

UN CONGE SANS CLOCHE

BY AGNES REPPLIER

WE had only two or three of them in the year, and their slow approach stirred us to frenzy. In the dark ages, when I went to school, no one had yet discovered that play is more instructive than work, no one was piling up statistics to prove the educational value of idleness. In the absence of nature studies and athletics, we were not encouraged to spend our lives out of doors. In the absence of nerve specialists, we were not tenderly restrained from studying our lessons too hard. It is wonderful how little apprehension on this score was felt by either mothers or teachers. We had two months' summer holiday, — July and August, — and a week at Christmas time. The rest of the year we spent at school. I have known parents so inhuman as to regret those unenlightened days.

But can the glorified little children whose lives seem now to be one vast and happy playtime, can the privileged schoolgirls who are permitted to come to town for a *matinée*, — which sounds to me as fairy-like as Cinderella's ball, — ever know the real value of a holiday! As well expect an infant millionaire to know the real value of a quarter. We to whom the routine of life was as inevitable as the progress of the seasons, we to whom Saturdays were as Mondays, and who grappled with Church history and Christian doctrine on pleasant Sunday mornings, *we* knew the mad tumultuous joy that thrilled through hours of freedom. The very name which from time immemorial had been given to our Convent holidays illustrated the fullness of their beatitude. When one lives under the dominion of bells, every hour rung in and out with relentless precision, *sans cloche* means glorious saturnalia. Once a nervous young nun, anxious at the

wild scattering of her flock, ventured, on a *congé*, to ring them back to bounds; whereupon her bell was promptly, though not unkindly, taken away from her by two of the older girls. And when the case was brought to court, the Mistress General upheld their action. A law was a law, as binding upon its officers as upon the smallest subject in the realm.

The occasions for a *congé sans cloche* were as august as they were rare. "Mother's Feast," by which we meant the saint's day of the Superioress, could always be reckoned upon. The feast of St. Joseph was generally kept in this auspicious fashion, — which gave us a great "devotion" to so kind a mediator. Once or twice in the year the Archbishop came to the Convent, and in return for our addresses, our curtsies, our baskets of flowers, and songs of welcome, always bravely insisted that we should have a holiday. "Be sure and tell me, if you don't get it," he used to say, which sounded charmingly confidential, though we well knew that we should never have an opportunity to tell him anything of the kind, and that we should never dare to do it, if we had.

In the year of grace which I now chronicle, the Archbishop was going to Rome, and had promised to say good-by to us before he sailed. Those were troubled times for Rome. Even we knew that something was wrong, though our information did not go much beyond this point. Like the little girl who could n't tell where Glasgow was, because she had not finished studying Asia Minor, we were still wandering belated in the third Crusade, — a far cry from united Italy. When Elizabeth, who had read the address, said she wondered why the Pope was called "God's great martyr saint," we

could offer her very little enlightenment. I understand that children now interest themselves in current events, and ask intelligent questions about things they read in the newspapers. For us, the Wars of the Roses were as yesterday, and the Crusades were still matters for deep concern. Berengaria of Navarre had been the "leading lady" of our day's lesson, and I had written in my "Compendium of History" — majestic phrase — this interesting and comprehensive statement: "Berengaria led a blameless life, and, after her husband's death, retired to a monastery, where she passed the remainder of her days."

It was the middle of May when the Archbishop came, and, as the weather was warm, we wore our white frocks for the occasion. Very immaculate we looked, ranged in a deep, shining semicircle, a blue ribbon around every neck, and gloves on every folded hand. It would have been considered the height of impropriety to receive, ungloved, a distinguished visitor. As the prelate entered, accompanied by the Superioress and the Mistress General, we swept him a deep curtsy, — oh, the hours of bitter practice it took to limber my stiff little knees for those curtsies! — and then broke at once into our chorus of welcome: —

"With happy hearts we now repair
All in this joyous scene to share."

