



AN AMERICAN GIRL IN LONDON.

BY SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN.

(Continued from page 100.)

Mrs. Bangley Coffin was tall, with a beautiful figure and pale gold hair. The Misses Bangley Coffin were also tall, with prospectively beautiful figures and pale gold hair. I never saw such a resemblance between mother and daughters as there was between the Misses Bangley Coffin and their mamma. Both they and their mamma had on dresses which it was perfectly evident they had never worn before, and of which they demanded my opinion with a frankness that surprised me.

"What do you think," said they, "of our Ascot frocks?" I admired them very much. They represented, among them, nearly all the fashionable novelties; and yet they had a sort of conventional originality. If I may say such a thing, which was extremely striking. They seemed satisfied with my applause, but promptly fell upon me for not meriting applause myself.

"We saw you," they said, unitedly, "in that frock last Sunday in the park!" and there was a distinct reproach in the way they said it. "It's quite charming!" they assured me—and it was—but it's not as if you hadn't quantities of them! Do you mean to say Lady Torquillin didn't tell you you ought to have a special frock for Ascot?"

"She said I should do very well in this," I declared, "and that it would be a sin to buy another—I had much better give the money to Doctor Barnardo!"

The husband and father of the Bangley Coffins was a short, square-shouldered gentleman, with bushy eyebrow, a large mustache, plaid trousers, and a gray tail-coat that was a very tight fit round the waist. He had an expression of deep sagacity; and he took from an inner pocket and fondled now and then a case containing six very large brown cigars. His look of peculiar anticipative intelligence, combined with the cigars, gave me the idea that we should not be overburdened with Mr. Bangley Coffin's society during the day, which proved to be a correct one.

We started with a sense of disappointment, which seemed to come in through the windows and envelop the Bangley Coffins, because "some people" they had expected failed to appear upon the platform. Mr. Bangley Coffin looked particularly depressed.

"Don't see how the deuce we're going to arrange!" he said to Mrs. Bangley Coffin, with unctious.

"Oh, there's sure to be somebody, Joey, love!" she returned, cheerfully, "and in any case, you see, we have you!"

To which Mr. Bangley Coffin gave a dubious and indistinct assent. I did not get on well with Mr. Bangley Coffin. He seemed to mean well, but he had a great many phrases which I did not in the least understand, and to which he invariably added, "As you say in America." It was never by any chance a thing we did say in America, but nothing could make Mr. Bangley Coffin believe that. I can't say that we had much general conversation either, but in what there was I noticed great good-feeling between the Misses Bangley Coffin and their mamma.

"The bonnet of that Israelite at the other end of the carriage would suit you to a T, mummie!" one of them remarked, in a joke.

The bonnet was a terrible affair in four shades of heliotrope.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Bangley Coffin, smiling quite good-naturedly, "that's about my form."

The Bangley Coffins were all form. Form, for them, regulated existence. It was the all-compelling law of the spheres, the test of all human action and desire. "Good form" was the ultimate expression of their respect; "bad form" their final declaration of contempt. Perhaps I should misjudge the Bangley Coffins if I said form was their conscience, and I don't want to misjudge them—they were very pleasant to me. But I don't think they would have cared to risk their eternal salvation upon any religious tenets that were not entirely *comme il faut*—I mean the ladies Bangley Coffin. The head of their house twisted his mustache and seemed more or less indifferent.

There is no doubt that in the end we did get to Ascot, and left our dust-cloaks in charge of that obliging middle-aged person who is to be found in every ladies' waiting-room in England. There was some discussion as to whether we should or should not leave our dust-cloaks with her. They were obviously unbecoming, but, obviously also, it might rain. However, in the end we did. Mrs. Bangley Coffin thought we might trust to Providence, and Providence proved itself worthy of Mrs. Bangley Coffin's confidence. Again as we joined the crowd that surged out of the station I noticed that look of anxious expectancy on the face of the Bangley Coffin family. It was keener than before, and all-embracing. I even fancied I noticed an undercurrent of division of survey—an arrangement by which Mr. Bangley Coffin looked to the north and Mrs. Bangley Coffin to the south, one young lady to the east and the other to the west.

