

"Oh, I don't think chaperoning a girl on board ship is very difficult. She'll be sea-sick for two days and getting over it for two days and there'll only be two days left then—besides Priscilla will enjoy keeping off the young men."

I considered this remark of Julia's in such exceedingly bad taste that I took no notice of it.

"Girls," continued Julia, "don't need chaperoning nowadays—not girls of our class—they know more about the world at eighteen than our grandmothers did at forty-eight—and I'm sure if she wants to pass the time on board with a little love-making *I* shan't interfere—it's part of a girl's education after all."

Mrs. Murgatroyd and I looked at each other in helpless consternation.

"Julia!" I remonstrated.

"Well, what's the matter? Isn't it true, Mrs. Murgatroyd, that girls who have to go out in the world and work, are bound—especially if they are at all good looking—to be made love to by many desirable and undesirable people. If they've got a mamma to keep at bay the wrong sort and encourage the right ones, it's very different, but when they've only their own judgment to guide them then the sooner they set up a standard of comparison the better—besides love-making's always good fun, though it generally leaves a

heartache behind somewhere—but then pleasure always has to be paid for with pain, either beforehand or after.”

“Oh, dear yes,” sighed Mrs. Murgatroyd, “it has indeed; but do you think a girl—a young girl—whose judgment is *not* yet very sound—should be left to learn in that way the perils of—er—love?”

“Well, how should you propose to teach her then? You can’t learn to swim if you never go into fairly deep water, and I’m sure there’s no way of properly learning to love and be loved except by practice.”

Mrs. Murgatroyd pondered the question a few moments.

“The old romantic dream of love seems dying out,” she said at last in the drawling tones some people use when they wish to show that they feel sentimental, “the old ideals are passing away, but are we any better for it I ask? This unrest, this distaste for home and domesticity, is it healthy, do you think?” and she gazed at us with just the same look as our dear vicar gives on Sunday when he puts to his congregation a series of questions which, after waiting a second for the replies he knows won’t come, he triumphantly answers himself.

“Well,” said Julia, “we weren’t just discussing that subject, were we? But as far as domesticity goes I think everybody is really just as fond of a home as ever they were, but none of us wants to get into a purely domestic rut again. Even you, dear Mrs. Murgatroyd, I’ve heard you say that you thought

bought marmalade and bought cakes are better than home-made ones."

"Well, so I do," she said, evidently puzzled at the allusion.

"And you've been two years in lodgings so as to avoid the worries of housekeeping——"

"Ye-es—not exactly the worries—my health, you know—I'm not very strong—I hate lodgings really—but what I mean is so many girls leave home and go to work. Are they happier?" and she gave Julia a challenging glance.

"With most of them," said Julia, "it's not a question of whether they're happier or not—they simply have to do it if the home nest is overcrowded. Girls *hate* having to earn their own living, but they know they must do it, or they'll never have a penny of their own and will be just in a backwater all their lives. When their work whatever it is gets absorbing they are all right, but the first few months are terrible—some of them couldn't stand it if they hadn't a little lovemaking to keep them human. Marie Laronde is going to Montreal to teach French. She'll feel like a transplanted lily at first,—all drooping and wilted, but if the dews of love fall gently refreshing on to her soul it will help her to strike fresh roots into the new soil."

"But, Julia, you don't seem to look upon lovemaking as a preliminary to marriage but just as an end in itself," I remonstrated.

"I do," said Julia solemnly. "It *is* an end in itself."

I had feared for some time that Julia's moral sense had been subverted by those French novels she is continually reading, now I was sure of it, and I saw Mrs. Murgatroyd (who considers herself nevertheless very liberal-minded) slowly stiffen into rigidity.

"No," she said with decision, fixing her gaze on the hearthrug, "mere philandering as a pastime—that I *do not* believe in—it is in fact distinctly immoral—or so I consider it—a girl's heart should remain fixed before marriage as well as after—she should not allow herself to be made love to by any man unless she is prepared to consider him in the light of a possible husband—otherwise her moral sense becomes blunted."

I entirely agreed with Mrs. Murgatroyd and was glad that she opposed Julia's pernicious views.

"Yet it is strange," mused Julia, her thoughts evidently reverting to some bygone experience of her own, "it is remarkable how impossible it is to eliminate mutual sex-attraction from the scheme of life as we live it to-day, but as a rule it leads to nothing—fortunately—otherwise life would be more complicated than it is—or perhaps I ought to say that its consequences are not permanent in one sense, though they are in another. Whenever the heart has been really touched no youth or maiden ever emerges quite the same from the most harmlessly superficial love affair even if it is succeeded, as is so often the case, by subsequent indifference or even loathing—something has been added or subtracted from the personality of the two involved—an illusion des-

troyed or a bit of wisdom or insight or sympathy gained. It is, I tell you, educational in the highest degree—it is the pivot on which the world moves. Why I can differentiate at once between unmarried women who have loved and been loved and those who have not. There's a mellowness and tolerance in the one—a different outlook on life. Of course it's embodied in the poet's 'better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.' ”

Mrs. Murgatroyd had let her teacake grow cold while listening to Julia's harangue, and I had vainly rattled the teacups in the hope of cutting it short, but my sister is not easily stopped when she begins to say anything. She sat there airing her views to Mrs. Murgatroyd whose marriage had notoriously been of the least romantic description possible while her conception of the yearnings of soul to soul was that it could only happen in France and other foreign parts where British moral standards were lacking.

So I told Julia afterwards how foolish I thought she had been in thrusting her ideas at such length on a listener obviously annoyed if not bored at their exposition.

“Pooh,” said Julia, “a woman like Mrs. Murgatroyd is afraid to be, say or think anything unconventional and talks as if girls could make themselves love or not love a man just in the same way as they'd go into a shop and choose or refuse a chicken or a pound of grapes. Her idea is that that's how they *ought* to

do it—choose the plumpest chicken and finest bunch of grapes and the most eligible man—as if any girl *can* do that till they've had experience in grapes and chickens and men—so absurd.”

“I doubt, Julia,” I remarked, “if you are exactly the right chaperone for Miss Laronde—I almost wonder that her relatives asked you to undertake the responsibility.”

“Oh,” said Julia airily, “the modern French girl, especially when she is Protestant, as is the case with Mademoiselle Laronde, is well able to look after herself. What her people want is not a duenna—the type is extinct—but a sort of guide, philosopher and friend who will help her to get over her home-sickness and loneliness—if there are any nice young men,” she said reflectively, “it will be quite an easy matter—you will see, Priscilla, how easy—and I *do* hope you won't be tactless and blunder up against them at inopportune moments with remarks on the weather or the number of miles we've travelled each day—you know you've rather talents in that direction. Remember you've lived in Arcadia yourself—even if only in dreams—so please be careful not to spoil sport. You never seem to realize that life's got to be played like any other game—you just blunder along and then groan because it's dull and colourless—of course it is if you don't take pains to make it different. Don't be the sport of circumstances. It's surprising how they'll bend to a resolute personality. You never have half the good time you might do because you handicap yourself from

the start with your clothes. Men will forgive everything in a woman except dowdiness, and they love to be seen about with a smart-looking woman, if she's the biggest fool that ever stepped. Why, just your boots would put any man off."

"Julia," I said severely, "your conversations are superfluous and uncalled for. I have no desire to attract any man's attention. You know that marriage never enters my thoughts. My life is at least disembarrassed of any preoccupation of that kind."

"Good gracious," exclaimed Julia with no attempt to conceal her irritation, "who's talking about marriage? Nobody, I hope, with the exception of Mrs. Faraway, suspects either you or me of any such foolishness, but what I do mean is that you miss having the good time you might have, by being such a dear sweet dowdy unselfish elderly old thing—when with your nice fresh complexion, regular features and fine dark eyes you might be the greatest success—as it is you are admired by a lot of stupid old women to whom you've devoted a lot of your spare time, but as soon as some one young and joyous and asking for amusement comes along you are as unsympathetic as a steel girder."

"No, I'm not," I said, stung into fury by Julia's remarks.

"You never go to the theatre, although you like it," she continued, "because you think it self-indulgent—why you've *got* to indulge yourself exactly the same as you'd indulge anybody else—or else you get warped

and starved and one-sided, and if you'd only try to *do* your hair instead of just twisting it up in that silly little screw—you might be the most attractive"—here Julia actually choked with emotion and I rose and put an end to the conversation which seemed unlikely to serve any useful purpose, but afterwards, when I took some pillowcases upstairs to be packed, I stopped in the spare room to contemplate myself in the wardrobe-looking-glass and thought there might possibly be some justification for Julia's remarks. I ordered the following week, on the strength of this conviction, a new navy-blue costume with a hat to match which, upon its coming home from the dressmaker, Julia declared was the first decent garment I had ever worn and that it took fifteen years off my age "at one fell swoop." I must confess that in spite of her talent for exaggeration she was not altogether wrong. It *did* make an appreciable difference.

"Plainness and severity is your style," said Julia, "frills and furbelows, which are the salvation of lean scraggy people like me, are absolutely deforming to a woman of your build with plenty of solid bone and muscle to fill up her clothes. You'd look quite well in a hobble skirt. I suppose you wouldn't like to——"

"No, I shouldn't, Julia," I said with decision.

"No, no, of course not—besides it's hardly the thing for Canada, I expect," she said soothingly, "but I hope you're convinced at last that it's worth while to take some pains with yourself. Jack will be awfully pleased,

I'm sure, when he sees you, it's always been a worry to him the way you dressed yourself."

Jack, I may here remark, had not been so useful to us in the way of hints as we had hoped. The single thing he had yet suggested as being an absolute necessity in Montreal was dusters, which he urged upon us afresh in each letter, so we inferred from this that his lodgings were probably not so immaculate as they might have been. The only further information we could extract was that everybody out there lived in flats and that he was spending all his spare time hastening from one address to another and hoped to have one or two nice little places ready for our inspection as soon as we arrived. The "Annex" he said, was where we should probably live and he sent us a newspaper, *The Montreal Star* where we could see for ourselves the various advertisements which he was "following up." The *Star* seemed positively to scintillate advertisements and the news of the world was sandwiched in between them as though the last strike and the Debate on the Naval Estimates were mere buffers between situations vacant and wanted. We were relieved to find the big stores advertising their wares at much the same prices, if our calculations of dollars and cents was correct, as we paid at home in England.

"Saucepans," said Julia thoughtfully, "appear to cost about what they do here—they are quite reasonable as far as I can see. And toasting-forks and bedsteads seem no dearer, I wonder if they are as good in

quality. In the advertisements they appear splendid value."

"But nobody can trust advertisements, Julia," I said sadly, "the pictures are, like photographs, naturally flattering to the qualities of the object depicted, we must debit something to that."

"Of course," said Julia impatiently; "I wish you wouldn't explain the obvious so painstakingly. Still it is a relief to see in black and white the fact that ironmongery isn't prohibitive in price—it easily might be, you know—in Alaska I believe a frying-pan or kettle costs as much as a grand piano."

"I should think it does," I retorted, "I'd rather *have* a frying-pan than a grand piano in Alaska but then we are not going to the Klondyke but only to Montreal, which is not exactly on the outskirts of civilization, but any way I'm taking our copper kettle, so we shall be provided for in that respect."

"Yes, dear," murmured Julia, "and while we're on the subject I might as well mention that those new collars and handkerchiefs you've been looking for all the morning are inside the kettle. It never occurred to me till just now, but I remember putting them in quite well."

"It's a pity you didn't think of it sooner," I said. "I as nearly as possible bought a second supply yesterday as I thought I must have left the first lot in the train."

"No, they're all reposing peacefully in the kettle's interior, together with a few other unconsidered

trifles, so don't forget to look inside before making our first cup of tea when we get into our Canadian flat or we shall be drinking a decoction of neckties, bootlaces, starch and blouses; there are two white muslin ones stuffed in at the top. Nature can't abhor a vacuum more than I do when I'm packing."

CHAPTER III

TO a person who has hardly slept away from home for more than one night during the whole course of existence it is a terrible business to leave that home with no definite idea when, if ever, she is likely to see it again. It seemed like a dreadful dream from which I must presently awaken, to find myself walking with Julia and Peter for the last time out of the garden-gate, to watch Smith's cart, piled up with our luggage, disappear round the corner, to wave farewell to the charwoman, Mrs. Cartwright, who was to lock up the house and keep it aired till Julia's return, to meet the Brown twins in their perambulator and to realize that when we met again they would have probably said goodbye to perambulators for ever, to know that to-morrow morning there would be no familiar milk-carts rattling past, nobody to nod to—not even the old road-man at his eternal task of road scraping.

Peter ran gaily about in the morning sunshine barking with joy at the unusually early walk and not thinking, poor beast, that it was his last glimpse of the familiar lane and of his old enemy the butcher's dog who growled at him as he passed his master's gate.

It was so strange to be travelling with all that luggage covered with ship's labels, when a tiny hand-bag had hitherto sufficed for my rare overnight visits; to be waiting on the platform for the Liverpool express—and to be making desultory and inconsequential remarks to the friends who came to see us off, friends who chattered gaily with an idea I supposed of keeping up our spirits and did not seem to realize what it meant to be going away from the long-trying and familiar, the dear daily sameness of existence, towards an unknown and dreaded future where everything must be learned afresh and the mind be adjusted to other views of life.

Peter began almost at once to justify Julia's doleful prognostications of the evils his society as a travelling companion would bring in its train.

It was one of those warm mellow autumn days which are very enjoyable in the country, but I had unfortunately arranged—as there was no room for it in the trunk—to travel in my sealskin coat—a relic of departed Aunt Susan, which, after hanging uselessly for fifteen years in the wardrobe, now seemed likely, in conjunction with Canada, to become a valuable asset, while Julia for the same reason also wore her smart, grey fur-lined motor-coat. When Peter, impatient of waiting, and yearning for his usual scamper up and down the market-place, pulled furiously at his chain, dragging me along the platform in a breathless race, I saw in Julia's eye as plainly as though she had spoken, "I told you how it would be," and, realizing as I wiped

my perspiring brow that the trials of travel had already begun, heartily wished that I could have grappled with them in somewhat cooler clothing.

The train when it rushed into the station was, I could see at a glance, terribly full, but I managed to get Peter, who was wildly excited, into a corridor carriage, where I had to unwind him from an indignant old gentleman whom he persisted in regarding as a long-lost friend. Julia and I took the only vacant places in a compartment and were consequently received with the hostile expression which one expects from fellow-travellers in such circumstances. Peter was annoyed that there was no place left for him and wandered wildly up and down under the seat among the passengers' legs looking for rats. I had taken him off the chain and felt it was a tactical mistake not to have given him in charge of the guard especially when I saw the skirts of the respectable old lady asleep in the corner violently agitated by the outline of Peter, who was evidently very anxious to emerge at that point and determined to thrust his way through at any cost. I tried to persuade him to take the back way to me again, but he is a very persevering dog and the upheavals of black bombazine became more and more furious till the old lady suddenly jumped up with a start and a shriek while Peter sprang forth, gaily wagging his tail and looking at me for approval.

It was of no use to say "Naughty dog! how could you?" The old lady was not to be appeased. It

seems she was subject to heart-palpitations and the shock of being so suddenly and alarmingly awakened had brought them on. Julia offered *eau-de-cologne* and tried to be a ministering angel and to arouse her sympathies by telling her how we were leaving our home for Canada and could not bear to part with our dog. I thought it rather funny of Julia considering how opposed she had been to bringing him at all. At any rate she stood up to the old lady and refused to have Peter turned out, and after a long time things settled down again and I had leisure to realise how suffocatingly hot I was, especially as I had to take Peter, who is a big heavy dog and continually sheds his hairs, on to my knee to keep him quiet.

However, Liverpool arrived at last, after what seemed hours in the train, and we found a man from the boat waiting with a sort of lorry to take all our hand luggage, which was a mercy as with our fur coats and *etc.* we had all we could manage. Julia carried her coat over her arm, but I needed both hands and arms for Peter, who made frantic dashes at the end of his chain in all directions, dragging me remorselessly hither, and thither till I almost felt I hated him.

At a dirty shabby restaurant near the station with paper peeling off the walls and a general air of dinginess, while we had eggs and coffee Peter partook of milk, but kept running for the stairs with a look which said as plainly as possible, "Oh, let's be quick back home, I'm tired of this." Many times indeed before

that weary day was over I wished too that the poor bewildered animal was back again in our pleasant cool green garden, but I would have died sooner than let Julia know how I felt about it.

We had to walk all the way to the docks as the Liverpool trams don't allow dogs on them and there didn't seem to be any cabs. We felt so silly in the hot sunshine wearing our fur coats and looking cross and exhausted, all except Peter who pulled harder than ever in his feverish search for the way home. On the quay there was further waiting—a queue of “simply awful-looking people,” said Julia, and Peter got trodden on a few times as everybody was loaded with bundles and packages and hadn't time to look where they were going, but some of the children were pleased to see him and patted him and gave him biscuits and he sat up on his hind legs and became quite a personality at our end of the crowd. Even the busy policeman had a kind word for him as we moved slowly along towards the gangplank.

“Give your dog to the butcher,” said a voice in my ear as we stepped on board.

“The butcher!” exclaimed Julia.

“Yes, 'e's goin' ter make 'im inter steaks,” said a facetious passenger, whose remarks Julia received with chilly disdain.

What a haven of rest our cabin seemed after that weary journey and what eons of time appeared to have passed since we left home. How little we value the

boon of quietness and privacy till it is gone! Peter lay on a berth and ate biscuits which Julia (rather officiously I think) had brought for him and seemed happy for the first time since our travels began.

"He can sleep nicely on the lower empty berth," I was remarking to Julia, when a brown-bearded man came and knocked at the open door of our room.

"Have you a dog?" he said, and Peter looked at him doubtfully.

"Yes, are you the butcher?" replied Julia haughtily.

"No, but you've got to take your dog to the butcher."

"Well, we don't know where to find him, so perhaps you'll send the butcher to us," said Julia in that tone of command which I have noticed always rather imposes on people. Julia says it's because she's been used to ordering other people's footmen and other people's children about and that everybody will do as they are told if you only speak in a tone of sufficient authority.

"We shall keep the dog with us for the present, till the butcher has time to look after him," she said.

"But you're not allowed dogs in the cabin. It's against the rules of the boat," said the man, who was evidently anxious to show his authority.

"Then send the butcher to take him away," said Julia firmly, "we are staying in our cabin for the present. Thank you very much. You'll perhaps tell him to step this way when he's disengaged. You know the number of the cabin. Thank you," and she turned her back on him and filled up the doorway.

It was half an hour before the butcher appeared. We had pictured some one coarse and burly, but he was a fair-haired, blue-eyed, gentle-looking young man in a striped coat and Peter took to him at once. He said the dog would have a kennel on the "island," and that we might visit him whenever we liked and that he would be well fed several times a day and probably be very seasick and might grow thin or die but he would do his best for him.

Peter ran after him quite cheerfully, but I felt dreadful at seeing him go away to such a strange life, for Peter had never lived in a kennel except as a punishment for going down drains and then never for more than half an hour at a time. Still I was so weary that I could not feel as sad as I otherwise might have done, and when we had both shed our heavy furs and washed our faces in the basin which Julia pulled out of the funny cupboard and I had grumbled a little at the slowness with which the water trickled into it from the tap and Julia had in her usual officious way instructed me as to the way we were to dispose of our things and had discovered a postcard from Mrs. Murgatroyd wishing us *Bon voyage* we felt better and went on deck to see how things were going. The heat of the autumn day was passed and our fur coats now no longer conspicuously unseasonable. As we stood watching the luggage being hoisted on board Julia offered me a little tube.

"Take your pills," she said, "I've taken mine, then I

can write a postcard to Mrs. Murgatroyd before we leave and let her know we are properly fortified against the Atlantic."

I meekly did as Julia suggested—no, not suggested—she never does that—dictated would perhaps be the most appropriate word. Anyway I submissively swallowed the two tiny globules.

I was disappointed somehow in the people. They did certainly look rather "awful" with their hair blown about in snaky wisps by the breeze coming up the Mersey. Julia had already donned rather a nice little motor-hood which she had been at much pains to get in a becoming shade of green, while I had invested in a plain, sensible woollen cap which made me look—so Julia said—exactly like Mrs. Cartwright when she tied up her head at carpet-beating times.

We found Peter on the "island" pulling feverishly at his chain. Julia sat down on the lumber near and fed him with dog-biscuits—she appeared to have brought a whole package for his benefit, which shows how inconsistent she is—and when he had finished he lay with his head on her lap and went to sleep—while I wondered how he was going to get through a week with scarcely any exercise, besides spending the cold nights in the tunnel, after having always had the kitchen sofa to sleep on.

It was not unpleasant there watching the steam winch at work, and package after package swung on board to be swallowed up in the hold's capacious maw. The

Patrician showed no signs of moving, but as the sun sunk at last in the fiery west and the shipping and the houses on the shore melted into grey shadows I knew that it was England dying for me with the dying day and I thought how many thousands upon thousands of emigrants had gazed at the fading land with the same feeling of despair that I did and then I tried to fix my mind on Jack waiting in Montreal for our coming and said to myself the lines—

If we go forward we die
If we go backward we die
Better go forward and die,

and then the deck steward came round hammering a gong and there was a rush below to dinner. We preferred to wait for the second table, and while the first lot of people were eating, Julia disappeared, and where she went to I don't quite know, but I caught glimpses in the fading light of some one remarkably like her walking about on the saloon deck. She was chatting with a gentleman—rather a tall handsome man so far as I could judge, and if it was Julia I wished she would be more careful to whom she speaks when travelling. She has rather a trick of letting strangers talk to her, which I think is rather foolish, though I don't know any one better qualified than she is to snub unwelcome advances, on the other hand she is often perfectly charming to people who *may* be all right, still—Anyway second-class passengers were not allowed on the saloon deck, but I knew that

would make no difference to Julia if she wanted to go there.

Suddenly it occurred to me that we had not taken any steps to discover Mademoiselle Marie Laronde. It was really rather negligent of Julia. The poor girl had doubtless been hoping to find us as soon as she came on board and was probably feeling sad and despondent and very lonely. I tried to locate her among the people on the "island," but there were only a few young men and half a dozen children to be seen, so I sat still and waited while Peter rent my heart by laying his head on my knee and saying as plainly as his brown eyes could speak "Oh, when are you going to start for home, I want my cosy fireside."

It began to grow very cold and a damp grey fog came drifting slowly up the river blurring the shore lights and enwrapping everything in its sodden chill. The frantic gong sounded again, and I tried to persuade Peter to go into his kennel among the shavings, but he remained dismally gazing after me at the full stretch of his chain, as I went over the bridge towards the second-class dining-room. In the music-room the tortured piano was already the prey of feeble amateur talent which however seemed to be quite to the taste of the majority of the passengers sitting in a cloud of tobacco smoke listening gravely to a young man who played a tune with a heavy pom-pom in the bass which was always several seconds in front of the treble.

Julia was already in her place at the dining-table when

I entered and on her left was a rather tall pretty fair-haired girl to whom she was talking in French, for Julia is fluent in three languages, but her French is very difficult to understand—at least to me.

“Here is Mademoiselle Laronde,” she said, as I swung round the rotating chair, and I saw at the first glance that Marie Laronde was not only pretty but exceedingly *chic*, at least Julia called it that, though I said I should have thought it was merely eccentricity and unusualness.

“Well, that’s what it is—unconventional and unusual yet smart—now you are unconventional and unusual but dowdy, my dear,” said Julia sweetly. “Marie Laronde compels people’s attention—I shouldn’t wonder if half the girls on board try tomorrow to wear a black ribbon in their hair like she does and they’ll all look frights—how thankful I am she’s not dowdy, a dowdy French girl is, though rare, terrible.”

All the solid rather vulgar-looking people eating soup did indeed seem attracted to Marie Laronde and glanced at her furtively over their spoons—while at the table behind us, the young men, in various stages of aloofness to each other, seemed to fix their eyes as one man on her beautifully arranged back hair, which rose in a series of burnished golden puffs one above another.

She spoke broken English very prettily and had pleasant dainty little ways of eating and drinking. Her firm rather large white hands seemed strong and

capable, and she didn't look at all as though she would need a chaperone which, in view of Julia's peculiar unsuitability for such a post, was rather consoling.

Our table steward was a hideous young man wearing a curl in the middle of his forehead and an ingratiating smile. He hung solicitously over Julia and Marie Laronde and rather neglected me till I recalled him to a sense of his duty.

It was the first time I had ever eaten my evening meal in public. There seemed a great many courses, and I wanted to have twice of everything but thought of the morrow and refrained. Julia frankly enjoyed her food and began talking to three rather nice little boys who sat opposite. One was about four years old and chattered almost without cessation. I heard him murmur to himself between mouthfuls of rice pudding, "My daddy's not the *best* man in the world, God's the *best* man—but daddy's a good second——" Here his mother interfered and broke off the further development of the comparison.

I didn't go and see Peter after dinner as I was afraid of unsettling the poor dog, but I heard him howling as I walked up and down the deck.

The next two days were spent by me in my berth. I was not sea-sick as long as I kept quiet, and Julia, who had faithfully consumed Mrs. Murgatroyd's pills at the proper stated intervals, although she breakfasted also in her berth, went up on deck "to see after Peter" and stayed there most of the day, descending occasionally

to fetch a dog biscuit or to give me an apple. She looked bright and radiant and happy.

"I thought you were such a bad sailor, Julia," I said fretfully as I lay nibbling.

"So I am on the Channel, but the Atlantic's different. These big boats don't pitch like Channel steamers. I don't know what you think's the matter with you."

"How's Peter?" I inquired feebly.

"Getting along finely—eaten two biscuits." I relapsed into an uneasy doze. No, I was not sick, but unwilling to get up. I didn't want to be bothered with anything.

On the third evening I crawled miserably upstairs and went out in the dark to Peter's kennel. Two figures sat side by side on the bunker near him. Perceiving that my sister was one of them I subsided on to a bench a little distance away and tried not to be "tactless."

"No," Julia was saying as she patted Peter, who was snuggled up luxuriously beside her, "although I suppose I am a Conservative in politics—if women are allowed any politics—yet it makes me sick to hear the ordinary Conservative member talk to his constituents—it's enough to drive anybody—anybody who doesn't think, and few of us do—to Socialism and Syndicalism or any other patent *ism* that seems likely to be a social cure—all for our many social sores."

"Then why are you a Conservative?" inquired a rather pleasant masculine voice beside her, while a

masculine hand also proceeded to stroke Peter, who lay and gurgled with pleasure between the two.

"Oh, because it's the only section among all the water-tight compartments into which modern politics seem to be divided, for which I have a faint degree of respect, it's just a matter of compromise, like most things in life," and Julia sighed. "I was brought up in the usual Conservative, Church of England family, and though it was like being chained up to all the prejudices and conventions that the human soul has created for itself since Adam—or any other starting-point you like to substitute—somehow one's sense of loyalty, and the perception that there is after all a substratum of solidity and permanence about the whole ridiculous structure—that it is founded on a good deal of truth and uprightness—seems to keep one from breaking definitely away, besides I've had to earn my living and one has to be a bit of a hypocrite to do that satisfactorily."

"Well, what about the Liberal politician?" said the pleasant masculine voice, speaking with more than a suspicion of amused tolerance. I am surprised that Julia doesn't see how ridiculous she makes herself talking in this reckless way, especially to mere ship-acquaintances.

"The Liberal," said Julia, "has his good points" (Fancy! I had hardly patience to sit still and listen to her), "but he too treats symptoms rather than the disease. It wearies me to see both sides fighting and

debating over things of no particular consequence, all working for their party or for one particular section of the community—the working-man because of his voting supremacy,—but no one trying to drive the foundations of Empire deeper—that is left for the non-politician—the quiet people whose names are not in the newspapers. A great statesman—another Chamberlain or Rhodes is badly wanted just now.”

“ Yes, but surely the condition of the people of the working-class is the paramount issue in these days,” said the voice.

“ The paramount issue can't be divorced from other issues,” said Julia in her pleasant voice, “ it is an imbecility to legislate about minimum wages and housing of the working-classes and so on— it's so easy to evade any law of that kind or to adjust the conditions so that the letter is obeyed and the spirit ignored. Legislation is becoming a burlesque, it is tending to increase the evils it professes to cure and it's paralysing trade.”

“ How so, fair lady ? ”

“ Well, a minimum wage will be paid only to a good worker who will give the maximum labour for the money—thus barring out the feeble, the old and the slow—the workman in power will not be less autocratic than any one else in power, will he ? ”

“ Well—no—I suppose not.”

“ Not unless you can pass a bill to eliminate from him all the ordinary human weaknesses.”

An embarrassed laugh was the only answer.

"And that's why Socialism too is doomed to fall. Argumentatively it is so nice and smooth and plausible and settles everything so comfortably, does away with the greed of employers, the tyranny of capitalism, the necessity of strikes—or the necessity of doing one's best."

"Well, that's what we're aiming at, barring the last clause," said the young man.

I knew it! He was a Socialist! And Julia, sitting there alone with him in the dark and Peter's head on his knee!

"And of course I am a bit of a Socialist myself," said Julia, "I believe in municipal ownership of a good many things such as trams and public libraries and parks—I did once believe in state ownership of railways, but since I've had to travel on state-owned railways abroad so much, I've rather cooled off on that question and indeed I've noticed that in Parliament it's people who haven't travelled on them who are most anxious to have them—there again, now when a system is working well and satisfactorily why disturb it? Our competitive system gives us the best railways in the world."

"But the shareholders' profits?" said the young man hotly. "Why should the shareholders grow rich out of means of transport?"

"Well, as a rule they don't, that's a figment of the Labour Member's brain, but the real question is, Are the public carried as cheaply and well as they would be by the state?"

"No, they're not," said the young man with emphasis.

"Well, my experiences differ from yours then," said Julia softly. "The best state-managed railways are the German ones, but they are not cheaper to travel upon than ours."

"I thought they were," said the man doubtfully, stroking Peter's ears.

"No, they appear so in tourist agent circulars and similar literature where no mention is made of the two mark *Platz Karte* (you know without a *Platz Karte* you couldn't sit down, but must stand up in the corridor all the way), and of course there is no third class on express trains—but worst of all is the permanent way—one continual bumpety-bump. I wish the Labour Members had to travel on German railways two or three days, it would do them good. They'd see things differently."

The young man seemed nonplussed. State-owned railways had evidently been a pet fad of his, and he did not abandon them without a secret pang.

"Well, anyway, the whole fabric of society needs reorganization—regeneration."

"It does," said Julia, "but isn't it getting it? Things are in the melting-pot to a considerable extent nowadays. Of course there will always be little country backwaters where new ideas don't penetrate quickly, but in the big towns—ideas—thought—they are the

great shatterers of things-as-they-are. Physical violence—and strikes, which are a mean weapon now, whatever they may have been in the past, only defeat their own ends. The working-classes have been exploited by the professional agitator for many centuries—when he rises and thinks the thing out for himself and casts aside charitable agencies and philanthropic schemes for making him fit for heaven, and all those things that sap his independence and take away his self-respect—like old age pensions to which he has not contributed——”

“ He’s contributed a life of toil for the public good,” interrupted the man.

“ Sometimes—sometimes not, but what I’m trying to say is that if he could only see that co-operative industry—a sharing of the risks and profits with his employer would be a better means of progress than contributions to his union, which are all swallowed up in strike pay, and salaries to officials, and if the employer would admit his employées into a profit and risk-sharing partnership—as I believe many of them would—that is the most promising path to economic salvation. And as far as public good goes everybody who works, the silliest little giggling typewriter girl or the man who hawks rags and bones in the street or the poor curate who tries to keep up a respectable appearance on very inadequate means or the struggling professional man of mediocre ability—they work too for the public good, but nobody arranges pensions for them

or for cooks or governesses or anybody, in fact, who doesn't go about in processions waving flags."

"And smashing windows," said the man joyously as though relieved to find that Julia was giving a humorous turn to the conversation.

"Yes, smashing windows or anything else that comes in the way—stone-throwing seems to be the accompaniment of every political agitation from the days of the Israelites downwards. No government takes anything seriously till glass-smashing begins; perhaps, like the Germans, they think it brings luck."

"Do the Germans think that?" inquired the voice.

"Yes, and talking of Germans, there's another inconsistency of our Government—inconsistency?—why, it's pure imbecility. Why do they sell them our best smokeless coal, and then tax us to pay for duplicating or triplicating or whatever the silly standard is—their warships—which would be useless to them without our British coal? I've talked about it to lots of Germans, and they're awfully puzzled at it—can't make it out—can *you* explain it?"

"No," said the voice doubtfully.

"No, nobody ever can, it's as inexplicable as the aurora borealis; but I suppose it's done to please the coal-miners, and they're not pleased either. If I were a millionaire I'd buy up all the anthracite coal in the market and give it to the Salvation Army sooner than I'd let the Germans have it. Talk of the engineer hoist with his own petard, why we're giving 'em a Christmas

cracker tied with pink ribbon which they can use to blow us up, and we are as smiling and amiable about it as though it were just the sort of aërial flight we were longing for. The British are a nation of wooden-headed idiots with their canting watchwords of Brotherhood and Liberty and Free Trade which isn't free and all the other humbugs. Let's take a walk, I'm getting chilly."

As they passed me I heard the man chuckling softly. No doubt he was delighted to hear Julia making a fool of herself.

I wondered how Miss Laronde was getting on, and if the young men Julia had talked about were already beginning her education, meantime I took Peter a run round on his chain. Evidently my sister was on the upper deck as I never caught a glimpse of her among the several couples promenading round; nor was the little French girl visible, so perhaps they were together. I hoped Julia would be careful with that Socialist man, some of them have such queer ideas, and I shouldn't have liked her to get entangled with people who don't believe in royalty and won't take off their hats when "God save the King" is played. Really Julia badly needs a chaperone herself. She does the most extraordinary things sometimes.

CHAPTER IV

YES, Mademoiselle Laronde's education had, I soon perceived, begun. There was a very handsome, dark young man, looking like the hero of a melodrama, talking a good deal to her the first morning that I was able to come on deck, and they both disappeared together when the kindly shades of night fell, and the deck chairs became deserted. I stumbled over his long legs on my way to Peter's kennel, and a little shriek and exclamation of "*Oh, mon Dieu!*" told me that it was Marie Laronde's toe on which I had trodden—rather heavily I fear. They had secured the one solitary bench on the "island," where deck chairs were not allowed, and I went at once and told Julia, who was lying in her berth for a rest till dinner-time.

"He's an awful man, Julia," I said.

"Yes," she answered lazily, "he's the stuff of which shop-walkers and kindred cattle are made. I never see him without wanting to take him up by the scruff of his neck and drop him overboard."

"Then you ought to interfere," I urged.

"Bother," was all the reply she vouchsafed. Her

indifference annoyed me so that I went back on to the island and sat beside Peter, who was delighted to see me again.

Presently the young North-West Mounted Policeman, whose picturesque uniform and lithe straight young figure had created much devastation on board, came along with his latest girl, for he distributed his attentions with great impartiality among the young maidens. If one of them walked triumphantly round the deck with him by daylight she was sure to have the galling experience that somebody else was chosen as the companion of his evening hours, but whether this was the result of calculation or merely a love of change on the Policeman's part can never be known, but it lent an added interest to the situation and prevented any one indulging for long in false hopes, which I suppose was a quite praiseworthy aim, and prevented any unpleasant after-effects. At any rate it was evident that the Policeman was not quite as young and callow as he looked. He came along now and asked the dark young man in his pleasant Canadian accent just to "crowd up a bit" so that he and his latest acquisition could share the bench, and the two couples sat hand in hand, as I could see by the deck-lamp, with that utter detachment from the rest of the world so characteristic of lovers everywhere. I was grateful to the Policeman, and though his fickle conduct had not hitherto met with any approval I felt that there was much good in the young man in spite of the fact that his view of the

ethics of lovemaking was practically on the same plane as Julia's. It was an end in itself, not a means to matrimony.

I had made the acquaintance of a nice lady on board who had a weakness for distributing literature designed, as Julia said, "to awaken sinners to a sense of their errors." They were really quite pleasant well-written little tracts, and I did not like Julia to laugh at them, for the lady—Miss Stodge—"a rather unfortunate but appropriate name" Julia said—was so earnest and burning to do somebody good that I rather liked her. She helped the two clergymen we had on board to get up little services in the steerage and started the singing in a thin sweet voice, evidently very fluttered and nervous but inspired by a sense of duty, so I admired Miss Stodge and we often chatted together beside Peter's kennel. Once when the sky looked black as though a storm were coming on she chirruped cheerfully, "Do not fear, Heaven is as near by water as by land," to which the butcher, who was bringing Peter some bones, retorted, "Often a good sight nearer, mum," which rather disconcerted Miss Stodge, and was, I thought, impertinent of the butcher, but as he was so good to Peter I forgave him.

All the women on board looked more or less weird, I suppose because their heads were tied up with hoods or shawls, as hats were a manifest impossibility in the teeth of the searching sea-breeze. It was curious how everybody looked like Russian peasant women, with

the exception of Julia whose motor-bonnet justified the pains she had taken over it. Even the quite pretty fresh-complexioned girls had rather a funny milk-maidy appearance which shows, said Julia—I had no opinion on the matter—how meretricious is our modern taste, vitiated by the constant contemplation of artificiality and wreaths of flowers on people's hats.

Julia had struck up a sort of friendship—I don't know how I'm sure—with the captain, who used to descend every afternoon from his Olympian position on the saloon deck, and find his way to Julia's deck chair, where he stayed and talked at interminable lengths. Sometimes I pretended to be asleep in the next chair, but I don't know that if I had been awake, it would have made much difference. Julia simply ignored me. Once *à propos* of some Mormons we had on board, they got on the subject of religion, and I was rather sorry that poor Miss Stodge, huddled up in a neighbouring deck chair, with a lavender-blue nose, was in a position to hear all they said. She told me afterwards how shocked and scandalized she had been, as her idea of the mercantile marine had hitherto led her to imagine it was pervaded with a strong vein of Christian piety, but she was afraid our captain was an exception. I comforted her by saying that there must always be exceptions to most things and she agreed rather unwillingly. "My religion," we heard the captain say as he stood with his hands thrust deep in the pockets of his blue top-coat and the pale sun-

shine lighting up the gold braid of his cuffs, "is to help other people when I get the chance and to do my best in the world. I hate parsons and dogmas."