There were five verses. When we had finished, we curtsied again and sat down, while Mary Rawdon and Eleanor Hale played a nervous duet upon the piano.

The Archbishop looked at us benignly. It was said of him that he dearly loved children, but that he was apt to be bored by adults. He had not what are called "social gifts," and seldom went beyond the common civilities of intercourse. But he would play jackstraws all evening with half a dozen children, and apparently find himself much refreshed by the entertainment. His eyes wandered during the duet to the ends of the semicircle, where sat the very little girls, as rigidly still as cataleptics. Wrig-

gling was not then deemed the prescriptive right of childhood. An acute observer might perhaps have thought that the Archbishop, seated majestically on his dais, and flanked by Reverend Mother and Madame Bouron, glanced wistfully at these motionless little figures. We were, in truth, as remote from him as if we had been on another continent. Easy familiarity with our superiors was a thing undreamed of in our philosophy. The standards of good behavior raised an impassable barrier between us.

Frances Fenton made the address. It was an honor once accorded to Elizabeth, but usually reserved as a reward for superhuman virtue. Not on *that* score had Elizabeth ever enjoyed it. Frances was first blue ribbon, first medallion, and head of the Children of Mary. There was nothing left for her but beatification. She stepped slowly, and with what was called a "modest grace," into the middle of the room, curtsied, and began: —

"Your children's simple hearts would speak,
But cannot find the words they seek.
These tones no music's spell can lend;
And eloquence would vainly come
To greet our Father, Guide, and Friend.
Let hearts now speak, and lips be dumb!"

"Then why is n't she dumb?" whispered Tony aggressively, but without changing a muscle of her attentive face.

I pretended not to hear her. I had little enough discretion, Heaven knows, but even I felt the unwisdom of whispering at such a time. It was Mary Rawdon's absence at the piano, I may observe, that placed me in this perilous proximity.

"Our reverence fond and hopeful prayer
Will deck with light one empty place,
And fill with love one vacant chair."

"What chair?" asked Tony, and again I pretended not to hear.

"For e'en regret can wear a softened grace,
And smiling hope in whispers low
Will oft this cherished thought bestow:
Within the Eternal City's sacred wall,
He who has blest us in our Convent hall
Can now to us earth's holiest blessing bring
From God's great martyr saint, Rome's pontiff king."

At this point, Tony, maddened by my unresponsiveness, shot out a dexterous little leg (I don't see how she dared to do it, when our skirts were so short), and, with lightning speed, kicked me viciously on the shins. The anguish was acute, but my sense of self-preservation saved me from so much as a grimace. Madame Bouron's lynx-like gaze was traveling down our ranks, and, as it rested on me for an instant, I felt that she must see the smart. Tony's expression was one of rapt and reverent interest. By the time I had mastered my emotions, and collected my thoughts, the address was over, and the Archbishop was saying a few words about his coming voyage, and about the Holy Father, for whom he bade us pray. Then, with commendable promptness, he broached the important subject of the *congé*. There was the usual smiling demur on Reverend Mother's part. The children had so many holidays ("I like that!" snorted Tony), so many interruptions to their work. It was so hard to bring them back again to quiet and orderly ways. If she granted this indulgence, we must promise to study with double diligence for the approaching examinations. Finally she yielded, as became a dutiful daughter of the Church; the first of June, ten days off, was fixed as the date; and we gave a hearty round of applause, in token of our gratitude and relief. After this, we rather expected our august visitor to go away; but his eyes had strayed again to the motionless little girls at the horns of the semicircle: and, as if they afforded him an inspiration, he said something in low, rather urgent tones to Reverend Mother, — something to which she listened graciously.

"They will be only too proud and happy," we heard her murmur; and then she raised her voice.

"Children," she said impressively, "his Grace is good enough to ask that you should escort him to the woods this afternoon. Put on your hats and go."