"We really must keep an eye open," said Mr. Bangley Coffin. "Coming this way? Oh! Hallo, Pipply, old man! Hare you?" with extreme cordiality to a short, very stout gentleman in gray, with a pink face and a hooked nose, and a white mustache, and a blue-spotted necktie—a New Yorker, I was sure, before he spoke.

Pipply responded with very moderate transports, and shook hands hastily with the ladies attached to Mr. Bangley Coffin.

"Mrs. Pipply's with you, I see," continued Mr. Bangley Coffin, joyously, "and that charming sister of hers, Kitty, we must see whether they have forgotten us, mustn't we?" and he and Kitty advanced upon two very much accented fair ladies in frilled muslins and large flowery hats. They were dressed as fashionably as Bond Street could dress them, and they were as plump and pretty as could be, but perhaps just a little too big and blue of eye and pink-and-white of complexion quite to satisfy the Bangley Coffin idea of "form." It would be difficult to account otherwise for what they did. For the Pipplys, they were very amiable, but, as you might say, at bay; and after reproaching the Bangley Coffins with having never, never, never come to see them, after promising *solemnly* to do so at Cannes, where they had all had such a good time together, Mrs. Pipply proceeded to say that she didn't know whether we were driving—if not, they had room for one, and we might arrange to meet again somewhere.

"How good of you!" said Mrs. Bangley Coffin, and looked at her two daughters.

"We're really obliged to you!" said Mr. Bangley Coffin, and bent a gaze of strong compulsion upon his wife.

The young ladies smiled, hesitated, and looked at me. I couldn't go. I had not even been introduced. There was an awkward pause—the kind of pause you never get out of England—and as the Pipplys, rather huffed and rather in a hurry, were moving off, Mrs. Bangley Coffin covered their retreat, as it were, with the unblushing statement that she was afraid we must try to keep our little party together. And we lost the

Pipplys, whereupon Mr. Bangley Coffin regarded his family with the air of a disciplinarian.

"They're certain to be on a drag," said he, "and no end of Pipply's clubs have tents. Why didn't one of you go? Not classy enough, eh?"

"I always think it's such a frightful charge for admission to the Grand Stand," said Mrs. Bangley Coffin, as we walked up the arborial approach to it. "A sovereign! Of course they have to do it, you know, to keep the mob out; but really, when one thinks of it, it is too much."

I thought this a real kindness of Mrs. Bangley Coffin, because if I had not known it was so much I might have let Mr. Bangley Coffin pay for my ticket, too.

It was about this time that Mr. Bangley Coffin disappeared. He launched us, as it were, upon the crowded terrace in front of the Grand Stand, where at every turn the Misses Bangley Coffin expected to see a man they knew. He remained semi-detached and clinging for about a quarter of an hour, coming up with an agreeable criticism upon a particular costume, darting off again to talk to a large, calm man with an expansive checked shirt-front and silk hat, who on the back of his head who carried a note-book. Then, once, Mrs. Bangley Coffin addressed him, thinking him behind her.

"Joey, love!" said she. "Joey, love!" said she again, turning her head.

But Joey was utterly and wholly gone. I believe he explained afterward that he had lost us.

"There!" said Mrs. Bangley Coffin, with incisiveness. "Now we must see somebody we know! Pet, isn't that Sir Melville Cartus?"

It was, and Sir Melville came up in response to Mrs. Bangley Coffin's eyeglass and bow and smile, and made himself extremely agreeable for about four minutes and a quarter. Then he also took off his hat with much charm of manner and went away. So did a nervous little Mr. Trifugis, who joined us for a short time. He said he was on the Fitzwalters' drag, and it was so uncommon full he had apprehensions about getting back. Whose drag were we on, and didn't we think it was drawing near the halcyon hour of luncheon?

"Little beast!" said Mrs. Bangley Coffin, candidly.

