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BY O. DOUGLAS

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Solemn Small Boy—"Penny plain, please. It's better value for the money."

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CHAPTER XIV.—(Cont'd.)

Lord Bidborough stopped before a shelf. "This is a catholic selection."

"Those are my favorite books," said Jean—"modern books, I mean."

"I see." He went along the shelf, naming each book as he came to it. "'The Long Roll' and 'Cease Firing.' Two great books. I should like to read them again now."

"Now one could read them," said Jean. "Through the War I tried to, but I had to stop. The writing was too good—to graphic, somehow. . . ."

"Yes, it would be poignant. . . . 'John Splendid.' I read that one autumn in Argyle—slowly—about two chapters a day, making it last as long as I could."

"Isn't it fine?" said Jean. "John Splendid, who never spoke the truth except to an enemy! Do you remember the scene with the blind widow of Glencoe? And John Splendid was so gallant and tactful: 'dim in the sight,' he called her, for he wouldn't say 'blind'; and then was terrified when he heard that plague had been in the house, and would have left without touching the outstretched hand, and Gordon, the harsh-mannered minister, took it and kissed it, and the blind woman cried, 'O Clan Campbell, I'll never call ye down—ye may have the guile they claim for ye, but ye have the way with a woman's heart,' and poor John Splendid went out covered with shame."

Jean's eyes were shining, and she had forgotten to be awkward and tongue-tied.

"I remember," said Lord Bidborough. "And the wonderful descriptions—'I know corries in Argyle that whisper silken' . . . do you remember that? And the last scene of all when John Splendid rides away?"

"Do you cry over books, Jean?" Pamela asked. She was sitting on the end of the sofa, her embroidery frame in her hand and her cloak on, ready to go when her brother had finished looking at Jean's treasures.

Jean shook her head. "Not often. Great-aunt Allison said it was the sign of a feeble mind to waste tears over fiction, but I have cried. Do you remember the end of 'The Mill on the Floss'? Tom and Maggie have been estranged, and the flood comes, and Tom goes to save Maggie. He is rowing when he sees the great mill machinery sweeping down on them, and he takes Maggie's hand, and calls her the name he had used when they were happy children together—'Magsie!'"

Pamela nodded. "Nothing appeals to you so much as family affection, Jean girl. What have you got now, Biddy? 'Nelly's Teachers?'"

"Oh, that," said Jean, getting pink—"that's a book I had when I was a child, and I still like it so much that I read it through every year."

"Oh, Jean, you babe!" Pamela cried. "Can you actually still read goody-goody girls' stories?"

"Yes," said Jean defiantly, "and enjoy them too."

"And why not?" asked Lord Bidborough. "I enjoy 'Huckleberry Finn' as much now as I did when I was twelve; and I often yearn after the books I had as a boy and never see now. I used to lie on my face poring over them. 'The Clipper of the Clouds,' and 'Sir Ludar,' and a fairy story called 'Rigmarole in Search of a Soul,' which, I remember, was quite beautiful, but can't lay hands on anywhere."

Jean looked at him gratefully, and thought to herself that he wasn't going to be a terrifying person after all. For his age—Jean knew that he was thirty-five, and had expected something much more mature—he seemed oddly boyish. He had an expectant young look in his eyes, as if he were always waiting for some chance of adventure to turn up, and there were humorous lines about his mouth which seemed to say that he found the world a very funny place, and was exceedingly well amused.

He certainly seemed very much at home at The Rigs, fondling the rare old books with the hands of a book lover, inspecting the colored prints, chaffing Jock and Mhor, who fawned round him like two puppy dogs. Peter had at once made friends with him, and Mrs. M'Cosh, coming into the room on some errand, edged her way out backwards, her eyes fixed on the newcomer with an approving stare. As she told Jean later: "For a' Andra pit me against lords, I canna see muckle wrang wi' this yin. A rale pleasant fellow I tak' him to be, lord or no lord. If they were a' like him, we wudna need to be Socialists. It's queer I've aye hed a hankerin' after thae high-born kinna folk. It's that interestin' to watch them. Ye never ken whit they'll dae next, or whit they'll say—they're that audacious. We wud mak' an awfu' dull warld o' it if we pit them a' awa to Ameriky or somewhere. I often tell't Andra that, but he said it wud be a guid riddance. . . . I'm wonderin' what Bella Bathgate thinks o' him. It'll be great to hear her breath on't. She's quite comin' roond to Miss Reston. She was tellin' me she disna think there's onything veecious about her, and she's gettin' quite used to her manners."

When Pamela departed with her brother to partake of a dinner cooked by Miss Bathgate (a somewhat doubtful pleasure), Mhor went off to bed, and Jock curled himself up on the sofa with Peter, for his Friday night's extra hour with a story-book, while Jean resumed her darning of stockings.

