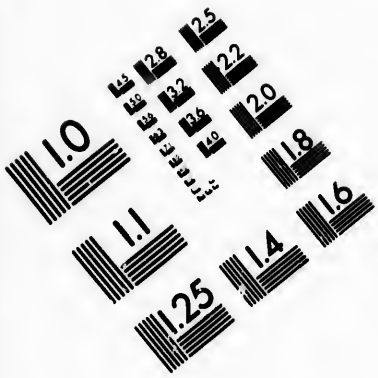

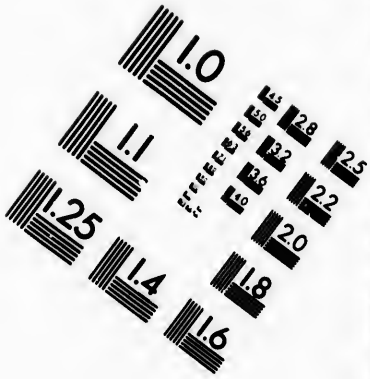

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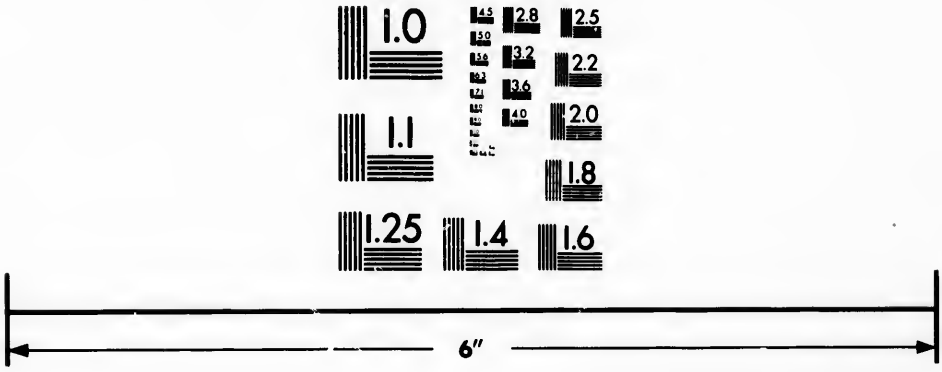

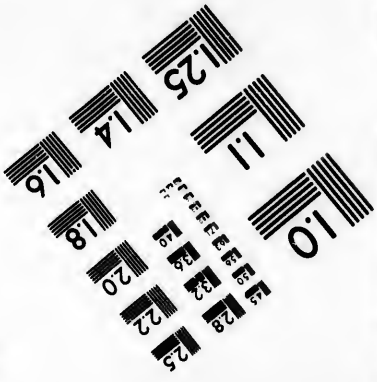

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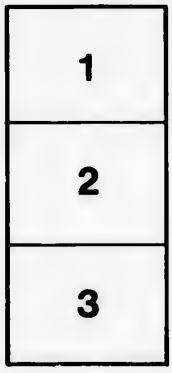

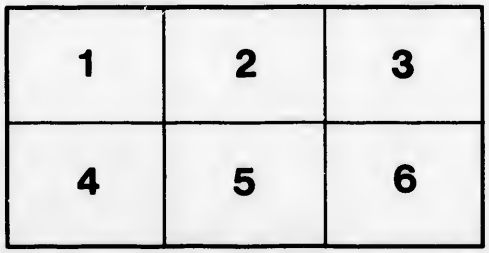

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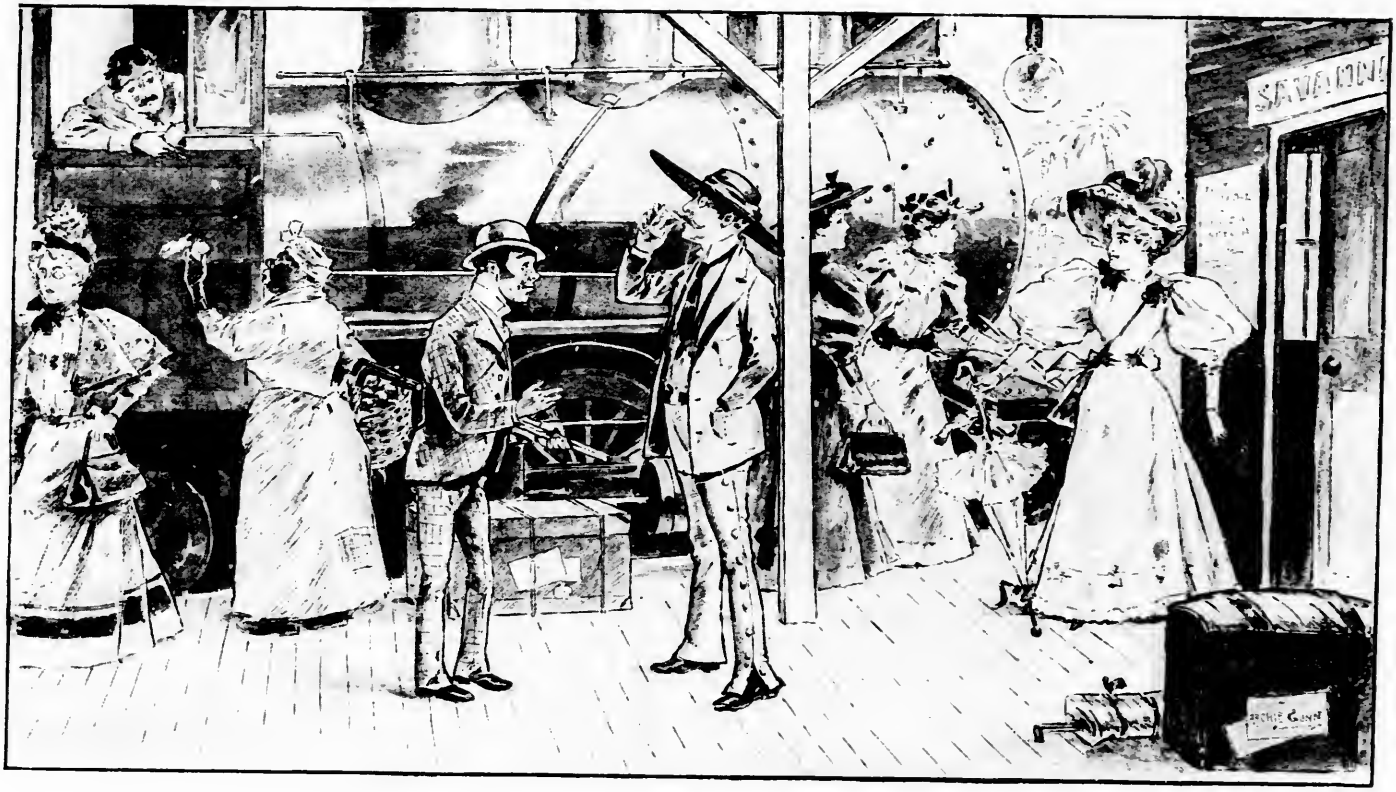