"Nobody's," said Mrs. Bangley Coffin, pointedly.

"We came by train this year. Joey is suffering from a fit of economy—the result of Surefoot's behavior at the Derby. It is about time for luncheon."

Whereat Mr. Trifugis dropped his eyeglass and looked absently over his left shoulder, blushing hard. Then he screwed the eyeglass in again very tight, looking at us with amiable indefiniteness, took off his hat, and departed.

"There's not the slightest reason why," he couldn't have given us all luncheon at the Lyric inclosure!"

Then I began to see why it was so necessary that we should meet somebody we knew—it meant sustenance. It was, as Mr. Trifugis had said, quite time for sustenance, and neither the Bangley Coffin family nor I had had any since breakfast, and if it had not been for that consideration, which was naturally a serious one, I, for my part, would have been delighted just to go round, as we seemed likely to do, by ourselves.

"I think we must try the drags," said Mrs. Bangley Coffin, and we defiled out into the crowd beyond the gates, whose dress is not original, that surges unremuneratively between the people who pay on the coaches and the people who pay on the lawn. We made our way through it, and walked slowly in the very shadow of the drags, on top of which people with no better appetites than we had were ostentatiously feasting. We were all to look out for the Pipply hats, and we did—in vain.

We saw Mr. Trifugis, and noted bitterly that he had not been at all too late. An actress on the Lyric drag gave us a very frank and full-flavored criticism of our dresses, but it was unsatisfying, except to the sensibilities.

"Shall we try behind, mamma?" asked one of the young ladies.

"Who could possibly see us behind?" exclaimed Mrs. Bangley Coffin, who was getting cross. Nevertheless, we did try behind, and somebody did see us—several very intelligent footmen.

"Is there no place," I inquired for the fourth or fifth time, "where we could buy a little light refreshment?"

Mrs. Bangley Coffin didn't say there was not, but seemed to think it so improbable that it was hardly worth our while to look.

"Nobody lunches at Ascot, Miss Wick," she said at last, with some asperity, "except on the drags or at the club inclosures. It's—it's impossible."

"Well," I said, "I think it's very unenterprising not to make provision for such a large number of people. If this were in America—" but just then we came face to face with Colonel and Mrs. J. B. Silverthorn, of St. Paul, Minnesota. To say that I was glad to see these old friends in this particular emergency is to say very little. I knew the Colonel's theory of living, and I was quite sure that, surviving for six hours on an English race course had no place in it. I knew his generous heart, too, and was confident that any daughter of poppa's might rely upon it to the utmost. So, after introducing Mrs. and the Misses Bangley Coffin, I proceeded to explain our unfortunate situation.

"Can you tell us," I begged, "where we can get something to eat?"

"Come right along with me," he said. "It isn't just the Fifth Avenue Hotel, but it'll do if you're hungry, and I guess you are."

And we followed him to the rather abridged seclusion of the restaurant behind the Grand Stand.

The Colonel did it all very handsomely—ordered champagne and more dishes than twice as many people could have disposed of; but the cloud that rested upon the brows of Mrs. and the Misses Bangley Coffin did not disperse with the comforting influence of food, and they kept a nervous eye upon the comers and goers. I suppose they had waited too long for their meal to really enjoy it.

We parted from the Colonel and Mrs. Silverthorn almost immediately afterward—they said they wanted to go and have another good look at the royalties and dukes in their own yard, where Mr. Bangley Coffin thought it was really our duty to stay in a row and saw the Gold Cup won, and shortly after took an early train for London, Mrs. Bangley Coffin declaring that she had no heart for another sovereign for the Paddock.

XXI.

"I don't know what we were about to let Miss Wick miss the boats," said Mr. Mafferton one day over his afternoon tea in Lady Torquillin's flat. I looked at Lady Torquillin, and said I thought Mr. Mafferton must be mistaken: I had never missed a boat in my life, and besides, we hadn't been going anywhere by boat lately. The reason we had put off our trip to Richmond five times was invariably because of the weather. Peter Corke happened to be there that afternoon, too, though she didn't make much of a visit. "Oh! you aborigine!" she began about the boats, and I presently understood another of those English descriptive terms by which you mean something that you do not say.

