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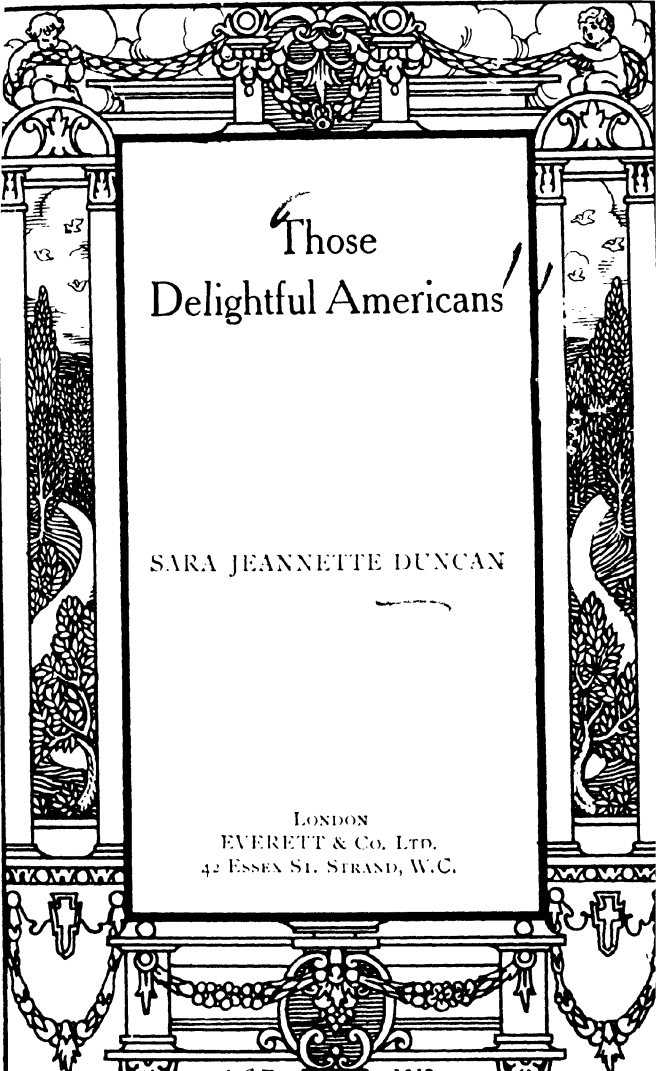
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THOSE DELIGHTFUL AMERICANS



IN NEW YORK



Those
Delightful Americans

SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN

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THOSE DELIGHTFUL AMERICANS
By Sara Jeannette Duncan

Those Delightful Americans

CHAPTER I

My mother-in-law was sitting on the lawn as we came up the drive. She sat beneath the pink horse-chestnut with a rug under her feet in the last Kashmir chudder Monty and Keith between them had presented her with; the rest were put away in camphor in a wardrobe in the blue room. We often told my mother-in-law that she was like Queen Victoria in her accumulation of Indian shawls; it would draw a smile from any mood. There was an old grey, too, with a small hole burnt in it and the fringe slightly moth-eaten; that, I think, had been given to her grandfather by a Rajah, but she wore it now in the mornings, reading prayers or giving orders, or if anything took her to the larder. The new one betokened tea-time; the yew bush behind her chair threw it out, white and square, and agreeably suggestive. Frances was there too, with a book from Mudie's—one could see the label. It was plain even at that distance that the book was a novel, and that Frances didn't think much of it. She held it as far away from her as possible, and the angle of her head was hostile. Fry was doddering across the lawn under the weight of the tray. It was

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plainly too much for him, and Parsons, following with the ~~muffin-dish~~ and the urn, voiced a general opinion in the look she cast upon his round back and shaky legs. It was not in the least as if Fry had grown old in the use of the family. He had applied for the situation, with his dyed whiskers and ~~stuffed calves~~, only two months before, and to criticism of his suitability on the score of age my mother-in-law would only reply that he came with an excellent character and had more than one dependent on him. Between the trees on the far side of the glebe meadows one could see the church spire; it is the view from Burroughs—my mother-in-law is immensely proud of it. It is another little joke to tell her that she is content with the view, since she has driven all the way to Cobhampton on Sundays ever since the day when she and Frances walked out of church for reasons connected with the vicar's sermon. Some rooks were talking in the elms behind the stables—Frances says the rooks made life in the country unbearable with their noise—and the roof of the carter's van moved along the top of the red-brick wall between the rose garden and the road.

"Should you like to tell her?" Kaye said to me.

"No indeed, thank you," I said, and we both laughed.

My mother-in-law greeted us without putting down her knitting. She looked very pink and very placid, as if she had spent the whole morning in the village doing good, very unsuspecting. Frances had more *flair*, as usual.

"Whatever you've got to say you might as well say at once," she remarked. Frances is my mother-in-law's niece and the daughter of a bishop. The bishop is dead, but he lives again

in Frances. He could never have received his diocese for his suavity.

"We *have* a bit of news," said Kaye, with a note of apology.

"We are likely to be obliged to go to America," I forestalled him after all.

"Go to America!" exclaimed both ladies at once. My mother-in-law's expression was one of simple bewilderment. Frances looked ironical. "What under the sun for?" said she.

"Not for pleasure," Kaye observed gloomily. "You may happen to remember"—he addressed his mother—"that part of your income is derived from shares in the Manhattan Electric Belt Company?"

"Has it failed?" demanded Mrs Kemball. "If so, tell me at once, Kaye. You know how I dislike being prepared for things. Dear me, that's the loss of a clear——"

"It has not failed," interposed Kaye, with that superior correcting air which Englishmen use toward their female relatives. "If it had——"

"I should have been obliged to put down the brougham and reduce the kitchen very considerably."

"There would be no occasion for me to go to the States," Kaye finished.

"What is the occasion?" asked Frances precisely.

"They've taken up a project of amalgamation—there's no use going into it, you wouldn't understand—and Travers and I think it had better be looked into. Travers can't go, and he says I must. As a co-trustee, with power from him, one's vote would make a difference. You see, one way or the other, mother holds such a con-founded lot of shares."

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"Then you go—if you go—with my consent as my representative," said my mother-in-law.

"Certainly!"

"It must be considered"—Mrs Kemball put down her knitting—"but not before the servants, please." Fry had tottered away rubbing his hands, but Parsons was again approaching with the dough cake. It was a particularly doughy dough cake, but the best the village baker could do, and we had to eat it on account of the village baker's young family and threatened insolvency. All but Frances, who declared that her digestion was of more consequence to her than anything that could happen to the baker. It was not everybody, however, who had the independence of Frances. Kaye at once took a large propitiatory slice.

We talked about the weather and the way the annuals were coming on until Parsons went away. It was rather a strain, but my mother-in-law would simply have ignored any other reference. Then there was a moment's silence while we waited for her to re-introduce the subject. Kaye had asked for a second cup before she did, but we always find it best to let her take her time.

"If it is only a process of amalgamation," she said at last. "I don't see why I should not make up my mind about it myself."

"Project," corrected Kaye. "Then will you go to America?"

He intended the finest irony, but Mrs Kemball replied: "I could not possibly be spared."

"Ask me," said Frances; "I should like above all things a wild adventure."

My mother-in-law saw humour in this suggestion, and smiled. "Fancy Frances," she said, "careering about, in what do you call them, the

cars? No, I couldn't spare Frances. And I fail to see the necessity for anyone's going."

Kaye stirred his tea.

"Amalgamation," pursued Mrs Kemball, "means, I suppose, the introduction of new metals. It would be perfectly easy to get advice about that in England."

I knew better than that, but I also knew better than to say I did. A snail had crawled across from the rose garden. I turned him over with the point of my parasol, hoping Frances would not see him, and kept silence. So did Kaye.

"Doesn't it?" demanded Mrs Kemball.

"No," said my husband. "Frances, you've given me sugar."

"I daresay I have," his cousin replied. "How is one to remember which of you takes sugar and which of you takes milk? Just drink it up and say no more about it."

"Amalgamation implies the introduction of something. Fry!"—we waited while Fry approached—"Bring me the dictionary—the large Webster—from the shelf nearest the fireplace in the morning-room. Amalgamate—of course, it is the merest common sense. If not a new metal, what is it they propose to introduce?"

"A new company," said Kaye.

"I knew I couldn't be wrong about such a perfectly simple word. Why will you always dispute things, dear boy? Now, will you explain *why* they want to introduce a new company?"

"I'm sorry, but I can't. I haven't a notion, mum. Thanks for the bread and butter, Frances."

"Then you must find out by correspondence. Write to New York."

"Shall you be inclined," put in Frances, "to believe everything they say in New York?"

"Why in the world," cried Mrs Kemball,

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"should you want them to go to America, Frances?"

"Oh, I'm tired of them," Frances said, with good humour. "They're so dreadfully honeymoony. When they come back perhaps they'll be more endurable."

This was ridiculous. We had been married four months.

"But I don't think," she continued, addressing us both, "that you have any business to come walking in at tea-time and say you are going to America."

"Certainly not. Travers should have written—I should have been prepared," said Mrs Kemball.

"You should have said it when you went walking out," I added my reproach, "after having led gently up to it."

"It's a perfect thunderbolt!" my mother-in-law summed up, looking with immense seriousness at the tea-table as if she saw it there. "Kaye is exactly like papa in that. I remember your father once, shortly after we were married, telling me at breakfast that he intended to go to Edinburgh on the following day. There was hardly time to order the fly for the luggage."

"There is a meeting of the shareholders," Kaye observed, "to-morrow fortnight."

"Are you expected?" Frances asked, with sarcasm.

"I don't know. Perhaps I shall be a surprise."

"Oh, well, that is out of the question," Mrs Kemball said, with a glance of slight anxiety at Kaye.

"The *Majestic* on Thursday, or the *Campania* on Saturday, would get us there in plenty of time," replied the son who was like his father.

"The *Majestic* on Thursday!" The name of

the ship seemed to destroy in my mother-in-law the spirit of opposition. She put down her knitting, which was the same as lowering her flag.

"Pray, don't take a record-breaker," Frances remarked. "Those Atlantic liners are always breaking each other's records. Most immoral and most dangerous I call it."

"We'll take one that has broken only her own record, if you think it would be safer," Kaye returned humorously; and his mother said, "Do, by all means, if it is to be found."

"If it had been India," said Frances meditatively, "one would have thought nothing of it. But America is so remote."

She was leaning forward sturdily in her chair with her knees well apart, her elbows planted just above them on her short legs, and her hands joined at the finger ends, dropped in the space which is usually indicated as a lady's lap. As she lifted a judicial chin and looked at us from under shaggy eyebrows with head a little on one side, I felt that the attitude was an inheritance from the bishop.

"It's only half the distance," said Kaye, who is also a little like his mother.

"If they are going to America they must have some introductions," said Mrs. Kemball. "Who is there we know with friends in the States?"

"Cook," said Frances genially. "Cook has a married sister in New York, and would be pleased to oblige."

"If it happened to be our cook," I put in, "she might give me a character, mightn't she?"

"It's all very well," returned Frances, "but Norah's sister's husband is an alderman. Norah says they use nothing but solid silver, and have their own phonograph. You may meet them in society."

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"Fancy Kaye taking cook's sister in to dinner!" I exclaimed, for something to say.

"It would do him good," pronounced Frances, who has socialistic sympathies which the family unite in deploring. As she has read up the subject, however, and nobody else has, we find it more dignified to ignore the things she says, or to indulge them with a smile.

My mother-in-law had been thinking. "There are the Fordyce-Pattersons," she said. "They have cousins in Florida, growing oranges, who might put you up for a week-end. And I know some people—Beresfords—belonging to the Dorset Beresfords—who went out to a ranche—or was it a sheep farm?—in Texas. But they have never been heard of since. I have often noticed that people who go to America simply disappear."

"We'll take return tickets," said Kaye.

"I believe there is a great deal of grass land in Texas—hundreds and thousands of square miles of it," observed Frances; "I suppose an occasional Englishman dropped about on it wouldn't make much of a figure. He would be swallowed up."

"There is an advantage, isn't there, in return tickets?—they allow you something," said Mrs Kemball. "You had better economize where you can. I understand the expense of living over there is scandalous. People simply throw away money. A shilling goes nowhere, and the hotel waiters expect gold, like private servants."

"Do they expect it every day?" asked Frances; "because, in that case, it might be cheaper to let the amalgamation proceed."

"They may expect," said Kaye, with firmness.

"You will have to black your own boots,"

Frances remarked, as if she enjoyed the idea. "Everybody does."

"What an extraordinary country!" ejaculated Mrs Kemball. "In that case you must have a new blacking-brush and several tins of Day and Martin. I will write to the stores for it at once. He couldn't take the things John has been using—Mrs Kemball addressed Frances—"John wouldn't understand it."

"You will see the inner workings of a great democracy. I wish I had your chance," said Frances.

"I wish you had. And I don't know about the inner workings. I expect I shall be quite satisfied with the outside," my husband replied, without enthusiasm.

"I shall expect full accounts of it by letter," Frances said.

"Oh, my goodness! Carrie, you'll have to write them."

"What shall we bring you?" I inquired diplomatically.

"I think I should like something made by the Indians." I had addressed Frances, but it was my mother-in-law who spoke. "And you might find out how many of them have become converts to our religion, and whether they still live in wigwams. It would interest me very much to hear that."

"I'll ask," said Kaye, "but I'm not sure whether they would know in New York."

"The squaws are very civilised indeed," I said, "judging by the pictures."

"Ah, well," said Frances, "over there the ladies always lead. Have they adopted visiting cards?"

"No," I said, "but they wear three petticoats;" and I glanced at Frances's limbs, which,

since they were not really entitled to gaiters, were much too well defined. She may or may not have seen the glance. All she said was, "Then they don't bicycle."

"You may bring me," she continued, "a piece of chewing-gum. That is a thing I have a great curiosity to see. All Americans, I'm told, chew gum, so they call it chewing-gum, though of course it is the people who chew, not the gum. It is extracted from a tree and it steadies their nerves. If it were not for chewing-gum they would have been at war with us long ago."

"That will be expensive," said Kaye. "They've put a tax on it to help them to pay for Cuba. Millions, they say, are rolling in as the result."

"Then don't be tempted," Mrs Kempball said, "to consume much of it. Leave it to those who can afford it."

"You may be thankful they don't put a war-tax on people entering the country," Frances said. "I notice they do on people leaving it. Five dollars—that's a sovereign, isn't it?—each."

"That's very intelligent of them," said Kaye. "You don't often feel that you're getting value for the money you spend on taxes."

"Do you think there is nothing good outside of England?" Frances demanded.

"I think there is quite enough inside it."

"America will be thrown away on you."

"On the contrary, I shall be thrown away on America," Kaye retorted, and with that we got up to go.

With much care and caution I put my snail again on a friendly footing, but Parsons, collecting the tea-things, and eager in that which did not concern her, discovered him. "Oh, ma'am, there's a snail," she said.

"Another?" exclaimed Mrs Kemball; "that makes the seventeenth to-day. Kill it on the gravel, Kaye."

"Not I," said Kaye hurriedly; "I—I haven't time. We really ought to be off, Carrie."

"Parsons!"

"Oh, don't ask me, ma'am, please. It's such a messy death, ma'am, a snail."

"Bring me two flat stones, Parsons, and don't be a goose," said Frances. As we made our farewells I dropped my parasol, and in picking it up contrived to slip the snail inside. From the drive, as we looked back, I saw Parsons standing with a look of horror and the two flat stones while the executioner on her knees looked in the grass for her victim. My mother-in-law had risen from her chair and was rolling up her knitting. "Fry," I heard her say, "you may take back the dictionary."

On our way home to Whitewood—it is only three miles, and we were walking—we overtook the postman, who handed us our letters. Among them was a hasty postcard from Laura Deane begging us to come to them on Wednesday for some scratch tennis. As he gave it to me the postman touched his cap. "If you like to write it, ma'am, I could take the answer to that'un on my round to-morrow mornin'. You'll have to send it by hand else, as the party's on Wednesday."

We wondered, as we accepted Higgin's kind offer, whether they would do as much for us in America.

CHAPTER II

PERHAPS it may have been evident that my husband was not particularly "keen," as he would have said, about going to America. The only explanation he seemed able to give was that he was very well pleased to stay where he was, unless I deign to add his statement that we should miss our own early peas and that he didn't like depending on John to exercise the horses. These reasons, of course, merely show how nonreasonable his disinclination was—how purely based on temperament and flavoured with insularity. That seems a severe word to use about one's husband, but if one interprets it as attachment to one's island, it is only a virtue somewhat over developed. I, too, am attached to my island, but not so far as to deny that there may be special attractions in a continent, or to be unenterprising about going to look for them—especially in the continent of America. One has always heard such piquant things about America. Also, I had a fancy that life in an island, even in the island of England, was apt to be too condensed, that there was not space for the accumulation of centuries to diffuse themselves properly, and that we lived in a kind of moral *purée*. In America I knew the air would not be so thick, one could see people better. This is simply to explain that Kaye, in representing to his mother that he was crossing

the Atlantic from a sense of duty to her, acted with sincerity, while I in allowing her to think, from all I left unsaid, that I accompanied from a sense of duty to Kaye, dissimulated. I don't know whether I was justified, but it is never expedient to let one's mother-in-law think one enthusiastic about going very far away from her; she imagines things.

The ship being a British one, I had no more idea that our American experiences would begin on board than that they would begin in Liverpool, but there I was mistaken. There is a vague and formless American element to be perceived in Liverpool in the summer months—an unknown word on the hotel staircase, a petticoat like a bird of strange plumage flitting in and out among the Liverpoolians—but in the tender it suddenly thickens, and on the ship it crystallizes into the predominating fact. Here and there on deck one could descry the form of a Briton, half submerged under his own flag, but there seemed to be vastly more Americans returning to their native land than English people making our voyage of discovery. I refrained from pointing this out to Kaye because it seemed to support his prejudice; but otherwise it was to me satisfactory. In my eager and hospitable state of mind I could not see Americans too many or Americans too diverse, I wanted to begin at once. Kaye was neither pleased nor displeased at their preponderance, he was so entirely taken up with the ship. It was certainly a large ship, and doubtless very wonderfully steered, with several comfortable floors and an attic most luxuriously upholstered and used as a library, but to me it was simply temporary quarters on the Atlantic for ourselves and the Americans, and I would no more have thought of looking at its engines than

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I would have gone poking about the axles of my carriage. Kaye, however, was perpetually "down" somewhere; do what I would, I could not keep him out of the stoke-hole. He seemed to want to know as much about the funnels and boilers and things of a ship as Rudyard Kipling does, which, considering he has no means of showing it, I thought a waste of time. He would establish me in a corner of the deck, as near to a group of Americans as I dared to direct him, and then he would disappear. I thought at first that they would speak to me in my abandonment, as I saw them address other lonely ladies in different parts of the deck, but none of them did; and then I noticed that those to whom this kindness was extended received it on other and more pathetic grounds. It seems shocking to have to confess to masking one's intentions twice in one chapter, but I was obliged in the end to close my eyes and smell my salts, otherwise not one of them would have said a word to me. On that first occasion I lay very still, and presently I heard a tentative voice quite close: "Do you still feel the motion of the vessel?" I looked up, feeling rather as if I had caught a squirrel. There the little thing stood in her brand-new golfing cape from Redfern's, and her smart plaid skirt—plaids were immensely worn that season—with her head on one side, pausing and poising as if the least thing would frighten her away, and yet in immediate personal relation with me. I *was* so pleased.

"I have not suffered so much on this voyage as on others," I said; "thank you very much;" and then, seeing the sympathetic interest fade in her eyes, I added hastily, "Not that I have ever crossed the Atlantic before. This will be my first visit to America."

It was fascinating to hear her say "Is that so?" And I had an anxious moment while she decided whether she would smile and resume her walk, or sit down beside me. Fortunately, the next chair happened to be hers, and she sank into it. I at once resolved as soon as she had gone away to look at the name on the back.

"Well," she said, crossing her beautiful little feet, "I hope you will have as good a time as I have had in England. Our country is different, of course——"

"I'm sure it's lovely," I interrupted.

I said this from conviction and not with any special wish to please, but she looked flattered and gratified.

"It's nice of you to say that," she said; "very nice." She pronounced it "vurry," precisely as they do in Mr Anstey's *Travelling Companions*, and we were travelling companions, so there was nothing lacking. I longed to ask her to go on about her country, but one could hardly do it when she took it so personally. "But you couldn't like America better than I like England," she continued, with a breadth of concession that was almost generous. "I think you ought to be proud of England. I suppose you are." She laughed a little, as if we were on disputable ground, and she had given me an advantage.

"I suppose so," I said; "I don't know."

"Well, I would know," she returned, and put me on the defensive.

"Perhaps," I said, "we have got used to the feeling and forget about it. As one forgets about all sorts of things."

She looked at me as if I had made the most of my advantage. "I call that being pretty proud of it"—I thought I detected a faint indignation in the way she said this—"and I can't say I admire

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all your customs. Taking off your hats to 'God Save the King,' for instance. Why do you do that?"

"I don't," I said. In my astonishment I could think of nothing else to say. Fancy objecting to capping the King!

Kaye told me afterwards that I should have explained that it was done as a mark of self-respect, but no one could think of a thing like that off-hand.

"It's subservient," she went on, "and unworthy of a population of forty millions."

"Are there as many of us as that?" I exclaimed. "I used to know, but——"

"That's your figure. Our population is seventy millions," she added, and comparison was so plainly implied that I felt suddenly inclined to challenge it.

"Do the forty millions include the Colonies and India?" I asked.

"Oh, do you count the Hindoos and Moham-medans?"

"Why not? They are human beings."

"But so low down in the scale of civilization."

"They built the Taj. I wonder how they would compare with your negroes," I said.

"Our negroes vote!" she exclaimed, as if that were conclusive, and I suddenly found that I was discussing something with a perfect stranger. One couldn't go on with that. I smelled my salts, and the American lady, reading defeat in the bottle, was generous again. "Well," she said, "anyway I would like to take England and put it right down in the middle of our country. Somewhere on the line of the Empire State Express."

"May I ask what that is?" I said.

"Oh, you'll find out soon enough. Besides,

"I couldn't describe it. Nobody could. There!" she said, laughing. "Thank goodness, that ticket has turned over at last. I thought it never would." She was looking at the luggage label attached to my chair, which had been flapping about in the wind. "I was dying to see what your name was. Mine isn't on my chair, so I'll have to give you my card."

"Thanks," I said, "I should be very glad—any time—"

"Oh, I've got it here," and she had. She took it from one of those dainty woven card-cases they make on the Jewellers' Bridge at Florence. It had a design of pearls and rubies, and she kept it in her bag. I felt awfully awkward about looking at the card, it seemed the sort of thing one ought to do in private. It was a great relief that she had a simple, plain name—"Mrs Horace Moss." Anything quaint or difficult would have put one out so much more. Going to America for the first time one is ignorant in many ways, and I am ashamed to say that I had no *savoir faire* whatever with regard to Mrs Moss's card. I glanced at it surreptitiously, but could not sit there holding it in her presence for ever—it would have looked as if she were a professional person, a manicurist, or something, and I wished her to go away. I know now that in American society one is expected to have a pocket-book or receptacle of some kind always at hand for this purpose, as any one may present any one else with a card at any time; and indeed that is the only way to save one from the misery, for lack of somewhere to put it, with which for two or three minutes I regarded Mrs Moss's card. I finally laid it down on an adjoining chair, whence, to my great comfort, as Mrs Moss was fortunately not looking, the wind blew it into the sea.

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I was doing my best to think of something else to say—I wanted above all things to prolong the conversation—when Mrs Moss gave me a look of scrutiny and said she thought my colour was coming back. “You’re nothing like as green as you were,” she said. “Now, don’t you think it would do you good to take a little walk?”

I thought that was really rather a cool way of dismissing one, when I saw by the way she jumped up and waited for me that it was an invitation. “Come along,” she said. I hesitated; it was going rather far. Then I reflected, “If I am going to draw back at a mere invitation to walk, what is to become of my American experiences?” and took the plunge. I got up, and as she turned one way and I turned the other, in my confusion we bumped against each other, and naturally we laughed.

“A little thing like that breaks the ice, doesn’t it?” said Mrs Moss; which was precisely what I had been thinking, but imagine having the courage to say it! We began pacing the deck together, I always thinking of things to talk about, when presently a touch on my arm made me start, and I looked down to see Mrs Moss’s small, daintily gloved hand lying within it. That, I think, was my first really supreme moment. Mrs Moss went on talking about the “water”—she invariably spoke of the ocean in this way—how rough the water had been on Saturday and how smooth on Sunday, while I struggled with the sensation that crept up from my right elbow. It seemed such a curiously foreign body, that small hand; the absorbing thing, as we walked up and down, was how it had got there. It seems absurd, but I could think of nothing else, and I talked at random. I was aware of a cold local hostility; if such things are transmittable through

a coat sleeve, I fear Mrs Moss must have been aware of it too. I knew nothing about Mrs Moss's hand, its antecedents, its practices; it had never even come into the range of my vision before. I could not conceive it bare, yet there it lay in the intimate relation of a hand that might have had to do with my affairs for years. I confess that with these reflections I carried it, I relieved her of it, I did not clasp it in any degree. Gradually, however, other ideas came to me. The hand looked quite comfortable, and it was plain that Mrs Moss did not share my discomposure the least in the world. The friendly intention was clear, and so was the gentle confidence. How difficult, I thought, it would be to induce me to expose my hand like that, for half an hour at a time, to the scrutiny of a perfect stranger. Yes, or even my glove. The local conditions became more humane, the circulation grew more active in my elbow. Presently I observed that the hand was a link, and not a package, and that two personalities on a somewhat unsteady basis were being assisted by it. I never quite lost consciousness of Mrs Moss's hand, but after that it became much less oppressive. It was only when I saw Kaye's cap ascending from the regions below that I stopped suddenly and allowed her to take it away. I should have had to explain to Kaye, and perhaps to defend myself, and it would have been the most difficult thing possible to make him understand the grounds on which his wife should be walking arm-in-arm with a person about whom nobody knew anything.

I have given Mrs Moss the importance she seemed to have at the time. Looking back upon her now—I have never seen her since—she seems one of the more vivid and obvious American illustrations, like a sketch by Mr Phil May.

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Besides, the incident was not so very wonderful. If I came across it now I should not think "anything" of it, as they say in the States. Things of that sort a great deal more amusing and a great deal more extraordinary happen there every day. But there she was at the very outset, and I thought a great deal about her then. Indeed I had to, she told me so much, and I still cherish her opinion that Kaye was the best-looking man on the ship except one of the stewards.

CHAPTER III

“By George!” Kaye ejaculated, looking over the side upon New York harbour; “they’re rowing in bags!” So they were; a racing eight, pulling across our bows with a fine, clean, practised stroke. Kaye never will ask questions, on the principle, I suppose, that what isn’t taught at an English public school isn’t worth knowing, so we watched the youths with mute astonishment as they bent to the oar, trousered in that tropical heat. The Americans on board, I noticed, expanded in it. They discussed it and abused it, and called it regular New York weather, but it only brought them a stimulus which they seemed to enjoy, and none of them were overcome. The collars of the men did not crease like Kaye’s, and none of the ladies looked parboiled, as I did. They came up from their cabins like flowers in frilled muslin’s, they tripped about excitedly in these, uncrushed and unfaded. They seemed rather pleased with the extreme after the equable temperature of Great Britain; one of the men said to Kaye, who was fanning himself with a New York paper, “Ever felt anything like this before?” in quite a proud and satisfied manner. Kaye said, “Once, at Singapore,” and the gentleman seemed delighted that an Englishman should be obliged to go as far as the Straits Settlements for weather which he, an American,

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could experience at his very door. "If you look in that newspaper," he said, "you'll find that 1000 tons of free ice were distributed yesterday to the poor of New York."

"What a fearful state of things!" my husband replied; but that was plainly not the view the American expected him to take. To Kaye the temperature was something people in general and he in particular had to breathe in and endure; to the American it was such a background as you do not find every day for a charity which nobody out of New York had ever thought of. It could not have been entirely a matter of imagination though, for I have a good deal, and I did not enjoy it. Now that I know a little more about it, I am convinced that if only a fact or a condition is remarkable enough and unique enough, no matter what its other characteristics may be, the American temperament will not only suffer it but exult in it. This is one of the things that render life over there so cheerful. Where we should make ourselves miserable and take up subscriptions and call public attention to the newspapers, they accept with satisfaction any affliction that has no parallel elsewhere. I have seen this done with blizzards and monopolies, and even Tammany.

Kaye went about that morning looking for the degree of humidity until he caught the first engineer, when he found it out, and put it down. His aversion to asking questions only extended to Americans, by whom, for some reasons, he could not bear to be told anything. Naturally, as the ship approached the docks, past the statue of Liberty, and under the extraordinary buildings called sky-scrapers, he had to submit to be told a good deal, but he never brought it upon himself with an interrogation. It was different with the

first engineer, who was a Cumberland man. The last question Kaye asked him was how soon he could come down to Whitewood, and on two occasions I saw one of them take the other by the elbow. So my husband should not be accused of class prejudices. He once said that Americans explained things to him with a kind of distressed patience, as if they never could make him understand, which, of course, would account for a good deal. Nobody likes to give unnecessary pain.

I seem to have great difficulty in getting off the ship, but the ship was very introductory; it brought me after all to the portal. I remember looking round me on board that morning, and thinking how vague and confused my impressions were so far—as if in the sum of my fellow-passengers there were too many patterns to construct any single kind of person from and say, “This is an American,”—and wondering whether anything would happen to simplify one’s views. We were sitting in long rows on each side of the middle table of the saloon, at the end of which sat a man with a bristly moustache swearing each of us in turn about the contents of our boxes. He and his assistant looked like judge and jury, and the passengers so like prisoners passing in review before him as we moved, chair by chair, towards sentence of acquittal, that I had it on the tip of my tongue to say “Not guilty” when my turn came, and take the consequences. It seemed an extreme proceeding, putting one on oath about one’s mere luggage, and I could see that it fidgeted Kaye. It was a little as if the President laid hands on one’s conscience, the accredited instrument of a higher power than any President, and squeezed it, as it were, to fatten his revenues. It made one feel dreadfully particular—I suppose that is what it is intended to do;

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and from the rigidity of Kaye's neck as he sat in the revolving chair scanning his paper of instructions with his back half turned to me, I gathered what his idea of accuracy would be. It was easy enough to avoid the penalty of a thousand dollars and confinement, or confiscation—I don't remember which—for tipping the customs examiners, by not tipping them; but the clause allowing one to possess twenty pounds' worth of new clothes and jewellery suitable to one's station in life, and the furious hostility of the President to sealskin, presented difficulties. As Kaye said afterwards, it would be much simpler if they would permit one to bring in only what could be tied up in a bandana handkerchief. This would be appropriate, coming to a new country, and put one in the mood to make one's fortune; but they shouldn't complain, in that case, if a man turned up at the opera in tweeds. That was the reflection of a more frivolous hour; what he said at the moment gloomily to me was, "I wish we had decided to send the pearls to Grindlay." So did I with all my heart; but there they were in my dressing-case and in my lap, for I could not, in the confusion of these last hours, leave them in the cabin. There they were, and already I could see through the port-hole the spires and sky-scrapers of a democracy which, unless it considered them suitable to my rank and station, would only admit them on payment of a much larger sum than Kaye could afford.

"Perhaps." I whispered. "they would let us send them back by the captain." But Kaye shook his head.

The man with the bristly moustache requested my husband to fill in upon a form his Christian name, his age, occupation, and destination. Kaye turned to me in the act of doing this, and said,

"These questions are perfectly proper, dear." But I should have been the last to protest, and I think he did it for the effect upon his own self-respect.

"Can you say," said the customs officer mechanically, "that you have nothing dutiable in your possession? Will you swear to this? If so, kindly sign here."

"Certainly not," said Kaye.

The officer leaned back in his chair with an air of being perfectly prepared for this. "Well," he said, "why not? Do you object to taking the oath, or have you anything to declare?"

"I cannot possibly say off-hand whether I have more or less than twenty pounds' worth of new clothes with me," said Kaye.

"Oh, I guess you can tell about, can't you?" the officer said indulgently.

"I am not asked to make an approximation, I am asked to take a precise oath," replied my husband. I pinched him gently to signify applause, but Kaye did not need anything of that kind. "And unfortunately, I haven't my tailor's bill with me," he continued. "Besides, there are two or three. You remember those things," he said to me, "that you ordered from Collins at the last minute?"

"They came," I said, with confidence, "to £1 11s. 7½d. I remember perfectly."

"I'll be satisfied," said the Officer, yawning, "with an approximation. People who can remember sevenpence ha'penny——"

"Thank you," replied my husband; "but the matter lies between the American Government, my conscience, and myself,"

"I take the responsibility. Just sign, please, and pass on. I can't do business with you *all* day, Mr Kemball."

At this point I heard a lady behind me exclaim, "If that's not a good-natured man!" But I am not sure which of them she referred to.

"I am afraid," said Kaye, still keeping his temper admirably, "that the responsibility must remain with me. But if you would kindly give me a little time, in which to consult with my wife, and consent to take my deposition afterwards——"

"Great Scot, yes!" exclaimed the officer. "Go and think about it and add it up. But don't ask us to calculate forty per cent. on the odd fivepence three farthings if it comes to that. Try and lie and make it sixpence—you won't get into any trouble. Now for the lady. Well, madam?"

"I haven't got anything like twenty pounds' worth of new clothes," I hastened to say; "but——"

"Then that's all right. Kindly——"

"But," I said, "I have a pearl necklace."

The officer looked at me. "I don't see why you shouldn't have a pearl necklace," he said.

Kaye had come up behind me. "My wife is unable to swear that it is suitable to her station in life," he put in.

"Oh, are you there? I thought you were considering your bill. What's the value of the pearl necklace?"

"Five hundred and twenty pounds," returned Kaye.

"Four shillings and tuppence," added the customs officer, as if absent-mindedly. "Well, that's more than I'd care to give for a necklace; but, judging from appearances, I should think you could pretty near live up to it. What makes you think you can't?"

"The necklace came to my wife," said Kaye

distantly, "from a relation on her mother's side, who was a lady of rank—a marchioness, in fact, and——"

"And we are only ordinary people," I finished for him.

"On a very ordinary income," added Kaye.

"So you see——" said I.

The officer scratched his head, not because of any embarrassment, but in order, I believe, to irritate Kaye.

"I guess a good many ordinary people in the United States wear necklaces about that price every day," he said.

"But we do not belong to the United States," my husband replied. "I shall be very glad if you can pass the necklace, but I wish you to be acquainted with the facts."

"Look here," said the officer, "don't you worry about the marchioness. She may have been a bigger swell than you are, but if she chose to will the necklace, that was her look-out. Anyway, we ain't going to inquire over here whether you've got a coronet to match or not. See! That clause that made you bring the marchioness from the dead is only a general provision——"

"It must be entirely devoid of meaning," said Kaye.

"Oh, not so bad as that; but we'll pass the necklace. Now, madam, nothing else, I suppose? There are one hundred and fifteen people waiting behind your chair. No sealskins?"

He was really quite pleasant, in spite of the extraordinary things he said.

"Yes," I replied confidently; "I've got a sealskin cloak. But I suppose that will be all right?"

The expression of the customs officer suddenly

changed. It was then that I noticed how bristly his moustache was.

"I'll have to trouble you for particulars about that," he said. "Is it a new one?"

"It is and it isn't," I said in some embarrassment.

"I've got to get you to say what you mean by that."

"It has recently been done up," I said, "by very good people. It looks as good as new."

I received the first glance of real suspicion I ever recognized in my life.

"How long has it been in your possession?" he asked.

"Only since Christmas."

"Then it was new at Christmas?"

"Not exactly. It had belonged to—to another person."

"It was made up," said Kaye furiously, "out of various furs belonging to my wife's mother-in-law; but I don't see——"

"You don't need to see," said the officer thoughtfully, biting the end of his pencil. "Are the skins pelagic?"

"I don't know," I said miserably; "but I always keep them in camphor."

"The skins," said Kaye, "were brought from Canada twenty-eight years ago by a British officer. They have been taken care of. I believe there was no question of pelagic sealing at that time."

"Maybe not, but we don't like 'em any better when they come from Canada. I'd advise you to own up to that sealskin, if you want to keep it."

"Own up!"

"Bound to let 'em pay something," I heard him say to the next comer as I went with Kaye

to another part of the saloon. I cannot see there was any necessity. However, we had our revenge, for Kaye's excess value of new clothes did come to a total with farthings. He could not avoid it.

CHAPTER IV

I EXPECTED, when my foot pressed American soil for the first time, to have rather a profound sensation, something I could talk about seriously afterwards with the kind of person one meets at dinner in Cavendish Square. I believe I had arranged my impression; it was to include a sense of kinship and an immense appreciation of material resources and a lively regret for the short-sightedness of Lord North a century and a quarter ago. I intended not to be able to rid myself of the thought of tea duties and Cornwallis and Yorktown for at least half a day, and to be oppressed for a much longer period by the thought of the loss of my country's greatest opportunity. These are the feelings the occasion should evoke—they rise, I notice, in every British bosom that afterwards confides in print, and the more distinguished the bosom the keener the emotion. I am sorry not to be able to describe and claim them; I regret to say that they never entered my mind. This in spite of my having made a special visit to Westminster to see the tablet to the memory of Major André and the vat in which his remains were afterwards brought to England, in order to prepare myself. Instead of any of these things, I felt, I confess, agreeably exhilarated. I hope it does not reflect on one's loyalty, but I had a tremendous feeling of escape

for the time being from what one was expected to do into a wide and wonderful region where one could do exactly as one pleased. I found out before long that this anticipation was extravagant, but at the time I might have been running away from school, joining indefinite numbers of other truants, whose behaviour suggested on every hand the prospect of a magnificently good time. They say we are really more free in England, but we haven't the atmosphere of it; the gay people of New York may be in chains to their democracy—*ça ne se voit pas*; one can only say that. History vanished before one into the accomplished fact, and the accomplished fact was too immediately fascinating to lament upon how it came about. There was an irresponsible brightness in the air which laid hold of you; it made you think, by some association of ideas, of that joyous being an American duchess. I had only made my bow to one of them, and passed on immediately out of her range of vision; but here were all the originals of the American duchess—the procession of them was dazzling. I literally wished for a sense of kinship, but it would not come; the differences, not the similarities, were what struck one. The family tie wouldn't appear, the best I could do was a belief in connection by marriage. Walking in Oxford Street one doesn't think of duchesses, yet there in Fifth Avenue they all were, pausing at the shop windows, showing pink silk petticoats at the crossings, getting in and out of the "street-cars." What fascinated me most in that first bewildering moment was hearing everywhere about me the common tongue. All this new life and colour and movement was expressing itself in a way that I could perfectly understand; that was what Kaye would call the jolly part of it. I wanted fifty pairs of

ears. The English language, too, seemed a kind of promiscuous introduction—it put me on terms with all these lively people—and I was consumed with impatience to see what they would have to say to me, what I should have to say to them. I wanted to make acquaintances, any number of acquaintances, beginning anywhere, but at once. People at home who knew us would have been amused, no doubt, to see us that morning in Fifth Avenue; Kaye with his head thrown back at a perpetual angle scanning the sky-line of the buildings opposite, I in my pleasure almost openly smiling at the Americans, as if I wished—as, indeed, I did wish—to say, “I have just crossed the ocean to see you, and this, I observe, is the front door, so let me in—you might—it was a long way to come to pay you that civility.” That was my overwhelming desire, to get in. Kaye’s was different, but quite as keen. He wanted to find out at once whether one could get permission to ascend the sky-scrappers.