This *was* an innovation! Put on our hats at four o'clock — the hour for French

class — and walk to the woods with the Archbishop. It was delightful, of course, but a trifle awesome. If, in his ignorance, he fancied we should gambol around him like silly lambs, he was soon to discover his mistake. Our line of march more closely resembled that of a well-drilled army. Madame Bouron walked on his right hand, and Madame Duncan on his left. The ribbons, the graduates, and a few sedate girls from the first class closed into a decorous group, half of them walking backwards, — a convent custom in which we were wonderfully expert. The flanks of the army were composed of younger and less distinguished girls, while the small fry hovered on its borders, out of sight and hearing. We moved slowly, without scattering, and without obvious exhilaration. I was occupied in freeing my mind in many bitter words to Tony, who defended her conduct on the score of my "setting up for sainthood," — an accusation, the novelty of which ought to have made it agreeable. When we reached the lake, a tiny sheet of water with a Lili-putian island, we came to a halt. The Archbishop had evidently expressed a desire, or at least some readiness, to trust himself upon the waves. The boat was unmoored, and Frances Fenton and Ella Holbrook rowed him carefully around the island, while the rest of us were drawn up on shore to witness the performance. We probably made a very nice picture in our white frocks and blue neck ribbons; but we were spectators merely, still far remote from any sense of companionship. When the boat was close to shore, the Archbishop refused to land. He sat in the stern, looking at us with a curious smile. He was strikingly handsome, — a long, lean, noble-looking old man, — and he had a voice of wonderful sweetness and power. It was said that, even at sixty-five, he sang the Mass more beautifully than any priest in his diocese. Therefore it was a little alarming when he suddenly asked: —

"My children, do you know any pretty songs?"

"Oh, yes, your Grace," answered Madame Bouron.

"Then sing me something now," said the Archbishop, still with that inscrutable smile.

There was a moment's hesitation, a moment's embarrassment, and then, acting under instruction, we sang (or, at least, some of us did; there was no music in my soul) the *Canadian Boat-Song*, and *Star of the Sea*, — appropriate, both of them, to the watery expanse before us.

"Dark night has come down on us, Mother,
and we
Look out for thy radiance, sweet Star of the
sea."

The Archbishop listened attentively, and with an evident pleasure that must have been wholly disassociated from any musical sense. Then his smile deepened. "Would you like me to sing for you?" he said.

"Oh, yes, if you please," we shrilled; and Madame Bouron gave us a warning glance. "Be very still, children," she admonished. "His Grace is going to sing."

His Grace settled himself comfortably in the boat. His amused glance traveled over our expectant faces, and sought as usual the little girls, now close to the water's edge. Then he cleared his throat, and, as I am a Christian gentlewoman, and a veracious chronicler, *this* is the song he sang:—

"In King Arthur's reign, a merry reign,
Three children were sent from their homes,
Were sent from their homes, were sent from
their homes,
And they never went back again.

"The first, he was a miller,
The second, he was a weaver,
The third, he was a little tailor boy,
Three big rogues together."

"Can't you join in the chorus, children?" interrupted the Archbishop. "Come! the last two lines of every verse."
"The third, he was a little tailor boy,
Three big rogues together."

Our voices rose in a quavering accompaniment to his mellifluous notes. We

were petrified; but, even in a state of petrification, we did as we were bidden.

"The miller, he stole corn,
The weaver, he stole yarn,
And the little tailor boy, he stole broadcloth,
To keep these three rogues warm."

"Chorus!" commanded the Archbishop; and this time our voices were louder and more assured.

"And the little tailor boy, he stole broadcloth,
To keep these three rogues warm."

"The miller was drowned in his dam,
The weaver was hung by his yarn,
But the Devil ran away with the little tailor
boy,
With the broadcloth under his arm."

There was a joyous shout from our ranks. We understood it all now. The Archbishop was misbehaving himself, was flaunting his misbehavior in Madame Bouron's face. We knew very well what would be said to *us*, if we sang a song like that, without the Archiepiscopal sanction, and there was a delicious sense of impunity in our hearts, as we vociferated the unhallowed lines:—

"But the Devil ran away with the little tailor
boy,
With the broadcloth under his arm."

