



AN AMERICAN GIRL IN LONDON.

BY SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN.

(Continued from page 18.)

"Too ridiculous, I call it. Her proper name is Catherine Clarissa, but she hates her proper name (sensible girl as she is in every other way)—prefers Peter! And if she happens to take a fancy to you she will tell you all manner of interesting things. For old holes and corners, I always say, go to Peter Corke."

"I'm glad," I said, "that she likes us individually fairly well—it's the only way in which I would have any chance. But she won't like my accent."

"If she doesn't," Lady Torquillin said, "I promise you she'll tell you. And you won't mind a bit."

When Miss Corke arrived I forgot entirely about the doubtfulness of her liking me—I was too much absorbed in liking her. She was rather a small person, with a great deal of dignity in her shoulders and a great deal of humor in her face—the most charming face I have seen in England, and I can't even make an exception in favor of the Princess of Wales. I may tell you that she had delightful twinkling brown eyes and hair a shade darker, and the color and health and energy that only an English woman possesses at thirty. I am sure I don't know why I speak of Miss Peter Corke in the past tense, however. She is not dead—or even married. I cannot imagine a greater misfortune to her large circle of friends in London.

"Two lumps, please," begged Miss Corke of me in the midst of a succession of enquiries about Lady Torquillin's cough—whether it could possibly be gout, or if she had been indulging in salmon and cucumber lately, in which case it served her perfectly right. "What a disappointment you are! Why don't you ask me if I like it with all the trimmings?"

"The 'trimmings'!" I repeated. "Certainly—the sugar and milk! Fancy being obliged to explain Americanisms to an American!" said Miss Corke to Lady Torquillin.

"The 'trimmings' an Americanism?" I asked. "I never heard it before. But I've no doubt it is an expression peculiar to Boston, perhaps."

"You had better not have any doubt," said Miss Corke, with mock ferocity, "of anything you hear in England."

"I've heard 'fixings' often at home," I declared, "but never 'trimmings'."

"Oh!" remarked Miss Corke, genially, "then 'fixings' is the correct expression."

"I don't know," I said, "about its being the correct expression. Our washerwoman, I know, uses it a good deal."

"Oh!" said Miss Corke, with an indescribable inflection of amusement, and then she looked at me over the top of her teacup, as much as to say, "you had better not go too far."

"So you've been in England a whole month?" said she. "And what do you think you have observed about us? Basing your opinion," said Miss Corke, with serio-comicality, "upon the fact that we are for your admiration and not for your criticism, how do you like us?"

"I couldn't help it."

"Individually," I said, "I like you fairly well—as a nation I can't—"

"Oh!" cried Miss Corke, in a little funny squeal, rushing at Lady Torquillin, "you've gone and told her—you wicked woman!" And she shook Lady Torquillin, a thing I didn't see how she dared to do.

"I can't bear it, and I won't! Private correspondences—I wonder you're not ashamed!" and Miss Corke sunk into a chair and covered her face with her hands and her handkerchief, and squealed again, more comically than before.

In the course of further conversation, Miss Corke said that she saw my mind must be improved immediately, if she had to do it herself, and where would I like to begin? I said almost anywhere, I didn't think it much mattered; and Miss Corke said, well, that was candid on my part and augured favorably, and was I architecturally inclined? I said I thought I was, some; and out came Miss Peter Corke's little shriek again.

"Tell her," she said, prodding Lady Torquillin, "that we say 'rather' over here in that connection. I don't know her well enough."

And I was obliged to beg Lady Torquillin to tell her that we said "some" over there in that connection, though not in books or university lectures or serious-minded magazines.

"I suppose we'd better begin with the churches, don't you think?" said Miss Corke to Lady Torquillin. "Poor dear, I dare say she's never seen a proper church!"

"Oh, yes!" I said. "You have never been in Chicago, Miss Corke, or you wouldn't talk like that. We have several of the finest in America in our city, and we ourselves attend a very large one erected last year—the Congregational, though mamma has taken up theosophy some lately. It's built in amphitheatre style, with all the latest improvements, electric light, and heated with hot water all through. It will seat five thousand people on spring-edged cushions, and has a lovely kitchen attached for socials."

"Built in the amphitheatre style!" repeated Miss Corke. "To seat five thousand people on spring-edged cushions—with a kitchen attached! And now will you tell me immediately what a 'social' is?"

"There are different kinds, you know," I replied. "Ice cream socials and oyster socials and ordinary tea meetings; but they nearly always have something to eat in them. A dry social, with only a collection, never amounts to much. And they're generally held in the basement of the church, and the young ladies of the congregation wait."

Miss Corke looked at me, amused and aghast.