I don't quite remember how it was that he and Julia somehow worked round to the higher criticism and the ravens that fed Elijah (or was it Elisha?) and Julia said—it is doubtful on what or whose authority, certainly not Biblical—that "the Ravens" was a name given to a band of robbers or outlaws and had no connexion with the feathered tribe.

"Ah," said the captain, "I *had* to believe in those ravens as birds when a child. Our Bible had pictures of 'em bringing nice little penny loaves in their beaks, but I felt all the time that no ravens, unless they were circus-trained, would ever behave with the charitable regularity of those two. I'm glad it's been explained after all these hundreds of years. I wonder where they found the explanation—never mind—now clear me up the mystery of Jonah and the whale—it's very American that story—and I'll go to bed happy."

"Oh, the whale was evidently the name of an early submarine," said Julia flippantly, "part of the fleet of Nineveh out on skirmishing practice." Miss Stodge wore a grieved expression.

"My dear," she whispered when the captain had departed, "fancy a man who won't—simply *won't* believe in miracles. What can the state of his mind be?"

"What indeed?" I answered.

We had some rather terrible children on board with

nasal drawn-out Canadian voices, which were difficult to differentiate from American ones, by American I mean of course belonging to the United States.

One little girl confided to me that her mother powdered as well as her aunt and that she had some red stuff in a tube for her lips. She was a nice little thing, if she had not been brought up among rather vulgar people. They lived out in the country beyond Hamilton and seemed to have extremely fashionable clothes and hair and the father (who was not with them) was a butcher and sent his wife and child "home" every four years to visit her relations in England. This little girl had a rather unpleasant habit of stooping down to look through the little square windows of the cabins, which were nearly on the level with the deck-floor outside, and asking embarrassing questions of the inmates.

"Hello, are yer sick, l'ydy?" we heard her thin high-pitched treble inquire above our heads, one day when both Julia and I preferred to remain peacefully in our berths.

"It's that awful child," said Julia. "Why *will* you encourage such an odious little creature. These Canadian children may be very smart, but they've absolutely no manners. Go away!" she shouted.

"Are yer sick, l'ydy?" she persisted. "I can see yer lyin' there."

"No, I'm not, but I shall be soon if I see your face at the window and hear too much of your sweet voice."

"Wh-a-at did ye s'y? I'll tell mother ye're sick and——" but at this juncture she was removed by an invisible hand and we heard her voice, more acutely nasal than ever, protestingly raised as she was hurried away.

"I expect she thought she was being polite to inquire after us," I said, "and 'sick,' you know, is used in America to express any kind of illness, not necessarily sea-sickness."

But Julia received my remarks with her usual ungraciousness.

"Don't explain things, Priscilla," she said. "It's the last straw with a head like mine."

When we were off the banks of Newfoundland a concert was given by the passengers, as is I believe customary on all big liners, for the benefit of the Seamen's Orphanage, and we all had to buy programmes, price 6*d.*, which gave us the right of entry into the concert-hall—the ordinary dining-room where for two days previously every amateur on board had been practising strenuously. Julia played the accompaniments to the songs of a German girl who was dying to sing but had expressed misgivings as to whether her nerves would be equal to the public gaze. In the bathroom I met a lady who was indignant because a friend of hers had *not* been invited to perform.

"Of course she's been sufferin' from throat trouble the last day or two—but she can sing some I tell ye'. You'd be tickled ter death if ye' hearrd her."

I thought it was a pity she should not exhibit her talents, and promised to mention them to the committee. The female passengers and children who appeared at the concert—and everybody came—were metamorphosed by the subtle power of dress into something new and strange and unrecognizable.

Julia declares that when feminine skill is able, in spite of several infants of tender years, a sea-sick husband, very limited cabin space and the most meagre toilet appliances (curling-tong lamps are *not* permitted on board) to achieve the elaborate puffs, the waved Grecian effects, the airy tangles of which the sportive sea-breezes on deck would make such short work; when it triumphantly negotiates all the difficulties surrounding the adjustment of evening dresses which hook down the back, and are fastened round the waist by subtle means known only to the impractical far-away dressmaker who invented them, she sees no reason why it should not be able to achieve any work which the world may demand of it, following, not the scientific well-reasoned methods of mere man, but the subtle instinctive emotional guidance on the crest of whose wave women have triumphantly progressed down the centuries.

I haven't the least idea what she meant by this, but that's what she said, and certainly they *were* dressed, not to say over-dressed.

Maria—that was the tiresome little girl's name—wore a red satin dress, while her mother was rather con-

spicuous in emerald green, with a bead fillet round her head, and somewhat too much powder on her nose. The men had just put on collars for the occasion, but every one was very bright and eager and determined to have a good time. Most of the performers suffered painfully from nervousness, and I got rather a shock when the little parson who acted as chairman announced that "Miss Floyd will now favour us with a song." Of course it was Julia, and I wondered she had not seen fit to tell me her intention of singing, but she afterwards explained that she had been asked just at the last moment as two other performers had felt impending qualms—I don't wonder, for the atmosphere was simply dreadful. She looked very nice in her black *crêpe de chine*, and though I knew she was rather nervous by the little flush on her cheek, yet she had no appearance of it, but smiled at the audience and then glanced for a moment at the doorway where, among the crowd standing there, I am sure I caught a glimpse of that Socialist man wearing a dress suit, and looking rather distinguished and well-groomed, a fact which surprised me, as most Socialists are a little negligent of their personal appearance.

Julia sang "Sally in our Alley," which was a great relief after the sentimental rather lugubrious songs which most people chose, and she pronounced her words so that every one could understand them, which was also an innovation, and when she warbled in that nice soprano of hers, "she is the darling of my heart," it sounded

very thrilling, and I saw the Socialist man—I afterwards found out his name was Page, Mr. Bernard Page—listening very intently with a pleased rapt expression, and I must say, in spite of Julia's unpleasant ways, she has a very charming voice, and sings with perfect taste and feeling. In that close stuffy dining-room it seemed to create something clear and refreshing after all the mawkish sentimentality and stupid comic songs which bored one so dreadfully. Somehow I found myself smiling with tears in my eyes, and the rest of the audience seemed to be affected rather in the same way. They insisted on an encore and were quite determined to have one, although Julia was unwilling on account of the length of the programme. Marie Laronde played her accompaniments, looking very nice, if a little extraordinary, in a very tight tube-skirted blue dress.

Afterwards Julia was asked to go round with a plate to collect for the seamen's orphans, and she kept a strict eye on the sum every one contributed, which she remarked afterwards mightn't be so polite as turning one's head aside at the critical moment but was more likely to help to swell the funds. The Socialist man, who had already given to some one else's plate, put a gold piece in Julia's with the remark, "That's for Sally."

"No, it's for the orphans," retorted Julia.

At any rate whether owing to Julia's tactics or not the sum realized was considerably in excess of that

raised at any previous concert, and Julia was requested to sing for the first-class passengers the following night, which she did I believe with even greater success.

I began now to see a good deal more of Marie Laronde.

"I 'ave enjoy myself ver' mooch," she told me the night of the concert. "Ze musique is ver' nice, nicer zan ze 'orrible cold deck, an' your sister sing so well, it giv' me pleshair to play for 'er."

I suppose that what she really enjoyed was being able to appear *en grande toilette* and to hang a few pendants and bracelets and chains on her neck and arms, for she was, as Julia said, "one of those people who 'carry off' jewellery, whether real or false, very well, assimilating it in some mysterious way with her dress or hair or general appearance, whereas to most women, trinkets appear as something extraneous and unnecessary—mere appendages of a costume, often striking a discordant note, and reminding one of a horse wearing a flower-trimmed bonnet," this last simile was no doubt the fruit of Julia's last summer visit to the French metropolis, where she had remarked on the number of horses wearing "Paris hats" during the intense heat of August.

It had been at the concert that I first perceived a coolness between the dark young man and Marie. He was evidently not fickle like the Policeman, and his eyes followed the little French girl with ardent adoration in their depths, but she gave him no answering look in return, but smiled everywhere except in his

direction, and when he way-laid her in the doorway, saying in the ordinary curt British fashion, "Comin' for a turn on deck?" she declined with thanks, and said "it was 'orribly cold up there."

The next day he wandered up and down forlorn and disconsolate, evidently not realising, poor young man, that as far as he was concerned the episode was closed, for Mademoiselle Laronde with the tact of her nation occasionally spoke to him in her pleasantly imperfect English, but there were no more delightful talks on the island or in the obscure corners of the deck, and though the young man was evidently only a "genteel" clerk of little education, I felt rather sorry for him, he was so faithful and depressed in spirits.

I told Julia, however, that there was no occasion for uneasiness about Marie as she had "dropped" the undesirable young man.

"Yes, I know," she said rather wearily, "I thought it was getting time to interfere."

"To interfere? Why? Did you advise her not to have any more to say to him?"

"Of course not, Priscilla. How silly you are! I admired his moustache, and his long eyelashes, and beautiful white hands, and said what a pity it was he talked with such a vulgar accent and dropped his 'aitches.'"

"But, Julia—that's just the worst of it. He doesn't do anything of the kind. He has that super-elegant ridiculous way of rather drawing attention to the fact

that he pronounces his 'aitches' and he softens his vowels and says, 'Do you laike trevellin'? Ai de-laight in it.' And if it comes to that Marie herself drops all her 'aitches.'"

"Well of course. As a Frenchwoman unaccustomed to any sounded aspirate she naturally would, and as a matter of fact, I wish we English would do away with it altogether. It's not essential to the language, and takes a lot of breath—just one of our stupid shibboleths. Dreadful tragedies might be written round the use or misuse of the letter 'h.' It's curious that Irishmen and Scotsmen don't omit it, nor Americans I believe, but now in the best society—or what considers itself the best—it's quite smart to drop one or two occasionally."

"Then why do you make it a reason for Marie dropping Mr. What's-his-name?" I remarked, astonished at my own powers of repartee.

"Oh, because, child," she said indulgently, "it is the only way in which I can make her see that he is not quite all right. If I had attempted to describe the bounder as he really is, she wouldn't have understood, and might have been tiresome about it, but now she feels vaguely that he is not her social equal, and does not know all the puny little regulations of her set, she drops him like a hot chestnut. All I told her was actually if not literally true, and of course as her aunt asked me to see after her I *am* rather responsible," and then Julia began brushing her teeth and refused to discuss the subject further.

Peter, during the last two days on board, had suffered some amelioration of his lot. I had found it almost too bitterly cold to sit near his kennel, especially when the wind blew the salt spindrift inboard, yet I would not desert the poor animal, who liked to lie on my knee, and we both shivered in company for a time. But Julia, taking the law into her own hands, and defying all the purser's rules and regulations with regard to dogs, unchained him and carried him off to the more sheltered promenade deck, where she lay tucked up in rugs and furs with Peter on her lap.

"I promised faithfully, Julia, that I wouldn't bring him on deck between the hours of 8 a.m. and 7 p.m.," I remonstrated feebly.

"He's not on deck, he's on my knee," retorted Julia, drawing her cloak over him and effectually concealing Peter from the public gaze, "he keeps me beautifully warm and he's very happy, so don't be conscientious and boresome."

There was no denying that Peter *was* happy. I don't think he had been thoroughly warm since we left England till Julia took pity on him and defied the purser. Even when the captain came for his afternoon chat just before they brought round tea on deck, she made no effort to conceal the dog, but allowed him to poke his head from under her furs, and look at the captain out of his friendly brown eyes. One could *see* how absolutely full of bliss the poor dog was. I felt grateful to Julia, but wished she had been more discreet.

However the captain patted him, and said he'd a dog very like him at home, and Julia told him what a hard-hearted man the purser was. By the time I got round the deck again she and the captain were discussing some abstruse subject—Socialism, I think, which seems just now a favourite subject with my sister.

"The person," said Julia, "who theorizes on life without sufficient experience of it, to other spirits ten times more theoretical and inexperienced than himself, is one of the greatest of our modern dangers. I know because I used to be one of them myself, but I found out at an early stage what awful humbugs we most of us are—the talkers and highfliers, I mean—who want to provide the people of the universe with the stars as candles, instead of ordinary gas and electric light. It's really the quiet workers who keep the world going, and are looked upon as they are by us other fools. Yet there's such a fearful lot to be said on both sides, isn't there? Speech-making and verbiage seem to rule the world at present. I wish I were an orator."

"But I think you are," said the captain softly.

"Oh, don't be sarcastic—I'm a good listener, too, you know"; and she smiled her brilliant captivating smile, and the captain walked away chuckling like the other man had done. Most men seem to be amused by what Julia says. I wonder she likes to be made fun of.

We landed some mails at Rimouski or rather somewhere off Rimouski, as there was nothing in the faint fog-wrapped grey outline we saw which suggested

either a town or village, but a little steamer appeared mysteriously from somewhere out of the woolly grey-ness, and took off not only the mails but one of our bright little parsons with his wife and two children, who were going to some place in Halifax. They all four looked very solitary standing alone on the steamer's deck responding as well as they could to the strenuous pocket handkerchiefs waved by the whole body of passengers in farewell, and they slid away from us against the grey background of fog till they were swallowed up in it, as far as we were concerned, for ever.

The winches were now at work, bringing up one continuous stream of brown mail bags. Julia said she didn't know anything more thrilling than to stand watching the enormous piles increasing so quickly, the men walking up the sides of them as though they were Alps in miniature, building up fresh peaks on every side. Only to read the names on the bags was a liberal education in geography.

We had expected to be especially thrilled by the St. Lawrence River, but just perhaps because of that expectation we were a little disappointed.

One dear old gentleman came along with statistics of its length and breadth and area, and all those dismal things one learns at school which convey no single impression to the mind. We tried to think it beautiful and said *how* magnificent it must be in summer, when the sun was shining on it, but the cold grey fog stretched mile after mile, not sufficiently to stop our progress

but enough to veil everything in a sad weird melancholy. It was an endless waste of bleak cold vastness with long grey backs of islands and dim shapes of trees showing through it. When night fell and gleams of light told us that we were passing little villages on shore it was consoling to know that other human beings than those on board were almost within speaking distance, and when we heard in the distance gay strains of music and all rushed wildly to the port side to see one of the C.P.R. boats forging magnificently past us, lit up story above story like a great floating hotel, we all cheered and waved and felt our hearts stirred by something national and British, and Julia said she wanted to cry—I'm sure I don't know why she didn't, she usually does things she wants.

That Socialist man, Mr. Page, hovered about a good deal that last night on board. Peter seemed to know him quite well, and wagged his tail every time he and Julia passed my deck chair on their tramp up and down deck. Julia had introduced me to him in a perfunctory kind of way—and he tried to be agreeable, but as I don't approve of Socialists, I wasn't so very cordial and was annoyed at Peter for going and sitting on Mr. Page's knee. I don't like being mixed up with all sorts of people.

We reached Quebec quite late at night, and all the steerage people got off there, and the creaking and rattling of luggage-winchies all night made it difficult for any one to sleep much.

We saw the thin grey stream of passengers pass over the gangway, many tiny little children among them, the most contented of all the emigrants, with no passionate regrets for what they had left behind. The parents looked careworn and bewildered, but were all wearing the anticipatory hopeful look to which one grows accustomed here. They and their poor pitiful luggage—inadequately tied up in unsuitable tin trunks, vanished into the gloom, and were taken in charge by the Emigration Committee who would forward them to their several destinations, tiny drops swallowed by the great land-ocean stretching away westward.

Julia packed up all our things several hours before we could possibly reach Montreal where we were due at five in the afternoon. We wondered if Jack would meet us, and what Peter's feelings would be, and how we were to dispose of the dog until we could find our flat. How we all longed for home!—a home of any kind—anywhere so long as it was a place where we could have liberty to do as we pleased and to shut out other people.

"We will go and look at flats first thing on Monday morning," I said.

"No," said Julia, "we'll go to-morrow, I don't care if it is Sunday."

I was silent, but did not disagree with her. The one imperative necessity was to find a home once more.

CHAPTER V

MONTREAL looked dull, dirty and smoky as we approached it in the cold half-light. It had the usual depressing effect of railway stations and landing-places, harsh, repellent, inhospitable, and the great grey river stretching out behind us seemed to intensify its disagreeable features. As Julia and Peter and I came up on deck, after distributing the usual *largesse* among the stewards and stewardesses who had ministered to our needs and smoothed away many of the unpleasantnesses of the voyage, a crowd of well-dressed strangers met our sight, and more kept hurrying up the stairs.

"Whoever are these people?" said Julia fretfully, for Peter was pulling frantically at his chain trying to get somewhere where he could see what was going on, for he naturally hated having his vision bounded by the skirts and trousers of the densely packed throng in which we found ourselves—the throng of which all the women wore a strange yet familiar aspect.

"Why, Julia, they are just the passengers. Don't you see they have put on their best clothes, and Sunday hats, that's why they look so strange."

At our elbow stood an elderly, stately, duchess-looking person dressed in velvet mantle, sables and an irreproachable bonnet. She was with great difficulty recognized as the stout uncorseted Jewess, who with a red handkerchief over her head had talked interminably during the whole voyage in a Polish-German accent to an equally uncorseted fellow countrywoman. We had privately set down the two as being so poor that we wondered why they had not travelled steerage. A grey silk hat trimmed with huge bows of scarlet ribbon at which the "Policeman" was looking with a puzzled expression proved to cover the head of his latest victim, a pretty girl hitherto wearing a gauze veil round her very untidy head.

"This explains all those enormous hat-boxes we have seen piled up in the saloon during the voyage. I wondered why so much 'Wanted' luggage had to be put there in everybody's way. Yet many of the people have still two or three days in the train, they would be much happier without these monstrosities on their heads."

Julia was in a bad temper. The heat was suffocating. Everybody seemed to be leaning on us for support, and poor Peter, in the intervals of being trodden upon and then patted by the guilty person, never ceased pulling with all his might. Drops of perspiration were trickling down our noses and dropped on to our furcoats.

After what seemed like hours of this dreadful heat

and pressure, we were carried over the gangplank and into the Customs Hall on the Quay where amid the continuous arrival of luggage, the distracted alarms and excursions of passengers, characteristic of custom houses all the world over, was to be seen in its most acute stage.

Peter gave a joyful leap as a voice said "Hello, how are ye'?" and there stood Jack in that hideous green top-coat Julia and I hated so much. We shook hands and kissed in the perfunctory way of English people, and Jack put on the usual airs of those who know or think they know the ropes, in front of the ignorant and unsophisticated, and piloted us to a place where the letter F hung conspicuously displayed. Some of our boxes had been already deposited there, and we sat down on Julia's cabin-trunk while Peter lay like a long-lost wanderer in Jack's arms, touchingly certain that all his trials were now over.

Julia interviewed one of the customs officials, a gallant elderly gentleman in uniform who addressed the passengers in English and the porters in French. On discovering that Julia understood and spoke the language of diplomacy his affability, which had been sufficiently conspicuous before, increased sevenfold, and after most amiable and entirely non-official conversation between them our thirteen boxes were chalked without opening and we were free to depart. An agent of the Canadian Express Company took charge, for a consideration of course, of most of our

boxes and the rest were put on a curious vehicle of the cab tribe which drove us to the boarding house where Jack had taken rooms for a week.

"Peter can go with me," he said, "my landlady doesn't object to anything." Certainly a great virtue in any person of her profession.

Marie Laronde, I may mention, had been met in the custom-house and taken under the wing of a very voluble French lady. Jack, seeing Julia in conversation with Marie, inquired anxiously who she was and asked if she were staying in Montreal and if we should be likely to see much of her. Jack is by way of being a kind of amateur artist and considers I suppose that that gives him a legitimate interest in beauty wherever found; he said afterwards that the French girl's style was very stimulating and unusual and that he would like to try and make a sketch of her head. I discouraged him, however, feeling sure that Poppy wouldn't like it, but he seemed put out because I disapproved and answered my subsequent questions and remarks rather impatiently for some time.

Our destination was a house on "Dorchester" near the *Windsor Hotel*, which is where everybody who wishes to make an impression stays when in Montreal.

"Turn up McGill," said Jack to our driver and explained with a cosmopolitan air that it was not usual to call streets in Montreal by anything but their first names so to speak—not as with us Regent Street,

Oxford Street, but simply Dorchester, McGill. He also expatiated on the fact that all streets ran east and west while Avenues—McGill College Avenue was the full name of McGill—ran north and south, so that no person of average intelligence could ever get very far wrong. He was full of three flats which we were to see the next day, explaining with great detail exactly in what part of the city they were and evidently annoyed that we didn't recognize the places from his description.

The boarding house at which we stopped might just as well have been in England. It had the same depressing sort of wall-paper, and a general air, although the rooms were large and airy, of having seen better days. The windows had wooden green shutters, which gave them a French appearance, and the proprietress, a stout smiling good-tempered woman, who wore a rather low-necked collarless dress all day, "because," she explained, "she'd have no time to change in the evenings," was an American who seemed to spend her time perpetually at the telephone in the hall either ordering goods from the tradespeople, or communicating advertisements for "helps" to the *Star*. The domestic servant problem appears to loom very large in Montreal as elsewhere and seemed to meet us almost on the doorstep. A coloured gentleman in a nice white linen jacket seemed somewhat to relieve the situation. He took our luggage upstairs and contrary to our preconceived ideas of his race he

neither smiled nor spoke, but remained preternaturally solemn and silent even when Julia fell up the dimly lighted staircase and tried to save herself by clutching at "Sambo's" coat-tails which were not there.

"So silly of him to wear such an absurdly short jacket," complained Julia, "I nearly sprained my thumb. I wonder they don't have a lift, I thought we should find lifts everywhere in these go-ahead American cities."

"Only in hotels and stores, Julia," I said soothingly, "not in private boarding houses where we only pay nine dollars a week."

The dining-room was in the basement and from our places we had a circumscribed view consisting chiefly of the legs of the passers-by. It was papered in sealing-wax red and adorned with nightmare works of art of the chromo-lithograph variety. Most meals began with fruit and were accompanied with iced water and coffee or tea and when we saw maple-syrup in a glass jar among a collection of other little pots on the table we began to feel as Julia said "the real Canadian atmosphere."

But we got lots of Canadian atmosphere the next day when we started out after luncheon to look at the flats. It met us as we closed the door behind us, a keen cutting wind that brought tears to one's eyes and nipped conversation in the bud.

"Pneumonia's very rife in Montreal," observed

Jack. "If people don't learn to keep their mouths closed out of doors they soon get it."

So we reduced our remarks to a minimum till we should find a tram which would take us to the Annex (with the emphasis on the first syllable). Catherine Street, or Catherine as Jack called it, seemed simply thick with huge tram-cars which stopped at each corner of a block to pick up or set down passengers.

We created some confusion by not having our money ready to pay at once on entering the car and between the difficulty of understanding the conductor's French-English remarks which were lost in his moustache and of extracting from our purse the right amount in a currency with which we were not familiar, and of being urged on by an impatient crowd behind and of trying to keep our hats straight on our heads we emerged into the car feeling more dead than alive so that it was a few moments before I discovered that the third occupant of our seat was Mr. Bernard Page "the Socialist," as I had mentally christened him. Julia was engaged in scolding Jack, who sat in front, for not having forewarned us of our duty with regard to car-fares.

"One feels such a silly fool," she complained, "studying a ten-cent piece and trying to make mental calculations as to its approximate value in English coin, while a woman's hat-pin point hovers round one's eyelids and men who've been smoking horrid tobacco wheeze and cough down the nape of one's neck. You ought to have told us, Jack."

Then she turned and saw Mr. Page, who it seems was staying at the *Windsor*. She smiled and shook hands and introduced him to Jack, and Mr. Page seemed rather pleased to have met us, observing that he, too, was on his way to the Annex, so he changed cars with us at the corner of Bleury—and he and Julia sat quite a long way from Jack and me in the other car, which was very full. They seemed to have a great deal to say to each other, and Julia smiled most of the time and looked as though she were making those ridiculous remarks she is so fond of, and Mr. Page was very absorbed and interested. The car flew along very fast and we got to a nice open space where there was a big stretch of grass lying at the foot of the mountain which gives its name to the town—Mont Réal or Royal Mountain.

To people who have seen the Alps or the Rockies the Mountain may not appear very striking. It is not particularly high, and has nothing steep or precipitous or noble or awe-inspiring in its aspect; nevertheless, though it is just a round placid tree-covered elevation without any peaks, easy to climb and with broad carriage drives running round its lower slopes it dominates the town and gives it character. All the wealthy people have villas on the west of the mountain—looking away towards the St. Lawrence and the opposite shore, and I learned for the first time that Montreal itself was an island lying in the river and that we could go to the other side of it in about half an

hour by tram. The green square through which we were running was called "Fletcher's Field" and a big Catholic school stood on one side of it looking bleak and gloomy and repellent with its high grey-stone walls and dark windows.

Our first flat lay not far from "Fletcher's Field," so we descended at the corner and walked the rest of the way, leaving Mr. Page in the car.

Streets in Montreal are remarkable, not only for their width, and the forest of crooked telephone and telegraph poles which fade away in dim perspectives in every direction, but chiefly for the funny wooden staircases which spring from the middle of the pavement up to the first story of every house.

"You see," said Jack, "these are all flats and every flat has a staircase to itself, that's why you often see three running side by side. The houses are rarely more than three stories high and the middle flat is considered the warmest because it gets the heat of the people above and below."

"How stuffy it must be," ejaculated Julia, and Jack became instantly offended. I wish Julia could understand that he is the type of man who detests a woman's banter beyond everything; but even if she did, I'm afraid she wouldn't care.

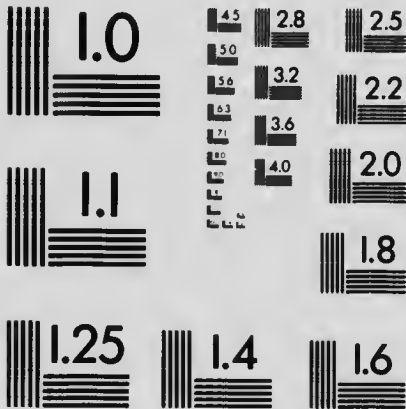
After Jack had consulted a piece of paper we ascended one of the wooden staircases and pressed a button on the door in the wall at the top.

"I should think people here die a good deal from



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broken necks, especially in frosty weather," soliloquized Julia, looking down the street at the series of precipitous stairways. "I see every house has a big balcony to sit in, that's rather nice too—I suppose children are trained not to fall from them either or perhaps people with young families take a bottom flat. It's a pity the staircase has to curve over their front windows, though."

Here the door opened and an old lady with almost no hair at all on her head looked at us with rather indignant inquiry, evidently prepared to shut the door on us again at any moment.

"Oh, we called to see the flat," said Jack in the soft, insinuating tones which he reserves for use outside the family, "we're very sorry to come on Sunday, but it's the only day I'm free. Still if you prefer us to come some other time——" The old woman hesitated, retreating a step and advanced again.

"Well, Sunday's not exactly the right day, is it?" she said. "Still if ye've no time week-days ye'd better come in"; and she proceeded to show us the apartment, expatiating on its virtues as is the way of people who want to get anything off their hands. Of course, we praised everything, which as Julia remarked afterwards was "absolutely wrong tactics, we ought to have been doubtful and pointed out the drawbacks to each other, only it seems so rude in another person's house." The fact was we none of us liked the flat, but thought it rather dear and larger than we needed and the furniture

which they wished us to buy was so hideous that it was, as Julia said, "enough to drive the steadiest husband from home." There *was* a husband, a nice old man who went about and opened cupboard doors and exhibited the woodshed on a gallery at the back where the coal was kept, and the stove for heating in winter, and he didn't look as if the furniture had affected him to any extent.

It was difficult to know how to beat a graceful retreat, but Julia with that disregard of truth so characteristic of her in certain situations, while declaring how delighted she was with the flat and the cupboards and the kitchen and the view from the back windows—which was chiefly backyards and ash barrels—still was almost afraid it was larger than we required, but she would think it over and write and let Mrs.—er—er—know."

"I think, Julia," I said when we got outside, "that you forget that it's not you but I who am taking the flat. You talk as if——"

"Yes, I know," she interrupted, "of course I know, but you stood perpending there as if glued to the floor, and I knew you didn't like the place, so I came to the rescue and told a lot of fibs which I knew your conscience would shy at and this is the thanks I get. You shall do your own lying next time."

"Julia!" I remonstrated.

The next flat, a bottom one—unfurnished just completed in fact, was still worse. It was dark and dull

and depressing, but the proprietor who showed us round expatiated on its cheapness and its bathroom and nearness to the trams till we were weary.

"You'll not get another flat like this for fifteen dollars a month."

"That's fifteen shillings a week," explained Jack; "the other one was twenty-five."

I thought of the charming little country cottages one could have for fifteen shillings a week in England and sighed over the hatefulness of a brand-new flat with a wooden staircase blocking out the light and no vestige of a garden anywhere, while nasal-voiced French-speaking children played in the streets.

"I'm afraid it won't do," I said and we wandered on further along the broad streets of new houses with their rows of starved-looking young maple-trees till our tired feet turned into one that was quite unfinished. There were planks instead of concrete side walks, and vacant building lots covered with stunted bushes, bearing notice boards in French and English. "To be sold. *Terrain à vendre.*" Some of the half-built houses had hoardings with political cartoons and manifestoes upon them left from the last election. "*Votez pour la Réciprocité et les salaires élevés!*" Reciprocity and high wages! "The old appeal to the pocket of the working man," said Julia; "how he must get tired of being humbugged."

We climbed the centre staircase of a block of brand-new houses and rang a bell.

"This is a top flat," said Jack, "there'll be another staircase inside. This is the one I like best of all."

We waited on the wooden landing while the inhabitants of the middle flat peered at us curiously from their discreetly-curtained windows, then the door opened and a bright, fresh-looking young woman with a soft English voice smilingly invited us to enter and we clambered up uncarpeted painted stairs into a narrow passage with doors on each side. In the tiny front room overlooking the broad balcony sat a rather pale young man in a dressing-gown. He was palpably English and evidently not in the best of health. The room was in a kind of semi-furnished condition yet had a cosy home-like air that we had hitherto missed. Julia sank into a rocker and exclaimed "Oh, how nice it is here! Do take it, Priscilla," which was a sentiment echoed by my own heart, only my common-sense urged that we ought at least to see the place first and not let ourselves be dominated so entirely by a momentary impulse.

But we were glad to sit and chat awhile and hear how the young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Gregson, had only been a week in the flat when the husband was taken ill with severe bronchitis, and the doctor having said he would not be able to face the severe winter of Montreal they were hastening back to England and had their passages taken for the following Friday and were most anxious to sub-let.

They had evidently been married not long before

coming out, for unmistakable wedding presents were scattered round—pictures in carved frames, inlaid bookcases, books such as people of some culture read, just the little portable things that one brings from the Old Country to help towards home-making in the new one. It seemed sad and pathetic and futile; all the packing to come out and now the packing to return, but they were both so cheerful and philosophic over it that our sympathy seemed almost an intrusion.

“I’m sure we shall like the flat,” said Julia, “and we can buy the furniture you don’t want and come in on Friday night when you leave. Friday’s a lucky day—Christopher Columbus discovered America on Friday.” The husband smiled pallidly and the rosy-cheeked wife dimpled.

“That would be nice.” she said, “and would save us a lot of worry. You see the furniture’s all new, we bought it when we came here.”

Presently we started on the final tour of inspection, but with a feeling of joy in our hearts. We felt instinctively that this was what we needed. All was fresh and clean. No hideous wallpapers—only plain white distempered walls with green and white panelling in the two sitting-rooms and the furniture was delightfully meagre in quantity. Just four chairs and a table in the dining-room.

In the little green-painted kitchen was a cupboard full of pretty china, a dinner set and a tea service among them—wedding presents as the smiling little mistress

of the house informed us cheerfully—besides sundry kitchen requisites in block tin. There was also a gas-stove for cooking.

“ Nearly every one seems to use gas here and of course you can cook on the Quebec Heater ? ” observed Mrs. Gregson.

“ Whatever’s that ? ”

“ Oh, that’s just the stove that keeps the flat warm in winter. It stands in a recess in the corridor and wants to be tended once a day. When you start lighting it you never let it go out again till summer comes.”

We looked at the Quebec Heater with great respect. It was just an ordinary pillar-like iron thing of innocent aspect, and it was not till later that we grew acquainted with its dire and hidden possibilities. The Quebec Heater led us on to talk about fuel, and we were conducted to the woodshed which, with the larder, was built on the wooden gallery outside the kitchen door, from whence we could look on to our neighbours’ galleries across the backyard. The coal was in little hard knobs evidently cut by machinery ; and we felt relieved to find it would need no breaking—as when one has to do all the domestic work oneself there are certain household duties from which one naturally shrinks and breaking coal is the chief among them.

“ I think it’s delightful,” said Julia, “ it’s so nice to have the top flat and know that on wash-day all

the drippings from our clothes will fall on to those underneath."

There was a tall post in the far corner of each back yard and from every gallery a double rope ran on a pulley diagonally to the post, so that the family wash could be hauled in or sent out to the winds by its means. A good deal of washing seemed to have been left out from Saturday and gave rather a festive air to the otherwise dreary backyards with their board fences and untidy dustbins.

No one seems to try to have a little garden here as they do in England. I suppose the severe winters would kill everything.

Of course we took the flat. It was too alluring to think of having a home of our own in less than a week, so we took the flat and the furniture and the crockery and the coal and the gas stove and the heater and the tin ware—in short, we took all there was, including the rocking-chair and the three little rugs which was all the carpet as yet provided, but as the floors were "hardwood" and capable of being polished, we resolved to have no more frowsy dust-holding floor coverings than was absolutely necessary.

"Everything one brings into a house is an added burden," said Julia sagely, "it needs henceforth either washing or sweeping or dusting—let us try to minimize labour by learning to do without superfluities. Man's riches consist in the fewness of his desires."

Thus she held forth as we returned wearily but

triumphantly back to our boarding house, feeling that our first day in Canada had been an unqualified success. Even the men in the car who chewed gum, although they roused Julia's indignation and disgust, "why even the conductor was masticating," she complained, could not quench her satisfaction at "having a place where one's thoughts may permanently repose," and in spite of the above-mentioned remarks about doing without, she began making out a long mental list of the things we "must have." We had left Peter in our bedroom at the boarding house fondly hoping that he would spend the period of our absence in peaceful sleep on the bed. We found him very pleased indeed to see us, and shortly after our return, the young lady in spectacles who had assisted Sambo to wait on us at table came up with a message to the effect that "Madame" could not allow the little dog to be in our room any more as he had been scratching at the door all the time we were away so we must arrange to have him sent somewhere else.

Julia soothed the young woman in her best French, promising to arrange it with "Madame," and she told Peter that he should soon have a house of his own, where he could do as he liked and run up and down stairs all day if he wanted.

"I say," said Jack, "I quite forgot, but dogs are not allowed in flats. It was in the agreement they showed us—I meant to draw your attention to it."

We looked at one another in consternation while

Peter gazed at each of us in turn in a vain effort to understand.

Julia as usual was the first to recover herself.

"Of course Peter's allowed in a flat, why ever not? They only put that in case any one has a dog who's likely to be a nuisance to other people in the next flat. What would Peter be to a cross baby crying all night? No one would ever know he was there. You'll see it will be all right. Don't worry. I'll talk to the landlord if he says anything." I felt dubious, but on reflection decided it was best to leave the situation to Julia. If she couldn't cope with it nobody else could.

CHAPTER VI

POOR Peter spent the next few days tied to the leg of Jack's bed in his room in the Café, which was the name of a boarding-house for young men with restaurant attached, conducted by a married couple named Pratt and "Bidly," their Irish help. All three appeared to live in a state of constant warfare, relieved by occasional short periods of armistice, and as far as outsiders could judge Bidly gave and took notice, on an average, three times a week!

The poor girl was the unfortunate possessor of a worthless husband somewhere in the States whose chief marital occupation had been domestic discipline with his fists and Bidly, declining further chastisement, left him and resolved to earn her return fare to her native Ireland which she had quitted only a year ago. She had drifted somehow to Montreal at the Café, where her good looks and her good-humoured smiles attracted many homeless young "Britishers," who found in her warm Irish accent some of the comforting familiarity of the old country. They told her their little love-affairs, showed her the photographs of the

girls "at home" to whom they were engaged, and she sympathized with them in their troubles and saw that they had their meals in comfort.

It was Biddy who carried through the negotiations for Peter's shelter during the five days which must elapse before we could command the flat, and it was Biddy who provided him with succulent bones, and, when she had time, with her society, which he greatly appreciated, and it was Biddy who showed us a short cut through the restaurant and the trick of opening the door so that Julia and I could slip in and fetch the poor animal for a run along Catherine or on the mountain, and it was Biddy who expressed in soft Irish gutturals ecstatic delight at finding Peter—one day when he lost us—sitting on the doorstep of the restaurant patiently waiting for the door to be opened.

"Shure, the poor bhaste feels himself at home here," she said with delight, "I will be rale sorry whin he an' Misther Floyd's gone. I'll be missin' them terrible."

Having disposed of Peter we set ourselves to discover the possibilities of the "stores" which we had been told equalled, if they did not surpass, those of the European capitals, not to mention New York. And indeed the big plate-glass windows in which everything was of "the latest London" or "the latest Paris" fashion far eclipsed anything I had ever seen at home. The crowd in the street impressed me too as being attired in "the very latest thing." There were **no** last year's dresses or hats to be seen, but a

unanimity of cut and shape which was almost like a uniform. Hobble skirts were not the privilege of the ultra-fashionable few as one sees and despises them in country towns, but of the majority, and ostrich willow-plumes—"Fancy! at eighteen dollars each! that's three pounds twelve for a feather!" gasped Julia. "How plucky!"—willow plumes in every shade of colour waved at exactly the same correct angle from every basin-shaped hat we met.