Her thoughts were full of the sister and brother who had just left. "Queer they are!" she thought to herself. "If Davie came back to me after a year in India, I wouldn't have liked to meet him in somebody else's house. But they seemed quite happy to look at books, and talk about just anything, and play with Jock and Mhor and tease Peter. Now I expect they'll be talking about their own affairs, but I would have rushed at the pleasure of hearing all about everything—I couldn't have waited. Pamela has such a leisured air about everything she does. It's nice and sort of aloof and quiet—but I could never attain to it. I'm little and bustling and Martha-like."

Here Jean sighed, and put her fingers through a large hole in the toe of a stocking.

"I'm only fit to keep house and darn and worry the boys about washing their ears. . . . Anyway, I'm glad I had on my Chinese coat."

CHAPTER XV.

Jock and Mhor looked back on the time Lord Bidborough spent in Priorsford as one long, rosy dream.

It is true they had to go to school as usual, and learn their home lessons, but their lack of attention in school-hours must have sorely tried their teachers, and their home lessons were crushed into the smallest space of time so as not to interfere with the crowded hours of glorious living that Lord Bidborough managed to make for them.

That nobleman turout out to be the most gifted player that Jock and Mhor had ever met. There seemed no end to the games he could invent, and he played with a zest that carried every one along with him.

Mhor's great passion was for trains. He was no budding engineering genius; he cared nothing about knowing what made the wheels go round; it was the trains themselves, the glorious, puffing, snorting engines, the comfortable guards' vans, and the signal-boxes that enchanted him. He thought a signalman's life was one of delirious happiness; he thrilled at the sight of a porter's uniform, and hoped that one day he too might walk abroad dressed like that, wheel people's baggage on a trolley, and touch his hat when given tips. It was his great treat to stand on the iron railway-bridge and watch the trains snorting deliriously underneath, but the difficulty was he might not go alone, and as everyone in the house fervently disliked the task of accompanying him, it was a treat that came all too seldom for the Mhor.

It turned out that Lord Bidborough also delighted in trains, and he not only stood patiently on the bridge watching goods-trains shunting up and down, but he made friends with the porters, and took Mhor into prohibited areas such as signal-boxes and goods sheds, and showed him how signals were worked, and ran him up and down on trolleys.

One never-to-be-forgotten day a sympathetic engine-driver lifted Mhor into the engine and, holding him up high above the furnace, told him to pull a chain, whereupon the engine gave an anguished hoot. Mhor had no words to express his pleasure, but in ecstasy of gratitude he seized the engine-driver's grimy hand and kissed it, leaving that honest man, who was not accustomed to such on-goings, considerably confused.

Jock did not share Mhor's interest in "base mechanic happenings"; his passion was for the world at large, his motto, "For to admire and for to see." He had long made up his mind that he must follow some profession that would take him to far places. Mrs. Hope suggested the Indian Army, while Mr. Jowett loyally recommended the Indian Civil Service, though he felt bound in duty to warn Jock that it wasn't what it was in his young days, and was indeed hardly fit now for a white man.

Jock felt that Mrs. Hope and Mr. Jowett were wise and experienced, but they were old. In Lord Bidborough he found one who had come hot foot from the ends of the earth. He had seen with his own eyes, and he could tell Jock tales that made the coveted far lands live before him; and Jock fell down and worshipped.

Through the day, while the two boys were interned in school, Pamela took her brother the long walks over the hills that had delighted her days in Priorsford. Jean sometimes went with them, but more often she stayed at home. It was her mission in life, she said, to stay at home and have meals ready for people when they returned, and it was much better that the brother and sister should have their walks alone, she told herself. Excessive self-confidence was not one of Jean's faults. She was much afraid of boring people by her presence, and shrank from the third that constitutes "a crowd."

(To be continued.)

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The remnants of long-discarded foulard dress made a lovely tie with large white polka dots on a navy blue background. Another tie cut from an old roman stripe silk scarf adds a gay bit of color to a white middy blouse.

Then there was the old china silk waist, worn in the sleeves and cream-colored from much laundering, which seemed to offer possibilities. This furnished material which, with the aid of some bits of "dyeing soap" which I happened to have on hand, were transformed into two beautiful ties, one of brown and one of red.

Altogether I felt my rummage in the rag bag had been well worth while. —R. H. O.

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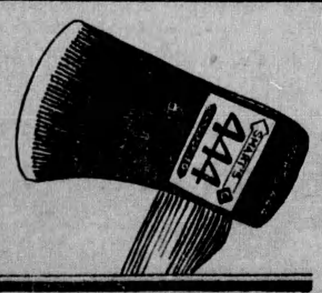

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