



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.

"Is '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 her dare to do.

"I can't bear it, and I won't! Private correspondence—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. "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 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 great past—and sunk silently into its history, just as their bodily selves have disappeared long ago in the mosses and grasses that cover them.

"No, Miss Mamie 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 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," said, "as a nation we do like to get a good deal for our time."

And we contemplated the studios 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.

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 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 as straight as you or I. 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