

of familiarity about the way in which she had mentioned Guy. Brother Joseph also suspected, and stroked his beard, watching his sister's face. Then as she rose to leave the table he demanded sternly:

"Car'line, where have you spent this afternoon?"

But by now her handkerchief was up to her eyes. "B-b-bed room!" she sobbed and vanished through the doorway, leaving them doubtful as to whether she had answered the question or given them the address of her place of refuge.

Silas had a nervous impediment in his speech which caused him to punctuate every two or three words with a noise in the back of his throat, which sounded like "Mew!" Whenever he mewed he coughed to disguise it, and gazed behind him with a worried expression as if seeking a ghostly kitten.

"Who (mew) is Guy?" he inquired.

"Don't know," said Joseph crossly. "But I'll tell you what: if you want her, you'd best say so!"

"I'll (mew) think it over (mew)," said Silas.

"You'll do nothing o' the sort!" snapped out Joseph,

entered: she was gazing from the window out across the road. He went up to her kindly and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Car'line," he said, "ain't it time you spoke to Silas?"

She turned her head impulsively and kissed his hand. "Oh, Joe," she sobbed, "you don't understand!"

He drew up a chair and sat down beside her. "What is it, Sister?" he asked. "What is it I don't understand? Is it something about this feller Guy?"

She laughed hysterically, shaking her head, and then pointed gravely with her finger across the road. "It's that," she said. "Ever since I was a child I've looked out from these same windows and seen jest that! And I'm tired—and I want to see life!"

When she told him what seeing life meant,—the spending of a thousand dollars on a trip to Europe,—he gasped with astonishment. "One would think we were made of money, to hear you talk, Sister Car'line," he said.

"An' to hear you talk, Brother Joseph, one would

that her joints grew more supple, so that her gamboling became more effective and drew more attention to her, it is not for me to say; but my belief is that she reported to Bethlehem more adventures than she ever found in Europe.

HER love affairs were incessant. She, who, save for the weak eyed Silas, had passed unnoticed of men in Bethlehem, was now importuned by them in droves. Her first affair was very mild. The Captain of the steamer that took her over told her at parting that he would never forget her eyes. She showed herself grateful and satisfied; but rebuked him gently by saying that such remarks were not considered quite the thing in the social circle of which she was the hub in America.

Her second took place at a Parisian boarding house: it began as the first had ended, with a rebuke. After dinner the ladies had retired from the table, leaving her alone with the men—she could not think why. She stayed longer, because the dessert was good and she was paying seven dollars a week and she was anxious to eat her money's worth. A young Englishman who had paid her a good deal of attention asked her whether she objected to their smoking and drinking champagne. (I think in this case, at least, Cousin Caroline must have meant just plain wine.) She told him yes, she most strongly objected: in the social circle in which she moved in America—etc. After which they all rose from the table, and bowing to her politely left the room.

The suspicion grew upon her as she lay awake that night that she had expressed herself too pronouncementally. First thing next morning she seized the opportunity to explain to the Englishman the strictness of American social conditions which had prompted her to take that attitude. She asked him to request the other gentlemen to stay at table with her as long as they liked, and to conduct themselves as was customary with their nation.

The Englishman was very nice about it; so nice, in fact that he broke through his incognito and confided to her, under pledge of secrecy, that in England he was a Duke. After that matters advanced rapidly, and they had many intimate conversations. They went on a tourist trip by boat through the Paris sewers, during which she turned faint and afraid. He placed his arm about her, and that was the climax.

At parting he kissed her hand tenderly and invited her, if ever she crossed the Channel, to visit him at the Mansion House, which lay in the heart of his ancestral estates. She had thought at first of doing so; but, considering the rapid progress their friendship had made in so short a time, out of deference to Silas had come to the conclusion that such a course would not be wise.

Wherever she traveled in Europe, she left broken hearts behind her. There was a Russian nobleman at Lucerne who conducted her over his château, explaining to her that everything was hers if she would be his wife. The château was very ancient, and you purchased an admittance ticket for a franc at the gate. The nobleman was so eccentric that he insisted on buying a ticket for himself before entering his own home.

In Italy she was specially triumphant. Italians, being a swarthy people, were astounded at her golden hair. In the stores men addressed her as "Madonna," squeezed her fingers in handing her her change, and even went down on their knees before her when they found that their love words were unintelligible; that is, they did in the Bethlehem version. In the streets it was a positive annoyance the way folks stared after her. Whenever she went out after dusk in Rome, casements would fly open, and voices sigh, and flowers flutter down to her.

SILAS and Brother Joseph between them made Caroline the talk of Bethlehem. Her letters, when they came, made them so excited that they couldn't keep quiet: they had to go outside and "blow," as Brother Joseph put it. Cousin Caroline found on her return home that they had blown her from the little, female, unmarried nonentity that she was when she went away, into the notoriety of a regnant European beauty. All her adventures were known; so that even in her own home town, where reputations are so grudgingly accepted, she had become an important personage. Whatever she chose to add, by way of embroidery, to the information already in hand was received with thankfulness and credulity.

When Silas came round to renew his proposal, she smiled on him with a languid worldly wise kindness; but could venture to give him no hope. She betook herself to learning, and was often heard to say that she lived not in Bethlehem but in her books.