"Did you see that girl?" whispered Julia. "It's the one who waits on us at table—the slatternly one with a hole in her blouse who only came yesterday?"

A very smart-looking, tight-skirted, high-heeled, willow-plumed personage had just passed us.

"It can't be, Julia," I said, beginning for the first time to realize, not "the glaring impotence of dress," but its awful majesty and power, for I knew it *was* the same young "lady" who, with gaping skirt-band, dubious collar, untidy hair and smudged nose, had condescendingly brought us our morning ham and eggs. She appeared now as the embodied form of the elusive fashion-plate, surrounded by an atmosphere of society gossip.

With slight variations in trimming and colour every other visible female seemed to radiate a similar effect, and I remarked to Julia on their singular appearance.

"It seems to me," she said, "that we are the singular people. You *ought* to have bought a hobble skirt,

Priscilla. You could hardly look worse than you do if you wore a crinoline."

I swallowed, as usual, my sister's unflattering remark and followed her humbly through the revolving glass door of the store. Being imperfectly acquainted with the principle on which the door in question worked I was swept off my feet as I paused to look at some neckties which were the colour of Jack's new suit and stumbled out of my glass cage, only to fall into Julia's outstretched arms.

"They'll think you're intoxicated, Priscilla," she whispered in my ear as she restored me to my perpendicular. "I wish you'd cultivate a more elegant way of impressing our Canadian cousins. The whole place knows now that we've only been about three days in the country."

I straightened my hat and glared at Julia who I hated intensely at that moment.

The store bewildered me. I had never been in even a big London shop, like Harrod's or Selfridge's, so I naturally felt inclined to look about, but Julia swept me onwards and as we turned the first corner, behind the "Gentlemen's Department," we encountered Mr. Page with a tiny parcel in his hand waiting for change.

I always treated Mr. Page with what Julia calls my "habitual stiffness," for I thought him rather a pushing young man, and in the few days we had been in Canada it was surprising how often we had happened to meet him. Once it was in Dominion Square,

another time on the Mountain when we took Peter for a short run and on each occasion he had refused to be shaken off but attached himself, without any invitation or the slightest encouragement, to our small expedition and tried to be very agreeable and give us information about Montreal.

Probably he felt somewhat lonely and Julia's irresponsible chatter amused him. I told her I thought it a pity that she should even tacitly encourage a man of his principles.

"I don't care to associate with such people," I said.

"How absurdly conventional and one-sided you are, Priscilla," she replied, "you ought to be prepared—nay, glad, to associate with anybody and everybody who looks at things from a different point of view to yourself—or how are you going to broaden your mental outlook?"

"I don't *want* various points of view, Julia," I retorted, "it only confuses one's mind and causes indecision. Now *you* are continually readjusting your opinions on men and things."

"Thank God, I am," said Julia, with what I considered unnecessary profanity. "I hope I shall never get rigid in my ideas nor incapable of mental development."

"Fixed principles are a great safeguard," I persisted, "and a constant change of mind is very unsettling and uncomfortable."

"Oh well, I never said that mental growth was

comfortable, Priscilla, it all requires a certain amount of effort, but if you want to remain stodgy and have a nice restful frowsy cushion of ideas on which to repose your mind for the rest of your lifetime all I can say is that in two more years, with four knitting-needles and half a stocking to help, you'll be a splendid survival of the Victorian age. They'll put you in a glass case in a museum. I wish you wouldn't do those virtuous maiden-aunt stunts so often."

I objected very much to Julia's reckless use of some of the less elegant Canadian expressions which she had acquired with amazing facility, and I did not like Mr. Page hanging on to us when we were buying household necessities, but as he could not be shaken off I had to submit.

I must say that I do not care to choose even ironmongery with an avowed Socialist looking on. I felt too very uncomfortable when we passed—on our way to the lift—a department of the big store where rows and rows of absurd little puff curls were exhibited for sale, and I tried to draw Mr. Page's attention to the bookstall opposite, but Julia, with her usual utter disregard of the proprieties, stopped in front of the curls, and the young lady in charge began urging her to buy a cluster, trying them first on her own fair brow and then putting a bunch under Julia's hat-brim to show her how becoming they were. Mr. Page seemed highly entertained and interested.

"Do buy some, Priscilla," said Julia in that mock-

ing tone which irritates me so much. "You wouldn't know yourself, if you'd only let the severity of your present style of hair-dressing be ameliorated by a few sausage curls," and she laughed and passed on, while the young lady at the counter grinned ingratiatingly at me with her head on one side, and waved a plump be-ringed hand invitingly at her wares.

"What are you wanting, Madam?" inquired a truculent-looking individual in rather dingy cuffs, bearing down upon Julia, who, "smiling put the question by," and asked the way to the quick-lunch-counter where we didn't want to go. The Canadian shop-walker has not yet acquired the oleaginous grace of his English *confrère*, nor does he appear to wash his hands with invisible soap in the manner, to which Julia and I were accustomed. His remarks, too, on the weather were conspicuous by their absence and he had a downrightness and directness which were positively disconcerting.

"As if I could tell him we didn't really want anything to-day," said Julia, "but it is a pity the quick-lunch-counter is on the ground floor which we've just seen. Anyway, let us go and eat something. It's all experience."

I had never seen a quick-lunch-counter and felt very undignified perched on one of those extremely high stools which do not allow of the toes touching the floor. I could not see why this unusual elevation was necessary to the rapid dispatch of food and de-

manded the reason of Julia, who had bought some kind of blue tickets from a young lady engaged in doing crochet-work inside a sort of horsebox in front of the counter. She counted stitches before condescending to hand us our tickets, which we were enabled in some mysterious way to exchange for coffee and ham sandwiches deposited in front of us by another young lady garbed from head to foot in spotless white, who served us with a certain *hauteur* and indifference highly disconcerting to timid people like myself. In front of us hung a list of queer drinks called "sundaes" which bore very startling titles like "Buster Brown" and "Little Jim," and "Greased Lightning."

"I suppose sitting on a high stool with one's toes just touching the floor helps the food down," said Julia reflectively, "or perhaps the discomfort of being perched on a high hard stool makes people eat as fast as they can to get it over. Don't you think so, Mr. Page?"

Mr. Page, who had consumed his sandwich in two bites, thought there "might be something in the idea." He does not talk much but listens to Julia, watching her furtively out of the corner of his eye. Evidently she puzzles him very much. I don't wonder.

He has rather bright merry blue eyes and a straight nose with a certain attractiveness of manner which is soothing after the Canadian bluntness which prevails everywhere. He kept on buying additional series of blue tickets and experimented with all kinds of funny

dishes which the young lady in white, whose manner softened perceptibly when addressing him, said were "just fine."

So our "quick lunch" took rather a long time and I grew very tired of being perched like a child on a high stool with all the blood running into my feet, and when Mr. Page got still more tickets and ordered ices I just got up and went off to the furniture department by myself where he and Julia subsequently found me in the act of thumping pillows to try and find out what they were stuffed with. The young man in charge explained at great length the nature of the "hygienic substitute for feathers made and purified on the most scientific principles." which all self-respecting housekeepers in Montreal patronized, seeming to imply that only people of retrogressive and decadent tendencies would ever again cast a lingering thought on the old-fashioned feather pillow.

"Well, in Japan they use blocks of wood as head rests," sighed Julia, "so I suppose we may be able to get accustomed to this sort of thing in time." Then she wandered off with Mr. Page to look at some "Mission furniture," which is all made of wood with no padding, while I purchased two white-enamelled beds with spring mattresses from the young man, who chewed gum industriously while I made my decision.

Julia bought what is called a sofa-bed for her own use.

"I've always pined for one of those pieces of furni-

ture that are 'a bed by night, a chest of drawers by day,' she said cheerfully, "but I cannot understand how any one sleeps in a drawer or keeps their clothes in a bed."

The sofa-bed had a green linen mattress with a deep green valance and was capable of being pulled out to accommodate two people, and Julia bought more green linen with which to cover the pillows, as her bedroom would perforce have to be converted into our drawing-room during the daytime, an arrangement which we discovered had its distinct drawbacks, especially when, as often happened, Julia wanted to retire early, and Jack and his friends remained smoking on the green sofa till a rather late hour of the night.

"It's not the smell of their horrid cigarettes permeating the pillows which I mind so much," complained Julia, "as having to make my bed when I'm almost too tired to undress at all."

But she was enthusiastic over the sofa bed when she bought it, and as we had but two bedrooms in the flat it was obviously a very necessary piece of furniture and one which we found was in great request in Montreal. Mr. Page pronounced it "a most practical invention," and wished he had had one like it in his rooms in London. "So useful, you know, to put up a friend for a night," he said.

We had expected to find quantities of folding and collapsible things—tables whose legs could be tucked away, chairs capable of being stowed flat in a portman-

teau and beds which the hardy emigrant might carry on the front of his saddle into the fastnesses of the wilderness, but even the ordinary English wooden camp-bed was not forthcoming and Julia's sofa bed appeared to be the one and only effort of its kind, a fact which, while relieving us of any possible indecision in the matter of choice, caused a certain sense of disappointment. We had been prepared to find marvels of ingenuity in transportable furniture and everything confronted us with uncompromising solidity and weight.

"Imagine," said Julia, "hauling this stodgy sofa up our front outside staircase into our fragile little flat. It cracks under Priscilla's weight as it is"—this was pure invention—"I wonder how they manage pianos." We found out how they managed pianos later on.

We wandered on, looking at massive, ugly expensive sideboards of elephantine proportions, incidentally increasing our knowledge of the Canadian shop-assistant.

"They're rather like olives—an acquired taste" said Julia, who seemed amused at the absence of suavity in their manners.

"What d'ye want?" was the usual uncompromising mode of address. "I wish I knew," sighed Julia, who always becomes excessively polite when dealing with abrupt and mannerless individuals.

For some recondite reason the ironmongery depart-

ment in the basement was the most conspicuously uncivilized. Perhaps the association with cold inartistic metal things re-acts prejudicially on the human spirit, but the young man presiding at the stoves was so conspicuously lacking in the ordinary subtleties of demeanour assumed to be necessary for the attraction of trade that it was surprising that he ever managed to sell anything. He had an acutely distressing nasal accent. He chewed gum and pared his nails with an air of utter detachment from the needs of customers.

When we mentioned that we possessed a Quebec Heater he became intensely contemptuous and, changing his attentions from the thumb nail of his right hand to the little finger of his left, said in a tone of voice which conveyed doubts of our judgment and sanity,

"I guess you'd better get shut of y'r Quebec Heater s' quick as ye' ca-an, an' let me sell y'r a stove that'll heat up y'r flat f'r you—that is ef ye' don't wanta freeze in the wint'r."

"We like being frozen," said Julia, "and we *love* the Quebec Heater—we wouldn't part with it at any price."

Julia and Mr. Page wandered away from the ironmongery to the provision department which was adjoining, and I found them drinking diminutive cups of cocoa at a small horse-shoe counter presided over by a stout, blonde, smiling young woman wearing a profusion of those same sort of curls we had seen lying about as we came into the store. She was a very

agreeable and chatty, not to say familiar, young person, obviously quite devoid of the respect for a customer or a customer's money which looms so largely in well managed emporiums in England. She expatiated volubly on the virtues of the cocoa which she was mixing all the time in a neat deft-handed way and if half she said about it was true it must have been something wonderful in cocoa brands. Julia smiled and praised it and told her we were going into a flat "in a few weeks," and that she would order a large tin of it as soon as we had a roof of our own over our heads, and she took away a large handful of leaflets "to give to her friends." We wandered on admiring the neatness and cleanliness of everything and when I looked up from the biscuit tins which I had been examining, I saw my sister and her escort in the act of accepting cheese savouries from another voluble young woman behind another horse-shoe counter who was pressing her wares upon them with the unintermittent fluency of a cheap Jack at a fair. Her counter was arranged with an embroidered lace tablecloth and the cheese savouries reposed on plates with wonderful openwork doilies, while artificial pink flowers and green foliage gave the needed touch of bright colour.

"Sweet are the uses of advertisement," murmured Julia with her mouth full, "if we'd only known we might have had a cheap lunch here—there's a desiccated soup counter round the corner that's got her eye on us I can see, and a Patent Flour Raiser has the

most delicious looking tea-cakes waiting to be tried and that girl in green, wearing diamond bracelets, has a Potted Meat Establishment with sandwiches just a few blocks away near the tinware. This thing is reduce' to a perfect system over here. I shouldn't wonder but what they have coffee and ices waiting to be sampled somewhere further on."

The upshot of it all was that Mr. Page's pockets became distended with samples of cheese and tins of soup and baking powder, all of which he promised to bring to the flat "to help us start housekeeping"—an alarming pronouncement which made me remark that our housekeeping seemed already to bristle with so many difficulties that I should hesitate to add to the number—whereat he laughed as though I had been guilty of a joke, and I never was more serious in my life.

We spent the rest of the week until Friday, visiting the various stores, more or less accompanied by Mr. Page whose business, whatever it was, seemed to leave him a lot of leisure time especially in the mornings.

Once Julia went off by herself to a furniture place on "Notre Dame," which is one of the principal business streets of the town and came back glowing with excitement, because she had seen the fire engines dashing up Beaver Hill.

"You'll see 'em every day," said Jack nonchalantly, "there are fires every five minutes in Montreal, and as nearly all the houses are built of wood, though they're

coated outside with brick or stone, the firemen have to be pretty spry or they'd come too late to be much good. Their horses *can* go some though."

Jack too, I noticed, had quickly acquired an American style of expression. He spoke of Mademoiselle Laronde, whom we accidentally met one day "on Catherine" as "some girl" and said she had "dandy eyes." His admiration of a totally different type of beauty from Poppy's made me rather uneasy, and I wished I had mentioned Jack's engagement to Marie Laronde.

On Friday morning we joyfully packed our clothes and ordered the Canadian Express Company to take all the boxes they had in charge to number 4004 Cartier Avenue, which was our new address. Julia and I were to arrive there about six and would receive the keys from the Gregsons, who were to dine with a friend before going on board their steamer which would leave at five the following morning.

The Express Company was to call and pick up the rest of our baggage—we had ceased to call it luggage—from the boarding-house, and after tipping Sambo and bidding farewell to Madame, who now seemed to have taken up a permanent position at the telephone, we set off to our future home in the highest spirits, which even the wretched drizzling weather could not damp. We had thought that an hour would be ample time to reach the flat on the Avenue, one end of which was in Catherine Street while the other—our *apartment*—was

pushing into the country three miles away, but we reckoned without a knowledge of the conditions of the tram-service at that hour.

Every car was full, nay overflowing. People hung on outside in the most precarious positions wherever there was room for a desperate toe to find hold and car after car swung past through the gathering darkness black with clinging passengers. The struggle at the stopping place at the corner of Bleury was terrific. We recoiled at the idea of making one in that vortex of humanity.

We had bought some necessary provisions to start housekeeping. Julia clasped a loaf under one arm and a bag of potatoes and a beefsteak under the other, her hands being loaded with various parcels, while I was equally burdened with flour, tea and other necessaries of life, so that our capacity for clinging was severely handicapped. We walked on hoping that some of the passengers would get off at the next stopping place, but the crowd seemed as dense as ever. While we stood hesitating, for there was obviously not a square inch of spare room on the car, a man on the edge of the wide step caught hold of Julia and hauled her up beside him, while I was carried upward by the pushing crowd and found myself with my hat on one side, my parcels relentlessly slipping, my skirt trodden upon by muddy feet, wedged into the centre of a hot perspiring mass of people, the beady eyes of two yellow-faced Chinamen who were taking home

the washing, in most startling proximity to my nose. All that was visible of Julia was the crimson feather she wore. Most of her appeared to be outside the car, and she said afterwards that if two men hadn't supported her round the waist she could not have retained her hold a single moment.

"Whatever sort of men, were they, Julia?" I asked commiseratingly.

"Oh, I don't know," she answered, "just ordinary men—at least, as far as I could judge, they were simple arms, I never was quite certain to which bodies they belonged, we were all so mashed together. They kept me on the car and I feel deeply grateful to them."

"It's rather awful though, having strange men put their arms round one like that," I hazarded.

"Not a bit," answered Julia, "no worse than dancing with a man one detests." As I had never experienced this form of enjoyment I had no adequate retort to make.

"It was the loaf and the beefsteak and the potatoes that worried me," she said, "they were continually slipping away—the beefsteak might possibly have been improved by a little trampling, but the potatoes——"

Fortunately, we had lost none of our property in the scrimmage, and by the time the car arrived at our end of the Avenue most of the people had got out.

It was very dark and still drizzling miserably as we stepped out into the broad street, and we went splash-

ing dismally along the plank side-walk of the muddy side street leading to Cartier Avenue.

Streets in Montreal are either excellently paved all over with concrete or remain in their primitive condition of mud—most side streets are quagmires during the spring and autumn rains.

We were much later than we had intended to be and hurried breathlessly on past the gaunt wooden stairs of each house till we arrived at our destination. The electric light—all flats have electric light and gas—was shining on to the stairs, and Mr. Gregson stood at the top of the inner flight evidently impatient for our coming and a little anxious at the delay.

A beautiful radiance from the Quebec Heater in the passage met us with friendly welcome, the nearest approach to a domestic hearth which we had seen for some time. It was our own fireside—even if a rather tubular one—and only those who have for the first time been divorced from the comforts and freedom and privacy of their own homes can realize what that means.

The kettle was purring gently on the top of the Heater, and in the drawing-room the red and white tea-cups were placed on the oval tray—our kettle, our tea-cups, our tray! What luxury to possess once more the means of comfort! In the little canvas-panelled dining-room stood Julia's sofa-bed, waiting to be unpacked. In spite of the confusion and bareness and emptiness and the straw-packed beds, the silent appeal of our future home crept alluringly into

our hearts, for as Julia said, "a week in a boarding-house is calculated to develop domestic instincts in a cuckoo."

So when Mr. Gregson, after mutual good wishes, had taken his departure in a "rig," surrounded by his few remaining pieces of baggage, to the friend's flat where his wife awaited him, we prepared tea with the feeling that it was a rite of solemn initiation and must be approached, like matrimony, not lightly and unadvisedly but with a due regard for its inner significance.

Undeterred by the lack of a toasting-fork which she improvised by means of a piece of wood, Julia made toast at the Quebec Heater so that the atmosphere of our flat might be permeated by its homely smell.

Mr. Page, who turned up during the toast-making, declared that he had been guided to the house by its means. He said he had come to help us undo the furniture. Julia gave him tea and toast and showed him how to make more on the top of the stove and she described our adventures on the cars (suppressing however the portion about the supporting arms) and we did not do much work for a while as might easily have been foreseen. Still Julia is nothing if not practical, and when Mr. Page was leisurely consuming his third round of toast, she mapped out a little programme of work for him which comprised the unwrapping and setting up of her green sofa-bed and the two white ones and the preparation of potatoes and beefsteak for supper.

"This beefsteak," she said, taking it from its sodden wrappings, "has been for more than a year in a state of suspended animation."

"What do you mean, Julia? Don't talk rubbish," I said.

"Well, I mean it's been dead a year at least, so the Gregsons said. All the meat is kept twelve months in cold storage and has to be cooked as soon as you buy it. It's fully a year since it cropped daisies and buttercups or whatever the Canadian equivalents for them are in the prairies."

Mr. Page looked at the beefsteak with great respect.

"Am I to cook it?" he asked dubiously. "You'll have to show me how, you know. I can do the beds, I'm sure, but I don't know about the beefsteak. Must it be toasted?"

"Of course," said Julia mischievously. "You'll have to do it *à la Marengo* with Worcester sauce and linseed oil."

"I've often thought I should like to be a vegetarian," returned Mr. Page, "and now I'm quite sure I should. Why do we allow the slaughter of harmless innocent creatures to gratify our brutal appetites?"

"Well, just because our appetites have to be gratified, I suppose," said Julia, accidentally dropping the beefsteak on to our only armchair, "appetites are horrid instincts which we've received from our primitive ancestors—we have to accept them like our Christian names, whether we like them or not. It's funny

that horses are vegetarians and we are not, isn't it? "

I rescued the beefsteak and carried it into the kitchen which opened directly out of the dining-room while Mr. Page began a long dissertation on the beauties of abstinence from meat.

When next I saw him and Julia—for I thought it better to prepare supper myself, and it was rather an absorbing business as the Express Company had not yet brought our household goods, and I had nothing to peel the potatoes with, excepting a penknife with an inadequate blade—he was busy under her directions putting up my bed in the front room and the discussion on vegetarianism was still in full swing. I forget how many pounds of apples he said were necessary to the support of one able-bodied vegetarian, but Julia reckoned that the minimum allowance for a family of twelve including three servants would be three barrels daily. She said she wished Jack would try it as it would do away with dish-washing, one of the least pleasing of the domestic duties which the near future holds in store for us.

The flat, under our joint ministrations, began to look like a place where it would be possible to dine and sleep. Each bedroom now held a white enamelled bed, but as the Express Company still delayed its coming we had no blankets. Julia's sofa-bed in its green-valanced cotton cover filled up the drawing-room recess and looked perfectly innocent of any remote possibility of being used as a couch of repose. The

bathroom served us for toilet purposes, and we dried our hands on a piece of old sacking, for the towels were, like John Gilpin's wig, "upon the road," at least we hoped so.

At seven o'clock Jack and Peter arrived in high spirits. The poor dog at once recognized that the flat was his home, and when the long-delayed baggage arrived and Julia pulled out of her bundle of rugs the identical piece of carpet on which Peter had been accustomed to sleep in the kitchen at home in England, placing it in the warm recess beside the Quebec Heater, his happiness was complete. He crept on to the carpet with a sigh of content, refusing to move for the rest of the evening and watched us intently, as we hurried about, his dear brown eyes radiating immeasurable felicity and domestic peace.

CHAPTER VII

HOUSEKEEPING in a Canadian flat was, we speedily discovered, totally unlike our English experience. It struck us as strange and inconvenient that all our household goods and provisions excepting coal and ice, should be all delivered at the front door and have to be carried through the passage and dining-room into the kitchen.

"What," we argued, "was the use of a back door?"

"That's for the garbage and ashes," said Jack. "Tradesmen in Montreal never come to the back door."

It was quite true, and there was no means of communication from front to back excepting through the flat itself. All the front doors were on a wide, tree-planted street furnished with telephone posts and a long vista of wooden staircases, while all the back doors gave on to wooden galleries and thence down a rough ramshackle enclosed staircase composed of innumerable angles, on to a trampled untidy yard from which the exit was through an ugly board fence into

a narrow back lane, permanently ornamented with ash barrels, garbage-tins and drifting eddies of ragged paper. Twice a week the garbage carts came up the lane and coal was brought in sacks and swung by means of pulleys into the various flats, otherwise there was no other traffic.

Our first difficulty, owing to our ignorance of the correct procedure, had been in obtaining a supply of milk. As directed by the Gregsons, who had been very lavish of useful information, we had placed their milk-bottle—every one uses glass milk-bottles with patent fasteners—upon the top step of the outside stair, placing inside it a paper with our names and the quantity we required. We had heard across our dreams the milkman running up and down the stairs at a very early hour and were disgusted to find our bottle empty. A breakfast table without milk did not appeal to Jack any more than to the rest of us, but fortunately the Gregsons had left half a tin of "condensed" behind.

The next night we placed the bottle in a more conspicuous position, but it was ignored as before, and I took Peter for a run and went in search of a milk-shop which I found after some difficulty as a sort of side industry to a big fruit shop. The chemist at the corner was also a dealer in postcards and confectionery, and in the town itself the combination of drug store, florist and restaurant was almost universal.

When I returned with the milk I found Julia engaged

in writing a letter to the dealer whose address she had found on the milk-bottle. It was a dignified and protesting letter and she was with difficulty restrained by me from enclosing in it a piece of poetry which she said had occurred to her while dressing.

It ran as follows :—

“ Shall all the people in our street
 Have milk to drink and we have none ?
 Then why does not your milkman fleet
 Pause at our door and leave us some ?
 Why fly his hurrying footsteps past ?
 Why waits the bottle day by day ?
 Why won't he leave us just one pint ?
 Perhaps he thinks we may not pay ? ”

She was finally persuaded to try the effect of plain prose first of all, with the result that from that time our bottle was filled and we were never overlooked again.

Thanksgiving Day, which we had previously imagined to be a festival observed only in the United States, has been, we speedily discovered, incorporated into the Canadian social scheme. It was the shops which first drew our attention to the fact.

“ Worse than Christmas,” grumbled Julia, “ the way one is implored to buy Thanksgiving dresses, Thanksgiving furniture, Thanksgiving mangles and wringing machines. A turkey seems to be the official victim of the feast, you'd better order one, Priscilla. How glad I am that plum-pudding isn't an accessory horror.”

We were looking, when Julia made the above remark, into a window where elegant table-linen was exhibited dotted about with encouraging placards in large letters to the effect that "a cheery Thanksgiving awaits those who purchase our wonderful demi-linen napery," while the grocery next door had "Thanksgiving potatoes" and "Thanksgiving pumpkins" largely evident. We bought a Thanksgiving shovel which proved to be anything but provocative of thankful sentiments in the hearts of those who used it, for it was of poor metal which buckled easily under pressure.

Peter revelled in his home and new-found liberty. Until we had time to go down to the police station and pay the dog-tax, when he would become a properly registered dog and run no risk of cremation as long as his official number was on his collar, we allowed him to run up and down the street wearing a parchment label inscribed with our address. He always found his way back again, although at first he made a few mistakes as to the right staircase, which was not surprising considering how much alike they were, so we once or twice saw him sitting patiently at other people's front doors waiting to be let in to the wrong flat, but in a day or two he learned to discover ours without any difficulty and speedily became, as far as we could judge from the luscious bones he was continually bringing home, rather a popular favourite in the district.

On studying the printed lease left to us by the

Gregsons, who had introduced us by letter to the owner of the house, a Frenchman living on the Boulevard St. Joseph, we found that "no dogs, chickens, or other animals" were allowed in a flat, and I was rather uneasy about Peter, but as a good many other dogs were evidently living in our street we concluded that this rule must be frequently relaxed. Still I felt rather apprehensive when I heard by letter from our landlord, Monsieur Renaud, that he would call the next evening with a new agreement for me to sign.

"We must just try and keep Peter out of sight. He might go for his evening run when Monsieur What's-his-name comes," said Julia as she hung up pictures. (It was surprising what a number she had managed to bring, packed between her dresses.)

"No, Julia," I answered firmly, "I shall do nothing of the kind. If Monsieur Renaud makes any objection I shall tell him that Peter is an absolute necessity for an unprotected person like myself and that I shall give up the flat rather than the dog."

"Well, do as you like," said Julia curtly, "but don't for any sake steer the conversation inevitably towards dogs. We are not supposed to read all that small print in French and English, and if Peter chooses to lie asleep under the table you've no need to lift up the tablecloth and point him out. I know the unflinching honesty of your nature, dear, and your peculiar talent for giving yourself and your relatives away. Haven't I squirmed many a time while you were

telling—quite unnecessarily—the chief gossips of our village the exact date of your birth and mine? ”

“ I’m sure I never told any one how old you were,” I remonstrated.

“ No, dear, but you said I was three years younger than you are, which comes to much the same thing. Personally I never connect age with anybody. Some people are older at twenty-five than others are at sixty, and if one looks forty it’s not much good to have been born only thirty years ago, but it’s your gift for giving people away and trampling on the most sensitive human feelings which keeps me always on the jump. You’ve heaps of sympathy for people when they suffer through death of their friends or illness, but none for the small trials, weaknesses, defects, or whatever you like to call them, of human character. You’d never help people to fancy that their hair or their teeth or their complexion was their own if it wasn’t. You love to tear off every illusion, you blurt out truths which more sensitive people don’t even whisper, and then you wonder why you’re not popular and why life is rather dull and colourless, yet at the bottom of your heart you rather sigh for romance. So that though it would break your heart to part with Peter or you think it would, you are not capable of the least bit of tacit deception for his sake. If you’d been born in the days of the Inquisition or any other time of religious persecution you’d have let every one know behind what secret panels all your friends were

hiding, and which chimneys were the most likely ones to explore for a prospective martyr's legs, but you'd have run any risk to accompany them to the scaffold with words of comfort and support and have been so rude to the man who tried them that they would all probably have reaped the benefit in additional nerve-racking tortures. That's the sort of person you are,' and Julia gave a delicate adjusting touch to "The Laughing Cavalier."

It is best to ignore Julia's remarks when she talks so recklessly, and as a matter of fact, when Monsieur Renaud arrived that evening with an English-speaking friend to help him grapple with any linguistic difficulties which might arise, it was Peter who escorted him upstairs and deposited the leg of a Thanksgiving turkey at his feet as he stood talking to Julia, who was showing off her French.

She praised the tasteful decoration of the flat to him and told him it was the nicest one she had seen in Montreal, making other remarks which were highly injudicious coming from a tenant to a landlord, for of course, though Julia was not the tenant she talked as though she were, completely misleading Monsieur Renaud, who was agreeably surprised at her inaccurate fluency in French.

I retired into the kitchen with the English-speaking friend and explained the difficulties with regard to gas and hot water for the bath, and he was very polite and recommended various firms all remotely related to

himself who would do the work we wanted "ver' sheap," and when I seemed to have exhausted his capacity for information I went back to the dining-room where Peter was being fondled by Monsieur Renaud, who was wearing that complacent, slightly suffused look which I have grown accustomed to remark in people whom Julia handles judiciously.

She made signs to me over his head to retire a little longer, so I had to affect to have forgotten something in the kitchen, and when I went in again the lease was waiting on the table ready to be signed and Peter was still allowing his ears to be stroked by Monsieur Renaud's long slim fingers. The turkey leg with its pathetic yellow crumpled claw lay at the Frenchman's feet like a mute appeal for pity.

My French which was always considered very good at school seemed to be difficult to understand and Monsieur Renaud's Canadian-French was quite incomprehensible to me, but Julia kept translating what she thought he said and the signing was done without any difficulty, and as Julia talked furiously all the time there was no opening for me to say anything about dogs, though I should have preferred to discuss the point and clearly indicate my wishes, but M. Renaud and his friend took their departure without any opportunity occurring for me to say what I wished.

As Peter, however, had been continually in evidence during the interview my conscience was quite easy, and I came to the conclusion that well-behaved dogs

were acceptable everywhere if accompanied by desirable tenants--at least, this was the view of the matter taken by Julia, and I daresay that for once she was right.

Our first experience of Canadian weather was that it was very like English weather, only more so. Just one continual damp drizzle and the mud in the streets of Montreal worse than I have ever seen anywhere at home. Semi-liquid and glutinous, it flowed along the gutters, sometimes widening out into a broad impassable stream, the occasionally narrowing so that it was possible for the fashionable crowd to pass over it. As for the side streets they were more like country lanes in winter time than any country lanes I ever saw, but everybody said it would be all right when the cold set in and everything was frozen hard, so we put on our hockey skirts to wear "down town" and tried to look forward to the winter, which might be expected any moment. We had to "hustle" to get the flat in proper order before it came.

"You're never thinking of trying to get through the winter with nothing but the Quebec Heater to warm the flat, are you?" was the invariable question asked by our English-Canadian friends when they called to see us.

"You've no idea what it's like here, thirty and forty degrees below zero. Think!--You've never felt cold like it in England."

It was Mrs. Knight who made this remark, a very

pleasant little English widow who had settled in Montreal with her two sons "because there are more openings out here than in England." She had spent three winters in Canada so spoke with authority, and always sat shivering when in our flat which we found most uncomfortably hot. But we noticed everywhere that all houses and shops in Canada were usually overheated, and said so to Mrs. Knight.

"You won't think so," said Harold Knight, who is a student at M'Gill University, "when you've spent one winter here and got acclimatized. We've got hot-water pipes all over our house."

They had indeed. When we sat in their drawing-room there were pipes running overhead and a radiator beside the piano and whiffs of warm air continually wafted in from the passages and stairways so that one longed to rush to the front door and get a breath of real fresh air. Only the very lightest of summer clothing is of any use in a Canadian house.

"It's rather nice though," said Julia, "to wake up in the morning and find that although nearly all the clothes have slipped off one lies enwrapped in a balmy Arabian atmosphere—and on stepping into the corridor to see the cheerful red glow of the faithful Quebec Heater apparently as full of coal as it was after filling it up the night before."

Julia used to get up at unearthly hours and sit down at the dining-room table at six o'clock in the morning to translate Heine, whose poems she admired.

She never troubled to dress on these occasions, and as we all slept with our bedroom doors open the first thing that met my waking gaze was a pair of bare feet and the hem of an angelic-looking garment, all that could be seen of Julia immersed in composition before the day's work began.

Servants are one of the luxuries which people try to do without in Canada if they possibly can. They are very expensive and their presence too obtrusive in a flat, added to which they require a great deal of recreation—picture theatres and a young man to walk out with every evening—and they have to be entrusted with a latch-key of their own and permitted unlimited liberty of action.

To do without a servant in England implies rather severe financial tightness. In Canada quite well-to-do people, especially if they have no children, consider that they are better off without one. Twelve shillings a week with board and lodging included is the price paid to the most incompetent of their clan, rising up to giddy heights in the case of well-trained domestics. Julia debated for some time as to whether it would not be wise for her to take a parlour-maid's place "in one of the houses of the great Montreal magnates," as she expressed it.

"I could pay for my journey back to England in two months," she said, laughing, "no social stigma attached, and theatre-going permitted not more than three times a week." I believe she really seriously

considered the matter, but finally came to the conclusion that the time was too short to allow of any such experiment.

I do not enjoy having to do domestic work, and Julia said that until some one had invented a means of washing greasy dishes the domestic problem would remain as acute as ever.

"If eating with its concomitant evils could be banished from human society how simple and easy life would become. We are altogether too refined and civilized. One plate ought to serve for the whole of dinner, why should we not train ourselves to eat rice pudding and roast beef from the same piece of crockery. We have too many artificially created needs. It is the domestic woman, the 'notable housewife,' who has undermined the stamina and endurance of the human race. If we ate only of one dish at meals, if we slept on simply-made beds like the Japanese, if we lopped off the foolish superfluities of mere existence, how easily we might devote ourselves to a fuller, richer, more intellectual life."

"Well, why don't we make a beginning then?" I said.

"Because it's too late. We need to start such a life in infancy, then it becomes an ingrained part of our nature, irrevocably interwoven into the fabric of our existence. Now it's too late. We've taught our menkind to expect three square meals daily. What do they care if a woman's life is spent over a hot stove

or in washing up greasy dishes? When men are trained in domestic duties as they ought to be, life will become much simpler. No mere man would have patience and perseverance enough to continually cook and wash dishes which are not a necessity, but a luxury. Half our diseases and failures in health are due to wrong ways of living. We trammel ourselves and, what is worse, generations to come just for the sake of vain show. We no more dare invite anybody to come and dine, say on oatmeal porridge with an apple to finish off with, than we dare walk down the street with bare feet."

I felt there was a great deal in what Julia said. The preparation of three meals a day, not to mention afternoon tea and the subsequent "washing-up," is—it cannot be doubted—the key to the tragedy of woman-kind in the colonies. I had heard it spoken of on board, talked about cheerfully and bravely by women whose lives, they said, had resolved themselves into one unceasing round of domestic labour, and now Julia and I began to realize something of what it meant. We had always been "domesticated" in the sense that women who keep one servant are domesticated. We could cook and sew, and Julia had a talent for millinery and for icing cakes. The wheels of domestic machinery ran smoothly enough in England with the exception of occasional jolts, such as a maid-servant who proved unpunctual or a chimney-sweep who was faithless at spring-cleaning times. But now I had to rise at

seven o'clock and prepare breakfast after sweeping the dining-room. In England this would have meant lighting a fire and consequent black-handedness, but with the gas stove in the kitchen and the Quebec Heater in the corridor it was a comparatively simple affair and the washing up afterwards, though uninteresting, was quickly over.

It was more particularly the evening meal which made our lives a burden. Jack had his midday luncheon in the town and thus spared us the necessity of cooking in the middle of the day, but he returned at seven and expected, "like all hateful, devouring masculine beings," a three-course dinner, beginning with soup, continuing with meat and two kinds of vegetables, culminating with pudding or fruit and perorating, as Julia put it, with coffee. He also usually demanded cocoa before going to bed. Jack is unfortunately endowed with the artistic temperament, which requires a good deal of varied sustenance but recoils from aiding in its preparation. He once or twice wiped plates during the process of "washing up," but soon discovered that a cigarette after dinner soothed his nerves better and allowed him "to think out ideas" as he put it. It is surprising what an amount of greasy pans and plates go to the preparation of a three-course dinner. Julia says I am ridiculously lavish of my personal trouble, and that Jack is being converted into the complete domestic tyrant, and sometimes I have regretted that I never trained

him from childhood to wipe cups and saucers and polish the knives. Masculine supineness at times of domestic stress is, I am convinced, one of the chief causes of domestic unhappiness. Julia and I raged inwardly when Jack and Lis friends sat comfortably smoking over their coffee in the evening digesting the three-course dinner which had taken us half a day to prepare, while we washed the greasy dishes in the kitchen by way of relaxation and tried to pretend we liked it.

Mr. Page was the only one of his sex who ever endeavoured to lend a helping hand, and under Julia's tuition learned to clean plates with surprising ability, but he, too, I noticed, found domestic work exhausting and never pretended that he liked it.

None of the families at our end of Cartier Avenue kept servants, although they all paid from £30 to £40 a year rent for their flats. Every morning along the perspective of kitchen balconies rising above each other, shapeless female forms huddled in long overalls, with features hidden from view under print cotton bonnets appeared fitfully and vanished again.

They carried out ashes to the big tins on the galleries, they hung out or pulled in washing, sometimes they shook cushions or hearthrugs.

Julia, hanging out pocket-handkerchiefs in her neat flannel blouse and hockey skirt, struck almost a false note. She recognized it herself.

"I ought to be disguised," she said; "it's not etiquette here to do housework in one's ordinary

character or to try to look nice while doing it. They look so fashionable in the front street, I wonder if they are the same people."

