

earls. The art firm and Barrow were present at the wedding, and the tinner and Puss had been invited, but the tinner was ill and Puss was nursing him—for they were engaged.

The Sellerses were to go to England with their new allies for a brief visit, but when it was time to take the train from Washington the Colonel was missing. Hawkins was going as far as New York with the party, and said he would explain the matter on the road. The explanation was in a letter left by the Colonel in Hawkins's hands. In it he promised to join Mrs. Sellers later, in England, and then went on to say—

'The truth is, my dear Hawkins, a mighty idea has been borne to me within the hour, and I must not even stop to say good-bye to my dear ones. A man's highest duty takes precedence of all minor ones, and must be attended to with his best promptness and energy, at whatsoever cost to his affections or his convenience. And first of all a man's duties is his duty to his own honour: he must keep that spotless. Mine is threatened. When I was feeling sure of my imminent future solidity, I forwarded to the Czar of Russia, perhaps prematurely, an offer for the purchase of Siberia, naming a vast sum. Since then an episode has warned me that the method by which I was expecting to acquire this money—materialisation upon a scale of limitless magnitude—is marred by a taint of temporary uncertainty. His Imperial Majesty may accept my offer at any moment. If this should occur now, I should find myself painfully embarrassed, in fact, financially inadequate. I could not take Siberia. This would become known, and my credit would suffer.

'Recently my private hours have been dark indeed, but