The discussion ended, very happily for me, in an arrangement suggested jointly by Miss Corke and Mr. Mafferton, Lady Torquillin and I should go to Oxford to see "the Eights," Mr. Mafferton had a nephew at Pembroke, and no doubt the young cub would be delighted to look after us. Miss Corke's younger brother was at Exeter, and she would write to the dear boy at once that he must be nice to us.

I suppose we have rather a large, exaggerated idea of Oxford in America, thinking about it, as it were, externally. As a name it is so constantly before us, and the terms of respect in which the English dispatches speak of it are so marked, that its importance in our eyes has become extremely great. We think it a city, of course no place could grow to such fame naturally invested in large blocks of fine buildings, chiefly devoted to business, in a widely extended and highly-perfected telephone system, and in avenues of Queen Anne residences with the latest modern conveniences. Both our young gentlemen friends were fractional parts of the Eights, and were,

therefore, unable to meet us. It had been arranged that we should lunch with one at two and take tea with the other at five, but Lady Torquillin declared herself in urgent need of something sustaining as soon as we arrived, and "Shall we go to the Clarendon to get it?" said she, "or to Boffin's?"

"What is Boffin's?" I inquired. It is not safe, in English localisms, to assume that you know anything.

"Boffin's is a pastry-cook's," Lady Torquillin informed me, and I immediately elected for Boffin's. It was something idyllic, in these commonplace days, when Dickens has been so long dead, that Boffin should be a pastry-cook, and that a pastry-cook should be Boffin.

"Shall we get," said I to Lady Torquillin, "any glimpse of the High before we reach Boffin's?"

Dear Lady Torquillin looked at me sternly, as if to discover some latent insincerity.

"None of your impertinence, miss," said she; "this is the High!"

People who know their way about Oxford will understand how we found ours to Pembroke from the High. I find that I have forgotten. But at last we walked out of the relative bustle of the high-ways and by-ways into the quietest place I ever saw or felt, except a graveyard in the Strand—a green square hedged in with buildings of great dignity and solidity and very serious mind. I felt as we walked around it, to ask a respectable-looking man waiting about on the other side where Mr. Sanders Horton's rooms were, as if I were in church.

"Yes! This way, if you please," said the respectable-looking man. "Mr. Horton's room is on the first floor 'h'up, m';" and as Mr. Horton himself had come out on the landing to receive us, and was presently very prettily shaking hands with us, we had no further difficulty. He immediately introduced his friend, Lord Symonds, who seemed, if anything, less mature, but whose manners were quite as nice. Then we all sat down in Mr. Sanders Horton's pretty little room and watched the final evolution of luncheon on the table, and talked about the view.

"You have a lovely lawn," said I to Mr. Horton, who responded that it wasn't a bad quad; and when I asked if the respectable-looking man downstairs was the caretaker of the college. "Oh, nothing so swagger!" said Lord Symonds, "probably a scout!"

And the materialization of a quad and a scout did more than all the guide books I read up afterward to give me a realizing sense of being in an English university center. We looked at Mr. Horton's pictures, too, and examined, complacently, all his decorative effects of wood-carving and old china, doing our duty, as is required of ladies visiting the manège of a young gentleman, with enthusiasm. Among the various photographs of other boat-races on the walls was one in which Mr. Horton pointed out "the Torpids," which I could not help considering and remarking upon as a curious name for a boating crew.

"Why are they called that?" I asked; "they seem to be going pretty fast."

"Oh, rather!" responded Mr. Horton. "Upon my word, I don't know. It does seem hard lines, doesn't it? Symonds, where did these fellows get their name?"