We were on our way to the hotel, but we knew a great deal better than to go in a cab. There seemed to be no cabs really, only carriages with cabmen. They looked very comfortable, but Kaye said we might as well begin the way we meant to go on, and we certainly did not mean to go on in those conveyances, knowing as we did that they were built to carry American fortunes. When our things were finally got together, Kaye looked at the sum of them and asked for a luggage van, but they brought him a person called an express agent, a kind of Carter Paterson. Only in London, if you want anything delivered, you must go and ask Carter Paterson; in New York Carter Paterson comes and asks you. Several cabbies came up at the same time and offered to take the luggage, and asked where we

were going and made propositions—this was quaint, too; fancy the cabbies at Paddington opening the question of a bargain!—but Kaye said no, we had been told how to get there, we were going to walk, and handed everything over to the express agent, dressing-cases, hat-boxes, portmanteaux, and all. He said it would be forty cents, which seemed reasonable until we arrived at the hotel and found he meant forty cents apiece. It would have been cheaper to take two cabs! Kaye thought he had been done and wanted to make a fuss, but the hotel people told him it was quite right.

In every hotel in the world after being in one's room about ten minutes one has occasion to ring, and at the end of that time I rang. I wanted the chambermaid. Presently there came brisk steps and a knock, accompanied by an intermittent jingling sound. I opened the door to a buttons bearing a large jug. "Kindly send me the chambermaid," said I. He looked at me sharply, and put the jug down just inside the door. "Chamb'maid?" he said; "right." "Stop," said I, "you've forgotten your jug," which I now saw contained water and large pieces of ice.

"No I ain't," said he. "Might as well leave it now; you'll be ringing for it in another two shakes." "My good boy——" said I, but he was gone.

I stood looking at the jug, in which the ice still gurgled up and down, and in a few minutes the chambermaid came—a very pleasant-looking young person.

"I should be glad," said I, "if you would put the room to rights while we are at dinner, as I shall want to go to bed very soon afterwards."

"Why, yes," she said; "I'd just as soon as not."

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I looked at her in astonishment, but her manner was quite obliging—it was impossible to be annoyed.

“And will you bring the hot water now?” I asked.

“Hot water? *Oh yes!*”

It was the kind and patronizing note of complete local *savoir faire* to the new-comer for whom all kinds of allowance had to be made. I sat down under it, helpless, on the edge of the bed, and called to Kaye in the room opening out of mine—we had to manage that way, as they seem to have no dressing-rooms—“Did you *ever* hear anything like that?”

When the hot water knock came, it was the boy again, and he brought it steaming in another jug on a tray, with a glass. “What’s this?” I asked. “Chamb’maid told me you wanted hot water, an’ I’ve brung you hot water.” He looked deeply offended.

“Kaye,” I cried, “I wish you’d come here and explain. They’ve brought us hot water to *drink!*”

“Ain’t that what you want it for?” asked the boy, a trifle resentfully.

“Tell him you want it in a can,” called my husband.

“Well, we ain’t got no cans. What d’you want it in a can for?”

“To wash with, naturally,” I said, but the boy did not take the slightest notice of my manner.

“Ain’t she put water in your washer?” And without waiting for an answer he walked over and inspected the washhand-stand. “Plenty here,” he said.

“But it’s cold,” said I. Fancy being expected to wash in cold water at the end of a journey, and a journey of four thousand miles!

"Well," said the boy, "you've got a pitcher 'f ice-water to drink, an' you've got a pitcher 'f boiling water to drink, and you've got plenty cold in your washer. That's about all we get asked for, anyhow *this* weather."

It certainly was warm, warmer than ever, but if established customs were to be at the mercy of mere changes of temperature! The boy went, and cautiously tempering my boiling beverage with my iced beverage I was able to wash my hands. I was acquainted with hot water as a drink; my mother-in-law sometimes makes whole meals of it, with a little minced beef and dry toast, but there must be a great deal of dyspepsia in the States when it is brought by bell-boys as a matter of course.

At dinner we felt quite exhilarated by the odd things they gave us to eat. I wouldn't have anything that I knew the name of, so as to make the repast completely interesting. Kaye was less adventurous; he tried the frogs' legs, but depended solidly upon the joint, which was international. I am not going to dwell on the dinners, however—that would be ridiculous in view of how much else there is—further than to say that this one inspired us with the energy to go and look at the voluminous and extraordinary light and noise that was beating up and down Broadway just outside the hotel. It sounded from the inside the wildest anarchy; there was none of the regular thunder and throb of London, rather as if the city were in the throes of an uncontrollable hysteria, and shrieked without a pause. Outside we were able, after the first alarming moment—we seemed swept back through the swinging doors of the hotel—to analyse the tumult. You find the cobbles of it in the Rue de l'Opéra, the congestion in Ludgate Circus, but only in Broad-

way the cobbles, the congestion, and the cable-cars. The cobbles send up a fundamental din, the congestion clatters over them, and through it all, with incredible swiftness and violence, speeds the cable-car, uttering the most awful warning note that could be imagined out of savage warfare. It was unparalleled to me, but Kaye said he had heard something like it the year he was in the East, where coolies cut iron beams the right length with steel and a hammer. This sound is made perpetually by some unspeakable electric agency connected with the driver's foot, and forms, as it were, the highest note of the shriek of the city. It is a terrific menace, but perhaps it is necessary, for destruction by cable-car would be a fearful way of leaving the world. They bear down upon you from both directions, one after the other, like rapid invincible fates. You see one, a mere parallelogram, in the far distance; it grows and broadens and threatens; it is a hundred yards away, whirling imprecations; it is upon you; it is passed into the more indefinite tumult beyond, and another is swiftly upon its track. By some merciful interposition of Providence your life has been saved; you have not even been shot through a plate-glass window, and you are extremely thankful. At least, we were. Conversation was impossible, but an idea came to me that I had to communicate. I motioned to Kaye to incline his ear to me. "Think," I shouted into it, "of Frances and her *grievance against the rooks!*"

Presently Kaye was stirred to embark upon a bold adventure; he would ride in a cable car. Other people got on and got off, he pointed out; it was probably not so perilous as it looked; there was no reason why we also should not essay it. I protested that the other people were Americans

and temperamentally equal to such feats; that they didn't seem to mind whether the car stopped or not; that though we had seen nobody killed yet, that was just the reason why we, laborious foreigners who were accustomed always to have one foot upon the ground, should supply the spectacle. I also said that I didn't want to, but Kaye would keep on waving his stick. For some time it seemed as if the drivers themselves thought we ought not to get on. They dashed past in numbers, taking not the slightest notice, and Kaye had just decided that there must be a signal code which we should have to learn, when a lady very kindly told us that we must hail them from the opposite corner. She smiled so prettily as she spoke; she had white hair and dark eyes, and looked most sympathetic. I wished we could have asked her if it was dangerous for strangers, but, of course, she was gone almost immediately. The next car stopped and we ran at it, but not fast enough to satisfy the conductor, who spoke to Kaye as he got in. "Get a hustle on!" he said to Kaye. Kaye turned upon him. "Do not address me in that way again," he said. But at that instant the car leaped forward, and I fell into the lap of a large Jewish gentleman with diamonds in his shirt front, and Kaye sat down very suddenly upon a little girl. "Why," replied the conductor, before we had time to recover ourselves, "don't y' like it?"

We were abroad and abroad, dashing through the light and life and circumstances of the streets of New York to the furious clangour of that anvil-devil under the driver's foot. Cars tore past us raging equally, cars preceded us, cars followed us. Evening grew, as it were, reluctantly upon the uproar, fought back by the electric flashing shop fronts. The trams were open, with seats

across and across; I watched the people getting in and out. They had pale faces and dark, shadowy eyes—nowhere the broad red British chop—and an immense look of sophistication, of life, which, nevertheless, sat upon them casually. None of them looked worn or anxious; there were no charwomen in wizened black bonnets getting home with a basket. One shouldn't generalize too much, but I thought I saw an easy satisfaction tinged with cynicism, an immense *sang-froid* about what might happen next in the men, especially the men who smoked cigars and wore pink shirts. The women had clouds of hair about their faces, and looked epitomes of dramatic possibility. They were more pictorial than the men, but they had the same acceptance of the facts of life, with a subtle hint of consciousness of power to mould them. And they knew very well where they were going. Three or four young and pretty ones sitting in front of us wore no hats. They put their arms round one another's waists and sang, looking from side to side with entertainment, as the car tore on. I looked to see if they were also barefooted—they were shod in kid! There was an accent about everybody, an effect; they might all have been doing their turns at a huge variety show, all "on" together, and it baffled imagination to guess what they were like when they were off. The sense of kinship retreated further and further. I thought, "How continental!" But whether I meant Paris or Naples or Vienna I was not sure.

We sat and gazed. The flying car made a grateful coolness; it was plain that many of these people had come for the mere jaunt of it, as we had. Some of them had delicate scents about them, which spread upon the soft, moist air, and added another fantastic note. Exquisite toilettes

ascended and descended—the sort of thing, positively, that might be worn at a Marlborough House garden-party—exquisite *coiffures*, and sat down in this most common carrier beside fat Germans with no collars, puffing meerschaums, all taking the air—the air of Broadway. The shops were closing, but we could still read some of the placards. One of them said, “Our hats are ice cold.” We wondered what it meant, and Kaye said he would go and buy one to-morrow to see what the refrigerating arrangement was. “What won’t they invent!” said Kaye. He was thoroughly enjoying his evening. We sat on in the car till it brought us back—I know now that when we thought we were getting into the country we were only at the Battery—and Kaye saw more sky-scrapers than he had any idea there were. It is still to me a wonderful sharp picture, and I write about it with excitement, that first glimpse of New York by New York’s own way of getting about. The sensation was a little cruel at the time but most dramatic, and a triumph to boast of over the base instincts which tempt one in crucial moments to run away. Kaye, too, remembers it with pleasurable interest, tempered by the conductor. As we were getting out this person addressed my husband again, though he had been expressly told not to. “Shake a leg!” said he.

CHAPTER V

WE had not come well-equipped with introductions. My mother-in-law and Frances did their praiseworthy best; the county was ransacked in every corner for these facilities, and one or two letters of research went to Brighton and to Bath—I remember Frances quoting “I shot an arrow into the air,” as she posted them—but the results all seemed to require us to go to Florida, or to Texas, or to the Pacific Coast. We brought them along, of course—they were better than nothing in case we should have time to visit these points; but I was not in the least keen about them, they were all to people whose people were in England, and you do not go abroad to meet your fellow-countrymen, at least in this direction. Kaye had one or two letters from solicitors in the City to gentlemen connected with the company, but these we naturally expected to be of no use beyond identifying him as mamma’s representative. He posted one of them the moment we arrived, with his card, and a civil note asking whether any change had been made in the date of the meeting, but as I couldn’t go to the meeting it was a matter of rather languid interest to me. I had unpacked our introductions ~~proper~~ the next morning after breakfast, and was trying to calculate with a map how far we should have to travel to meet the Hon. Jermyns St Jermyn, who lived in a place

called Aitchison, and we were to find out for ourselves what State it was in, which I had done as easily as possible with the map. Kaye had gone out to look for a newspaper stand, and buy a *Standard* for himself and a *Morning Post* for me—one may go a long way from home, but one likes to keep in touch; we always did in Paris. I was debating between the disadvantage of closing the window or having the cable car come in with the fresh air, when a squeak came from the speaking-tube in the wall. Kaye had explained this to me, as well as the fire-escape and the arrangement for letting them know in the office that you wanted a bath, or a cab, or a cigar, and by putting my ear to it I heard, "You're wanted at the telephone." I had presence of mind. I said at once into the wall, "Where is the telephone?" and got the reply, "First floor, off the cloakroom." I was a good deal flurried, but I collected myself enough to ask, "Who wants me?" To this there was no answer; someone else, I suppose, was using the squeaker.

Of course I knew about the telephone; we live in the country, but we are not so behind the times as all that. In fact, I had seen one in the bank at Cobhampton. So far as that goes, we have had a cinematograph down from London for the children's school treat, a much more recent invention. But I had never had anything to do with them, and—it sounds incredibly foolish—I imagined, on my way downstairs, that whoever wanted me would be waiting at the telephone. It was exciting, but I was not alarmed—I only hoped it would be an American.

The bell-boy whose acquaintance I had already made, was sitting on a chair beside the instrument, and there was no one else.

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"Where is he? I asked. "The person who wished me to come to the telephone?"

"Number 5673. Connection's off now. Can't hold the line more'n a minute. Want I sh'd ring 'em up for you?"

I understood at once. "Oh," I said, "wait a minute. Who is it?"

"Number 5673."

"Then you don't know who it is?"

"Course I don't. But I kin ast."

I considered for a moment. "Yes," I said, "you had better ask, please. Say that Mrs Kemball would be glad to be informed as to who wishes to communicate with her."

The boy rang the bell, put the tube to his ear, and presently said, "Who wants to get Mrs Kemball?"

I hoped he had not been heard, it sounded so dreadful; but apparently he had, for after listening for a moment he turned to me. "Gentleman by the name of Adams," he said; "Amelia—no. What did you say your first name was?" he called into the telephone. "Repeat front name. Oh yes—Cornelius. Cornelius Adams," and he handed me the trumpet.

"Oh," I said. "Go on talking to him, please. I don't understand this invention. Tell him Mrs Kemball is here, and will he very kindly give you any message."

"Ah, there?" said the boy into the telephone. "Are you on, Mr Adams? Mrs Kemball is here, but she don't understand this invention, an' will you very kindly give me any message?" I think the boy was imitating me, from the sound of his voice. He listened again. "Right," he said presently, "goo-bye." "All right, Central"—he seemed to be addressing someone else. "You're very foolish to-day, ain't you? There,

take it! Have you got it? Keep it!" and he rang once more, quite with temper.

"He says I was to tell you he'd got Mr Kemball's letter, and he'd be over after lunch. An' he says you'd better begin to pack up right away."

I could not help looking at the boy with suspicion, he was such a casual boy, without any of the responsibility of his buttons. I had no way of knowing that he had not made it all up. Mr Adams, I remembered, was one of the people Kaye had letters to from the City. I could understand his calling and wishing to persuade Kaye to go back to England, but a peremptory message over the telephone to that effect I could not understand. I was sure that Kaye would not pack up right away, and that he would be very angry.

When my husband came in he was very angry already. He had not been able to find a copy of the *Standard* or of the *Morning Post*, or even of the *Times*.

"They don't seem to read the newspapers in this part of the world," he said.

"I suppose they have their own," I suggested, and Kaye replied, "Oh yes, they have," and put one down on the table. There is no use in reporting what else he said; he has the most violent prejudices against all newspapers other than the *Times*, the *Standard*, and the *Morning Post*, even English ones. As to anything coloured pink——! I notice, too, that everybody abuses American newspapers; it makes one feel quite sorry for the people connected with them. I certainly cannot abuse them—not that I would have any wish to do so, because I do not remember ever looking at one; with mails twice a week from England one wasn't obliged to. Kaye was

particularly annoyed because he could find nothing about affairs in England except the news that an American perambulator had been ordered for little Prince Edward's younger brother, and something that wasn't true about the Dowager Empress of China; and he kept on saying things. Presently, however, I got a word in edgewise about Mr Adams, and then he was more vexed than ever that I should have received at the telephone a person I had never heard of, which shows that he was simply very cross; for what difference could it possibly make with the person perhaps a mile away, talking through a wire, to say nothing of the boy? As to the message, he said it was extraordinary, of course, but so was everything else, and I think he was rather pleased about it than otherwise. It showed, he said, how necessary it was to come; matters probably required a great deal of looking into if they—Mr Adams and the others—took such a tone as that.

The irritation my husband felt was quite a usual and natural thing, though I thought it unreasonable at the time, and very probably said so. I have noticed since that it is the experience of every Englishman who lands in America, no matter how equable he is at home—and in six counties you would not find a more even-tempered person than Kaye—he is inevitably as cross as two sticks about something or everything in the customs of the United States at first sight. He is exactly like his own silk hat brushed the wrong way. It is different with women. I did not mind anything myself; that is to say, really mind. Perhaps we have more philosophy; this is likely, I think, considering how much we have to put up with at home (now that I have seen what a republic can do for ladies I am very much

impressed with this); or perhaps we are only more curious.

We had another little dispute when Mr Adams arrived. I wanted to go down and Kaye wouldn't let me, although two cards had been sent up, plainly showing that he expected to see me too. Kaye said not on any account, that we hadn't the slightest notion what kind of interview it would be, and walked up and down with an air of being prepared, if it were necessary, to call in the police to deal with Mr Adams. So I gave in, of course, and he descended alone, leaving me in my bedroom with the steam heating pipes, which did not entertain me as much as they had my husband. I must confess, though, that when the messenger Kaye sent for me ten minutes later stepped into the lift he met me stepping out. It was my anxiety, but I need have had none; the most delightful-looking person got up with Kaye, when I went in, to be introduced. He was rather short and rather stout, and very pink—a kind of infantile pink—not in the least ruddy. His aquiline nose was pink, and all his clean-shaven face and the bald spot on the top of his head. He had a crisp, pure white military moustache, and his hair was white, too, but there was nothing venerable about him; if he was middle-aged, that is as much as can be said. He smiled with great cordiality, and I noticed with surprise that Kaye was smiling with some cordiality also. He said he was extremely glad to see me, and particularly privileged, or something like that, to be the first to welcome us to New York, and his bow expressed this as well. I mean it was a bow of enthusiasm, of sentiment and feeling, as far from the perfunctory inclination of an Englishman as from the elaborate sophistry of a Frenchman. I liked Mr Adam's bow.

"But, my dear madam, we're not going to allow this at all." Mr Adams sat down again, and cocked one leg over the other, and I never saw upon man so well-fitting a boot as the one poised before me. "I've just been telling Mr Kemball that your room is all ready for you over in Madison Avenue, and I'm under orders from Mrs Adams to get you there before dinner."

"Mr Adams has very kindly offered to put us up," said Kaye; "but really——"

"How very kind indeed!" I said. I carefully avoided looking at Kaye, for I instantly made up my mind that I wanted above all things to accept. "How extremely kind!" I couldn't very well go on, "We will come with the greatest joy," because, of course, Kaye had to be consulted. I cast about me for something neutral. "It is rather noisy here," was all I could think of.

"There," said Mr Adams, "that settles it. Mrs Kemball's nerves are being destroyed. Why on earth you selected a down-town hotel—— You must pack, you must pack, and come with me."

"My wife has no nerves," said Kaye.

"Oh, haven't I?" I cried.

"Certainly you have, Mrs Kemball; every lady has. Don't you stay here, and get them shattered. Come, how long will it take you both?" and Mr Adams looked at his watch.

"We are both exceedingly obliged to you, I am sure," said my husband, and I knew that he was looking at me hard, though I kept my eyes on the carpet; "but——"

"But nothing. Think of Mrs Kemball's nerves, my dear fellow. Madison Avenue is the country compared to this."

"I love the country," I said softly, and here I met Kaye's glance. At this point, after all that

had been said, it was perfectly possible to smile as if our acceptance was to be taken for granted.

"I was going to say," said Kaye, "that my visit is so entirely a matter of business—we shall have so much running about to do—I could not think of making use of you in such a way," but I could see that I had smiled at the psychological moment. He was weakening.

"Now don't talk like that—it isn't any manner of use." Mr Adams shifted one grey leg, and cocked the other one over it. "You can't disappoint Mrs Adams like that—a poor innocent lady who has never done you any harm, and who is dying to meet Mrs Kemball here—to say nothing of Verona."

"Do tell me who Verona is," I said. Already I basked in the social temperature that surrounded Mr Adams. It was certainly a very sudden change. A quarter of an hour before Mr Adams was a visiting-card, and sat in the hotel drawing-room in the remote and icy atmosphere of the unknown. Already it was warm and sunny round his chair, and he talked of Verona.

"My wife's sister," he said; "and a very important member of the family. Oh, you'll have to get on the right side of Verona; the rest of us don't matter."

"Kaye," I said, "Mrs Adams and Verona are dying to meet me, and I am dying to meet Mrs Adams and Verona." That was all, and yet my husband said afterwards that I carried the position by assault. It was really Mr Adams who carried it. In a very few minutes more he was marshalling us to the lift, always with his watch in his hand, we under bond to be packed and ready in three-quarters of an hour, when Mr Adams would return from an appointment in Sixth Avenue. As we ascended to fulfil this contract, we looked

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at each other. Kaye pulled his moustache like a terrier who has done something naughty that he knows he will be applauded for, and the lift was full of our mutual understanding of the wildest adventure.

“It’s the realization of all I ever heard,” I said with excitement. “Kaye, we’re on the brink.” Kaye glanced, with reproof, at the boy, but in my delight I did not care a brass farthing.

“He is solicitor to the company,” my husband said guardedly, “and, of course, he’ll be able to post me any amount——”

“After dinner,” I put in, “while I am talking to Verona.”

Here a graceful young person with yellow hair and a white piqué frock, with a blue sailor tie, got in at the second floor, and we were silent. As she got out at the fourth Kaye gave a final twist to his moustache. “I don’t see why you should be the only one to talk to Verona,” he said.

CHAPTER VI

“GOOD-NIGHT,” said Mrs Adams, “and—oh, Cornelius, I have forgotten them. Will you ring?”

Mr Adams glanced with humour at his wife, but went, saying nothing, and touched a button in the wall. While I lingered over my good-night to Verona the summons was answered by a maid with a tray. “Will you take your—your candles, or shall I send them up?” asked Mrs Adams.

“I may state,” said her husband, in the manner of one who would no longer be denied, “that the house is lighted, garret to cellar inclusive, with electricity, but my wife insisted, for some reason best known to herself, that you would require candles.”

“Oh, not ‘require,’ Cornelius; I never said that. But I know the English have the habit—I thought you wouldn’t feel comfortable without them,” said Mrs Adams, with the sweetest smile of deprecation. “I said to Cornelius, ‘I want above all things they should feel at home. Candles they must have.’ I do hope they are what you’ve been accustomed to; I had to trust entirely to the grocer.”

I looked at the candles and then at Kaye. Kaye looked at the candles and then at me. They were quite eighteen inches long and thick

in proportion, the kind used on altars, and they stood magnificently before the maid.

"They are the finest candles I ever saw," said my husband, after an instant's pause, "but I'm very sorry you troubled. With the el——"

"And they do remind us of home awfully," I broke in. "Don't they, Kaye?" We stood in a semicircle round the maid and looked at them, Kaye pulling his moustache, Verona with her elusive smile. It seemed somehow an emergency in which it was our duty to save our host and hostess.

"It is a charming custom, I'm sure," Mrs Adams said, regarding the candles critically with her head a little on one side. "Deliciously old world."

"Well," said Mr Adams, "I hope they will make you very happy."

"But really"—began Kaye. I cut him short by seizing a candlestick.

"But really it's too kind," I finished for him, and Mrs Adams led the way to the staircase.

"Oh," said Kaye, with a slight inflection of disappointment, "aren't we going up in the lift?"

"Do you think you could—with candles?" exclaimed Mrs Adams, quite shocked. What *did* she mean?"

"No," said Mr Adams, "they ought to go up the ancient oak staircase, and at the top a draught from the blue room should meet them in the west corridor and put their candles out. But the elevator's there after all, and we generally keep the ancient oak staircase for coming down. *Let* them go up in the elevator, Louisa."

"Oh, if they would prefer it," said Mrs Adams.

I didn't know what to say, but Kaye declared at once that he would prefer it, so we exchanged

good-nights at once at the door of the elevator. They must all have wanted to use it, but I suppose politeness made them send us up alone first. We had gone about half-way to the first floor when an urgent voice from below—it was Mrs Adams's—summoned us back, and the boy let us sink again.

"I'm *so* sorry," she said; "I'm afraid you'll think us very thoughtless—we've forgotten to light them. Cornelius——"

We all laughed, including Mrs Adams, who seemed quite accustomed to taking jokes gracefully at her own expense.

"Louisa," said Mr Adams seriously, "it ought to be done with a spill. Have you provided spills?"

"But," put in my practical husband, "as there are no fires you would be obliged to use a match to light the spill."

"Oh, thank you, Mr Kemball; I should never have heard the last of that. Cornelius, you know perfectly well you have plenty of matches."

"It ought to be a spill—it ought to be a spill"; but our host produced a little silver box and solemnly lighted up for us, Verona looking on like a vestal virgin, with her hands behind her. So at last we rose up to our beds, our prodigious tapers adding to the blaze of the electric light a familiar scent of home, and not by any means the most agreeable one. Kaye blew his out promptly when we got to our room, and I would have liked to, but it seemed unkind to dear Mrs Adams, so I let it stand on my dressing table till I was almost ready for bed. The last thing I remember about that delightful evening was an admonition from Kaye.

"You mustn't write home," said he, "that private houses in America are provided with lifts.

It isn't at all common. Adams told me he had this put in on account of his wife's spraining her ankle last winter."

"Well," said I, "there's a lesson for Englishmen."

"What! And it's electric, not hydraulic."

"Is it?" said I, and went to sleep.

When you have been accustomed all your life to the ordinary white counterpane with which respectability covers its beds in Great Britain, it is a distinct sensation to uncloset your eyes upon a pale blue satin *couverture* exquisitely embroidered in pink wild roses. Whenever I think of Mrs Adams's housekeeping, which is often, I think of that blue satin quilt—it was a kind of key to all the rest. I lay and marvelled in the morning at the lightness and delicacy of my room; it was an apartment Marie Antoinette might have slept in. The bed was panelled in porcelain, the footboard presented a group of maidens upon a rustic bench under a tree, before whom a gallant in a pink coat and buckled shoes performed upon the guitar. There were gilt arabesques upon the furniture, and the silk curtains were in an old French design, green stripes and pink rose wreaths. Something like it one sees in Liberty's windows at home, but never, oh never, in the country. The dressing-table—the glass was upheld by Dresden cherubs—held a multitude of the most clever conveniences, all labelled so that one knew. One of them, I remember, was a beautifully embroidered pouch marked "Hair combings" in Old English lettering, and on an ormolu table near the bed lay the *édition de luxe* of the *Confessions of St. Augustine*. In Kaye's dressing-room we found the poems of William Morris, and, hanging against the wall, the sweetest illuminated vellum book cover, containing

shaving-papers. It had on it a quotation from Pope, I think, about the advantages of shaving. I never saw so much forethought and taste expended on a bedroom, and neither did Kaye, though all he would say was that Adams must let his wife spend a lot of money at church bazaars.

Verona, when we went down, was putting the finishing touch to the biggest La Frances I had ever seen upon the breakfast table. In the morning her lips seemed more composed than ever, her oval face of a clearer pallor, with its shadowy eyes and dark soft frame of hair. She had no colour whatever, had Verona, but the roses gained significance from being in her hands. In reply to our inquiry for Mr and Mrs Adams, she said they were "out on the steps." We found them there—out on the steps. Mr Adams sat on one of the steps reading the paper, Mrs Adams leaned against the brown stone balustrade. The front door was open; a pleasant freshness came in from Central Park across the road. Electric trams were humming past laden with people who did not look at all surprised to see Mr and Mrs Adams sitting on the steps. I regret to say that my husband did. He looked amazed, and hung back in the hall as if to give his host and hostess an opportunity to get off the steps before he said good-morning to them. I even saw the shadow of a doubt flicker across his face as to whether we ought to have come to the Adamses. He was thinking, no doubt, of the spectacle of the occupants of Queen's Gate, W., reading their *Morning Posts* on their steps. But we were four thousand miles from Queen's Gate, and I went out joyously and sat down upon the lowest step of all, though I knew perfectly well what Kaye meant when he asked me if I didn't think I would take cold. It gave one immensely

the sensation of doing as one liked, but I believe there are people in the world who prefer not to do as they like. The reason for this is obscure, but it must have been something of the kind that kept Kaye standing just inside the door like a footman, while the rest of us enjoyed the brilliancy and early morning movement of out of doors in Madison Avenue, sitting on the steps.

Do what you will in writing a narrative, you come back to the things you eat and drink. I would much rather describe Verona, but I cannot quite pass over the cantelopes. We began breakfast with the cantelopes (a kind of melon)—they were there before us waiting upon our plates; we each had half a one, ready sugared, with a lump of ice in it, to negotiate in advance of anything else. One saw at once that it was thoroughly American, so one could only say that it was most refreshing, inwardly thinking all the time, "This is the only coldness they show to a stranger." They talk about our "jam habit," and make a butt of us on the subject of marmalade; but it is certainly more reasonable to finish up with a spoonful of jam than to precede with an iced slab of raw fruit—so discouraging! However, that has nothing to do with Verona, who made the coffee. She made it in a remarkable invention, and it had a delicious smell; but when Mrs Adams said, "The tea is coming in a moment, I hope you'll like it—it is English breakfast tea," we could not very well trouble Verona. We had to sit in silence through the making of the tea, and it was an ordeal. Mrs Adams put it into a richly-chased but cold teapot, and the maid brought the boiling water in a silver kettle in her hand *up from the kitchen* and poured it into the teapot. I am not ungrateful for that or any other breakfast I had in the United States,

but I cannot help hoping that Mrs Adams was mistaken in calling her decoction English breakfast tea. If she was not, a great deal of the prejudice against us over there can be accounted for. We talked a great deal, all but Verona. Verona, when one glanced at her, was nearly always looking at the roses, but in the intervals I was aware that her attention was concentrated partly upon Kaye, but mostly upon me. As I say, I never once caught her at it; her contemplative gaze when one sought it was sure to be fastened upon her beautiful handiwork, but I never in my life had felt myself under anything so absorbent as Verona's eyes. They were not penetrating. They did not at all lay bare one's real character, but they were wonderfully "drawing." Kaye said afterwards he was not in the least aware of it, but I had the amusing feeling that half of me was crossing the table to be examined by Verona from a closer point of view. Not that one minded, but it interfered immensely with my own impression of Miss Daly. I soon found that the only way I could get one was by waiting until she was interested in somebody else. The single thing I realized about her then, for instance, was that she had simply no appetite. She seemed to breakfast chiefly upon the roses, and, if I may say so, upon me. Mrs Adams's attention was dispersed over a thousand things, but she, too, seemed quite detached from the business of toast and bacon, even the ethereal form in which they were set before us. Both of the ladies conveyed food to their lips, but in the most perfunctory fashion; the reason of the meal seemed to be much more the roses, and the lovely silver, and the charming suitability of Mrs Adams's morning frock, and the daintiness of the way everything was done. When Kaye was

helped to broiled mullet for the second time Mrs Adams said it was such a pleasure to see people relish their food, and I was inclined to exclaim, "Surely it is not one that occurs so seldom!" but, of course, I refrained.

Mrs Adams was charmingly versatile. She flew like a bird or a butterfly from topic to topic, poising as it were for an instant among the silver, with unexpected flights and hoverings over the butter dish, the crystal, and the porcelain, always within the radius of the tablecloth. I think in the course of a meal we talk more about one thing in England, or perhaps two things. I had to be very quick to follow her, and I began to understand what men at home mean when they say that American women kept them awake. Mrs Adams seemed to have, however, one central idea from which she branched out thus variously. It was the extraordinary difference we should find on every hand in America from our own ways and customs at home. Mrs Adams mentioned a great many English ways and customs—which was clever of her, for she had never been in England—more, positively, than I thought there were. She explained very carefully the corresponding ways and customs over there, and it was very funny the way she seemed to think that, because the people of the States thought a thing right and proper, it was right and proper—I mean just as right and proper as any opposite habit that might prevail in England. Mrs Adams seemed to wish to establish this, but after doing so she didn't mind admitting, indeed she insisted that we should be most uncomfortable when we missed the railway porters and the *Spectator* and the Horse Guards. We declared we had never thought of them since landing, but Mrs Adams, as her husband said, was dreadfully worried about

it, and went on hoping that we should find something not altogether different from what we had at home, until Kaye had to remonstrate.

"I assure you," he said, "this egg has precisely the flavour of an English egg," and Mrs Adams said she was so glad, and Verona laughed. After that I always thought about the things that made Verona laugh, it was a charming effect for anything to have. But Mrs Adams went on at such a rate, upholding and depreciating and explaining America and the Americans, that I hastened to protest. "Stop! stop!" I begged, "or we shall have nothing to find out for ourselves." Mrs Adams told us so much that I only found out one thing for myself, which was also in connection with eggs. I noticed that the whole Adams family turned theirs inside out in a manner permitted only in the nurseries of England. Perhaps I wouldn't have noticed that if Mrs Adams had not drawn attention to our way of doing it. Mr Adams said it was odd that they had not domesticated the habit with the hen, and Mrs Adams said she was very glad they hadn't—if we didn't mind her saying so, she thought the British table method of dealing with an egg just a little indelicate. I wonder if it is.

CHAPTER VII

MR ADAMS, I remember, was explaining to Kaye the principle of the lift that had shot him that morning so amazingly fast to the top of the very highest sky-scraper in New York. I should have thought any of them sufficiently high, but Mr Adams said that only the best was good enough for his visitors, and procured by telephone the pass that was necessary, as the building was itself still mounting. I remember that Kaye tried to return to the discussion after Mr Val Ingham came in, and how difficult he found it. It was one of the things Mrs Adams had prepared me for, one of the differences, so I was not altogether surprised to see a young man come walking into the drawing-room between eight and nine in the evening to make a call. At least, I was; but I understood it, I did not cry out, as Kaye was perpetually charging me with doing over my discoveries. Mrs Adams and I were talking about something, some other difference, no doubt, and Verona had disappeared. The maid did not announce him as she ushered him in upon us; the thing she said to Mrs Adams, confidentially, but so that we all heard, was, "I'll tell Miss Daly, ma'am." And Mr Ingham turned a winning smile upon her and said, "Thanks, Annie."

We discovered at once that his winning smile was an integral part of Mr Ingham. He did not

keep it for Annie alone, he bestowed it abundantly. Kaye and I came in for our share, too. He did not eye us, or question us; he took us for granted. He took everything for granted, this delightful young man, his chair, his coffee, all the immediate facts of Mrs Adams's drawing-room. One might have expected him in the presence of two perfect strangers and the expected advent of a young lady to be a little shy and silent, to sit holding his hat and stick between his knees, and look a good deal at the carpet and pull his moustache. Not in the very least. He cocked one leg over the other at the angle of least embarrassment, he left his hat and stick in the hall, he exclaimed, "I knew you'd say that!" with a joyous laugh at some reply of Kaye's that he could have had no special reason to anticipate. Why, I thought, should he know Kaye would say that, and why should he announce it if he did? My husband for a time said nothing more, but it soon appeared that Mr Ingham might anticipate anything he liked, and you were not supposed to take offence. He anticipated Miss Daly; he said he was certain she would keep him just a quarter of an hour waiting; she always did—it was one of the few things he had against her. He described himself as being kept waiting, although we were all in the room—positively we might have been so many chairs. Yet he gave us his gay attention and demanded ours. As I said, we were talking about other things when he came in, but our topics instantly melted away, we ceded them to him, as it were, led on by Mr and Mrs Adams, who made the sacrifice enthusiastically. He took immediate possession of us, and keyed us up differently, apparently to pass the time until Verona should come in, for he kept a very obvious eye upon the

door. In my experience, young men dropping into the tide of conversation were either absorbed if they were clever, or stranded if they were shy, but this one absorbed us, all four of us, positively he did. The only person he did not absorb when at last she arrived was Verona. I was at least clever enough from the beginning to see that. He approached and shook hands with Verona with a very proper deference, more marked than anything he had shown to Mrs Adams, or even, ridiculous as it may seem, to me. I watched her, Verona, in the play of a new relation; there was a fascinating difference. I don't mean that she kindled at the advent of the young man in any common way—it seems absurd even to write this of Verona—but he certainly evoked new lights and meanings in her face. For him her smile was active and her words were free; he plainly represented a familiar, if not a favourite idea. It was intelligible enough. He was extremely good-looking, with charming manners, and had quite the air of a man of the world, though I believe he had never been out of New York, except, of course, to Boston or some such place. One couldn't help being interested and having one's ideas, and my idea was that they were on terms, distinctly on terms. Some feminine instinct, I suppose, made me ask Mrs Adams to play, and try to draw the rest of the circle round the piano and give them a chance, but I need not have taken the trouble; they isolated themselves in the midst of us in the most effective and remarkable way. They did not deign to avail themselves of the little opportunity; they looked towards the piano and smiled and talked about Mrs Adams's touch, but the whole time one could see that they were quite independent and superior; whoever one of them addressed it

was really to the other that the remark was made. The occasion existed for these two; they were practically alone in it, and Mrs Adams's playing was a detached and unnecessary feature of it, to which, nevertheless, they were scrupulously polite. Mrs Adams seemed aware of this; she went on nervously, with pauses, in which she sought her husband's eye with what seemed to be interrogation. His only response was to look at his watch and to remember an appointment, and she followed his genial retreat with something like despair. It was just then, I remember, that Mr Val Ingham made his announcement about the theatre. "After all," he said, "I could only get two seats for Monday night."

Mrs Adams looked at him with a mock severity. "Then Verona can't go," she said.

"Can't go where?" my husband inquired.

"To see Julia Marlowe with Mr Ingham without a chaperon," Mrs Adams replied, and Mr Val Ingham said regretfully, "Oh, certainly not."

Then it seemed to me that they all rather glanced in our direction, Kaye's and mine, as much as to say, "We expect you, you know, to approve of this." I certainly did approve of it, but one had to stop short of saying, "How very proper of you!" Mrs Adams, arranging her music, said she knew she was a dreadful tyrant.

"As a duenna, Mrs Adams," said Mr Val Ingham, "you have few equals and no superiors in the city of New York."

"Do you really bully girls any more over there?" asked Verona, smiling. Kaye, whom she addressed, said, "Oh, a lot"; but I could see how bewildered he was.

"I presume," said Mrs Adams—(I was so

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pleased to hear her say "I presume")—"you hardly expected to find American girls——"

"Chained to a chaperon," Verona finished for her.

"You thought they could do anything," said Mr Val Ingham, a little vaguely.

"Well, since you ask me"—I said, picking up my courage.

"We do ask you," said Verona.

"I *am* a little disappointed to find chaperons in the States."

"Oh," said Mr Val Ingham earnestly, "we've had them for years."

"They came in," said Verona, with seriousness, "about the time of the bishop sleeve."

"Oh, long before that!" exclaimed Mrs Adams. "Do tell us," she went on, "what you really thought they did—American girls, I mean. I shouldn't be surprised if you were quite mistaken, but I should love to hear."

"Do!" said Verona.

I hesitated; one felt a little embarrassed with the young man in the room. Verona divined it. "Oh, don't mind *him*!" she cried. "Besides, it's a subject he takes a deep interest in—don't you, Mr Ingham?"