Then the Archbishop stepped out of the boat, and there was a timid scramble to his side. The barriers were down. He had knocked at our hearts in the Devil's name, and we had flung them wide. The return to the Convent was like a rout; — little girls wedging their way in among big girls, the Second Cours contesting every step of the path with the First Cours, the most insignificant children lifted suddenly to prominence and distinction. I was too shy to do more than move restlessly on the outskirts of the crowd; but I saw Tony conversing affably with the Archbishop (and looking as gentle as she was intelligent), and Viola Milton kissing his ring with the assurance of an infant Aloysius. When he bade us good-by, we shouted and waved our handkerchiefs until he was out of sight. He turned at the end of the Avenue.

and waved his in a last friendly salutation. That was very long ago. I trust that in Paradise the Holy Innocents are now bearing him company, for I truly believe his soul would weary of the society of grown-up saints.

And our *congé* was only ten days off. This thought was left to gild our waking hours. We — Elizabeth, Marie, Tony, Lilly, Emily, and I — resolved ourselves immediately into a committee of ways and means, and voted all the money in the treasury for supplies. It was not much, but, if well laid out, it would purchase sweets enough to insure a midnight pang. The privilege of buying so much as a stick of candy was one rigidly reserved for holidays. “Mary” did our shopping for us. Mary was a hybrid, a sort of uncloistered nun. Her out-of-date bonnet, worn instead of a lay sister’s close white cap, proclaimed her as one free to come and go; and her mission in life was to transact outside business, to buy whatever was necessary or permitted. The lay sisters did the work of the convent; Mary ministered to its needs. We wrote down for her a list of delicacies.

One dozen oranges.

One box of figs.

One pound of caramels, — which were dear.

Two pounds of walnut taffy.

Three pounds of cinnamon bun.

A fair allowance, I surmise, for six well-fed little girls.

“I tell you what I’ll do,” said Marie, in an excess of generosity. “I’ll save up my wine, if you’ll lend me bottles to put it in.”

We felt this to be noble. For some mysterious reason (she was never known to be ill), Marie was sent every morning at eleven o’clock to the infirmary; and at that unconvivial hour drank a solitary glass of wine. It was port, I believe, or Burgundy, — I am not sure which, and I pray Heaven I may never taste its like again. Now, provided with half a dozen empty bottles, which had erstwhile held tooth-wash and cologne, she undertook to elude the infirmarian’s eye, and to decant

her wine into these receptacles, instead of putting it where it was due. How she managed this we never knew (it would have seemed difficult to a prestidigitator), but Marie was a child of resources, second only to Tony in every baleful art.

Clever though we deemed her, however, clever though we sometimes deemed ourselves, there was one in the school, younger, yet far more acute than any of us. Thursday was visitors’ day, and Lilly’s brother came to see her. After he had gone, Lilly joined us in the avenue, looking perturbed and mysterious.

“I want to tell you something,” she said lamely. “Viola has got some cigarettes. Jack gave them to her.”

Cigarettes! Dynamite could not have sounded more overwhelming. Cigarettes, and in Viola Milton’s keeping! Never had a whiff of tobacco defiled the Convent air. Never had the thought of such unbridled license entered into any heart. And Viola was ten years old.

“I know what that means,” said Tony sharply. “She wants to come with us on the *congé*.”

Lilly nodded. It was plain that Viola, having possessed herself of a heavy bribe, had persuaded her older sister to open negotiations.

“Well, we won’t have her,” cried Tony vehemently. “Not if she has all the cigarettes in Christendom. Why on earth, Lilly, did n’t you ask your brother for them yourself?”

“I never thought of such a thing,” pleaded Lilly. “I never even heard her do it.”

“Well, we won’t have Viola, and you may go and tell her so,” repeated Tony, with mounting wrath. “Go and tell her so right off. We won’t have a child of ten tagging round with us all day.”