That afternoon our bell jarred sharply and instead of Mr. Page, whom we had half expected, a most elegantly-attired lady appeared when Julia opened the door. She wore white kid gloves, two willow-plume ostrich feathers on her hat, her coat was of velvet faced with satin, a faint perfume of violets and lilac was wafted up the stairs from her garments as she moved. From my bedroom window I saw her hand something to Julia, who presently returning, laughing, with a dinner-napkin in her hand.

"It's the lady from the bottom flat. I must have dropped this from the kitchen balcony this morning. She says she found it on the rail of her gallery when she was hanging out her "wash" after dinner. Isn't she lovely? Cinderella in the morning. A princess in the afternoon."

We watched her going down the street picking her way daintily through the mud. Her dress was pictorially perfect. Not a false note anywhere. Fashionable, but in perfect taste. The colours right, the cut good, the material and small accessories of the best. At a royal garden party on a rather chilly day, it would have been pronounced an exquisite confection, but for shopping purposes it seemed almost an extravagance.

"Anyway it brightens up the street," said Julia.

"I'm glad she called on us. I consider it plucky in a woman who's been washing all morning and has four children to look after—very plucky and energetic, and I bet she gets heaps of pleasure out of it, so why shouldn't she do it."

"I think it's perfectly absurd, Julia," I answered, for Julia is always defending any display of vanity, which, allied as in this case to senseless extravagance, is, I consider, little short of criminal. "Think of her husband, poor man! working hard to pay for those clothes."

"Well, think of her working hard herself over the washing and cooking. She's earned those clothes over and over again, every penny of them, I'm sure. She carries out the ashes and the garbage into the lane. I've seen her do it—recognized her by her nose. Why shouldn't she have and give the pleasure that comes from wearing and seeing pretty clothes? It's the most encouraging thing I've noticed about Canada so far. As long as a woman takes a pride in her appearance and does her housework she's helping the British Empire and encouraging trade. If they all took to sackcloth and ashes I suppose you'd say 'How noble and self-sacrificing!'"

It was not an exceptional example. Every lady, on emerging from her front door in the afternoon on shopping intent, at once created a fashionable atmosphere in our untidy incomplete street. In England the inhabitants of corresponding houses would have

presented a struggling, respectable, depressing, dowdy appearance. Their attire would have suggested utility before anything else. In Montreal there was a joyous optimistic extravagance in the women's garb which Julia said was "stimulating," while I considered it alarming. So much for our different points of view.

Julia at an early stage of our possession of the flat had been complaining of the unnecessary amount of trumpets in which the youth of the street indulged and also of the dull rumblings "like loads of bricks falling downstairs" which disturbed her early morning slumbers, rumblings which always seemed to follow hard on the frantic blasts of the trumpet.

"*Dieu ! que le son du cor est triste au fond des bois,*" she murmured one morning on hearing the well-known sounds. "Why do those children have those beastly trumpets? Their parents ought to be prosecuted for letting them disturb virtuous citizens."

"It's not children," said Jack with amused contempt, "it's dynamite. They are blowing up the rock foundations and the trumpets sound to warn people to keep their distance. Montreal is built on rock, and every house has to have its foundations blasted out. You'll get used to hearing it pretty often round here. They've started on three new houses since we came."

So it was. On all sides of us the ground was being prepared, and every day we saw the grey rock floor cracked and shattered by the constant

blasting. The notes of the trumpet grew more and more frequent and came from every point of the compass. The children paused in their play a moment or two, the gay wagons of the various stores pulled up, the workmen drew aside in a casual way and the man with the trumpet bleated continuously till the dull rumble announced that the danger was over.

It was a long and tedious business getting out the foundations, and then the pieces of rock were built up into a wall about three feet high, but from that point the houses appeared to shoot upwards like a beanstalk in a single day. We went down town one morning for a little shopping and came back in the afternoon to find our side view which had given us a glimpse of distant trees when we left, permanently obstructed by great balks of timber which formed the divisions of the rooms of the new house. Even the roof was on; a skeleton roof it is true, but none the less obstructive. The front wall seemed to be left to the last, enabling us to look into the rooms like a doll's house. All above the rock, excepting the brick chimney, where holes were left for the entrance of the stove pipes, was of wood and had a curiously unpermanent effect, as if it might burn or blow down any moment.

Whenever we went "down town" we never passed a Shoe-Shine Parlour, of which there are several in "Catherine," without Julia wishing to go in and get her shoes polished.

"It looks so positively Olympian," she said, "and

must make one feel like a demigod to be seated up there in a beautiful green-plush armchair with gilt fittings while the man stands at one's feet and does artistic stunts in the high-grade polish line. Just look at that row of young men all smoking cigarettes, don't they look insufferably insolent and complacent, yet when they descend on to the mere floor again they are rather meek and humble-looking individuals."

All the Shoe-Shine Parlours had enormous plate-glass windows so that the customer's extremities, raised as they were on a high platform, were in full view of the street.

"Must need a lot of nerve, though," said Jack, "for people with ugly feet to exhibit them to the public gaze," and he contemplated his own boots with interest. "It runs up, though, five cents a day for boot-cleaning—that's eighteenpence a week, including Sunday, six shillings a month. Local custom's funny, isn't it? What should we think if we couldn't get our shoes cleaned in the house in England? I wonder how these customs originated?"

Jack always cleaned his own shoes and ours—a feat he would never have attempted in England, but he felt, he said, as though he were earning money and reflected on the amount of cigarettes he could buy with the four and sixpence which he weekly saved to the family, while Julia demonstrated by means of a very plausible well-connected chain of argument that, according to current Canadian rates, she and I were per-

forming for his benefit domestic duties whose value was equivalent to a sum of at least four guineas weekly. As he seemed, like most young men of his age, oblivious of the advantages he enjoyed in being served by women of some culture and intellect, she urged me to let him have an occasional week at a boarding-house so that he might learn to better appreciate the sacrifices of his womenkind.

"That is if poor Poppy is to have a chance when she comes out," concluded Julia; "she's taking lessons in cookery, which I suppose is the *one* great feminine effort that has to be made in view of matrimony. How I wish the human race could make a fresh start altogether and banish the superfluous luxuries of the table once for all, so preventing the waste of human existence. I see a procession of hot joints, soups and puddings progressing down the centuries over the prostrate bodies of worn-out, harassed women. We ought to live simpler, nobler lives. I wonder what Diogenes ate in his tub—something equivalent to bread and cheese, I expect. Grapes and bread probably."

"I daresay he did," retorted Jack, "that's why he was so rude and ill-tempered. It's all very well for a philosopher who does no work and basks all day in the sun. We men who design and build bridges can't do it on grapes. Don't talk such bally rot, Julia."

CHAPTER VIII

MARIE LARONDE has been down at our flat a good deal lately, and Jack and Harold Knight are taking French lessons, or, as they say, "improving their French conversation," though, as Julia remarks, "it is not easy to improve the non-existent," for notwithstanding that they of course learned French for years at school in England, they naturally cannot say a single phrase, though both of them passed exceedingly high in their French examinations. Did I mention that Harold Knight and Jack had been at school together? Well anyway their French conversation was truly pitiable, and Julia used to inveigh for hours against the idiotic English system of teaching languages in private schools, and Jack for once agreed with her.

I also seized the opportunity of trying to improve my own knowledge of French, for most of the tradespeople in our quarter speak very little English and often employ rough, uncouth Canadian slang in a very startling, almost alarming manner, saying "You bet "

and "Sure" and other inelegant expressions with which they disguise their real ignorance of what I am saying to them. Jack declares it of the utmost importance to him to be able to understand and speak to his French-Canadian workmen, and he loses no opportunity of practising wit. Marie Laronde, who seems to have a great deal of spare time and is always free after six o'clock to do exactly as she likes.

Mr. Page has gone up into Saskatchewan and the Western towns. I think he is writing a book about Canada, so of course it is necessary for him to stay at least a day in each of the places he intends to describe. Julia says he has great assimilative powers like herself, and a knack of discovering the salient points of any situation or argument. He must be a very clever man to please Julia, who is apt to see people's weak qualities sooner than their strong ones.

A day or two after his departure Julia rose up early to translate Heine.

From my bed opposite the door, I could see into the dining-room where she sat at the table, her bare toes, for she was still undressed, squirming agitatedly in the throes of rhythmical composition. When they were curved back I knew she was groping vainly and when they relaxed her pencil began to move rapidly and the elusive word had evidently been run to ground.

Julia says Heine is very difficult to translate. Personally I do not think much of this poet whose works I am unable to read in the original—but the lyric Julia

left on the table when she returned to bed for another hour, impressed me as rather feeble stuff.

It ran as follows :—

WHY ?

Tell me, then, why are the roses so pale ?
 Speak, Love, and tell me why.
 And why down in the green, green grass
 Dumb the blue violets lie ?

Why, then, with such a sad wild tone
 Aloft the lark's notes swell ?
 Why rises from the balsam-bush
 An, earthy death-like smell ?

Why shines the sun so vexed and chill
 Down on us here below ?
 Why is the earth a desert drear,
 Empty of all but woe ?

And why am I myself so sad,
 So ill and heavy-hearted ?
 Oh, speak, my heart's beloved one,
 Why art thou then departed ?

I think that Julia—at thirty-five—should give her mind to higher thoughts than these—in fact, I told her so, and she said that thirty-five had nothing to do with it, and that if age was to be a continual test of what we ought or ought not to feel in a literary sense, of course some of the most beautiful love-poems in the world would never have been written.

“ We feel things,” she said, “ from twenty to thirty, and we write about them all our lives. Try not to be narrow, Priscilla, I shouldn't be surprised if at forty you fell madly, deeply, dangerously in love, but if

you do I suppose you'd let concealment prey on your damask cheek rather than find a literary outlet. If you'd only let yourself go occasionally you'd be so much more agreeable, but you're too self-conscious sometimes and then not enough when you judiciously might be."

Julia was evidently irritated at my remarks on her literary efforts, and I suppose it *was* unwise to criticize her translation.

Later on in the same day she suggested, as a celebration of the completion of furnishing the flat, that we should go down to Baldwin's, the big store where we had made most of our purchases, and partake of their forty-cent luncheon. Forty cents is one shilling and eightpence in English money.

I agreed, as I wanted to soothe down her feelings, which had been slightly ruffled by my remarks on the poetry, so we left Peter in charge of the flat and boarding the car at the corner of our street were soon on our way townwards.

On arriving at Baldwin's, we took the lift up to the top-floor, and Julia had a passage-at-arms with the lift-boy, whose affable familiarity gets rather tiresome when too often repeated. Julia has a habit, which sometimes I think oversteps the bounds of propriety, of talking to tram-car conductors, policemen, lift-boys and shop-walkers. She has a constant thirst for information, and is interested in all kinds of queer people, not philanthropically interested, which would

of course be all right, but merely "humanly interested," as she calls it, and it sometimes leads her into quite queer situations, like it did on the steamer, where one of the stewards fell in love with her and was with difficulty persuaded to transfer his affections to somebody else.

On the top floor, divided by white enamelled railings from the furniture department, we found the restaurant with the forty-cent luncheon in full swing. A tall, urbane gentleman garbed in a fashionable black morning suit with a pleasing, but not too pronounced rotundity of outline, guided us, after indicating the umbrella stand by a wave of his plump, well-kept hand adorned with a cameo ring, to a white enamelled table laid for two. All round us at other tables were seated the usual well-dressed people we were accustomed to see in Montreal and an entirely satisfactory and not too obtrusive orchestra was playing *Carmen* with the restraint needed where music is merely a background to conversation and a veil to the clatter of knives and forks. The hardwood floor was polished to brilliancy, the white trelliswork was cheerful and clean-looking, while the cream stucco wall-panels were of the latest, most fashionable, Empire style of decoration. The colour scheme was white and green, simple and pleasing to the eye.

The long and lavish *menu* included a choice of two dishes at every course. We began with tomato soup, continued with clam chowder, turkey and cran-

berry sauce, roast mutton and peas and potatoes, finishing with pudding, ice and coffee, and I did not notice that Julia practised any of the curtailings of superfluities about which she is so fond of talking. She upbraided me for taking rice-pudding instead of vanilla ice.

"So exactly like you, Priscilla, to choose what we can have every day at home, rather than ice which we can't, and it's most awfully good too."

It was at that moment on looking up I saw what startled me exceedingly.

A rather stout couple who had been in front of us had just finished and got up to go, revealing at the table beyond them, Jack and Marie Larond, comfortably lunching together. She was looking her prettiest and smartest, and Jack was evidently pursuing his studies in French conversation with the greatest earnestness and enthusiasm. They had obviously not yet seen us, and I turned an appealing glance on Julia, who shrugged her shoulders when she saw the two young people laughing and talking together with an air of the greatest enjoyment.

I felt too indignant almost to speak.

"I shall write and tell Poppy how Jack is behaving," I said furiously.

"Don't do anything of the kind, Priscilla," said Julia. "You'll be sorry if you do."

"Well, some one ought to tell her, and I feel it my duty to do it," I continued.

"I daresay you do, Priscilla," said Julia wearily,

"but at any rate, don't do anything in a hurry. This kind of thing wants tactful handling. I should await further developments if I were you. It's probably only temporary aberration on Jack's part. If you interfere you'll make it permanent. Why shouldn't they lunch together?" and as Marie's eye caught hers she smiled and nodded to that astonished young person with great affability. Jack looked rather taken aback when he saw us, and his face grew slightly flushed, but he smiled and tried to hide his embarrassment by an increased gaiety of manner.

"I've never lunched here before," he said, as he came towards us, "Mademoiselle Laronde was just sitting down when I arrived so we thought we might as well share the same table. We've been turning the *menu* into French, but haven't yet found out the right word for clam chowder," and he gave a nervous laugh.

I treated Marie Laronde as well as Jack with great chilliness, as I saw no reason why they should not be made aware of my disapproval, and I did *not* believe that their meeting was accidental. It might have been on Jack's side. Doubtless, he mentioned in Marie's hearing that he intended to lunch at Baldwin's, and she came on the chance of finding him there.

I certainly thought things were going too far, and though Julia accepted the explanation with every appearance of believing that their meeting was a pure accident, I was not so easily taken in.

That evening Jack announced that he was going to paint Marie Laronde's portrait. He used a lot of technical terms like "chiaroscuro" and "atmosphere" and "synthetic values" and said the "main refrain" of the portrait would be crimson "echoed in the cheeks" and there would also be a "permeating sense of grey" and other incoherent jargon of the sort, "which did not take me in in the least.

I preserved a chilly and forbidding attitude towards his project, which I considered a flimsy pretext, but Julia, to my great surprise, for she has always scoffed at his artistic talents, warmly encouraged him in the idea and said that Marie's nose was "quite divine," and that her hair was like spungold and that she ought to make a marvellous picture, and she was so affable and pleasant about it, that I was quite perplexed, till she explained after supper while we were "washing up" together.

"If he paints Marie Laronde," she said gleefully, "I know the sort of awful lubb it will be. She will have a green complexion and a dab of burnt umber and lamp black for a nose, and her eyes will glare with a 'tight-boot' expression, and she'll look fifty-six at least, with a swollen mouth and one cheek larger than the other. It's the very best thing he can do. Marie will never, never forgive him. You needn't be at all uneasy about Poppy. It will certainly turn out all right."

The following Saturday Jack brought home a brown

paper parcel, containing a new canvas, and we had hardly finished our luncheon—it was always a “square meal” on Saturdays because of Jack’s half-day holiday—when Marie Laronde appeared in a new crimson hat, evidently relieved to find a warmer welcome than she had expected. We left her with Jack in Julia’s bed-sitting-room, of which she had granted the use as a temporary studio, and for an hour neither of us intruded upon them; then I took a peep through the open doorway over Jack’s shoulder, and saw that all Julia’s anticipations had been fully realized. The portrait was a wild and unearthly caricature of the sitter, who with a complacent smile waited for the enchanting moment when she would be permitted to look at her own fair counterfeit.

Julia and I were, of course, used to Jack’s artistic efforts. We realized that conception and realisation are not identical. We had learned by force of constant reiteration that the eye of the artist—Jack’s eye—saw everything quite differently to what we did ourselves. We knew that modern art could only be understood of the elect few. We tried to believe that square dabs of chaotic colour had deep and hidden meanings for those who could interpret them aright. We felt in short our own limitations, and accepting the axiom that “Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder” waited for the day when “the true artistic sense” might develop within us, but Marie Laronde was one of those people who knew what she liked herself, and didn’t

care whether it coincided with the canons of modern art or not. She expected, as she had every right to do, that her portrait should make her look pretty, and was fluttered and thrilled with the effort to appear at her best. She had discarded the crimson hat which she held on her knee and thrown a scarf of red drapery round her russet-coloured hair, through which it shimmered evasively. Subtle, painstaking care had been bestowed on her appearance and the look on her face was of a grave sweetness waiting to burst into smiles—a perfect look if only Jack's brush had been equal to it, but—alas!—it groped round the palette in vain.

“Your expression is very elusive,” I heard him murmur as he drew back his head and sternly regarded his handiwork. Not only the expression, but the likeness too had eluded him. Anything less resembling Marie's piquant, soft, dewy French beauty I never saw. He had represented her as a harsh-faced, middle-aged woman with a scowl, and the “tight-boot” expression was painfully evident in the eyes. I trembled for the moment of revelation, while Jack complacently painted on.

“I like that red scarf immensely,” he said, “just the colour I love;” and he put heavy dabs of carmine and vermilion on his canvas, giving them a sweep together with the tip of his little finger.

“Do you like it?” cried Marie, catching sight of me.

“Is it ver' nice?”

I nodded brightly and hurried away. When I returned some twenty minutes later, the revelation had evidently been made. Marie's attitude partook of the pathetically dejected, she was drooping and wan and out of spirits, while Jack with knitted brow was trying the effect of a high light above the nostril.

"There! that's better," he said cheerfully. "One touch more or less makes a wonderful difference, doesn't it, Priscilla?"

I assented with enthusiasm. "Oh, it does. It makes *all* the difference."

"Of course, this is only a rough sketch," said Jack soothingly, perhaps conscious of certain shortcomings, "but it'll be a fine picture when I've time to work it up. Won't it?" He spoke with hopeful intonation.

I assured him that it was one of the best things he'd done, and he brightened visibly and continued dabbing with redoubled zeal, till Julia came in and, grasping the tragedy of the situation, insisted that we should all come at once and have tea in the dining-room. After tea, which lasted somehow longer than usual, it was too dark for any more painting and Marie found that it was time to go back to the other side of the mountain where her employer lives.

We pressed her to stay longer, but it was of no avail. She *had* to go, she said, and complained of a *migraine* which had come on suddenly in the midst of the sitting.

"It was an awful pity about her headache," said Jack, when he returned from seeing her into the cars, "seemed to quite put her out of tune somehow, didn't it? She was so bright and gay when she first came in. Quite brilliant really, and then after the first hour, she seemed to lose all interest and be so depressed and miserable. She must have been suffering frightfully, poor girl!"

"She was. One could see that," said Julia grimly. "You should not have kept her sitting so long. It is not easy to keep still when any one isn't accustomed to it."

Jack launched into an account of models fainting and having to be massaged and brought round by "First Aid" methods, and said the next sitting needn't be longer than ten minutes without a rest now that he had "only the finishing touches" to put in. He asked our advice as to sending the picture to the Montreal Art Gallery at the next Exhibition of Amateur Work, and Julia urged him insistently to do so.

"By Jove, I do believe you girls are beginning to recognize good work at last," he said complacently.

"I believe we are," said Julia with a subtle smile.

It was lucky that we had been able to settle into our flat with so little delay, for the weather now grew daily colder, though as yet there was no snow. A harsh, bitter, biting wind blew down the broad streets turning the mud into dust, and stinging nose and ears into unbecoming redness. All the grass lost every

vestige of greenness and looked grey and starved and shuddering. We could see the grim winter closing its iron grasp upon the land. I had never felt so warm indoors nor so cold outside. Jack had hung all the double windows, and we had double doors from the kitchen on to the balcony so as to keep the cold at bay. The Quebec Heater in the corridor was the source of all our warmth. We discovered in it certain sinister, not to say vicious propensities which we had not observed before. One morning we woke to find it out, though apparently full of coal, and for three hours, nay, for the rest of the day, Julia and I wearied ourselves in vain efforts to light it again. We cleared out every vestige of coal and lit it from the bottom, half-filling the stove with shavings and wood, but after burning cheerfully for an hour it sulkily refused to continue and in five minutes became a black and chilly iron pipe full of half-burnt sticks. Julia hung over it with increasing solicitude, growing more grimy as the day advanced, and each renewed effort proved to be as ineffectual as the last. The anthracite coal absolutely refused to catch fire, but Jack said he thought charcoal was used to start stoves, and as we had seen huge bags of it at the corner shop Julia hurried down, weary and smudged, to fetch some and our last effort, at half-past seven in the evening, was crowned with success. The charcoal burnt with curious blue flames threaded by running fringes of tiny golden sparks, and the sulky coal gave up the contest and yielding to the beneficent

influence soon acquired its usual steady glow, for there are no flames in anthracite coal.

But from that date the Quebec Heater became very "uncertain, coy, and hard to please." It would seem to be full to the brim with an incandescent mass of fuel, and in five minutes we found it was quite extinguished. Some mornings it would be red-hot, and the next, after treatment on precisely similar lines, stone-cold. There was ever a pleasing uncertainty as to its behaviour, and its caprices and unreason inspired us at last with a virulent detestation of its tubular "cussedness."

Suddenly its mood changed and became lamb-like and amenable to persuasion, so our feelings were touched, we forgave past errors and basked in its rays until it relapsed into another whimsical debauch of ineptitude.

"It evidently looks on charcoal as some men do on drink. It has occasional unhealthy cravings for it which must be gratified," said Julia, as she sat looking at the creature with concentrated disgust one morning when it had "struck again" as Jack said.

But though we missed its warm cheery glow when it retired from further effort there was always a sufficiency of heat left in the flat to prevent any discomfort. It remained far warmer than any English house I was ever in and the gas stove cooked all the food we needed.

Marie Laronde came to see us a few days after Jack

had painted her picture and Julia, as soon as she saw her coming up the wooden stairs outside, hastened to remove the portrait from Jack's bedroom where it had been hanging on a nail to dry, and placed it in a conspicuous place on the little shelf which runs round the dining-room, where the harshness and unflattering modernity of the picture would have its full value.

Marie shrank into a subdued and chastened mood as soon as she saw it.

"Do you think that I all" like me?" she inquired anxiously, "not very like me, is it really?" and her liquid dark eyes looked appealingly at Julia.

"Jack thinks it extremely good," smiled Julia. "You see he has an artistic temperament and sees everything through an artistic environment of his own. Of course, *I* don't see you quite like that, but I suppose he paints your temperament as it appears to him. It may not be really correct, but it is what he imagines it to be. Modern artists don't trouble much about outside physical likenesses, they want to suggest something occult and hidden. Jack says you are very subtle, and he wants to make you *look* subtle, so he aims at expressing subtlety and mystery and that kind of thing. He doesn't trouble about mere prettiness. The modern school do not like anything in the least obvious or commonplace."

Marie sighed and looked puzzled, and her eyes kept wandering furtively to the picture all the time we were having tea, while a look of repulsive dislike was plainly

visible on her pretty features. Julia had placed her exactly opposite to the painting, where the dab of burnt umber and lamp black which represented the nose received a lurid light from the red-shaded electric pendant and the "tight-boot" expression of the eyes was intensified past bearing. Whenever Marie's attention wandered from the picture and she began talking cheerfully for a short time about something else, Julia would bring back her attention by saying, "I think Jack ought to try and paint you in a hat," or "Don't you think a high light in the eye would improve it?" so that the poor girl was never able to forget the portrait for a moment, and I grew heartily sick of the thing myself, and was glad when Marie went away soon after tea.

She came again, however, the next night after dinner and talked French with Jack and Harold Knight, who was evidently just as infatuated as Jack, but afraid of showing it. Still he summoned up enough courage to ask her to go and look at the football match between Toronto and McGill University on the following Saturday, and Marie, who had a vague idea that football was an American name for cricket, which she had once seen played, gladly consented.

"But I thought we were to finish the portrait," said Jack reproachfully.

"Oh, I am so sorry, but I will come anoizzer time," lisped Marie with her sweetest smile. "I love ze football. It so nice to see ze boys in white flannel 'it ze

ball away an' all ze ozzer boys try to catch it."

"Oh, but that's cricket," said Harold with an indulgent smile. "Football is played by kicking the ball—and then getting goals—don'tcher know—you have it in France sometimes,"

"Oh yes," said Marie eagerly, "I read about it in ze newspapaire. We 'ave it often in Paris, but I never yet see eet—I wish much to see eet. I will go wiz you wiz great pleshair. I will be painted anozzer time."

For the rest of the evening Jack was gloomy and Harold in good spirits, and Julia tried all she could to make Marie come and be "touched up" pictorially after the match was finished.

"It will be over at five," she said, "or will it be too dark then, Jack?"

"It will be too dark," responded Jack in tones of sepulchral monotony.

"Oh well, then, we must fix it for the following Saturday," said Julia cheerfully. "The picture *must* be finished, it's made such a good beginning."

Marie's cheek flushed, she glanced up apprehensively to where it stood leaning against the white wall. At last she spoke.

"I think the picshair not ver' mooch like me," she said with a painful smile and evident effort.

"But of course it's not *finished*," said Jack in exasperated tones, "*pas fini—pas encore—il faut—er—il faut finir*," and he waved his hands largely, to show, I suppose, the immensity of the task before him, then

struck with a happy inspiration he said, "Let's all go on Sunday to Sault-au-Recollet."

"That's what they call 'Sou' here," said Harold, "you go on the street cars about ten miles out in the country, it's just the opposite side of the island."

"Is it worth going to?" said Jack hopefully.

"Oh yes, it's a quaint little French village with a ferry over the Back River as it's called."

So we arranged to go next Sunday with Marie to "Sou," after which Jack seemed a little happier, but for the rest of the week he was rather depressed, and I noticed that he wrote very short letters to Poppy instead of the usual lengthy three sheets.

However, when Sunday came bright and sunny, he recovered his spirits, and I heard him whistling cheerily in the bathroom as he shaved. Marie appeared about ten o'clock, just as I was putting the three-tier steamer with our potatoes and pudding in it on to the Quebec Heater where it would simmer gently we hoped during our absence. She was prettier than ever, and Jack was evidently swelling with pride in the car as he amiably pointed out to her the chief features of the landscape through which we were travelling.

The houses in the outskirts of Montreal have an unfinished, casual, unpermanent appearance which is probably due to what Julia calls their "tin-biscuit-box style of architecture." The inhabitants have evidently bought bits of land and thereby exhausted for the present their financial resources. So they

erect upon them queer, lopsided three-storey wooden houses which are protected from the wear and tear of the winter winds by square sheets of tin nailed irregularly all over the outside walls. The squares assume different tones of colour and give a strangely patched appearance to these queer dwelling-places, which are built as near as possible to the car-track, which is their only link with civilization. In England, we should think it strange to see electric cars running for miles through fields and marshes, but around and outside Montreal the cars appear to perform the function of a local railway. Sometimes we passed through queer little villages whose picturesqueness was spoiled by the ugly square frame houses of which they were composed, and we missed the creeper-covered cottages of rural England and more especially the green ivy which with us so kindly veils half-ruined, tumble-down buildings, enabling them to crumble decently to decay.

When we reached the terminus in the middle of a lonely lane we found we had the village to ourselves as far as other tourists were concerned and we passed on to the shores of the Back River, where Jack sat down on a stone, and producing a sketch book began to make one of his queer sketches, "to be amplified" later on.

Marie and I perched on a bench placed for the accommodation of passengers by the ferry, and watched the inhabitants come down to the waterside in their

light spider-wheeled rigs to wait for the ferry boat which could be seen returning. Every one drove a pair of horses, on account I suppose, of the bad road which was probably also the reason of the light build of the vehicles we saw that afternoon.

The ferry appeared capable of accommodating any number of "rigs," and nobody troubled to get out and stand at their horses' heads. Marie seemed rather annoyed at Jack being so absorbed in his sketching, while Jack was evidently pining for that understanding and approving criticism which is as the breath of life to a man of his peculiar artistic temperament. Julia and Peter wandered restlessly up and down the shore eating the sandwiches with which Julia's forethought had provided us. It was a pretty scene with the little island in front of us, *L'Ile Jésus* as it is called, basking in the sunshine, but all the landscape had a rather pallid, faded look, and we missed the lovely green of the English meadows.

When at last the time came to depart once more, Jack and Marie sat a few seats behind us, and I heard Jack invite criticism, which in his case means admiration, of the sketch he had made. Marie responded with all a Frenchwoman's tact, feeling her way carefully along the unaccustomed road, and never inquiring, as Julia did, "what that thing in the foreground" was meant to be. But when Jack, taking advantage of her amiable mood, tried to pin her down to a definite date for finishing her portrait she became uneasy

and prevaricating, alleging all kinds of semi-engagements. She tried to smooth matters over by saying how fearfully cold it had been at the football match, and hinting at Harold Knight's lack of initiative in not providing chocolates on such an occasion, but something rankled in Jack's mind.

"How fickle French people are!" he said bitterly, gazing at the portrait before going to bed that night. "When I proposed to paint her she was as keen as mustard—declared she didn't mind how many hours she sat still—and now she's lost all interest in it, tired before the thing's begun. Women never know their own minds."

CHAPTER IX

AS yet we had not seen much of the social life of Montreal, although we read a good deal about it in the *Star*, where notices appeared such as this :—

“ Mr. and Mrs. Alexander McFarlane have returned from their honeymoon in New York and have settled down in their flat at King Edward’s Buildings, where they are ready to receive their friends.”

Or, “ Three brides will hold receptions in the following week. Mrs. Jonas Simpkins at 3, Nelson Avenue, Mrs. Burrycombe at 27, Foley, and Mrs. Johnson Lingham at 55, Pelham.”

There were frequent notices of afternoon teas, and the description of the dresses worn were just as thrillingly interesting as those in the fashion papers “ at home.”

“ Mrs. Porter Phipkins was attired in an elegant yellow tunic over green ; Mrs. Pettegrew, her daughter, was in pink over salmon colour, Mrs. William Watson, a recent bride, in mauve over black and a black feather, etc.”

Everybody present appeared to be mentioned, and when the reporter had got through all the colours of the

spectrum known to modern science, she, for I suppose no mere man could carry the sort of thing through, invented new terms such as canary-colour, lemon, daffodil, egg-yolk, and *jaune fébrile*, which gave an impression of the latest Parisian triumphs and made the bewildered reader yearn to be invited to similar social functions and sigh to think how remote was the possibility.

"They don't say anything," said Julia, "of the heat and the crush and the horrid tea one always gets, half-cold and bitter as hops—nor of the headaches and the bad tempers. The great charm of such teas is the getting away from them into the fresh air." Thus Julia whose experience of social pleasures is fairly wide.

"One puts on one's most expensive and least comfortable frock," pursued Julia, "and curses the fiendish ingenuity of the dressmaker who glories in complicated fastenings and a multiplicity of hooks and eyes. White kid gloves which have been cleaned and consequently shrunk from their original size are an added torture, and one hails with relief the moment when they split up the back and must of necessity be torn off and thrown aside. One spills tea on one's own or somebody else's skirt and as likely as not sits on a bit of teacake that a careless guest has dropped on a chair by accident or design. If any one nice is there, there's no chance to say anything but the merest platitudes—no, I don't come to Canada to go to afternoon teas—but there is one thing I'm going to do, I'm going to the reception of the Duke and Duchess if I'm spared. After all, it's

only royalty and the old aristocracy who really know what democracy means."

I gasped at Julia's temerity.

The Duke of Connaught, our General-Governor, with the Duchess and Princess Patricia, was to hold an informal reception in the City Hall to which anybody might go who wished to do so. It was to be modelled somewhat on the President's receptions at Washington with the hand-shakes omitted. The Canadians have sufficient sense to know that three thousand people can be greeted more effectually and with less fatigue by an all-embracing royal smile than by digital exercises carried beyond the bounds of human endurance.

Julia insisted that Jack should escort her to the reception—I suppose if Mr. Page had been available she would have gone with him, but he was still in Saskatchewan studying the Canadian Pacific's Ready-Made-Farm System—and she instructed him thoroughly every evening in the proper shades of loyalty and respect combined with independence and absence of servility which were to be expressed in his bow, arranging three chairs to represent the three illustrious personages at whose feet the tribute of his homage was to be laid.

Jack became restive under her treatment and said it was "all bally rot."

"It is nothing of the kind," said Julia, "you haven't the least elementary glimmering of the symbolism of things. It's Canada and the British Empire—not just the Duke and Duchess and Jack Floyd crawling past

them with a hang-dog look and his mouth open—don't you understand? "

Jack then declared he wouldn't go, and Julia took refuge in the grossest flattery, saying she had been so pleased with the stately calm and self-assurance of the last bow but one that if he could only repeat that success she should have nothing left to wish for.

" You've only to remember that it is one gentleman bowing to another, not of course a ' How d'y,' casual nod, but the bow you'd make a lady, tempered with respect and not hurried—above all, not hurried."

For a person who professes to be a semi-socialist, Julia's attitude towards royalty is certainly inexplicable. She has indeed never made any serious attempt to explain it, but declares that modern royalty, stripped as it is of most of its prerogatives and burdened with what she says are " the most atrociously humdrum responsibilities," needs all the countenance and support it can get.

" Look at America," she said, " running mad after Alice Roosevelt before she was married and then cooling off when Mr. Taft became President. I don't blame the Americans for being more servile to their President than we are to our own British royalty. It only shows that human nature needs a tangible symbol of national life and that's how we feel about kings and princes, they are concrete representations of Great Britain—in spite of their German blood—that's what makes people feel trembling and shaky in the knees and inclined to weep

into their pocket-handkerchiefs when everybody cheers as the King and Queen go by."

According to the *Montreal Star*, everybody who was the happy proprietor of a visiting-card could go to the ducal reception and evening dress was "optional," which must have greatly relieved the minds of many enthusiastic loyalists, anxious to show their fealty to the Empire, but reluctant to invest in a suit of clothes which would be of no subsequent use. Julia and Jack, as they possessed all the necessary equipment, decided to wear orthodox evening attire. It would take out a few of the creases of his dress-suit Jack said.

Every day the *Star* published anecdotes of what had happened to the Duke when he first came to Canada some twenty-five years before, together with reminiscences of people living in out-of-the-way streets who had seen the Duke pass when they were children or given him a flower, or picked up his pocket-handkerchief or done something exciting of that kind. There were long letters written by indignant citizens pointing out the filthy state of the public streets and imploring the municipal authorities to remove this blot and disgrace from the town before the Duke should come and be overwhelmed with disgust and anger at the sight of the rivulets of mud.

"Just as though he hadn't seen plenty of it in London," said Julia impatiently.

The night of the reception, which was to begin at five o'clock was one of the wettest on record. The rain fell

in torrents, the most uncompromising business-like rain I ever saw in my life. Jack was in a state of nervous apprehension and kept unceasingly opening and shutting his crush hat till Julia took it away from him and hung it on a peg.

"We shall never find room in the cars when we have to change, and look at the awful mess your hair and everything will be in. We ought to have ordered a 'rig.' It's absurd to go to a royal reception in a tram-car."

"Not a bit of it," said Julia stoutly. "In a democratic country like Canada nobody minds how we travel, and in any case the Duke and Duchess won't ask us if we came in a car or our private automobile."

"Yes, but I don't want us to appear before them looking like two drowned rats."

"Well, we shall look just like other people," said Julia calmly. "If the rest of them carry a dripping umbrella past the royal presence, I don't mind doing it too. We might even keep our rubbers on, or let them hang gracefully from our fingers as we bow. I'm sure the Duke and Duchess wouldn't mind. Much more amusing for them than an ordinary London *levée*, where everything is correct and stiff and boring." But Jack had all a young man's horror of doing anything unconventional and was only half consoled when Julia emerged from her bed-sitting-room looking very nice indeed with a jewelled velvet in her hair, and her white round dimpled shoulders—she is proud of her shoulders

—emerging from her dress of blue *crêpe-de-Chine*. She added a mackintosh and rubbers and a light scarf over her hair, and they both went out into the pitiless rain, while I proceeded to stoke up the Quebec Heater and prepare hot soup and such simple remedies as have the reputation of best nipping in the bud an incipient cold.

The lady from the flat which backed on to ours dropped in that evening. By some occult means she had managed to find out that Julia and Jack were going to the reception and she wished to hear their impressions. She said that she and "Joseph," her husband, a timid suppressed sort of gentleman whom we had never seen when fully dressed, his function as ash-carrier and stoker necessitating his appearance on the balcony in various stages of undress, had intended to go too—but at the last moment Joseph had contracted a bad cold, so the expedition had to be abandoned.

She was of the type of Canadian born in the country, who is a little incomprehensible to the average English-woman. Our acquaintance so far had literally been a "nodding" one. We had nodded to each other from our respective balconies across the fluttering festoons of linen hung out in the back-yard, uttering, or rather shouting, the merest platitudes of conversation such as "The wind's very cold to-day," or, "Rather dull, isn't it?" But at this first meeting where we were able to sit and talk in comfort over a cup of tea she unbosomed herself to such an extent that I became alarmed, wondering if I was expected to reciprocate and

reveal our most intimate family history to her eager attention. She not only told me of herself, of her husband, of his position, the amount of his salary, of his flirtations with a "down-town girl," of his otherwise good qualities as a husband, how he gets breakfast, sweeps the kitchen, carries the ashes, does as he's told, gives her jewellery on her birthday, buys her ice-cream and shakes the carpets, but she told me details of the careers of her three sisters.