"The deepest," announced Mr Ingham. "Please don't mind me."

"I did think—I'd always been told——"

"That they went to theatres and balls alone with gentlemen escorts?" cried Mrs Adams. "Not in society, Mrs Kemball. There are so many types of Americans, you know."

"I know," I said; "sixty millions."

"It's dreadful we should all be thought to behave alike. I'm sure I don't know anybody——"

"Yes, you do," said Verona. "The Haffners."

Did you ever know the Haffners to bother their heads about chaperons last winter?"

"Yes, once," remarked Mr Val Ingham. "Mrs Vassler did dragon for them at one of the Assemblies. They sent her a bouquet, and got her six partners each, and the swellest man they knew to take her in to supper, saw her into her carriage about one o'clock, and then proceeded to enjoy themselves. But I believe they said they'd never undertake it again."

"I *should* like to meet them," escaped me, and Verona looked at me in a friendly way, but Mrs Adams said she knew them very slightly.

"You see," Mr Ingham explained to me, "so far as New York is concerned the Haffners are only about three years old."

"I suppose you mean they may learn," said Verona. "Well, I hope they won't. I don't want to run down the institutions of your country, Mrs Kembal, but I think the chaperon is silly. You never see her when you want her, and when you do see her you don't want her."

"I'm afraid she has come to stay," observed Mr Ingham.

"I should think so, indeed," said Mrs Adams. "There's one lovely thing about you, Mr Ingham, your ideas are *always* correct."

"You can't defend the chaperon," Verona continued, "if people are not in love there is certainly no need of her——"

"But at any moment they might be," remarked my husband, and then, avoiding Mr Val Ingham's eye, blushed violently.

"And if they are in love," Verona went on calmly, "why, there is still less."

Young Ingham drew his feet under him in a nervous manner, and cast about him, I thought, for a reply. The discussion seemed to lie between

these two. I, for one, could not have contributed anything if my life depended on it.

"I think," he observed, "there is generally a preliminary stage."

I almost gasped, but it seemed to be nothing unusual. Verona permitted him a concessive smile, and inquired where the Haffners had gone this summer, anyway. Mr Ingham said to Paul Smith's, and we asked what Paul Smith was, and were told. Then Mrs Adams offered to show us the billiard-room, and Kaye went with her gladly. Her invitation included us both, but, of course, after what had passed, I could see that she was depending on me to stay where I was.

"You don't play billiards?" remarked Mr Ingham. I said, "Oh yes," and Verona, for some reason, looked at him reprovingly. "English ladies play everything," she said; "cricket, and golf, and hockey. Do you play hockey, Mrs Kemball?" I said I did.

"I don't think hockey is as good a game as billiards," remarked Mr Ingham again; but when I suggested that we should all go and play, he protested that he knew nothing about the game.

"Then there's polo," he went on vaguely. "D'you play polo, Mrs Kemball?"

"Polo is a man's thing," cried Verona, "and very dangerous. How could Mrs Kemball play polo? How absent-minded you are!"

"I really believe I was," said Mr Ingham. "I'll have to get you to pardon me, Mrs Kemball. That charge of Miss Daly's reminds me of the old conundrum, 'What is better than presence of mind?' Do you know it?"

"It's a very stupid conundrum," said Verona, "and not worth guessing," which was a little severe, I thought, upon the poor young man's

CHAPTER VIII

VERONA had just gone out of the room; it was Mrs Adams's bedroom. Verona was always disappearing and reappearing generally in a different frock, continually making exits and entrances. I wouldn't call her theatrical for the world, but there was always an effect about Verona; without apparently putting it there she knew where her elbow was. She was the most pictorial human being I ever saw; however she sat or stood one felt like running for a frame and making her permanent, a quite impossible ambition in any sense, for she never gave one absolutely the same impression twice. Her comings and goings were in the oddest contrast to those of the girls I knew at home, sturdy young persons who walked with their legs from place to place; you observed at once the definite objective and the means. Verona's movements were more involved, they had the suggestiveness of curves and the mystery of an aim remote; if she took a rose from a vase of roses one was never quite sure whether she wanted the rose or only the idyll of taking it.

Mrs Adams's glance went after Verona as she closed the door, and we smiled an admiration at each other.

"Is she engaged to him?" I ventured.

Mrs Adams blushed, positively she blushed. I felt almost as if she blushed for me. It really

seemed as if I had hinted at an impropriety, had even thrown one bare. Yet it is surely a very ordinary thing, an engagement. Either people are engaged or they are not engaged; it is very simple. But Mrs Adams looked at me as if I had rushed in where angels fear to tread.

"I don't know," she said.

"Oh," said I, "I'm so sorry. Perhaps I shouldn't have asked."

I suppose Mrs Adams saw from my manner that I thought she was just telling a silly little fib, for she leaned over and touched my knee with her large palm-leaf fan. These palm-leaf fans are a curious feature of life in the States. They are sold in the streets of New York at twopence-halfpenny, and people carry them to church.

"I don't know, really," said Mrs Adams. "I would tell you if I did, you are so sympathetic; but I don't."

I vented my amazement. "Your own sister!" I exclaimed. "Under your own roof! Could she be without your knowing it?"

"Why, yes," said Mrs Adams. "Verona hasn't told me, and, of course, I can't ask her."

"Why not?" I inquired.

"Oh, it might spoil everything, and, besides, I wouldn't—for worlds."

"Then I should ask him."

"Mr Val Ingham?"

"Why not?" I inquired again.

"Why, it would be *ghastly!* He's such a *nice* fellow."

"Then, of course, he would understand," said I.

"Oh no, that's just what he wouldn't. He would think I didn't trust him. He would be frightfully insulted."

"Well," I said, "you can't always trust them."

"Oh, in this country you can. Towards

women, American men—well, they really and truly *are*, you know; why, they have a reputation for it.”

I raised my eyebrows and Mrs Adams nodded, and we both understood that towards women American men really and truly were everything that is charming. I had heard it before; it must be acknowledged that they *have* a reputation for it.

“But doesn’t it put other men off,” I asked, “his being so devoted?”

“What a thing to consider! I don’t want other men on—or Val Ingham either, unless he decides he can’t live without her! He’s a lovely fellow, and I don’t know anybody I’d rather have for my brother-in-law, but it must come of itself.”

“And while he is deciding?”

“She is deciding, too, I hope, but I would be the very last to suggest it to her. I think they are both drifting—unconsciously.”

“My goodness!” I exclaimed.

“I look every day for some awakening in her, but,” Mrs Adams confessed, “I haven’t seen it yet.”

“Meanwhile he comes——”

“Most evenings. And he sends her perfectly elegant flowers, and such chocolates. And he wouldn’t go to a single ‘At Home’ all last winter if he found out she wasn’t invited. They certainly enjoy each other—anybody can see that.”

“Has she many—I mean is there anybody else?”

“Well, no—at least I don’t know what she might have, but he takes up all her time.”

“I see he does,” I said. “And how long is it supposed to go on? I mean, doesn’t Society

—mothers and fathers and people—fix any limit? Say, six months or a year?"

Mrs Adams burst into laughter. No, she didn't burst, it is too vulgar a term, but she laughed. "How perfectly crazy!" she exclaimed. "Poor boys and girls! I think I see them looking at each other, and saying to themselves, 'The time is about up. *Do* I like the shape of her nose?' or '*could* I stand the way he wears his hair?' And then their last evening together! I expect he would stay till midnight."

"What?" I exclaimed.

"And what a closing of the door," Mrs Adams went on, with a dash of pensiveness, "between their two young lives! And next day back into the convent, I suppose."

"I should think so, indeed," was on the tip of my tongue, but I checked myself in time. When astonishment rose in me it was better, I found, more polite, and more expedient, not to let it explode. When it did Mrs Adams always explained more and told me less, and I did not care half so much about the justifying theory as about the delightful fact. I came straight back to this one.

"You say Mr Ingham takes up all Verona's time. But a girl has only so much time——"

Mrs Adam's lips moved, and I fancied they were about to form "Not in this country."

"And suppose in the end he makes up his blessed mind that he does *not* want her! She will have lost a whole season!"

"You talk as if it were a race. Well, it isn't—not with us. Girls aren't trotted out and——"

"They trot out themselves," I said. "Of course, if it's understood——"

"Yes, that makes all the difference, doesn't it?"

"If it's understood it may not damage a girl's chances."

Mrs Adams fell upon me like a shower of little pebbles.

"Now *that*," she exclaimed—I can't tell you how she emphasized the "that"—"is the very most British thing you've yet said. I've been waiting for it—I've seen the expression in your novels. And I don't know how you *can*! If you imagine Verona would lift her little finger to *compete* with—with Violet Ham, for instance——"

"Oh, I don't," I cried. "Who is Violet Ham?"

"Another girl. Verona *would* be mad if you talked to her about her chances."

"Oh, one doesn't!" I hastened to protest.

"In our country it is the young men who have them," concluded Mrs Adams, "so far as marriage is concerned. And I could mention several whose chances are very poor indeed among the girls of New York."

I could not help exclaiming "How splendid!" And I asked Mrs Adams the reason of this important difference, but it was one of the few things she could not explain. She seemed content to rest upon the fact and wave a flag, which, of course, one could understand.

"Don't you imagine the main thing, almost the only thing, between young people is psychological attraction?" Mrs Adams asked.

"How can I possibly tell in this wonderful country?" I replied. "The first thing that attracted me in Kaye was his bowling. He took three wickets for eighteen runs in a 'Varsity match. I suppose nobody over here would look at that."

"They might look at it, but they wouldn't understand it. Baseball, you know, is our national game. I don't think you could beat us at baseball. I think we lead the world *there*. But——"

"Do ladies play it?" I interrupted.

"Oh, no, not *ladies*."

"You haven't any county teams?"

"We haven't any counties," Mrs Adams replied blankly; "except for voting and all that."

"Haven't you, really? I've always lived in one. I should miss it dreadfully. But you were going to say——"

"I was going to say that I've heard Mr Val Ingham talk as if he thought everything of cricket and not quite so much of baseball. I sometimes think," Mrs Adams went on seriously, "that Mr Ingham isn't at heart a very good American."

"But I thought you liked him so much!"

"Oh, we do—we simply love him. But I've heard him wish he had been sent to Oxford instead of Yale."

"Oh well," I said.

"If he had said Heidelberg or Göttingen it wouldn't have seemed so bad, but *Oxford!*"

"I know some people who always get their marmalade from Oxford," I said. "Why not Oxford?"

"It isn't as if he could acquire a foreign language there."

I didn't say so, but surely he could. I remember Frances saying she had met the Oxford professor of Chinese at Carlsbad; and what about Max Müller?

"Of course, Mr Ingham has been in England,"

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Mrs Adams went on, "but that doesn't excuse everything."

Mrs Adams certainly did bewilder one at times.

"Why should it excuse anything?" I exclaimed, but she said "Hush! Here comes Verona."

CHAPTER IX

I NEVER saw Kaye so excited as he was in that first fortnight in New York. No one else, of course, noticed it as I did, since no one else knew what he was like at home. Indeed, when I mentioned it to Mr Adams he seemed to think I was joking. "Well," said Mr Adams, "if that's how he acts under excitement I must say I envy him his self-control. I remember now, I saw him run'to catch a car yesterday. It struck me at the time; I guess he is excited." I could believe that or anything after the way I saw my husband day after day come up to our room and sit down for the mere purpose of talking for a quarter of an hour at a time about what he had seen and what he thought of it. It was most unusual. I could not get a word in at all, I who generally got all the words in. I mean that my husband was not at home exactly a person who talks for the sake of talking. Speech with him was a convenience like a spoon; he did not use it oftener than was necessary. In England that is not very often, such a great deal is taken for granted there: it is a kind of cult to know how much you may leave unsaid. You inherit accumulations of silence, and Kaye belongs to a very old family.

It was a revelation to me to see him so impressed and so keen on telling one; it seems

ridiculous, but his vocabulary was a surprise. When he came back from the gallery of the Stock Exchange and related how the Hams—they are brothers, well-known in American finance—had done something extraordinary in corn meal, I really thought he had a degree or two of fever, but it was only the spectacle working in him of one of the Hams standing on his top-hat to attract the necessary attention to do the thing, whatever it was.

“Adams seemed to think nothing of it,” said Kaye. “He was rather quaint about it. He said hats went out of that place every day that would never smile again. Now that was quaint, wasn’t it? One remembers an expression like that.” He did too, and used it unfailingly for months after we went home if anything happened to a hat with which we were acquainted, of course, well acquainted. “It will never smile again,” Kaye would say, until Leigh Hopkins took it up, and, of course, when a little boulder like that began to use the phrase, Kaye dropped it.

It was usually in the half-hour before dinner that we had our little talk, and it was then I was quite sure that Mr and Mrs Adams had theirs. Two centres of international comment we were, with only the thickness of a wall between, for I began to think that they found as much to say about us as we did about them. Not, of course, that there was much; both Kaye and I are very ordinary people, while they were Americans, but they seemed politely to examine our little ways almost as much as we did theirs. What they thought I suppose we shall never know, but, as Mrs Adams was fond of saying we might all teach each other something, one hopes it was not entirely disapproving. Mrs Adams struck me as

very broad-minded. She was extremely kind and pleasant about several of our institutions; she said she would give anything to have a Westminster Abbey in New York, and she was almost the only American I met who saw what Kaye would call "points" about our Royal Family. She went so far about the Princess of Wales that I almost thought she would give something to have a Royal Family in New York too; but that, of course, was only my idea. I did think her extraordinarily foolish about Verona though, and I was glad to find that Kaye, on the whole, agreed with me. Being a man he had the advantage of a simpler point of view. He made tremendous qualifications, however, in favour of the young lady. He said it was not in the least her fault, but the fault of the social system; and when I suggested my suspicion that the social system was made by the young ladies of the United States for the young ladies of the United States, he inquired then who allowed them to do it. This, of course, was unanswerable, but I could not help demanding whether, in Kaye's opinion, Verona was a person one could "allow" to do this or that. He said he didn't see in the least why not, and added he wished she was *his* sister, presumably for purpose of experiment.

"It isn't as if one were sure of his being in love with her," I said; "he may be only amusing himself."

"Oh, I fancy they are both amusing themselves," said Kaye, "very well."

"In the meantime," said I; "and presently they may stumble on the discovery that it is serious. I believe that is what is expected of them."

"He's a queer chap, that Ingham," Kaye remarked, with a severe frown; "he asked me

last night whether I didn't think the line of her chin wholly classic."

"I don't see any special harm in that," I replied to the frown.

"When we were engaged I didn't go about asking chaps if you hadn't a classic line to your chin."

"You couldn't! Besides, they're not engaged."

"As good as."

"Not a bit of it. They're only looking at each other with a possible view of being."

My husband guffawed—which is not a thing they do in America.

"Rot!" he said. "They're keeping it dark."

"Kaye," I said, "unless you wish to discredit the English people altogether you will kindly refrain from using such expressions in this country. Americans do not say 'rot,' 'rotten,' or 'nasty.' I confess I say 'nasty' myself pretty often, but I quite see that it isn't nice. Last night at billiards you first said your luck was 'rotten,' and then you got excited and declared it was 'putrid.' Mrs Adams turned quite pale."

"What is a fellow to say?"

"If you must express that idea, wouldn't 'decomposing' be better?"

"Takes too long. I say, you know, for people who have so little time, they do use thunderin' long words."

"Mrs Adams does, rather. But I can generally understand her."

"Oh yes, if you put your back into it, you can," observed my husband thoughtfully. "But look at the difference at home. Take one of the mother's tea-parties—about fifty words would carry you through, short ones at that. Here they seem to get the whole range of the dictionary. Odd thing to come to the States to get

practice in your own language." So he noticed it himself.

We were dressing to dine with Mr Ingham at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. He would have preferred, he said, to invite us to a home, but his father and mother had gone to Alaska, leaving too small an establishment to minister to us; Mr Ingham complained, indeed, that he could get nothing out of the cook but scrambled eggs and huckleberry pie, because she herself happened to be fond of those dishes. He explained that he, alone in 221, West Seventy-fifth Street, was a helpless victim, that when his mother was at home the cook was not allowed to do exactly as she liked about huckleberry pie, but that even then they had to have it pretty often—about once a week, as long as the "berry season" lasted—or Mabel would not stay. I thought Frances would be interested in that. "Send me all the illustrations," she said when we came away; "all the illustrations you can of the practical working of democratic institutions." I had already put down several.

It was only Verona, Kaye, and I who were asked, and when we came downstairs Veròna looked at me and said, "Oh, we ought to get a carriage."

"Why, yes," said Mrs Adams. "I can telephone to Flynn's, and it will be here in ten minutes. But you'll be just half an hour late for your dinner going that way."

I confess I had counted on some kind of a vehicle, but Kaye said, "Nonsense, my wife can bundle up."

"Oh yes," I said, "I can bundle up."

"The electric car will take you right there," Mr Adams said, "but what's worrying me is, will Mrs Kemball take cold?"

"My wife never takes cold," said Kaye.

"Anything would have *done*," remarked Mrs Adams, looking at my shoulders. "This is the very first time I've been sorry about the horses," she said, turning to her husband.

"We put down the horses, as you say in England," said Mr Adams. "Yes, we put down Billy and Sam because the cars got there ahead of them every time. But we'll put them up again if you have any reason to suppose it would make you happier, Louisa."

"Mercy, no!" exclaimed Mrs Adams. "The misery I've suffered with those horses! One of them used to *paw* every time we kept him waiting five minutes! Paw at the door and shake himself. And the wickedness of sending for cabs when you knew they wanted exercise themselves—I mean Billy and Sam. It was Billy who pawed, but Sam would get his tail over the reins, and then you never knew! I used to wish we could send the empty carriage to funerals—you do that in England, don't you? I would have sent them to a funeral every day."

"We have reason to believe they did attend a wake once," remarked Mr Adams. "Do you remember the afternoon we met them flourishing down Broadway, and Mike on the box with crape on his hat and the carriage full of Hooleys?"

"And we were on the Battery car, and you laughed so hard you broke the strap you were holding on with. But Mike had no right to do such a thing," Mrs Adams responded seriously. We were all standing on the steps waiting.

"Well," said Mr Adams, "the electric car always gets enough exercise, and doesn't have to be ordered, and there's no bloated aristocrat on the box to trample on the rich man's rights and fill it with Hooleys instead, and you haven't got

to be bothered owning it in any shape or form—and there it is, so if you can't be lively, Kemball, be as lively as you can."

Mr Ingham had invited us nominally to give us a dinner, but really, I suspected from the way he stood on the steps, to show us the Waldorf Astoria. I saw a similar look of gratified proprietorship on the faces of many of the several hundred gentlemen who seemed to be entertaining friends there; Kaye noticed the same thing. "It was just," he said to me afterwards about Val Ingham, "as if he had money in it." But neither Mr Ingham nor any of them had money in it or anything to do with it, nor Verona either; yet even Verona had the air of accepting our appreciation as a personal compliment. It was as if I had been proud of Bailey's, where we always go in town. It is convenient and clean at Bailey's, I don't mind saying that, but it isn't like one's own place, and one doesn't care a brass farthing how many hundred bedrooms it has, except that if it ever gets too big one won't go there again. But Bailey's certainly isn't a patch on the Waldorf Astoria. I can't imagine the Waldorf Astoria giving you breakfast, plain, with jam and two eggs, for 2s. 6d. I can't imagine getting breakfast at all there; it seems too ordinary a meal; though, of course, it is done. The occasion of the moment was dinner, but people were not dining solidly, silently, and a little suspiciously, as they do at Bailey's. They were assisting at a brilliant, dainty spectacle, grouped about scores of little shining tables, each little table conscious of its own and the general effect. There was the liveliest beat of talk and laughter, a flash of observation like the constant ripple on a running stream; the enjoyment in the air was only ostensibly connected with knives and forks, more ethereal

than it is at Bailey's. The diners were all putting, in the American way, an emphasis and a vitality into what they had to say; this I discovered as soon as we found our little table and were unfolding our napkins. And I made an observation, which might as well go in here as anywhere, that that is what they do, the Americans. They take such an interest in everything, they say that nothing has the air of a commonplace, even when it is one; while we, upon my word, we seem to think it bad manners to assume that anything we have to say could be interesting.

"I'm afraid," said Mr Ingham, as I removed my cloak, "I should have taken a private room," exactly in the tone in which Mrs Adams lamented the carriage. Then I noticed that I was the only woman in the place in evening dress. Crowds of the smartest frocks, such as one sees at Nice or Homburg or Cairo in the height of the season, but all *toilettes de visite*, all high in the neck. I had on the same dress that I wore the evening before I sailed (we left town by the White Star train at noon) when Kaye took me to dine at the Criterion, to be quite certain of being right, so I was not discomposed.

"I'm so glad you didn't," I said, "one gets so tired of that. England is divided into private rooms," (Kaye afterwards said that was beastly clever of me, but not in the hearing of the Adamses.)

"Couldn't you put your wrap on?" suggested Verona.

"Thanks, no," I said; "I don't want it in the least. Kaye is quite right, I never do take cold."

Verona's glance met that of Val Ingham, and they both looked at their soup, blushing deeply. It looked extremely silly, but I was quite pleased

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to have had that effect on them. It didn't happen so often!

"In the season," said young Ingham, "half the people here would be in full dress. But now everybody is out of town except seven or nine people, of whom we are four."

"But surely the season isn't over yet?" remarked Kaye. "This is only the middle of June. It ought to be at its height."

"In London," replied our host humorously; "but it often rains in London when it's quite dry here, and we don't sell any more patent leather shoes in this city when the King goes to Marlborough House than when he stays with his family in the country. Our season takes place in the winter, sir, and in the summer New York dies."

The gathering about us seemed very far from moribund, and my husband and I demanded in one breath: "Then who are all these people?"

Mr Ingham looked comprehensively round. "I don't know a human being in the room," he said, "except the head waiter, and he's a Dago. Yes, I do; there's Edward P. Bailey, the fellow in the peacock-blue necktie, just back of those two Jewesses in pink *crêpe*. He must just have come into the city. The *Eagle* had it he was at Newport yesterday. It gave a list of his partners at Princess Yamani's ball last Wednesday."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Kaye.

"Yes, Mr Bailey was mad. He thought he must have dropped his programme at the end of the evening and some reporter got hold of it, but I suspect his man sold it. That's the worst of a valet; he is just as likely as not squared by the papers."

"Did he take any action?" asked Kaye.

"Why, no, he didn't make any unpleasantness.

But he isn't happy in his mind, because the name of one young lady appears on it five times, and it isn't the one it ought to be."

"He's engaged, you know, to Minnie Magruder," explained Verona.

"And it wasn't her name!" exclaimed Kaye.

"Now you've got it," replied Mr Ingham. "Also, she has five millions of dollars to play with."

"And the Marquis de Vibois simply dying to marry her," added Verona, "according to the *Morning*."

"So E. P. Bailey's domestic future isn't as rosy as it was," Mr Ingham continued.

"He seems very young to be so much before the public," I said. "He might be still at college from his appearance."

"Oh, Edward left school a very long time ago. He's been a leader of society for two years. He's a well-known club man, and he drives the fastest trotters in New York. His father was Ephraim Bailey, who founded the Northern Bell Telegraph system."—"I've heard of his father," Kaye put in—"And he gets up a hunt every year, you see, at his place on Long Island, and he's always right in it. If you knew our New York papers you could find his name blindfold in the Sunday Supplements. What brings a man before the public in your country?"

"He must be of age, anyhow," said Kaye simply, but the other two laughed and cried out to him.

"You are very severe, Mr Kembell," said Verona. I noticed that often in the States. One is constantly suspected of adverse criticism when one may be thinking of something else altogether, or when one's mind, on the contrary, may be full of admiration. This encourages the habit, and

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by the time I got home I *was* critical; I had quite an eye. My mother-in-law's astonishment and the way I was snubbed were proofs of it."

"Don't you really know any more of these people?" I asked, hoping to hear of somebody else as interesting as Edward P. Bailey.

"I do not. Most of them look as if they had come in for the summer sales."

"They do suggest the bargain-counters," said Verona, and blew her nose rather contemptuously with a Honiton lace pocket-handkerchief. I have one very much like it which I keep in lavender and *carry* to parties. I expressed no amazement that the frocks about us should have come out of summer sales—one dislikes above all things to seem provincial—but I said I would like to go to some of them.

"Take her to Wanamaker's," said Mr Ingham, "on a mammoth day in shirt-waists."

"Take me," Kaye suggested; "I should profit more, shouldn't I, by shirt-waists? I believe they do you very well over here—some dodge of measurement."

Even if Kaye had been pretending to misunderstand—which he wasn't—I don't see why it should have shocked Verona. A shirt is an innocent thing, and, if well laundered, a smart thing. But it did—she drew herself up. "Mr Ingham refers to a ladies' sale," she said, and added, with a little haughty nod towards a group entering, "There are the Hams."

And I thought I was chaperoning that party! I was amused at the way Kaye got out of it. He looked at young Ingham consideringly for a minute. "You know more about millinery than any chap I ever met," he said.

"Have to in this country," Mr Ingham returned in an abject manner, and we all laughed.

"Where *have* I heard of the Hams?" I demanded. "Oh, I know. Which is Miss Violet Ham?"

"The young lady just sitting down," said Val Ingham.

"With the lovely colour," added Verona.

"*They* come in often, of course, with their steam yacht," Mr Ingham informed us. "They're only about an hour up the Hudson, at their country seat."

"How quaint to go to the country at this time of the year," Kaye remarked. "We couldn't get a soul now, could we, Carrie?"

Val Ingham looked as if he could have protested in high comedy, but gravely restrained it. I noticed that Kaye often produced that effect upon Americans.

"Violet Ham has the bluest eyes and is the best dancer in the city of New York," remarked Verona, smiling prettily at Val Ingham. That was another thing I noticed—the best in the city of New York was ultimate praise; no one could say more than that.

Mr Ingham looked at a point remote from Miss Ham, and made no response. "And she makes the loveliest angel-cake," Verona went on. "You really eat too much of it at their 'At Homes.'"

"I should like to see you eat too much of anything," I cried, and Kaye said what he would be glad to know was how in the world Mr Ingham managed to be giving us grouse in June. The explanation, whatever it was, added, I remember, to the wonder, and did not detract from the flavour. It was an excellent dinner; it remains in both our minds as a singularly excellent dinner—Kaye, by the way, was much impressed by the capacity of the young men of New York to do that sort of thing well—but it was conspicuously

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a dinner that one would expect to eat at other times of the year, a dinner at war with itself and with the almanac. This was the *chic* and the shock and the surprise of it, and helped to explain not only the deportment of the head waiter, but the unshuttered, uncurtained plate-glass windows that offered us up to Thirty-fourth Street outside. People eating an ordinary dinner cannot be much of a public spectacle, but there may be a curiosity to see them enjoying grapes in June and fresh asparagus in December. Anyway, there we were, every mouthful exposed in the highest light, and there was the shifting, staring multitude outside in the dark, and not one of the five hundred diners apparently wished to have it otherwise. I did not particularly mind—it was rather like dining on the stage—but I was thankful that Kaye had his back turned to the windows.

CHAPTER X

THE business that brought my husband across the Atlantic was one of the matters that kept Mr Adams in New York so long after other people had found it too hot to stay. He made that out in his cordial way to be a claim on us; he said that if he must broil in order to attend to our affairs, he might as well broil in our society. It was agreeable to acknowledge such claims, and I was rather sorry that things were settled so soon. There seemed to me to be no difficulty. Kaye said to me that the advantage of amalgamation to the original shareholders was as plain as a pikestaff from the first, and if he maintained a somewhat reserved and cautionary attitude with Mr Adams for a week or two, I think it was chiefly so that the absurdity of taking an ocean voyage to protect rights which were in no way imperilled might not be too plain. When he came to learn that the company in its new formation was to include one of the Hams, his satisfaction was even greater. Mr Adams shared Kaye's admiration for the gentleman's astuteness. "Certainly," said he, "I would go into anything with Ham, provided I also came out with him," and, as an after-thought, Kaye arranged with Mr Adams, in case of an exit by Mr Ham, to use the same door. We were delighted on general as well as on personal grounds that we had found

nothing in the world to justify us for having come. Perhaps I have already shown that we expected to find a great deal; one hears such tales in England, one naturally expects in Transatlantic matters to be "done." And certainly a widow lady of some opulence living in a remote English county would be exactly the person to be put upon if the wish to do so existed. Quite apart from the money consideration, nothing would have upset us so much as to find that it did exist. As it was, our interest in that extraordinary country and its inhabitants had the firmest basis; there was nothing to qualify any charm or to dash any attraction.

When it was all signed, sealed, and delivered, however, there was no further reason to keep either the Adamses or ourselves in New York. We were sitting on the steps on that final evening—after the first week Kaye frequented the steps as much as anybody—discussing plans with the Adamses, when Verona appeared at the door with a letter.

"Well," she interrupted, "if you do"—we had settled on a fortnight with the Adamses in the Adirondacks and home by Niagara and Montreal—"Violet Ham will be the most disappointed girl in the State of New York."

"What has Miss Ham to say to it?" asked Kaye, and we all looked up.

"Everything," said Verona, reading the letter, from which descended a delicate fragrance; "that is, she would like to. She wants me to come and stay with them at Bellevue, and bring you with me."

"There now," cried Mrs Adams, "Mrs Kemball thinks that perfectly crazy."

"No I don't," I responded promptly; "I

think it most awfully kind. But isn't there a Mrs Ham?"

"Oh, there *is*," said Mrs Adams, "but I believe she isn't over-strong."

"Don't you know her?" I exclaimed.

"Why, no, not to speak to. I saw her once shopping with Violet."

"I know her," announced Verona. "Violet has to do just as she says in *some* things. Violet wanted the carpet taken up for her dance last winter, and Mrs Ham wouldn't let it be done, and Violet just had to give in and have linen put down."

"Then they are your friends altogether?" I said to Verona.

"Well, I know Violet too," Mrs Adams said.

"Considering she came out in this very house," put in Verona, "I should think you did. Don't you remember—the afternoon of the blizzard?"

"In the United States," put in Mr Adams, "we have the privilege, if we like to take it, of being acquainted in family sections. Ma may be an ornament to society while pa stays at home and runs the lawn-mower. Or ma may prefer to can preserves while the young people dance with our visitors from the Courts of Europe. It's peculiar to this country," said Mr Adams, knocking the ash of his cigar upon the stone balustrade of his residence.

"I do not quite understand," said Kaye, who was also smoking. "how the young lady came out in the afternoon, and why she came out in a blizzard."

"It was an afternoon tea," Verona explained, "and the blizzard came without being invited."

"Now, what is there wonderful in that?" Mrs Adams demanded. "Don't young ladies come out at teas in your country?"

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"Not for choice, I imagine," my husband replied. "Pretty average slow, isn't it—one man to fifteen women?"

Mrs Adams gave a little shriek. "Not with us!" she cried. "In New York the men are perfectly sweet and lovely about afternoon 'At Homes.' They are charmed to come. They flock."

I was thinking about Miss Ham's invitation. "I really wish Mrs Ham had written," I said to Verona.

"Oh, she leaves all that to Violet."

"Perhaps she sends a message?"

"No, she doesn't. Violet just asks you herself. But you needn't be afraid—it's all right." I thought Verona somewhat enjoyed my perplexity.

"Suppose she doesn't know a thing about it?" mused my husband. "One would feel jolly awkward. This sort of thing: 'Your daughter asked me'—eh?" Overcome by the idea, Kaye was unable to continue.

"Then my daughter shall be whipped," I went on for him; "and I am sorry I can't press you to stay."

They all laughed, and Verona said, "Is that what would happen in England?"

But Kaye by this time was much less unreasonable about doing this, that, and the other thing. Perhaps he gradually saw that it does not do to try to impose one's ideas upon the United States; at any rate, he stopped, to my great comfort, behaving as if he had any responsibility in the matter. He as good as said on one occasion that English ways were best suited to England, and when you consider how many people want to insist on them all over the globe, this was going pretty far. And we went to the Hams. The

Adamses went to the Adirondacks and we went to the Hams with Verona. It was practically decided before we left the steps that evening. To our great relief Mrs Ham said she was real glad to see us. It was Violet who met us at the landing and drove us to the house and showed us where to go and what to do, but we encountered Mrs Ham later in the hall upstairs, where she was stooping over the edge of the carpet. She was a dried-up-looking little woman with sharp eyes and rather compressed lips and very white hair, which she wore puffed round her forehead.

"Now I know," she said as she shook hands with us, "without being told, that you are Mr and Mrs Kemball, of Great Britain. Violet's been expecting you all afternoon. Well, you've caught me in my apron. I was just looking to see if there was any more sign of those Buffalo bugs—if you let them alone five minutes they eat you out of house and home. I've tried phenyle and I've tried naphthaline—dear knows what I haven't tried, but I never believe I kill a Buffalo bug without I do it with the sole of my shoe."

I must just explain that the expression is not offensive in the United States. It doesn't necessarily mean anything dreadful. There are many kinds of them, such as the "June" and "potato"; in fact, it is a general term applied to insects over there. I have heard a poor innocent earwig called one. We became quite accustomed to the sound of it before the summer was over, but it is an Americanism I don't think one would ever acquire. Kaye simply pulled his moustache and stared but I realized at once that it must be something quite different.

"Are they very destructive?" I asked.

"Destructive's no name for them. Anything that's cotton or wool! And eggs by the million! They're new to us, and I don't know whether they've crossed the Atlantic yet, but when they *do* you'll know it! Now, I hope," Mrs Ham went on cordially, "you'll make yourselves just as much at home as they do, that's all. Violet hasn't a single thing to do but entertain you. You'll have to excuse *me*, I'm on my way down to my kitchen. We got a new girl in yesterday, and what she knows about a gas range I don't think it'll trouble her to forget."

Kaye and I stepped out into the balcony at the end of the hall. It was garlanded with flowers and creepers. Wide lawns sloped away from the house on every side, with vivid parterres and geraniums. Half a dozen fountain sprinklers played on them, the coils of rubber looked like so many boa-constrictors in the grass—beyond all, the splendid panorama of the Hudson.

"So that's Mrs Ham," said I.

"Wife of Jacob Ham," said Kaye.

"And mother of Violet, and mistress of all we see," I ejaculated.

"I thought," said Kaye guardedly, "that when it got to this, you know, they always went to Paris and lived in diplomatic circles, and had Whistler paint them."

"Not in this case," said I.

"Oh no, much too sensible, I should say. But she's not a nobody by any means."

"Who gave you the idea that she was?"

"Why, Mrs Adams—didn't she? Said she didn't know her. Adams knows Ham too—that's queer. Ham lunched us both at the Union Club."

"Didn't Mr Adams give some kind of explanation of that?"

"I remember now, he did. Said you could ask a man to dinner without his wife in America—something like that. You might mention it to Frances; she'll be interested. By the way, what's the party? Have you heard?"

"Only ourselves and Verona and Mr Ingham, and some Englishman, I believe. I didn't hear his name."

"That eternal young Ingham."

"Oh, I rather like him. He's been confiding in me a little lately."

"That's why you like him," said my husband acutely.

"Oh not altogether. He's an amiable boy, and very adaptive. If you knew——" I smiled broadly at the recollection.

"Knew what?"

"I don't think I ought to tell you. Poor Mr Ingham," I went on, still smiling, "he is so very earnest."

"Why do you laugh in that silly way? Has he made up his mind that it's good enough?" Kaye demanded.

"I wish Mrs Adams could hear you! I gather he is making it up. He thinks in the end she will be quite indispensable to him."

"I'm blowed," said my husband, with the vulgarity of intimate moments; "I'm blowed if I understand American men!"

"He says he's seen so much misery; and so has everybody. I think he's quite right to take his time. But that isn't the funny part of it," I said, again giving way to mirth.

"There won't be any funny part," Kaye returned, with annoyance, "if she refuses him, and I jolly well hope she will. You say you didn't hear who the other chap is—the chap from home?"

"Heaven only knows," I said. I cannot explain it, but English people have a way of assuming that Heaven only knows their compatriots in foreign lands.

"Some first-class bounder, you may depend," said Kaye. "Americans do get hold of the most extraordinary people from our part of the world. They seem to think one 'Britisher' is just as good as another."

"That's exactly what they say about us," I exclaimed. "They complain that we can never see that there are Americans and Americans. You ought to hear Mrs Adams. And I haven't heard the expression 'Britisher' since I landed; I begin to think that we invented it ourselves."

"Maybe so, but they're taught to be alike, and we're taught to be different. Hullo!" exclaimed Kaye, in a tone more lively than that of argument. "Who's that? Blest if it isn't old Bobs! Old Bobs, of all people!"

"Is it?" I exclaimed, leaning over the balcony to look. "Impossible! So it is!"

Two figures, Miss Violet Ham's and another, were slowly progressing in deep and animated conversation up the drive towards the house. They came at this point within the radius of precise observation, and Kaye was quite right, it *was* his cousin, Lord Robert Walden—Kaye's mother was a Walden—upon whom in complete amazement we looked down.

"I understood," said my husband severely, "that he let the place this year in order to economize; not to go to the most expensive—I say! I suppose he's the Englishman!"

"I suppose he is," I responded, as we went downstairs to find out the whys and the wherefores. "Some first-class bounder, you

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may depend," I couldn't resist adding; "Americans do get hold of such extraordinary people."

But Kaye, wrapped in speculation as to the remarkable coincidence, did not retaliate.

CHAPTER XI

"It was my little surprise," exclaimed Miss Violet Ham, as we all stood together on the gravel below. "I knew you were related. Lord Robert told me. Lord Robert has more relations—well, I don't believe he knows half of them to speak to."

Bobs was every bit as surprised as we were. He and Kaye were quite embarrassed with their astonishment. They could do nothing for several minutes after shaking hands but stand, first on one leg and then on the other, and ejaculate, "I say, old chap!" and "Upon my word, old man!" without the slightest attempt to get at the root of the matter. Miss Ham looked on with delight.

"Oh," she cried, "I hadn't an idea it would come off so well! It's lovely—do go on! You'll find out something in time. It's like John Drew," she went on, turning to me. "You've seen John Drew—he stars with Ada Rehan. And that's just the way he does English parts. Mr Kembell has exactly John Drew's figure—they could wear each other's clothes, I should think, without a crease. Well, that's a compliment, if ever I paid one."

"I don't think he heard you," I said reassuringly.

"Oh, but I meant him to! I didn't intend it should be thrown away!" responded Miss Ham.

She was a tall and vigorous young person, richly coloured and curved, quite different from Verona, who could not lose an ounce of flesh anywhere without missing it. She had soft, dark hair, pushed forward round her face in a slight exaggeration of the way people were wearing it, and splendid blue eyes with thick lashes, and nearly always a laugh in them; as Kaye said, she looked awfully good-natured. Her dress dragged in most exquisite lines on the ground behind her; it was from Paris, and had more of an accent than any English girl would dare to carry, more than it would have had on a French person; the American young lady in it simply doubled its significance. Miss Ham was large and abundant every way. In figure she reminded me of a friend at home, but this young lady was alert in every line; beside her, Laura, as I conjured her up, stood equally big, but placid and reflective, and hard to move. Like Verona, she, Violet, made pictures; but they were by a different artist, a bolder and more sumptuous brush.

