My Lady Cinderella

By Mrs. C. N. Williamson Author of "My Friend the Chanffeur," "Lady Betty Across the Water," Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER L

The Day When Something Happened. Today I had meant to be a happy day. But after all, I was miserable would have given a great deal to be almost anywhere else-yes, even at Home in Cousin Sarah East's villa in

I had never thought of myself as a vain girl; but I suppose it was a morbid sort of vanity that induced so keen a pang of shamed distress on this glorious June day in the park. Anne Bryden, who had brought me, and proudly paid for the chairs to which we had found our way through he crowd, looked serenely blissful. She was not one whit depressed by the act that she and I were the only ugly ducklings in this dazzling array ff swans. Forgotten was her rusty let trimming on the bodice; her last rear's but, with its faded pink roses,

practically ceased to exist. I did not even occur to her that it the protection of her skirt. This lack reaches of sweet-smelling, new-cut ten minutes' conversation, to visit her? selfconsciousness struck me as grass in the park. carcely short of greatness in Anne. It ie, and far above the level of the thing but ourselves.

It was not often that I could get a holday from Cousin Sarah's babies, them." whom I had the honor of being ursery governess-allas nursemaidwith a mingling of general servant's" idiffired the babies, and deferred to ten about you." Cousin Sarah's opinion during the one

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visit I had received from her at Happinolme Villa.) Accordingly this whole June afternoon in her society nad been granted.

I ought to have been radiant, reveling in the pretty faces, the prettler dresses, and the glittering equipages of my betters, but instead I sat wishing that I were not ashamed to ask Anne if she were ready to go away; concealing the mended finger tips of my gloves by curling my hands into my fists, and feeling utterly wretched that I, who adored beauty, must be so

hopelessly out of the picture. Carriage after carriage rolled by; well-groomed, clean-limbed men lounged over the rallings, and raised their tall, shining hats to the occupants, or chattered with exquisitely dressed girls, who looked like floating black frock, with the cheap, pathetic flowers under their tinted chiffon and lace parasols. The rhedodendrons were a flame of glorious color; the distance was blue with the soft mist isn't a sham? If she is really what appoint the poor "doll" you wanted to that hung, ineffable and pensive, above might be well to give her shabby boots the Serpentine, and the far, billowy should she pick up and invite us/ after

"It's a nice world, isn't it?" remarked almost above the level of the fem- Anne, apropos of everything-every-

"Yes. And there are lots of nice times in it. Only we're not in any of

Anne looked critically at me. "You ought to be, Con," she obmingling of general servant's" served, after an interval of reflection.

There were no regular "days" "As for me, I don't count. I'm no
mother had kept, was now a mixture of typewriter, secretary, and comoff." out" for me, but Cousin Sarah con- body. I was born to things, and I panion to a vulgar, newly rich matsidered Anne a "most respectable don't expect them. But you—you are ron engaged in storming the outworks roung woman." (Anne had with undifferent. You are a beauty. And you of society, and it was part of Anne's the words sounded ungracious. But the words sounded ungracious. But duty, I remembered, to read aloud endthey broke forth without my volition. konted diplomacy praised the house, are a mystery. A book could be writ-

I laughed a little. -they were all sad things." "But you are the sort of girl that own masquerading in borrowed plum-

things do happen to. They will yet; age. you mark my words." I shook my head.

"Oh, if they only would! I'm so, so happen today!" "What would you like to happen?" queried Anne.

"Am I to have my choice? Are you a fairy godmother in disguise? Well, should say, please, fairy godmother, you see that beauteous maiden in pink medin, driving with her Aother in the particularly desirable victoria?" (As I spoke my eyes focused upon a wonderful girl who looked haughtily, lazily conscious that she was one of Fortune's supreme favorites.) "Well. a three-and-sixpenny umbrella, and make me, if only for the space of one gorgeous month like her. Give me as joy this season. It isn't a very noble prise and interest you."

Anne's chair was on my left. On my right, separated by a little distance, I had been conscious for the past half hour of a vague cloudiness of silk and muslin that represented a fluff which was a sunshade. Now, suddenly, it was lifted, and a soft

voice addressed me from underneath. "Do forgive me, won't you? I really can't resist speaking. I don't want to be rude. On the contrary, I wish to be very nice. But-I couldn't help overhearing some of the thir);s that you and your friend have been say-

ing."