“Agnes is only eleven,” said Lilly.

“How many cigarettes has she got?” It was Elizabeth who asked this pertinent question.

“I don’t know. Jack gave her all he had.”

“It does n’t make any difference how

many she has. I won't have her," flamed Tony.

At this assertive "I," Elizabeth lifted her head. Her light blue eyes met Tony's sparkling brown ones. It was not the first time the two children had measured their forces. "We'll see, anyhow, what Viola's got," said Elizabeth calmly.

Lilly, being despatched to make inquiries, returned in two minutes with her little sister by her side. Viola was a bony child, all eyes and teeth, as ugly as Lilly was beautiful. Her sombre glance was riveted wistfully upon Elizabeth's face. She was too wise to weaken her cause with words, but held out eleven little white objects, at which we looked enviously.

"Seven from eleven leaves four," murmured Emily.

"I don't want any," said Viola, who was bidding high. She would have bartered her immortal soul to gain her point.

"And I don't want more than one," said Lilly. "That will leave two apiece for the rest of you."

"Well?" asked Elizabeth, looking round the circle.

"Oh, do let's have them!" I urged, dazzled by a sudden vision of debauchery. "They'll be just the thing to go with the wine."

They were *just* the thing. We found this out later on.

"Oh, yes, let's have them," said Marie, who felt the responsibilities of a hostess.

"Let's!" said Emily, our silent member.

"I won't!" asseverated Tony, battling heroically for a lost cause. "I won't have anything to do with the treat, if you let Viola in."

"Then don't!" retorted Elizabeth, now sure of victory, and scornful of further dispute.

Tony turned her back upon her venal friends, and marched off to another group of girls. There was no great novelty about this proceeding, but the imminence of the *congé* lent it an unwonted seriousness.

"Don't you suppose she'll play *cache*

cache with us?" asked Marie somewhat ruefully, and well aware of what we should lose if she did not.

"Of course she will," said Elizabeth, "because she can't play without us."

And Elizabeth was right. Before the first of June, Tony had "come round;" being persuaded to this condescension by Lilly the peacemaker. Every cluster of friends should look to it that there is one absolutely sweet-tempered person in the group. But one is enough.

The first glorious thing about a *congé* was that we got up at seven instead of at quarter-past six, and the next was that we began to talk before we were out of our beds. Breakfast was so hilarious that only the fear of wasting our precious hours ever dragged us from the refectory, and up into the schoolroom, to prepare for the special feature of the day, *cache cache*. We never played *cache cache* except upon a holiday, which was why it seemed such a thrilling and wonderful game. No indulgence was likely to lose its value for us through unwarranted repetition. Two captains were chosen by acclamation, and they in turn selected their girls, picking them out alternately, one by one, until the whole Second Cours was divided into two bands of about twenty each. One band remained shut up in a music room (which was goal) for half an hour, while the other betook itself to the most secret and inaccessible spot that could be thought of as a hiding place. The captain might stay with her band, and direct its action, or she might be hidden separately; but no one except the captain was permitted to stray from the ranks for purposes of reconnoitring. The same rule held good for the searching party. The captain alone might play the scout. The rest were obliged to hold together. The capture of the hidden captain counted as half the game. The capture of the hidden band, before it could reach its goal, counted as the other half of the game. Thus the hidiers were forced either to dispense with the invaluable services of their leader, or to risk the loss

of the whole game if she were surprised in their company. So much, indeed, depended upon the leader's tactics, and so keen was our thirst for victory, that the girl who saved the day for herself and for her comrades was held in higher esteem than the girl who came out ahead in the periodical blistering of examinations. College valuations are, perhaps, not so absolutely modern as they seem.