"I wrote to Verona," explained Miss Ham, "over a week ago, asking her to come and visit here; and she wrote back and said you were there, and you were too utterly fascinating—leave you she couldn't, and wouldn't. In the very same letter she mentioned that you were cousins of Lord Robert's. 'Goodness me,' I said, 'that must be my Lord Bobby'—he belonged to the Kittley's at Idlewyld then; but that doesn't matter. I just made sure; I said to him one day, 'Look here, if it isn't a personal question, could there be two Lord R. Waldens in Great Britain?' and he said no, there couldn't; just as I thought. So then I got up my little surprise party. I wrote to Verona you simply had to be my house-guests for July, and if she didn't bring you, I might go

on loving her, but it wouldn't ever be the same." Miss Ham said this with a frank, delightful laugh. I saw at once by the way she diverted Bob's attention that he was quite carried away.

"If you think you're worth a threat like that"—he turned to my husband.

"I wish I didn't always forget to put down the things Lord Bobs says," declared Miss Ham. "I want to store them up for consolation in my old age. They would look lovely in a thought-book, too."

I don't know why it is that an American young lady can always make a British nobleman look sheepish.

"Oh, draw it mild, Miss Violet," said Bobs, and began to gnaw one corner of his yellow silk handkerchief. He always carries a yellow silk handkerchief, and he always gnaws it under embarrassment or emotion. A man in that position doesn't often get his little habits corrected for him, as of course they should be. People hesitate.

"What is a thought-book, Miss Ham?" asked Kaye.

"Oh, it's just a little book—blank book, note-book, copy-book. You put down in it any bright ideas that happen to come your way; but of course they ought to be principally your own. Like Daudet's *Notes sur la Vie*, you know."

I didn't know. It was a book at the time I hadn't seen, but I was none the less brought up short by Miss Ham's quoting it. The key of the delicate and the subtle was precisely the one she didn't obviously strike, but I was soon to learn that she knew all the keys; she had a practised hand and a wide range. She could talk about everything. I never thought again about poor

dear Laura, who can talk about nothing in particular, nice as she is.

The picture of our kinsman standing biting his silk handkerchief on the Ham's gravel drive beside the Hudson continued to affect me—I couldn't at all get over it; and I was glad to hear presently that Miss Ham had met him at the American ambassador's in London, where she had the honour to be staying. She didn't say she had the honour—it is a thing that Americans never seem to think they receive or confer—but I say it for her. So very much better than at Monte Carlo or on board ship, where Bobs has made attractive friends before now and handed them on to his family. In this case, however, the favour was entirely on the other side; Bobs was the humble recipient.

“When he said he was coming over, I gave him an introduction to the Kittleys,” Miss Ham went on.

“Oh, she's been awfully good,” mumbled Bobs.

“Not to Mr and Mrs Ham?” asked Kaye.

“Bless your heart, no! What *would* poor pa and ma have done with a perfectly fresh, untutored Englishman, and me away? But I knew the Kittleys would take care of him and show him as much as was good for him till I came back; and now,” she went on in mock despair, “he declares he is going to stay all summer!”

“Your people will have a tidy job to get rid of me,” Bobs responded cheerfully. “So jolly here—shouldn't make it so jolly.”

“You must all stay all summer,” declared Violet, and positively the idea didn't seem at all ridiculous; there was no obvious reason why we shouldn't. The thing that struck one most at a glance was the extraordinary absence of any

impediment to doing exactly as one liked. The wide stretches of lawn and river expressed it, and the way the trees grew and the flowers. There was an absence in all this profusion of accustomed restraints, one felt a little as if one had penetrated to the enchanted castle in the fairy tale, where the banquet is spread with every luxury, and absolutely nobody to interfere. Presently it appeared that there was somebody to interfere—just a little—in the person of a man in a wide-brimmed straw hat and his shirt-sleeves, who crossed the lawn at an angle a few yards away from us, and addressed a boy farther off manipulating one of the rubber hose. "Say, Pete," he shouted, "the old man kicks about somebody drivin' on his grass. He's got it you done it, and he's after you."

"Oh, *all* right!" the boy called out, in a tone half resentful, half conciliatory, and turned his hose in another direction. The man took no notice of us, did not even touch his hat, but somehow he did interfere with the impression I've mentioned; he introduced a note of dominance.

"That's Jake," said Violet. "Might say good-evening, Jake; guess you're getting proud." Jake acknowledged the pleasantry with a grin and went his way.

"The head gardener?" asked Kaye.

"Head everything. Jake just about runs this place—laid out the tennis courts, named it, and everything. Pa was going to call it River Bluffs, but Jake didn't think much of that, and went round calling it Bellevue till it got known by that instead. Jake's a good man. You tell him you think a thing might just as well be done, and it is done. You don't have to suggest it twice. Jake and pa were at school together."

Kaye simply stared, with visions, I suppose, of Rugby and Harrow—he himself is a Harrovian. Bobs had restored his handkerchief, and was drawing patterns in the gravel with his stick. He had been longer in the country.

“At school together!” ejaculated my husband.

“It is funny, isn’t it? Jake looks so much younger. That’s the result of a country life. Pa went into a store in New York, and Jake stayed in Mount Pleasant and made other people’s cheese for them. All the same, Jake isn’t any hayseed—he knows exactly where he’s at. And he hasn’t any business to call pa ‘the old man,’ he’s only two years younger himself.”

“He hasn’t, indeed,” returned my husband, with astonished emphasis. And we turned at Violet’s “Here he is!” to meet a narrow, little grey-haired man, with round straw hat and a blue ribbon on it—coming back from the city!—a lined and sallow face of great alertness, and one shoulder rather higher than the other, walking up the drive.

I was the only one to be introduced, and I hardly needed it; Kaye had pointed out Mr Jacob Ham so often in the illustrated weekly papers. He spoke to me very pleasantly and kindly, saying that he hoped Kaye and I felt already entirely at home—which we did—but there certainly was in his manner that touch of perfunctoriness that one notices with people who have to meet and greet a great many strangers in the course of the day. At home one sees it immensely in London, but hardly ever in the country, naturally. It made one feel, though quite welcome, a little incidental and unimportant.

“Have you seen my beans?” he asked, almost at once.

“Indeed, they haven’t,” cried Violet. “Do

you think I would be mean enough to show them before you came home, you dear, silly, old Johnny?"

"Oh, come on then," said Mr Ham. "My beans are something to see."

"He's got twenty-five varieties," said Violet. "But don't be afraid, they're not all ripe at once."

Mr Ham led the way with promptness, and Kaye and I followed, while Jake in the distance gave us one casual glance, apparently determined that we might go if we liked, but it was none of his business, and sat down on the lawn roller to light his pipe. We turned foolishly expectant of the others, but Miss Violet bade us go on.

"Never mind us," she said, "we've seen the beans."

"Yes," seconded Lord Bobs, with alacrity, "we've seen the beans—rather!"

CHAPTER XII

WE began to learn next morning how entirely we were to look to Miss Violet for all that it was our privilege to claim from our hostess. The form of our invitation, of course, had given us some notion of that, but nothing at all adequate. It was Violet who rang the electric bell for breakfast, and Violet who explained when it appeared that it wasn't a particle of use waiting for Lord Bobs; Violet who inquired how we had passed the night, and whether the steamer whistles had disturbed us in the early morning. Somewhat later, I confess, but at the first opportunity, I asked for her mother, and was told that we need never expect to see her at the morning meal.

"Mrs Ham breakfasts in her room?" asked Kaye, with proper solicitude.

"I'm just as glad she doesn't hear you," Violet cried. "Do you take one lump or two? I haven't known ma have breakfast in bed for ten years. You couldn't make her. She gets up and has it with my father at seven!"

"So early?" I exclaimed.

"Well, that only just gives them time for a look at the beans and a word or two with Jake, perhaps, and gets pa to his office in the city by nine."

"So early?" remarked Kaye in turn, and it was

astonishing enough that Mr Jacob Ham, who could buy any day, as Kaye said, a small principality to play with if he liked, should go to his desk like a clerk.

"People who do business in New York City," said Violet sententiously, "have *got* to get a hustle on. That's one of our idioms; it means——"

"I know what it means," said Kaye, "in connection with electric trams. It is a graphic expression. But I should think at your father's time of life——"

"He'd be sitting in an armchair, nursing a gouty foot and making things pleasant for his family," responded Violet gaily. "Imagine *pa*. That isn't the American style, Mr Kemball. With us the old gentleman drop out of a good many things—you couldn't get my father to a dinner-party with ropes—but they never drop out of business."

"Then Mrs Ham is already up and about," I remarked. "I'm afraid she must think us shockingly lazy."

"Don't you be afraid—mother isn't like that, not a bit. She wouldn't mind if you didn't get up till twelve, except for keeping the work back in the kitchen. She says she doesn't know what people come to this country for unless it's to eat and sleep. But she'd feel wicked herself if she wasn't up by about six fussing round taking things out of the hands of the help—I mean the servants—and doing them herself. This minute, if we tracked her down, we should find her stretching curtains in the billiard-room, I imagine, by the smell of cold starch round the door as I passed it."

"When my mother was younger," Violet went on, "she was known as the best housekeeper in

Starrville, where she lived. She won't consent to outgrow her reputation."

We talked of something else. Verona came down, and soon after Mr Ingham, who had arrived two or three days before; but that summing up remained with me. It seemed to me too touching—the wife of the great Jacob Ham. I made plans to waylay Mrs Ham about the house and persuade her to do something in company with the rest of us, which should reflect a degree of the magnificence of her position—go out in the automobile for choice. Meanwhile it was occupation enough to observe Violet and Verona Daly in their charming proximity. They were not, I think, as sentimental as English girl friends are apt to be; they did not kiss each other good-morning, and no shy allusive glances or giggles of understanding passed between them. One could not imagine them making tender mutual discoveries at bedtime, brushing their hair, or exchanging any sort of vow. The basis they went upon was much more cavalier, yet signs of affection were not entirely wanting, as when Violet inquired, "Got your letters, honey?" and Verona replied, "Yes, my chicken." Also, there was a tremendous understanding, but it was a different thing, much more candid in one way and much more subtle in another, consisting partly in the frankest appreciation of each other's attractive points, and partly in the deepest recognition of each other's power and privileges as that democratic princess, an American girl. I could imagine that between them the likeliest token of esteem would be a photograph, very artistic, by Sarony, and that they would exchange these with a high notion of graceful appropriateness tempered by a keen sense of acquisition.

After breakfast the two young ladies disap-

peared. They were going, they said, to the kitchen, where Violet proposed to make an "angel-cake." That struck me as another odd note in the splendid scale of the Hams; surely, I thought, a daughter of Jacob Ham might get her angel-cakes from the pastry-cook. But I observed presently that it was taken seriously. Mr Ingham, who carefully attended them to the vanishing point, with the air of being absolutely at their disposition so long as they could possibly require him, came after they had gone, to bestow himself upon me in one corner of the wide verandah. It was a perfectly gorgeous verandah, with creepers climbing over it, and striped awnings, and pretty, light, luxurious easy chairs and Oriental rugs—I must say the Americans do know how to make themselves comfortable out of doors. That, of course, is because they have an out of doors which they can to some extent rely upon; but I have never since been able to enjoy myself in an English garden-chair. However, Mr Ingham came and sat down beside me. "Miss Ham," he remarked, "makes delicious angel-cake; the best, I should say, in New York City. It's a well-known feature of their 'At Homes'—all the fellows go for it."

"It must be," said I, "a very useful accomplishment"; but I may confess that I privately thought it must be a very great waste of time. I could not imagine a girl of Violet Ham's resources and opportunities dabbling flour and eggs together below stairs. "But perhaps she does it," I said, following my thought rather than my words, "to keep in touch with her mother."

"It's an accomplishment we all approve of. With us, you see there's a theory that a lady should know how to make home happy fundamentally—be able, you understand, to wipe out

the cook. It's very necessary in a country where the cook so frequently—well, erases herself."

"But domestic happiness is not based upon the angel-cake," I objected.

"No," said Val Ingham absently; "I guess steaks come in."

"And chops," I said.

"Dear me, yes; there used to be a paragraph"—Mr Ingham went on, "it must be an old, old paragraph now—to the effect that Queen Victoria brought up all her daughters on the same principle, taught them to cook, you understand, and to sew. I used to wonder, as a small boy, whether the princesses wore their crowns in the kitchen. But I guess it was a lie," and Mr Ingham sighed, for some reason entirely disconnected, one could see, with the family of Queen Victoria.

"And does Verona make angel-cake, too?" I asked encouragingly.

"How you read a fellow's thoughts! You remember our last conversation?"

"Perfectly," I said. "You had pretty well made your choice, and, in spite of the angel-cake," I laughed, "it had not fallen on Violet."

"The hand of Miss Ham," said Mr Ingham gravely, "is doubtless reserved for some worthier claimant. She is a charming girl, with every grace and nearly every accomplishment. She quite belongs to the intellectual set of New York girls; we have some, I am glad to say, who are not mere butterflies. Has she ever interpreted any Browning to you?"

"No," I said; "but you really want, don't you, to talk about Verona?"

"How direct and incisive you English people are! I do want to talk about Verona, but," said Mr Ingham, with another slight sigh, "the sense

of shades and contrasts between two such attractive personalities is very enjoyable." He gave me the impression, did Mr Valentine Ingham, of being hardly yet free of the burden of infinite care and solicitude which had attended his decision.

"They have both been kind to me," he said, "very kind, so much so that I feel that I may hope to keep the permanent friendship of the other."

"You mean of Violet?"

"I mean of Violet. It is so good of you, Mrs Kemball, to let me talk to you like this. Do you object to tobacco?"

"Not in the least," said I, and Mr Ingham produced a cigarette-case. I noticed that it was of gold, and had his monogram in diamonds.

"I've always heard," he went on, after a fragrant puff or two, "that in England a married lady is more free to make friendships with our sex and receive confidences from miserable fellows like me than girls are. I think that's the way it ought to be. That's the view I should like my wife, if I am fortunate enough to get one, to take."

"As girls," I objected, "we're kept uncommonly close." If an Englishman had talked to me like that I should have known that he was a clumsy donkey, on for a most tremendous flirtation. But young Ingham was perfectly sincere; he meant just what he said. He had really weighed the matter, and it stood to him in the pure light of a theory.

"Oh, I've heard of the bread-and-butter miss," he said, smiling, "but she seems to be remarkably transformed the moment she enters the matrimonial—the halls of matrimony." Mr Ingham puffed rapidly at his cigarette, and I had an idea,

though I was looking across the river, that he was blushing.

"Oh, well," I said, "there are the two systems. Have you read *The Awkward Age*?"

"That's by James," Mr Ingham frowned; "James is so dreadfully assimilated."

"You can't expect us to love him any the less for that," I remarked.

Mr Ingham's frown turned into a bright smile. "You know there are many English ideas that I like lots better than ours," he said. "You must be, by now, aware of that."

"Well," I declared, "there are some of yours that I like much better than ours. So it's even. And Frances—you don't know Frances, she is my husband's cousin—simply adores your institutions. So the balance is in your favour."

"You must have noticed the great increase of cordiality lately between the two countries," said Mr Ingham, with enthusiasm. "Personally, I am very glad of it."

"I've noticed an increased recognition of our cordiality," I observed; "we've always been cordial, or we have as long as I remember. So cordial that we never think of mentioning it. It's only you Americans who go on being such good haters—I can't imagine why, unless you've never forgiven us for not thrashing you at—where was it—Yorktown?"

Mr Ingham looked distressed, pained. "Now, don't you be misled," he said, "Mrs Kembball, by what you see and hear over here. The feeling you speak of is wholly confined to the masses."

"That's just what we complain of," I remarked.

"The better class of Americans," continued Mr Ingham earnestly, "do not share it. They rather admire, in fact, in some ways imitate, the English people."

"I know," I said; "one finds that out by coming over here and hunting up the better class of Americans. They're awfully nice to us, and they say they enjoy themselves in England, and all that. But I almost think it would be more to the purpose," I added gloomily, "if the masses liked us better and the classes less. Over here the classes don't count, it seems to me. They're simply downtrodden."

"That ridiculous anti-English bias does, of course, come up politically," remarked Mr Ingham.

"Fancy a political party in England trying to win an election by abusing the Americans!" I exclaimed irrelevantly.

"But socially it is simply non-existent."

"However," I said, "that has nothing to do, has it, with Verona?"

"I was coming to that. With your permission, I will light another cigarette. Thank you so much for your interest and sympathy." Mr Ingham lighted his cigarette. "I really hope I don't bore you," he said, throwing away the match.

"I should think not, indeed. It's the most extraordinary luck—I mean it's a most interesting experience to come across an American love affair in real life. They seem perfect idylls in Miss Wilkins's tales."

"Pardon me," said Mr Ingham, with slight stiffness, "you would hardly be likely to find mine in stories by Mary Wilkins."

"No," I said, in some confusion. "Of course not. I should have said Bret Harte's perhaps."

Mr Ingham smiled with a natural touch of superiority. "Not that either, I am afraid," said he. "Miss Wilkins writes of what you would probably call the peasant class——"

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"Oh, no," I interrupted, "peasants never have such consciences."

"And Bret Harte of the Wild West and its types."

"I know," I said intelligently, "Buffalo Bill."

Mr Ingham gave me another indulgent smile. "Well," he said, "I'm not much like William, am I? No, for a prototype of my love affair, as you call it, you had better read the works of Mrs Burton Harrison. Her characters nearly always belong to New York society, and her books repay perusal on other grounds as well. But perhaps you know them."

"I am ashamed to say I don't," I said; "but how we do get away from Verona!"

"We never get very far away from her," Val Ingham said, which I thought pretty of him.

I waited, while he smiled dreamily and made smoke rings.

"She is the subtlest Omarian I know," he continued.

"Omarian!" I cried. "It sounds for some reason like a mermaid."

"Now what could the association be? I have it—saurian. No, it couldn't be saurian," he exclaimed, dismayed, and we both laughed. "An Omarian is a devotee of Omar Khayyam; you have them in England."

"I've heard of a society," I said, "but I live in the country, you know."

"When I go over," said Mr Ingham, "I believe I shall visit the grave of Fitzgerald before that of Shakespeare. I suppose the nation holds it an equally sacred trust?"

"I don't know. I've never been to either. You forget that I live in the country."

"Well, there's nothing about you to remind me of it," said Mr Ingham gallantly. "You

appear as well as if you came from any large town." (I have never yet found out what he meant, but I am certain it was no incivility.) "If I am the happy man I hope to be, I shall take in England on my wedding tour."

"Do," I said; "and that brings us back, doesn't it, to Verona?"

He seemed still to hesitate over what he really had in his mind. "I have been more struck than ever with Miss Daly's style—what you call 'form,'" he said, "since contrasting her with Miss Ham in connection with Lord Walden. I don't at all like the behaviour of Miss Ham," he went on, quite severely, "in connection with Lord Walden."

"He isn't Lord Walden, he's Lord Robert."

"I have no desire to be so familiar," said Mr Ingham, with dignity. "She has no business to keep Lord Walden on a string the way she does."

"I don't see any harm in it," I said.

"You're a guest over here, Mrs Kemball, and you're polite. You are sojourning among us, and you are not going to criticize more than you can avoid. But I don't need to tell you that the freedom with which Miss Ham treats Lord Walden would not be well received in England."

"Oh, well," I maintained, "we are not in England."

"Yesterday at tea-time," continued Mr Ingham, "she had Walden down on his hands and knees tugging with his teeth at his blame yellow silk handkerchief against Nat, her retriever puppy. Then she made them both sit up and catch biscuits in their mouths. It was a ridiculous spectacle."

"Yes," I said coldly, "perhaps that was going rather far." I felt some annoyance. "I hope it was quite a little home party."

"The Kittleys were there and the Simcoxes.

Ally Simcox asked to borrow Nat and his lordship to do it again at their reception on the 29th."

"Upon my word," I said, "I'll speak to Bobs. When Americans come to England they don't gambol about in that idiotic manner."

"I shall be inclined," said Mr Ingham thoughtfully, "to sit up very straight in England. Well, to come to the point, Mrs Kemball——"

"I wish you would."

"You have guessed my feelings towards Miss Verona Daly."

"And I am not very clever either," I interposed.

Mr Ingham looked at me earnestly. "It is easy to see, Mrs Kemball, that you have more solid qualities," he said. "What I'm coming to is this. I hope nobody can accuse me of any want of patriotism if I don't propose to wave the Stars and Stripes over the most solemn juncture of my life. I've always thought that once I had made up my mind about the lady, I would prefer to approach her in the manner in vogue in your country. It seems to me to have more delicacy and decorum than our pell-mell American way, and it seems to me that its adoption by an American would be the finest kind of tribute to the girl."

"But," I objected, "isn't it rather late? Haven't you been practically making love to Verona for the last year?"

"Not a day, not an hour late. That's just what's going to be hard for you to understand. Since I absolutely made up my mind I haven't seen her alone for ten consecutive minutes. It's going to be hard for me to explain too, but I'll

try and put it into shape for you." Mr Ingham smoked with concentration for a minute or two, and then the end of another cigarette went out on the lawn. "You see with us you reach a point when you are in love," he said; and I must say, tilted back in his chair, with his hands well down in his trouser pockets, and his candid flush, he looked very handsome.

"I see," I said. "You're not in love in the beginning."

"Very seldom, I won't say never, but it's the exception. In the beginning it's a pleasant friendship, with attractions perhaps on both sides. That I approve of; that's our great old opportunity, you see, of knowing each other, that you never get on the other side. You're very good friends, and you'd rather be with her than any other girl, and you don't want it to go any further. Then comes the point when, confound it, you do want it to go further. A new element comes in—it makes all the difference; friendship ends and courtship begins. Do you follow me?"

"I follow you," I said, "but I must say I think American young men are very deliberate."

"We are deliberate—in some matters. But, of course, not everybody so much so as I. I daresay the average fellow would propose ten minutes after the—the point was plain."

"And you?"

"Well, I'm telling you I want to enjoy the luxury of a proper courtship, on what is really the old-established plan. I want to attain my paradise by degrees. I want to read the signs and not be too gross about my own intimations. I'd like to savour the thing—not swallow it whole. Now do you get me?"

"My dear boy," I said, with some impatience, "you're not so difficult to get. But I can't think why—you have the most enviable privileges and nobody to say a word, and you want to throw them away." I daresay I spoke almost reproachfully.

"I like your system best."

"Our system is cramped and dangerous, and full of pitfalls," I warned him, but I could see he paid no heed.

"For instance," he said, "here is one of our ridiculous methods of making ourselves acceptable," and he produced a large, beautiful box of the most wonderful sweets—it must have contained three pounds. "This is my first sacrifice to principle. I meant them for Verona—I'll give them to you instead."

"Oh, but indeed I won't take them. Besides, what on earth could I do with them?" I exclaimed.

"If you don't," said Mr Ingham solemnly, "Jake shall have them; Jake has a small family. They are intended to be eaten, and they are the best——"

"In New York City," I laughed, and I must say my scruples melted still further with the particular bonbon that Mr Ingham extracted for me. The instructive thing, however, was to see him eat them—five or six in succession, with the open confession that he always kept a pound or two going in his room. And yet this young man before breakfast that morning had beaten Kaye at the long jump.

"One considerable charm for me about Verona Daly," said he, "is that she is unwealthed."

"Un-*what*?"

"Unwealthed—no particular money. Perhaps that's an Americanism."

"I think it must be," I said. "Well, it wouldn't be considered a charm upon the English system. I'm afraid you're not fitted for what you are undertaking. I really wish you would desist."

Val Ingham only smiled. "We own too much ourselves. I mean our family," he said. "Tell me, did a fellow ever give himself away to you like this before?"

"You mean confide his intentions to me? Yes, once."

"English fellow?"

"Yes, a man I met in Surrey."

"I wonder how he put it. The old, old story, I suppose—we're all alike when it comes to telling that."

"Let me see if I can remember. He mentioned the girl's name."

"Of course."

"And asked me if I had seen her at the dance the night before. I said I had. 'I'm going to have a shot in that direction,' he said."

"And what did you say?"

"So far as I remember I wished him luck."

"And that was all?" demanded Val Ingham.

"That was all."

"Was he in love?"

"Awfully."

Val Ingham sighed, and there was a moment's silence while his choice fell upon a pistachio strawberry.

"Oh, confound it!" he said at length. "We enjoy our emotions more than that."

"Yes," I said, "that's just the difference. An Englishman rather hates them."

Verona came through the verandah at that moment. She wore one of Mrs Ham's big aprons and a pretty pink flush, with a smudge of flour

on one cheek. She made an old-fashioned curtesy in reply to our chaff, and her eye rested for just a perceptible instant upon the sweets, but in spite of the temptation she would not be induced to stay.

CHAPTER XIII

OF course, I told Kaye—it was the sort of thing one naturally would tell one's husband, especially if the days of one's own courtship were fairly fresh and recent, and it was possible to remember and compare. This placed one more or less in a position to be useful to Mr Ingham if he really did want advice upon any point—it was not as if one looked back at such things across a generation of hoary prejudices. I mentioned this to Kaye when I recounted the matter. I told him I remembered exactly what he did that he ought not to have done, and what he left undone that he ought to have done when he was besieging my affections, and felt quite competent to keep another young man straight in a similar direction. "I won't mention you, of course," I said; "I will appear to draw upon my general experience."

"I should advise you to keep jolly well out of it," said my husband. We were taking a quiet walk in what Mr Ham called the "grounds." "That's the line I'm taking with Bobs. Don't ask *me*," he said.

"What on earth has Bobs to do with it? He doesn't want to marry Verona, too, does he? He can't—she is unwealthed," I added with the satisfaction which I always felt in airing a new expression.

"Rather not—it's Miss Ham, of course. Rat-

ting good thing for Bobs, too, if it comes off."

It is odd how one hates to hear one's husband talk approvingly about marrying money if one hasn't had any. Still more, I suppose, if one has! I told Kaye it was too bad that he had done so indifferently in this respect, and he pinched me harder than the law allows. "And Bobs," he said, resuming, "has got the same bee in his bonnet about the way it should be done. With a difference. *He* wants to go to work on the American system."

"Oh," I said, "wait a minute, let me grasp it. Why?"

"He says Miss Ham is such a thorough American——"

"Well, she is."

"That she's bound to like it better. He says our notions are out of date anyhow, and she's a girl of too much character and independence to be approached that way."

I mused deeply. "But what in the world did he think *you* could tell him?" I asked, with fine scorn.

"The Lord only knows. He said we could put our heads together. I think he thought I might get a tip or two out of Ingham."

"Oh, don't do that. It would lead to the most frightful confusion."

"Not I. I suggested he should go to Ingham himself, but he said he was blowed if he'd ask any American. One can understand that."

"I advised him to get it up," continued my husband, "to mug it up. There must be books. Novels can't be written without it. He ought to get hold of some good American novel."

"I don't suppose the directions would be very plain," I objected. "One would have to be

clever to pick them out. And Bobs isn't clever, you know."

"Maybe not, but he's an awful good chap, is Bobs. And he's down on his luck just now. Doesn't seem to be pulling it off. That's why he's lost confidence in British methods. He thinks they aren't understood over here. Why, he says the mere fact of his staying here ought to be enough, but the old man is as dense as possible. They're all as dense as possible. Seem to think he'd just come out to play."

"You mean unless he wanted Violet he wouldn't be staying here like this?"

"Not ten minutes. How could he—in his position and she in hers?"

"And mamma in the kitchen."

"Quite so. People would talk."

"I don't believe Americans would," I said. "Is he by any chance in love with her?"

"Oh, very hard hit."

"What did he say to make you think so?"

"Oh—poor old Bobs—I don't remember. I think he said she was ripping. I gathered it more from what he didn't say."

"Well, I don't in the least see why you should discourage it," I said.

"Discourage it?" exclaimed my husband with astonishment. "Rather not! I wished him well. Why, I look to Miss Ham—with confidence—for my next year's shooting."

"It's a long time, certainly, since Cliffenden has been at the disposal of the family," I reflected. "How Bobs will enjoy spending something on it instead of practically getting everything out of it! Well," I said, with a sigh, "one has always read of these Anglo-American alliances in the newspapers and more or less regretted them, at all events when it came to dukes; but here is one

blossoming, so to speak, under our very noses, and a relation too, and one doesn't mind so very much. And I suppose they do promote good feeling between ourselves and the Americans."

Kaye pursed his lips. "I don't think there's much in that," he said. "A while ago, you remember, we sent a chap with an American wife out to India to be Viceroy. The lady came from Washington. There was a lot of talk in our press about the compliment to America, and increased cordiality, and so forth. It strikes us that way, you know. I mentioned it over here the other day—compliment paid by the Queen to American young lady, and all that. 'Yes, sir,' said the man I was talking to, an American girl has mounted the throne of India—and why not?' Whatever he meant by the throne of India, he evidently thought she had got there on her own merits."

"In a manner she did," I said thoughtfully; "the Queen didn't marry her, you know."

"No, but my point is you can't exchange international flatteries with an American. He may or may not say, 'Thanks, very nice of you,' but he thinks he's worth all that and more, and he'd thank you to get to business and understand that that sort of thing doesn't go down with him. As far as I can make out this kind of marriage stands entirely outside of the average American's calculations. He doesn't love his millionaire's daughter a bit better than he loves the Englishman who comes over and marries her; and what I suspect he would really like would be to dispose of ma and pa and the whole boiling, to the same nobleman at the same time—get rid of the lot, and leave him more of a chance to pile up the dollars himself. So far as public sentiment goes, accord-

ing to my notion that's about the size of it, as they say over here."

I looked about me at the shimmering Hudson, and the planted lawn, and the handsome house, and Jake, who, in the middle distance, was mending his suspender with a bit of string. It all had a temporary air in the brilliant sunlight, very blue and green, very sharply outlined, like something arranged for immediate entertainment and not calculated with any thought to the future. I could already, in imagination, see ma and pa and the whole boiling being pushed, for export, to the edge of the Atlantic, with only the British aristocracy to look to for consolation on the other side; and the propelling hand seemed to be Jake's.

"Gad!" said Kaye, "it is hot."

I am revealing my husband just as he was. He might have used a prettier expression; I think an American would, but he didn't. "Gad!" he said, "it is hot."

We were spending the day in looking forward to an expedition by the automobile in the afternoon. I must confess we were conscious of a certain lack of resource. At home there are things to do in the country; in America you principally lie in a hammock in the verandah and read light literature. I will say for Violet that her hammocks were most luxurious and her light literature most original and sparkling, dainty paper volumes that just gave a fillip to repose, while the box of chocolates or the dish of peaches, never far away, made one think oneself a person in a fairy tale who had only to wish and have. There was a billiard-room, a music-room, a card-room, all decorated so that no mistake could be made as to their intention. The card-room had a dado and a frieze entirely composed of playing-cards in different design; all kinds of quaint

stringed instruments—a complete assortment, I remember, from Thibet—hung round the music-room; great champions of the game looked down upon the billiard baize. But the energy of the house seemed used up in procuring and establishing these things, none seemed left to take advantage of them. There was indifference to them, at all events, among the young Americans; they did not care to do anything long that had not in it a fresh stimulus or the amusement of something new. They seemed to prefer to lie in whimsical indolence and wait for the next entertaining trifle that the painted ocean of life might cast up for them; and the odd part of it was that they never had the effect of being bored. They were too clever and appreciative and lightly sophisticated for that—spoilt children of fortune, I called them, but without any serious reproach. We, I confess, were at times a little bored, we solid English people, who always at home had our day cut out for us. I speak, of course, of Kaye and myself. Bobs was in that supremely absorbed condition which precludes the idea of such a thing. Enormous wealth cradled us, but it had no park, no preserves, no fishing, and only carriage horses in the stables. We tried walking, but five miles were more tiring than ten at home. It was too hot for golf, though nobody else seemed to think so. It was the single form of exercise that prevailed. The landscape was magnificent, but the details didn't reward one—there was so little variety. No shady lanes or hedges, or market gardens or villages, churches through the trees, or cottagers pulling a forelock; but an empty road and a railway embankment, and wide maps of crops, all one colour, bounded by netted wire fences, and a population of Jakes, mostly driving superior animals in high-seated vehicles and

making a prodigious dust. It was agriculture for profit, not for enjoyment, and the country gentleman hadn't a place in it. We vaguely felt, as we went back to the hammocks in the verandah of Bellevue, the reproach of the attempt to introduce the country gentleman at all as a fact of nature industrial on so large and progressive a scale. Certainly, he went away—the country gentleman who was our host—every day to work in the city, and Mrs Ham did her best, as we had seen, to redeem the anomaly, but there seemed no excuse for the rest of us, we were equally without reasons and objects. If it had not been for the automobile, I really think Kaye would have been obliged to go.

The automobile, however, had a fascination for my husband which led him at a particular time almost every day to disappear from the social circle. I soon ascertained that it was the time the thing was groomed, cleaned, and oiled. I may say in the beginning that I could never bear it, but it was supposed to be a very fine one; it would seat six, and do fifteen miles an hour over country roads. It had a lot of silver plating about it, and "Ham" painted on the sides, so that it could never get lost among the other automobiles, and it lived by itself in a very superior stable quite away from the horses. Jake managed and controlled and drove it; if you wanted it you had to ask Jake, and it just depended on what else he had to do. It looked rather queer, Jake in his shirt-sleeves and straw hat on the box, but Mrs Ham said he had shown an interest in it from the day it came, and had learnt it up and taken such a lot of trouble about it that it seemed hard on him to hand it over to the coachman just when it got so that a person could take some pleasure out of it. It did seem a pity, Mr Ham admitted,

that it's driver didn't think to put a coat on, but he didn't want Jake should feel he had to come out in his Sunday best every time the machine went on the road, and that's what would happen if anything was said—Jake was pretty sensitive. So nothing was said. I must say Jake did not appeal to me at any point, but my husband in the course of these polishing operations developed a very considerable opinion of him. In discreet terms I mentioned this to Jake when the opportunity occurred—we all like a little encouragement sometimes. "Wal, Mis' Kemball," he said, thoughtfully removing the straw from his mouth, "you kin tell him the same from me. Your better half has got a good mechanical head, fur an Englishman—a very good mechanical head." When I got over my astonishment I decided that it was genuine reciprocity, and nothing more objectionable, but it did not add to my affection for Jake. It is a curious thing; at home I was always fond of cottagers, but during the whole time I was in America I did not come across a single person of this class that I felt in the least drawn to. They lose their charm, somehow, in the United States.

CHAPTER XIV

VIOLET declared it was a tremendous triumph of mine to have persuaded Mrs Ham to come with us, something immensely to my credit, and I was very pleased to think so, for it certainly took time and patience—even a little affectionate force. There was plenty of room, as Kaye preferred to go on the box with Jake, and was rude enough to say so, and Mrs Ham could not take up much of her own automobile at the best, there was so little of her. She sat in her black silk—of all things in the world for a picnic!—very much in one corner, as if she would abstract herself as far as she could, and kept exclaiming that we were all young people together, and couldn't possibly want *her*, and it was all very well for us, who had no responsibilities on our shoulders, but she had other things to attend to. Her hands in her lap were restless in their idleness; she was not happy, until I let her hold the parasol that shaded us both. Tea came behind in a carry-all driven by the boy. About American country places there was, I noticed, invariably a cub of a boy, of no special designation and no particular duties, but who seemed somehow to fit the emergency of the moment. He looked purposeless, but he was indispensable; he preserved a semi-independent attitude, with the brim of his old felt hat slouching down over his freckled face, and was ready

to argue anything. The Ham's boy seemed always to be considering whether the point of rebellion had not arrived, whether he would or would not weed the gravel drive or go to the village for baking-powder; but so long as we were there he did as he was told. He looked pleased to be driving the carry-all, and made one or two attempts to pass the automobile, but Jake would not have it. "Think we want your dust?" he called out severely, and the boy, with a grin of appreciation, drew rein again. Jake did not, however join in the conversation. His remarks to the boy had rather the character of the London 'bus-driver's, and simply showed him, so far as the automobile went, the superior party.

I am under a positive vow to put down exactly what I observed and felt over there as it glanced off the angle presented by my own nationality, and I am obliged to say that the automobile, as we started off in it, struck me as very like a box of blocks. We were the blocks, and we had been jumbled in. It was a new and agreeable sensation; hitherto one had always been so carefully assorted and arranged. Such a box of blocks in England would have been so precisely similar in shape and size, in taste, habits, and traditions; we would have fitted in so well that there would not have been among us elbow-room for a single originality. But here were Mrs Ham and Lord Robert Walden and Violet, as diverse as could be; Verona and Val Ingham, variations of the same delightful type; Kaye and I, sufficiently like everybody else in England, but always being laughed at for our difference in America; and Jake. At home Jake wouldn't count, he would be part of the driving power, but here he was unmistakably one of the blocks. Jake had

initiative in every sense; it was he who, when we had all started, produced and affixed to the brake handle a small edition of the American flag. It gave us at once the air of universal holiday which we had noticed in New York, where the national colours were being displayed even upon the peanut stands. The dray horses wore them over their ears, and the tram-drivers in their button-holes. Verona presented me with a Stars and Stripes hat-pin and belt-buckle, and a package of envelopes, quite covered with the national emblem, to use in writing to my friends. As the flag was being carried so far abroad one would have thought it would be conserved at home, but it was not so, and we wondered. And here was Jake, an intimate example, unrolling it in the heart of the country on his master's automobile. Kaye, Bobs, and I looked at it with interest, it made us feel important and political; a little of the enthusiasm mantled in us that any fluttering thing can stir up which is the standard of its country. The others regarded it with an habituated air, and Verona smiled.

"What's that for, Jake?" asked Val Ingham.

"I guess the war ain't over yet," Jake replied.

"When we Americans go to war," remarked Mrs Ham, "we like everybody to know it."

"But," said Lord Robert Walden, "everybody does know it. It's in all the papers."

"That's no satisfaction to us," said Violet. "Every American you see likes to do a little whoop on his own account."

"Likes to carry the war into the heart of his own country," added Val Ingham.

"Don't you ever display the Union Jack?" asked Mrs Ham.

"Oh, yes—at Windsor when the Sovereign is

there, or over the Parliament building when the House is sitting—occasions of that sort," I said.

"You mean you don't break out with it, like we do with Old Glory, when you're at war?"

"No," I said, "I don't think we do, except on some very great occasion. You see," I added apologetically, "we're pretty nearly always at war."

"I see," said Mrs Ham, "you couldn't keep it up. There would be a sameness."

Captain Lord Robert Walden was thinking deeply. "Oh, come," he said, "so there would be, you know, about the Church service if it was read every day. So they only give it to us on Sundays."

I could have patted Bobs on the shoulder, he had hit it so straight.

Kaye, on the box, turned round. "I fancy that's pretty much the way we look on the Rag," he corroborated.

"But," I put in, "it's very nice, I am sure, to be constantly reminded that we are under the protection of a civilized power."

My remark for some reason seemed to fall a bit flat. Mrs Ham's expression made me think that "civilized power" was perhaps not quite complimentary enough. A faint indignation seemed to rest upon Verona's upper lip, and even Jake's uncommunicative back looked conscious. Yet what more than a civilized power could they wish to be?