"We've all made, well, what you might call good matches," she said with charming frankness. "My eldest sister didn' do quite as well as the rest of us, married an Englishman"—in a tone of contempt and seemingly oblivious of the fact that we were English—"wall, he wanted ter borrer mother's money ter set him up 'n'a farrm, an' I didn' think much a that, y' know. It's not my idea of a husband—not like my Joseph, 'e's the man—ther's nob'dy like him, I'm sure, in th' wurrld—af I want anything you c'n mention—wal—I just 'phone ter Joseph. 'You bring me up this—or that'—ef it's a chick'n er a barrel 'f apples er a noo stairr cyarp't—along it comes. Seen the ring 'e gev me when we got marr'd?"

"Well, only the outside of it," I said gazing at her wedding ring, "it looks a very nice one."

She slipped it off with the greatest alacrity and placed it in my hand.

"Look inside it," she said with a note of triumph in her voice.

"There's the date of your marriage, I suppose," I said.

"Yes, there's the date an' a motter, 'To my beloved wife.' Look, there it is."

She held the ring so that I could look at the inscription, while I wondered vaguely if Joseph still were capable of feeling the same blissful thrill as on that day six years ago, for it had struck me, from what I could see from the balcony, that poor Joseph was decidedly hen-pecked—not viciously nor unpleasantly, but that with much good-humour and joking his life was rendered somewhat of a burden by his cheerful, rather pretentious but ignorant little wife, who now proceeded to tell me how Joseph had discovered her, in lodgings in a boarding-house, how he had called every evening and been made a physical and mental slave to her charms, how she had quarrelled with the lady of the boarding-house about the "heater," what she had said to the lady and the lady had said to her, together with other wearisome details to which I lent but perfunctory attention.

I was glad when at about nine o'clock Julia and Jack reappeared in very good spirits, looking rather worn and chastened, but as though supported by a consciousness of success.

After removing her wet outer garments and partaking of soup and other necessary food, Julia unfolded the story of her experiences, to which Mrs. Waddel, the neighbour, listened with a scandalized face, evidently rather shocked at Julia's levity.

"I wouldn't have missed it for anything," said Julia, sinking into a rocking-chair. "It was delightfully informal and would have given a Gold-Stick-in-Waiting an apoplectic fit if he had happened to be present. One dear old gentleman forgot to take off his goloshes—rubbers, I suppose, I ought to call them. He wore a red woollen comforter round his throat and convulsively clasped his faithful umbrella to his breast as he passed the royal presence. It stuck out behind when he made his bow and the royalties enjoyed it ever so much. They were smiling the whole time, real amused smiles, not just ordinary glued-on society smiles. I never saw Royalty look less bored at any public function. It shows what correct instincts the Duke has. Canada will feel itself ten times more British on going to bed to-night than it did when it got up this morning."

"How did Jack make his bows?" I interrupted, for I was not anxious to hear Julia descant, in Mrs. Waddel's presence, upon the inner meaning of what she had seen.

"My impression is that he never made any at all," said Julia calmly.

Mrs. Waddel's face grew horror-stricken.

"Well—er—yes. I'm afraid I forgot," said Jack, pausing in the consumption of cocoa, "I sort of followed Julia and watched her sweeping on in front bowing and smiling so grandly as though she'd lived at courts all her life and I somehow walked on without thinking,

and it was no good going back, besides you couldn't, there were such a lot of other people behind pushing on, so I didn't worry any more about it."

Mrs. Waddel looked at me in consternation.

"Wal!" she ejaculated.

Julia nibbled at biscuits and regarded Mrs. Waddel with that critically disapproving look which I knew so well. Mrs. Waddel led the conversation by imperceptible degrees to herself and her flat and her relations with "Joseph." She was manifestly out of her depth when discussing royal receptions, so she repeated most of the things she had already confided to me while Julia listened politely with a stony silence very foreign to her nature. Mrs. Waddel at last arrived at the perorating point of her eulogium of "Joseph." She drew her wedding-ring from her finger.

"Guess what 'e had put in my wedding-ring," she said with quiet triumph to Julia, who, like myself, knew Joseph of course only in his early morning mood of cinder-sifter and carpet-beater.

"What he had put in your wedding ring?"

"Yes, a motter, 'Ter my beloved wife'; it's reel touchin' I call it. You've no idee what that man thinks o' me. Reg'lar worships the ground I walk on. Strange, ain't it?"

"Very strange," said Julia coldly.

At that moment the electric bell sounded.

"That'll very likely be Joseph," said Mrs. Waddel complacently. "He's come to fetch me 'ome."

Jack went to the door and ushered in a funny little stiff-looking rather plain man wearing a frockcoat. He gave one, I don't know why, the impression of a Sunday School teacher. His manners were elaborate and quite remote from cinder-sifting or the purification of carpets.

"I have come—ahem—to escort my wife home," he announced with a shop walker's bow.

Jack invited him to take a chair and offered a cigarette, while Mrs. Waddel regarded him sentimentally with the tenderest affection, glancing at us to see if we were noticing. She afterwards indulged in marital badinage of an intimate nature, to which Mr. Waddel appeared singularly unresponsive, not to say fractious. Mrs. Waddel smiled at us knowingly as if to imply what depths of slumbering devotion were concealed under this assumed indifference.

We tried, with mediocre success, to draw Mr. Waddel out. Whenever he was on the verge of something interesting Mrs. Waddel mercilessly intervened and sportively but implacably dragged the conversation in the direction of her own charms and their relation to Joseph. She indulged in nods and becks and wreathed smiles which only seemed to plunge poor Joseph into deeper sloughs of melancholy. Jack regarded him with a face of gloomy sympathy.

When they at last rose to depart we accompanied them to the door, Mrs. Waddel still beaming graciously on her husband, and triumphantly smiling with hidden

meaning, as, at her request, he drew on her rubbers.

It was a pity that as they descended the wooden stairs we heard Joseph distinctly declare that he "wouldn't be made such a fool of," while his language was more forcible than is customary in the best society.

As they passed beneath our windows, they were unmistakably quarrelling and their strident accents floated up to our shocked ears.

"Humbug!" said Julia tartly. "They flourish, it seems, here in Canada much as they do in the old country."

"Well, *he* wasn't a humbug," said Jack, defending the absent Mr. Waddel. "He's only an unfortunate victim."

"I don't think so," said Julia. "The only reason he was annoyed with his wife to-night was because he saw we didn't feel in the least impressed by her foolish vanity. If we had pretended to envy her or sighed over our husbandlessness or wished that we had a man to shake carpets and sift ashes instead of doing it ourselves—I don't mind sifting ashes, these American patents make domestic duties almost interesting—he would have been satisfied; but why that woman should flourish her Joseph—a mere wage-earning, carpet-beating accessory of life—in our faces I don't know."

"Think of the wedding-ring and motto," I interposed; "he must have had tender romantic thoughts of her once upon a time."

"Priscilla dear, how easily you are taken in! De-

pend upon it that woman made him do it, she has the ignorant calibre of mind to which mawkish sentimentality appeals—she is pretentious—she is vulgar—she told me that they always had oysters and ice-cream for dinner.”

“ Well, perhaps they do,” interposed Jack.

“ If they do, she needn't talk about it as though it were something extraordinary.”

“ What did you say to the oysters and ice-cream ? ” I asked.

“ Told her I hoped she wouldn't get typhoid fever, and that nothing would induce me to touch an oyster, and I said ice-cream was one of the most unhealthy things any one could possibly eat—made people yellow. Then she bragged about her silk eider-down quilt and said what an awful lot of money it had cost—she didn't hardly like to use it—but Joseph had insisted on it being silk as nothing was too good for her to sleep under. She watches all the time out of the corner of her eye to see the impression she's making with her little tarra-diddles and she never gives up trying, I will say that.”

“ You must have been awfully aggravating,” said Jack, commiserating Mrs. Waddel, “ so absolutely unmoved by her efforts.”

“ I hate humbugs,” repeated Julia, “ especially female humbugs. I'm getting used to the male kind, There are such lots of them everywhere.”

Leaving his crush hat under a chair, Jack, speechless with indignation, retired to bed, while Julia chuckled

with unholy mirth. She seems to enjoy making people uncomfortable, and says she doesn't wish to exhibit amiable traits of character, it's so weak-minded. I'm sure she need have no apprehension on that score.

CHAPTER X

JULIA and I have been to see the Indians at Ongawaga, about twelve miles or so from Montreal. We almost wish we hadn't. It is depressing and disillusioning to behold the noble red men and women cooking potatoes and cabbage in enamel-ware saucepans and heating their houses by means of patent stoves, and as Julia said, there appears not to be a war-whoop left in the entire community and as for scalps——

Jack had by some means got to know the Rev. J. Smith, the gentleman to whom is confided the care of the spiritual needs of this particular group of Indians. He belongs to the Nonconformist Church and preaches to them by means of an interpreter every Sunday. He has a wife and a little girl, who live a strangely isolated life in Ongawaga.

One day when we had just decided to take a day off from housekeeping cares—it is surprising what an enormous amount of hard work is involved in keeping a small flat, permeated with labour-saving devices as it is, adequately tidy—the wife of the above-mentioned Mr. Smith pressed our bell.

"I'm Mrs. Smith," she said, smilingly.

"Oh—er—yes—very pleased I'm sure," said Julia, who had opened the door and to whom the name conveyed nothing. "Will you come in?"

Mrs. Smith moved to one side, revealing another lady, who had been temporarily eclipsed by Mrs. Smith's rather massive person.

"This is Miss Johnson, our school teacher," said Mrs. Smith.

Julia shook hands with both of them and ushered them up, thinking all the time that they were neighbours from over the way, or perhaps emissaries from the church we—at least I—attended.

"Mrs. Smith and Miss Johnson." She introduced them to me in the passage.

"From Ongawaga," smiled Mrs. Smith explanatorily, as she sunk into our only rocking-chair, "it's a fearful business getting here, if you could only see the mud we've come through this morning, we have no roads of any kind, you know—not to call roads—just a rough track, that's all, and we're only twelve miles from Montreal."

"Ongawaga! oh, you are the Mrs. Smith from the Indian village. How interesting! Have you ever been scalped?" said Julia, with that easy banter which I think is such *very* bad form when one hardly knows people at all, and the first stiffness of meeting has not yet worn off.

Mrs. Smith looked astonished. She was evidently a

person in whom a sense of humour was not conspicuous, and she took Julia's question seriously.

"Oh no!" she answered in tones of blended reproach and pity. "The Indians have quite given up those customs, they are perfectly civilized now, they do farming and beadwork."

Miss Johnson smiled. She was a nice-looking woman, youthful and alert in spite of her grey hairs, with that decided American wide-awake expression which one so soon grows accustomed to expect here among the people born in the country.

We administered lemonade and "crackers," as we were learning to call biscuits, and as we had just finished preparing everything for our late dinner, including soup and potatoes, we mentally decided to sacrifice all our preparations on the sacred altar of hospitality and to eat at one o'clock what we had destined for consumption in Jack's company at seven. Having muttered this readjustment of domestic affairs to Julia and placed the vegetables on the Quebec Heater I settled down to entertain our visitors and hear about Indians.

Mrs. Smith had not a good word to say for them and seemed not in the least inspired by missionary zeal on their behalf, neither, as far as I could judge from her conversation, was her husband. He preached to them in English every Sunday, much the same sermons he would have preached in the pulpit of any little chapel in England, and spent the rest of the week at McGill

University in attending lectures, whether as teacher or pupil I could not quite gather from Mrs. Smith.

"So I'm left quite alone with my little girl all day," she said, smiling brightly.

"No servant?" asked Julia sympathetically. "Not even an Indian one?"

Mrs. Smith shook her head emphatically.

"No, I've tried them, they're no good, they don't know anything, and they're not teachable—not obedient."

"Perhaps they don't understand your orders," suggested Julia, who is always a partizan of the absent.

"It's not that," said Mrs. Smith, "they understand well enough, they're lazy and unambitious—most of them are French half-breeds, you know. They sell us coal full of stones. They're awfully mean and deceitful. I shall be glad when our time's up and we can go."

Miss Johnson, who taught the Indian children, corroborated. She said they were very disobedient and had no moral sense, but were quick at learning when they chose to try. She thought it demoralizing for them to be all shut up in a village together with nothing but farming and beadwork and processions to occupy their time.

"Processions? Do you mean Indian processions? How interesting!" said Julia. "What do they do?"

"They're Roman Catholic processions. Most of them are Catholics, you know, with being so mixed up with the French. Whenever they have a wedding, they

all go to church in procession and have a big feast—so ridiculous.”

“Well, we do much the same,” said Julia.

Mrs. Smith looked annoyed.

“Oh, but this is quite a ridiculous procession. Pictures of the Virgin, and they carry branches and wreaths of flowers and steal our chickens on the way. They beg eggs from us too.”

Mrs. Smith seemed decidedly pessimistic over the Indians.

“Perhaps a different system of education—more practical—teach them poultry and fruit farming and agriculture——” suggested Julia.

Miss Johnson brightened perceptibly while Mrs. Smith shook her head doubtfully.

“I think that's what is necessary,” said Miss Johnson, “technical education,—there is too much purely religious teaching—you see, the Catholics here are rather behindhand—nice people, but rather out of touch with modern ideas—the girls should be taught domestic work and poultry-keeping and the boys might learn carpentry and building. School makes them lazy and disinclined for work. Too much book-learning is really bad for them, they grow vain and ignorant and think they know a great deal, they learn to despise hard work, the older Indians complain of it too.”

Julia groaned.

“Fancy! having the same fatal method among these unfortunate Indians which prevails in our English

schools. We waste millions every year in England in perfectly futile education."

"Do you really?" inquired Miss Johnson with interest, "in what way, I wonder—I'm crazy about education."

"It is," said Julia, "so obvious that I suppose it has escaped those wise statesmen who rule our destinies that quite young children—say from eight to twelve years—are much more easily taught the rudiments of domestic economy than girls of sixteen, whose chief obsession is the means of attracting the opposite sex by means of pin curls, tight skirts and that slightly boisterous manner, which, in the upper circles of society, we call charm."

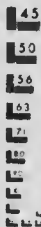
"But, Julia," I objected, "you can't teach children of eight how to cook, they couldn't lift things."

"They often have to lift a weighty baby three times too heavy for them to carry," pursued Julia relentlessly, "and they could lift a small saucepan containing five or six potatoes. Your objections are so futile, Priscilla, they are only fit for parish-council meetings or our English House of Commons. We begin at the wrong end of everything. We teach subtle arithmetical problems to the undeveloped minds of infants and try to inspire, six years too late, a love of cooking and laundry-work by means of County-Council lectures. Habits of domestic work can only be formed in comparative infancy by constant repetition. Men, who understand these things so well, seem to think that if they



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throw into uncultivated soil 'a tiny seed' of, let us say, ten expensive cookery lectures, a girl is equipped for matrimony at once. Cooking needs months of apprenticeship and constant repetition and children delight in it—when they're older they've passed on to other interests."

Julia's conversation imposes on people. They don't understand quite what she means, so naturally think she's very clever. I suppose brilliant people are like that, they dazzle others and confuse their ideas. I could see that Miss Johnson was impressed. She left off eating her "crackers" while Julia talked, and drank in every word as though an oracle were speaking. When the potatoes boiled over on the Quebec Heater in the passage and Julia flew to take off the saucepan lid so that they might calm down a little, Miss Johnson's eyes followed her with a sort of furtive admiration in their depths. She was thinking, I am sure, that Julia has one of those superior intelligences which would enable her to comprehend her—Miss Johnson's—ideas on many subjects.

Mrs. Smith, who was obviously not anxious to discuss abstract subjects, turned the conversation back into the channel of her daily life as affected by Indian environment, so we were not enabled to get a very clear idea what sort of people the Indians, generally speaking, might be, as our view was continually obscured by the necessity of regarding them, as it were, relatively to Mrs. Smith's comfort and enjoyment. It really seemed very

hard to think she had so little congenial society, that she should have to do single-handed the work of a large house—there were eleven rooms in it, she said, which was a pity, as she only needed four—that the roads were non-existent, that her husband was away all day, not preaching or teaching Indians, but at college—that there was no doctor, no society—nothing but Indians and a few Catholic French-speaking priests. Miss Johnson lodged with her, but was of course necessarily away a good deal.

Mrs. Smith had left England four years ago—England where she had been the centre of her little circle, shone at tennis parties and dances, been petted and spoiled by an adoring mother and brothers. She had “come out” to be married and had grown faded and tired and rather disappointed with life. Still she was wonderfully cheerful over her difficulties and looked forward to the time when they would be “moved on” to a more congenial sphere.

We feasted them both and gave them of our best and talked at dinner incessantly of England, “home” as every one calls it out here.

“Are you going home again so soon?” said the cashier at our bank rather wistfully to Julia when she mentioned that she was returning in the spring.

Mrs. Smith was thirsting, like all British-born Canadians, for “home” news and looked at our month-old illustrated papers with childish delight. We gave her a bundle to take home.

“It’s funny,” said Julia, as we came home from accompanying them to the cars, “that England looks so different to people when they get into another country. At home one feels all the prickly disagreeables, the income-tax collector, the water-rate, the idiotic politics of the neighbours—the absurdity and shiftlessness and poverty and dirt, and when one gets away one thinks only of the nice things—one sees what fine things we have in England which other people haven’t got—the English mode of thought—its cleanness and pride and reticences and shibboleths is unique—nobody can understand it unless they’re born in the atmosphere—the way we discuss the ethics of everything—the liberty we allow individuals to be a nuisance to the community, the independence and don’t-care-what-anybody-else-thinks, it all looks fine when one gets back away from it and sees it at a distance. People are always trying to put their fingers on it and find out why, with the awful muddling form of government we’ve got, the shiftless unorganized methods we pursue, we yet somehow manage to ‘get there.’ We are so ridiculously complacent, so contemptuous of other nations, so cocksure that the British way is *the* right way, and it really looks as though Providence were trying to bolster us up in this illusion. We see various details which might be better managed, but taking us in the lump, with all faults and defects, we are a surprising race of people.”

I do not know why this particular train of thought

should have been provoked in Julia by Mrs Smith's visit, and I made some observations to that effect.

"Why," laughed Julia, "I was thinking about Mr. and Mrs. Smith and their methods with the Indians. Now, if, for example, the Germans had taken in hand to convert those red-men the missionaries would have been carefully trained beforehand for the business, would have studied the Indian language, Indian ideas, would have tried to catch glimpses of the Indian mind and point of view—but Mr. Smith, with his narrow Nonconformist ideas—Church-of-England Missionaries would be just as narrow-minded, I've nothing against Nonconformists as such—brings along his British methods, his British obtuseness, his flow of British eloquence or dullness filtered through an Indian interpreter, and starts out to convince the Indians—his mind against their minds—and he takes no particular trouble over it either—one day a week, that's all. It's stupendous impudence. He sets up his Britishness and imposes himself on those Indians. They're not in the least converted to his religion, but they learn something about British ideas."

Considering that Julia had never yet seen Mr. Smith and knew nothing of his methods with the Indians except as presented by his wife—a woman obviously unsympathetic and ill-adapted to the true missionary spirit—I thought it better to enlist Julia's energies in helping to "wash up" the dirty dishes—the awful Nemesis which

awaits all our entertaining—and in preparing fresh food in place of what we had devoured.

“No wonder,” said Julia, as she put on the rubber gloves which are part of the domestic equipment of every self-respecting Canadian housewife who wishes to keep her hands in good order. “No wonder that girls prefer long hours smiling behind ribbon-counters rather than this Sisyphean task of dish-washing. Civilization is always heaping new burdens on people. We carry everything to extremes.”

I drowned the rest of this soliloquy in the crash of crockery and rattled plates with unnecessary vehemence, for I was tired of considering the various problems presented in such rapid succession by Julia's active mind.

“When did Mrs. Smith ask us to come and see her?” asked Julia.

“Next Saturday, when her husband will be at home.”

“All right, then we'll go, Priscilla. Jack can come on later and bring us home again.”

So it was settled, and we went, but Jack said he couldn't fetch us home as he would be detained at business. There was a choice of routes. We might go by train or by tram-car and steamer, so chose the latter method as being more adventurous and started off in the tram towards Lachine—a place a few miles outside Montreal on the banks of the St. Lawrence. One of the early French explorers, Jacques Cartier or Champlain, I forget which, thought he had reached the

shores of China when he arrived here, making, like Columbus, one of those mistakes which names perpetuate throughout the centuries.

We had to go a long way on the cars through a very uninteresting, dull part of Montreal out into wild marshy bits of grey-looking land where occasionally hideous square wooden houses of the tin-biscuit-box type of architecture reared their heads above the tangled bushes through which the shining tram-rails ran like filaments of civilization threading the wilderness. For it was a veritable wilderness. Except in the untidy unfinished-looking houses no sign of cultivation, just shivering greyish sparse grass threaded with rocks, bushes and pools. When we arrived at Lachine, which was a funny village of wooden houses, straggling along the bank of the river, the sun came out strongly and immediately the bleak cold landscape became suffused with beauty. We waited half an hour at the landing-stage watching other passengers arrive, and then went on to a very funny antiquated-looking steam ferry-boat which carried, apparently as part of its permanent equipment, a nigger-band. They were real "coloured gentlemen," not the kind one sees at English seaside-places with the black leaving off just under the chin, and their performances on the banjo and the liquid unctuousness of their voices blended pleasantly with the rush of the water under our paddle wheels and the clank-clank of some insistent machinery hidden in the centre, or "waist" perhaps I ought to say, of the

boat. Three affable ferrymen supplied us, in the intervals of their strenuous duties, with information as to various points on shore. They were French-Canadians and spoke nasal English to us and incomprehensible seventeenth-century French to each other. The "mighty St. Lawrence" widens out into Lake St. Louis just where we crossed, but we were only about twenty minutes in getting from shore to shore, and another quarter of an hour's walk, along a rough cart-track, brought us to Ongawaga, the Indian village.

"This is a fraud," said Julia, as the neat wooden houses surrounded by apple-trees came into sight. "Where are the wigwams and the totem-poles and scalps fluttering in the morning breeze. Where are the tomahawks and the wampum? What is wampum, by the way?"

I was pleased to be able to inform Julia, who is always so informative herself, that wampum was the shell-money ground into a circular bead-like form, used in olden times by the Indians as a means of exchange.

"Three of the black shell beads were worth a penny and six of the white ones, but like the Indian rupee it fluctuated a good deal in value, especially when the English took to making imitation wampum beads which they exchanged for valuable furs."

"Of course, they would do," said Julia; "the Indians have been exploited to extinction by the white man. What with whisky and imitation wampum we've a great deal to answer for."

"Well, they've a good deal too," I retorted.

"Oh, yes," responded Julia cheerfully. "They lived up to their standard and we lived up to ours. I'm not going to sigh over the fate of the noble red man. Doubtless he had his good points. Dead people and dead nations usually have. We can afford to feel sorry for them without any compunction about doing our duty by them."

We came into the village street, which was indescribably muddy and full of deep ruts. Each house stood, according to regulations, in its own acre of ground, which was well-planted with fruit trees and vegetables. The houses were square and ugly, built of boards with shingle roofs. There was the usual painful absence of flower-garden which so often in Canada strikes English eyes with such a sense of loss.

Groups of children were playing in the streets, shouting to each other in a queer language, which it was difficult to recognize as French.

They were awfully if unpicturesquely garbed. The boys wearing very baggy corduroy trousers some sizes too large, while the girls were clad in print frocks of varying ugliness, tartan stripes being evidently much in favour. Their features were in most cases of the harshly handsome Indian type, with clear dusky skins. Occasionally the French blood in them was manifestly predominant and the straight lank hair took a softer curve as though wishing to try and curl. Aquiline noses were in the majority, but an assertive tip-tilted French nose

frequently confronted us, and one child Julia asserted was the living image of the Marquis de Montcalm as portrayed in our old French history at home.

Julia, in her best Parisian French, seemed inclined to make researches into the family history of the child, but was frustrated by her inability to make herself understood, and I was glad to see Mrs. Smith hurrying towards us, picking her way through the pools of mud on the road and scattering the skinny fowls who were vainly looking for a dry spot where they could scratch comfortably.

She had seen us from the end window of her house and now greeted us with delighted smiles and hand-shaking, while the children formed a ring round us and watched with uncomprehending gravity while we exchanged the usual commonplaces of conversation.

"I think we'd better take a turn round the village first and then you must come and have something to eat. It's no good getting your rubbers dirty again, is it?"

We agreed that it wasn't. The children still surrounded us, their black eyes fixed unwinkingly on our every movement.

"Poor little things," said Julia pityingly, "I expect they don't get much excitement. I'm glad I'm wearing my red hat." Then she harangued them in a Fenimore Cooper style, saying that the "pale-faces" (a little blue from cold) were come to smoke the pipe of peace in the wigwams of their brothers the Iroquois.

Mrs. Smith is evidently doubtful as to Julia's sanity. People who don't understand her peculiar form of humour often are.

She hurried us away, and we left the children staring silently after us.

"It's trying," sighed Julia as we splashed along, "really, very trying not to be able to communicate nor receive ideas for want of language. It's the greatest barrier that exists. Doesn't it make you miserable, Priscilla, not to be able to understand one word that those children say?"

"Not to any considerable extent," I responded. "I have not Julia's capacity for being made happy or miserable by trifles.

"Well, it does me," she said irritably. "I never fully realized before I went abroad to 'foreign parts' where English isn't spoken—at least in the streets—how one misses the vivid forcible language of the English peasant. I'd give worlds to hear Anna Maria Pennygood say 'I'll clout yer ear'ole for yer, if yer touch me again!'"

Anna Maria Pennygood was a little girl "at home" in England of defective manners and excessive animal spirits who had been in the habit of throwing stones at our hens and hanging on our gate with inadequately-washed face, and why Julia should sigh for a sound of her strident voice and vulgar—if forcible—method of expression is one of those mysteries that only Julia herself can explain.

"I daresay the children are saying just the same kind of nice effective things to each other and we're outside it all—might just as well be deaf and dumb."

Fortunately the sound of a gramophone from the open door of one of the houses diverted Julia's attention from the painful subject. It was playing "Shall we gather at the river?" and as we came nearer to the source of the strains an elderly woman appeared in the doorway.

"That's Mrs. Luck, she speaks a little English," said Mrs. Smith, and she bade Mrs. Luck an affable "Good morning."

Mrs. Luck, though of a decidedly Indian cast of feature—she was, we subsequently learned from Mr. Smith, descended from a great Iroquois chief of blood-thirsty memory—irresistibly recalled to both Julia and myself an ancient Irish charwoman to whom we had once given temporary employment. The resemblance to Mrs. Murphy was further accentuated by the soft tweed man's cap she wore on her straight black locks, otherwise she was neatly attired in a faded print dress and apron. She came down to the fence and said—

"Nice day! Ver' nice day, ain't it?" looking at us stolidly and impassively out of her glittering black eyes. Her hard, knotted, work-stained hands gripped the top of the fence. She had an air of looking through us at something far away, but Mrs. Smith said after

wards that she had probably been interested in our clothes and that it was not considered polite to look at any one straight in the eye.

Julia praised her garden and asked if it was her gramophone which was playing so beautifully.

"No, no, not mine, 'e belong to my son." The son appeared at the doorway and looked over our heads into the middle distance, completely ignoring our presence. He had rather long hair parted in the middle and was smoking a clay pipe. A lean, mangy, wolf-like dog snuffed about his feet.

"I believe those are the people who stole my chickens," murmured Mrs. Smith as we moved on; "the daughter was married a month ago, and they had twenty or thirty people at the wedding and six of my best young cockerels went. It was then they bought the gramophone. They are the richest people in the village."

We went on further and visited the school, a tiny wooden building furnished much like any other village school with portraits of British royalties on the walls and maps of the North American Continent. The children unfortunately were all gone home, as work had finished for the day. We found Miss Johnson correcting dictation exercises, a heap of dog's-eared, torn and blotted copy-books beside her. She was underlining the mistakes in red ink.

"Fancy!" she said, "Marie Ponçon has been spelling wrongly on purpose, because she thinks her pages look

so much prettier with plenty of red ink. What is one to do with such children?"

"Stop using red ink," said Julia, smiling. "I know. It is a temptation."

"But I can't stop using red ink," said Miss Johnson plaintively; "it's the only way possible to correct mistakes."

"Oh, it's not really," said Julia in a wheedling tone of voice, "not unless you think it is. If you think black will do as well, you'll find it *will* do as well."

Miss Johnson looked unutterably distressed and worried and did not pursue the subject.

We continued our inspection, visited the little wooden chapel and the tiny Catholic church, which was a queer mixture of smells, incense, leather and frowsy clothes. It was decorated with crude pictures of the Virgin, and there was a very square confessional looking rather like a railway booking-office.

When we finally arrived at the Smiths' house for our long delayed dinner, Mr. Smith had just arrived from Montreal, accompanied by the Indian interpreter. Mr. Smith was small and sandy and insignificant-looking, the small Smith daughter, who had been indulging in her afternoon sleep while her mother took us round, was an exact copy of her papa—"Much too good to be healthy," said Julia—and the Indian interpreter, Mr. Benedict Richard, was a tall handsome half-breed who talked with preternatural seriousness of the hours of

the trains, of the nigger-band on the ferry-boat, of the apple harvest, and of the approaching winter.

Julia's most brilliant witticisms failed to provoke more than the faint shadow of a smile, he was so fenced in by an impenetrable gravity, and Julia remarked, on the ferry-boat as we went home, that he made her feel as though she had been in church.

However when she played on the tinkling little piano, which had a thin, remote, anæmic resonance, especially in its upper notes, he listened with absorbed attention and when at Mrs. Smith's urgent request Julia sang, he evidently appreciated "Sally in our Alley," and asked her to sing it again.

"Your sister's voice reminds me of your English nightingale," he remarked to me.

"I did not know you had been in England," I replied.

"No, I have nevere been in England, nevere heard the nightingale, but I read about him in books. I think he must sound like that."

I told Julia later of this remark, and she was very pleased about it, and said it showed that the poetical Indian imagination was not yet extinguished.

Mrs. Smith showed us her garden and orchard, full of apple-trees, and presented us with more vegetables and fruit than we could carry. We insisted on returning to the house to help wash up the dinner things, knowing by experience that accumulated dirty dishes are the usual result of Canadian hospitality, and that the strain

of playing both hostess and kitchenmaid is one under which most women suffer severely.

Mr. Smith seemed to think that we, as visitors, ought to sit in the parlour and look at photographs of Niagara Falls, but Julia had looked at so many pictures of Niagara Falls, both in England and elsewhere, that she pointed out the superior joys of dish-washing.

"I'm very likely going to Niagara before I leave Canada next spring, so I don't want to see many more pictures of it or I shall be sure to be disappointed." And she retired decisively into the kitchen, whither Mr. Smith and the interpreter followed her. The latter studied Julia with interest, and his black eyes followed her furtively as she polished up the spoons and went to and fro putting away the dishes.

Julia asked him many questions about the Indians and extracted from him a good deal of information about Jesuit missions, but he did not appear very willing to discuss the history of his forefathers.

When it was time for us to return they all three accompanied us to the ferry-boat carrying melons, apples, tomatoes and other vegetable productions which we were to convey home.

"This is the last week the ferry-boat runs," said Mr. Smith. "They'll lay up for the winter soon. You'll have to come and see us by train then. I hope it won't be a wet winter."

"I thought that winters in Canada were never wet only cold and bright and exhilarating," said Julia.

Mr. Smith smiled sadly, and shook his head.

"It's a popular delusion," he answered. "The winters are of course cold, much colder than in England, but just as changeable, at any rate in this part of Canada. It makes a great difference to us out here. When it's wet the roads are really impassable. When it freezes, especially after snow, we get along finely. Our Canadian Christmas is often just as dull, foggy and muggy as in England, with no sign of frost or snow. Naturally further north it's cold enough. I don't know anything upon which people are more misinformed than on the subject of the weather and climate of various countries."

We left them standing on the little landing-stage, the English clergyman, his wife and the Indian interpreter. As the ferry-boat moved away to the strains of the nigger-band, their black silhouettes stood out against the pale lemon of the sunset sky. They looked very solitary and remote. Julia shivered as she watched them.

"Mr. and Mrs. Smith," said Julia reflectively, nursing a large pumpkin and a fish-net bag of tomatoes on her lap, "are just common every-day sort of people, not anything special about either of them, yet somehow they look like the British Empire, don't they? it's funny, isn't it? I don't wonder people are puzzled over it. I'm puzzled myself."

The nigger-band struck up a more lively chorus, so I was spared the necessity of reply. I suppose there are

a good many solitary exiles like Mr. and Mrs. Smith scattered about in the Colonies.

"I'm sure the Americans over there," said Julia, nodding towards the States as we left the boat, "must often wish they still belonged to the Empire."

I grunted "Don't think so," by way of reply. The burden of a stone of miscellaneous vegetables precluded any desire for discussion of American political yearnings.

Smith

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CHAPTER XI

EARLY in November, after some iron-grey days when the north wind snapped savagely at each street corner, sweeping along, not strongly, but with an acute bitter relentlessness that seemed to say "here, this is the real thing, you shall see what winter can be like," the snow began to fall in earnest, coming in thick flurries which quickly veiled the hideous galvanized garbage tins on the kitchen galleries till they had the appearance of glorified wedding-cakes, and one would hardly have been surprised to see a Cupid push up the lid and peep out.

(Julia says that this flight of imagination on my part is singularly out of place and that the association with winter of airily-clad Cupids, whose chief sartorial equipment consists of a bow and arrows, a pair of gauzy wings and an all-pervading pink-and-white chubbiness, is what might have been expected of a person who wears a lace blouse with a tweed skirt. Why not? I ask.)

The harsh outlines of the ugly board fences on each side of the dreary back-lane softened into a strange weird beauty, the ash-heaps assumed the form of minia-

ture mountain-peaks, and the men, with the rubbish-carts, wearing thick fur coats and caps, bore a striking resemblance to the popular conception of Santa Claus. The children playing in the streets, who had hitherto been, as Julia said, painfully commonplace, grew suddenly picturesque. One forgave their nasal strident voices for the sake of their little pointed red-tasselled caps and the bright red woollen scarves twisted round their waists and knotted in front. They dragged tiny sleds bumping down the wooden staircases and pulled each other up and down the wide side-walks uttering elfin shrieks of joy. Their woolly fingerless gloves made patches of moving colour on the brilliant whiteness. The tiny babies took their morning constitutionals in perambulators on runners.

"This looks like the real thing, Priscilla," said Julia, seizing the shovel, "I'll clear the staircase."

We were not quite sure if snow-shovelling on the front part of the premises was in accordance with local etiquette—but Julia, with an egoism which I cannot but think somewhat too self-sufficing, said, when I remonstrated, that the only opinion she cared about was her own, and she put on her motorhood and rubbers and with the further aid of the whisk-broom vigorously cleared the steps of snow, completing her work by throwing down ashes which drifted on to our neighbours' stairs.

Our milk arrived in the dark hours every morning heralded by the musical tinkle of sleigh-bells as the

milk-pung moved slowly down the street. It was pleasant to hear them as we turned luxuriously in bed and thought of the cold, twenty below zero, outside.

The coals our neighbours had ordered glided down the back-lane with the graceful ease of Lohengrin's swan, coming curvingly to rest in the backyard like a ship at anchor. The horse, by means of a pulley rope, drew the fuel up to the top story, walking softly over the stained whiteness while the sack swung higher and higher up against the brilliant blue of the sky till it reached the wood-shed window and was hauled in by the fur-coated coal-man.

"It has quite a Russian atmosphere, hasn't it?" said Julia, her face glowing with pleased interest, and although neither of us had ever been in Russia we agreed that it reminded us of that particular European country.

Down in the heart of the town the change was still more to be remarked. The sound of hoofs and the rumbling of traffic over the ill-paved streets of Montreal had been re-placed by the continual musical clash and clang of sleigh-bells. Snowploughs were mounted on front of the big street cars, ready for the heavier falls of snow, and instead of the wheeled cabs, airy fairy structures on runners, behind which long buffalo-robos floated in gracious curves, glided noiselessly—but for the musical tinkle—round the corners of the streets.

On one cab-rank we discovered—the only one of its clan—an elderly-looking, respectable, amply-built, covered four-wheeler—at least it was evidently a

four-wheeler at other seasons of the year—though it now was on runners, and reminded Julia—her ideas are frequently *bizarre* in the extreme —of the elephant in the story, who, out of sheer goodness of heart, tried to hatch out some eggs in the absence of the hen.

Jack and Julia, as soon as the snow came, invested each in a pair of "skis," while I contented myself with the safer and less expensive snow-shoe, a course I afterwards much regretted, for snow-shoeing, at any rate as I practised it, was the least exciting of sports and partook merely of the nature of a useful aid to walking.

Jack said that he got almost as much pleasure out of wearing rubbers as he found in snow-shoes.

Nobody in Montreal ever goes forth in the winter time without rubbers over their shoes. They are one of the chief necessities of life, first of all as a protection from the mud and wet, then against the snow and last but not least they save many a fall on slippery surfaces. Jack, who forgets most things, never forgot his but once, mentioning the lapse with deepest regret on his return home at seven.

He had suffered a heavy tumble at the street corner besides other minor unpleasantnesses, such as an involuntary leaning for support on a fortunately solid old lady of vituperative powers, which, even when veiled in Canadian-French, had been disagreeably conspicuous.

"I believe she had a whisky-jag on," said Jack reflectively when recounting the painful episode; "but,

anyway, don't you girls try to go out without rubbers, you'll be sorry if you do."

He had brought a friend to dine (of course without telling us his intention beforehand), a Mr. Peel, who was manager of a bank, a young and handsome Englishman of about thirty. After our introduction to him in the passage, where the exigencies of supervising the potatoes cooking on the Quebec Heater compelled our attendance, he retired on to the mat and took off his rubbers as a matter of course, leaving them neatly placed beside Jack's, and when Harold Knight appeared a few seconds later, he added another pair to the row.

"It's a fine idea," said Julia, gazing at the three pairs of masculine footwear, "saves dirt and gives quite a Turkish atmosphere to the house, also lets visitors know how many guests and of what sex have preceded them."