Given an area of over a hundred acres with woods and orchards, with a deep ravine choked with tangled underbrush for concealment, and with wide lawns for an open run, — and *cache cache* becomes, or at least it became for us, a glorious and satisfying sport. To crouch breathless in the "poisonous valley" (there was a touch of poetry in all our nomenclature), to skirt cautiously the marshy ground of La Salette (named after the miraculous spring of Dauphiné), to crawl on one's stomach behind half a mile of inadequate hedge, to make a wild dash for goal within full view of the pursuing party, — these things supplied all the trepidation and fatigue, all the opportunities for generalship, and all the openings for dispute, that reasonable children could demand. We hardly needed the additional excitement provided by Eloise Didier's slipping into the marsh, and being fished out, a compact cake of mud; or by Tony's impiously hiding in the organ loft of the chapel, and being caught red-handed by Madame Duncan, — a nun whom, thank Heaven! it was possible, though difficult, to cajole.

We played all morning and all afternoon, played until our strength and our spirits were alike exhausted; and then, when the shadows began to lengthen, and our vivacity to wane, we made ready for the mad carousal which was to close our day. A basement music room, as remote as possible from any chance of inspection, was chosen as the scene of revelry. It was not a cheerful spot; but it appeared reasonably safe. Hither we transported our feast, which, spread out upon a piano, presented a formidable appearance, and

restored us to gayety and good-humor. The advantage of childhood over riper years is its blessed slowness to recognize a failure. If a thing starts out to be a treat, why, it *is* a treat, and that's the end of it. The cinnamon bun was certainly stale (Mary had, it was plain, consulted her own convenience as to the day of its purchase), but Heaven forbid that we should balk at staleness. Oranges and caramels, figs and walnut taffy present, to the thinking mind, an inharmonious combination; but that was a point on which we were to be subsequently enlightened. As for Marie's wine, it can be readily imagined what *it* was like, after lying around for a warm June week in imperfectly corked tooth-wash bottles. I can only say that no medicine it had been my lot to taste was ever half so nasty; yet those were days when all drugs were of uncompromising bitterness. An effete civilization had not then devised gelatine capsules to defraud the palate of its pain.

We ate everything, cake, fruit, and candy; we drank the wine (heroic young souls!), and, trembling with excitement, we lit the cigarettes, — a more difficult matter than we had imagined. I had not waited until this point to dree my weird. Excessive fatigue is but an indifferent preparation for unwonted indulgence; and I was a sickly child, to whom only the simplicity and regularity of school life lent a semblance of health. Ominous sensations were warning me of my deadly peril; but I held straight on. Suddenly Marie, who had been smoking with silent fortitude, said sweetly: —

"It's a shame Viola should n't have one of her own cigarettes. I'll give her my second."

"She can have one of mine, too," said Emily.

"Thank you," returned Viola hastily. "I don't want any. I gave them to you."

"Oh, do try one!" urged Marie.

"Yes, do!" said Tony sardonically. "Do try one, Viola. They are anxious enough to get rid of them."

She flung this taunt at the crowd, but

her eye met mine with a challenge I would not evade. "I want my second one," I said.

Valor met valor. "So do I," smiled Tony.

From this point, my recollections are vague. We talked about Madame Davide, and whether she really did not understand English, or only pretended not to, — a point which had never been satisfactorily settled. We talked about Madame Bouron, and her methods (which we held unworthy) of finding out all she knew. I added little to the sprightliness of the conversation, and after a while I slipped away. On the stairs a kindly fate threw me into the arms of Sister O'Neil, who had charge of the vestry, and who was carrying piles of clean linen to the dormitories. She was a friendly soul (nearly all the lay sisters were good to us), and she took possession of me then and there. When I was safe in bed, — collapsed but comforted, — she sprinkled me with holy water, and tucked the light covers carefully around me. "Lie quiet now," she said. "I'll go tell Madame Rayburn where you are, and that there was no time to ask leave of anybody."

I did lie very quiet, and, after a while, fell into a doze, from which the sound of footsteps woke me. Some one was standing at the foot of my bed. It was Tony. She looked a trifle more sallow than usual, but was grinning cheerfully. "I'm better now," she said.