"What moves me to pity," said Val Ingham, "in connection with this invention, is the fate of the horse-fly. What does a horse-fly get off an automobile? Varnish only. Disappointing in the beginning, deadly in the end."

The other Americans, I noticed, smiled at this in an obliging way, as at an agreeable commonplace, but Kaye and Bobs and I were all much struck with the humour of it. Bobs roared aloud. "Jove!" he said. "It's pretty rough on the flies," and went off into another peal. Who but an American would have thought of the unsatisfied horse-fly dining upon the automobile? Nobody. Yet Mr Ingham did not seem to think he had made a joke. We were always being moved to laughter by things said at the Hams' without a twinkle—quaint, amusing things, that passed as mere small talk, but were dangerous to imitate; one found it not easy, somehow, precisely to remember the point.

"I call that magnificent of Ingham," said Bobs, as we all abandoned the thing to Jake and the wayside, and plunged into the woods. Val had given his arm to Mrs Ham, and was leading the way at a considerable distance. Kaye and I were perfectly prepared to take care of Mrs Ham; it was entirely unnecessary sacrifice on the part of Mr Ingham, but I saw in it part of his interpretation of the proper thing, and respected it accordingly. Certainly, to win favour with Verona it was not a bad plan to begin with Verona's hostess—the only thing that confused one was the impression that the favour was already won. In Verona herself I could detect no sign of approval or disapproval as she observed the departure, only the unfailing charm and gaiety with which she permitted us to think that she was very pleased to have our company. I looked closely to see how, in Bobs's idea, the American system would bear upon the situation. He was gazing upon the ground with his brow knitted, thinking hard. Presently he went over and conferred with Jake—not, I hoped, submitting the

case—and came back with a look of relief and of purpose. “Miss Ham,” said he, “this other path leads to Harrison’s Pond too—Jake says so—and it’s a prettier way to go—er—Jake says so. Shall we go this way, and—and see who gets there first?”

“Oh no,” said Violet, “there are bears that way—ask Jake if he doesn’t say so.”

“Not really!” Bobs exclaimed with eagerness. “Confound it—I’ve left my kit in New York. Oh, you’re sellin’ me!”

“The American brown bear,” continued Violet imperturbably, “is particularly fond of honey and British tourists. And I, alone, could not defend you.”

“Oh, I say, don’t rub it in too hard! I’m sure that’s the jolliest way. And Jake says it isn’t more than a mile farther,” Bobs continued to urge, with an ingenuousness that should have been disarming.

“Can you think of any reason,” inquired Violet, “why we should go a mile farther than we need, for choice?” I myself thought that distinctly cool of Violet.

“Rather,” said Bobs promptly; “a hundred.”

Miss Ham looked a trifle disconcerted, but, as Kaye says, you simply cannot put an American girl in a tight place.

“Nonsense,” she said; “it’s swampy that way. These things,” she showed a daintily gloved foot, “come from Vickard’s, and cost eighteen dollars. I’m not prepared to offer them up.”

“I could carry you over those places,” Bobs argued phlegmatically, “but you’d be a bit of an armful. Why don’t you wear boots?”

I could have told Bobs, if he had come to me for advice, that it does not do to suggest to an

American girl that she is anything but ethereal, and above all that an ounce of her is inconvenient. It is her particular susceptibility; she must be, beyond everything, of a slender and graceful figure, and no more to be considered from the gross point of view of so many "stun" than a sylph or a fairy. In her private list of desirable attributes you may be sure that comes first, and if she is so unlucky as to be fat before she is forty it must be ignored or treated with the greatest delicacy. Violet was not fat, but, as Bobs suggested, she was a thumping good weight, and I saw a little spark come into her beautiful blue eyes when he offered, if nothing else could be done, to carry her. She was much too sensible, I imagine, to think that a man ever really carries a grown woman for pleasure, but I fancy she did not wish to be the one to destroy the illusion that he does.

"Thanks," she said, "I'd rather spoil the shoes. Besides, somebody must help the boy with the tea."

"Right you are," responded Bobs. "I say, you people, don't wait for us. We're going to help to bring along the buns and things."

I glanced back and saw Violet loading him up. She gave him a basket in each hand, and they looked like heavy baskets. "I think," I heard her remark, "that they weigh rather less than I do, so you won't mind." Then, with a light admonishment not to break any of the cups and saucers, she ran on and overtook us, sliding an arm round Verona's waist in a manner which distinctly, to me, betokened an understanding.

I did not look back again, I was too much annoyed, but I knew that fifty yards behind us I

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might see my downcast kinsman, Lord Robert Walden of Cliffenden, lugging along the essentials for Mrs Ham's tea-party in the co-operative society of a freckled-faced boy, who did not even call him "sir."

CHAPTER XV

THE American woods are as different from English ones as the American temperament is from any manifestation we have over here. They have all the sweetness of freedom, no hint of subdual anywhere; circumstances have wrought nothing upon them that you can see. Things come up there exactly as they like, just as things rise to the American tongue. There is untamed sunlight and unchecked shade, with ferns to your knees, and the dead branches of the spreading cedars not even lopped. Nobody to gather up the fallen wood; it lies and rots across the path, crumbling dry yellow rot, with raspberry bushes growing out of it. A great green profusion, with wanton curves and whimsical outflings as if a splendid, lavish joy in life exclaimed everywhere. And in such a silence—opulent, odorous, divine.

Too big, I suppose, to possess and know as we know our glades and spinneys. At all events, we could get nothing out of Verona or Violet about the trees and things; we positively knew more ourselves than they could tell us. They hesitated between beech and birch, they differed about hazel and hickory, to them the flowers were all "wild" flowers, and varieties in cones and berries and fungi meant nothing except that most of them were probably "poison." We saw hardly

any birds, but they did not know a single note of those we heard calling, and not even young Ingham, when we joined him, could tell us what game there was and what the laws were about it. Mrs Ham believed there were foxes, but had never seen one; she made the single practical contribution to our acquaintance with those parts by pointing out a chipmunk. We declared they were shocking cockneys, and Mrs Ham replied with indignation that she had never dropped an "h" in her life.

"That isn't the only thing that makes a cockney, dear Mrs Ham," I cried.

"I guess it's the principal thing," she replied. "Anyhow, a person who drops his 'h's' is what we call a cockney. It's the way the word is used with us."

"Oh," I said, as one who accepts what she is told. Experience had taught me the folly of disputing the meaning, spelling, or pronunciation of any English word with an American. I myself think the language is one of the few of our institutions which they might consider they have not improved, but I soon found one mustn't say so.

"Here comes the only real cockney," said my husband, as Bobs approached, carrying his baskets, I was glad to notice, cheerfully. "Originally, you know, it meant a person born within the sound of Bow Bells. My cousin was born at his father's town house in Eaton Square."

"So they own a house in London City?" asked Mrs Ham. "Property must be very valuable there."

"If you mean he possesses it free of encumbrances," said Kaye, a little distantly, "I cannot tell you; but the house has not changed hands as far as I know." Poor Mrs Ham, as I told him

afterwards, meant nothing of the kind. Americans talk about owning things when we talk about having them; the word does not necessarily imply a clear title. It puts a not altogether agreeable stress upon the idea of possession, but it is the general habit.

"I wonder what his frontage would bring, in sovereigns," mused Mrs Ham. "Not that I want to buy. But I'd like to know how it would compare with Seventy-sixth Street. Well, it's a custom that seems to be taking hold here too, living in two different places for no better reason than because you can afford it, and I'd just as soon it had never crossed the Atlantic, for one. It seems to me that with two houses to look after my life is *all* spring cleaning and fall cleaning. When I want a change I like going to a good hotel where you're nothing to the hired girls and they're nothing to you, and you get a choice of twenty-five dishes for your dinner and haven't had to order one of them. But with a house the size of Bellevue standing empty and moths accumulating and repairs wanting, and Jake writing he's that lonesome, how can a person neglect it all and go off to Saratoga for enjoyment? I don't know how the English manage. When I read of the Duke of So-and-so going from his place in Scotland to his place in Devonshire, and from there to his residence in Belgravia, I say, 'It's all very well for the Duke; he has nothing to do but sit down to his meals here or sit down to them there, but the Duchess must be simply worn out.'"

There was no time to explain, and, besides, Mrs Ham was not very tolerant of explanations; she seemed to think they savoured of superiority, and she generally snubbed them. I daresay she is still of the opinion that the wife of a migratory

Duke leads rather a hard and harried life. We had gathered in an open, grassy space that ran down and lost itself in reeds at the edge of a lovely little sheet of water. So far as Val Ingham could tell Kaye it had neither inlet nor outlet, and no fish except possible minnows. My husband asked a great many questions about it, and proposed to Mr Ingham that they should walk round it before tea, but the young man did not encourage this adventure. "My dear fellow," he said, a trifle impatiently, "it's a pond. I've never rowed on it, or swum in it, or fished in it, and that's all I know about it." He could not understand Kaye's interest in a newly discovered body of water just as such. Americans, I suppose, have lost some of the pleasure of discovery, they have made a business of it so long. Mr Ingham sat down and hugged his knees in a green shade, whence he dispensed general amiability and encouragement. I noticed that the boy, having deposited his burden, followed his example, choosing a remoter one, and spreading his length along it supported on his elbow, with an indifferent back half-turned to us, chewing grass. Kaye and Bobs, strolling forward with offers of assistance, were told to go and do likewise. Kaye insisted, and attacked a basket, and Mrs Ham fairly fell upon him.

"I know it's well meaning of you, Mr Kemball," she said; "but we can get along all right now the kettle's boiling. You go and sit down." Kaye, not knowing, like Mr Ingham, what was expected of him, persisted, and began taking the teacups out of their paper wrappings. Mrs Ham, busy with the bread and butter, watched him uneasily out of the corner of her eye.

"Mis' Kemball," she said presently, "don't you bring up your husband to do as he's told?"

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I laughed. "I bring him up to be useful," I said. I myself was seated near Mr Ingham. I didn't see why I should get myself a cup of tea when there were men about to do it.

"You'd better stop, Mr Kemball," warned Violet; "you're encroaching on our sphere of influence."

"Sakes alive!" exclaimed Mrs Ham, "will you look at Lord Robert Walden with that lemon cake?"

An American lemon cake is a delicious but very sticky confection, covered with meringue and a thin crust of icing. Bobs had prepared it for consumption by intelligently sticking a table-spoon into it. "Isn't it a pudding?" he inquired humbly.

"Will you two go and sit down?" demanded Mrs Ham in vain. "Then I'll have to make you." And taking hold of my husband by the elbows from behind, she positively ran him out of the scene of her operations. Bobs took himself out. My own tardy offer of help was better received. Mrs Ham evidently thought it was no more than my business, and presently I had the pleasure of handing a cup of tea to the recumbent Mr Val Ingham, while Violet passed Kaye one kind of cake and Verona pressed Bobs to partake of another. It was very Hebe-like and charming, of course, and Mr Ingham didn't seem to mind. I suppose he was used to it. In fact, I noticed at various afternoon "At Homes" over there that it was a kind of accepted thing for young ladies to take charge of the refreshments, more or less a post of honour. Kaye liked it—he said it was a custom brought to America by the Germans, and probably a valued social tradition, but it was too classical for my taste. I confess I like to see a man on his legs.

Mrs Ham had disappeared from the beginning

of our orgie, and Val Ingham had to be pacified about her before he would consent to take anything. In a few minutes she emerged from the woods triumphantly bearing a large glass jug. "Why, mother!" exclaimed Violet, "if you haven't been making lemonade," and Verona chimed in, "What a lovely surprise!"

"Yes," said Mrs Ham; pouring it out into tumblers; "in my young days a picnic wouldn't have been a picnic without lemonade, generally made in a tub and the lemons pounded—the man who made his fortune out of lemon-squeezers hadn't thought about it then. We'd have despised tea—I'm not sure if I approve of it yet. This is some better," she went on, with a twinkle, "than a good many of the tubs I remember. Here's your glass, Lord Robert. I want you should try it."

"Oh, thanks awfully," said poor Bobs, "but I'm drinking tea, Mrs Ham."

"That don't matter one atom," said Mrs Ham, with decision. "You can go back to your tea, and finish it afterwards; or you can throw it away for all that. Tea's cheaper than it was. I want you should try my lemonade." Bobs obeyed. I suppose, poor fellow, he had to make the most of his opportunities for being agreeable. Kaye and I took refuge in postponement; the rest acceded gladly. What there is in the American constitution that so predisposes it to acids, I don't know; but I believe there is no time of the day or night at which the inhabitants of the United States will not drink lemonade.

"My!" continued Mrs Ham, "in those days we wouldn't have thought much of bread and butter at a picnic either; and there you all sit, eating it for preference."

"I suppose they gave you sandwiches," I said.

"No, they didn't give us sandwiches either. The kind of picnic I remember best was the Sunday-school picnic, and that meant just cake and nothing else. The picnic in the summer and the Sunday-school sociable in the winter were the two occasions when we children got all the cake we could eat, and we weren't going to look at anything else. Cookies and doughnuts were what my mother used to send principally, and didn't we children think it the greatest privilege to carry the basket to the church!"

"To the *church!*" I repeated in surprise.

"Yes—to the basement, you know, where they have Sunday-school on Sundays. The teachers used to be waiting there to take it from us and give back the basket and the napkin, if there was a napkin, which wasn't always, of course. Such pleased, smiling teachers and such interested children! We knew everything each other brought. How well I remember poor little Ann Springfield and her dozen o' buns! They had sickness in the house, the Springfields had, and Mrs Springfield couldn't be bothered to bake, I guess, so she just sent a dozen currant buns, and poor Ann had to take them. 'Despise' was no word for the way we looked at currant buns as a contribution, and Ann knew it. Poor little thing, she was that mortified she wouldn't come to the picnic at all. She went berryin' instead, with the barefoot Williams lot that lived back of Hartley's carriage works, and weren't likely to be going to any Protestant picnic. And well slapped for it she got, too. If parents only knew!"

"Poor little kid," remarked Bobs, with sympathy.

"She whips her own now," said Mrs Ham, smiling. "She married Jake, you know, and I've

got to call her Mis' Elwood. That's funny, come to think of it, when we all call Jake, Jake; but it's so. Anything else would put her back up dreadfully, though I guess when she talks about me it's Malvina Spence right enough. There came a change in the Sunday-school picnic long before I left Starrville," she went on. She had quite taken command of us; we listened as if it were a chapter of romance. "One year somebody started sending to the confectioner's, instead of baking, for tarts at twenty cents a dozen, or whatever would make the most show for the money. Then more got to do it—it saved a lot of trouble—and things began to taste pretty much all alike, and generally of bad butter, and we kind of lost interest. Whether it was that, or because there was more going at home, before I left Starrville it got to be a kind of favour to get the children to a picnic at all—they'd go or they wouldn't go—you had to throw in a trip by the cars and call it an excursion before you'd think of offering it. Nowadays I wonder sometimes if school keeps at all over to Starrville."

"Oh, tell us some more," I begged, "you—you tell it so well, Mrs Ham."

"No," said Mrs Ham with a sudden look of repression, "that's about enough of my reminiscences. Give us some of yours, Mis' Kemball. What are Sunday-school picnics like in England? Pretty uncertain weather, don't you have?"

"I was never at one," I said, "except once when I was staying at a country rectory, and they made the tea for the school-treat in the wash-house. I helped to pour it out and hand it to the children. I was about twelve, and so pleased with myself when they curtseyed."

"Never at one! Didn't you belong to any Sunday-school?"

"Oh, no," I said, laughing. "Sunday-school was for the village children. When I was older I used to teach them sometimes, but we were too far from the school-house to walk, and the horses couldn't be spared regularly," I hastened to add, seeing the disapproval gathering in Mrs Ham's face, but I could not avert it.

"Well," she said, "I don't see why salvation should be reserved for village children and why their tea should be made for them in a wash-house. It sounds like a mean place to make tea in, if there wasn't any special reason for not doing it in the kitchen, where I suppose that minister's wife was accustomed to have it made for the family and for company. Now, I don't know as you meant to, Mis' Kemball, but you've kind of given me the impression that in England Sunday-school isn't considered good enough for the children of people in society."

"Have I?" I said, rather awkwardly. "Oh no, not that, but——"

"Listen to me," Violet interrupted, with much tact. "I will recite you a recitation. It is a very beautiful recitation indeed, and I promise you will learn more in three minutes about American girls, Mrs Kemball, than Verona and I could teach you in a year. It is called 'Christmas Chimes':—

Little Penelope Socrates—

A Boston maid of four—

Wide opened her eyes on Christmas morn,

And looked the landscape o'er.

"What is it that inflates my *bas de bleu*?"

She asked with dignity;

"'Tis Ibsen in the original,

Oh, joy beyond degree!"

Everybody laughed. "Penelope Socrates" was certainly funny, and then Violet's manner was irresistible.

"Extraordinary thing to give a child," said Kaye to me in an undertone. He never will laugh for politeness alone. "Wait," I said, "perhaps the point is in the next verse."

Miss Mary Cadwalader Rittenhouse,
 [went on Violet,]
 Of Philadelphia town,
 Awoke as much as they ever do there,
 And watched the snow come down.
 "I'm glad that it is Christmas,"
 You might have heard her say,
 "For my family is one year older now
 Than it was last Christmas Day."

Again great laughter, in which I joined. I was getting fairly quick at American humour, and the joke here was, of course, that there were no old families in Philadelphia, a city, no doubt, full of *nouveaux riches*. So even one year would naturally make a difference. Violet fixed her eyes sorrowfully upon Kaye:—

'Twas Christmas in Giddy Gotham,
 ["That's New York, Mr Kemball."]
 And Miss Irene de Jones
 Awoke at noon, and yawned and yawned,
 And stretched her languid bones.
 "I'm sorry it is Christmas,
 Papa at home will stay,
 For 'Change is closed, and he won't make
 A single cent to-day."

To my great relief Kaye saw it. "Very good," he cried. "Capital!

For 'Change is closed, and he won't make
 A single cent to-day.

Oh, very good indeed."

"Thank you, Mr Kemball," said Violet.
 "Shall I go on?"

“Rather,” said Kaye.

Windily dawned the Christmas
 On the city by the lake,
 [“That’s Chicago, Lord Bobby.”]
 And Miss Arabel Wabash Breezy
 Was instantly awake.
 “What’s that thing in my stocking?
 Well, in two jiffs I’ll know.”
 And she drew a grand piano forth
 From way down in the toe!

More roars; Val Ingham rolled over in his mirth. We of Great Britain did our best to join, but it was a little perfunctory; we didn’t roll over; we were thinking what it meant. It was Bobs who presently hit it. “Athletic girl, that,” he remarked amid the subsiding merriment, at which it broke out again, louder than ever. I must say I found the Americans very ready to laugh at *our* jokes.

On the way back I noticed that Kaye and I were allowed to accompany Mrs Ham, while the others paired off as might be expected; so that whatever blunders the young men had made earlier in the afternoon, the results were not, apparently, to be permanent. I was very glad.

CHAPTER XVI

ALL through these chapters I seem to be trying in vain to talk about Verona. As I glance back her name holds its place for an instant here and there in them and vanishes, much as Verona herself came and went in those first few weeks of our acquaintance. She would hesitate upon the fringe of a general conversation or falter into a chair in the drawing-room circle, but never for long—one could never get hold of her; there was no satisfaction in those poisonings and flittings. In New York there was always plenty of Mrs Adams to make up—it seemed to be thought proper to turn me over to Mrs Adams, we being married women together, and having things to talk about; and if Verona had not been in the case I should have been the last to grumble at that. But she interested me more than any of the anglo-American diversities Mrs Adams could point out, and it seemed to me a waste of time to consider theories of bringing up daughters—especially as neither Mrs Adams nor I, at that time, had any—when such a delightful illustration was looking out of the window, doing nothing. At Bellevue I wasn't turned over to Mrs Ham, because Mrs Ham simply wouldn't have me—she had other things to do; but Violet was quite ready to perform her mother's duty towards me, and to the tide of Violet's energy a word or smile

from Verona was complement enough. Besides, there were the men at Bellevue; they took up a good deal of one's time, as men seem to think they have the right to do everywhere. Violet Ham was the delightful realization of all I had ever heard or read about American girls. I looked forward with great satisfaction to seeing her at Cliffenden, quite apart from the restoration of the west wing and building of new stables, but Verona nobody had foreshadowed to me. Her Americanism was not the kind that flowers in every novel or crosses in every steamer; she was something quite different, and I particularly wanted to make friends with her. It is ridiculous to have to say so, I a married woman and she only a girl, but I simply had to wait Miss Verona's good pleasure. And to make the situation more quaint I was sure that our brief periods of contact were quite enough for Verona; they told her all she wanted to know of me, and her curiosity was as lively as my own. I mean she could, if she wanted to, take my pen at this point and write a great deal more about me than I can about her.

One morning, however, I languished in a hammock, with a headache, and Verona, passing through the verandah, observed me. Her humanity—one could see, after all, that she was full of that—insisted that she should go and bring me her Florida water, which had a delicious spraying arrangement, and then I said, plaintively, as I was entitled to do, "Oh, don't go away." She eyed me doubtfully for an instant, and then sank upon the edge of a chair. "Should you like me to bathe your head for you?" she asked.

"No, thank you," said I. "I should like you to sit still. Why does one never see you?" and I put out a desultory hand to pluck at a frill of

her skirt. She let herself be appealed to; it was not in her, one could see, to snub a poor lady with a headache.

"Oh, I expect you see enough of me," she said, with gay simplicity.

"You must think me very easily satisfied."

"Why, how perfectly silly! As if you were likely to want to talk to *me*," cried Verona, but she settled back in her chair. "If it were Violet now—Violet is really worth talking to. She has ideas and remembers quotations, really good ones, that fit in."

"I know she does," I replied, rather ruefully. "It always brings you up rather short, don't you think, when you don't know where they come from?"

Verona leaned all the way back in her chair. "I know it," she said, "but it's a lovely thing to be able to do. Do you think American girls talk well, Mrs Kemball?"

"Splendidly," I said, without reserve. "In England, you know, they never open their mouths until they're married. I know I never did."

"Is that so? With us it's just the other way. American girls don't seem to me to be anything like as bright after they get married. Look at Mrs Ham. She taught school, there where they lived, at Starrville, and I expect she talked Emerson and Thoreau to Mr Ham when he was paying her attention—very likely they used to repeat the 'Psalm of Life' together. And now——"

"And now?"

"Now he listens to her worries with the servants, and she looks at his beans. They pass all the rest on to Violet."

"Now that's odd," I said. "With us it is generally the older people who are the more cultivated; the young ones are too much taken up

with examinations or athletics or amusements, they haven't had time."

"Is that so?" said Verona again. (It is not really a question, only a kind of neutral comment.) "I've learned quite a lot about life in England since you came; it's much more interesting, I think, than anything that goes on over here."

"Oh, dear, no," I cried. "You are the world's new serial, coming out chapter by chapter. We are an old story, published in full ages ago." We both laughed.

"You are always altering your binding, though," said Verona smartly. "I would never trust a last year's edition to have enough of Africa, or India, or China in it;" and we laughed again. There is nothing like a little international compliment for putting people on good terms with each other.

"Now, then," said Verona, "look at the way you laugh. You sound a high note and dwell on it, and then run down a scale. It's the most English thing. It sounds as if you were taught to do it for behaviour. Were you taught to do it?"

"No," I said anxiously. "I must have picked it up from my people. Is it a very bad laugh?"

"Oh, it's rather pretty," said Verona consideringly; "but when I heard you do it at Louisa's I used to think, 'Now she's laughing at something she doesn't understand.'"

"Oh, well, I daresay I was," I confessed; and Verona cried, "There you go again."

The book I had been dipping into dropped out of the hammock. Verona picked it up, and read my name upon the fly-leaf.

"Caroline—what is your second name?" she asked.

"It is pronounced 'Chiffers,'" I said.

"Caroline Chilifres Kemball. If I saw it in a hotel register or anywhere, I should say, 'That name belongs to an interesting person.'"

"Well, you see it doesn't." I said. "But it did once. Caroline Chilifres was a rather handsome and rather political and not very nice old lady about the Court of George I. One would think we were proud of her, the way we have kept the name going in the family ever since. As a matter of fact, she wasn't a person you could possibly know."

"Shall you cut her on the Resurrection Day?" asked Verona quaintly. "I don't think it does matter in England whether your ancestors were very respectable so long as they were important enough. I was called Verona because I happened to be born there—that doesn't seem to be much of a reason. It must be nice to have a little ancestor or two, just to blame for your bad qualities. I haven't any. At least, I shouldn't know any by sight."

"They aren't much encouraged over here, are they?" I asked.

"It's thought respectable to go back to the Revolution," said Verona slyly, and we laughed again. "We have always supposed that the Dalys originally came from Ireland," she continued.

"What part?" I asked, but Verona said she was afraid she had never heard what part. She seemed satisfied to know that her grandfather was born in the State of Vermont. It is a curious thing, but I noticed numbers of instances in the United States where people seemed to begin their family history with its first American settler. They did not usually seem acquainted with it, or much interested in it, at any earlier period. Doubtless in the upset and confusion of moving,

in those days, to a new country, a good many family records were lost. And after all I don't suppose it much matters, once you become an American, what you were in any previous state.

Verona put her hand on the hammock and gently rocked me. The motion was loathsome, and I would have asked her immediately to desist, but it seemed a mark of confidence, almost a proof of affection, and with poor Val Ingham in my mind I could not dispense with it. He had been getting on anything but well, that I had from him direct, and it was supplemented by my own observation. He had taken the very proper course of asking me to put in a good word for him; he said he was sure I would know how to do it, in England that kind of intermediary was so often resorted to. As a course of action it had his approval, he thought it delicate and diplomatic. So I swallowed my qualms and let Verona rock me.

I didn't in the least know how to bring him in. Verona seemed inclined to talk about anything and everything else, especially about England and the manners and customs that prevail there. Never in my life, I may remark, have I been so bored with my fellow-countrymen and my native land as I was during my stay in the United States. I didn't go there the least in the world to talk about the English, but I had to, for hours at a time. At last the object of my solicitude crossed the lawn with Kaye on his way to the boat-house, and gave me my opportunity.

"There he goes," I said, precipitately seizing upon him, as it were, before he vanished.

"Mr Kemball? What a dear he looks in flannels!"

"I meant Mr Ingham."

"Oh, well, he looks very nice in them too. But, do you know, I like the way your men dress much better than the way ours do. Now look at those two. Mr Kemball has put on clothes convenient for going on the river. Mr Ingham is dressed for the part." I gazed after the pair, but all I could see was that Val Ingham's clothes seemed to fit a good deal more neatly than Kaye's. As I looked, my husband hitched his trousers up and tightened his belt. Verona, also observing this, smiled almost tenderly. "What I do love about Englishmen," she went on, "is their naturalness. Yesterday afternoon at tea-time a mosquito got that dear thing of yours on the shin, and he just pulled up the leg of his pants and scratched it before us all. An American wouldn't have done it for 500 dollars."

"There's nothing indecent about a shin," I expostulated.

"Why, no," said Verona, but she still smiled.

"What a nice fellow he is!" I sighed.

"Your husband?"

"No, Verona. Mr Val Ingham. Don't be provoking." Miss Daly looked at me curiously. "I am sure he likes you very much," she said, and, as if to augment the proof of her affection, rocked me more vigorously than ever.

I clutched at her skirt. "For goodness' sake stop!" I cried. "I wasn't brought up to it—there's no earthly use pretending that I like it."

Verona stayed the hammock. "There's no use pretending anything," she said. "Do you really like Val Ingham?"

"I do indeed," I said. "Why should you think otherwise?"

"Oh, I don't know. I thought, perhaps, you were only analyzing him as a type of young society men over here."

"Heavens!" I cried. "What a cold-blooded thing to do! Poor Mr Ingham—no, indeed. Besides, I couldn't analyze anybody to save my life."

"Then you like him for himself?"

"Of course I do."

"That," said Verona meditatively, "makes a difference."

"Oh, we're great friends. He's coming to stay with me at Whitewood the next time he is in England."

Verona said nothing, but very slightly raised her eyebrows.

"It's a very good hunting country," I said, "and Kaye has promised to mount him if he stays for the winter. Don't you like him too, Verona?" I looked at her hand and thought of taking it, but it seemed too far away or something.

"We have been friends for the last two seasons. We have things in common. He responds to me and I to him in several directions," said Verona.

"Oh," I said, and then I said, "Indeed?" I didn't in the least know what else to say. Verona, leaning back among silk cushions, clasped her slender hands in her lap, compressed her lips critically, and narrowed her eyes as she gazed in front of her, as if to consider Val Ingham undistracted by any surrounding circumstances.

"He's very good-looking—fine eyes," I ventured.

"Y—es," conceded Verona absent-mindedly. "Yes, certainly. As far as that goes. He dances well, too. I know it's weak of me, but I haven't any use for a man that isn't a good dancer."

"Any use for him?" I echoed.

"I mean he doesn't interest me. I think it must be because the spiritual counterpart of the

rhythmic sense is lacking, but I don't know. Anyway, it's horrid having your knees bumped. Does Lord Bobby dance well?"

"Like an angel, when he likes; but he's dreadfully lazy. Mr Ingham is clever, too, isn't he, Verona?"

"Oh, he's more than that," Verona allowed, with an effect of generous correction. "He feels things—he has a certain amount of temperament. It's a great pleasure," she went on, "to induce some reflection of his soul to flash out, especially when it has the colour of your own."

"I know," I exclaimed intelligently. "You mean that you are affinities. How nice!"

Verona looked at me as if she had not made me understand, whereas she had, perfectly.

"I don't think you express it very modernly," she said.

"But that's what it comes to. I don't think Kaye and I are affinities, precisely," I reflected, "but we get on very well."

"I'm not sure that that kind of relationship is so very desirable in married people. It must make life very tense," remarked my young lady with a fine calm, and I felt as if poor Val Ingham were quite dismissed from the list of possible husbands. "Tell me," she went on, "I've been dying to ask you for ever so long—when Lord Robert was in India last year did he fight any?"

"I hope so," I said. "His regiment, you know, took part in the Tirah Expedition."

"He doesn't look as if he'd ever killed a man. Most of my friends in the Philippines," continued Verona thoughtfully, "have killed several."

"Bobs got a D.S.O., anyway," I said defensively.

"What's that?"

"A Done Something or Other, Kaye calls it. Properly speaking, a Distinguished Service Order. And the Frontier medal, with two clasps."

"How perfectly fascinating! He must have killed loads of Tirahs, or whatever they are. I wonder if he'd lend it me to wear at the Kittley's hop on Thursday; but, of course, Violet has asked him already."

The idea horrified me into silence. "He's already promised me one of his regimental buttons to make a hat-pin of," Verona went on, "and one of the Junior Army and Navy Club ones too, with 'Rag and Famish' on it. Won't it be too *chic* for words?"

"I'm pretty certain," I managed to say at last, "that he hasn't his uniform with him, or of course, his medals either."

"Anyway, I shall ask him," said Verona.

CHAPTER XVII

ON Sunday mornings some of us always drove to Waterford, the nearest village, to church. It was not in any way compulsory, as it so often is at home; one was not likely to meet the rector the next evening at dinner, and read one's delinquencies in his eye. As a matter of fact there was no rector, the Hams were Congregationalists, and the minister of that denomination in Waterford seemed not to be known beyond the village. The Hams had a pew, and paid for it, did their duty by special offerings and subscriptions, listened to the sermon and sang the hymns, and there it seemed to end. They knew their pastor's name, but during the whole of our visit we hardly heard it. It is a curious thing to write, but he did not seem in touch with the few wealthy members of his congregation like the family at Bellevue; he glanced at them respectfully in the village street, and raised his hat as if they were his superiors. He seemed a functionary to whose services they were entitled, with the rest of one portion of the public; they took them, and paid for them, and went their way, recognizing no claim—nor was any made—on the part of their spiritual adviser to be what they would call "in society." This is putting it rather baldly, but the facts did seem bald, by contrast, I suppose with the Hon. and Rev. Horatio Ffrench, Vicar of

Cobhampton, who is never more annoyed than when one of his parishioners lets a place to difficult people. Perhaps, too, the Hams' spiritual relations were more equally adjusted in the winter, when they worshipped in New York. The service in the little frame church at Waterford had always, I remember, rather the character of a compromise, and there were a good many suppressed and apologetic smiles at some of the things the preacher said, such as "You may be sure the devil will hump himself if you don't." I put that down intending to find out what it meant but I never did.

Mr and Mrs Ham, Verona, Bobs, Kaye, and I had been the party one Sunday soon after my chat with Verona, and we drove home to find the usual addition for lunch of more young people from New York. They came in hosts, did young people from New York, and always on Sunday. They made a kaleidoscopic vision of youth, with only one constant feature in their originality, a simply unsurpassable standard of charming clothes. They were wonderfully vivacious and clever and detached as it were from the commonplaces of life; they seemed to float above it and look down at it from a point which they attained by simply being severed from anything so sordid as the consideration of bills. They diffused tremendously the atmosphere of being able to do exactly as they liked, of having no limitations except individual ones. The talk, of course, was allusive and personal—it generally is with young people—and one could not always follow it, but its gaiety and rapidity and good-humour were delightful—quite set one up. I suppose they were still when they were asleep, but it seemed unlikely, they were so full of restless movement at all other times, never for a whole instant quiet. Eyes,

features, shoulders, hands; if nothing else stirred, be sure a patent leather foot was wagging hard at an unsuspected end, giving the lie to any idea of real repose. They were never bored, or dull, or languid; they showed such a keen and perpetual sense of enjoyment that I used to wish one could transport the whole of them—the whole bunch of young, fresh, fructifying life—to England, to enliven our society and appreciate the charms and the comfort of our way of living. I felt quite sorry sometimes that Bobs could only marry one of them, and remembered other friends, especially one or two men at Aldershot, less blessed than he in the opportunity. I was thinking, of course, chiefly of the girls; the young fellows seemed somehow more bound up with the country, better satisfied with it, and better suited to it. I never had any overwhelming desire to deport American young men from the scenes of their activity to those of our leisure, and, as a matter of fact, they don't come, do they? they are much too patriotic.

There was a Miss Georgie Madden, and a Miss Daisy Summers, and a young Madden, and a young man Summers, I remember, that Sunday among the others, and we had talked of nothing, since luncheon, but golf. The club Violet belonged to played over links three miles away, and the Hams' tennis-courts lay in perfect order under their drawing-room windows, but these circumstances made no difference, tennis was uniformly neglected, and every day a contingent went off by automobile or otherwise to the links. I must say it gave me the idea that American tendencies in amusement were rather extreme. The war was still a subject, but we heard as much of golf as of the Philippines, and the remarkable thing about it was the way it excluded everything

else. Kaye is fairly keen on it; I am a poor person on the tee and feebler still on the green, and I naturally preferred tennis; but the bored and languid way in which the other three played when at last we got up a set quite discouraged all desire to propose it again. It was easy enough to beat their heads off, none of them had had a racquet in their hands the whole season they said, and I believed them. They actually talked golf between the services, as if they could not even think of any other game while they were playing it. Tennis, it appeared, was distinctly not the thing, though it was indulgently pointed out that it might "come in" again. It was not the fault of tennis, but of that wayward abstraction called popularity, to which we all had to bow.

I tried to explain the English toleration for more than one form of exercise, but I could see that I was not understood; a game was a thing either to be "perfectly crazy" about or to be practically laid on the shelf—relegated to the amusements of second-class hotels. One would positively think by the contemptuous way Miss Daisy Summers talked about tennis that it had descended to the servants' hall, or whatever answers to it in America. That was another feature about golf, it seemed to take the form of a *cachet* of fashion—a curious function for a game. I don't think we have any notion to correspond with it. It is, perhaps, thought swagger to hunt, but farmers do, and even 'Arries, according to *Punch*, though I must say I've never seen one at a meet. Perhaps polo is thought a smart game among men; but then it is so limited. Certainly one would never put people down as second-rate because they didn't hunt or play polo. But I expect to be believed when I say that is what it came to on the Hams' verandah with regard to

golf. When I was asked if I played, and answered, as every poor player does, that I was keeping it for my old age, the subject was politely changed and brought within the limits of my obviously narrow experience of the world. Kaye only just redeemed me with a technical expression which none of them had heard, and which they all wrote down! Stories were told of outsiders who assumed familiarity with the game and made ridiculous mistakes about it, and laughed at as if these were blunders in grammar or in manners. And Miss Georgie Madden confided to me that she privately hated it, and only played because you were so out of it if you didn't.

"Isn't it what you call a classy game in England?" asked Mr Summers. He pronounced "classy" like "massy." There is nothing so confusing as familiar slang with the vowels flattened.

"Oh, no," I said. "The most frumpy people play. In Scotland some of the best players are nobody at all—dear me, their photographs are enough! But, of course, smart people play too, like the Hon. Dolly Petre—she is our county champion—and politicians like——"

"Mr Balfour!" they all exclaimed in one breath.

"Yes, and—oh, all sorts of people." I finished, "If you like it you play it, and if you don't you don't."

"I suppose it isn't so new with you as it is with us? You've had time to get tired of it," said the young man Madden.

"We've been playing it about three hundred years in Scotland and two hundred in England," Kaye replied; "but we're not tired of it, as far as I know."

"Great Scot!" exclaimed Val Ingham; "you know when you like a thing, don't you?"

"Why," pursued my husband, "there's a portrait at the Mythe of a forebear of mine who had the vanity to get himself done in the pink over a century ago."

"Then I expect you've inherited that wonderful approach of yours," said Verona respectfully.

"If I have it was all the old beggar left me," Kaye went on. "He got through everything he could lay his hands on, and then went off to fight the French in Canada. An Iroquois scalped him there, and a brother officer got the Iroquois and brought home the scalp."

"How perfectly thrilling!" cried Miss Summers. "You have the record of it all—old letters."

"We had the scalp until ten years or so ago. You remember it, Bob. The grandmother used to keep it in one of those little green silk things that roll up."

"Needle-cases!" ejaculated Verona.

"Rather," replied Bobs; "and the time you got Frances to bag it, and send it in a hamper of grub to school, to show the other fellows."

"Ee-ugh!" remarked Miss Madden.

"Well, one day the grandmother said it was too painful a memory, and she wouldn't have it in the house any longer, so she gave it to a charity bazaar to be raffled, and what became of it I haven't the remotest notion."

"What a way to treat the scalp of an ancestor," cried Miss Madden.

"It was rather a bald one," said Kaye, in deprecation, "and it wasn't a nice thing to have about. I believe I got hold of it as a baby once, and promptly put it where all babies put things."

A general shriek assailed and stopped him.

"Well, if he did hand you down that approach," said Val Ingham, "it was the least you could do to give Christian burial to his remains."

"Oh, I'm beastly uncertain. That was a capital lie I had yesterday at the last hole, and it didn't come off a little bit."

"That was an accidental fozzle," Val Ingham returned handsomely. "Well, whatever you think of it in England, golf has had a great triumph in this country. We couldn't have paid a game a higher compliment."