Mr. Peel proved a great acquisition to our circle. He and Julia, it is true, developed a habit of arguing, which seemed to give them both a great deal of satisfaction, especially Julia, who told him that he was a "foeman worthy of her steel." His ideal woman, he declared, was the old-fashioned modest retiring type whose happiness was in her home and who had no desire to usurp functions properly belonging to men.

Julia treated him kindly and indulgently, and he was a long time before he made the discovery that she was "advanced" in her ideas and pining to have a vote.

In fact it dawned upon him by such imperceptible degrees that by the time he had become aware of Julia's total unlikeness (to his cherished ideal he had unfortunately fallen under the spell of her fascination—a "purely intellectual fascination," I heard him explain to Harold Knight—and was constantly struggling between his admiration for her subtle and convincing style of argument and his "innate masculine prejudices," as Julia called his desire to see women keep modestly in the background.

Julia's domesticity, her capacity for cooking, dress-making, carpentry, or anything else she considered worth while, together with her interest in abstract questions, her fluency and originality and unexpectedness puzzled him extremely. She was to him a delightful but tantalizing enigma.

At an early stage of their acquaintance he had confided to her the fact of his engagement to some one in England whom he hoped to "run over and marry" in the early spring, and Julia promised to help the future Mrs. Peel to furnish her flat on the same lines as ours, for which he professed great admiration.

"Poor man," said Julia, "he says she's very sweet and clinging, and has been brought up at a country vicarage by two aunts, so she'll probably want to have everything exactly as she's accustomed to it in England, thick carpets, heavy hangings, stuffy dusky furniture and marble clocks and vases on the dining-room sideboard, whereas we haven't got a sideboard at all,

but no self-respecting woman could really exist without one, I'm sure."

One evening Mr. Peel, probably unaware of Julia's weakness for cigarettes, was very emphatic in his condemnation of women who smoke, and I listened with pleasure to his strictures, since I too disapprove of the modern feminine craze for a habit which even in the case of men has little to be said in its favour. But the next day we went on our first ski-ing expedition, accompanied by Mr. Peel and several other young men. On the Mountain, which is the chief play-ground of Montreal, a gentle slope was discovered, where the first vain struggling elementary efforts might be pursued in comparative privacy. Mr. Peel was the only expert among us, the rest had little or no experience, and I on my snowshoes as a passive spectator found sufficient entertainment in the uncouth and complicated positions they inadvertently assumed in their attempts to attain the graceful fluent progress of Mr. Peel.

Julia was an apt pupil and speedily overcame the preliminary difficulties. She had a sense of poise and balance and managed before long to glide easily down a gentle slope swaying lightly to the movement and looking very picturesque in her motor hood and white woolly jacket. When they started homewards after a strenuous afternoon the fatal discovery was made that though every one was supplied with tobacco nobody had any matches left. It was then that Julia produced from her pocket a box of vesta[®] silver

cigarette case which she handed to Mr. Peel with a cynical smile.

"You may have a match on condition of smoking one of my cigarettes," she said, and Mr. Peel, after a moment's hesitation, succumbed to circumstances and accepted the abhorred feminine cigarette which had aroused his contempt only the day before.

"There's something to be said for women smoking after all," he conceded with a smile, and his smile, as Julia said, was the chief feature his face possessed, it was otherwise handsomely uninteresting, but his mind she was of opinion would, if it had been properly cultivated and not choked with conventions and prejudices, have been extraordinarily alert and receptive and "if his wife," she continued, "happens to be the right sort of woman, which I very much doubt, his views on many things could soon be brought into correct focus; it's funny how people, quite intelligent people, prefer to think in grooves and make no attempt to see both sides of a question."

I never quite understand what Julia means when she talks like this. She is full of Utopian ideas and reads too much of Bernard Shaw and German philosophy. She is always worrying me to study Darwin and Spencer and says the *Origin of Species* was the book that changed her whole mental outlook--if so, I prefer to keep my own. Julia says the assimilation of such a book in early life, in combination with *Hamlet*, Goethe's *Faust*, *Vanity Fair*, *David Copperfield*, *Treasure Island* and

In Memoriam would provide sufficient mental equipment for the average man and women for the rest of their existence and that once these above-mentioned works are firmly woven into the fabric of any human mind—whether male or female, though Julia doesn't believe in such a thing as a "female mind"—the formation of a sane and independent judgment, which she declares to be the crying need of the age, would be assured.

"But, Julia," I objected as we walked down the Mountain, for it was on our return from our skiing expedition that she, in spite of her aching limbs, put forth these extraordinary views, "most cultivated people have read—with perhaps the exception of *Faust* and that book of Darwin, which I have always heard was contrary to the accepted dogmas of the Christian religion—all the books you mention, yet they are not conspicuously saner or more independent than other people."

"Middle class people—our class," said Julia, "chiefly read the *Strand Magazine* and similar light literature. It amuses them without requiring any great mental effort, and when they've subscribed to a so-called popular scientific monthly with nice photogravures of seeds sprouting and sections of a mole-hill, they positively think they can feel their ideas enlarging and are immediately conscious of their immense superior mental culture to the next-door neighbour who never reads anything but the *Gardener's Annual*. They think they

know Shakespeare because they had to work up some of his plays for the Oxford examinations, but as for Darwin, and of course *Faust*, why even if they read them, they wouldn't assimilate them any more than a lead pipe assimilates the water that runs through it. They haven't the requisite mental digestion."

"Well, then it's not their fault, if they're not constituted to do it," I said.

"No, not at all, the trouble is when people think themselves cultivated and broad-minded without being so. It's the fashion to be broad-minded now-a-days. Even the so-called lower classes feel it, and they are broader with their own class, though never with the class above them. But our system of Education is absolutely incapable of producing either culture or sanity of mental outlook—in fact, no mere book-student can ever be very wise, that's why parsons and school-masters——"

"Oh, Julia!" I exclaimed, for Mr. Peel, who was listening with the deepest interest, had informed me only the night before that one of his brothers was in the Church while another had a school at Ealing. "I think, Julia, your skis are slipping apart, shall I fasten the straps a bit tighter?"

"In Germany," pursued Julia, as soon as her straps were tightened and the skis slung again in the orthodox position across her shoulders, "where people don't indulge in light literature to the extent they do here there is a much higher standard of culture than in Eng-

land because they read more solidly. If people are not cultured they don't imagine they are, but even there the pernicious influence of English taste is beginning to make itself felt. Tauchnitz has a great deal to answer for," and Julia sighed and relapsed for a few moments into silence.

"Your sister is remarkably clever," said Mr. Peel to me as we found ourselves together on Park Avenue. "Even though I may not always agree with what she says I find her remarks always interesting and stimulating."

Indeed as time went on and Mr. Peel instructed Julia every Saturday afternoon further in the intricacies of telemark turns and other ski-manceuvres I began to wonder if his appreciation and admiration of her "marvellous versatility and adaptableness," as he called it, were quite justifiable in view of his position as an engaged man. He talked a good deal of his *fiancée*, who was the daughter, it seems, of a clergyman in Cheltenham. He showed us her portrait—two of them, in fact—one in fancy dress as a fairy with gauze wings and a rather short skirt and another in ordinary costume with a tennis racket lying across her knee. She looked gentle and blue-eyed and was undoubtedly pretty, and Julia said all kinds of nice things about her and Mr. Peel seemed pleased to hear them. Jack compared her with Poppy and said he should like to try and paint her portrait when she came, whereupon Mr. Peel, flushed with gratitude, declared that he was sure it would be a

great joy to her to be painted, but he had not then seen the oil sketch of Marie Laronde, or I am sure he would not have been quite so enthusiastic.

It was on the second or third of our ski-ing expeditions, when we had invited Mr. Peel to come home and have tea with us, which in Montreal also implies dinner, that I had the misfortune to lose the front door latch key. I had hurried on in front, thinking with a certain pleasure of the agreeable warmth of the flat and not less of the large cake with which Julia's forethought had provided us, when at the top of the staircase, where the cold north-easter blew my skirts in unbecoming festoons about my ankles, I made the appalling discovery that the key of the Yale lock which closed our front door was missing. I stood there fumbling vainly in the two pockets which are the maximum allowance for any mere woman, hearing Peter's impatient barks from the other side of the door and waiting with apprehension Julia's remarks when she should hear of the calamity. She was slowly approaching, walking rather stiffly, for at her age, as I tell her, one does not fall down twenty times in an afternoon with impunity, and of course she was discussing some weighty question—I think it was universal military service, of which she is an ardent advocate.

“Do hurry up and open the door, Priscilla,” she cried as she saw me re-descend the stairs, “we're all dying for tea and my feet are awfully cold.”

“Well, I'm sorry,” I said, “I'm afraid I've lost the

key and can't get in. I must go and find a locksmith."

I felt sorry, for I knew by my own feelings, and I had not been skiing, what Julia's state of mind would be, but she only said, "Well, I'm surprised you haven't lost it before, your pockets are so casual."

I went in search of a locksmith and the lady in the next flat, who had evidently seen our trouble from her discreetly-curtained window, invited Julia and Mr. Peel to go and wait in her room till I returned in about half an hour with an amiable but utterly inadequate workman, who muttered to himself in French but spoke no comprehensible word. The only implement he appeared to possess was an axe which he inserted between the door and the jamb splintering off a long slither of wood.

"If he's going to bash down the door in that primitive way," said Julia contemptuously, "he'd better experiment on the back rather than the front"; and she laid a restraining hand on him as he poised the axe for a fresh effort.

If there had not luckily been a vacant building lot a few yards further down our side of the street we should have had at least a quarter of an hour's walk before being able to get to our back door, but our little procession, headed by Julia and the locksmith, whose conversation, though gutturally fluent, was totally incomprehensible to any of us, hurried across the rough rocky uneven ground covered with stunted bushes,

finally arriving at the back lane and boarded fence of which we had had day by day a distant view from the kitchen balcony, but never as yet seen close at hand. We were in too much haste to study its features, and our chief anxiety was to find our own door in the fence, where every entrance was exactly like the next. We squeezed up the narrow, stuffy, enclosed plank staircase which turned in a succession of angles past the doors of the lower and middle flat, until we reached our own humble back door, and the locksmith again made elaborate preparations to break in, but Julia lifted up the latch and walked into the woodshed.

"Thank goodness, we have at least the woodshed at our disposal, let's leave our skis here, we'll soon break that paltry kitchen-door catch."

But there was no necessity even to do that. We only had to open the double door, and walk in, for the back door had not been locked, and on reflection I decided that it probably never had been, during all the time of our residence in Montreal.

"I never should fasten it if I were you," said Julia as she turned up the electric light. "You're always liable to lose the key and between the two evils of burglary and being locked out with the thermometer at fifteen degrees below zero, I should much prefer burglary."

The locksmith departed smiling broadly, richer by twenty-five cents than when he came, and Julia began to make toast over the Quebec Heater where Mr. Peel, after tidying up in the bathroom, came and studied her

method of toasting, which she explained quite scientifically, mentioning that the bread had to be held laterally, not perpendicularly, and illustrating the proper angle to put it on to the fork so that it shouldn't drop off into the fire.

"I must show Netta how to do it when she comes," he said.

Netta was the name of the future Mrs. Peel. He stood warming his hands and watching Julia, whose face was lit up by the ruddy red glow of the stove. I sometimes wished he wouldn't look so long and so often at Julia.

It was while we were out walking with Mr. Peel one Sunday that what Julia calls "the great skunk adventure" happened.

We had got into the habit, now that the days were so short, of having a late dawdling sort of breakfast on Sunday mornings—the only day, as Jack pathetically remarked, when dawdling was possible for him—and afterwards taking a long ramble—weather permitting—till three o'clock, when we returned to the flat and partook of our "square meal," which had been gently simmering in the three-tier steamer on the Quebec Heater during our absence. Of course Peter always shared our walks which usually led us over the mountain. Many dogs in Montreal wear snow-boots during the winter season, for the snow catches in the long hair round the paws and speedily forms hard balls of ice, which render walking difficult. Julia had very much wished to provide Peter with a set of shoes, but I flatly

refused to have my dog made ridiculous and was sure Peter would not like them, but it was tiresome having to stop so often to clear away the hard snow from his toes. I wonder how wolves and other wild animals manage in the winter season.

There are some very beautiful walks on the Mountain and the cemeteries among the pine-trees, Catholic, Protestant and Jewish, lie facing the valley of the St. Lawrence, whose shining breadth glimmers blue and sparkling beyond the multitudes of red-roofed houses.

There are tiny islets far away, mere cloudy grey touches between us and the opposite shore, and we can stand under the birch-trees looking over the limitless waste of snow—when there is any—and fancy how it was in the old times with Indian birch-bark canoes threading the sparkling waters and the shores echoing to the yells of the "braves." An occasional grey squirrel flits among the trees, and Peter has vain and futile but exhilarating chases after them. Jack is vexed when they get away. Men always want to kill things I notice. But I should be sorry to see the cheery little creatures destroyed. There are no birds visible, excepting the ubiquitous sparrow, which seems able to survive the severity of any climate.

It was one Sunday morning in late November we were on our customary walk through the woods. Jack was in front with Mr. Peel, and Julia was talking to nobody in particular about the Iroquois and Wassa-

wattamie Indians, who, she said, had formerly lived in this part of Canada.

"Less than a hundred years ago, they brought their furs to sell on Beaver Hill—now the heart of Montreal—think of that——" she was saying, when suddenly the most horrible, heart-rending, sickening smell, quite loathsomely indescribable, permeated the air.

"What a horrid——" began Julia, when Mr. Peel fled towards us in a succession of bounds, calling to Jack to follow him.

"A skunk! Go back! Run for your life! Call Peter," he shouted, quite abandoning the usual calm masculine attitude in face of peril.

"Come along, quick." He seized Julia's hand and dragged her on, while the rest of us followed helter-skelter, bounding, racing on, with beating hearts, till the smell subsided, and we felt we were out of the danger zone.

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated Julia piously. "That was a narrow escape! Thank goodness we fled in time!"

"Where's Peter?" said Jack anxiously.

"Perhaps he's tackling the skunk," suggested Julia.

None of us dared to go back. We called him in our most alluring tones, but he did not appear.

"We'd better walk on," said Jack, "there's nothing else to be done."

We retraced our steps, feeling that grave issues were pending and presently we caught sight of Peter running

parallel to our path some distance away and occasionally stopping to rub himself in the snow, rolling over and over and burying his nose under it. We felt greatly relieved at seeing him.

"He's all right, I think," said Jack, "it's lucky he didn't see the skunk, or he might have gone for it."

Peter rambled cheerily on, darting in and out between the tree trunks, sniffing after imaginary rabbits till he happened to come rather closer than usual to us.

We all stood still and ejaculated a simultaneous "O-o-oh!"

"He did get it then," said Mr. Peel, with the calmness of despair.

It was too true. One of those painfully obvious truths that allows of no ignoring.

Mr. Peel, who was better informed on the subject than most of us, was of opinion that the misfortune had met Peter in an attenuated form, or the odour would have been even more overpowering than it was.

"If you call this attenuation," cried Julia, through her handkerchief, "whatever would concentration be?"

"Why, it would mean that you couldn't live in the same street with him," said Mr. Peel gravely. "There's no joking about it. I mean literally what I say. We're lucky it's no worse."

We found our luck bad enough. We dare not take Peter on the tram in his highly odoriferous condition, so Jack and Mr. Peel walked all the way home with him while Julia and I hurried on in the cars so that we might

be getting lunch ready and hot water for Peter's bath, which was an obvious necessity.

As soon as the poor animal set foot on our staircase, we became painfully aware of his presence and the suffocating skunk-odour penetrated into the house as soon as the door was opened. So we thought it better to leave him in the street to run about in the fresh air, while we disposed of our luncheon, for the long walk had made us ravenously hungry.

From my bedroom window I could see poor Peter striving to greet the few members of his own kind with whom he had formerly been on friendly terms, but after a few tentative smells they one and all fled from him, while the human acquaintances who had hitherto patted him so kindly held him at arm's length with sticks and umbrellas and responded to his affectionate advances by shouts of "Get away."

Julia and I hurried through our meal as fast as we could, so that Peter's purification need not be longer delayed than necessary, but Jack and Mr. Peel were aggravatingly slow and the latter kept discovering new and appalling skunk anecdotes by way of consoling us for Peter's misfortune.

"One man told me his cousin had been on the way to propose to a girl, all dressed up in a brand-new suit, plug hat, boots polished, scented handkerchief just showing at one corner of his pocket. He was walking along feeling very happy and confident of success when—just a few yards away from the girl's doorstep it

happened—the creature had been visiting her chicken coops and killed ten of them it seems—he came right in the line of fire. It was awful—simply awful.”

“ I call it tragic,” said Julia, “ funny things usually are, it seems to me. What did he do ? ”

“ Well—er—he didn't propose to the girl *that* night. Went home and buried his clothes for six weeks.”

“ Did he finally marry the girl ? ” said Julia with interest.

“ No, while he was waiting for his clothes to sweeten, somebody else stepped in and had better luck. The girl thought he didn't care for her.”

“ Well, that *was* hard luck,” said Jack sympathetically.

“ Wasn't it ? He was hard hit in more senses than one at the time, but he afterwards married a widow and got over it. It was worse for the girl. She got a bad bargain—a drunken worthless fellow—no good at all.”

We all sighed. We felt it was one of those cynical blows which Fate seems to delight in dealing at the innocent and unsuspecting.

Mrs. Waddel came to call as we were scrubbing Peter with carbolic soap and other disinfectants. She was very sympathetic.

“ If your dog had caught the skunk you'd have got ten dollars reward and the police would have disinfected him free of charge.”

Our efforts had very little effect, and poor Peter

evidently suffered severely in his feelings at being so thoroughly cleansed, but the odour still clung faithfully, nauseating beyond belief.

"I can understand now," said Julia sadly, as she sprinkled the flat with carbolic, "how it is that the epithet 'skunk' is such a universal term of opprobrium in America."

CHAPTER XII

IT was a long long time before we were able to forget the skunk. Every day Peter had carbolic baths which made his life a burden, and Julia, with what she called a "heroism worthy of a better cause," followed out with more or less patience the various treatments recommended by sympathetic friends as well as those suggested by her own active mind, battling with renewed zeal each morning against the irresistible forces of nature.

Day by day we awoke to the suffocating nauseous skunk atmosphere, for though we might tie Peter up on the outside gallery or give him the run of the street all day, it was impossible to deny him the shelter of the flat and the warmth of the Quebec Heater at night. The cold was too bitter. The poor animal felt in his sensitive doggish mind that for some unknown reason he was an outcast and a pariah, that a change had come into the current of his life, that he might no longer snuggle into warm skirts and sleep placidly in the family circle. He looked at us dumbly out of his brown eyes, gently wagged his tail and sighed, oppressive, heart-

breaking sighs of uncomprehension which spurred Julia into fresh efforts.

She had a theory that the old-fashioned remedy of burnt brown-paper might have some effect and persistently flourished flames and smoke into every nook and corner, and the agonies of apprehension I suffered can be better imagined than described, for it is the easiest thing in the world to set fire to a Canadian flat. We had had the engines in our immediate neighbourhood three times during the month of November.

"It's silly to be so nervous, Priscilla," she said as I snatched the curtains away from impending destruction. "We've got to take energetic methods, it's no use to try half measures."

The drug-store man at the corner must have made a small fortune out of us, and recommended various scientific remedies which proved hopelessly ineffective.

To show how persistent and ineradicable was the all-pervading odour—on the Tuesday following the fatal event—our weekly charwoman asserted on entering that she had been able to perceive it at the foot of the stairs outside the house. She also corroborated Mrs. Waddell's assertion that if Peter had succeeded in catching and slaying the skunk (being a French-Canadian she called it a *bête puante*) we should have had a reward of ten dollars—two pounds—and Peter would have been disinfected at the municipal expense.

"They ought to throw in a gold medal and a vellum testimonial," said Julia, "I think it's a disgrace to

civilization that in the heart of a large and wealthy town like Montreal, such vermin can be allowed to exist. There ought to be an organized campaign against them."

Jack tried to excuse the municipal authorities.

"Skunks are very prolific," he said, "and like rats, they *will* congregate on the outskirts of civilization. They are attracted by the garbage tins and poultry. They're very difficult to catch."

"Why don't they give those Indians over in Ongawaga the job?" persisted Julia. "There they sit twirling their thumbs and playing the gramophone and writing dictation exercises when they might be doing really useful work clearing the woods of pests and preserving their own knowledge of wood-craft. Seems to me everything's wrong nowadays, there's a shameful waste of energy all over the world, nothing and nobody put to the best use."

"Certainly, skunks are not put to the best use," murmured Jack.

"They need keeping in wired-in reservations much more than Indians," continued Julia gloomily. She was pursuing what she had got into the way of calling "the daily round, the common task" of lathering Peter with carbolic soap. Peter stood, one paw on the edge of his tub, looking an abject picture of suffering martyrdom. Jack was smoking. He was a great believer in tobacco as an antiseptic and deodorizer. Many men are, I notice.

Our above-mentioned charlady, an innovation of Julia's, who "butts in" among my domestic arrangements more than I entirely approve, bore in her outward appearance no resemblance to the English sisterhood of charwomen. She did not appear in a rusty bonnet or a battered hat or a mar-s-tweed cap, with discreet and shabby cape of hidden possibilities—no, she presented the appearance of a neatly-dressed ladylike woman, and her ambition was to buy "building lots." That was the reason why she went out to scrub other people's paint and polish their hard-wood floors. Neither she nor any one else in her set considered that she was doing anything which might unfit her for shining later on in the highest social spheres.

She appeared once a week at eight o'clock, having already breakfasted, and changed her neat walking dress for a tweed skirt and over-all, and then methodically and systematically cleaned the gas-stove and scrubbed the kitchen floor, while we flitted rather aimlessly here and there, furtively admiring the smoothness of her methods and uncomfortably conscious of our hopeless inferiority as far as domestic science was concerned. She possessed all the easy effortless capacity of the great artist. What we performed by dint of strain and obvious hard work, she achieved like one who has conquered labour and made it her willing servant, whereas we were always toiling against the grain, consumed by our own fretful incapacity and want of knowledge.

"I know what it is," said Julia, who had been perpending over the difference between Madame Charles' way of scrubbing the floor and our own exhausting and conscientious efforts, "she approaches it in a different mood to ours. We're always looking towards the end, to having done with it, and she enjoys doing it, she likes the work itself, studies its smallest details. She doesn't slop and splash and flourish a scouring flannel about, like Mrs. Murphy used to do, she's a real brainy worker. To us it's drudgery, to her it's a certain amount of pleasure. She really gets satisfaction out of doing it the best way. That's why she doesn't get tired over it."

I daresay what Julia said had some truth in it. At any rate we felt that the dollar which is the standard rate of pay in Montreal for such work—about four shillings in English money—was fully earned by Madame Charles, who retired homewards at five o'clock, looking in her neat coat and skirt as fresh and unwearied as when she first appeared in the morning.

We really learned more colloquial French from her than from Marie Laronde, who had lately joined our ski-ing parties and fell about gracefully into the snow with little squeaks of delight. Jack had made a sketch of her from memory (we recognized it by the red-tasselled cap and Indian blanket-coat) gliding gracefully down the mountain at what looked like a most fearful angle, though in reality it was quite a gentle slope. She was very pleased indeed with it and wheedled and coaxed

him into giving it to her, for he very much wished to keep it himself.

"You are such a clevere artist," she said, showing her white teeth, "I will send zis to my cousin in Paris to show 'ow I can ski."

As a matter of fact she could not ski at all without falling down every few yards, but there were always several men ready to pull her on to her feet again and help her to disentangle her skis. She never lost for a moment her fascinating smile, and her bright golden hair made a soft warm glow on the snow, so nobody minded how often they had to support her lovely form to perpendicularity once again. Harold Knight, I could see, was getting deeper and deeper into her toils. Ski-ing is rather bad for getting entangled—or perhaps I ought to say good—it depends upon the point of view.

Jack and Julia were becoming, under Mr. Peel's tuition, excellent performers, while I still shuffled painfully about on my snow-shoes. Perhaps if I had been able to walk for miles along the snow-clad prairies of the West, I might have got some satisfaction, but as a means of sport on the historic mountain of Montreal they were a dead failure. Julia urged me to hang them up in the corridor opposite the Quebec Heater as a permanent and highly appropriate wall-decoration, but, having spent three dollars on these instruments of pleasure, I was anxious to get my money's worth.

"But you don't get one cent's worth of fun out of the things," said Julia.

"Well, I'm not going to waste them," I retorted.

She offered to lend me her own skis, but I stuck to my snow-shoes, always hoping that some time I might discover in their use that wild delirious joy, that exhilaration of spirits which I felt was the legitimate accompaniment of sport.

It is a pity that the weather in the southern part of Canada is not to be relied on. We Britishers *had* relied upon it. We had been brought up to believe that when once started, the Canadian winter knew its own mind and would keep steadily and unswervingly to one idea. We speedily learned that it was really just as whimsical and capricious as it ever is in England. Mr. Smith had warned us about it the day we went to Ongawaga, but we had been unconvinced and were sure that shining fields of snow, and a brilliant blue sky with a hot sun shining was to be the normal every-day experience of the winter months. But the thaw came at the beginning of December, the rain fell in torrents, the piled-up snow in the streets vanished into masses of trampled yellow slush. We disconsolately hung up our skis and bought new rubbers. The red-tasselled children disappeared from the streets which, lately so cheerful and animated now became wildernesses of driving rain. Julia proposed, while the thaw lasted, to go to the Market of Bon Secours—called by those who know, Bosco Market. Mrs. Waddel, who came at frequent intervals and studied our *ménage* as if we had been some species of cavedwellers, so strangely did our domestic idea

strike her, had given us all the information we needed about Bosco Market. It was held on Saturday morning in a remote part of the town. All the country people from the surrounding farms drove in with their produce, and one could buy things at a third of the shop price—that is, if we didn't mind carrying home unlimited quantities of apples, celery, tomatoes, etc.

"It's no use ter me," said Mrs. Waddel, in her nasal but mellifluous voice. "Joseph would'n' let me go an' load myself with a lot o' truck o' that sort. He'd rather pay the price four times over. You've no idee what a lot 'e thinks o' me."

We murmured that we were quite sure about it, without knowing very clearly what we meant, and pursued our inquiries after the market.

"I believe some people go," said Mrs. Waddel, "but it's draggin' work. I sh'd have my things from the store if I was you."

But the next Saturday morning, it having ceased to rain, we rose up early and collecting our various mat baskets and string bags sallied forth in the cold. We had to take the car down into the city and change twice, going deeper and deeper into the old French quarter of the town till we finally arrived at the market. There were few, if any, stalls. All the fruit, meat, chickens and vegetables were arranged in the bottom of the two-horse "rigs" in which the farmers had driven from home. They seemed to be all French-speaking half-breeds and knew very little English, but

we had by this time acquired a certain amount of colloquial French-Canadian which we exhibited with great pride and found no difficulty in becoming possessed of an enormous quantity of vegetable produce which we transported, with infinite pains and the aid of a small boy who demanded ten cents for his services, to the cars.

"We must borrow a hand-cart or a baby's perambulator next time," sighed Julia, as hot and breathless we sank into our seats, while a careless passenger just saved himself from falling headlong over our baskets which rather encroached on the alley-way.

"Silly thing," said Julia, in a loud whisper, "why doesn't he look where he's going."

The man was chewing gum, an American habit to which we are not yet reconciled, though Julia, whose principle it is to test everything as much as possible by the light of self-experience, has invested in every kind of gum known to commerce and chews it conscientiously and reflectively while dusting.

"It can't be defended on æsthetic grounds," she says plaintively. "It gives people a bovine ruminating look and makes them develop prognathic jaws, and as for the taste of it it's simply horrid, rather like india rubber flavoured with peppermint or rosewater. I can understand silly young schoolgirls indulging in it but grey-headed grown-up men with bald heads and furrowed brows—that's what I find so terribly inappropriate."

She is still persevering, however—on scientific grounds, as she carefully explains.

“ I expect when people have been a good while without food it may help to dispel the pangs of hunger and give the impression of having had a square meal—otherwise it’s a pure waste of energy. Perhaps it helps to soothe the nerves, but I always want to look in another direction when I see any one doing it. It has a hideous effect on the human countenance and must spoil the teeth.”

American dentistry was another subject of Julia’s disapproval.

“ Oh, those dreadful golden smiles that one meets everywhere, why can’t they be content with natural porcelain teeth, which don’t make the mouth look like a ju-ju image? What do people want with golden teeth, anyway? ”

“ Perhaps it’s the easiest way to repair them and the most durable,” I said, trying to palliate the crimes of American dentistry.

“ No, it’s just mere show and desire to look wealthy,” said Julia, with conviction. “ A gold plate in the roof of your mouth blushes unseen and wastes its aroma of riches in a hidden recess, but three or four golden front teeth, besides being outrageously hideous, attract people’s attention, give the public a blow in the eye and seem to say at once, ‘ Look here, I can afford to fill my mouth with gold, that’s better than being born with a silver spoon in it, hey? ’ I suppose the millionaires over in

New York will have diamonds set in theirs presently when it occurs to them, and we shall be having past imitations over here three months afterwards."

Julia is sensitive to the æsthetic side of every question. Ugly houses, ugly people, ugly backyards torture her beyond belief. She is wounded to the quick, she says, because I wear my hat at a comfortable though æsthetically wrong angle, and asserts that I am so accustomed to seeing myself as a frump that frumpishness has become my standard of beauty.

As we were dragging our vegetables and fruit wearily up the stairs, exhausted, hot, and breathless, the distant notes of a piano in one of the flats reached our ears.

"We must have a piano for Christmas," said Julia, resting her two bags on the edge of the stairs while I fumbled for the key.

"A piano, Julia," I said, aghast, "I hope you're not thinking of buying one, for I certainly won't have it in my flat. You know positively that you can't afford it." I spoke indignantly, for Julia's impulses leaned always towards mental or financial extravagance.

"Keep calm, Priscilla," she said as we toiled upwards, "my idea is not to buy but to *hire* one. I talked to a piano-man in Catherine not two days ago and he explained all about it. It's quite easy. So much for a month, and his men bring it and put it where you want and take it away again. Of course, I'll pay the hire. It will make Christmas so much brighter."

I pondered over Julia's proposition while stowing

away our purchases. The pumpkins had to be kept in my clothes-cupboard, and the tomatoes and celery in the bathroom till we were able to consume them. A piano would without doubt add very materially to the joy of our Christmas, especially if, as seemed likely, the weather continued to be wet. So I did not directly oppose Julia, resolving to retain a strictly non-committal and diplomatic attitude until I had considered the question from every point of view.

"I don't see how they would ever get a piano up our straight wooden stairs," I remarked dubiously as a result of my reflections.

"Nothing easier," said Julia, "we leave it all to the men who bring it. It's their piano, and they are responsible. All we need consider is whether we can afford it or not."

"I thought *you* were going to hire it. It's nothing to do with me."

"Yes, I know. I can't afford it, but I'm going to hire it all the same. There's a lot of joy in having things one can't afford. Christmas is the time when everybody gets stony-broke, and I can easily earn the price of a month or two's hire. I can teach children or wait in a restaurant or be a sales-lady at Baldwin's."

It was too true. Julia could without the slightest difficulty have found work which, however uncongenial to her feelings, would have left no social slur behind. That was one of the differences between England and Canada.

The next day we splashed along the planks of the sidewalk in our street and through the slippery mud and ooze at the corner and boarded the cars piano-wards.

A very cold wind was blowing, and there were hopeful signs of a renewal of the frost. Our car had a fire in it — a queer little stove in the middle of the cushioned seat which ran lengthwise. The conductor came and put coal in it and poked out the ashes and a glowing cinder fell out and burnt a hole in the plush covering of the seat.

The man at the piano-store treated us with a deference to which we had long been strangers, for in Montreal we were accustomed to a rather abrupt, off-hand behaviour from shop people of both sexes, frequently accentuated by chewing-gum and a languid indifference to our needs. At first it had aroused in us much hostility and indignation, but we had learned to look upon this independent attitude as a sign of the free colonial spirit and had arrived at the philosophic state of mind through on us by a sense of its inevitability. So that we were agreeably surprised at being received as possible benefactors and purchasers, with suave smiles and a flow of polite language which no doubt has the drawback of dazzling the senses and frequently causes the feeble souled to buy many things for which they have no use. I always tremble when Julia goes shopping. She has such a talent for discovering "just the thing we wanted" from a patent potato-scraper to a hygienic door mat.

The piano was to be Julia's Christmas present to

both, "for one month only," she stipulated, and we spent more than an hour under the guidance of the polite storekeeper, "just running up and down" the keys of an interminable number of instruments. The storekeeper's tastes lay in the direction of "rag time," while Julia's are severely and fastidiously classical, but this difference between them having been adjusted, we wallowed, so to say, in pianos, for it was transparently evident that the hiring was only intended as a mere preliminary to purchasing outright. Julia, who, when shopping, ceases to display that nice sense of honour which should, I am convinced, pervade even business transactions, conveyed the idea that she was really anxious ultimately to buy a piano if she could find one of suitable tone and was thus enabled to get a superior one—at least so the man said, and I have no reason to doubt his word, knowing, so to say, the Julian effect on the masculine mind—at the price of an inferior one—a confirmation which is the usual result of Julia's diplomatic manœuvres.

We returned home to find Mrs. Knight, Harold Knight's mother, on our doorstep. She had come on the previous car to ours and been ringing, she said in rather injured tones, "for the last ten minutes."

"Very sorry. We couldn't help it," said Julia, cheerfully, as we ushered her into the tiny drawing-room, "we were both out, so couldn't answer the bell. Come and take off your things."

In Montreal casual callers always expect to be asked

to lay aside their outdoor garments, and visits of a quarter of an hour are quite outside Canadian experience. If you invite people to tea, it implies providing them also with dinner, a custom which before long was thoroughly understood it gave rise on our part to much hasty, panic-stricken and self-denying hospitality.

"You and I must go without soup to-night," Julia would whisper hastily to Jack as he took off his rubber boots in the passage, "the Waddels came to tea and we've been waiting two hours expecting them to depart, but they don't look like settling down more firmly than ever. Don't ask twice for vegetables; there's only one potato and half for each person as it is."

So when Mrs. Knight came to tea we supposed she had every intention of remaining to dine, and while Julia ran backwards and forwards with the tea things I reviewed the larder with anxiety and planned out in addition to our evening meal of fried sausages and cream flour.

Mrs. Knight, usually a very talkative cheerful little woman with no very deep ideas, but a pleasant illuminating way of prattling about Canadian domestic methods struck us both as being in rather a depressed frame of mind. We supposed it was the effect of standing ten minutes at the door pressing our bell and hoped it would be under the cheering influence of tea and cream cakes, but away into the limbo of forgotten disagreeables, but the gloom seemed to deepen as time went on, and at last

pushing away her empty cup, she began to reveal the cause of her unaccustomed melancholy.

"I've come to talk to you about Harold," she said, in sepulchral tones. "I'm rather worried about him just now."

"Yes," said Julia, who always meets people half way, "we noticed too how hoarse he was on Saturday; he ought to be more careful of his throat, but boys of his age *are* so careless."

"Oh, it's not his throat—it's not his health, I'm worried about," said Mrs. Knight plaintively; "it's his conduct with that French friend of yours—Mademoiselle Laronde, that worries me." Here she shook her head and gazed fixedly at the tablecloth.

Julia and I looked at each other across the table with some dismay. It is disagreeable to have responsibility for love affairs thrust upon one. Even Julia was at a momentary loss.

"She's a little minx," burst out Mrs. Knight, "a minx!" The repetition of the epithet appeared to afford some slight relief to her feelings. "She's led him on and on, smiling at him and letting him spend money on her—buying her flowers and candies and so on. I shall tell her what *I* think about it if nobody else will."

She was trembling with indignation and suppressed fury.

"Well, it's not Harold's fault," said Julia soothingly. "I daresay there's no harm done. It's just a little

boy and girl affair of no particular consequence, isn't it? Marie is rather a minx, I'm afraid; she leads people on and then laughs at them. But I don't think it would be wise to interfere, would it?"

"Somebody ought to talk to her about it," said Mrs. Knight, now beginning to weep freely into her pocket-handkerchief, "she's no business to make my poor boy miserable. He hardly touches a thing at meal-times. I tried him with chicken and ice-cream and anything I thought he could fancy, but it's of no use, he hardly eats enough to keep a sparrow alive. It's very cruel of that girl. She's a cat!" Here Mrs. Knight subsided again into her pocket-handkerchief.

"Well, I shouldn't worry about it," said Julia commiseratingly; "it's one of those things that boys of his age get over very quickly. It will perhaps be an experience that he'll be thankful for some day. You don't want them to be engaged, do you?"

"Oh no! nothing of the kind," cried the afflicted mother. "It would be dreadful to have a French daughter-in-law, an English one will be bad enough. My boys and I were all in all to each other before that wretched creature crossed our path."

"Well, if it had not been Marie, it would probably have been some one else. You can't expect your boys never to fall in love. I'm sure Jack's always doing it," said Julia.

"Jack's so different to Harold," sighed Mrs. Knight, "my boy feels things so deeply. You've no idea. He's

not a bit superficial. He has an intense nature—quiet but deep—he can't chop and change like some people."

We murmured polite assent to what we both considered a complete misapprehension of Harold's real character, swallowing the implied slight to Jack in view of Mrs. Knight's obviously distracted state of mind.

Julia talked soothingly and offered much good advice, while Mrs. Knight was evidently bent on some one giving Marie what she called "a good talking to."

"That's what she wants, a good talking to about herself. Tell her that English ways are different and that she has no business to behave so, even if she is French. I wish I knew more of her language, I'd let her know what I think about her."

Julia maintained that she had known plenty of English girls just as bad as Marie, but Mrs. Knight refused to believe it, and I left them both still discussing the matter while I went to see about dinner, as Mrs. Knight, whatever her maternal anxieties, had managed to dispose of a good deal of tea and cream cakes.

However, after all she decided not to remain, though we eagerly pressed her to do so, hoping that a little distraction might change her gloomy view of Harold's depressed condition, but she thought it better to go home to her boys.