I felt the color stealing up, racked my brain to recall exactly what we had been saying. Anne was staring sonage of great magnificence who was endeavoring to draw us into conversation, and no doubt Anne was wondering, even as I was wondering, what could be the motive of such ap-

parently purposeless condescension. The lady was of middle age-if women who frame their personal charms with the best can ever appear of middle age. She had elaborately undulated brown hair, under a bonnet that was a poem, in one verse; bright searching eyes, and a complexion that could still live up to its past. As for her gown, it was too exquisitely Parisian to have been made out of Lon-

"Don't look so horrified," she smiled "I'm not mad, only a little eccentric That means that some of my friends you would think of me if I suggested that you tried me as a fairy god-

mother?" She spoke to me, not Anne. She die not even look at Amre after the first courteous, comprehensive glance.

"Why, I-I'm afraid I'd think you were m king fun of me," I stammered, since some answer must be given. "Then you'd be mistaken. I fancied rom same of the expressions which I involuntarily overheard that you were not-we'l, not quite a conventional

giri; that you had an original way regarding life. If you have, we might ultivate each other's acquaintan with mutual advantage." "I should find it more interesting " krow you than you would to know nie." I said meekly, for I felt as if I

and te dreaming. "That remains to be seen. prefixe loks promising. Let's begin, if you don't mind, to cut each I heard somebody say, and was dimly ther's leaves. My name is Sophie de measure you need only mark, 32, 34, or Gretton — Lady Sophle de Gretton, strangers call me. What is yours" "Const elo Brand." I answered.

asure. When misses' or child's THE EVILS OF SUBSTITUTION EX POSED.

A dealer substitutes because he centric person, who is tired of most makes more profit on an inferior ar- things and pines for variety, might be ticle. A local citizen was induced to seized with a sudden violent desire to take a substitute for Putnam's Corn have you for-for a new doll to play Extractor, with the result that the sub- with?" stitute burnt his toes and failed to I did not take her at her word and cure. Putnam's contains no acids, and glance mirrofward for I was familiar nausea and indigestion at once, setis guaranteed. Always get Putnam's enough with the reflection I should ties the stomach and makes you well, and unhappy, yet obstinate.

I had never talked to a Lady Any tonly saw it in small, greenish sections at home. I was not ignorant of the formidable if she cause, not the fact that I was pretty, or might be pretty in a decent dress; but I had not suspected that I was pretty enough Sarah's ir:ends in Peckhan.

they call you Consuelo?" I blushed vividly.

consolation.'

cause I wanted to think." "And our chatter disturbed you." do you say, you and your friend, to I were determined to go." going home with me and having a I made these explanations jerkily, talk over a cup of tea?"

was an adventure! The shabby nurse- on them, I broke out: ry governess from Peckham asked to tea with a personage in Park Lane!

Bryden, I'm sure." I turned to Anne, but her face exshe pretends to be, why on earth play with?"

CHAPTER II.

The Mysterious Visitor. Anne, whom I had known ever since to get you comparatively cheap." my dear mother and I had stopped at the boarding house which her less columns of society gossip, bristwas for some nefarious purpose of her turbed spirit.

ired of Peckham. If something would ting home. We don't live in Park you did not guess that I observed you, Lane, and we've a long way to go."

> gested the lady in lavender. such a chance be thrown in my way you satisfied?" again; my future was bounded by "Don't you think we might, dear?" But-it would be pleasant."

we might manage a few minutes." Lady Sophie de Gretton rose.

"We won't delay, then, if you haven't

hoped Lady Sophie did not realize that ready to drink it down to the she was waiting to see whether we should be led into Park Lane. But we were led there, and stopped

before a quaint, pretty little white woman. I had not actually glanced house, sandwiched in between two big my eye had reflected a pale lavender pink and white geraniums, and frothing over with snowy, frilled curtains. So far the adventure seemed genuine; and the footman who opened the door (respectfully addressing our companion as "my lady") was grand enough to convince even Anne.

We passed through a miniature hall, whose walls could not be seen for exquisite engravings, went up half a stairway, and had the door of a fairy swam before my eyes. bower thrown open for us. Cousin Sarah East would have scorned chintz but Lady Sophie de Gretton's turn up later." drawing-room was all white and green and rosy and ruffly with chintz.

with strawberries and cream and pend on many things." tiny cakes, and quantities of silver

looked imposingly ancestral. little brown face had relaxed into a or carelessness. mingling of curiosity and good nature.

She had a brusque way of speaking, went on abruptly:

"You haven't told me where you "In another world," I retorted. "They

call it Peckham." "Do you like this better?" "Yes," entering into the spirit of the

catechism. "How would you like to have that wish of yours granted-as I hinted it might be, if you would trust to my wand - and live here, surrounded by the joys which I heard you cataloguing to your fairy godmother? Now, don't fall into error again, and fancy I'm making fun of you, for I'm not. I'm asking you a serious question, and

must have fallen asleep in my chair. I want a serious answer." A curious tingling chill was creeping up from my finger tips. "I-I don't think I understand you," aware that the somebody could only

> be myself. "Yes, you do. If you are dumfounded, it is because you are a singularly modest young woman. Turn round: glance at that mirror on the wall near you, and see whether you can guess why a rather lonely, ec-

have net there; though, to be sure, and all for 25 cents per bottle.