Mr Ingham quite gave the impression that he was offering one to the country from which golf emanated. That is a great notion with Americans—they think they flatter you tremendously if they take up one of your institutions. I never could see it. I've heard a German quite congratulated with "Everything is Wagner this year in New York." I think he must have felt inclined to reply, like the Washington man about the Viceroy's American wife, "And why not?"

They disputed at last; people who talk endless and unmitigated golf always do. It was something about a twosome and a foursome and passing. Kaye quoted authority with confidence. "That's the rule," said he.

"Well, of course, I don't know what the practice may be in your part of the world, sir. I can only tell you what the rule on that point is *as approved by the American Golf Association.*" Three people, at least, looked astonished on the Hams' verandah.

"Do you mean to say," exclaimed my husband, "that your association would tamper with *the rules!*" Positively, they might have been Holy Writ.

"Pardon me," returned Mr Madden—no polite American will argue without that preface, one is

eternally "pardoning" them. "Pardon me, I have not had the opportunity of comparing your rules with ours. But I have no doubt we may have altered some of them to suit the country."

"You'd much better alter the country," advised Kaye, with distinct sarcasm; and in a moment I am certain things would have been said but for Violet. Miss Ham joined us then, carrying a large paper bag and a small box. I saw a conscious look come over Bob's face, and it flashed upon me that he had been trying to be original, or American, which is equally difficult. I trembled for him, Violet looked so mischievous, and I trembled with reason.

"Just look," she cried. "Everybody, please look at what I've found on my dressing-table! From Lord Bobby! Isn't it just as sweet of him as ever it can be!"

"*Pea-nuts!*" exclaimed Miss Summers.

"*Gum!*" ejaculated Miss Madden.

The inflection was ambiguous, but it was immediately lost in a shout of laughter. Poor Bobs looked frightfully annoyed, but they laughed as if they couldn't help it.

"And a real thoughtful note," Violet went on, "saying he doesn't think they can be good for me, but if I don't eat them all at once perhaps they won't do me any harm."

"Say, old fellow," exclaimed Val Ingham, between his spasms, "how you are catching on!"

"So you must all help me," continued Violet, liberally passing the bag and the box.

"If Lord Robert will kindly show us how," cried the young man Madden, holding out one of the little white oblongs of chewing-gum. "The pea-nuts I think I can trust my memory for, but this——"

How they did laugh! All but Verona. Verona

distinctly helped Bobs out and prevented his going off in the sulks to the billiard-room, as I saw at one moment he meant to. Sustained by Verona he took the tremendous chaffing he got very well. "I'll send the next ones to you," he declared to her gratefully, and Verona said "Yes, do," but I don't think he ever had the courage.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE moment I got Kaye alone I tackled him on the subject of the melancholy fiasco I have just described. "Did you tell him to do it?" I demanded.

"I didn't tell him not to," my husband confessed.

"I wish Bobs would just occasionally come to me for advice," I said. "Did you really suppose, the pair of you, that it was customary over here to send young ladies pea-nuts and chewing-gum as a mark of consideration?"

"You told me yourself——"

"Oh, sweets! That's quite a different thing! They are delicate and expensive—candied violets and rose leaves!"

"They hadn't anything of that sort in the village——"

"Was that where he got them?"

"Yes; we bicycled over. I'm sure I've always heard——"

"Haven't you in the last two months disproved a number of things you'd always heard?" I asked coldly.

"Oh, well, you needn't jump on *me*! I told Bobs I didn't think it would be a go, somehow. There was something so awful about the bag."

"There was," I groaned.

"Bobs was bound it would be understood.

He's been nosing round, you know, after the proper thing for some time. He came home as proud as a retriever with that confounded bag."

"Bobs isn't very clever," I remarked, and Kaye shook his head. It was a statement that had often found us in gloomy accord before.

"It's a pity," I continued; "they don't seem to be much liked over here unless they're clever, I mean by girls."

"I've noticed that," said Kaye, packing tobacco into his pipe; "they don't take to a chap much on his merits, just as a decent marrying man. Of course," he added, applying a second match, "in Bobs' case there's always the title."

"One would think so," I mused; "but I have reason to believe she refused young Foskin, Laura Deane's second cousin, you know. He's a baronet."

"Stutters, doesn't he?"

"No, not that; but there *is* something. Oh, I know, he's got no sense of smell. But that shouldn't have made any difference—in a baronet."

"With this sort of girl you never can tell. Maybe she objected to a chap who wouldn't know if the gas was escaping."

"I don't believe it was that," I said; "I think she suspected him of being lacking in some spiritual counterpart."

Kaye took his pipe out of his mouth and looked at me.

"I was only thinking," I hastened to assure him, "of a conversation I had the other day with Verona. It was most unsatisfactory."

"About Ingham? Well, how does the land lie? I hope she is going to chuck him."

"I don't see why you should hope anything

so painful. I haven't the least notion what she's going to do."

"Wouldn't talk, eh?"

"Oh yes, she would talk!"

"Wouldn't commit herself?"

"She committed herself so far as to say he was charming."

"Well, that's all right, isn't it?"

"No!" I replied explosively; "it's a thing you would *never* say about anybody you were in love with! Charming—fiddlesticks! And she told me just how far they were sympathetic to each other; at least, no, I don't think she did that, but she certainly gave me the idea that they were sympathetic."

"All the better for that."

"And yet when I said they were affinities, she wouldn't have it."

"Oh, well, affinities means rather a lot, doesn't it?"

"I don't know what it means, but I think she might have admitted it—in confidence. We were having a very intimate talk—at least I was."

"Seems to me she admitted a good deal."

"I wish I could make you understand. She talked about his emotions. He might have been a frog."

"A frog is a cold-blooded animal," responded my husband, "and has none."

"Verona is a cold-blooded animal," I said, quite with temper.

"Rubbish!" said Kaye; "she doesn't want to confide in a Britisher, that's all."

"Why not, indeed?" I inquired indignantly. "Look at Val Ingham!"

"Bah! He would confide in anything."

"Thank you," I said; "I wish he had selected

something else then. It makes one feel so involved, somehow."

"If you *will* advise him," said Kaye, removing his pipe in a way that gave weight to his utterance, "you assume a certain amount of responsibility, of course."

"What is one to do? He consults one at every point. He is so anxious, poor boy, to conform to the English system in every respect—to do nothing wrong."

"I don't pretend to understand him," said Kaye briefly; "but according to you his English system doesn't seem to be exactly a success."

"It is, so far as he is concerned. He enjoys it awfully."

"And so do you, I imagine."

"It's a little like amateur theatricals," I mused; "he has a part he likes, and he does it beautifully. I? Oh, I'm only the prompter."

"To my mind," said Kaye, "it's rather like enjoying your honeymoon by yourself. The girl doesn't seem to be in it."

"Oh, I think she must see. She's very quick."

"See what?"

"What it all means—the dignity and the difference of it."

"I think she must see that he's a confounded young ass—and that's probably what she does see. I've no patience with him."

"You've just said that you didn't understand him, dear, and I daresay you don't. It's an idyll—a perfect idyll. Mr Ingham is a flower of chivalry come up very late in Seventy-Something Street. But I think he does carry it rather far, myself."

"As how?" asked Kaye laconically.

"Well, he behaves, don't you know, rather as if she were shut up in a moated castle, and he

had to sigh down below, outside somewhere. If she speaks to him, you would think she waved a handkerchief from a tower. He creates invisible barriers and absurd distances; when he looks at her, you can see them in his eyes. And she's of age, and her parents are dead, and the Adamses would simply love it, and there isn't a blessed thing to prevent their being engaged to-morrow. Did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous?"

My husband had been growing more and more curt in his replies, and to that he merely offered a grunt.

"He carries off her gloves and handkerchiefs and things, till she's quite annoyed about it—she says she hasn't two pairs that match. The other day he asked her for a flower from a bunch she had, and she said, 'Oh, you can have them all if you like. Cut flowers are for the city. In the country I like them much better growing.' I must say she seems very detached."

"So does any sensible person like them better growing."

"Verona isn't sensible—she's artistic," I replied; "and she didn't say it in the least because she meant it."

"Oh, if it's a case of finding out what a girl means," Kaye remarked, "I'm sorry for the chap. Though I don't remember much ambiguity about you," he conceded.

"I never had a chance," I said regretfully. "You know very well, Kaye, you simply——"

"I hadn't any time to spare, old woman. I was due in Bowbriggie, you know, for the twelfth."

For some reason I felt a little huffed with Kaye, and I removed my hand from the one he was not smoking with. Perhaps I have not men-

tioned that I was sitting on the arm of his chair. I found one for myself.

"Where've you gone to?" he asked discontentedly.

"It's more comfortable here," I said; which it wasn't. A man never can see that he deserves anything. Husband's certainly cannot, and this makes it unsatisfactory to discipline them sometimes. I had to go back to the arm of the chair without any proper explanation of why I had left it. This, I am sure, is the kind of incident that gives a whole sex the reputation of being whimsical and unreasonable.

"The fact is," I continued, "Val Ingham doesn't find enough difference between our modern English way of making love and the American one to satisfy his imagination. There isn't so much, you know, when you come to think of it. Dear knows, I have had to think of it hard enough. Val is always bothering me for what he calls 'pointers.' It would have been much easier," I went on dispiritedly, "if he had been doing it a century ago. But what girl of to-day would enjoy being serenaded, even in England? She would be so horribly laughed at. And I can't think what Verona would say."

My husband laughed immoderately. "Does Ingham want to serenade her?" he asked.

"He suggested it. He plays the mandolin, and has rather a pretty voice. But I discouraged it."

"Just as well, I fancy."

"It's all very well to laugh, and I daresay it sounds silly enough the way I repeat it; but if the poor boy confided in you, Kaye Kemball, you would sympathize. He is full of the most charming ideas, the most beautiful smiles, and his whole attitude towards women and—and marriage

is one that I admire very much. And when I see things not going so well as they ought to go, I can't help feeling rather miserable about it."

"Oh, well, you can't do anything," said Kaye.

"I've done such a lot already," I confessed. "When I couldn't think of pointers for him, I just imagined them."

"That was foolish," advised my husband; "I wouldn't imagine any more if I were you. I haven't got to that point yet with Bobs. He does all the imagining, and I do the reining in. But things don't look any too bright in his direction either."

"I do hope you haven't been putting your foot in it in that affair," I said, with anxiety. "The almonds and raisins—I mean the other grocery things—were bad enough; don't say you've done anything else! Why don't you send him to me? I have more reason, really, to be interested in that match than the other."

"You don't shoot," said Kaye solemnly, "so you can't be as keen on it as I am. And a man is much more competent to advise another man in matters of that sort. Though I must say I'm thankful young Ingham didn't come slobbering to *me*."

"That reminds me," I said. "You managed to let two grains of rice from the mulligatawny stick to your moustache last night, and they remained there during the whole of dinner. Things like that don't happen to an American moustache."

"No," replied Kaye, with fine scorn. "They carry pocket-combs and looking-glasses over here. I saw a chap using one in a tram the other day. He made himself quite lovely. Shall I get——"

"That will do, Kaye," I said firmly. "You must have found out by now that there are just

as many lower classes in America as there are with us. Since you have taken the responsibility of advising Bobs—very lightly, it seems to me—well, I think you're rather a beast, you know, not to tell me."

"I'll tell you all right," said my husband, "if you give me a chance."

I was silent. It seemed the only way to get anything out of him.

"As a rule, I pull Bobs in. He wanted to ask her to go berrying with him the other day—rasp-berrying—and I put my foot down on that."

"Innocent enough."

"She wouldn't have gone. She won't do any single blooming American thing. But I have given him an idea."

"Yes."

"A tandem bicycle," said Kaye, with modest pride. "I saw an advertisement of one with some jolly improvements in a New York paper lately. If that machine doesn't give him opportunity nothing will."

I had no confidence in the idea whatever—I never had in mechanics—but I was far from desiring to throw cold water on anything calculated to bring Bobs to the point.

"You must have been awfully taken with the improvements," was my only comment.

CHAPTER XIX

FRANCES wrote regularly, and usually expressed disappointment with candour. She said neither of us seemed to have our eyes about us, and what we did see was transferred through a medium of the purest prejudice. So far as discernment and deduction went, she said, she might as well have sent her two cats. Had we yet heard anything, she asked, with scarcely concealed sarcasm, of the advancing struggle between American labour and American capital? Might any one have mentioned a political institution known as "Tammany"? Had any hint come our way of the intentions of the United States towards the Monroe doctrine? The Adamses, she remarked, were doubtless very pleasant, and the Hams very hospitable people, but either of them might be met any day in the middle shires—how little she knew!—and did not appear, in any case, to be persons of sufficient importance to take up our whole attention. Could we not manage to make the acquaintance of a member of the Congress? So far we had reported upon nothing worth a serious thought. Prison regulations, ward politics, poor laws—and we knew how particularly she wanted information on that head, being herself a guardian—no reasonable matter for inquiry seemed to have suggested itself to us. We had not even

made it our business to meet Norah's sister, in whom for some reason, I imagine, Frances expected us to find an epitome of the virtues if not the charms of a democracy.

This was not all in one letter or even in two, but it was conveyed in terms no milder, and there was, all told, a great deal more of it than that. It was a little unreasonable of Frances; we had not gone abroad, after all, as her special correspondents, and I think it was very nice of me to go on writing to her after she had said, intending it to be insulting, that my letters were almost good enough to appear in a ladies' paper. (I suppose I was not deeply offended; as a matter of fact, I should have been rather pleased to see them there, especially with pretty illustrations. And I knew Frances.) But I couldn't help thinking—biting my pen to inspire it with the things she wanted to know—how licensed Miss Walden's demand was, on behalf of the stay-at-home members of an English family, that the gone-abroad member should make the most of his opportunities and add to the store of knowledge in the home hive with long important letters, fit to be read aloud and passed round the circle of relations and tied up and put away. I am aware that such people communicate nowadays by post-card and telegram, but Frances, for all her modern notions, is a survival in lots of ways. I sometimes think that maiden ladies are the best repositories of British tradition. She has her own packets of old letters, written by members of the family who had their eyes about them and an acquaintance with elegant diction; among them a bundle of very yellow ones from a grand-uncle chronicling the scenes and incidents of the Peninsular campaign. When I thought of these cramped pages and looked at my own dashes and exclama-

tion points I did feel that my use of this serious instrument, the pen, was flippant and irresponsible. Frances was quite within her rights in complaining; the Peninsular grand-uncle, in my situation, would have filled it much more to her satisfaction, though I daresay he, too, would have found himself kept up to the mark. It is also true that America, as a subject, is certainly much more worthy of her grand-uncle than of me. But he is in his grave and I am on the spot, and that, after all, makes all the difference. Under a sense of my deficiencies, I wrote and recommended Bryce's *American Commonwealth* to her as an addition to our letters, which I remembered somebody had strongly advised me to get; and it was just my luck, as Kaye would say, to find it afterwards in a parcel lent to us to read on the voyage, with strict injunctions about keeping on the paper covers, by our affectionate cousin Frances. Step beyond the bounds of your own interest and intelligence, and that is what happens—you are always caught. This is the reason of my discretion, in this account of our visit to the States, with regard to the political and economic problems to be observed there. I could have told Frances as much, but it would have made no difference. She merely thinks that if you are not so clever about such things as she is you ought to make it your business to be.

They were all interested enough, however, even Frances, in our news about Bobs's matrimonial intentions. Nothing excites an English family like the prospect of an additional member by marriage. It is no doubt something surviving from the time when the heads of families had everything to do with the matter; having produced children, they thought themselves entitled to dispose of them as best suited the

general good. There is still a tremendous flutter, a great exchange of letters and opinions by the early post, and exhaustive demand for information. People are not, I noticed, so difficult to please in America. There never has been anything feudal in the relations of American young people to their elders—they begin early to breathe, on the contrary, the equal privilege of the republic. No doubt there is some parental inquiry, but a certain calm acceptance is the usual thing. I did once hear great annoyance expressed because the young lady was a Unitarian, but it wasn't allowed to interfere. As to uncles and aunts and cousins they are quite philosophic, they do not concern themselves at all. It must be because the yoke of family connection sits more lightly there than in England; the fact that a person who happens to be your second cousin married another person is no reason why you should call upon her, especially if you belong to different denominations. You take no responsibility and she makes no claim; it must be less cramping, certainly.

Frances is Bobs's nearest living female relation. She is only second cousin to Kaye really, but she is Bobs's aunt, by a family complication which I am sure anybody would prefer to take for granted. Frances has all the money there is practically, and Bobs will be her heir. This has always given her the liveliest interest in him, though it isn't enough, and never has been, to make him pay very much attention to her ideas. I suppose he knows very well that if you are a Miss Walden and your nephew is a lord of the same name, you are not likely to leave whatever you have in Consols to anybody else. I have wondered sometimes whether if Bobs were a baron and had a seat in the Lords' an issue would

arise between them, for the abolition of that body is one of Frances's strongest points, but fortunately he is not. As things are he is inclined to agree with her. Speaking probably with the warmth of a narrow escape, he says he considers hereditary legislating a fag. Frances is none the better pleased with him for this opinion. It is really very difficult to please Frances—you never can be sure she won't sniff quite as much at your agreement as at your difference. Her great complaint of poor Bobs is that he has no particular opinions; he manages to enjoy life without them. She says that a person who can't argue is like a person who can't chew; he swallows the facts of life unprepared for digestion. She scorns to shrink from putting a thing unpleasantly, does Frances, if she thinks she can make you understand better that way; and it must be said for her that she always does make you understand.

It will be plain that Kaye and I looked with much interest for Miss Walden's comment on our news. We could not in the least guess how she would take it, for it is one thing to proclaim your admiration for the institutions of a country and quite another to take the product of those institutions to your bosom, especially in female form. Not that it was easy to imagine Violet in Frances's bosom. I tried to conjure it up, but one could not see it somehow. Her letter, however, proved her consistent beyond any of our speculations. Her congratulations were all for Bobs, her sympathies all for the unknown Miss Ham. "The confounding weakness," she wrote, "in the members of a democracy is that they have ever a covetous eye upon the baubles with which we console ourselves for a social theory so much inferior. Bobs's title is, of

course, the toy these Hams seem willing to buy so expensively, and very bored with it the intelligent young lady you describe is likely soon to be. However, that is her business, not ours, and I am as thankful as you are that Bobs is going to get a wife who may possibly make something of him, and of the position, and of the old place. But there is one thing that unmistakably is our business, and that is to see that these Hams are fully aware of the nature of their bargain—that Cliffenden is mortgaged up to the eaves, and if it had not come to Bobs through his mother, the earl would have sold it long ago. They ought to be exhaustively informed about my precious brother, and why he prefers to live abroad, also the delightful connection they will be making in my eldest nephew, Lord Compton, who has gone through his wife's fortune in precisely three years and a half, and has known for a long time that he will never see a penny of mine. Bobs himself has absolutely no notion of the value of money, and it should be mentioned that—as you know, he has twice been got out of Goldstein's hands by a relation, my name need not appear. Heaven only knows how far he is dipped at this moment. The last time I thought very seriously of making other arrangements for the future."

"Rubbish," said Kaye—I was reading the letter aloud. "She is devoted to Bobs, and never dreamed of such a thing."

"But after the way he behaved at Dargai I can't, of course, do anything of that kind. He is the first Walden to make his country recognize his name, and he won't bear it always in poverty if £2,500 a year some day will keep him out of it. But that isn't much, and I have every intention of living, at least as long as I can bicycle. Americans are a large-minded nation, and these

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Hams strike me as not at all the people to ask small-minded questions. Bobs will tell the truth, of course, if he is asked, but he's not likely to make any revelation that isn't required of him. Now I am more or less sponsor for Bobs—I've practically looked after him since he was five—and I am particularly anxious that if he brings an American millionairess into this family, he shall bring her with her eyes wide open."

"I don't think Frances need distress herself," said Kaye; "what Miss Violet doesn't see isn't worth showing her."

"I quite agree with you, but, my goodness, Kaye, listen to this: 'To write these particulars to Mr Jacob Ham would, I think, be laying too much stress upon them, and would also be naturally resented by Bobs'—I should think so indeed—but you who are on the spot have every opportunity of conveying them by word of mouth with just the amount of emphasis they require and no more. Will you undertake to do this? Please let me know—I shall be very glad if I can depend upon you.'"

"We could not possibly," I exclaimed.

"Rather not."

"As if we—I mean you—were not too much involved as it is," I cried.

"It's absolutely no business of ours," said my husband, with decision; "nor of Frances' either, for the matter of that. Interfering old busybody! Bobs is a good enough chap; in my opinion the girl is doing very well for herself. The old man can tie up the money any way he likes I suppose."

"Well," I said, as this was accompanied by a distinctly abusive glance, "I didn't propose it, please."

"You may tell her that I wouldn't do it for a thousand pounds, or let you either."

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"If I do that," I said, "she will certainly write to Mr Ham, and he will imagine it's a great deal worse than it is."

"That's true," said Kaye; "she is perfectly capable of it."

"I won't write at all," I said, with an inspiration, "till the engagement is announced. It can't be long now."

Kaye looked dubious, but nodded. "That would be safest certainly," he said. "You can send her messages in your letters to mother, and always say you are writing by the next mail."

I assented to this; my husband put on his cap for the river, and reached the door.

"Wait a minute," I said. "You haven't heard all Frances's news—where was I? Oh—'old Tilly Andrews in the village has had another severe attack of lumbago. Mr Ffrench tells me he yesterday married Jenny, the eldest granddaughter, and Peter Gaff, the Fieldings' undergardener, and there are grounds for congratulation that it was not to-day.' Oh, Kaye, that nice, tidy Jenny Andrews! And it's old Tilly's fourth attack since Christmas. I wonder if she is as obstinate as ever about her medicine. Your mother had always to give it to her in Bovril. How far, here in America, we seem from the village!"

"A deuced long way," replied Kaye. "Tilly Andrews doesn't seem of much consequence over here."

"Ah, well," I said, "she will assert herself, never fear, as soon as we get back."

CHAPTER XX

My own idea was that Verona and Val Ingham were to go with me into New York when that first cool day came at last, on which I had been promised a shopping expedition. It had been proposed and arranged that way, and I had been looking forward immensely to having these two on my hands, as it were, for the whole day, enjoying the little drama of their behaviour to one another, and giving Mr Ingham such discreet opportunities as he would appreciate if I had any reason to suppose that he had at last made up his mind to declare himself. I was rather disconcerted and not particularly pleased, to find Violet waiting for me buttoning her gloves in the hall after breakfast; Verona, she said, had a headache, and would she do instead? She was looking particularly lovely, in some thin blue thing with white flowers and black lines on it; nobody could complain of her as a substitute, and I saw that even poor Val's disappointment was tempered with admiration as he regarded her from the drawing-room door. He looked so little surprised at the change that it flashed upon me he expected it. As Violet got into the dog-cart to take the reins, "I hope," I said to him, "this doesn't mean that you and Verona have been misunderstanding each other again."

Val Ingham smiled. There was patience,

brooding reminiscence, and faint amusement in his smile. "I know nothing half so piquant as these misunderstandings," he said. "They really help you to know a girl."

"Didn't she like the marked Tennyson?" I asked anxiously.

"She returned it to me—she said she couldn't think of depriving me of such an old friend. I would have done better, I believe, to have given her a new one—an *édition de luxe*."

"Oh no!" I cried. "Your own copy that you had always carried and read and been fond of—much more of a present than a new thing in vellum with only the publisher's associations about it!"

Val Ingham smiled his peculiar smile again. "I'm afraid Miss Daly missed the precise flavour of that," he said, and we were half-way to the station before I realized that there had been in what he said just a perceptible criticism of Verona's taste.

Before long I began to see that however unfortunate it might be for the interests I had so much at heart, personally I was not likely to suffer from the alteration in our party. Verona, especially with Val Ingham, was a complex creature; one had to add and subtract with her, and carefully consider what she was likely to mean by all she left unsaid. It was interesting, but it was a species of enjoyment by itself; one rather wanted a free mind for it and an unimpeded occasion, whereas we were about to spend the day among the great distractions of the city of New York. It was almost a relief, after the tax Verona made upon the imagination, to chaperon a young lady in the society of Mr Ingham, about whose relations with him one had not to think twice. Violet was simple enough with everybody

—her cleverness was quite upon the surface, and not concealed somewhere behind her glance like Verona's—and particularly so with Val Ingham. Her clear blue eyes rested upon his, when she spoke to him, with the most charming directness; they seemed almost to say sometimes, "How delightful that there is nothing between us!" It was difficult to read the response in Val's; they seemed to guard reserve, a neutrality of opinion, but that was all a part, of course, of his enigmatic attitude toward women: it would have been absurd to pay any attention to it. The plain good fellowship between them, especially on Violet's part, gave me a comfortable sense that here there was nothing to understand, nothing that I need bother my head about. I might look out of the windows freely and miss no greater entertainment. It was odd, nevertheless, to notice how Val Ingham let Violet take the initiative in all that was said, he who so constantly led the way, capering to the music of his pipe, with Verona. Violet quite commanded him, and that explained itself.

"We were at school together, you know," she said to me as the train rushed along, "and tremendous sweethearts in those days, weren't we, Val?"

"At the age of twelve," said Val to me, "I wrote her sonnets. At least I thought they were sonnets."

"They were as much sonnets as anything," declared Violet, "and I kept them until I got into the Sixth Reader. Then I allowed myself to be persuaded that they wouldn't scan. It was Verona," she went on with a little smile, "who persuaded me. Now that was odd."

"It was odd!" I exclaimed, but Val only pulled his moustache, and looked at Violet in the

way a man does when he has been frightfully scored off, and doesn't much mind.

"But at twelve," continued Violet, "he was useful as well as sentimental. He always carried my school-bag home for me, and once he kept off a large bounding black dog."

"Fancy your remembering!" exclaimed Val Ingham, and then to me in a stage aside, "I adored her."

It was charming to a degree, this gay rallying, unhampered by a particle of self-consciousness, and I reflected, as the train drew into the station, how admirable was the American plan of educating boys and girls together, that produced it. Here were two young people of opposite sexes, just at the age usually most full of silly embarrassments, able to look back upon a childish love affair with a mutual tender ridicule which had nothing in the world in it for either of them but a piquant picture, a pretty jest. I resolved at the time to ask Violet for more particulars about the system upon which her early education and Val's had been conducted, but if I did I find that they have escaped me. However, the result is the important thing, and I can testify to that.

We got almost immediately into an elevated railway train. I was to have my way about all we did, and I chose that method of getting to the shopping quarter because it seemed the quietest. The word quiet in New York of course is relative; in many districts it could hardly, as a matter of fact, make itself heard. The elevated railway is not even comparatively quiet—one doubts if any successful American enterprise could be—but it is at least possible in using it to think; one's mind is not continually distracted with horrid apprehensions of crashing into horses and over people. And it is always freshly quaint to watch the

turmoil of the plane of New York with those demon trams careering through it, from a point detached and superior. I was glad to be back in the city again, thrilled and excited at getting another glimpse of the greatest variety entertainment that goes on, I think, in the streets of the world. Bellevue was a luxurious interlude, with the gay little incidents of every day painted into the wildest canvas of blue sky and river, green forest and lawn; but this was the crowded, vivid, provocative life that seemed so to stir one's nerves and infect one's veins. Again, it seemed that the people who dropped in and out of the cane-backed seats of the train had so much to say to each other and to me that our not being on speaking terms was a simple farce. Such mobility of life and eye they had, such initiative and response sat in their faces! I looked at Val and Violet to say something about it, and saw that they too, just sitting there, were stimulative and pictorial in their own manner and degree. One cannot expect the characters in a story to see how interesting it is, still less to exclaim upon it, so I said nothing.

I set down the conductor of that train as the type I should remember of all New York's harried public officials. He was pale, with a square face and a black moustache under the company's cap. He came to the door of the train every two or three minutes to shout to us the name of the approaching station, and he was too tired even to open the whole of his mouth to do it. He used only one corner, and as little of that as possible; the marvel was that the stentorian sound could get through the hole he made to let it out. He was the weariest seeming human being I ever saw and one of the most alert; he looked so bored and sophisticated that if he had not been conduct-

ing an elevated train he might have been doing the same thing for an Alhambra orchestra. He was plainly what we call in England above his work: I wondered much to what, at this temporary cost and degradation, he meant to attain. He had certainly no look—these people never have in America—of being thankful for his job and meaning to stick to it; to say that he was contemptuous of the travelling public is not to express it at all; he regarded them as he twisted the turnstile that let them in and out as so much moving matter. His expression never charged itself with a spark of interest as his glance fell on any one of them. He was blankly impersonal, that man, wonderfully withdrawn; his only visible relation was with the turnstile. When we descended the steps into the street the first thing I saw reminded me that the policemen of New York are not like this. The policemen look happy and satisfied and good-natured. They might be continually reflecting upon how much better paid a thing is to be a policeman in New York than in Dublin, for example. They wear on their beat nice comfortable dark blue pyjamas with brass buttons, but these have not at all the appearance of being slept in, and are no doubt changed at night. They are most obliging; the thing I noticed was a kind service. A passer-by had lost his collar button down the back of his neck; a policeman fished it out and fastened it in for him. I paused and watched the operation through; it gave me a new sense of the brotherhood of man.

We went straight to the shop where it was a bargain day. It was a well-known shop, and I noticed that Violet and Val Ingham mentioned the name of the proprietor with respect. So big and successful a shop, where it was possible to offer such extraordinary bargains and yet make

money, seemed to command that feeling for its pioneer. In England I fear we reserve our consideration until he has stopped selling lace edging at threepence three-farthings a packet, and bought a place in the country and restored the parish church; but there seems to be no premium of that kind upon retirement from business in America. You may go on advertising bargain days all your life without any loss to your dignity, and as there is no country to retire into and none of the parish churches need restoring, people naturally do.

Val Ingham and Violet said that here I *would* see a crowd, and Val warned me seriously against certain counters where he seemed to think one would be in personal danger from American ladies anxious to get the very pick of the bargains. I said I was sure they wouldn't hurt a poor foreigner, and Violet mentioned that an unfortunate Frenchwoman had had a steel-pointed parasol poked through the drum of her ear in this very store the week before. So I was a little careful. I skirted the edge of the thickest crowds and kept my eye open for ladies who looked capable of using a parasol in that fashion. I was not ill-used in any way; indeed, I have to acknowledge being treated with care. I was standing in a door and a little woman in a hurry behind me took firm hold of both my elbows and placed me out of her way. She was quite a little woman, in brown, with jet on her bonnet. It was much better than knocking one down. But if all Americans take such a summary way with the obstacles in their path one doesn't wonder that they get on. I saw nothing more violent than this happen to anybody, but there was certainly an extraordinary urgency among the crowd of ladies who surged about the departments

and made little dashes from one counter to another, or rapid expeditions to the elevator. The very spirit of speed seemed to be generated in the feet of these ladies, to mount all through them and come out again, like an electric current, in their quick glances. I could not even think fast enough to compete; two or three articles which I am almost sure I would have bought in the end were snapped up while I was considering them. I could not keep up properly even with Val and Violet, though they were doing their best to lag in my company. I had no way of drawing on my nerve force at such a rate; these ladies spent enough upon a single step to carry me down a street.

"This is really cheap," said Violet. "That is simply dinky-dink," said Val. I do not know which surprised me most, that a daughter of millions should notice the remarkable value in an oxydised silver button-hook marked fifteen cents, or that an athletic young man should point out the charm of alternate black dots and lines on a blouse.

"I don't much care for puce," said I.

"What's puce?" asked Violet. "Something Queen Elizabeth wore?"

"I should call it heliotrope," remarked Mr Ingham. "With that hint of gold in your hair you ought to wear it perfectly."

"It's more than a hint," declared Violet. "It's like the most precious of old Japanese bronze, gold glinting all through it. And I should simply love to see you in puce, or whatever you and Robert Herrick call it."

Of course I bought the blouse, but what struck me about the incident was the curious difference between Violet and Verona in the matter of Val Ingham's little compliment to me. Val was very

pretty with them, he nearly always had one ready, if the occasion fitted; and though everybody knows that such phrases to a married woman have no more significance than blown rose leaves on a breeze, I naturally liked him none the worse for it. But Verona, if she happened to be with us, would either turn her head away and pretend not to hear, or look at me as much as to say, "How can you allow him to do it!" I thought it really rather stupid of her. Violet, on the other hand, seemed perfectly to understand. Verona, as Val Ingham had said a few weeks before, may have been more subtle in her divinations, but I think Violet had the broader intelligence.

CHAPTER XXI

I OBTAINED a tremendous number of bargains, going from one teeming shop to another; in the joy of acquiring them I entirely forgot the few things I really wanted. Violet, in spite of her appreciation of small prices, bought nothing; she declared that she had quite as much as she wanted to do to make up her mind, she had no time whatever for her own. That, I imagine, was only her kind way of putting it; her custom of purchase, I am sure, lay above and beyond bargains. She would never be definite about the prices of her things—they were probably fabulous—but now and then she let fall a French name that sounded very expensive, and once or twice in my most excited moments I caught her looking bored. Violet never showed it, but I believe rich Americans have a kind of contempt for cheapness that one seldom hears in England. “I guess it cost you as much as thirteen cents at Wanamaker’s!” said Verona in decision at a plaid neck-tie Val Ingham had on. “All on this counter, thirty-nine cents!” remarked Val Ingham of a pink cotton shirt Kaye was wearing. “Look here, old man, you shouldn’t go spending all your money at once that way!” Once afterwards, at Burroughs, I jeered Frances about an imitation tortoise-shell comb. “Elevenpence three-farthings, wasn’t it, at William White-

ley's?" "No, indeed!" said she. "It was one and a ha'penny, and if you knew they were to be had at Whiteley's for elevenpence three-farthings, I'd have thanked you to mention it sooner."

It must come of great sophistication, this superiority to the bargains of New York, almost incredible to the stranger. Many of them invented, on the spot, the dainty want they supplied. These were the most irresistible, it was so charming to add another to the long list of requirements with which we divert our longer lives. Every one of them, even the most shop-worn and turned-over, had a quality which one must call distinction, though it is too big a word, a quality of its own which forbade the idea that somewhere put away in boxes there were hundreds of dozens like it. At home we import this quality from Paris, or imagine it expensively in the designing rooms of smart establishments; over there it is translated into cheapness, and is within reach of everybody. Indeed, nobody will look at things that haven't got it. I felt in the shops of New York as if I had bought nothing all my life but longcloth and housemaids' caps, and I quite longed to have Frances with me to educate her taste a little. As Frances, with twenty-five hundred a year to spend, has worn nothing but coats and skirts in the day-time within the memory of man, however, I daresay it would not have been of much use. The coat and skirt has become stereotyped into a principle with Frances, and when that happens nobody can do anything.

I know I did dawdle frightfully. Kaye would not have put up with it for an instant. One could admire by contrast the potential American husband in Mr Valentine Ingham, who would lean

a patient elbow and fix a sympathetic eye upon a notion-counter for ten minutes at a time. Within an hour's drive of Burroughs what wives I could have found for Val Ingham! But, on second thoughts, none of them would have understood him like Verona, before he spoke, or always immediately after, and I couldn't think of a single Omarian among them—I daresay none of them would have answered. And what wives he had at the length of a glance, what a company surged about him, trim and charming creatures, each with her vivid purpose in her eye, hastening gracefully about her business, and taking, I am bound to say, not the slightest notice of him! I positively pitied the youth of the country for his bewilderment in throwing the handkerchief in such a multitude. And they nearly all had interesting faces, any one of them might have been an Omarian. Indeed, I am not sure that some of the young women behind the counters weren't, they did their hair so beautifully and looked so full of ideals. It was the way they did their hair that constituted their chief difference from the same young women of Great Britain. Such persons at home either wear it in untidy wisps or in magnificent frizzled exaggerations of the prevailing fashions; there is no mistaking the type. But I am not sure that I should know a shop girl of New York on Sunday or Bank Holiday if I met her strolling in Central Park, unless she were chewing gum. I noticed that a great many of them did that, even the most thoughtful.

A consuming thirst is abroad in New York which never troubles one in town; it may be the excitement, or it may be the climate. When I complained of it, Mr Valentine Ingham at once took us, of all places in the world, to the nearest chemist's shop. When he asked me what I would

have, I said I thought a little magnesia would be cooling, at which he and Violet and the chemist all laughed together, and Val explained that American drug stores were good for something better than that.

"In this city, it's a pretty unenterprising druggist," said Mr Ingham, "that can't give you a chocolate soda." That is what he and Violet had, chocolate sodas, an hour before lunch! Anxious as I was to add to my American experiences, I was afraid to go so far. I had some delicious, cold, fizzy stuff, which also came out of a silver-plated tap in the counter, and was called orange phosphates, and why it did not make me very ill at that hour of the morning is more than I can imagine—I suppose it was the phosphates. Americans, by the way, are very fond of phosphates; they put them into all sorts of sweet drinks, whether to soothe their nerves or to enable them to take more chocolate sodas I don't know. Val Ingham said it was used freely in porridge by the poor and in puddings by persons of the better class; but I did not always find Mr Ingham reliable in statements of this kind.

We were to lunch with Mr Ham at two. This I understood to be no particular favour on our part, but a great concession on his. None of us represented to Mr Ham any transaction which could be put through at lunch; the cutlets and the time he gave to us would be quite unprofitably consumed. Mr Ham's time at office was one of the few things spoken of respectfully at Bellevue. (Americans are flippant, there is no doubt about that. They never called their late President anything but "Mac," and one of the jokes of the summer was, "What did the horse say when they clipped his tail?—'Remember the

Maine.''' I have described Violet's attitude towards English rank; it was typical. I don't believe you could gather up enough deference in that household to treat a country squire properly.) But, as I say, Mr Ham's time was an exception. It was regarded as a kind of sacred thing, and when he brought home the rare account of an intrusive visitor, one would think the creature had profaned a holy temple and assaulted its high priest. Mr Ham at home, that is detached from the market value of his time, was just a little dried-up man, who loved buckwheat cakes and could not eat them because his digestion was gone. Mr Ham at office was the custodian of his time, a thing he had the power to transmute into dollars and dollars, just shut up with it at a revolving desk in an inside room. Nobody would interfere with this process lightly, it was a kind of thing to be encouraged, a magic to be left to work under the most favourable conditions. At Bellevue they were content to add up the results, and try to invent substitutes for buckwheat cakes which would be just as attractive and which would not increase the acidity of pa's poor stomach.

We had spent the whole morning in elevators, rising and sinking perpetually from floor to floor. We went up again, very far, in search of Mr Ham; he seemed as inaccessible as architects could make him; and while we sat waiting for him in an outer room, I saw through the window other swift ascents and descents, dark against the dazzling white wall of a building higher still. It was only the shadow of smoke from a neighbouring chimney going up and down, but it gave one the dizzy idea that in New York all transit was vertical, and that the point you wanted to attain invariably overhung you somewhere in the

air, a city of Jacks of the Beanstalk. Presently we secured Mr Ham. He came out with his hands in his pockets, and to one of the elbows he thus protruded clung another man, whose attitude, persistent and affectionate, suggested that he hadn't yet got what he wanted. He dropped it, however, the elbow I mean, like a hot coal when Mr Ham very simply looked at his watch. "You can't pull any time on me!" he said, and took himself off. A quaint expression, which meant, I am afraid, that his feelings were rather hurt.