The delicate emphasis on the *now* was like a condensed epic. "So am I," I murmured confidentially.

Tony disappeared, and in a few minutes was back again, comfortably attired in a dressing gown and slippers. She perched herself on the foot of my bed. "Has n't it been a perfect *congé*?" she sighed happily. (Oh, blessed memory of youth!) "If you'd seen Madame Duncan, though, when I came stealing out of the chapel, — without a veil, too. 'What does this mean, Tony?' she said. 'It is n't possible that' —"

There was an abrupt pause. "Well?"

I asked expectantly, though I had heard it all several times already; but Tony's eyes were fixed on the little pile of clean linen lying on my chair.

"Oh! I say," she cried, and there was a joyous ring in her voice. "Here's our chance. Let's change all the girls' washes."

I gazed at her with heartfelt admiration. To have passed recently through so severe a crisis, — a crisis which had reduced me to nothingness; and yet to be able instantly to think of such a charming thing to do. Not for the first time, I felt proud of Tony's friendship. Her resourcefulness compelled my homage. Had we been living in one of Mr. James's novels, I should have called her "great" and "wonderful."

"Get up and help," said Tony.

I stumbled out of bed, and into my slippers. My head felt curiously light when I lifted it from my pillow, and I had to catch hold of my curtain rod for support. The dormitory floor heaved up and down. Tony was already at work, carrying the linen from one side of the room to the other, and I staggered weakly after her. There were thirty beds, so it took us some time to accomplish our mission; but "The labor we delight in physicks pain;" and it was with a happy heart, and a sense of exalted satisfaction, that I saw the last pile safe in the wrong alcove, and crawled back between my sheets. — "Something attempted, something done, to earn a night's repose." Tony sat on my bed, and we talked confidentially until we heard the girls coming upstairs. Then she fled, and I waited developments.

They entered more noisily than was their wont. The law ruled that a *congé* came to an end with night prayers, after which no word might be spoken; but it was hard to control children who had been demoralized by a long day of liberty. Moreover, the Seven Dolours dormitory was ever the most turbulent of the three; its inmates lacking the docility of the very little girls, and the equanimity of the big ones. They were all at what is called the

troublesome age. There was a note of anxiety in Madame Chapelle's voice, as she hushed down some incipient commotion.

"I must have perfect silence in the dormitory," she said. "You have talked all day; now you must go quietly to bed. Do you hear me, children? Silence!"

There was a lull, and then — I knew it must soon come — a voice from the far end of the room. "I have thirty-seven's clothes" (everything was marked with our school numbers), "instead of mine."

"Mary Aylmer, be quiet!" commanded Madame Chapelle.

"But, Madame, I tell you truly, I have thirty-seven's clothes. Who is thirty-seven?"

"I am," cried another voice, — Eloise Didier's. "But I have n't got your clothes, Mary Aylmer. I've got Alice Campbell's. Here, Alice — twenty-two — come take your things."

"Who is thirty-three? Ruffled night-gown with two buttons off. Oh, shame!" sang out Marie jubilantly.

"Children, will you be silent!" said Madame Chapelle, angry and bewildered. "What do you mean by such behavior?"

"Forty-two's stockings want darning," said a reproachful voice. It was very probable, for I was forty-two.

"So do thirty-eight's."

"Adelaide H. McC. Harrison," Elizabeth read slowly, and with painstaking precision. "Have n't you any more initials, Adelaide, you could have put on your underclothes?"

"Look again, Elizabeth. Surely there's a coronet somewhere?" interposed Eloise Didier sardonically. Adelaide was not popular in our community.

"Three coronets, a sceptre, and a globe," said Elizabeth.

"Children," began Madame Chapelle; but her voice was lost in the scurrying of feet, as girl after girl darted across the polished floor to claim her possessions, or to rid herself of some one else's. They were, I well knew, devoutly grateful for this benign confusion, and were making the most of it. Fate did not often throw such chances in their way. For a moment I felt that noble joy which in this world is granted only to successful effort, to the accomplishment of some well-planned, well-executed design. Then silence fell suddenly upon the room, and I knew, though I could not see, that every girl was back in her own alcove.