"Silly woman," said Julia sententiously, "exaggerating the situation and giving her son away like that. How foolish mothers are sometimes!" For once I agreed with Julia.

It was perhaps a providential though curious coincidence that Jack should bring Harold Knight home to dinner that very evening.

For a young man suffering the pangs of unrequited love we found him singularly cheerful, but gaiety is often assumed to hide an aching heart, and we were not misled by his laughter.

"Poor boy," said Julia, "it's hard for him to be given up by Marie and given away by his mother. We must try to persuade him to eat if we can."

But there was no need. He partook, without any persuasion, of soup—two helpings—beef and vegetables—two helpings—apple pie and custard—two helpings, not to mention dessert. After dinner he drank two cups of coffee and before departing late in the evening was induced to take some cocoa and biscuits with Jack.

"Your mother was here to tea this afternoon," said Julia during the evening; "she was worrying about you. Said you were rather off your feed."

"Off my feed?" inquired the astonished Harold.

"Yes. She said you were not eating enough to keep a sparrow alive."

Harold knit his brows and perpended severely for a few moments, then smilingly shook his head and looked helplessly at us both.

"I don't know what mother's driving at," he said, "I didn't have any dinner at home last night because I met a fellow unexpectedly and dined with *him*, I can't really eat two dinners. I told her about it. I came

home early before she'd finished and she seemed rather put out, I noticed, because I wouldn't have any more with her."

"Well," said Julia, "it would be a good thing if you told your mother to-night when you get home exactly what you *have* eaten. She is evidently fretting herself about your appetite. She was almost weeping about it this afternoon."

"Women are always worrying themselves unnecessarily," said Jack sententiously when Harold had taken his departure. "He *over-eats*, that's what's the trouble with *him*. And when he's not eating he's chewing gum. Not eat enough!—Why, great Scott! I'm not bad, but Harold can give me a hundred yards start and then romp home three lengths ahead. Pooh! Not much wrong with him, I'm sure. What ideas his mother gets into her head! He lunches with me nearly every day and the restaurant makes very little on him. What bally rot!"

So Julia decided that it would not be necessary the next time she met her to take Marie Laronde aside for sorrowful remonstrance at her devastatingly minx-like career.

"Girls like Marie do boys like Jack and Harold a lot of good," she said at bedtime when she came to my room to borrow some hairpins. "It's painful but salutary. We shan't need to lie awake with anxiety about him."

"No, not about him, but what about his mother?"

"Oh, to be on the safe side after dinner I just wrote her a little note and sent it by Harold, telling her how *perfectly* satisfactory everything had been. She knows by this time that her boy can't possibly die of inanition for the next few days at least."

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CHAPTER XIII

WE made immediate and extensive preparations for the reception of the piano as the store-keeper had expressed himself deliriously anxious that we should enjoy at the earliest possible moment the exquisite tones of the "Burger and Schmidt," he was sending to us at "cut-price terms." It was to stand in what *we* knew as the drawing-room and local custom called the "front-parlour," where Julia slept and dressed under conditions of some difficulty which the advent of the piano would, I plainly foresaw, tend to somewhat seriously complicate.

But Julia is one of those people to whom a life without difficulties would be a life bereft of interest.

"One needs a stimulus—something to grapple with—something to overcome," she said, apropos of the piano. "It's not so much the difficulties of life which worry one, as the irritatingly futile advice of incapable and officious friends."

After this remark I left her to grapple with the problem alone, and as she has an ingenious and inventive mind of unexpected and wildly original accomplishment,

was not at all surprised to find that her scheme for the accommodation of the piano involved its incorporation into a plan she had for providing herself with a more stable sleeping-place.

"The sofa bed is all right excepting in one particular," she remarked, "it is so light, and runs so easily on its castors that if I only turn over in the night or sneeze, or put my toe an instant against the wall, off it skids into the middle of the room. It's too evasive that's a fact. I shall wedge it between the end of the piano and the wall. It's almost like living in the zone of a perpetual earthquake at present."

For several days we waited for the piano, never daring to leave the house together in case it should come during our absence. Julia was feverishly impatient for its arrival, and every day, nay, every hour, new ideas crowded upon her as to its accommodation. Several times she went down to the store and remonstrated with the proprietor who treated her with much suavity and polite evasiveness. Julia's opinion of that man, expressed in vivid and forcible terms to me with overwhelming fluency of language, would, I feel sure, if he had heard it, have been in the nature of a grievous surprise.

"Like Hamlet 'I eat the air, promise-crammed,'" she said angrily, pulling off her rubbers and kicking them viciously into a corner. "He declares his men and horses are working night and day delivering pianos, and that everybody orders just before Christmas,

but we shall have it to-night without fail. I shall just dismiss the piano from my mind."

We agreed that this would be the best plan, and Julia, before retiring to rest, wrote a very polite note with a more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger tone about it, cancelling the order and hoping that at "some future time" we might renew it.

"We may as well let him down easily," said Julia, who in her sternest moods tries to temper justice with mercy. "Of course we shall never deal with him again. It's very disappointing."

She read the letter to me twice, in case there was any improvement of style I might care to suggest, and then it was closed and stamped with an air of dismissing the incident for ever.

The nearer we approached Christmas the warmer and rainier grew the weather. Santa Claus, dotted over with cottonwool in the windows of the big stores, did his best to keep up the fiction that snow and ice and the Polar regions were his normal and abiding habitation. He had been brought from the station in procession, accompanied by a brass band and various side shows, to the big toy-crammed stores in Catherine, and no doubt the spectacle would have been very charming if the necessary background of snow-covered streets and gaily caparisoned sleighs and pungs had been forthcoming, but against the leaden weeping skies and foggy atmosphere, even the red-faced hilarity of the chief performers, who threw crackers and five

cent toys to the children crowding the route, had something forced and unreal.

Our chief consolation was that another injustice to England and the English climate had been unmasked.

Julia, who has a spendthrift nature, brought home day after day portentous parcels, which she hid in the big cupboard in the front-parlour. I trembled to think of what she was spending on perfectly useless things which nobody wanted. That is the worst of big department-stores. One cannot walk through them. One can buy a bootlace without catching sight of half a dozen other "indispensable" articles.

At the fifteen-cent store Julia spent much time and money. Here she bought curtain rods, brass towel rails for screwing on the bathroom door, all those varied and ingenious "Yankee notions" which are the offspring of the inventive people "over the border."

Steadily and unrelentingly she screwed on to our cupboard doors and shelves, patent wall-hooks and coat hangers innumerable. She bought a fifteen-cent shade for the electric-light bulb in the dining-room which threw an artistic glow over our daily roast and boiled. She is a past mistress in the art of fixing screws and wall plugs and most of her nails seem to go in quite straight. Jack is a mere fumbler beside her, and I have never ventured much beyond tin-tacks. I was brought up to be feminine.

Two days before Christmas we had an interesting call from an insurance agent.

It was rather unfortunate that he came exactly five minutes after the agent from the Montreal Power and Light Company had taken his departure after a visit, or visitation Julia called it, of three-quarters of an hour, just in the busiest part of the morning.

The electric company's agent had ruffled our feelings by refusing to sign the contract for electric light when he heard that I was not a married woman, and I can faithfully say that any feeble leanings I may have towards women's suffrage date from that humiliating moment. I will not chronicle Julia's remarks to that young man, a rather conceited French-Canadian bearing the historic name of Maisonneuve, well known in Canadian history, as he took care to inform us, but for once I found her observations very much to the point and enjoyed seeing him wilt beneath her sarcasms.

He argued the case from his own point of view, which implied that women were mere parasitic creatures incapable of standing alone without a kind of masculine hop-pole around which to wreath themselves and their responsibilities, that they could not be held accountable for electricity accounts, and he was astonished to hear that our landlord had allowed us to take a house without a masculine guarantor behind us.

"Perhaps French-Canadian law is different to ours," said Julia, but young Maisonneuve implied that the difficulty was in something more recondite than the law—something that lay in the essential

heart of things. Even when Julia suggested paying in advance he seemed still dissatisfied and at a total loss how to deal with the situation, but brightened up on hearing about our brother Jack, and eagerly closed with Julia's suggestion, that the agreement should be signed by him.

Close on the heels of the departing and slightly roused Mr. Maisonneuve, arrived the insurance agent—a very smartly-dressed, middle-aged gentleman whom we at once recognized as a "Britisher." He was a Life insurance agent—not Fire—as he was careful to impress upon us, and he spent some ineffectual minutes in a long fluent speech pointing out the duty of women to husbands and children in the matter of insurance.

After a pause, just as he was re-opening his mouth to continue, Julia intimated that we possessed no matrimonial encumbrances, so did not need to assuage anybody's grief for the dear departed by means of a "nice little sum."

"You're neither of you married," he exclaimed "not married! Great Scott!" and he looked at Julia with consternation.

He had, however, more self-recovery than the electric-man, and proved the automatic adjustment of his mind by abandoning husbands and children and sheltering behind the peculiar local burial conditions prevailing in Montreal.

"If you die during the winter you see," he said smiling urbanely to neutralize anything inherent

painful to our feelings in the suggestion, "you'll be glad of an extra sum of money because you'll have the expense of two funerals and that's a consideration. It's a great expense."

"Two funerals?" said Julia with the liveliest interest. And the agent settled down comfortably to explain.

It was at the top of our inner staircase that this conversation took place, and while Julia leaned in a negligent but graceful attitude against the door-jamb, the agent found support in the angle of the stairs.

I took the opportunity of dusting my bedroom, where I could hear all the conversation and occasionally emerge to join in it.

The agent, before going further, produced and presented his business card, so that we might know that his name was Mr. William Butler, and that he had been on Mance—in Canada one always lives *on* a street, never *in* it. He was a tall good-looking man—quite a contrast to the Canadianly abrupt electrician.

"You see, ladies," he said, speaking with gentle deference, "in the wintertime, the thermometer often remains from twenty to thirty below zero for a considerable time."

He said it confidentially as though it were a fact not generally mentioned, but that he could trust it to our discretion.

"And the ground freezes hard," put in Julia, "and

so nobody can be——” she panted and Mr. Butler bowed.

“Just so,” he said, commiserating her unspoken thought. “It strikes a stranger as curious, very curious. I remember when we first came here my wife had a charwoman who informed us that she was a widow—a widow. About two weeks after she first began to work for us, she excused herself one day from coming as she had to go to look after her husband’s funeral. We thought it strange—very strange—and my wife made inquiries and found out how it was. They take you, it seems, up to the Mountain and leave you in a mortuary chapel with cold-storage arrangements. Julia shuddered—“and then when the thaw comes and the weather allows, all the funerals take place on the same day—ah well, it’s an unpleasant subject—we need not dwell on it. It’ll only happen once.”

“We must try and arrange to die in the summer time,” said Julia grimly; “it must be so painful for the survivors.”

“Oh, it is—it is,” said Mr. Butler, his face expressive of the most intense sympathy. “Still,” throwing aside the gloomy thought, “you see how it affects people. Now a little bit of insurance—you get more favourable terms here than you would do in England—and we pay the money two days after death—very prompt—well, if you’ll allow me I’ll leave you our prospectus. Here, you see, are the rates of premiums and so on. Money’s always useful, you know. Helps to cons-

the wounded heart and any little debts left behind—well——”

Julia pleased him by saying that his arguments were very convincing and she would consider the matter at her leisure if he would leave a prospectus behind, and he departed lingeringly, returning twice to offer additional arguments in favour of the insurance of single women. After him came a French hawkler selling bananas, and later on the boy from the laundry who understands neither English nor French—at least, not our French. He is an aggravating boy, always bringing us somebody else's tablecloths.

Julia had yearned to have her things washed at a Chinese laundry ever since the night when we came home through a back street, and saw about twenty interesting Celestials in blue blouses ironing shirts—but I did not feel inclined to entrust my table linen to the heathen, however accomplished they might be. I should have fancied all kinds of disagreeable things, as, for instance, that the pillow-cases smelt of opium and bhang or whatever they smoke. In the heart of the town there are a good many Chinese restaurants where “Chop-suey” is inscribed in large letters over the door. They look horrible places, dim and dirty and full of mystery. One catches glimpses of shadowy moving figures in the gloom and the occasional swing of a pig-tail and Julia is always wishing she could go inside and look round. It is a pity she has such an insatiable curiosity for the abnormal.

On Christmas Eve Julia, who is rather childish on occasion, decorated our dining and drawing-room with bits of spruce fir and some tinsel which she had saved from last year. She very much wished to buy a Christmas tree, but I objected to it, not only on account of its obvious unsuitability to grown-up people but still more because of the risk of fire, so she contented herself with making imitation holly out of sealing wax and green paper and hung silver balls from the electric light pendant, as some relief to her Christmas aspirations.

Mr. Peel and Marie Laronde and another friend of Jack's, who had just come out from England, a Mr. Marling, were coming to have dinner with us next day and we sat up rather late finishing our preparations and tying up our presents. Jack had rushed in and bought his offerings ten minutes before the stores closed. He had sent Poppy's to her—by dint of constant reminding—a fortnight before—so that there remained nothing for him to do but write a few Christmas post-cards to "chaps at the office."

We retired to bed at half-past twelve in that exhausted state which is the invariable preliminary to any time of festivity, and were all fast asleep when the sound of our bell, a long jarring, peremptory note, cut across our slumbers. Men's voices could be heard on the stairs.

"Whatever can be the matter?" I said, darting into Julia's room. "Can it be a fire or what?"

Julia, huddling on her dressing-gown in the dark, was looking down into the street, where a dark mass with moving figures round it was to be seen.

"No," she said reflectively, "that's not the fire engine, it looks rather like a coffin—no, it isn't—why, it's the piano! they've brought it after all."

A second peremptory ring and an impatient hammer at the door stopped any further conversation. Julia turned up the lights, while I made a sketchy attempt at dressing and Jack, issuing into the passage in pyjamas, his bare feet thrust into slippers, demanded magisterially to know the cause of that "infernal row," while Peter barked deafeningly without a moment's pause.

"It's all right," said Julia soothingly from her room, where we could hear her sliding her bed into the opposite corner. "Wait till I've found a hairpin. Keep Peter back. I'll go and speak to the man."

She emerged breathlessly, having managed in the stress of the moment to do an incredible amount of dressing, and we heard her clear tones with a running accompaniment of gruff bass from the bottom of the inner stairs, expostulating, arguing, finally ascending with two clumping stumbling men up into the corridor.

I regret to say those men were not perfectly sober. At Christmas time one is apt to regard the weakness of undue indulgence in liquor with less severity than at other periods, but the feat of bringing a piano to the second story up breakneck stairs, with no hand-

rail on either side, is one that seems to demand at least perfect clarity of mind. We looked dubiously at each other, while the men peered drunkenly about—not too drunkenly be it remarked—just a little stumbingly, their speech was thick rather than incoherent.

“I thought you'd given up having the piano?”
I said to Julia.

“Well, as they've brought it we may as well have it, after all the trouble.”

“But you wrote them a letter to say they were not to come.”

“Yes, so I did—yes, I certainly wrote to them.”

She put her hand in the pocket of her dressing-gown and pulled out the identical letter.

“It never got posted after all,” she said mournfully, but with, I thought, a gleam of satisfaction in her eye.

The two ruffians in Julia's bed-sitting-room opened the window and began shouting unintelligible French-Canadian directions to others of their party down in the street. We could see a horse standing droopingly in the shafts of the piano-van. It was evidently prepared to maintain its attitude of supineness for the next two hours. Two more men came in with ropes and mysterious tackle and disappeared through the kitchen up somewhere into the roof where in the darkness, drunk as they were, they rigged up a pulley.

“Good gracious,” said Julia, “isn't it awful? The

are going to take out all the window frame in my room."

We sat down helplessly and watched, while the men, with the certainty of people who know exactly what is to be done, even though their capacity is temporarily obscured by drink, worked away at the window, which under their taps and hammerings came bodily out of the frame, leaving an awful empty space of darkness with the stars shining in it. Fortunately it had ceased to rain, and the night was fairly clear with ragged clouds scudding across the sky.

We all three huddled on Julia's bed, which had been pushed into a corner, holding Peter, who was in a state of intense excitement, his tail trembling like a telegraph wire. Jack was smoking a cigarette and had an air of wondering if he were in a dream and would presently waken. We saw him furtively pinch himself once or twice and look at Julia and me with a puzzled expression.

We had said nothing to him about the piano as it was to have been "a great surprise" to him, and it evidently was.

After what seemed an interminable age and a fearful noise on the roof which sounded like men quarrelling and knocking each other down, punctuated by thumps which we couldn't explain at all, a chain and some ropes could be seen hanging over the black background of sky. There were shoutings and movements in the street, snatches of drunken songs, yells, guttural noises of an obscure nature echoed from the roof and finally

the dark mass of a legless piano could be seen swinging over the balcony rail.

"Is this a nightmare or what?" said Julia. "Whatever the neighbours thinking about this awful row. I shall be surprised if they complain to the police or give place in a body to-morrow."

The piano was swung in to the balcony and a sudden irruption into the room of "more blackguards," as Jack called them, took place. They hauled and pulled the instrument through the window frame, screwed on the legs, shoved it into the recess and smiling largely at us where we sat, evidently waited for applause and perhaps—we were not sure—*largesse*.

"They're drunk enough as it is," said Jack virtuously; "shan't give them another cent."

"Oh, but it's Christmas, Jack, and the poor things have to work so hard. They must take the horse and van home yet and get something to eat. We must excuse a little seasonable hilarity. Besides it's so dreadfully late, poor things!"

Two of them remained to replace the window, banging it noisily back into the frame while Julia sought in the pocket of her morning skirt for pieces of small change. But they all disappeared without that crook of the palm which makes "tipping" in England a relatively easy if unpleasant business. Julia stretched out her hand insinuatingly to the first one, he took it and shook it heartily and the coin fell unnoticed by him to the ground, the second followed suit and with a gut-

tural "Goo' night" vanished, so Julia put her hand in her pocket and placed her foot on the ten-cent piece.

It was nearly half-past two, but undeterred by the lateness or earliness of the hour or any consideration for the feelings of the neighbours Julia sat down and played "Christians Awake" followed by a "Slumber Song." She is curiously inconsistent even in her choice of music for the small hours.

Next morning, when I went to fetch the milk bottle, the lady living at the flat underneath was taking in hers at the same moment, so I apologized for the disturbances of the night, but she was very affable over it and said she had much enjoyed the music—it reminded her of the carol-singers "at home" and her husband had been delighted.

Our Christmas was quite a success and in spite of the unorthodoxy of its arrival the piano was the great centre of the festivities. We went to Church in the morning, calling for a reluctant member of our party who had desired to remain peacefully in bed, but Jack inflexibly helped him to get up and dress and dragged him after us, feebly protesting that he hadn't breakfasted. We sang lustily the old Christmas hymns, tried to feel something of the old Christmas glow and enthusiasm which evades us more as years go by, listened patiently and indulgently to a young and hesitating preacher who tried to hide his nervousness by putting questions to the congregation. Why did we keep Christmas? What was the lesson of Christmas? How were we to

make Christmas profitable to our souls? What was the view we took of Christmas? Why did we take that view? Was it a right view? We felt that the Socratic method, especially when put into practice in the incomplete ecclesiastical manner, has its drawbacks, though perhaps it was good for Julia to have to curb her propensity for supplying unanswerable arguments on any and every point.

Mr. Peel looked at Julia frequently during the sermon. He told me some time since that she reminds him very much of "Netta," the girl in England to whom he is engaged. He is to go to England immediately after Christmas and will bring "Netta" back with him. He has been consulting Julia a good deal lately about furnishing a flat. She has promised to help and to advise the young wife when she comes, but told me privately that advice was the last thing a young newly-married woman wanted.

"It's so much better to make one's preliminary blunders and be done with it. It's really only through mistakes that one learns," she said sagely.

But Mr. Peel has such a high estimate of Julia's powers of mind and such a touching confidence in her capacity, that, instigated by her, he has already invested in a cooking-stove and four dining-room chairs, which were sold very cheap by some people over the way who were going "out West." Our woodshed harboured these things until Mr. Peel's flat should be ready to receive them. He was anxious to take one in

our vicinity if possible, but at present there were none vacant and he was waiting and trusting to Julia to find one.

So with his eyes fixed on her during the long and interrogative sermon he doubtless visualized "Netta" in her English country parsonage, Netta who would be thinking about him and of all the future Christmases in store which they would spend together.

Our turkey and plum pudding and mince-pies were all that those respective dishes ought to be, but were overshadowed in point of importance by the piano. Marie Laronde arrived a little late and met on the doorstep Mr. Marling, a recently-arrived friend of Mr. Peel who had been invited at the eleventh hour to join our festivities. She was a radiant vision with something new and rather startling in effect upon her head. Mr. Marling dropped his eye-glass when he saw her coming up the stairs—he is, so far as we know, the only person in Montreal who wears an eye-glass and when Julia went down to let them in and introduced them to each other, his rather round soft chubby cheeks became suffused with blushes, and he bowed with an elegance which one rarely sees off the stage.

As the potatoes were not quite done, Marie, who plays very well, filled up the interval of waiting by brilliant performances on the piano, singing one or two little French *chansons* in a charming manner. We all saw at once—even I, in the midst of culinary duties, grasped it—that Mr. Marling, perhaps impelled

thereto by the music, was, without delay and in a perfectly obvious and open manner preparing to plunge headlong down the fatal slope of Marie's attractions. He positively exuded love at first sight, passed Marie pepper, salt and sugar with unnecessary frequency, kept his eye-glass focussed continually upon her, leant forward to catch her lightest word, smiled fatuously at her feeblest jokes, surrounded her with sweet observances and positively and unmistakably ignored everybody else in the room.

We felt rather sorry for him, but tried, as Julia said "to resign ourselves piously to other people's coming misfortunes."

"It's no use warning him, or anything of that kind," said Julia; "it's like measles, he's bound to have it sometime and it must run its usual course—he's already infected and we can only do our best to ameliorate his sufferings as the symptoms develop. Marie is rather a minx, but she educates these young men better than a University course of lectures. They emerge rather sad and sorry for themselves but it makes it easier for the next girl."

These were the sentiments to which I listened while we wrestled with the plates and glasses. The rain was coming down outside with a quiet steady persistence which quenched any idea of being able to get out for a walk as we had hoped—a cloud of cigarette smoke floated down the corridor from Julia's room where the piano was gaily tinkling amid occ

sional snatches of song—rag-time choruses chiefly.

Mr. Marling revealed the possession of a high tenor voice and produced from his overcoat pocket a bundle of music, which was hailed with cheers. He sang the most impassioned love-songs at Marie, who played his accompaniments in a rather stumbling style, for she was not a very good reader. She seemed quite impervious to his declaration "to live for thee—to live for thee"—chord on the sub-dominant—"to all eternitee—to all"—bang—"all"—bang—"eter—ni—tee"—*arpeggio rallentando*, bang.

We all clapped and applauded and demanded an encore, and Mr. Marling blushing allowed himself to be persuaded to sing us six or seven more songs including "Maud" and "Thora."

After tea Mr. and Mrs. Waddel came to wish us the compliments of the season. Mr. Waddel was in his Sunday frockcoat and his demeanour partook of the stiff, ceremonious, distantly polite order which is rather a strain to keep up for any length of time. Mrs. Waddel was gorgeously attired, and whispered to us at the earliest possible moment evidences of Joseph's infatuation. She exhibited a diamond bracelet which she had received from him that morning and was evidently contemptuous of the books and note-paper, ket-holder and hair brushes which our humble-min family had bestowed on each other.

When Mrs. Knight appeared accompanied by her two sons and a cousin of uncertain age, Julia announced

the beginning of Christmas revels, including musical chairs, blindman's-buff, charades, and the lancers.

Under the influence of musical-chairs Mr. Waddel's stiffness of demeanour was forced to give way and by the time we arrived at blindman's-buff, both his collar and his manners had become, as Julia expressed "equally unstarched." As the blindman, he chanced and caught Marie Laronde with such unswerving determination as to give rise to grave suspicions of dishonourable peeping and held her so long while pretending to try and guess her identity that Mr. Marling's attitude became distinctly offensive and Julia decided that it was time for charades.

Mr. Marling, in female attire, was the chief success of the evening. His round, fat face under Julia's cotta-bonnet was a revelation of ugliness and Mr. Parnell embracing him as the ardent lover brought down to the house. Mrs. Waddel's histrionic talents were not of a very high order and consisted chiefly in fanning herself with a paper fan and saying, "Oh, dear! I am so tired," the word they were acting being "ambiguous."

The strain of entertaining so many people coupled with the very broken slumbers we had enjoyed the previous night began to tell upon us at an early hour but we persuaded Mr. Marling to sing his seven songs once more, and Julia, by some occult method of which she is past mistress, managed to suggest to him the propriety of seeing Marie Laronde at any rate part of the way home before it grew very late, and Mr.

Knight had evidently also suffered from a strenuous day and was glad to turn her steps homewards, so that by twelve o'clock we were able to wave farewell to our last visitor.

"I think they've all had a good time," said Julia, "we've been rather silly, but it was better than sitting quietly thinking about the people we would have *liked* to spend Christmas with, wasn't it?"

There was a tremble in Julia's voice. I was afraid that with the piano and one thing and another she had over-fatigued herself. As she stood under the electric pendant and twisted the little silver balls thoughtfully round her fingers, she looked rather pale and drooping and a little wistful. Yet she had been so gay all the evening, the life and soul, to use a trite phrase, of all our mild festivities. She is very difficult to understand sometimes, for when I began to sympathize she was quite snappy and said a curt "good-night," leaving me abruptly in the very middle of a sentence. She apologized afterwards and said that Christmas had "got on her nerves."

CHAPTER XIV

MR. PEEL had definitely settled to be married in England at the end of March and he spent all the spare time at his command in running up and down to buy furniture from people who were going "out West," to Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg and similar towns, where any one who is in a hurry about getting rich can do astounding things in the real estate line and has a chance, after working hard for five or six years, to return in an affluent state to the cultured East wearing diamond studs and other outward and visible signs of prosperity.

Married couples who have planned to do this "fortune-hunting stunt," as Jack calls it, are willing to sell their furniture at alarming sacrifices, and, doubtless inspired by the visions of gilt and brocaded sofas which the glorious future holds in store, promptly disembarass themselves without a pang of their own household belongings, so Mr. Peel, taking advantage of this frequent characteristic of the more enterprising inhabitants of Montreal, had acquired a miscellaneous collection of what Julia designated as "miscellaneous"

necessaries of existence." These necessaries were dispersed among such of his friends and acquaintances whose homes possessed the smallest unused storage capacity. He invariably submitted all his purchases to the test of Julia's approval, which she not infrequently withheld, pointing out the more obvious disadvantages of a sofa with a broken spring or a chair with a doubtful leg, and cracked and discoloured earthenware.

"It was thrown in with something else you see," he would explain anxiously, "I wish I could have had your opinion first, but the man had another offer and couldn't wait."

"They always have," said Julia grimly, "there's always some one else in the dim background who is yearning to buy their broken-sprung sofas and wobbly tables. It's a mistake to buy *anything* with a defect; it pursues you for the rest of existence. Remember you've got to live with these things you're buying, well—at least for several years, if not for all your life."

"Oh, they won't worry me," said Mr. Peel grandiloquently, with an air of possessing a calibre of mind which rises superior to these mundane trifles.

"Yes, but your wife"—Mr. Peel was startled—"your wife will have to live with them a good deal more than you will. You know you like women whose hearts are centred in their homes and their domestic duties, so you must give her affections something

stable to repose on. Get the carpenter to make that leg right and as for the sofa—it will really be better to advertise it in the *Star*. It would be the cheapest in the long run.”

And Julia sat down and immediately concocted a most glowing panegyric on the sofa in question, describing it as the property of a gentleman “departing for England,” and hinting plaintively at the reluctance with which he tore himself away from this adorable piece of furniture.

I do not know how Julia reconciles this sort of transaction with her fine sense of honour. But the sofa was finally disposed of without loss, chiefly I believe because of Julia’s interview with the purchaser, a bright young American from the States, who allowed himself to be “stung” to the tune of seven dollars.

After this incident, Mr. Peel thought it would save time and trouble to turn the whole thing over to Julia. He was very anxious that “Netta” should be able to avoid the discomfort of lodgings and walk straight into a home of her own, and I gathered from his remarks that his prospective bride was not conspicuously capable, but what Julia called “feebly-domestic and rather muddle-headed.” She had expressed herself delighted at the idea of finding a “ready-made home” when she arrived in Montreal, and judging from such portions of her letters as Mr. Peel read aloud for our benefit, was evidently unaware of the important

part played by Julia, in the choice and arrangement of the furniture. She believed that Mr. Peel, flushed with enthusiastic ardour, was personally supervising every detail of the "building of our little nest," as she poetically described it, grappling manfully with the various problems incidental to housekeeping.

A week before his departure for England Mr. Peel took a flat, unexpectedly vacant in the next block to ours and came with the measurement of all the floors in his pocket to announce the fact to Julia, who rushed off at once with him to inspect and criticize.

"It's a jolly little flat," she said to me when they returned after an hour's absence, "just right for a young married couple; there's a rather ugly wall-paper in one bedroom which the landlord won't alter because it's newly done. So silly to insist on people living with walls they just hate—but I'm going to paper it again myself with plain cream-colour and then it will be the nicest room in the house. Mr. Peel and the others must help in the evenings."

I was not quite able to see Mr. Peel with his immaculate bank-manager's hands engaged in pasting paper on walls, but Julia talked as though it were a foregone conclusion that he would be able to cope with all the mysteries incidental to the art of paper-hanging.

"You'll have to show me how, you know," said Mr. Peel modestly. "I never did anything of the kind before, but as you say it's so easy——"

"If you do it the right way it's easy," said Julia

rather severely ; " if not, the paper will tumble down on your head and you'll be covered with paste."

Mr. Peel looked alarmed and thoughtful.

" But at least," she continued, " you'll be able to cut the edges off while I paste."

" Oh, yes, I cou^d. do that," said Mr. Peel humbly, anxious to show his willingness, though evidently very diffident of his own powers. " But don't you think it might be well to employ a regular paperhanger. You see, it's got to be right, hasn't it? "

But Julia scorned the idea of professional help. She bought a cream-striped paper, and the next Saturday afternoon being rather unpleasantly windy she decided to devote it to " putting a twig into the nest."

Mr. Marling, whose infatuation for Marie Laronde had continued without intermission, called, with his roll of songs distending his overcoat pocket, just as the paper-hanging party, which included Jack, were departing for the sphere of action. Julia abstracted my large cutting-out scissors from my work-basket, as soon as Mr. Marling appeared.

" You're just come at a very opportune moment," she said to him brightly. " We're going on a papering expedition to the new flat, you'll be most useful. Just carry these rolls. It's only a few doors off."

Signs of opposition were to be seen struggling with other emotions on Mr. Marling's countenance. He dropped his eye-glass and looked dubiously at Julia.

" Mademoiselle Laronde is going to help us when

she comes. I told her we should be there if the weather was not very alluring."

The atmosphere cleared immediately. Mr. Marling responded with a smile which overspread his rather fat baggy cheeks. He replaced his eye-glass and said he should be delighted, although he knew nothing about room-papering. He cheerfully took charge of a bundle of miscellaneous objects committed to his charge by Julia without so much as a protesting look, though he is the type of young man who, at home in England, would rather perish than carry any kind of parcel in which string appeared, limiting himself to golf-clubs, tennis-rackets and books from the library.

"You might come down with Marie in a while, Priscilla, and bring us something to eat—and we can make tea down there too, we're sure to be dreadfully thirsty."

"I didn't know that you expected Marie," I said, looking questioningly at Julia, for I thought it was just one of her naughty irresponsible methods of hoodwinking poor Mr. Marling, utilizing the poor young man's services by means of illusory hopes. In this, however, I found I had done Julia less than justice.

Marie Laronde arrived shortly after, in company with Harold Knight, and after a short chat they departed to the new flat to "see what the others were doing."

When I, mindful of Julia's instructions, followed in an hour or so with a basket of cakes and buns and materials

for tea-making I found the work, under Julia's judicious organization in full swing. She herself, attired in a cotton sunbonnet and overall, was perched on the top of a new and very rickety-looking step-ladder engaged in the hanging of the paper, which Jack and Mr. Peel were pasting under her directions. Mr. Marling, Harold Knight and Marie Laronde were snipping off the edges, or occasionally one of the two young men, summoned by Julia to find "a little piece to fit in here," had to tear himself away, leaving his hated rival in possession of the field, while he filled up a corner under the window, or pasted a strip beside the door. They all hailed my appearance with pleasure, especially when I produced the cakes, and everybody paused in their respective tasks, while Julia, descending from her Olympian height on the step-ladder, went to and fro with a bun in her hand, criticizing and slapping the paper.

"It looks dreadfully wrinkly, doesn't it?" I said to Mr. Peel, who was regarding the walls of his future home with an expression of mingled doubt and pleasure.

"It does," he conceded in a low voice, "very wrinkly, I do hope it will turn out all right, but it's very wrinkly at present."

Julia paused in her peregrinations to tear off a recently-applied oblong of paper.

"Mr. Marling, your eye is not accurate," she said, in indulgent tones; "these stripes must be parallel to the door moulding;" and laying down her bun she proceeded

to stick it on again while Marie protested that she saw no improvement in the alteration.

"I like it better before," she said, twisting her little French toque with its waving feather, from side to side; 'it quite straight before I'm sure. Meestere Marling do it vera well."

Mr. Marling's face became suffused with pleasure, his pale blue eyes blinked with joyous embarrassment, he grinned painfully and shortly after went up to Marie and hung over her in the adoring attitude of the young man about town who is "hard hit."

I pointed out the wrinkles to Julia. She immediately became angry.

"Of course there are wrinkles, Priscilla, there are bound to be wrinkles. Whatever did you expect? The paper stretches while it's damp. Really one has to explain to you the most obvious scientific facts. Wait till it's dry."

"Oh, it will be quite all right when it's dry," said Mr. Peel reassuringly, as though perfectly convinced of it in his own mind; "the wrinkles all dry out, don't they, Miss Floyd? The paper will be quite tight and flat, won't it?"

"Quite," said Julia in a nettled voice; "but I know you none of you believe it. You are thinking of the amateur paperhanger's efforts as portrayed in *Comic Cuts*, with everything askew and baggy and hacked and splashed about. Now, isn't that the truth?" and she pointed an accusing finger at Mr. Peel, who hung his head

and murmured something about "having every confidence" in Julia's ability.

And as it happened, the paper when dry was perfectly flat and smooth and quite satisfactory in every point, though observing the casual, lighthearted way in which Julia had set about the business one would never have thought it could turn out so well.

"Pooh! This is simply child's play," she said airily, from the top of the ladder; "men make such an awful fuss over these trifles. Why I once papered Aunt Susan's dining-room without taking up the carpet or anything. Just moved the furniture from the walls as I needed, and then put it back again as I went on. Look at the business people make over white-washing ceilings in England. In the States they just come and do it without moving anything at all, not even the pictures nor the best satin sofa. When I was at school in Brussels, the man came and did the dormitories with a long-handled brush and no one knew he was there. The calmest most every-day affair in the world—no domestic panics and upheavals. Pasting paper on a wall is quite a simple matter—as easy as sticking a postage stamp on a letter."

Thus Julia harangued us from her superior position, and we obeyed her behests and submitted to her orders, and before we left that night the room was finished, although the border of wild roses which gave the touch of colour and gaiety upon which Julia insisted, had—the electric light being not yet connected—to be pasted

on by the light of two wax candles held by Mr. Peel and Jack, while Marie and Mr. Marling and Harold Knight sat on dry-goods boxes in the shadowy part of the room and appeared to be deeply happy and absorbed in each other's conversation.

It was clever of Marie to treat those two young men with such admirable impartiality, to keep them delightfully entertained by alternate wheedling, coaxing, and fascination. Harold had arrived at the stage where he had grown a little cynical and disillusioned.

"Like the moth round the candle," said Jack, who had also suffered disillusion, "he knows that she only dazzles him for her own amusement, yet he can't keep away," he remarked commiseratingly; but Mr. Marling was in the blind-and-deaf-to-everything-else stage, swimming in a sea of ecstatic bewilderment and "making every kind of fool of himself," as Julia put it. I should have been uneasy if Julia's attitude had not been so business-like and confident.

"Of course it's hard on Mr. Marling," she said, "painful, but *so* salutary. A man of more artistic mind might perhaps suffer too unbearably, but it will help to shiver up Mr. Marling's commonplaceness and vanity. When he comes out of his dream on the other side, he will be a much improved man."

This sounded callous and hard-hearted, but Julia called it philosophical.

Meanwhile she gave the young people every opportunity of meeting and adroitly interposed when she thought

fit. I have not yet been able to grasp her point of view and still think that Marie's behaviour was rather minx-like.

Mr. Peel set out for England at the end of February, leaving Julia to finish the flat, and after his departure, she spent a good deal of time there, arranging and rearranging, fixing hooks and clothes-pegs in every available corner, buying cheap but artistic Japanese matting for the floors, making the place, I must admit, very pretty and home-like at a very small expenditure. She manufactured chintz covers for the ugly but well-made armchairs in which Mr. Peel had invested anterior to her intervention in his domestic matters. She had settled on what she called a "definite colour-scheme" for the flat so that when the bedroom doors stood open along the main corridor there were no jarring contrasts, but all the tones blended together, "giving an air of cohesion and space."

All the floor-coverings, for example, including that in the passage, were of the same warm shade of terra-cotta and cream, so that the tiny rooms looked like sections of one large apartment. The chintzes in each bedroom were of different patterns but with terra-cotta and cream prevailing. The drawing-room sofa, bought in place of the discarded "bargain," was covered with linen of a dark red shade of terra-cotta which would not soil too easily, while fresh cretonne-covered cushions blended in themselves the two colours with a touch of blue "to break the monotony."