"You see, I was quite right," she said to Lady Torquillin. "She never has! But I think this really ought to be reported to the Foreign Missions Society. I'll take you to the Abbey tomorrow," she went on. "You like 'deaders,' don't you? The time between might be profitably spent in fasting and meditation. Good-bye, dear love!" to Lady Torquillin. "No, you will not come down, either of you. Remember, young lady, three-thirty sharp, at the entrance everybody uses, opposite Dizzy's statue—the same which you are never on any account to call Dizzy, but always Lord Disraeli, with the respect that becomes a foreigner! Good-bye!"

XIII.

"What do you mean?" asked Miss Corke, indicating the Parliament House clock with a reproachful glance as I joined her next afternoon outside the south cloister of the Abbey. Her tone was portentous, and I looked at the clock, which said ten minutes to four. I didn't quite understand, for I thought I was in pretty good time.

"Didn't you say I was to come about now?" I inquired.

Miss Corke made an inarticulate exclamation of wrath. "Half-past three may be 'about now' in America," she said, "but it isn't here, as you may see by the clock. Fancy my having made an appointment with a young person who had an idea of keeping it 'about' the time I had condescended to 'fix'!" and Miss Corke put down her parasol as we entered the cloister, and attempted to wither me with a glance. If the

glance had not had the very jolliest smile of good-fellowship inside it I don't know what I should have done, but as it was I didn't wither.

We walked up past the little green square that you see in wide spaces through the side pillars, where the very oldest old monks lie, nameless and forgotten, whose lives gathered about the foundations of the Abbey—the gray foundations in the grass—had sunk silently into its history, just as their bodily selves have disappeared long ago in the mosses and grasses that cover them.

"No, Miss Mammie Wick, of Chicago, I will not hurry!" said Miss Corke, "and neither shall you! It is a sacrilege that I will allow no young person in my company to commit—to go through these precincts as if there were anything in the world as well worth looking at outside of them."

I said I didn't want to hurry in the very least.

"Are you sure you don't—inside of you?" she demanded. "Certain you have no lurking private ambition to do the Abbey in two hours and get it over! Oh, I know you! I've brought lots of you here before."

"I know," I said, "as a nation we do like to get a good deal for our time."

And we contemplated the studious effigy of Dr. Busby until I told Miss Corke that I wanted to be taken to the Poets' Corner.

"Of course you do," said she. "There are rows of Americans there now sitting, looking mournful and thinking up quotations. If I wanted to find an American in London I should take up my position in the Poets' Corner until he arrived. You needn't apologize; it's nothing to your discredit."

"Where is Chaucer?" I asked, wishing to begin at the beginning.

"Just like every one of you that I've ever brought here!" Miss Corke exclaimed, leading the way to the curious old rectangular gray tomb in the wall. "The very best—the very oldest—immediately. Such impatience I never saw! There, now, make out that early English lettering if you can, and be properly sorry that you've renounced your claim to be proud of it."

"I can't make it out, so I'll think about being sorry later," I said. "It is certainly very remarkable—he might almost have written it himself. Now where is Shakespeare?"

"Oh, certainly!" exclaimed Miss Corke. "This way. And after that you'll declare you've seen them all. But you might just take time to understand that you're walking over 'O rare Ben Jonson!' who is standing up in his old bones down there as straight as you or I. Insisted—as you probably are not aware—on being buried that way, so as to be ready when Gabriel blows his trumpet in the morning. I won't say that he hasn't got his coat and hat on. Yes, that's Samuel—I'm glad you didn't say Ben was the lexicographer. Milton, certainly; it's kind of you to notice him. Blind, you remember, ribald author of several works of some reputation—in England."

"I knew he was blind," I said, "and his daughters used to dictate to him. We have a picture of it at home."

I made this remark very innocently, and Miss Corke looked at me with a comical smile.

"Bless it and save it!" she said; and then, with an attempt at a reproach, "What a humbug it is!"

We looked at Shakespeare, supreme among them, predicting solemn dissolution of "The Tempest;" and turned from him to Gay, whose final reckless words I read with as much astonishment as if I had never heard of it before:

"Life is a jest, and all things show it.
I thought so once, and now I know it."

has no significance at all read in an American school-book, two thousand miles and a hundred and fifty years from the writer of it, compared with the grim shock it gives you when you see it actually, cut deep in the stone, to be a memorial always of a dead man somewhere not far away.

There's a lovely epitaph for you, of Edmund Spenser's, whose name you need not know, other than the workes which he left behind him. You will kindly make no ribald remarks about the spelling, as I perceive you are thinking of doing. Try and remember that we taught you to spell over there. And when Edmund Spenser was buried, dear dame, there came a company of poets to the funeral—Shakespeare, doubtless, among them—and cast into his grave all manner of elegies.

"Of their own composition?" I inquired.

"Stupid! certainly. And the pens that wrote them."