"What a queer name! Why did (which the youngest East had sat on in a rage this morning,) boots, and

"My mother had had a great deal "You don't answer. Don't you think of trouble. She hoped I would be her your people would let you come for

"Oh, I beg your pardon; I didn't "I have no people. Only a cousin, mean to be prying. But it's my turn who doesn't like anyone to know that to impart information now. I live we're cousins. When she is angry she close by, in Park Lane. You can al- says she 'keeps me out of charity.' most see my house from here. I When I answer her back, I say that I strolled into the park by myself be- more than earn my living. Sometimes she tells me she wishes I were out of her sight forever. I don't know whether "On the contrary, it has been most she means it or not, but I do not suphelpful-why, is my secret. But what pose she could force me to stay if

and then, at the end, before Lady My heart gave a little jump. Here Sophie de Gretton could comment up-

"But why-why do you say such strange things to me, whom you never "I should like it immensely, thank saw till an hour ago? There are you, and so would my friend, Anne thousands of girls whom you know who would love to come and visit you -poor girls, perhaps, yet in your own pressed disapproval. I could read her class of life. Why do you put such thoughts, and guessed that she was ideas in my head when you must feel, saying to herself: "Humph! how do if you stop to think, that by tonight we know that this bird of paradise you will be sorry, and have to dis-

"My mind is made up," she quietly returned. "As for the 'why-why' There's something pretty queer about which you fling at me, can't you be satisfied with the explanation I have given? I've set my heart on having you to play with. You are the prettiest doll in the whole shop, and I hope

"But what would you do with me?" "Oh, put you in pretty frocks, take

I had not meant to speak aloud, for the words sounded ungracious. But Lady Sophie's handsome face ling with titles. Probably she was flushed, and she bit her lip. For an "It would have to be a book for familiar with that of Lady Sophie de instant her eyes appeared to flinch children. Nothing has ever happened Gretton, who lived in Park Lane, and from mine, and suspicion, vague, yet to me since I was a child, and then believed that our eccentric new friend sharply pinching, clutched my per-

"Well, if you must have it, my fancy for you arose partly from a resem-"I'm afraid," she replied stiffly to blance to some one I used to know and the question in my eyes, "that it's admire years ago. I noticed it the inrather late, and we ought to be get- stant I saw you in the park, and though I hardly took my eyes from your face, "Come alone, Miss Brand, is your peeping under the frills on my sunfriend has no time to spare," sug- shade, until I spoke to you. Now that I've exhibited myself as a woman of It was a temptation. Never would sentiment—a creature I despise—are

Perforce, I had to answer faltering-Peckham. Yet I could not leave Anne. ly that I was. But suspicion, once roused, would not be put to sleep I pleaded. "I won't go without you, again so soon. There was a look in Lady Sophie de Gretton's eves which "I wouldn't dream of letting you go told me (or I morbidly imagined it) alone," said Anne, with the air of that there was still something conthen, dear fairy godmother, wave your preserving me from a death trap. "If cealed under her most unexpected, magic wand which so sadly resembles you really wish it so much, I dare say most astonishing offer. I felt this electrically, yet I would not listen to the subdued whisperings.

What if there was something else? many Parls gowns, as much fun, as much time to spend, for I have several What did it matter? What did anywild a whirl of gaiety, as she will en- things to say which I think will sur- thing matter if this transformation of my life could come about? I was Anne walked, along, keeping those intoxicated by the cup that she held or exalted wish; but I'm in the mood for that, and nothing else, today."

Anne walked along, keeping those intoxicated by the cup that she held big gray eyes of hers wide open. I out to me, and I would have been big gray eyes of hers wide open. -if only I need not taste the dregs

quite yet. "I must be hard to please if I were not satisfied." I said. "But I'm so bewildered, you must forgive me. Only in her direction, but the corner of ones, its windows blossoming with tell me, since you say this is real and serious, what I am to do."