We sank again with Mr Ham, and then rose with him in a higher flight than ever in search of luncheon. We were to have it, at his suggestion, on a roof—I think New Yorkers like to show you how eccentric they *can* be. I asked if it wouldn't be windy, but Mr Ham said he guessed we could keep our seats. As a matter of fact, we were completely sheltered by awnings, above which, I have no doubt, fluttered the American flag, and it was no more than fresh and pleasant. The oddness of it quite took my fancy, doing such an ordinary thing as lunching in a place so extraordinary, a point so superior even to the tall city that stood below, sharp in the sunlight, with its blue harbour on the horizon. The greatest pleasure in life it seems to me is doing things differently; why we go on and on the way we do in England is more than I can conceive.

Mr Ham carefully explained to us in the elevator that this was not a fashionable resort but a "regular down-town place." My heart warmed to the silk hats, so like dear old London, and I noticed that there were about as few ladies as there would be in a City restaurant at lunch-time. The men had the universal City look, the tenseness and the essential sophistication, but

they wore their finance with a difference, a kind of *debonair* that one doesn't see in Leadenhall Street. There were a great many white moustaches and pink chops and prominent waistcoats among them, but nothing in the least uniform in the way they took their places and talked and gave their orders or read the papers. One of them in a beard and a long black coat might have been a Nonconformist minister, another a dandy from the Bois. They all had the look of dealing in money, but their goddess seemed a volatile creature, there was nothing settled in their ways. I suppose being Americans there never will be. And I missed the clerk from among them, at least he was not wearing paper over his cuffs, to save the washing, as he does at home. But perhaps these persons in America cannot afford to lunch at such an elevation.

A great many people looked at Mr Ham as if they recognized him, and you could see by the way he held his head and fiddled with the salt-cellars and things that he was aware of it. He did not seem to resent the public stare or even particularly to dislike it, but his manner was deprecating; he had the air of being rather ashamed of his importance. I have dined in public with only one other notability, our own member for Cobbhamp-ton. How differently he received the respectful glances of persons unknown to him—how he seemed to feel and acknowledge the propriety of them. "Nature," he seemed to say, "has created me for this eminence. It will not be my fault if I do not adorn it." Mr Ham, who was really in his own way even more of a celebrity, looked rather as if he would like to apologize for it, and tell everybody it was not his fault that he was of more consequence than other people. I suppose it is the effect of republican institutions on the con-

science, but I wished he wouldn't—it took away half the pleasure of being seen with him.

I must say for Mr Ham, that he laid himself out to entertain us. I suppose he thought that while he was doing it he might as well be agreeable—there was practically no more money to be lost that way than any other, though it might take a little longer. He pointed out other celebrities, or their relatives, and told stories about them. He quite took the reins into his own hands; he was a great deal more at home than in his country house; we had only to listen. The celebrities were generally people who had made a great deal of money in the profession of alderman or in some other branch of public usefulness, and Mr Ham's smile was a kind of qualified tribute to them. One of the stories was about a person, I think his name was Fisk, and Mr Ham was surprised that I had never heard of him—I had to explain that I lived in the country. Somebody applied to Mr Fisk for a subscription to mend the paling round the parish graveyard, and he refused because, he said, "Nobody who was in could ever get out, and nobody who was out wanted to get in." Somebody else it seemed once asked this same Mr Fisk whether his father would tell a lie for two cents—a most extraordinary interrogation. Mr Fisk said, "Certainly not," which is what one would expect him to say, but it seems he felt compelled to add, "But he might tell three for a quarter." Mr Fisk must have been a very conscientious man; few sons would make such an admission about their father, however true it might have been. That was the kind of story Mr Ham told. Val Ingham found them very funny, and I found them as funny as I could. Violet must have heard most of them before, but she encouraged her

father with much gaiety. It was a little as if Mr Ham were enjoying a holiday which his daughter was indulgently giving him, yet I saw as I never had before how perfect was the understanding between Mr Ham and his daughter. He left a great deal to her, even the ordering of the wines; it was plain that his confidence in her was complete. Some mention of Bobs was made at which I detected a glance between the two that showed them most sympathetic. I was glad to think that there was likely to be no obduracy on the part of the old gentleman, and already I made allowance for some of his little ways as a prospective connection.

We went home by an earlier train than Mr Ham, who had to stay behind to see the man he should have seen at luncheon. We found Kaye, who had started early on an all-day expedition on foot, in order to be well out of the way of Bobs and Violet, newly returned, and extremely cross. Bobs had taken Verona out in the boat for her headache, and it did not improve my husband's temper that we had to wait dinner for them.

CHAPTER XXII

IF I wanted an illustration of how fast the Americans are growing and changing I would not look for it farther than the Ham family. I have mentioned before how difficult it was to see anything of Mr or Mrs Ham, and if I speak of it again it is by way of apology, for it does seem almost discourteous that in writing of their so lavish hospitality a guest should find so little to say about them. The fact was that they and their daughter belonged to different periods, different parties, almost to different classes. The thing that made this only peculiar and saved it from being pathetic was their complete realization of it and satisfied acquiescence in it. They were quite content to be as they were, and quite pleased to have Violet as she was: they were wonderfully unexacting and liberal in their recognition of the difference between her "bringing-up" and theirs, and not in the least jealous of the large share of her that was absorbed by people and interests quite outside their lives. She was travelled and modern, they were provincial and narrow, she had a hundred tastes that they could only pay for without sharing, and they did not mind. I think part of this was due to the real American complacency and self-satisfaction bred of the Declaration of Independence and other early colonial demonstrations, which

you only find in its perfection now in rather middle-aged and old-fashioned people; the younger ones have a wider world and move more diffidently in it. Whatever it was it made them model parents from the point of view of filial convenience. Mrs Ham asserted herself exclusively in the housekeeping, and Mr Ham only if anybody wanted to trample on Jake. But it took us some little time to become accustomed to it, and to realize that between the pleasures of Mr and Mrs Ham and Violet Ham there was a great gulf fixed, which no polite entreaty on our part could possibly bridge. After a while we stopped trying, but it was not, I fear, until Mrs Ham had been seriously annoyed by our importunity. We began presently to be very gay. A leader of society—the Hams were not leaders of society, though Violet, of course, would be when she married—came into the neighbourhood and set everything going, coaching parties, yachting parties, garden parties, dances, picnics. They gave one a delightful opportunity of observing New York manners and New York clothes, and I must say I thought them both much too charming to be wasted on the banks of a somewhat uninteresting river flowing through the wilds of North America. There is no use in saying that New Yorkers of a certain class are more vivid, more witty, and more sympathetic than Londoners of the corresponding class—one must know them at home to understand just what particular quality of vividness and wit and sympathy they have. I rejoiced in it very much, as all foreigners do who have any intelligence at all, but I could no more reproduce it than I could reproduce the scent of a flower or the song of a—well, of a cicada. It is something quite personal and undetachable, connected in some way perhaps with

vast incomes and wide bright spaces and irresponsibility for the government of a country. We have nothing like it in England, where serious duties sit upon serious men even in society, but it is the most delightful of republican products to encounter. Cleverness reserves itself at home for dinners, nobody seems to think it suitable or worth while to be amusing at garden parties; even celebrities walk about in the dullest manner; but over there the talk was as gay and original as the frocks that trailed across the lawns; there were flashes round the refreshment tables and coruscations under the trees. A kind of concentrated essence and flavour about the things that were said made one feel, I must say, dreadfully unsophisticated. Even in town, people have common-place interludes in which they talk about Mr Chamberlain's last indiscretions, or the troubles in Senegambia, or the drop in Consols, and these are restful, because one never is expected to really understand; but it seemed to me that the New Yorkers were always playing round their artificial lakes and grottoes, with ideas and abstractions; as Kaye remarked, there was no let up to it, and I won't say that in the long run we didn't find it a trifle fatiguing. But it carried one along, one felt quite clever too at the time, though afterwards, when one got one's breath as it were, it was difficult to see exactly why.

Mr and Mrs Ham would not be enticed to any of these functions. So far as I could see, Mrs Ham's principal relaxation was to sit in a rocking-chair in a shady corner of the verandah commanding the river, with *The Christian Union* or a bit of plain sewing; and this she preferred to do when we had all gone off somewhere, leaving her in sole possession. If it had not been for Henry Bird I would really hardly feel that I had

made her acquaintance. But Henry Bird wanted a place, Frances mentioned that he did, and the Hams about the same time decided that they wanted a butler. Violet had said that there was never any real repose in a house without a butler, which is quite true when one comes to think of it, women-servants look so constantly prepared to give notice. I fancy she had to say it a good many times before she convinced Mrs Ham, but at last she did convince her, and it was decided finally that it would be best to get one out from home—I mean from England.

“Always import direct,” said Mr Ham, “it saves expense in the end.”

“The sound, old-fashioned article,” said Violet, “cannot be had in New York. It deteriorates in this climate.”

“He couldn’t be more incompetent than Elizabeth,” said Mrs Ham, “if he came from the South Sea Islands.”

After the matter had been fully and thoroughly discussed, I suggested Henry Bird. I waited till then, and did it diffidently, because it is often unsatisfactory enough to have recommended a servant from the next parish, and I trembled at the responsibility involved in getting Henry Bird in a situation on the other side of the Atlantic. But Mrs Ham seemed to think it quite providential.

“It would be such a blessing to know something about him,” said she, “a person coming into the house like that.”

“We should get him with what you dear Britishers call a ‘character,’” said Violet.

“Oh, I couldn’t give Henry Bird a character!” I exclaimed with alarm. “I hardly know anything about him—only that Colonel Maxwell is dead. He lived near us in the country, you know, and Bird has been with him ever since I can

remember—for seven or eight years anyway. The man always looked a good servant, and I never heard anything against him, but whether Colonel Maxwell would have recommended him or not, of course I can't say. He was a bachelor, and not very particular I daresay about his plate—I wish I had noticed when I dined there last; it's so important, isn't it? but, of course, I didn't."

"Never mind," said Violet soothingly, "we'll try and be satisfied with the fact that he lived with Colonel Maxwell seven or eight years and gave no ground for complaint. We would prefer, of course, to hear that Colonel Maxwell had left him a legacy. You couldn't assure us of that?"

"It's quite possible," I said, "but Frances didn't mention it."

"Oh, well, we can ask him when he comes. He is middle-sized, I suppose, thick-set and square-chinned, with rather a painful, reserved expression."

"How in the world did you know?" I exclaimed.

"They all are."

"It sounds very dependable, I must say," put in Mrs Ham.

"If he has whiskers," continued Violet, "they are iron-grey."

"Colonel Maxwell allowed him to wear whiskers and a moustache too, I'm afraid," I said, "but, of course, you could insist on his shaving, if you preferred it."

Mrs Ham and Violet looked at each other.

"Could we insist?" asked Violet; "we fear we could not. It is un-American to dictate to a fellow-citizen how he shall and shall not adorn his face,—even," she added musingly, "a fellow-citizen who brings in hot plates. We are simply shackled by our respect for the brotherhood of man."

"It's quite true," remarked Val Ingham, who had helped Violet materially to bring about the butler; "once he sets foot in America his whiskers are safe."

"If it had to be done," said Mrs Ham, "your pa would have to do it."

"It isn't in my ma," said Violet, with conviction, "that's plain enough."

"It isn't in any of us," Val Ingham declared; "I will assist to overpower Henry Bird in the night and cut off his whiskers, but I will not even remotely hint to him that he is expected to shave."

An idea struck me. "I could write to Frances," I said, "to tell him to shave before he starts. Frances wouldn't mind, I assure you. Then it would be done."

"And irrevocable," said Violet. "Poor Henry Bird! Think of his feelings when he lands and finds that he has been the victim of a monarchical order delivered from republican soil! At his first taste of the sweets of liberty he would grow them again, and then he would look a fright."

"Your proposition, Mrs Kemball," said Val Ingham, "is contrary to the spirit, if not the letter, of our foreign labour legislation. This Government does not permit contracts to be made with aliens before they arrive. Such contracts are not only null and void, but, I believe, they bring the party proposing them within the scope of the law. Henry Bird's contract would not be null and void, because his whiskers would be gone, but his natural rage would be all the greater on that account, and——"

"Oh, I am sure Bird would do nothing of the kind," I said confidently. "He is much too well-behaved a man. But perhaps Mrs Ham had better write to Frances."

That American laugh, which is so often inex-

plicable to foreigners, seized them all, and when it had subsided Mrs Ham closed the discussion.

"No," she said, "I don't seem to care enough about it one way or another. I guess I won't be the one to part them; Henry Bird can come in his whiskers. He'll be so much of a novelty anyhow that I don't expect we shall ever take notice."

That evening Mr Ham joined us in the billiard-room with a slip of paper in his hand. "How will this do?" he said, and read it aloud:—

"'Lucrative situation offered Henry Bird in family—Jacob Ham, firm of Ham and Ham. Three in family, other help kept. Passage paid by first steamer. Kindly hustle.' If you have no objection to put your name to this, Mrs Kemball, and address it to the lady you mentioned, I'll get it off first thing to-morrow morning, and Henry ought to be here in ten days."

"Do you propose to cable?" inquired my husband, with suspended cue. Verona and Bobs were watching the game from the dais. Violet and Val Ingham were criticizing it, mostly with their backs turned, from a French window which gave upon the moonlit lawn.

"Why, yes, it's quicker," Mr Ham replied. "Either we want H. Bird or we do not want him. If we want him, he can't get here any too soon. Besides, ma and I thought it would be pleasanter for him to arrive before you go away. I expect he'll find Americans kind of strange to him, and a familiar face might help him to stay and get accustomed to us."

"I see," I said. It was a little embarrassing. If I signed that telegram Frances would think me quite mad. But I could not very well say so to Mr Ham. Kaye calmly went on with his shots, giving me no assistance. "Send it by all means, Mr Ham," I was obliged to say at last, "but

I hardly think my people will understand it. They—they live in the country, you know." And that wasn't so bad either, considering.

"Well, in wiring for a butler we don't want to make any *very* bad break," said Mr Ham good-humouredly. "He might bring it up to us afterwards."

"*Must* you wire?" I asked. "It seems such a serious step to take, all the way to England just to engage a servant."

"I guess I've got to," replied Mr Ham, "otherwise you see it would have to be done by letter, and I've no reason to expect that my typewriter knows how to hire a butler, especially through people in England who live in the country. It would only lead to more confusion."

"Perhaps it would," I said. "Well, you may get Bird by telegram, if he's not too frightened. But I would mention the wages, I think."

"H'm," said Mr Ham, "I'll give him what's right, of course; but I thought I'd wait and see what he asked. There's no use in offering him more than he's willing to take."

"People of that class are so suspicious, Mr Ham. I'm afraid he wouldn't come unless he knew in advance."

"I'm not going to beat him down any. He can have what he wants."

"Yes, but you can't put that in a telegram. People of that class have such extravagant ideas of what they can ask——"

"Well, see here, Mrs Kemball, you fix it. If you know how to deal with people of that class, it's more than I do. Make any business proposition to Henry Bird that seems to you right, and I'll buzz it off in the morning. Only, as I get away early, you won't have *all* night to think about it," Mr Ham added good-humouredly.

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"Kaye," I said, "what would you give Colonel Maxwell's butler if we were taking him on?"

"Forty a year, at the outside," my husband replied. "I've heard Maxwell call him fair to middling; but he's a frumpish old party, if I remember right."

"Pounds," said Mr Ham; "well, I'll give him sixty. Tell him my offer is twenty-five dollars a month."

"I think it would be better to say so much a year," I said, "it's more usual with butlers."

"Oh, do let us mention it by the year," sighed Mrs Ham, who had joined us, "it sounds so much more permanent. Though I never did such a thing in my life before."

"All right," said Mr Ham, "three hundred a year. Got that down?"

"Three hundred dollars a year," I repeated, writing, "and everything found."

"Everything he *can* find," replied Mr Ham, "so long as it doesn't belong to the family."

They turned round in the window to laugh at this, and Val Ingham explained, much to my relief.

"I see," said Mr Ham, "we have got to do the finding. Well, we'll try. I presume ma will attend to it. She's a pretty good provider."

"This is what I have written," I said: "'Place for Bird with Mr Ham. Sixty pounds, everything found, passage paid. Bird will leave by first mail.' He will take it for granted about the other servants," I added apologetically; "butlers always do."

"Come to think of it, they would," said Mr Ham; "you couldn't expect a butler to make a bed and wash. Well, this will reach Henry Bird despatched from New York at nine to-morrow morning, about seven o'clock on the same day."

"Well no," said I, "if that is when it will reach Cobbhampton. Cobbhampton is seven miles from Babbitts, and Babbitts is four miles from Burroughs, and the Grange, Colonel Maxwell's old place, is three miles beyond Burroughs. That makes fourteen miles it has to go by messenger after it arrives. By the way, there will be an extra charge for that, but of course Frances will pay."

"I will be much obliged," said Mr Ham. "I can send you the amount later, if you will let me know what it is. Don't let your lady friend forget about it."

"Oh, she won't forget about it," said I; "it won't be much, but Frances will remember. And, of course, Bird may happen to be in Cobbhampton, in which case there would be nothing to pay."

"I never calculated," reflected Mr Ham aloud, "on those fourteen miles my wire would have to walk in the course of the day, after crossing the Atlantic before breakfast. It does seem hard."

"I think it's quite *likely* Bird may be in Cobbhampton, Mr Ham." I urged; "I do hope so. It seems a pity to waste——"

"Well, now, don't you worry, Mrs Kemball." Mr Ham replied, smiling broadly, "we're none of us going to be sick with anxiety about the expense of that telegram."

"There's one thing—you might cut it down more," remarked Kaye from the other end of the billiard-table. "Hand it over to me."

"No, sir; no, you don't," interposed our host. "I won't have that wire tampered with at the risk of making it any less intelligible. It's got to be understood in England by people who live in the country."

CHAPTER XXIII

HENRY BIRD arrived just in time, so far as concerned my familiar face. We were to start the very next day for the Adirondack Mountains, Violet and Verona, Bobs and Val Ingham, Kaye and I, there to rejoin the Adamses, who were dying, they wrote, of loneliness at the bosk. They must have been dying of loneliness to ask so many of us at the same time; but they seemed to think that was the only way to get us; they must keep the little party together. This was not exactly the case: Kaye and I would have gone by ourselves, since you cannot eat caramel on the verandah of even the most hospitable American for the whole summer; but we were pleased that the kind Adamses had kept the party together, it was such a friendly party, with so many lines of mutual interest. I wished sometimes that Kaye and I had been in the same just-about-to-become-engaged stage as the others, so that we might all have occupied an equal footing of exquisite uncertainty. Married and settled, we felt superior, but also rather out of it. Six people, however, and three of them wondering precisely what the other three meant, might have produced situations too highly charged, so perhaps we were as well as we were.

Jake took his own buggy to the station to meet Henry Bird. He said, when it was proposed,

that he'd just as soon as not somebody else went, there was nothing wanted at the village, and he didn't know how he was going to leave the job of painting the boat-house. "Well, Jake," said Mrs Ham, "you know well enough that Tom is driving Miss Ham over to Kittley's this morning, and if you think proper to send the mare out with the boy, why you do it, but I won't take the responsibility." At which Jake said he supposed he'd have to go himself then; but when he harnessed up, Mrs Ham noticed and told us that he had taken his own buggy. "Jake's queer," she said. "Now what did he do that for?" None of us could say, but I privately thought I knew, and I would have given something to have occupied an invisible third seat in Jake's buggy on the way home and heard the new butler's first lesson in the social status of the American "man on the place."

I was packing when Bird arrived, but Violet came and said her mother simply wouldn't go down and see him—come up rather, for she was in the kitchen—unless I came with her; so he was received in the breakfast-room by all three of us. "Well, Bird," I said, "so you have come all the way to America!" I could have hugged him, the dear old thing looked so like home, but I contented myself with warmly shaking hands. "Mrs Ham," I went on, "here is Bird at last. I've promised Mrs Ham, Bird, that when you came everything would go smoothly, and she expects a great deal of you."

"How do you do, Bird?" said Mrs Ham. She also shook hands with him, at which he looked somewhat startled, but almost instantly regained his self-possession. Violet, sitting on the arm of the chair, gave him a bright little nod.

"I'm sure I hope to give satisfaction, ma'am. Words in the kitchen, ma'am, if that's what's been the trouble, I don't encourage, ma'am."

"It's more a general slackness that I complain of," communicated Mrs Ham. "It's the corners of the rooms and the handles of the tea-cups, if you understand me."

"Both under-house and scullery maids, ma'am, are a poor dependence."

"I thought in England they were just perfection," exclaimed Mrs Ham. "You might as well sit down, Henry. You'll be worn out."

"Oh, if you'll excuse *me*, ma'am, I couldn't do that," replied poor Bird, turning a scandalized glance upon me. Receiving at the same time a joyful nudge from Violet, who seemed delighted with the whole proceeding, my feelings were a little confused.

"Just as you like," said Mrs Ham appreciatively, and to break the slightly oppressive silence I asked Bird if he had seen any of the people about Burroughs or the Mythe before he left, and how they were all keeping.

"I was over to the Mythe no longer ago than the day before I left the Grange, ma'am, having a small matter of business with John Coke——"

"That's the coachman," I said to Violet.

"Yes'm, and he told me as how I was to report to you the 'osses was in the pink of condition, which I saw for myself, ma'am. I took notice of your little dog too, ma'am."

"Oh, *dear* Whiskey!"

"Yes'm! He's grown quite a bit since'm, and got very knowin'. He's learned he can drive the kitchen cat but not the drawin'-room cat; and the household generally, ma'am, are quite well and send their respects."

"You'll find that we have all the modern

improvements," said Mrs Ham. "Too many and too modern, I sometimes think, for much use."

"Indeed, ma'am! I'll be very careful, ma'am." He paused to give time for an order, but as none came, "Might I ask is your last man here, ma'am, or am I to get the keys from yourself?"

It was a demoralizing moment, though I believe I was the only one who felt routed. Violet, I knew, was on the brink of laughter, and Mrs Ham saw nothing either funny or dis-comforting in the situation.

"There wasn't any last man," she explained. "You are the first, Henry Bird. I've always had hired girls up to now, and that's the reason I'm a grey-haired woman before my time. And there aren't any keys. I've never been accustomed to lock anything up except the house, and that locks itself nowadays."

"Not the butler's pantry, ma'am?"

"There isn't any butler's pantry, but you'll find a real comfort in the new refrigerator."

Bird looked slightly dazed, but took definite hold of one idea.

"If I'm to be responsible for the cellar, ma'am, I'd beg to ask for the key," he said respectfully but firmly.

"Well, I don't know what for. There isn't one thing in the cellar but the furnace, and I don't expect Jake would want anyone interfering with that."

"Not the wine, ma'am?"

"Why, no, we don't stock wine. We just get it in as we need it."

I saw the first expression of disapproval dawn upon Bird's countenance. He looked at me with what my guilty conscience took to be reproach. I suppose he never in his most oppressive night-

mares saw himself dissociated with a wine-cellar before—it must have made him in his own eyes logically impossible. “And—and the plate, ma’am,” he altered; “do I rightly understand that there ain’t a key to the plate-chest?”

“Well, you see,” Mrs Ham explained, “we only use electro in the country. All our real silver is in Mr Ham’s safe in New York.”

“I see, ma’am,” said Bird. Then for some inexplicable reason he added dolefully, “Shall I be expected to attend chapel, ma’am?”

That was too much for Violet. Her laugh rang out, infecting us all and clearing the situation in an instant.

“No, Henry,” she said, “there’s no compulsion, you can attend anything you like. We haven’t got any wine-cellar or any plate-chest, and if you noticed as you came through the hall, we haven’t any suits of armour either and our family portraits are all photographs. You’ll have to use the same pantry as the rest of us do and get along as my mother says with a share of the refrigerator. You’re quite as new an institution to us as we are to you, but you needn’t be afraid you won’t get a chance to make yourself awfully useful. You don’t seem to drop your h’s—that’s disappointing—but otherwise you come, so far, quite up to our expectations. I think the express cart has come; you had better go now and see about your baggage.”

Miss Ham got through this rigmarole with commendable gravity, and I could see her rising in Henry Bird’s estimation as it proceeded, but once that much puzzled man had well left the room she fell helplessly over the arm of her chair and incidentally into the seat of it. “Oh, isn’t he too *beautiful!*” she cried, “with his kitchen cats and his drawing-room cats! Isn’t he just *like* them!

And to think that we've lured him across the ocean, and to-morrow he'll bring in the waffles! Oh, Henry Bird, you've given me such a pain!"

"I don't think you need have been in such a hurry getting rid of him," complained Mrs Ham; "I was just beginning to feel a little at home with him."

"When you're quite at home, mum dear, maybe you'll decide what he is to be called," sighed the exhausted Violet; "we've addressed him as 'Bird,' 'Henry,' and 'Henry Bird'; if he tries to measure the cordiality we mean to imply he must be rather puzzled, poor man."

"I like Henry best—it's more like Jake," Mrs Ham returned, thoughtfully, "but Bird seems to be what he's accustomed to. We'll leave pa to settle it. He looks to me," she went on, "like that new gas range we got last week—calculated to be a great comfort once you learn how it is worked."

The door opened and the haughty head of the kitchen-maid appeared upon our counsels. American servants have a perfectly unendurable way of sticking their heads in at the door, offering their intelligence only, as it were, for orders and reserving the rest of their bodies for their own convenience. "Mis' Ham," she said, "that Mr Bird asks for beer with his lunch. When I offered him tea he got the regular hump. He said he hoped he wasn't going beyond his rights, but unless there was some good and sufficient reason he'd trouble me for beer. He acted grumpy I must say. Am I to open that new Minneapolis lager or the old kind?"

Mrs Ham looked more taken aback than I ever saw her. "Beer!" she ejaculated, "I've never given out beer in the kitchen in my life. Has he got any right to ask for beer?"

I felt obliged on behalf of Henry Bird to remind

Mrs Ham of her responsibilities. "I think Mr Ham cabled everything found," I said.

"Everything that is reasonable and proper!" cried Mrs Ham; "but beer! I do think Henry Bird has got a nerve!"

"Doesn't Jake get it?" I asked.

"Mercy no! Jake's total abstinence. If I happen to be making raspberry vinegar or lemon syrup I may send a bottle over to Mis' Elwood with my compliments, but there it begins and ends. Do you give beer?" Mrs Ham demanded.

"There's usually a keg going for the kitchen. It's supposed to last so long, you know. I make a tremendous fuss if it doesn't," I added virtuously.

"It isn't that I'd mind the cost, but I must say it does seem to me unprincipled," propounded Mrs Ham; "I don't like offering it every day on the table, much less letting the hired help have the run of it."

The maid's head again appeared at the door, reminding us that while we discussed the ethics of the situation, Henry Bird remained thirsty.

"Lizzie," said Mrs Ham, "you can tell him that alcoholic beer I cannot and will not take the responsibility of giving him, at all events until I have had time to speak to pa. But there's some ginger beer on ice, for I put it there with my own hands; he can have a bottle of that."

Lizzie disappeared on her non-alcoholic errand, and Mrs Ham repeated, with a sigh of relief, that pa would have to decide. "I never thought of a problem like that," she said, "but one thing I can say, and that is, that beer or no beer, Henry Bird won't have any fault to find with his lunch, for I saw to it myself."

We left next morning, and I was too excited by the prospect of our first long railway journey

in America to share much of the general interest that surrounded Henry Bird like an atmosphere and followed him wherever he went. I remember the view of his solicitous back at the sideboard carving the cold joint, and Mrs Ham's uneasiness at seeing the cold joint appear at breakfast at all, and especially on the sideboard. And I remember feeling rather glad that I should escape the complications that would be certain to arise over the division of labour between my hostess and her butler, which was "mean" of me, as they say over there, considering what a large share I had in bringing those complications about. But I am sure, on the whole, it was more satisfactory that the contest should take place in an empty house.

CHAPTER XXIV

WE were off and away to the Adirondacks, mountains which I rejoiced to think I could pronounce correctly in future, and set other people right about as well; the Indian nomenclature of North America causes the most painful struggles of England. We were making a *détour* to give Bobs, Kaye, and me the opportunity of seeing Niagara Falls. It was a pity, the others said, who were in a hurry to get to the mountains, that we could not see "the Falls" from "the Bridge" without getting out of the train at all, as it always slowed down in crossing; but it was generally conceded that this was impossible; we would have to get off the train and go and look at them, and stay all night in a hotel. This did not strike us as being too much to do for Niagara, but then we were persons of small but determined leisure; we hated looking at anything from car windows; for one thing, so far as American car windows were concerned, there were always too many cinders in your eye. Kaye and I were to have a fortnight with the Adamses, and then go on through a little bit of Canada, and sail from Quebec. We hoped Bobs would come with us, leaving everything happily settled up; but Kaye could get nothing out of him: he was obstinately indefinite about his plans. Privately—that is, of course, in consultation with Kaye (how private are the plans of any married woman!)—I hoped to see both affairs brought to their proper conclusion before we left; it was a little ridiculous

the way they had been dragging along. I don't quite like to say that Violet flirted with our cousin, Lord Robert Walden, but she certainly trifled with him; and there is a point, as I came very near telling him once or twice, beyond which an Englishman, especially an Englishman of title, should not allow himself to be trifled with. But Bobs exhibited a kind of base content with this treatment; he seemed quite happy, representing the British lion, to have alternate sticks and buns poked at him, an illustration, I often thought, of how much men will suffer if they are sufficiently in love. At Kaye's advice he did take one step—he showed himself rather more plainly appreciative of the charms of Verona Daly. That is precisely the kind of old-fashioned plan that would occur to a man—distinctly early Victorian, if not older; but I do not think the jealousy of modern woman is to be aroused by so transparent a device. I should never have recommended it to be tried upon Violet Ham, but, as I have said before, Lord Robert Walden did not honour me with his confidence.

I had great expectations, however, of the next fortnight. It looked pretty definite, our all going off together in that very charming but quite unnecessary way. Verona was obliged to come, of course; but why should Val Ingham, unless he had, at the bottom of his heart, a great deal more encouragement than he ever mentioned? Bobs could hardly in decency refuse—he had been long enough, in all conscience, at Bellevue; but Violet had a dozen other invitations—to Newport, to Bar Harbour, to the Saguenay. Why should she have elected for the Adamses and the Adirondacks and the further society of a British nobleman, who had made it plain enough that he wanted to marry her, unless she intended in the long-run to accede to his desire?

We were travelling by the Empire State Ex-

press: no other train was even considered by the Ham family in arranging our movements. No Bradshaw was consulted; somebody looked in a newspaper for the advertised starting of the Empire State—that was the train for us. I gathered that it would be a stupid thing to go oneself, and a rather unpatriotic thing to send foreigners by any other, so long as the Empire State was available; though a company's enterprise, it was in a manner a national institution—a sample, as Mr Ham said, of what Americans could do in the way of transportation. I remembered little Mrs Moss on the steamer coming over, and her mysterious reference, and smile with superiority over the uninitiated person I was then, sailing up to the shore of this immense America. I quite wished, now that I knew a little about her country, to meet Mrs Moss again; she would have found me, I hoped, so much more intelligent.

One could certainly cry out that it was beautiful, before it started, this pride of the transporting American. We travelled "drawing-room" class, a frightful extravagance; but none of the others seemed to dream of anything else, and we could not be in a churlish minority. One could hardly imagine such an expensive interior devoted to public use—all pale yellow wood carved in exquisite panels, and deep arm-chairs luxuriously upholstered in rich stuffs, and an inlaid floor partly covered with Eastern-looking carpet into which one's foot sank half an inch. A scrap of lace would have turned it into a boudoir, a pipe or two into a smoking-room in the house of a millionaire. I noticed with interest how Violet and Verona and young Ingham and all the Americans sank with indifference into their places in this scale of public splendour; it was, of course, nothing wonderful to them, but they seemed designed in some special

way to fit into the scenic effect of it; a couple of dozen English people in those chairs would have struck a horrid false note—their insular prejudices, in a decorative sense, would have screamed aloud. I think Americans like to look at each other; and no wonder—such toilettes and such backgrounds; for although there were little compartments at one end of the car, where one could be private, nobody occupied them; the preference was plainly to sit in rows, each travelling American taking in, swinging round in his or her pivotal chair, the picture of the other travelling Americans. It was certainly a little stuffy; the beautiful carpets and cushions were not only on the floors and the furniture, but to some extent in the air, mixed with a highly refined but palpable smell of varnish. Kaye tried one of the windows, but found it disinclined to move—it may or may not have been movable, but it plainly had not the habit; and Verona remarked, with slight displeasure, that loads of air came through the ventilators in the roof—we would see when we started. Loads of light and landscape certainly came through the windows, they were so big and so crystalline, almost producing the illusion that air came too. And as our fellow-travellers rustled into their sumptuous seats, separate delicate odours of expensive essences and soaps exhaled from them and floated past. Altogether it was no common-place travelling, but a dream of transport in select company. It seemed even more like that when, as we moved out of the station, a train-boy in livery and civility, real civility, although an American train-boy, came through and offered each of us three or four new novels, and a catalogue to choose more from, for our free profit, our unpaying amusement during the journey. This was really astonishing; it gave one a feeling of being handsomely treated, with

the embarrassment of having no one to thank—one could not lavish gratitude upon the train-boy. I read, I remember, some charming stories of secluded American regions by a lady, a delightful lady, Mrs Rebecca Harding Davis, who lived in Philadelphia. The secluded regions, under her presentation, were attractive, but what I felt was that I should like to go to Philadelphia.

I don't know whether it is safe to say that the Empire State train is the fastest thing in the States—it is impossible to gather, from one's mere feelings, how it compares with express elevators—but presently it began to go terribly fast. Bobs leaned over to assure me, above the roar, that I had travelled just as many miles an hour in the Scotch Express.

"I never realized it," I shouted.

"No; it's less noticeable, on account of the superiority of our road-beds."

"The what of our road-beds?"

"The superiority."

"The *what*?"

"*The superiority*," bawled poor Bobs. He was facing Violet and Verona, and talking across the aisle to me. I saw them exchange pitying glances, but no argument arose. None could, very well; we were tearing along with such a roar, such a rattle and swaying and creaking and lurching, such tremendous and undeniable speed. The other people in the train looked happy and satisfied. Whatever Bobs may say—and he and Kaye said a number of things later in private—about road-beds in the United States, I am sure that Americans do not use this kind because it is cheap, but because it gives the greatest effect and impression of speed. If you like a thing very much, you like not only to get it, but to be aware that you get it; and the American road-bed, I am sure, offers a larger amount of palpable hurry than any other for the money.

Oh, it was going altogether too fast—it was lurching too much, the fields outside whirled in too dizzy a vision. The window shades swung in from the glass, a hat bounded out of its rack. Kaye had my travelling-bag. I got up to ask him to get out the Eau de Cologne, staggered two steps, and fell back into my seat. My husband reading my signs, brought the bag; but inadvertently, and entirely owing to the motion of the train, hit a stout gentleman severely over the head with it. The stout gentleman took it, I must say, very well—quite as a joke; Kaye was the more annoyed of the two. As he made his uncertain way back to his seat, Val Ingham greeted him with the smile of a person who makes a triumphant experiment—now we were testing, with our powers of equilibrium, what could be done in travelling by rail in America. “New to you, this sort of thing,” he remarked; and Kaye, sitting down heavily, responded, “Entirely.”

In spite of Verona’s ventilators, it grew hotter and hotter; the delicate scents thickened and concentrated and weighed upon the air, where they mingled with a vile smell of coal gas from the engine. Our expensive interior was invaded by cinders, dust poured into it through the sealed windows, dust rose up from the heels of the train-boy treading the deep piled carpet, dust and cinders lay thick together on the plush upholstery of the arms of the chairs. Plush under dust and cinders in a moist hot drawing-room car attached to a bolting engine is not pleasant to rest the hand upon; why does no public-spirited American write to the papers and ask for linen or leather? On we swept. I began to have feelings which I must be excused from describing, though I could easily do it, for I saw them plainly reflected in the faces of several ladies who made their way one after the

other toward the end of the car. When in the ruthless course of time and the train I followed them, one or two were extended upon the sofas behind the curtains of the private coupés, compulsorily retired for the moment from the society they so undeniably adorned at the beginning of the journey. There is a word for their emergency, they were all "car-sick," *we* were all car-sick—why should I hesitate, so long after, to include myself? It is one of the things the American public puts up with, one of the ways in which it earns its enormous reputation for good-nature. I thought as I sat there, car-sick in all that sticky splendour, that this reputation was well deserved. The others seemed happy and unconcerned—all but Kaye. I knew how my husband felt from his appearance, as of course every married woman does, but I could not look at him long—he rocked about so. Val Ingham was trying to cheer him up.

"I meant to have told you, if you were in a hurry this morning, not to bother shaving," said Val Ingham. "You can get a shave on board this train."

"Thanks," replied Kaye. "Rather be excused."

"Could have said you'd done it, you know—been shaved on a train going sixty miles an hour; didn't get a scratch. Something to say, old man."

"Don't know why I should be an ass for the sake of explaining that I am one," returned my husband ungraciously.

"Not such an ass, you know, old chap, if it meant catching the train. You can get a bath too."

"I'd considerably rather go dirty."

"Shower-bath, I *think*—hot and cold. Massage to order."

"Chiropodist, I suppose, in the next carriage—manicurist by appointment?"

"Have them next year, old man, just as soon as the demand justifies it; we don't go in for the unnecessary luxuries. Tell you one thing—got any pressing correspondence to attend to?"

"Yes," said Kaye; "letter to a female cousin."

Val Ingham looked disappointed. "No almighty rush about that," he said.

"You don't know her."

"Well, I was going to say if it was *business*—there's a stenographer and typist on board, regular feature, ordinary New York charges. But you'd be glad to get a female cousin off your hand. Dictate it. My dear chap, you've got no enterprise. If the American public were like you, this train wouldn't run two trips."

"It would not," groaned Kaye. "You can't send your female relatives typewritten letters. I should never have a chance to send a second to Frances Walden."

"She must be very particular."

"She is. Where's the piano?"

"In the dining-car," replied Val Ingham imperturbably. "Paderewski always travels by this train to get a chance to practise."

"At this point Violet and Verona and Bobs got up. "We," they announced, "are going to the observation car in the rear—will you come?"

Val Ingham would, with pleasure, but we two Kemballs sat rooted in our misery. Violet urged that we would obtain a better idea there of the way we were getting over the ground, but we were content with the idea we had. The other four went into the observation car, and stayed there until we arrived at Suspension Bridge. I hoped everything was going on as it should, but I temporarily quite lost interest in the matter; I should have been unable to look on intelligently, even in an observation car.