"I said I thought it a most beautiful and poetic thing to have done, if they kept no copies of the poems, and asked Miss Corke if she believed anything of the kind would be possible now."

"Bless you!" she replied. "In the first place, there aren't the poets; in the second place, there isn't the hero worship; in the third place, the conditions of the poetry market are different nowadays. It's more expensive than it used to be. The poets would prefer to send wreaths from the florist—you can get quite a nice one for twelve and six;" and Peter Corke made a little grimace expressive of disgust with the lines.

"We used to have all poets and no public; now we have all public and no poets," she declared, "now that he is gone—and Tennyson can't live forever."

Miss Corke pointed with her parasol to a name in the stone close to my right foot. I had been looking about me and above me, and everywhere but there. As I read it I took my foot away quickly and went two or three paces off. It was so unlooked for, that name, so new to its association with death, that I stood aside, held by a sudden sense of intrusion. He had always been so high and so far off in the privacy of his genius, so revered in his solitude, so unapproachable, that it took some breath away for the moment to have walked unthinkingly over the grave of Robert Browning. It seemed like taking an advantage one would rather not have taken, even to stand aside and read the plain, strong name in the floor, and know that he, having done with life, had been brought there and left where there could be no longer about him any wonderings or any surmises.

XIV.

I know it was the "private" part of the "private view" that made me so anxious to go to the Academy on the first day of May this year. The pictures would be there the second day and the day following, and days indefinitely after that; and for a quarter of a dollar I could choose my own time and circumstances of going to see them. I might, weather permitting, have taken my "view" of the Academy in the publicity of five or six other people, who, like me, would have paid a shilling apiece to get in; but I found myself preferring the privacy of the five or six hundred who did not pay—preferring it immensely. Besides, I had heard all my life of the "private view."

Every year there are special cablegrams about it in our newspapers—who were there and what they wore; generally correspondents in it, at least a column and a half. Our special correspondents in describing it, and rival each other adjectively in describing it. She said it was "a thing to see," and she meant to try to get me an invitation. Lady Torquillin went every year.

But when the thirtieth day of April came, Lady Torquillin told me in the evening, after dinner, that she hadn't been able to manage it, and showed me the card upon which the President and Members of the Royal Academy of Arts "requested" the pleasure of the company of Lady Torquillin, only. "Not transferable."

"It's very tiresome of them," said Lady Torquillin, "to put anybody. Otherwise, I would have handed it over to you, child, with the greatest pleasure (I don't care a pin's point about going), and you could have gone with the Pastelle Browns. But there it is!"

Of course, nothing would have induced me to take Lady Torquillin's invitation and deprive her of the pleasure of going, but if Lady Torquillin had not told me that she had known him, not come often in the course of an ordinary lifetime, I was describing my feelings in a letter addressed, I think, to Mr. Winterhazel, when, about an hour later, Lady Torquillin ap-

peared again, flushed with exertion, and sank panting into a chair.

"Get ready, child," said she. "I'd wear your tailor-made—those stairs will kill me, but there was no time—to waste on the lift! I can get you in—hurry up your cakes!"

"But am I invited?" I asked.

"Certainly you are, by a Royal Academician in person—so fly!"

I flew, and in twenty minutes Lady Torquillin and I were on the way to Burlington House. "You see," she said, "the very first person I had the good luck to meet when I went in was Sir Bellamy Bellamy. You remember Sir Bellamy Bellamy at the 'Gatherings'?" I tell you frankly that I wouldn't have mentioned it, my dear, unless he had first, though I knew perfectly well that what Sir Bellamy Bellamy can't do in the Academy simply can't be done, for you know I'm the last one to push; but he did. "Where is your young friend?" said he. Then I took my chance and told him how I'd asked that old screw of a Monkhouse Diddlington for two and only got one, and how I couldn't possibly give it to you because it was printed 'not transferable,' and how disappointed you were; and he was nice about it. "My dear Lady Torquillin," he said, "we were children together, and you never came to me. I should have been delighted!"

"Well," I said, "Sir Bellamy, can't we do anything about it now?" It's rather late in the day, said he. "It is late in the day," said I. "Oh, I say!" said he, "she must come if she wants to—any friends of yours, Lady Torquillin—such a humbug as the man is! It's a bit irregular," he went on, "and we won't say anything about it, but if you like to go and get her, and see that she carries this in with her (here Lady Torquillin produced a fat pale-blue catalogue book), there won't be any difficulty, I fancy. So there you are, Miss Wick, provided with Sir Bellamy Bellamy's own catalogue to admit you. If that's not a compliment, I don't know what is."

"I don't feel as if I had been properly invited," I said. "I'm afraid I oughtn't to go, Lady Torquillin."

"Rubbish, child!" said she. "Do you want them to send a deputation for you?" And after that what could I say?