"You are to get leave, and come to stop with me, as soon as you can," "Oh, for how long? A week-a fortnight-if you won't mind my ask-

"Would it be worth while your of fending your Peckham relative and losing a home for a fortnight?" I drew in my breath. The room

"Yes!" I cried recklessly. would be worth it all-for that. For "That was right, William. I will see for her parlor in Peckham, where she a fortnight I should have lived. I had a "suite" of saddlebag, or some- should 'have had my day,' and surely thing else that sounded horsey to the something, some sort of work, would Lady Sophie remembered us. But

"Brava! you're a girl after my own heart. You are a woman who dares We sat down, I feeling more con- I was only trying you. I'd keep you scious of my dusty old boots and longer than a fortnight. Just how serge, white round the seams, than long, I'm too honest, Miss Brand, to hurried on: ever. Presently the footman brought pretend to settle now. It would de-

"Now for business!" exclaimed Lady hide something of mystery. But I was not drive to Peckham for you. You Sophie, when I had grown more and used to mystery. I had it in my own shall come here, but don't bother could only be together in an omnibus more dazed with the thought that I life, so close, so intimate a companion, about-er-much packing. It will

was dreaming her, and Anne's shrewd that familiarity had bred contempt-It was business, then! I was stabbed thereof; and you would have to trust longer now, as she is in haste, and with humiliating dread lest Lady me to see that your future prospects I've an early dinner, for a theater Sophie de Gretton were on the com- at Peckham or elsewhere were not party, to dress for, too. Good-by, or think me a genius. I wonder what mittee of a girls' friendly society, and endangered. Meanwhile I can promise rather, au revoir!" had gathered us in as likely candidates. you this: While your visit lasts you

shall have everything that the most despite her low, sweet voice, and she spoiled and petted girl could ask for with. William had been rung for to for an example in speaking to your June sunlight of Park Lane again, friend in the park. By the way, I banished from fairyland, humbly know her well, and you shall know her waiting for an omnibus. too, if you wish, though I warn you she doesn't easily tolerate rivals, and get rid of us?" queried Anne. "And you will be so dangerous a one-that why was she so pleased because the the rose of her acquaintance may have footman had shown that man into its thorns.'

I wonder if a spirit of prophecy had entered into Lady Sophie de Gretton. that she should have made use of just those words?

As she spoke the door opened, and brute of a William was ashamed, too. the footman who had brought in tea. That's why." appeared.

"Sir George Seaforth, my lady-" he had decorously begun, when his mist- words, Con, there's a mystery of some ress sprang up impulsively, her face flushing. Her eyes darted to the door- up in it. Don't go to stop with that way, well nigh' blocked by the man's padded shoulders, and so doing her features slightly relaxed.

The visitor was, at all events, not close behind the servant, and for some reason she was glad of the respite. "Where is he?" she questioned, a slight quiver in her voice.

"I showed Sir George into the boudoir, your ladyship, thinking you were engaged." UNEASINESS IN THE STOMACH.

That's the complaint to prove the

merit of Polson's Nerviline. Cures announce a visitor my excitement had

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him there in a few minutes." William vanished; the door closed; there was a subtle change in her man-

"It is settled, then?" she asked. Her tone was almost impatient, and, as soon as I had mumured "Yes," she

"Good! Can you get away the day after tomorrow? Ah, I'm very pleased. Again her eyes dropped away from I will-but no, on second thoughts, for mine as if their falling lashes would several reasons, perhaps I'd better amuse you to choose a new outfit with then separate, she proceeding in one me. I may depend on you? Then I "Sufficient for the day is the evil won't keep you and Miss-er-Bryden

Before we knew what had happened we had been cordially shaken hands -quite as much as the one you took show us out, and we were in the warm

"Why was she in such a hurry to

another room?" My ears tingled with the sting of my conviction. "She was ashamed to have anyone see us in our dowdy clothes. And that

"Oh, do you think so? I don't. goes deeper than that. Mark my sort, and the man who called is mixed woman, dear. It's all too fantastic. No good can come of it, but maybe dreadful harm to you."

No wonder that Anne's words struck coldly on my heart. It was odd that she, as well as I. should have suspected something hidden, for Ladv Sophie de Gretton's explanation, though eccentric, had sounded frank enough. I would not have given up my new prospects, chimerical as they still appeared, unwise as it was according to an old proverb to exchange "a bird in the hand for two in the bush," but since the entrance of the footman to been dving down. Now I felt chilled

"I can't help it," I said sulkily. "It's

"Ah!" with a little relieved sigh. | done now, for good or evil. I wish an omnibus would come." But at an unseen distance something

had happened, and there was a block in the stream of traffic. Not an omnibus was in sight, and none of the carrages packed into Hamilton Place were able to move out into Piccadilly Anne and I were obliged to stand close by the curbstone waiting, and though was in too reckless a mood to care whether I were late in arriving at Happihelme Villa or not, I was also too impatient to tolerate waiting. I wanted to be off: I wanted to be going somewhere, anywhere, Anne and I

To Be Continued.

direction. I in another.

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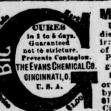
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