But Lord Symonds didn't know exactly either—they'd always had it, he fancied; and Lady Torquillin explained that "this young lady" (meaning me) could never be satisfied with hearing that a thing was so because it was so—she must always know the why and wherefore of everything, even when there was neither why nor wherefore, at which we all laughed and sat down to luncheon. But I privately made up my mind to ask an explanation of the Torpids from the first Oxford graduate with honors that I met, and I did. He didn't know either. He was not a boating man, however—he had taken his honors in classics.

XXII.

It was an extremely nice lunch, served with anxious deference by the respectable-looking little man who had come upstairs and nervously commanded by Mr. Horton at one end with the cold joint and Lord Symonds at the other with the fowl. It began, I remember, with *bouillon*. Lady Torquillin partook of *bouillon*, so did I; but the respectable scout did not even offer it to the young gentlemen. I caught a rapid inquiring glance from Lady Torquillin. Could it be that there was not *bouillon* enough? The thought checked any utterance upon the subject, and we finished our soup with careful indifference.

Presently Mr. Horton asked if he might give us some salmon, not collectively, but individually and properly, Lady Torquillin first, and we said he might. He did not help Lord Symonds, and relapsed himself, as it were, into an empty plate. It was Lady Torquillin's business to inquire if the young gentlemen were not well, or if salmon did not agree with them, and not mine; but while I privately agitated this matter I unobservedly helped myself to mayonnaise.

"I beg your pardon!" said Mr. Sanders Horton, in a pink agony; "that's cream!"

So it was, waiting, in a beautiful old-fashioned silver pitcher, the advent of those idyls that come after. It was a critical moment, for it instantly flashed upon me that the respectable scout had forgotten the mayonnaise, and that I had been the means of making Mr. Sanders Horton very uncomfortable indeed. Only one thing occurred to me to say, for which I hope I may be forgiven. "Yes," I returned, "we like it with fish, in America." At which Mr. Horton looked interested and relieved. And I ate as much of the mixture as I could, with a smile, though the salmon had undergone a vinegar treatment which made this difficult.

"It is in Boston, is it not," remarked Lord Symonds, politely, "that the people live almost entirely upon beans?" And the conversation flowed quite generally until the advent of the fowl. It was a large, well-conditioned chicken, and when the young gentlemen, apparently by mutual consent, refrained from partaking of it, the situation had reached a degree of unreasonableness which was more than Lady Torquillin could endure.

"Do you intend to eat *nothing*?" she inquired, with the air of one who will accept no prevarications.

"Oh, we'd like to, but we can't," they replied, earnestly and simultaneously.

"We're still in training, you know," Lord Symington went on. "Fellows have got to train pretty much on the stodge," and at this juncture Mr. Horton solemnly cut two slices of the cold beef and sent them to his friend, helping himself to the same quantity with mathematical exactness. Then with plain bread, and gravity which might be almost called severe, they attacked it.

I am not pretending to write about the things that ought to have impressed me most, but the things that did impress me most; and they were, at Mr. Sanders Horton's luncheon, the splendid old silver college goblets into which our host poured us lavish bumpers of claret-cup, the moral support of the respectable scout, and the character and dignity an ideal of duty may possess even in connection with cold beef. I came into severe contact with an idiom, too, which I shall always associate with that occasion. Lord Symonds did not belong to Pembroke College, and I asked him, after we had exchanged quite a good deal of polite conversation, which one he did belong to.

"How lovely these old colleges are," I remarked, "and so nice and impressive and time-stained! Which one do you attend, Lord Symonds?"

"Maudlin," said Lord Symonds, apparently taking no notice of my question, and objecting to the preceding sentiment.

"Do you think so?" I said. I was not offended. I had made up my mind some time before never to be offended in England until I understood things. "I'm very sorry, but they do strike an American that way, you know."

Lord Symonds did not seem to grasp my meaning. "It is jolly old," said he. "Not so old as some of 'em. New, for instance. But I thought you asked my college. Maudlin, just this side of Maudlin Bridge, you know."

"Oh!" I said. And will you be kind enough to spell your college, Lord Symonds? I am but a simple American, over here partly for the purpose of improving my mind.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]