"My great fear is," sighed Julia, in the pauses of furiously rattling round the handle of my sewing-machine, "that Netta will bring with her from England, bestowed by beloved friends and relatives, all kinds of horrors which will completely upset my colour-scheme. Now a cushion with violets embroidered on the white muslin cover or any of those awful crude things which our nearest and dearest are apt to bestow so lavishly at the crises of our lives, would absolutely spoil everything in this room; it would jar unutterably, and I am afraid that Netta would be impervious—I'm afraid she would."

Julia sighed and stuck pins thoughtfully into a seam.

"Well, it's perhaps as well not to be *too* much influenced by colour," I said soothingly. "Personally I don't mind so long as things are pretty in themselves whether they match everything in the room——"

Julia shrieked with horror.

"Match—they don't need to match—but they must blend, they can't sit and yell at other things. Those hard, harsh colours are insufferable. To be able to tolerate them shows mental deficiency."

I meekly accepted the implication, for I liked "cheerful" colours.

"I'm sure the awful mass of inartistic rubbishy things which people treasure in their drawing-rooms are enough to make one wonder how mere accumulation of horrors could have ever become such a universal human characteristic. Now pictures, for example. One or two good pictures on a wall are a pleasure and a delight, but

twenty of them destroy each other's value, the mind distracted and worried in an effort to look at them all. The Japanese are much more sensible in this respect. They only get out one vase or one purely ornamental object at a time, the rest are put away. That shows how artistically advanced the Japanese are. I do hope they'll never get really Westernized. It would be a loss to the artistic world."

I murmured something inarticulate and confirmative and Julia continued her sewing.

"At any rate you'll have started them all right," cried through the whirl of the machine, and Julia sighed again.

At the beginning of April we received some wedding cake from Mr. and Mrs. Peel, together with silver-edged wedding cards, followed a few days later by a long letter announcing their expected departure for Montreal by the *Corybantic*, which should arrive, all being well, on the seventeenth or eighteenth.

So Julia continued feverishly to add other touches to the little home she had prepared, hinting to Mr. Peel and his friends just the wedding present which would be "the very thing" that was needed. She ruthlessly exchanged a pair of green-and-purple vases contributed by Mrs. Waddel for an inkstand and blotting-case, and sent Harold Knight's silver cigarette-box back with the request that he would supply instead a sugar-sifter and a pepper-pot. She attached to the gifts little labels tied with pink ribbon bearing the names of the givers and

bought two pots of ferns for the tiny front parlour. She never rested day or night and was always having new ideas with regard to the home-coming and reception of the bridal couple.

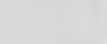
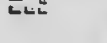
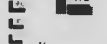
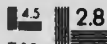
"We must lay in a nice little stock of provisions for them, not too much but enough to carry them on for a few days. Mrs. Waddel has promised to ice a cake, a small one, almost like a wedding cake with silver balls on it and their initials in silver on it. She bought the materials to-day and was to set to work in the morning, and you can make some buns, Priscilla, and a pork-pie, and we must have heaps of lovely flowers, however much they cost. The char-lady has finished the scrubbing and polishing, and I shall put up the clean curtains and give the finishing touches to-morrow. I like to be in plenty of time. They won't be likely to arrive for another three days, but I want to have a day or two's rest before they come."

One fly in the ointment of Julia's satisfaction was the conduct of the people in the next flat whose back-yard was commanded by the Peels' kitchen balcony. On the weekly occasions when the family wash was hung out to dry one or two hair-switches were also pinned on the line to flutter in the breeze beside the pocket-handkerchiefs. Although we could not but approve, from a sanitary point of view, the wisdom of this proceeding we felt that a conspicuous lack of reserve and æsthetic principle was involved in such a frank admission of adventitious aid to female beauty.



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We subsequently discovered, when camping out near the Back River, that every tent inhabited by a French family was invariably adorned in the early morning by fluttering tufts of hair-switches attached to the tent-poles.

Julia formed the theory that it was an interesting survival of the days when scalps adorned the wigwams of the braves, but meantime she was afraid the custom might give a severe shock to Netta's sense of delicacy.

"It's quite possible that her aunts wear something of the kind, but nobody in England would flaunt the false hair in any one's face like that. The English atmosphere is pervaded by decent reticences and a pretence that many things don't exist which obviously do. And Netta has been brought up in a country vicarage. Why I can see her absolutely afraid to venture out on to her own kitchen-balcony in the mornings. Of course it's purely a question of ethics, but then fine ethical distinctions are the hall-mark of civilization. We occasionally get so refined that we become ridiculous and unnatural, but there's a happy medium between that and the frank destruction of every earthly illusion—and I'm sure it's bad for the hair to be bleached in the sun.

"But very sanitary," I urged again in extenuation. "and it shows a nice independent mind, impervious to the carping criticisms of the neighbours."

"I'm not sure that it isn't just inspired by blatant ostentation," said Julia pessimistically. "Good hair

switches are very expensive, and they like people to know they can afford them, that is really what is at the bottom of this tonsorial display—merely ostentation.”

Julia fluctuated for some time mentally between the landing-stage and the flat as a desirable background for our first meeting with Netta.

“Of course one wants her to feel welcomed from the very first moment she sets foot on Canadian soil, but then there’s the publicity of it all and the fuss with the customs and the luggage and all that kind of thing, besides the boats are so uncertain at this time of year. I don’t feel that I could possibly be on the landing-stage with a bouquet of roses at half-past five in the morning, though I wouldn’t mind waiting up till two or so. Early rising is the one thing of which I feel myself incapable. If they could only arrive about tea-time when we might arrange an atmosphere permeated with toast and hot cakes it would be splendid.”

We were fairly experienced in meeting boats and trains, for few weeks passed that we did not hear of some friend or friend’s friend coming out from England to Canada who either needed entertainment for a few hours while they waited for the train to take them on to Calgary or Winnipeg or Vancouver or wherever it was they wanted to go, or else required what Jack called a “shove-off” into the commercial life of Montreal itself. Once, at the request of a remote cousin of Poppy’s, we had met a man and his wife and two children who, accompanied by a dog and a canary, were travelling

westward in search of a more hopeful future than England offered, and as they were unable for two days to get sleeping-berths for the long three-days' journey inland they stayed with us in the flat for that time.

The mother was an interesting cultivated woman who had travelled in France and Italy and was very well read. She accepted with a courageous heart all the hardships that lay before her.

"We shall have to rough it, of course," she said brightly, "but it will be a healthy out-door life for the children, and I shall try to keep on educating them. I'm taking out as many books as possible, and we shall read Scott and Shakespeare in the long winter evenings when we feel lonely. Our family has always been fond of reading, it's a great consolation—that and a sense of humour carry one over lots of rough places in life."

Another time we had come to meet a boy of seventeen whose mother had written begging us "to do our best for poor Harry" whom we found looking very cheerful and not in the least sorry for himself, when we heard a not altogether unfamiliar voice saying, "How are you miss?" and from the other side of a pile of luggage saw a smiling face which we felt that we ought to know.

It proved to belong to the porter from our London station "at home" in England who was come to make his fortunes in the Dominion. We had known him in a former existence attired in corduroy and flat leather cap busy collecting tickets or struggling with luggage.

but here he suddenly emerged in the Montreal custom-house looking remarkably alert and expectant, quite a contrast to the rather quiet depressed young man accepting tips with a diffident smile which had been our last impression of him.

During the voyage he had evidently suffered a sea-change which had stimulated into life hitherto unsuspected reserves of self-respect and confidence, and he exhibited no surprise at meeting English acquaintances before he had well quitted the steamer which had brought him over. His destination was a town two days' journey from Montreal, and his wife and child were to follow in a few weeks' time. We met them too when the time came, and after a night's stay with us "waiting for the cars," saw them depart, cheery and hopeful in the usual emigrant manner, a little intimidated by the strange new ways and bigness of the country, but certain that they were going to be happy in it.

Our half-formed intention of meeting the new Mrs. Peel "on the very threshold of the New World" as Julia poetically phrased it, was frustrated by fog in the St. Lawrence and the absence of a telephone in our flat—Mrs. Waddel was always expressing her surprise that we could exist without a 'phone—so that we were not in a position to be kept informed by the shipping office of the gradual approach of the *Corybantic* up the river, and had to leave the official welcome to Jack, whose works were in convenient proximity to the

docks, while we concentrated our minds on the preparations at the flat.

"I'm afraid that horrid outside staircase will be rather trying to Netta's feelings," sighed Julia, "at least if she's as artistic as I hope. It will be a good thing if they arrive in the dark, then the worst features of the streets will be hidden. First impressions count for so much, and those crooked telephone and telegraph poles are enough to give any one a fit. They spoil the whole perspective of the streets."

Julia's aspirations were satisfied. It was just getting dusk when Mr. and Mrs. Peel drove up to the edge of the plank side-walk. A soft illusionary greyness swathed the harsh outlines of the houses, and the last dying gleams of a pale pink-flushed sunset were reflected in the puddles left by a recent shower.

Warned by a wire from Jack we had hastily arranged a kind of late dinner combined with tea—the kind of meal peculiar to the colonies—and Mrs. Waddel's cake, looking conspicuously bridal, held an elevated position in the centre of the table, which was ornamented with red roses.

The wedding-presents, including a gramophone and records, were grouped, in a conscientious effort to give each one a front place, upon the dining-room side-table. There was what Julia had especially desired to have, a smell of hot cakes in the corridor, and as soon as the rig came to a standstill, Peter, who had been fastened to the rail of the kitchen balcony so as not to sully

the immaculate cleanliness of the flat, was induced by means of patting and a biscuit to place himself in an attitude of complacent welcome at the top of the stairs where his hospitably amiable tail-wagging merged, as soon as he recognized his old friend Mr. Peel, into one frantic and extensive leap downwards. His exuberant joyousness evidently pleased Netta, a little fluffy golden-haired creature with the sharp quick movements of a canary, who hopped up the steep wooden steps loaded with little bags and parcels. Mr. Peel down below was paying the driver in the intervals of Peter's ecstatic onslaughts, so we ushered Netta into her new domain with a keen desire that her first impression should be nothing but pleasing, yet with an apprehensive foreknowledge of the dreadful difference between a country vicarage and a Canadian flat.

But fortunately the electric light, which, justified by the unique occasion, we had lavishly allowed to flood every corner, filled the bride with unspeakable delight, so that the blatant ugliness of the Quebec Heater passed almost unobserved.

"Hasn't Reggie really got wonderful taste?" she said as she looked round at all the terra-cotta and cream floor-coverings visible through the open doors. "It was a splendid idea of his to have everything alike. I suppose you and your sister must have helped him occasionally with the sewing and arrangements. It was very good of you. I had no idea that Reggie was so artistic. I suppose one keeps

on making discoveries all the time about one's husband. I couldn't have done it better myself. I hope I shall not grow tired of terra-cotta though, Aunt Mabel thought of a pink bedroom and a blue dining-room—you know with the oak furniture blue walls would have been rather nice—nearly everyone has them now. I've a lovely pair of pink vases from Aunt Mary to put on the drawing-room mantelpiece—exactly like those we have at home—she had such a lot of trouble to get them—but—why—” in blank dismay—“there are no mantelpieces anywhere—how very strange!—I never thought of such a thing—and no fireplaces!—how terrible!—and the pink vases will have to stand on the sideboard—”

Julia told me afterwards that she saw in a flash the total destruction of her colour-scheme by that pair of pink vases, for if there are any two colours which refuse to live amicably side by side pink and terra-cotta are surely the most irreconcilable.

However she forced a smile and hoped the Express Company, though they were notoriously careless, would be careful not to break them, and after some further conversation we attempted to retire with Peter, leaving Mr. and Mrs. Peel to the uninterrupted enjoyment of their new home.

But they insisted that we should remain and share their dinner, a course which we had assumed and hoped they would take, as most of our available provisions had been dedicated to their service, leaving our

larder depleted of all save the merest fragments of food.

So, re-inforced by Jack who had come up on the cars, we assisted at Netta's first meal in Canada which she said would be described in full detail in her next letter home to "father and the aunts."

"It's really a momentous occasion, isn't it?" she said, looking at us with her bright quick eyes from behind the bridal cake. "When Reggie is a millionaire it will be so interesting to think of our tiny flat—(Why are all flats tiny, I wonder?)—where we began our married life together. The aunts will keep all the letters we write and bring them out again in ten years, and then we shall find them awfully interesting, don't you think so?"

"Oh! Don't try to be millionaires. They have such dull lives and none of them are happy," said Julia in imploring tones, though she remarked to me afterwards that Reggie Peel was not the stuff of which millionaires are made considering how easily he had been "stung" over buying his furniture.

"Aunt Mabel and Aunt Mary were rather nervous about letting me come to Montreal," remarked Netta as we drank coffee after dinner on the balcony and looked at the twinkling lights of the stars above us.

"I suppose they were afraid of shipwreck," said Julia, stirring her sugar thoughtfully.

"Well, no, not so much on that account, but you see their impressions of Canadian towns are formed on

what they've read in Bret Harte's stories of places 'out west.' I'm afraid they haven't got hold of quite the right facts. They are rather nervous about lynch law and people shooting with revolvers in the streets. Does that kind of thing still happen? I suppose not very often?"

There was acute anxiety in the tone of her voice, and I was glad that Jack and Mr. Peel were smoking in the drawing-room and could not hear the timid inquiry.

"Oh no," said Julia in reassuring tones, "nothing of that sort ever happens here. That kind of trouble only takes place in the States where the law is powerless and men have to right their own wrongs. Law and Order march hand in hand with British Government, don't you know that? The aunts can sleep peacefully in their beds and need not spend one anxious moment in imagining the possibility of you or Reggie falling a victim to stray bullets meant for somebody else, nor need they fear that you will be shocked by summary justice carried out by means of the nearest telegraph pole. You might as well expect lynch law in Piccadilly Circus as in Montreal."

"Yes, I was quite sure it was all nonsense," said Netta in tones of evident relief; "I shall write to them to-morrow and tell them not to worry any more—so foolish of them, isn't it? They knew that if they asked Reggie he would make the best of things and not let them know anything disquieting, but now that you tell

me all that kind of thing is past and done with they can just put it out of their minds altogether."

"They can," said Julia; "it's as dead as the Crusades; in fact I don't think it ever was alive in these parts—of course there were the Indians."

"Oh yes," said Netta hastily, sitting up in her chair in an attitude of alarmed expectation, "the Indians!—of course—Aunt Mary assured Aunt Mabel that they never—well very seldom—did anything objectionable nowadays—said they were quite Christianized and not in the least dangerous. I suppose you would have heard if they ever were to break out?"

Netta seemed almost to wish that the aunts might be justified in their affectionate apprehensions.

"They only break out with measles and scarlet-fever and other civilized diseases, and you are not allowed by law to give or sell whisky to an Indian——"

"As if I ever should," said Netta reproachfully.

"Because if you do," pursued Julia, "his primitive instincts are aroused by the firewater, he immediately reverts—in spite of mission-school training and beadwork and French-gardening—to the ancestral type. You see he's not removed many generations away from his scalping forefathers, so he seizes the nearest substitute for a tomahawk and goes for all the pale-faces whom he finds in his path. Unfortunately the person who administers the firewater generally gets off without a scratch. It is the innocent who fall victims."

Netta sighed deeply. "How terrible!" she ejaculated.

"But it never happens in Montreal," continued Julia, "and very rarely anywhere else, so the aunts can strike that item off as well. It need not burden their minds for a single instant. I should really have thought that Mr. Peel would have explained how things were better than that, letting——"

"Oh, but we thought it best not to worry him about such things, and now that I have an unbiassed opinion I am quite satisfied—quite. You see magazine stories are apt to be misleading, they say so much about cow-boys and revolvers and Indians—one forgets that they are works of fiction. Of course they have to make them exciting, don't they?"

We felt it our duty to supply all the information possible as to the right treatment of Chinese laundrymen, the engagement and social standing of French charwomen, the inner workings of the Quebec Heater, and the cost of beef and mutton, but somehow every subject seemed in some mysterious way to tend in the direction of the aunts and their possible views on it, so we finally abandoned the attempt to give Netta an insight into the conditions of her future life and did our best to get interested in her family.

Aunt Mabel we gathered was a widow who made tentative attempts at up-to-dateness as implied in cigarettes and advanced views on the suffrage question, these efforts being sternly discountenanced by her sister, not so much because they were inherently sinful in themselves as that they were unbecoming in those

connected with the church. The pink vases had been the only concession made by Aunt Mary to the lighter side of her niece's outfit, but she had equipped her with a sewing-machine, a knife-cleaner, and various chilly presents in ironmongery, while Aunt Mabel's affection had found expression in pretty and expensive garments which filled Mrs. Peel with delight.

"Of course Aunt Mary's presents are most useful—splendid in fact—but Aunt Mabel's kimono dress-gown is simply a dream, I used to feel so conceited when I walked to the bathroom every morning on the *Corybanic*. Reggie likes me in it awfully. Pretty clothes are rather alluring are they not? I suppose that is why some old-fashioned people still think them sinful."

It was getting fairly late when, after a thorough inspection of the flat, during which Mr. Peel shamelessly appropriated to himself all the encomiums his wife lavished on Julia's ingeniously picturesque arrangements, we left the happy pair standing in the middle of their drawing-room in an appropriately absorbed attitude towards each other and their new surroundings.

Both Jack and Julia, in spite of the pronounced success of the evening, seemed a trifle depressed and melancholy as we walked up our own staircase.

"A fellow," observed Jack meditatively, "can't really be happy and feel settled down in a new country until he gets married, can he?"

"They will probably be very happy," said Julia, ignoring the personal note in Jack's plaintive question,

“especially when the aunts have got into proper perspective and no longer occupy the whole or at least the whole part not occupied by Reggie—of Netta’s mental foreground. She’s a nice little thing. What a shame of Aunt Mary to give her those pink vases! I hate that woman already. A set of copper saucepans would have been so much more consistent with her character. Why do people act contrary to their own temperament, I want to know? Pink vases indeed! Anything but pink! They have blighted my existence.”

I thought that for a pair of vases she had not yet seen which—through the Express Company’s agency—might quite conceivably arrive in a severely shattered condition, that Julia’s sensitiveness tended towards exaggeration. An artistic temperament is clearly not an invariable source of happiness to its proprietor.

CHAPTER XV

THE Canadian spring comes with a sudden rush, no gentle dallying on the way, no coy hesitations and returnings such as we experience in England. It is a quickly evanescent season and merges into hectic summer with little perceptible pause.

It is in the spring, the first of May to be precise, that Montreal makes its yearly move from house to house and, it may have been an exceptional year, or a sign of Canadian restlessness, or Canadian prosperity, but it seemed as though every one but ourselves were house-moving. It reminded one of the "Lay of Horatius," "a fearful sight it was to see for two long nights and days," for the roads were crowded with vans and drays loaded with furniture and for three nights our slumbers were broken by the sound of new neighbours "moving in" in the small hours.

Some people coming to a flat opposite arrived about ten o'clock in the morning, and sat patiently awaiting the arrival of their furniture, which, however, had not appeared at midnight. They were going to camp out on a rug on the floor and were fed by charitable neigh-

bours, as, all the gas-stoves being disconnected for purposes of removal, there are no means of cooking anything.

Every available horse and cart in the city is pressed into service and sometimes the furniture is stacked up in the street on the broad pavements, waiting till the out-going tenants have been able to clear away theirs. If it happens to rain, the pitiable plight of the pianos and mahogany furniture and green plush sofas arouses emotions of the deepest pity. Julia insisted on taking out our travelling rug and large umbrella and fixing them up over a nice arm-chair which was standing forlornly in the drizzle on the side-walk beneath our window.

"Poor old thing, look how it holds out appealing arms," she said. The people to whom it belonged were deeply touched and grateful when they discovered the thoughtful attention.

When the sudden hot weather came, Julia decided, on the strength of some articles she had been writing for a Canadian magazine, to take a trip westwards to the Kawartha Lakes and spend the money she had earned in "camping out" and fishing for maskinonge and black bass. Julia has these sudden resolves. She knew then nothing about fishing—and confessed that her chief attraction to the Kawartha Lakes—the word Kawartha is Indian, signifying (in a highly compressed form) "Bright waters and happy lands"—was the name of each of the fourteen

lakes—Scugug, Katchewanooka, Lovesick, Buckhorn, Chemong, etc. The lakes form a chain over one hundred and fifty miles long and, according to the guide book, enjoy uninterrupted sunshine. The same authority remarks that “the wholesome fragrance of the pine and hemlock is the only exception to the perfect purity of the atmosphere.” Julia had met a former school-friend, married to a wealthy magnate of Montreal, who wanted to take her family away camping and Julia persuaded Mrs. McFarlane to go to the Kawartha Lakes and to invite her, Julia, to join the party.

I felt a little lonely after she had departed by the Canadian Pacific Railway, whose big engines, uttering queer cow-like hoots, pass the end of our street. Still I was not depressed for very long, for Jack has received a substantial rise in his salary and been writing to Poppy to ask if she can get ready to come out here in August. So that I can let my thoughts dwell on England once more and wonder how the garden at the old home is looking now, and if the people to whom it is let furnished will be willing to go away again somewhere in September. It would be nice to get back again for the winter, and Poppy is burning to come out and wed Jack, for that foolish father of hers has thought right to marry his housekeeper. Men of his age so often perpetrate this kind of injury to a young and startled family.

The first letter I received from Julia described the journey to the Kawartha Lakes and the Lakes them-

selves in guarded terms. She said the McFarlanes were staying in an hotel, but that they would "camp out" as soon as the weather improved.

"Of course we should like a fine day to pitch camp," she wrote; "in the meantime, I am learning, under the guidance of a quaint, rather ragged person of mixed French and Indian blood how to catch maskinonge and bass. It is very cold sitting in the canoe, and I can see the end of my nose looking rather red and shiny, but Champy's conversation—Champy is our guide's name—is very entertaining, not to say scandalous. He puts the worst motives on everybody's behaviour and smilingly takes away people's characters without turning a hair. He is called the 'Champion Liar' and is usually called Champy or Champion for short. I made the mistake of calling him Mr. Champion the other day, but he gazed at me more in sorrow than in anger as he put fresh bait on my hook, and I have never done it again.

"Mr. McFarlane is a rather quiet, stolid individual, who seems to find holiday-making, especially when it rains, rather tedious. I am trying to persuade him to learn how to paddle an Indian canoe, as I feel sure it would remove some of that adipose tissue which is slowly but surely sapping his manly figure. I wish his cheeks didn't hang over in that flabby way. He ought to wear one of those patent 'beauty-restorer' things which people tie on at night to keep their features from deteriorating. It has been raining for

the whole of the three days we have been here, and the mass of forest looks sulky and forbidding. I want to go and explore, but Mr. McFarlane seems afraid of rheumatism. Champy looks at us both with cheerful suspicion when we are together. I believe he thinks we cherish a guilty passion for each other, merely because I tried to show Mr. McFarlane the right way to hold a paddle. Ever since then Champy has been discreetly keeping himself in the background, so as to give us, I believe, more opportunity for conversation. If he continues I shall contrive to tip him into the waters of Lovesick—what a silly name anyway. Mrs. McFarlane is in bed with a cold. When she recovers things will move. Her husband, one of those men who only does what his wife tells him, is as clay in the hands of the potter. I believe his heart is really all the time on the equivalent for the Stock Exchange in Montreal. He is certainly making wonderful *coups* in real estate and gets richer and less happy week by week. Perhaps when we penetrate what they call the 'impenetrable forest' he will manage to forget his affairs for a short time."

In a later letter she wrote that the weather had at last "come up to guide-book standard," and that Mr. McFarlane's indifference to Nature was becoming less pronounced as time went on. He was beginning to admire the things the guide-book pointed out as admirable, such as the sunset, "when it is 'golden,' otherwise it escapes his attention" or "the rugged

scenery" on Deer Lake and the "pine-tree park" on Chemong Lake. He had conscientiously partaken of wild rice, "which is most delicious when properly cooked and served," but Julia thought that somebody had "slipped up" on the cooking of what she tasted. The beds of wild rice grow on Rice Lake, where thousands of ducks congregate.

"I am getting to be pretty good at paddling these light canoes," she wrote, "and now that the weather is fine and the mosquitoes—passed over with haughty silence in the guide-book—render life on land somewhat of a burden, I spend many early-morning hours on the water with Champy while the McFarlanes are still sleeping the sleep of the just. The other morning I had somewhat of an adventure. I was paddling away merrily, enjoying the wild scenery and everlasting spaciousness and bigness of everything, which is apt, however, to make one feel a little lonely and timorous and of not much account in the world, when, as I lent a half-hearted attention to Champy's wicked insinuations about some of the guests at the hotel and wondered why a man gifted with such a radiant smile should be such a consummate gossip-monger, I turned a bend of the shore and came face to face with another canoe, containing, who do you think? Why, your friend Mr. Bernard Page and another man." My friend indeed! Fancy him turning up like that. "We each suspended our paddles in mid-air and the canoes drifted slowly on a moment while each of u

stared at the other in the silly way people do when they are rather surprised and haven't an appropriate remark ready.

" ' It really is you ? ' he said at last, and as our canoes came close together I saw his contained some splendid bass.

" ' Really me, ' I replied. ' Whoever would have thought of meeting you like this ? ' "

Then another man in his canoe took the paddle and he and Champy held us together while I talked to Mr. Page.

" He looked very mosquito-bitten and brown and lean and healthy and the clothes he wore were in the last stage of disrepair, as though he had been pushing through jungle and underwood for the last six weeks. The man with him, who was still more mosquito-bitten, he introduced as Mr. Duke. He was rather ugly and had those stiff, polite ways of the English gentleman which seem to fence him round with barbed wire—but all the same he had a nice face and I liked him.

" They had been camping on one of the upper lakes, shooting bear, as that is the only animal now in season, and living like backwoodsmen, and when I had explained about the McFarlanes and the camping projects, which materialized so slowly, they said they would lend us some of their outfit, tents and camping-cots, and folding chairs and so on. The steamer was bringing them down. They would be available at once. I thought this very decent of them. We

returned to the hotel together and Mr. Page thinks I handle a paddle very well considering the short time I have been practising. He is going to stay a few days at the hotel with his friend, who is rather taciturn, but, as I said before, quite a good sort."

Three days after this a letter arrived dated "Muskeg."

"Here we are," wrote Julia, "in the heart of the primeval forest and Mr. McFarlane is washing dishes while Mrs. McFarlane dries them with sand, processes evidently equally repellent to the natures of both, Mrs. Mac. being of too frivolous and Mr. Mac. of too serious a mind for the accomplishment of domestic duties. Mr. Page and Mr. Duke and Cha. apy are busy cutting down young trees and building a hut as the tents are a little the worse for wear and in case of rain could by no stretch of the imagination be considered waterproof. There are two McFarlane children. I have not said much about them yet, but they are rather nice little kiddies of nine and ten, Arabel and Daphnis by name, with pug noses and bulgy cheeks like dear 'poppa's.' I hear their shrill little voices calling 'Mother-r-r, Mother-r-r' with a long burr at the end like a corn-crake. Mr. Page has taken our picnic in hand, otherwise I fear it would never have become an accomplished fact, Mr. MacFarlane being, as I have hinted, quite ignorant of the lighter holiday-making side of existence. I see him looking at a cracked enamel saucepan with an eye of discontent. He seems to wash the things, though unwillingly, with a certain

knack—can it be that in a former phase of existence he has had to do this sort of work for a livelihood? A faint memory stirs within me. Yes, I remember. Was it Champy who told me?—that he had been kitchen-boy in an hotel. This would explain his reluctance. Well, Champy's knowledge of the private affairs of every guest is too complete to be accurate. To-morrow, when the huts are built, *he* will wash the dishes and do the cooking and the McFarlanes will retire from their menial duties to a higher plane of existence where fishing and canoeing are the chief occupations. Another guide is joining us to-morrow, a man Mr. Duke knows. He will bring more of the luxuries of civilization with him, and we shall explore the upper regions of the river. If only Mr. McFarlane would try to play the game and be happy, all would go merry as a marriage-bell, but he looks all the time as though wanting to run and 'phone something to somebody about building-lots at Winnipeg. Why can't people learn to enjoy themselves and have a good time? That's one reason I gave him the dishes to wash so that he shouldn't feel bored. He tried to cut wood, but his wife took away the hatchet just in time. It was really a mercy he didn't cut off his foot, and Red Cross bandages are just the *one* thing we've forgotten in our outfit."

A fortnight later the party seemed to have settled down to the routine of camping.

"We are all more or less bitten with mosquitoes,

which are the chief plague of existence, but Mr. McFarlane is evidently slowly but surely succumbing to the charms of outdoor existence. He confided to me yesterday that he had never felt so well in the whole course of his existence, never slept so well, nor ate so much since he was a hungry schoolboy. As for sleeping, it was not necessary for him to say much, for I am sure his snores are quite sufficient witness to the soundness of his slumbers. The men spend the night in a long narrow open-fronted shed, on bunks raised from the ground, and we two ladies and the little girls have another one a short distance away with a curtain drawn across. We all bathe in the lake in the mornings, and Mr. McFarlane in a green-and-white bathing-suit is an offence to the forest silences, but the poor man is learning to smile and be happy, and occasionally he is quite schoolboyish and actually climbed up a tree—a small one—the other day. He has caught two black bass under Champy's careful guidance and the smug smile raised on his countenance by this success has scarcely yet evaporated. My heart warms to him. I see the soul of the sportsman slowly but surely developing in him day by day. Mrs. McFarlane keeps saying how glad she is they came.

“ ‘Albert's not the same man he was,’ she confided to me ; ‘ he's never touched any of those patent medicines he brought along with him. He eats new bread ; which he can't look at at home, and he enjoys his food—well, you know yourself what he had for dinner—and

gets up from table feeling hungry. It's years since he ever *was* hungry. Oh, I'm delighted. I sh'll keep him up to the mark now he's got a start. You'll see.'

"Mrs. Mac. rather snubs poor Mr. Duke, who is a very nice man and loves to sit on the rocks by the lake watching Arabel and Daphnis—what absurd names for such plain children—while he smokes a short clay pipe. He uses very good tobacco though, and his guns and canoes look rather expensive, even if he does appear rather a tramp in his red-flannel shirt. He walks with a sort of round-shouldered Eton slouch and seems rather melancholy and troubled. For two days we have been exploring up-stream, taking two small tents with us and sleeping out in the primeval forest surrounded by wild animals. It is strange how noisy the forest gets at night. There is a continual sighing and sighing of wind through the pine and hemlock branches and the boughs begin to creak against one another, then there are soft rushings as of owls or other creatures, occasional patterings of field-mice or foxes or chip-munks or wolves mixed with an occasional cry of a bird, and through it all unintermittently, inevitably, the snores of Mr. McFarlane. One would think they would be enough to scare any wild animal away within a circumference of ten miles, but the other night I woke up to hear a horrid snuffling and scratching at our tent-flap. I sat up straight in bed and shouted at the noise, for I was dreadfully afraid it might be a skunk and I would prefer to have an untamed

lion in the neighbourhood. The chorus of snores from the men's tent abated not one jot at my shouts, but the snuffing stopped and there was a soft pad-padding which quickly died away and all was quiet again. But the next morning bear-tracks were plainly visible all round the tent and the marks of a bear's claws where he had tried to scratch his way in, which he would easily have done if I had not been able to frighten him off. After that I insisted on having one of the loaded guns within reach, though Champy declares a bear would never hurt me unless by accident.

"The other guide is called Jimmy Dew, and he and Champy are always contradicting each other, not exactly quarrelling, but amiably disagreeing about the distances we travel daily or the weight of the fish we catch and so on. As Champy's estimate is always considerably higher than Jimmy's we prefer to accept his, while feeling all the time that Jimmy's is probably the most correct. They both of them cook very well, and our appetites are so good that we are prepared to overlook the filthy state of their hands when engaged in culinary processes. Champy's ablutions of his person only occur when he happens to fall overboard from the canoe which so far has only happened once and Jimmy openly expresses his contempt for much washing.

"'Why always washing?' he expostulated with me, 'when we camp we must wash twenty, thirty times a day to keep clean hands. I wash at bedtime.

That's enough. Not got time to be always washing.'

"I suppose washing is rather an acquired taste and the wind and the rain and the sun after all are better than patent purifiers and these men certainly look cleaner than Mr. McFarlane with his pale unhealthy colouring, although it is much improved since he came out here."

The letter that followed this was a very surprising one. I have hardly yet recovered from the shock of it.

"I hope, dear old Priscilla," wrote Julia, "that you are not feeling very lonely without me"—well, I have been rather lonely with Jack away so much—"and I daresay you will wonder when I am coming back to Montreal. Various things have been happening lately and you will be doubtless interested, if not *pleased*"—she underlined the word twice—"to hear that Mr. Page and I are engaged to be married at the earliest possible opportunity. Poor Bernard—his name is Bernard, you know—has been trying, quite unsuccessfully, to forget me for the last six months, and he says that when he saw me come paddling so cheerfully that morning in my canoe round the bend of 'Lovesick's wooded shores'—a portentous name, isn't it?—he felt it useless to fight further against destiny, that's why he instinctively held up his hands and mentally surrendered to the fates which have obviously taken our affairs in hand, else why should we have met again like that without any planning of our own. And I must say, Priscilla, that if we can each appreciate the

other, mosquito-spotted, weathered, healthy but plain as we are, far from the haunts of civilization, and that meretricious atmosphere of social glamour which is apt to obscure the judgment and lead it pitiably astray, there is every prospect of our being able to sail the stormy waters of matrimony together without any great mishap. You know a single life has great attractions for me, liberty-loving as I am. There are so few married lives that one really envies. One or other of the partners invariably breaks down somewhere. I daresay our marriage will not be any better than just the ordinary, average one, but when I am with Bernard this does not count with me at all. I envisage all the calamities that might possibly befall us with the utmost calmness, and my resolution to go forward remains fixed and immovable. I have no doubts nor hesitations. I never wonder if I am about to do a wise thing or not. I *know* it is wise, so write and congratulate me nicely like a dear, good Priscilla."

In a postscript she added, "Mr. Duke turns out to be the Duke of Burlingham travelling unencumbered by his title. Bernard and I are the only ones in the secret, and it gives us all three much pleasure to see the unconscious Mrs. McFarlane treating him with scant courtesy and snubbing the poor young man rather unmercifully. She has an idea that he is a poor but haughty Britisher who has left his country for his country's good, and is just hanging on to Ber-

nard as a kind of parasite. I encourage her to abuse him, knowing what her feelings will be when she knows the real truth. The Duke is married, as I daresay you remember, but he and the Duchess, whose tastes lie in an entirely different direction from those of her husband, who would have been perfectly happy if he had been born a Canadian backwoodsman, agree to allow each other a fairly long tether, which I think is very sensible. He is going back to her in August to their place in Scotland, but he hates shooting grouse and doing those fashionable things that one reads of in the papers. He wants to buy acres of land out here and settle some of the sons of his tenants on farms. He has a scheme for building the houses and cowsheds and ploughing the land with a steam plough so that the settlers won't have such an awful up-hill struggle as many of them do, and he wants Bernard to superintend all this business and create, as it were, the social rules for the best governance of the community, but I'm sure Bernard will make some awful mistakes if he tries to govern them in any way different to the ordinary Canadian laws, which are really framed very sensibly and must have been made without the aid of any politicians, or they could never be so finely conceived and so liberally and wisely carried out."

When I informed Jack of Julia's engagement to Mr. Page he was not as surprised as I expected, but said he "thought there was something of the sort in the air." He also told me that Mr. Marling had announced

to him his engagement to Marie Laronde, which he confessed had astonished him very much.

"Fancy a girl like that wanting to marry a man like that," he said in tones of concentrated disgust. "I hate them both. I shan't let Poppy see too much of them when we're married."

I agreed with him that it would be quite as well to be careful, but thought that Mr. Marling and Marie could hardly be shut out from the circle of his acquaintances.

I should have liked to ask if it would not now be better to suppress Marie's unfinished portrait, but was glad afterwards that I had been discreet—silent, for the next Saturday afternoon I found him dabbing it all over with grey so as to form a background for a picture he intended to paint of Poppy in her wedding-dress. There was something unconsciously figurative in the act which made me feel rather thoughtful and puzzled over men—even when they are our brothers—and their ways.

Now I am very busy preparing for Julia, who will return in a fortnight's time to stay a week with me before she returns to England.

In her last letter she writes as follows:—

"Perhaps Bernard and I may be married in Montreal before we start home. It would really simplify matters, and if his family have any objections it would be nice to know how futile they were. Mr. Duke, I mean *the* Duke, thinks it would be much the most

sensible plan. 'Save all that fuss of bridesmaids and people cackling and stuff in the society journals,' he said; 'you could put advertisements in the *Morning Post* and the *Daily Mail* and a few other papers, and it would save lots of trouble.' I feel almost inclined to do it. Bernard and I are both too old—did I tell you he was thirty-six, just fourteen months older than I am—to care a toss about the frills of an English wedding with the family blessing it with their presence and a plain-clothes detective to protect the wedding-gifts from burglary. We are determined not to wear unnecessary social shackles; on the other hand, we don't want to develop into uncouth cranks and have agreed that a dress suit shall always form a permanent part of Bernard's wardrobe. People who try to be too original are often as boring as the merely commonplace. We both like these big wide spaces out here, but don't want to lose touch altogether with English life. I am going to help Bernard with his book about Canada. His sentences often need just a little twist upwards. They are plain commonsense English, but it pleases me to give them a literary touch. We have done two chapters at Muskeg and the result is astonishingly good. It will be the best book on modern Canada that has ever been published.

"We have definitely decided to come back here in three months and help the Duke to develop his Land-Settlement Scheme. I am feeling quite excited about the planning of the farm-houses. They must have

plenty of useful cupboards and shelves and as many fixtures as possible and the colour-schemes are going to be sheer joy to me, as simple, practical and artistic as brains can make them. The children born in these houses have *got* to be started right from the beginning. No ugly wall-papers to vitiate their tastes at the very fountain-head. Oh, Priscilla, you don't know how gloriously Life is opening out to me. If I only realise the fifth part of the future of which I am dreaming what a happy woman I shall be. Sometimes I am afraid because I am so happy."

THE END

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