"Hold up your head and look perfectly indifferent," advised Lady Torquillin as our hansom deposited us in the courtyard before the outer steps. "Don't grasp that catalogue as if it were a banner! Carry it carelessly. Now follow me." And Lady Torquillin, with great dignity, a sense of rectitude, and a catalogue to which she was properly entitled, followed by me with vague apprehensions, a bad conscience, and a catalogue that didn't belong to me, walked into the "private view."

We moved aimlessly with the throng, and were immediately overtaken and possessed by the spirit that seemed to be abroad—a spirit of wonder and criticism and speculation and searching, that first embraced our nearest neighbors, went on at random to a curiously dressed person in perspective, focused upon a celebrity in a corner, and spent itself in the shifting crowd. Lady Torquillin bade me consider whether in all my life before I had ever seen such remarkable gowns, and I was obliged to confess that I had not. Some of them were beautiful, and some were not; many were what you so very properly and aptly call "smart," and a few were artistic. All of them, pretty and ugly, I might have encountered at home. But there was one species of "frock" which no American, I think, could achieve with impunity. It was a protest against conventionalism, very much gathered, and usually represented itself in colors unattainable out of a London fog. It almost always went with a rather discouraged looking lady having a bad complexion and hair badly done up, and invariably it dragged a little on one side.

Lady Torquillin did not know many of the literary people who were present, but she indicated Mr. Anstey and Mr. William Black, both of whose works are extremely popular with us, and it was a particular pleasure to be able to describe them when I wrote home next day. Before we went she showed me two or three lady journalists busy taking notes.

"There's that nice Miss Jay Penne," said Lady Torquillin. "I know all the Jay Pennes—such a literary family! And Miss Jay Penne always wants to know what I've got on. I think I must just speak to her, dear, if you don't mind waiting one moment, and then we'll go."

"She asked about you too, dear," said my friend when she joined me, with a little nod of congratulation.

I should perhaps have stated before that there were a number of artists walking around trying to keep away from their own pictures, but this I gathered of myself, for with the exception of Sir Bellamy Bellamy, who had gone away, Lady Torquillin did not know any of them. I noticed, too, that the walls of the rooms were in some places covered with pictures, but they did not seem to have anything to do with the "private view."

XV.

Lady Powderby's ball was the first I attended in London, and therefore, I suppose, made the strongest impression upon me.

We went in a four-wheeler at about eleven o'clock, and as the driver drew up before the strip of carpet that led to the door the first thing that struck me was the little crowd of people standing waiting on either side to watch the guests go in.

Inside I expected to find a crowd (I think balls are generally crowded wherever they are given), but I also expected to be able to get through it; in which, for quite twenty minutes, I was disappointed. Both Lady Torquillin and I made up our minds at one time to spend the rest of the evening in our wraps, but just as we abandoned ourselves to this there came a breaking and a parting among the people and a surge in one direction, which Lady Torquillin explained, as we took advantage of it, by the statement that the supper room had been opened.

In the cloak room several ladies were already preparing for departure.

"Do you suppose they are ill?" I asked Lady Torquillin, as we stood together while two of the maids repaired our damages as far as they were able. "Why do they go home so early?"

"Home, child!" said Lady Torquillin, with a withering emphasis. "They're going on. I dare say they've got a couple more dances apiece to put in an appearance at to-night."

Lady Torquillin did not approve of what she called "excessive riot," and never accepted more than one invitation an evening; so I was unfamiliar with London ways in this respect. Presently I had another object lesson in the person of a lady who came in and gave her cloak to the attendant, saying:

"Put it where you can get it easily, please. I'll wait it again in a quarter of an hour."

I thought as I looked at her that social pleasures must be to such a one simply a series of topographical experiments. I also thought I should have something to say when next I heard of the hurry and high pressure in which Americans lived.

"It's of no use," said Lady Torquillin, looking at the stairs. "We can never get up. We might as well go with the rest, and—"

"Have some supper," added somebody close behind us, and Lady Torquillin said, "Oh, Charlie Mafferton!" though why she should have been surprised was more than I could imagine, for Charlie Mafferton was nearly always there. Wherever we went—to at-homes, or concerts, or the theatre, or sight-seeing in any direction—Mr. Mafferton turned up, either expected or unexpected, with great precision, and his manner toward Lady Torquillin was always as devoted as it could be. I have not mentioned him often before in describing my experiences, and shall probably not mention him again, because after a time I began to take him for granted as a detail of almost everything we did. Lady Torquillin seemed to like it, so I, of course, had no right to object; and, indeed, I did not particularly mind, because Mr. Mafferton was always nice in his manner to me, and often very interesting in his remarks; but if Lady Torquillin had not told me that she had known him in short clothes, and if I had not been perfectly certain she was far too sensible to give her affections to a person so much younger than herself, I don't know what I would have thought.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]