"May I ask the meaning of this disorder!" said Madame Rayburn coldly.

She was *surveillante*, and was making the round of the dormitories, to see that everything was quiet after the day's excitement. Madame Chapelle began a nervous explanation. There was some mistake about the laundry. None of the children had their own clothes. They were trying — rather noisily, she admitted — to exchange them. Was it possible that Sister O'Neil —

"Sister O'Neil!" interrupted Madame Rayburn impatiently. "Sister O'Neil had nothing to do with it. Answer me quietly, children. Did you all find you had some one else's clothes?"

There was a murmur of assent, — a polite, subdued, apologetic sort of murmur; but, none the less, of universal assent. At that instant I remembered Sister O'Neil's parting words to me, and, with the instinctive impulse of the ostrich, slid deeper in my little bed. A quick step crossed the dormitory. A firm hand drew my curtain. "Agnes!" said Madame Rayburn, in a terrible voice.

Ah, well! Anyway, the *congé* was over.

THE COMING OF THE TIDE¹

BY MARGARET SHERWOOD

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"One of them," observed Frances Wilmot to the sea, "is like a sudden squall when the water is all furious, and driven this way and that; the other—the other is like your deepest deep, where dim, rich things lie hidden at the heart of the tides. The squall blows over and the water forgets, but the tide must go endlessly on its appointed way."

The sea answered with all its myriad beauty of motion and color and sound. Across the brown rocks, purple-tinted where they gleamed with wet, a great green wave rolled in with exquisite curving, and the girl watched vainly for the moment when the blue of the deep water melted into the green of the wave, and for that when all shifted into pale foam. Leaning back against the rock, her hands clasped behind her head, and the wind from the sea blowing back her hair and her fluttering sleeves, she spoke aloud, exultantly, forgetting her decision of yesterday.

"No one but me knows the treasure hidden at the heart of him, and it is mine, all mine."

Delicate, clear morning rested over the sea, and the rising tide brought Frances Wilmot, to whom the everlasting rhythm had grown to mean always a feeling of gain or of loss, strong sense of incoming life. Pale and far, a fairy dream of blue, the water stretched, with myriad sparkles of light, light, light, breaking the surface a thousand ways, moving hither and yon, and gleaming as if invisible mermaids in countless numbers were waving torches of flame. The freshness of those moments when earth was young was on land and sea, in the early look of blue water and the hints of silver mist not yet cleared

from the face of the deep; and its voice was as the first murmur out of primeval quiet. Far away, dim with distance, two fishing boats were daintily riding the waves. Watching them, the girl leaned forward, and her eyes were wet.

"Tell me if I love him," she begged of her comrade sea.

The great waves answered her in deep murmur on the rocks, and in faintest ripples over pebble and sand.

"I did not want to," she whispered, with the sob of the tide in her voice. "I was content, for I had you and all the other beauty, and my old happiness, and my old pain. It was all good, and I saw my way."

From the heart of the sea to the heart of the woman came a cry, deep calling unto deep.

"I am afraid," she said, brokenly, and the ocean, with moving finger, wrote its infinite meanings on rock and sand.

Frances Wilmot rose and walked along the lonely shore, over pebbly beach and grass-grown headland, and golden butterflies followed as in pursuit. The touch of autumn was over all the land, and the gray cliffs jutting into the water were aster-covered and crowned with yellowing grass. At her feet the tangled blackberry vines were touched with red, and all the hinted purple and crimson and gold seemed to her full of the great encompassing rhythm of things. Wandering the way of the sea, she sang to herself, her song of the fullness of life flowing out in melody that only now and then found words. The lilt of her voice caught the sound of the breaking wave, and its low notes chimed with the withdrawing ripple. Little trills as of human laughter broke and splashed with the foaming spray as the singer went on, voice and feet and

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