AT the end of a year the wander fever seized her again. She had been reading about Greece and became crazy to go there. Upon inquiry she was disconcerted to discover that Greece was not considered a safe country for a lady to travel in without a male escort. She proposed to Joseph that he should accompany her. He had become very submissive of late, and she thought at first that she might persuade him. But Joseph shook his head slowly and said:

"No, Sister Car'line. I'm a modest man, an' if I reck'lect those pictures of stat'ry you showed me, it's a place where they don't wear clothes."

He sat silent, thoughtfully stroking his beard; then his face lit up with sudden inspiration. "Tell you what I'd do if I was you: I'd take Silas."

Five minutes passed by in which neither spoke. Then she turned her face away from him and inquired briefly, "Kind o' honeymoon?"

"Waal—yes."

She smoothed out her dress with the palms of her hands and hesitated. "Poor old Si!" she whispered. "Yes, I guess I might."



"Sister Car'line," said Joseph. "You'd Best Not Say Such Things Outside."

"You've thought it over these fifteen years and more, and it's most time you came to the point. D'you want her?"

"Yes (mew). Tell her (mew)," said Silas. Then, in his nervousness, he sought the kitten and, finding his hat, departed.

ALL three were missed from church that night. Late in the evening Joseph crept upstairs to tell his sister. Finding the door locked on the inside, he postponed his news till morning. Even to his prosaic mind there was something too grossly unromantic about whispering a second-hand marriage proposal through a keyhole.

At breakfast, ten hours later, he broached the subject. Between sips of hot coffee he divulged his secret. "Si—Si has—Si has made up his mind." He reached out his hand nervously and removed a vase of flowers from the middle of the table, because it hid her face. Then he waited for her reply.

"Made up his mind!" she inquired, flushing. "To what has he made up his mind?"

"Preet-ty good! Waal, I call that preet-ty good, after near twenty years of courtin'. To what should he have made up his mind? To get married, surely!"

"Has he, indeed, Brother? And to whom?"

Joseph regarded her solemnly. "Waal, it isn't to me," he drawled; "so maybe it's to you."

"I guess not!" said Caroline with a toss of her head. "I'm too young for Silas."

Joseph tugged at his beard and snorted, a sure sign that he was alarmed and that his temper would soon rise. He pushed back his chair and, controlling himself, said quietly, "Car'line, you jest guess again; an' next time you guess remember just how old you were last birthday."

"Age don't go by years nowadays," she replied tartly: "it goes by how you feel."

ALL that week she sat in her bedroom and read Guy. Her spirit was elated and her imagination on fire. She wondered how it was she could have lived in such ignorance of Europe. She pictured what life would mean with Silas,—just Bethlehem to the end of her days,—and then she started in to study the Atlantic sailings.

One evening Joseph came home and found her seated by the parlor window, surrounded by guidebooks. She had grown much younger in appearance of late, more vivacious and excited, and more juvenile in her toilet. He was pleased with the change; though he wouldn't have owned it for the world. She did not turn when he

suppose we didn't have enough to cover our heads."

"But how about Silas?" he asked.

"I'll answer Silas when I come home."

AND so she drew out one-fifth of her savings from the bank and sailed for France, to discover life. What precisely she expected to find over there, I'm sure I don't know,—perhaps a husband, a tragic fellow like one of those depicted by Guy. Certainly she hoped that she was going to meet the great adventure of her career.

I picture her as a gentle old sheep, somewhat stiff in the joints, self persuaded she was a lambkin, and doing the best to persuade others by gamboling her way through Europe.

Her French author had led her to suppose that the Continent was the home of the gaily wicked and the desperately gallant. I am thankful to say that she met with no one who was so unkind as to undeceive her. She had fled from Bethlehem to escape virtue, because it had made her tired. Had she found virtue primly seated on the wharf, waiting for her on the other side, the romance of her journey would have been utterly ruined.

It speaks volumes for the deep down goodness of mankind that all her kindred sheep, when she frisked toward them, guessing the purpose of her errand, I suppose, promptly donned wolf's clothing to oblige her. She wrote home entranced and delighted. According to her account, all the women she met either smoked or had smoked, and all the men fell in love with her and drank champagne. Such information gave Joseph the fidgets. He read me extracts from her letters and sought my advice. But later on, when she recorded her friendships with Countesses and Dukes, he plucked up spirit and began to boast with not unnatural pride.

"Waal," he would say, "I had no idee that our Car'line was so attractive to foreign folks. I guess we ain't valooed her right. Did you notice what the Count said to her? Preet-ty good! I call that preet-ty good! She's jest provin' what I allus told her, that we Bethlehemites could hold our end up as high as any of them aristocrats of durned old Europe."

Silas Jephcott was often present at these readings, and would mew his indignant surprise. He was a weak eyed little bachelor, tenacious of the habitual. Now that his habit of Caroline was broken, he was experiencing love in all its frenzied jealousy for the first time.

Caroline's passionate pilgrimage, as recorded in her letters, tended to increase in intensity as her absence lengthened. Whether it was that her imagination expanded with use and her narrative style improved, or