



## GAY LIFE AT A SUMMER RESORT.

TIME—EVENING.

Mr. Jinks (the life of the party) entertains a room full of mosquitoes with his favorite song—"O isn't this awfully jolly, ha! ha!"

## HER MAJESTY'S CUSTOMS.

I HAD been notified of the arrival at the custom-house of a box of books for me from England. I was densely ignorant of the constitution and by-laws of that great autocracy of this country, but imagined that all I had to do was to dress with care, betake myself to the custom-house, present my paper, and pay the duties. Then, of course, I should be able to collect my goods, and go on my way rejoicing. This proves how ignorant I was.

I was graciously received at the custom-house by a benignant elderly gentleman, and given some papers to fill out. This looked simple enough; and as I proceeded to fill them out (a not difficult task) I mentally laughed at the cock-and-bull stories that had been told me about the red tapeism of custom-houses. The benignant elderly gentleman moved away from me in the discharge of his duties, and my work of filling out the papers was all but completed when a spruce, mustacheless young man sidled up to me, and politely but authoritatively asked to see my papers.

I weakly surrendered them. The young man smiled a smile of profound pity for my dense ignorance as his eagle eye glanced over those papers. He was evidently a youth who, in moments of confidence, told his friend and his inferiors that he could always tell by instinct when a greenhorn was at large in the custom-house.

"You are all wrong, my dear sir," he said, cheerfully. "It would be impossible for you to manage this sort of thing, anyway. The ways of the custom-house are peculiar, you know, my dear sir."

I replied that I really knew no such thing.

"They *are*, sir," he said, deliberately tearing up the papers he had taken from me. "The proper way will be to go to Mr. —, a custom-house broker, who will assume all responsibility, and save you all trouble. If you will mention my name," tendering me his card, "he

will push the matter through without delay. And it will cost you only fifty cents."

Then he figuratively, if not literally, put me out of doors, and very carefully pointed out the office of Mr. —. Of course it would never do if I should stumble into the office of some rival custom-house broker! But, begrudging my enterprising young friend the small commission he thought he had made sure of in my case, I threw away his card, and did turn into the office of a rival broker. This proves how churlish I was.

I had considerable curiosity to find out what manner of man the custom-house broker might be. I was prepared to face a portly, severe, individual, who would try to extort some very damaging confession from me, but who would generously spare my life. I was therefore somewhat surprised to find myself confronted by a dapper little fellow, hallasted by a huge and extravagant eyeglass, but whom, for all that, even the slim senator from Virginia could easily have pitched out of the window. He looked as if he must have been tenderly brought up on fish balls and tapioca, and carefully protected from the sun and from draughty doors. I have since made an important discovery, to wit: that all custom-house brokers are not cast in the same mould.

This young man soon made me aware that however frail and spiritual he might look, he yet rejoiced in a gigantic intellect, and had ways and means of scaring some people almost to death.

The first thing he did was to prove to me that my books had been wrongly invoiced, and that in the name of his Queen and his country he was authorized to increase the invoice price by twelve dollars. As the duty on the books was fifteen cents on the dollar, this did not seem so very terrible, and I agreed to submit to the overcharge, though under protest. I thought I would allow him a fair start, just to see how far he would presume to go before I should suddenly check him. That was where I made an egregious mistake, for he seemed content to have raised and put into the pocket of his Queen and his country the sum of one dollar and eighty cents.

He now proceeded to lay before me such a pile of papers that I marveled where they all came from.

"You will sign your name and address, please; your name and address in full," he said, at last, taking up the undermost paper.

I did so, remarking that I had no objection to give him my age and the name of my dog, if he so desired.

He regarded me with withering scorn, and placed another paper before me to be signed. I perceived that these papers were precisely the same as those I had been given to fill out at the custom-house, only that here there were more of them. This was not calculated to soothe my ruffled spirits.

"Don't you wish me to fill out these papers in full?" I blandly inquired.

"No; it is my clerk's business to do that," he replied haughtily.

His clerk! I was astonished! But on looking around me I perceived an office boy of tender years and in all the glory of curly hair, pensively chewing gum in a corner. So he had a clerk, surely enough!

A third paper was spread before me, which I was requested to sign in two places. Things were beginning to get interesting. I had the curiosity to read a few lines, first humbly asking permission to do so. I had thought Blackstone dry and dreary reading—but this!

"Where do you get all your census papers, if I may ask?" I suddenly blurted out.