

San Francisco, where they struck north to fetch a compass of Canada before descending through the States of Mexico and South America. The tour was to give Deryk a breadth and maturity which Eton and Magdalen had failed to impart; he was to see the world in its variety and size and so in some measure to counteract the conventional education which his father deplored. Successive letters, pursuing the travellers further and further east, demanded in terms whether Deryk was becoming a little more manly, less impetuous, of weightier judgment. Hatherly, no humourist himself, found difficulty in answering these solemn demands for daily reports without becoming unforgivably flippant. The letters and enquiries followed them from Buenos Aires to Teneriffe, where they changed to a Union Castle liner and worked round the Cape, through Rhodesia and the Lakes to East Africa, the Sudan and Egypt; thence, with a sudden pang of homesickness, they made for Brindisi and home.

"There's plenty for him to do," murmured Sir Aylmer. "Did he give you much trouble?"

"Oh, nothing out of the ordinary. He's just what you were at his age, though *too* restless, *too* energetic; the world's not quite big enough for him to conquer."

Hatherly poured himself out a second glass of port wine and sipped it appreciatively, looking, with his bald head, large spectacles and twinkling eyes, like a reincarnation of Mr. Pickwick. "At his age—no, you must have been older then. D'you remember that peculiarly bleak March morning when you strode into my office, remarking that you'd had as much as you could stand? I never imagined then. . . ."

He broke off and gazed round the long room with its rows of departed Stornaways, finally letting his eyes rest upon his friend's face.

Sir Aylmer hesitated long, and his eyes, too, wandered round the great room in which the table was like an island of light in a dark sea.

"I never imagined, either. . . ." he muttered. Both men