CHAPTER XXV

WE have the warmest and most grateful feelings toward Americans, and I do not wish to dwell upon the treatment our luggage received, to the exclusion of everything else, as so many English people do, especially as the recollection of it even now rouses in one a kind of annihilating rage which is not a pretty sentiment. But two burst locks and a top completely smashed in—it was my new dress-baskets from the stores—cannot be passed over in silence. There seemed to be among the porters an honourable competition as to how far they could fling the boxes, and how accurately they could place them upon their corners. Perhaps if one were a porter oneself, and were asked to lift the monstrous great clamped trunks the Americans carry about, one would have felt the same animosity towards them; but to display it toward cabin luggage and cane baskets and leather portman-teaux was an act of malignity which had no excuse. Kaye, with his foolish insular idea of bringing somebody to justice, found what they call the “baggage-master,” a muscular red-faced thing in his shirt-sleeves, who might have been chosen by election for his skill in damaging the possessions of the travelling public. He put his fingers in the arm-holes of his waistcoat and looked at our boxes. Then he spat. Then he turned to a subordinate. “Looks like some of Tom M’Ginnis’s work here,” he said to the subordinate, who nodded.

“That’s what y’ get,” he said to Kaye, “for trustin’ yer baggage to a man like Tom M’Ginnis.” Kaye was speechless, and perhaps it was as well; but he seldom tells the story to this day without

adding—"That baggage-master made me a convert to lynch law."

This incident did not occur at Niagara Falls, but it occurred, and I thought it might go in here, as Kaye insists that it should not be omitted, and we are travelling by rail only in these chapters. The little town of Niagara, on the contrary, spread around us, oh, so peacefully after the Empire State Express had gone roaring on its way. I don't know precisely what I expected of Niagara, but "thunderous sound" was the principal thing, and a good deal of fashion and gaiety, smart shops, and villas and carriages. I suppose one thought of so world-renowned a place as at least a local summer resort of some brilliancy and importance. How different it was; the country fields, with their "snake" fences and ragged corners of raspberry-bushes and meadow-sweet and golden-rod, crept close to the station, where there was presently nothing and nobody but ourselves and our luggage and one countrified sticky little girl in white stockings. The road rambled away, bordered by weedy grass and wooden "side-walks," and white frame cottages with green shutters sat sleepily on either side in bits of garden where pink and white peonies were blooming. It was so quiet that one heard a cock crow and a woman beating a carpet. I could have wept at the peace of it but one does not give way to emotions like that; I got into a cab with the rest and drove to the hotel. On the way we passed a tram, but it did not disturb us—it was waiting for an old lady who was still some distance away, and there were only two other people in it. Another illusion was shattered when we were put down at our destination. The Niagara cabman no longer exists as the brigand of my imagination. We had very little to pay; I don't remember what, but very little.

We chose our hotel at random—tossed coppers for it, and it turned out not to be one of the big ones. With its shady lawn and its plaster urns of gay geraniums and its broad verandah it might have been a comfortable private house. People, who looked on friendly terms with each other and very much at home, were sitting on the verandah in painted rocking-chairs, reading newspapers—two or three men and the inevitable little, middle-aged, tidy, bright American woman with white hair, who glanced shrewdly up at us as we passed in. On the gravel path a youth was practising riding the bicycle, and two young girls, bare-headed, strolled arm-in-arm on the side-walk—between it and the lawn there was no wall or paling. All was serene and pleasant and relaxed, and a public-spirited lady opposite was watering the road between with her garden-hose, making a grateful coolness. We seemed to be a little surprise, so many of us, walking in; there was some delay about our rooms. “Might I ask,” said the proprietor to Bobs, “who recommended you to this hotel?”—“The President of the United States,” said Bobs gravely, alluding to the “heads or tails” of the cent which decided our coming; but he didn’t score much. The man stared for an instant, and then, “Oh yes,” he said, “he always stops here.” It is foolish for an Englishman to try to get ahead of a Yankee in any such way as that.

Late dinner they didn’t provide, but tea we could have immediately. “Tea!” exclaimed Lord Robert Walden, crestfallen. “But we’ve had nothing since lunch—have we got to go to bed on tea.”

“Cheer up, old chap,” said Val; “it won’t be any thin bread-and-butter business, you’ll see;” and it wasn’t. It was cold ham and chicken and pickles and hot creamed potatoes; also the flakiest fresh biscuits—those round light scones which are

not biscuits at all; also that delicious jam-sandwich kind of cake that nobody but the Americans really know how to make; also peaches and cream. Nothing to complain of, one would verily think; and yet my belongings, Kaye and Bob Walden, grumbled till I was heartily ashamed of them. They wanted a joint and beer; and in the end they got it, cold, and supped since they could not dine; but I chose the American, or better part, with tea, and never told the dreams I had after it.

Bobs and Kaye took their pipes out into the verandah. Verona went promptly to bed. Violet would not wait till the morning for her first glimpse of the Cataract, but must needs hail a vehicle and start forthwith. I was much too tired to go with her, and Bobs and Kaye were as lazy as might be expected after the cold joint and beer; but Val, whose politeness never failed, prayed instantly to be her cavalier.

"Oh, yes," said Violet, "you can come if you like; but mind, not a single attempt at originality."

It amused me sometimes, privately, the way she would sit upon Verona's property—she really was not in a position to do just as she liked with Val Ingham.

When we went out, the proprietor was sitting in one of the painted rocking chairs reading war telegrams aloud out of the *Buffalo Express*. It was important news of one of the Philippine victories, and we listened with the rest. When he had finished, the proprietor folded the paper and handed it to Kaye.

"I don't know where your sympathies are," he said, "but maybe you'd like to see what's going on."

"My sympathies are right here," said my husband, who was picking up Americanisms fast; and as Bobs and I looked over his shoulder at the exciting head-lines, I waylaid one or two glances,

approving and fraternal, from the other occupants of the verandah.

How pleasant it was on that quiet verandah, what a sense of hospitable retreat behind the grass and geraniums, in view of the earthly road, where now and again came the long free trot of a good horse in a light buggy, driven as likely as not by a man in his shirt-sleeves, with a straw hat on the back of his head, holding between his teeth the calm cigar of evening leisure. Dear horses of America, what happy beasts you are! No galled necks or swollen fetlocks; no ribs showing, heads hanging, or feet outplanted for greater ease; none of these ills are yours. You live in a country where there is still plenty for a horse to eat, and not too much for a horse to do. You can't make money, but every other benefit of the American lot is yours; and you go in your airy harness, taking your light traps along, as if you knew it. Instinctively one feels warmly toward Americans when one sees their horses—not the expensive carriage animal, but every man's horse, the horse of the livery and express cart and the evening buggy. Thinking, as we watched them, how shockingly the Spaniards treated theirs, I, for one, could feel only one sentiment about the war.

The lady who sprinkled the road from her garden had disappeared, but a very lovely white clematis over her window remained. It shone like clustered stars in the twilight, and I exclaimed upon it to the proprietor.

"Yes," he said, "that's a fine plant; but you can't anything like see it from here. It would be worth your while to go over and look at it."

"But it's a private house," I said.

"Well, yes, it is a private house. Mrs Pritchett lives there. She's a widow, pretty well off. But I don't know as anything pleases Mrs Pritchett so

much as to have folks go in and admire her flowers. I believe she took down her fence a-purpose."

"Walk across her lawn!" I exclaimed. "I wouldn't dare."

"Why, now, there's nothing to be scared of. Look here, I'll take you over myself if you really want to."

I didn't like to refuse so cordial an offer, and the proprietor and I made our way across to the beautiful creeper, which was more radiant than ever at close quarters, though I was in too much trepidation to stay more than half a minute.

"There's Mrs Pritchett at the window now," remarked the proprietor, as we retraced our steps. "I'm real glad she didn't miss us."

Kaye and Bobs sat late on the verandah smoking that night—so that Kaye had to undertake to lock the front door and enable the proprietor to go to bed. Kaye had a serious talk with Bobs, from what I could gather afterwards. His function as adviser had been allowed to lapse for some time. My husband is never a very communicative person, but I know that for weeks he had had absolutely nothing to tell me. Once an adviser always an adviser though, and he had not, of course, the least difficulty in bringing the matter up. He was really anxious—we both were.

"I suppose," said Kaye to Bobs, when I was gone, "you made it all right with your future pa-in-law before we left?"

"Can't say I did," said Lord Robert, with would-be nonchalance as he knocked his pipe against his heel.

"Meant to, didn't you?"

"Oh, it's no use, in this country, until you're square with the girl. Girl first, you see, over here. And that's as it should be too," added Bobs.

"H'm," said Kaye, "yes. When the chap's an American. But you're not an American."

"I've been doing all I know to act like one."

"Yes; but look here, old chap, I've come to the conclusion that little game of yours isn't likely to be understood. Pa Ham will expect you to act like an Englishman. Maybe that's what's queering the whole pitch."

Bobs apparently had no reply for this, and there was silence for several whiffs and some slight restraint.

"If it's got to be like that," he said at last, without enthusiasm, "might as well go a step further and arrange through a third party, Continental style. You might have done it for me; hanged if I wouldn't have preferred it. That little old stick of a Ham paralyzes me, as they say over here. Wish I'd thought of it in time."

"He doesn't paralyze me," remarked Kaye; "but then I don't want either his ducats or his daughter. I'd have done it for you like a shot, if you'd asked me. I want to see the thing come off, both for your sake and the family's. There's a lot of coin, and she's a nice girl."

"Nice girl—oh yes," responded Bobs. "Confound these Yankee matches; there isn't a light in a blooming dozen of 'em. As you say, it's a pity it's too late."

"Wouldn't like me to write?" suggested Kaye.

"No, no; I think not. Writing's always a mistake. No, as you say, the opportunity's gone. I'll just have to——"

"Keep up the siege?"

Lord Robert rose and stretched himself. "I suppose there's nothing else to do," he said; his words were mixed up with a yawn. "I'm afraid," he added, as they went indoors, "that beastly train was too much for the ladies. Miss Daly's quite knocked up."

CHAPTER XXVI

NEXT morning we visited, of course, the Cataract and the Park, and those beautiful little islands that seem caught on the brink and not yet pushed over, and the whirlpool, and all the other great and wonderful exhibitions of nature in this place. It is curious that, in looking back upon the wonders of the world that we have travelled far to see, it is not the sublimity itself that we want to write about, but the tiny human interest clinging to the verge. Is this because we more than suspect that we have no words to deal with such marvels, or is it because they produce in us one shock of feeling and after that are void, barren of suggestion, and as a theme for common people to dwell on—dare I say it!—a little boring? We saw the Falls of Niagara, fell into the trance they evoke, were stupefied, awed, and overcome, but one should be John Milton, or an organ, to describe them, and I am only a young married lady living in Sussex. My mind turns more readily, therefore, to the beaded moccasins they sell you in the place where the lift lets you down to see the whirlpool—the single thing made by Indians that I saw in the continent that once belonged to them—excellent bathroom slippers. At Schaffhausen, I remember, Kaye bought me a walking-stick with a dear brown bear climbing up it; but that was less useful. And I am very

glad that the thunder of the Falls has not obliterated in my memory the voice of the man opposite Kaye at the breakfast-table. He began a conversation with us in such a curious way; I imagine he was a regular boarder, and so felt that he had the advantage of transient persons like ourselves.

"I understand," he said, so suddenly that it made me jump, "that there are eleven hundred and seventy-two persons living, descendants of Mary Stuart, to whom six hundred and seventeen had a better claim to the English Crown than Queen Victoria. Is that so?"

What were we to say! None of us knew, none of us had an idea. If he had thrown a poached egg at us, we should not have been more dumbfounded. Kaye was the first to recover his presence of mind.

"I have no knowledge of Jacobite statistics," he said.

"Got no use for 'em over there, eh? Well, it's funny how I generally manage to ask an Englishman a question he can't answer. Been long in the United States?"

"About three months."

"That's long enough for a good look round. Well, sir, now you've seen popular government, what do you think of legislation by the upper classes only, which I understand is your system?"

"I wish it were," replied my husband. "The member for our place is a bounder. Brings his own cigars with him when he dines with you."

"That's the chap, isn't it, that wants to marry his deceased wife's sister?" put in Bobs languidly.

"I know him. Awful brute."

"Why in Sam Hill shouldn't he?" exclaimed the man. "But that's not saying what you think of your system of government now you've seen ours," he added shrewdly.

"I think rather more of it than I did," said

Kaye. "Thanks for the mustard, Ingham. We're pretty bad, but I see we're not so bad as we might be. We're still a little particular about the men we give the job to. A lot of little things come up in Parliament one way and another that we like to have properly looked after, and we'd hate to see a chap making money there. No, the man in the street isn't good enough to spend our taxes for us yet; and the wonder to me is," concluded Kaye, twisting his moustache in a manner of which I felt extremely proud, "that you put up with him over here as you do."

"The theory of the American constitution is, sir, that one man is as good for that purpose as another."

"I've been noticing," said Kaye, "how it works out."

"You have only to look at the country, sir."

"A wonderful country," remarked my husband, "in spite of everything."

"On that principle," continued the man opposite, "we fill our civil service, our consular and diplomatic agencies."

"We do, the Lord help us!" put in Violet Ham; at which Verona cast upon her a glance of indignation, and Val Ingham gave her a sympathetic smile. "Shall we get our hats?" she said to Verona; and we all got up. I had breakfasted in mine, and I followed Kaye out to the verandah. So did the man opposite; and while we waited for the others, he began again.

"I understand, sir, from what you said last night, that you were pretty favourably impressed with this country—what you'd seen of it. Think I heard you kind of admirin' the way our Jackies fixed up things in Manila?"

"Favourably impressed! I should think so. You've done things in mechanics I wouldn't have

believed of the devil," replied my husband candidly; "and as to this campaign in Cuba and the Philippines, I'm proud of it."

"You're proud of it," repeated the man no longer opposite. "May I ask if I've been mistaken in supposing you're an Englishman?"

"You have not."

"Going to settle in this country?" "No."

"Married to an American lady?"

"No!" I cried, laughing. "I'm just as English as he is."

"Then I'm blamed if I can see why you should be proud of it."

"Well," said Kaye, "I'm not proud of it at all, if that makes it any clearer. That official report from the Admiral in command who wired that he had the pleasure of making the American nation a Fourth of July present of the Spanish fleet, for instance, I should say, was the most indecent contribution ever made to Blue Books in the English language. I was ashamed of that."

"Oh, now you're talking through your hat! And what's more, I don't see you've got any call to express feelings about it one way or another."

"You asked me," said Kaye.

"I asked for an opinion," retorted the Yankee.

"Got you there, dear," I murmured at my husband's elbow.

Kaye was picking out a cigar from a box of Val Ingham's, and did not reply until he had made a careful selection. Deliberation is a leading characteristic of Kaye's.

"Sorry if you don't like it," he said, "but we've got rather a strong feeling about Americans in England—family feeling. You come of the old stock, you see; in the eyes of the world we're originally responsible for you; we can't help being more or less gratified about that, you know. I

expect the Dutchies are fairly proud of the Boers though they've degenerated in some respects, while you've improved—in some respects."

"You've got a cold nerve," said the man, now in the rocking-chair.

"By all the laws of nature," continued Kaye—"These are rattling good Havanas. They belong to another man, but I guess I can offer you one. No?—By all the laws of nature you belong to us, though you happen to prefer a different domestic arrangement——"

"Which has been going on for a century and a quarter, and turning out a new race right along."

"Oh no. What's a hundred and twenty-five years? With constant immigration and communication. You can't get away from us so soon as that," declared my husband.

"Excuse me, sir," replied the American resolutely. "Queen Victoria was no grandma of mine."

"And the long and the short of it is," Kaye went on, "that you can't do a single thing, good or bad, that doesn't reflect in a manner upon us. Just as we can't do a single thing, good or bad, that doesn't reflect in a manner upon you. England is your grandma, if ever you ever had one—Nelson's your grandpa anyway, the likeness is perfectly ridiculous."

Something in this idea seemed to please the American better, for his laugh, though rather unwilling, was quite friendly.

"Why, sure," he said, "if you've a mind to look at it that way. But it about uses me up to hear an Englishman say so."

He took his leave, to catch the train for Buffalo; and when he had gone, I asked my husband how soon he was going to claim the United States as the most autonomous of the various parts of the

Empire. I also assured him that during the whole of the conversation I have reported, he talked just like an American, which anyone who has travelled in the States would admit, I think.

Next day we went on to the Adirondacks—not by the Empire State. Our party was divided equally to a hair upon that; but Violet's section gracefully conceded the point to our unprogressiveness. Into the wild sweet country of the Adirondacks we climbed—a long slow climb from the Great Lake Level, with a train-load of people going to shoot and fish and golf there. As we climbed, hills began to lift themselves in the distance, low ridges that grew higher and bluer; rocks and fir-trees came close to the line, and now and then a torrent, and now and then a little quiet lake smiling in the evening light. The sweetest breath I have ever drawn came to me through the open windows, an air soft and buoyant and caressing, a celestial air. We passed Turanac; and one thought of Stevenson, with an acuter sadness that he should have fought and not prevailed even here. And there at six o'clock, at the little wooden station of Massauqua, were the dear welcoming Adamses saying they thought they never should see us again, and other things calculated, with the nectar of that air, to make one as happy as it is possible to feel on earth.

We had a ten mile drive through the woods, woods that might be lonely if they were not so full of their own friendliness and sweetness—oh, the dryads are good company there, bursting with unwritten poems and admirable quaint sayings. Once a deer tossed his antlers in the distance, and raspberry bushes, thick with the wild red fruit, lined the roads on both sides all the way. I put my hand out from the break and gathered some as they swished past—half a dozen on a stalk,

sweet, delicious. We came to a fir-fringed lake dimpling in a very coquetry of silence; and here the road divided, leading round one side to the bosk, and round the other to a big hotel, where we could see a hundred lights and hear a band. Mr Adams explained with some pride that the bosk was there before the hotel; and when we cried what a shame it was that his lovely solitude should be invaded, he explained that he had sold the hotel company their site, and so took a more cheerful view.

It was dark by the time we reached the house; but by the light that streamed from the verandah, as Val Ingham stood helping us out in turn, I read the glances Mrs Adams sent me. It was a glance of interrogation, and I knew very well what it asked. It was depressing and a little humiliating to be obliged to shake my head.

CHAPTER XXVII

AMERICANS certainly have an idea of interpreting things properly. When they live in a palace, they are palatial; when they live in a bosk they are bosky. There wasn't a bed in the Adams's house—we slept upon low cots, filled with balsam twigs, aromatic and dreamful. No paint or varnish anywhere; all the decorations in the natural bark, all the furniture knocked together with the natural branches. The chimneys and the fireplaces were built with rough small stones and mortar. I had a fungus for a pincushion. The forest did it all—all but the dinner. We expected venison chops and potatoes, and for what we were about to receive felt very thankful; we were given a dinner of courses in the best New York manner. Mr Adams's reliance upon the wilderness stopped there—he would not try nature too far, I suppose. He provisioned the bosk by rail from New York, from the canvas-backs to the péaches; and it was an arrangement that no doubt gave us, by contrast, a deeper appreciation of the primitive. At all events nobody complained of the inconsistency.

It was delicious next morning to be alive in that sweet and tangled Adirondack solitude. There was no escaping the charm of it; the scent of the balsam came in everywhere. The bosk was a hunter's lodge, but hunter's lodges have verandahs in America; and we sat in this one and looked

out on a forest wilderness full of dreams. The lake had pearly breadths in the morning light; the firs stood in rows, looking into it over each other's shoulders; we saw that there were turns and inlets deep in clear brown shadow where it slipped closer under them. In the very middle lay a tiny skiff, from which a man from the hotel, in a striped blazer, sat contemplative. We hated the man in the striped blazer because he came from the hotel; perhaps he considered that we on our verandah also blotted the scene.

I did not wish, for reasons of my own, to be led into a *tête-à-tête* with Mrs Adams immediately. I had not made up my mind how much to tell her of the situation between Val Ingham and Verona, as I had observed it. One always runs the risk of being charged with indecency in having observed it at all. So Kaye and I were both keeping our hostess company in the verandah—the rest had gone to find a wonderful spring—when a surprise arrived in the shape of Mr Jacob Ham. There had been half a promise that both Mr and Mrs Ham would “run up” from Bellevue for a week or so later and stay at the Massauqua House, taking Violet back with them when our party broke up; but the solitary appearance of Mr Ham within five days of our farewells foreclosed this expectation somewhat suddenly. The moment I recognized the little desiccated old gentleman I was filled with the wildest forebodings and imaginings. Had he decided that Bobs after all wouldn't do? Had Frances written? Had he lost all his money and come to say that he could not now afford to give Violet a title—I mean that Bobs could not afford to give her one with her expensive tastes? That would be annoying after all the trouble one had taken to feel the proper kind of affection for Violet, but strictly honourable.

It was quite an unnecessary flutter. Mr Ham made his little ceremonious entrance among our wonders and exclamations, told Mrs Adams he was very pleased to make her acquaintance—it was the oddest thing, but he had never met her before—sat down comfortably in a hemlock rocking-chair with pine-needle cushions, and remarked that this was better than New York City any day in the week. One hesitated always to ask Mr Ham questions of a personal nature, he looked such a little grey locked box of private affairs; so after ascertaining that Mrs Ham was still at Bellevue, we let him take his own time in accounting for himself.

“I hope you are comfortable at the hotel, Mr Ham?” said Mrs Adams. “I *wish* we could take you in—put you up, isn’t that what you say in England, Mrs Kemball?—here at the bosk, but——”

“You’re a considerable-sized crowd already,” Mr Ham finished for her good-humouredly. “Yes, it’s a pretty good hotel. They’ve got Charles P. Seaforth to manage it from the Vandyrke House, New York. That’s all the recommendation I want.” Mr Ham mentioned the name of Charles P. Seaforth with what we thought extraordinary respect; but we did not know then that hotel management was one of the finest American arts, and that soaring reputations are made in it.

“They came pretty near losing him in June, I hear, by some interference on the part of the directors. They wanted the golf links over towards the village, and Seaforth wanted ’em somewhere else. Charles P. Seaforth is not a man to stand any bossing, they might’ve known that.”

“Are the rooms good?” asked Kaye.

“Why, yes—mine’s all right. But I kind of

feel as if I'd been compounding a felony or something about that room. You see, I came in by the late train last night and I got number twenty-two. This morning after breakfast, when I was waiting in the office for my mail, I heard a pretty mad woman tackle Seaforth about number twenty-two. 'You promised it to us, in addition to the one we have, the minute it was vacant, Mr Seaforth,' says she. 'It's next door, and communicating with number twenty-four where we are; and you know I told you how uncomfortable Mr Peterson and I were in that small number twenty-four.' 'Well, madame,' says Seaforth, quite polite, 'the hotel's full up, and it's gone now, and that's all there is about it.' 'Well, I think it's a funny thing that you can't keep your promises,' says she rather short. 'And I think it's a funny thing you and your husband can't occupy the same room,' says Seaforth. I expect by this time he was riled. That's the kind of man to have for a hotel manager," added Mr Ham approvingly; "up to an emergency, every time."

Silence fell, we all looked away across the landscape. Mrs Adams remembered that she had orders to give the cook.

"You'll stay for luncheon, of course, Mr Ham," she said.

We sat alone with our late host on the borders of Massauqua lake.

"I haven't been sleeping well lately," he said, "and I've had a touch of hay-fever." As if in recollection of the hay-fever he took out his handkerchief and tried to blow his nose, but one could not think the symptoms very pronounced.

"I'm sorry to hear that," said I; "so the doctor ordered you off to the country? Very wise, I'm sure."

"Well, no," said Mr Ham conscientiously, "I

can't say I saw any doctor. I'm my own doctor most of the time. I knew I could rely on the air of these parts."

"You were intending," I ventured, "to come here later in any case?"

"That's right—I was. I'm exactly three weeks ahead of my date." Mr Ham paused. "As a rule," he continued, "I don't do things like that. I stick to my dates, as a rule. I guess it was lonesomeness," he struck out, slapping the arm of his chair with a sprightly hand, "lonesomeness after you'd all gone away that brought me along—eh?"

"Was it, Mr Ham?" I said; "that's nice."

"Well, no," he replied, "I'd like to say it was, but it wasn't. That's not saying you're not missed either. But the real reason I'm here, Mrs Kemball, three weeks ahead of my date in this crazy way, is Henry Bird."

"Henry Bird?" cried Kaye and I together. "What in the name of conscience has he been up to?" demanded my husband.

Mr Ham put up a calming hand. "I've got no complaint to make of Henry Bird," he said, "none whatever. Henry Bird is a respectable man."

"Up to his work," said Kaye.

"Oh, up to it! And down to it! And the whole enduring time"—Mr Ham fixed his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat—"behind my chair."

"If that's all," said I, "why not send him out of the room?"

"Send Henry Bird out of the room? No, I'd as soon send my grandfather out of the room."

We laughed, of course. "Oh, he's quite accustomed to it," said Kaye.

"That's just it," said Mr Ham. "That's

another thing against Henry Bird. He looks as if he were accustomed to it—to that kind of treatment. He looks as if he expected me to give it to him. He stands there, humble and patient, waiting for something mean to be said to him as if it was part of the contract.”

“That’s only his expression,” said Kaye; “it doesn’t signify anything.”

“It signifies a lot to me. And he’s that watchful! He knows exactly how many more mouthfuls there are on your plate, and before I’ve made up my mind whether I’ll have another help or not, he’s got the plate.”

“Soon cure him of that,” said Kaye.

“Well, I don’t like to try. Another thing, since Henry Bird’s been in the house I don’t get any more comfort with Jake. Jake’s so taken up with him, and he’s so taken up with Jake. Only night before last I went round back to give Jake the evening paper and get his opinion on one or two points—he’s a sharper man than you’d think for, just to see him round in his shirt-sleeves, Jake is—and I found ’em both red hot about Lord Rosebery. ‘When a Liberal wins the Derby,’ Bird was saying, ‘you can generally put him down to be a gentleman in spite of his politics. There ain’t no better blood in England than some of them old Whig families,’ and Jake was all ears. ‘Well, now,’ said I, stepping up, ‘what’s to prevent a Liberal being a gentleman that doesn’t win the Derby? I never heard of Gladstone winning as much as a sack race!’ ‘That’s so,’ says Jake, ‘neither did I.’ Bird looked kind of foolish, as if he’d been caught out where he hadn’t any business. ‘No, sir,’ he said, ‘Mr Gladstone wasn’t what you’d call a sporting character in any sense, but if you’ll excuse me, sir, there is a good many families in England where he wouldn’t be

thought *exactly* a gentleman either, sir.' Well, we went on talking—I wasn't going to leave such nonsense as that in any human being's head and not have a try at making him see sense; but it wasn't any good; we hadn't what you might call an intelligent conversation. I could see it was a case of two's company, so I went along and had a look at the beans by myself. Jake never stirred to come with me, and I wasn't going to ask him."

We followed this recital with the closest interest, you may be sure; but I really could not see that Bird was in any way to blame. Kaye reverted to the man's legitimate duties.

"Why don't you have him put the things on the table and wait outside for the bell?" he asked.

"Just so. I would, only for Mrs Ham. Ma likes him where she can look at him, walking round that way with the potatoes. The things that rile me about Henry Bird please her down to the ground. I notice she's getting quite haughty with him too—she says it makes him more cheerful and contented."

"Get Mrs Ham away," continued Mr Ham, while Kaye frowned upon the situation and I rocked thoughtfully. "Not for a good while yet. She prefers to sit there at home in Bellevue and enjoy having a butler. She says it's the first time in all her born days she's had any real comfort with a servant, and now she's going to take it. She'll have to take it for the two of us."

I saw that my husband's mind had wandered from Mr Ham's domestic perplexities. He asked me if I had unpacked his tweed cap, and that was an invitation to go and get it that I had the presence of mind to accept.

"Oh, don't you bother," he said, and followed me into the house. There he laid a finger on my arm. "Don't scream," he said; "I'm going to

take the old chap out for a walk, and do Bobs's business for him."

"Heavens!" I exclaimed in a low voice, "do you think you'd better?"

"Rather," said Kaye; "Bobs will be awfully grateful. He bitterly regretted not letting me do it before—thought himself no end of an ass."

I kept a detaining hand upon my husband's person, debating this bold step, but he shook it off.

"I mustn't lose this opportunity," he said. "He's off to-morrow or the next day to Paul Smith's—didn't you hear him say?—to see a man. Ten to one I won't get another chance."

I saw them start from the verandah in doubt and apprehension. Nobody admires my husband's many talents more than I do, but he is not a person to entrust with a delicate negotiation.

Before they returned the others had come in, and there was the hurly-burly of lunch. By the way Kaye avoided my eye and kept out of my neighbourhood, I suspected the worst, and I thought of twenty ways in which he might have made a muddle of it. There comes a time when one's husband must dress for dinner, however, and I held my speculations in hand till then.

"Well," I said, coming in upon that operation, "may I ask what happened?"

"You are sitting on my clean shirt. Nothing."

"I'll get up if you find me a chair. Then after all you didn't speak about Bobs?"

"I spoke about him till I was black in the face," said Kaye, crossly. "I told the old gentleman exactly what the situation was. I enlarged on it. I said I'd never seen Bobs so desperately in love before."

"Oh, I have; but I wouldn't have said that. Well, you are making a long story of it. Will he have it or won't he have it?"

"He seemed fairly interested in the family and so forth, especially in that connection with Henry the Sixth, you know——"

"I know."

"But he didn't seem to think he had much to do with the matter. He said there was no reason why Bobs *shouldn't* propose to his daughter, so far as he knew."

"I should think not, indeed."

"But as to whether she would have him or not he couldn't given any opinion. He's a leery old boy, that's what Ham is, a leery old boy. He behaved as if I were giving him a piece of interesting gossip."

"Then, of course," I said, "you didn't approach the consideration of settlements?"

"Didn't get within miles of it. I don't think any harm's done," added my husband, with attempted cheerfulness. "But things are pretty much where they were."

"H'm!" said I; "you'll tell Bobs, of course?"

"Oh, of course," replied Kaye, "in a day or two. There's no particular hurry."

CHAPTER XXVIII

It was the most exquisite moonlight night. Kaye and Mr Adams were smoking in the dining-room; the four interesting members of our party had gone out upon the lake. Mrs Adams and I sat with shawls about us on the verandah. We had been sitting there for half an hour, and Mrs Adams knew all there was to know. I did not intend to tell her more than about half, but when one had once begun it was too fascinating—it told itself. There were difficulties, for I could not expect her to approve of Val Ingham's method of winning Verona's affections; but then I did not approve of it particularly either, and that made it easier. Mrs Adams said about it that, personal feeling apart, she perfectly saw Mr Ingham's idea; but then she sometimes fancied she understood Mr Ingham better than Verona did, which was exactly what I had often thought myself.

"I can't say I think it an idea that would appeal to Verona," said Mrs Adams. "She's pretty subtle, but she's very American. She would think being made love to on that system almost as bad as marrying an Englishman. Not that she has anything *against* Englishmen, you know, only she——"

"Objects to them on patriotic grounds," I said; "of course her objection must be purely patriotic."

"Oh, certainly. But one can understand the feeling."

"One can understand a *corresponding* feeling," I said thoughtfully, and we rocked for a moment in silence.

"I am glad to think there is no—no sentiment of that kind about Violet," I resumed. "She has travelled so much, hasn't she? But of course there may be financial difficulties. Mr Ham may not see his way——"

"Mr Ham will see his way to anything Violet wants," said Mrs Adams decidedly. "And of course she'll want Lord Robert. He is such a dear, with that innocent air like a schoolboy. People may say what they like, but there is a charm about your British nobility. Of course you have to meet them to recognize it. Dear me, how often I have read of these Anglo-American alliances, and how little I ever thought I should have one taking place in my own family."

"Ah well!" I sighed, "I hope it will all come right. You never can tell what notion two girls like that will take into their heads. Both Val and Bobs may have carried their wretched systems too far—I never believed in them."

"If it is to be it will be in both cases," said Mrs Adams. "Surely you don't think, Mrs Kemball, that if these dear young people are real psychological counterparts, are absolutely essential to each other's happiness on the scale of the ideal, they can be driven apart by such a thing as a system?"

"I don't know," I said. "American girls are faddy. Why, they've taken the canoes!"

"Have they? But they said they were going out in the boat."

I pointed to the path of moonlight on the lake which the two canoes were crossing, unmistakably

from the bosk's wharf, unmistakably containing two persons each. We watched them for a moment in a silence charged with happy conclusions. Presently I broke it.

"If Val Ingham has taken Verona out alone in a canoe," I murmured.

"And if Violet has gone out with Lord Robert alone in a canoe," murmured Mrs Adams.

"It looks definite," said I.

"What a relief!" exclaimed Mrs Adams as the canoes shot into the shadow. "Could you help looking at them? I couldn't. And surely if any moment of their lives should be sacred from an intrusive gaze it is this one."

"What difference does it make?" I said. "They were nothing but spots when we could see them."

"Let us be kind," said Mrs Adams, "and not even think of them just now. Consider what a critical hour it is with them. I had a kind of presentiment that something would happen to-night. They didn't seem at all themselves at dinner. Even Lord Robert was distrait."

"I didn't notice," I said, "but who are these people?"

"Mr Jacob Ham for one," replied Mrs Adams. "I can't think who the lady can be. They're coming here, of course."

We sat in our shawls watching the approach of Mr Ham and his companion. Still less than Mrs Adams could I think who the lady could be. Suddenly it dawned upon me, and I assured myself I was dreaming. Then the voice reached me and assured me that it was no dream. Precipitately I rose and rushed into the dining-room, where my husband and Mr Adams lowered astonished pipes.

"Kaye," I exclaimed, "who in the name of all that's amazing do you imagine is out there at this moment with Mr Ham?"

"Well!" asked Kaye.

"Frances!"

"No!" exclaimed my husband. "What on earth has brought her over!" but as our eyes met we knew what had brought her over.

"It's my cousin, Miss Walden, from England," Kaye explained to Mr Adams, "and we hadn't a notion she was coming. The very last person!"

"Well!" said Mr Adams. "Don't you want to go and see her?"

That brought us to our senses, and we went out to find Frances calmly installed and making disparaging statements about the hotel to Mrs Adams. It seemed she was at the hotel, had arrived that afternoon, and dined *tête-à-tête* with Mr Ham. When she told us that we knew that whatever was going to happen had happened, which is not perhaps a strict sequence of tenses, but will do well enough. Mr Ham looked as if he had been dining *tête-à-tête* with Frances, that is he looked roused and animated and rather uncomfortable, yet there was now and then a twinkle in his eye, as if in any combat they might have had he had been not altogether worsted. Of course she hadn't come over with a combative intention, quite the contrary, but her discussions were bound to end up that way; in the nature of things and the nature of Frances they had to. I hoped she hadn't been too hard on Bobs; but she had come so far to set forth the truth that one feared it might have gained an unnecessary impetus on the journey. Drawing my chair into the shadow, I gazed forebodingly at the lake, and gave myself up to astonishment at the almost malign appropriateness of Miss Walden's arrival.

To-morrow would have been in all human probability too late; we could have welcomed her with mild surprise and admiration for her conscientious scruples; she could have done practically no harm to-morrow. But to-night, exactly at the moment to harden Mr Jacob Ham's heart and make him absurdly suspicious and difficult to deal with! It seemed a sudden unkindness of fate, and fate had always before been so bland to Bobs.

There was no opportunity of course for any private talk with Frances. She said in reply to our exclamations that she had come over on some special business, which was all that the occasion permitted; but I could see that she was dying to let out fifty uncompromising things, the principal one being that she knew she couldn't trust us. I had taken Kaye's advice, I hadn't written, and this was the result—she had come marching over, colours flying, to tell a poor innocent unsophisticated American billionaire, that his prospective son-in-law, Lord Robert Walden of the 10th Coldbrooks, had never had quite as much money as he wanted to spend, but had invariably spent it all the same.

Frances and the Adams's talked, Mr Ham and Kaye and I sat and listened. Gradually it became only Frances who talked and the Adams's also listened. She discussed democratic institutions as if she had invented them, and approved of the American Republic as if she had brought it up. She was encouraging about political rings and bosses; she said such scandals were incident to the growth and development of a people; she herself took an optimistic view, quite expected a moral sense to appear and influence American politics before the end of another century. The kinder she became in her beliefs and expectations, the more silent grew the Adams's, but monologue

had no embarrassment for Frances: I suppose she inherited a pulpit facility from the bishop. She held forth without flagging, and the rest of us waited for the splash of the paddles.

"Surely," she interrupted herself to say, "it's very late for these young people to be out."

That was what we were all thinking, but not one of us dreamed of going in. There was a compulsion upon us all to stay in the verandah and receive the young people, a kind of excited prescience of a moment of high congratulation, or perhaps it was only a happy anxiety to assure ourselves that they had not been drowned. We drew our shawls closer about us, and thrust our hands deeper into our trouser pockets, and sat still in a half circle almost indistinguishable among the black and white shadows of the moonlight. At last we heard voices, and then silence fell even upon Frances—it was a conscious conspiracy—and we sat like six statues. It wasn't really fair.

As the first pair came round the little bend in the path to the house I grasped the arms of my chair with both hands and put my foot with meaning emphasis upon Kaye's. They came up the path *swinging hands*: she was singing something soft and gay. I knew it was Bobs by his shoulders, but I had never heard Violet sing before. Then, as they stopped swinging hands, and just in time I am sure, a sudden stentorian unnatural cough from Kaye brought about a standstill and a separation. We all pushed our chairs about and began to talk volubly at once, but nobody was imposed upon, neither the couple on the path nor any single guilty soul of us. We all knew that we had seen that which we ought not to have seen, and they, poor things, knew it too.

"Where are Mr Ingham and Verona?" cried Mrs Adams, to cover the situation.

For an instant they hesitated and conferred, then we heard them laugh, and they came briskly up.

"Here is Verona," cried Bobs audaciously, some paces off; "we passed Ingham and Miss Ham ten minutes ago, sitting on a stump. They told us to go away."

Verona!

I thought it was a joke; I did not at first take it in. It *could* not be Verona, she was unwealthed; besides, had not Bobs been, up to a month ago, more in love with Violet Ham than he ever was before with anybody? It flashed upon me that we had simply surprised an outrageous flirtation, and that our reasonable and proper expectations were to be disappointed for the twentieth time; and in that brief instant I decided that I would positively wash my hands of the whole affair; it wasn't worth the trouble and anxiety. I don't know what the rest were thinking of while this was passing through my mind. Frances was announcing herself to her nephew, and this of course covered the embarrassment everybody felt. And Frances was not a person to be kept long in doubt about anything. Turning graciously—for her—to Verona, who had apparently forgotten that she was looking very charming in Bobs's Inverness cape, "And this is the young lady," she said, "whom we hope, when all is made clear, to be allowed to welcome into our family—Miss Ham, I believe."

"This is the young lady; but her name is Miss Daly, Aunt Frank," said poor Bobs, making everything, with those few words, clear beyond surmise.

"I understood you to say 'Ham,'" Frances addressed me severely. "It is not a word you

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after all, a very common advantage; "perhaps Lord Bobby will make some." The figure of young Ingham's and Violet Ham's united income certainly represents an advantage rather uncommon, and I fear that poor Bobs will never amass the hundredth part of it. He is making what he calls a shot at it, however. Mr Adams has got him something in Standard Oil in Yokohama. It's a good, socially, as a Consulship, I hear, and better paid. And we are all very happy, even Kaye, for the Inghams have taken Cliffenden this year, and we are going up for the shooting.

THE END

