

THE OPEN SESAME

BLUEBELL STEWART PHILLIPS*

How anyone who has enjoyed the delight of living through a winter season into spring can think of a winterless climate, I do not know. Were I to spend the winter in the warm south I know my heart would cry out for the brisk bright mornings when the snow lies in a wide silver sheath across the fields and parks; for dark, stormy afternoons when the rolling clouds, black and angry, rush over the breast of the city and the bitter winds sting like a whip-lash. How delightful home and the smell of a fragrant supper seem then! But how exciting and lively the outdoors sounds when one is comfortably reclining in a deep armchair listening to the latest thriller on the radio, or hearing the wild throbbing of the "Ride of the Valkyries" piercing the rude weather!

Away from my beloved Candian scene I would miss the sudden spells of warmth, when a kindly sun turns the world into a semblance of the Flood, and youngsters shout gleefully beside the pools, glad of the spring-like respite; happy that another day or so will give them back sledding and overshoe hockey.

Winter is a challenge if nothing else: when one can no longer meet a challenge, or no longer wants to, then of a certainty something alive and wonderful has gone out of the soul. So long as the *joie de vivre* is part of one's being, so long is the sheer, joyous, youthful delight in battling the elements alive.

Yet, winter is not all furious wind and winging snow: how delicately she spreads her beauty over autumn's waning loveliness; waiting, not timidly but with magnificent generosity, until the riotous colours on valley and mountain have faded to a smoky haze before throwing an embroidery of clearest crystal on tree and shrub and field. What a scintillating, glowing picture the world presents then!

Now as April runs with light feet over country and town, there is a wonderful savour to life. Abandonment enters the soul as heavy wearing apparel is discarded. What a lively music is the bright sound of heels on the side-walk. At the first sign of dry streets off come the overshoes: how joyfully one writes a spring symphony, "The Heels Concerto", on the bare patches of pavement!.

*Of Montreal, P. Q.

Did you never lie abed on an April morning and have your senses assailed by a strange melody—a nostalgic music, rhythmic and inspiring—and suddenly realize children were skipping? And then, while your adult body lay quiet on the bed, has your young soul not hurried out into the bright morning to take its turn at:

Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn around:
Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the ground?

What has the slumbrous south to offer in comparison with that revivifying, intoxicating experience?

And marbles! What a merry music *they* make! Only spring is responsible for the ardour with which small folk aim bits of coloured glass toward a shallow excavation, faces alert and expectant.

There is the less tangible music of spring too—the first rain slashing across the windows, or falling with mournful cadence through the dark of an April night, pregnant with the same lilt that a few days will bring from the tadpoles in mysterious corners we city dwellers rarely discover.

How old will a man be before he loses his joy in the first returning robin? So old that his sight has failed, his ears lost their hearing and his soul its memories. "I've seen a robin!" The winter is gone, spring has come, the resurrection is a fact.

How crisp and champagne-like the scent of winter, following the musky, tangy odours of autumn; how intoxicating the almost tangible fragrance that is delightful beyond description of spring. One who spends winter in the south and returns in time for spring realizes only a moiety of this exquisiteness;—he can no more taste the whole of it than he could savour wine after dulling his tongue with overseasoning.

Winter is the "Open Sesame" to the wonder of a Canadian spring.