THE LADIES' JUGGERNAUT

A NOVEL

BY

ARCHIBALD CLAVERING GUNTER

AUTHOR OF

"MR. BARNES OF NEW YORK," ETC.

With Illustrations by ARCHIE GUNN and A. W. B. LINCOLN

TORONTO:

THE TORONTO NEWS COMPANY.

42 YONGE STREET.

1895.

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BOOK I.

The Flirtation in Florida.

(*Being portions of the Diary of Miss Evelyn Vallé Bulger.*)

CHAPTER I.

THE FLORIDA SPECIAL.

St. Augustine, February 27th, 1894.

It was thought best by papa that with the coming Lent I should have a relaxation from the wear and tear of my New York season—my *first* New York season!

Too many balls and parties, the family doctor said.

Too *few* balls and parties, thought I; for to a girl who is squeezed between the door and the jamb of the New York smart set, there is more wear and tear on her nervous system by the balls and parties to which she is *not* invited, than by those to which she is bidden. Many a night have I suffered the pangs of hideous despair because my name was forgotten—I will not say

omitted—in the list of buds invited to some swell function at Sherry's or Delmonicos'. Dancing the german with the worst partner in the room would not have racked me a tenth as much.

Not that I didn't have many invitations; no young lady who is supposed to be an heiress to vast sums of money is *always* forgotten. But the invitations I did not receive jarred upon me a great deal more than those I did. So our family doctor suggested a rest-cure from the struggles of metropolitan society, and I selected St. Augustine, preferring Florida to a religious retreat, though some young ladies get mightily advertised by this means in our daily newspapers. Papa, with his usual kindness, made no objection to pretty long milliners' bills for resting-costumes made of summery gauzes and laces and semi-tropical muslins.

Consequently, late in February, I found myself with my French maid Elise, warranted Parisian (a young lady whom my French professor says has destroyed my grammar but improved my facility in the language), on the 'Florida Special' en route for St. Augustine, where Mrs. Armitage, of Chicago, a cousin of my mother, has volunteered to chaperon me.

Mrs. Armitage and her daughter Mirabelle are already at the Ponce de Leon. My suite of rooms next to hers is already engaged; my dinner awaits me there to-morrow evening. I think this, as we run out of Jersey City at ten in the morning upon the great Southern express train—the aristocratic train, the train that costs more to travel on per mile than any other railroad accommodation in the United States.

As usual it is crowded; and my application not having been made sufficiently in advance, I have not been able to obtain a state-room; but a section has been secured to me which I occupy with my maid, who utters, in French volatile vernacular, her dismay at

the thought of climbing to the upper berth for our one night of railway travel. Does Elise think she will have the *lower* one? Not if Evelyn Vallé Bulgée understands her own comfort and convenience!

I write my name in this affected French style because it is the name that has been given to the family since we arrived in New York—not by my father, who still sticks to his old one, and still writes it plain "Bulger," but by myself and my aunt Seraphia, who have managed our social affairs since we moved to the Eastern metropolis from the Western one—Chicago. It is this awful name that I cannot get away from. It pursues me everywhere. As we run out of Jersey City the whole railroad seems lined with it; at every station it stares me in the face—"Bulger's Bile Exterminator!" My father appears to have secured the whole Pennsylvania railroad for the exhibition of "Bulger's Bile Exterminator!"

Why he should have given our family patronymic to his patent medicine I do not know. I suppose it didn't matter much *then*—thirty years ago, when he began business. Nobody seemed to think much of it in Chicago, and papa has his ambitions as well as other people. One is to be very rich, and the other is to make "Bulger's Bile Exterminator" the most celebrated patent medicine in the world.

The manner of changing our name was curious. On my poor dead mother's side our family were distant connections of the Chouteau-Vallés, the great French fur trading family who built up the valley of the Mississippi in early days and settled in St. Louis, though my own ancestors have resided in Chicago almost since the massacre by the Indians. Consequently I was christened Evelyn Vallé Bulger. But as Bulger has grown distasteful to my aunt Seraphia and myself we have changed it since our removal to New York, giving it,

as my father calls it, "a French twist," though he will not permit me to write it except in the ordinary vulgar way "Bulger."

This style of spelling he always sticks to and, in his frank Western manner, jeers: "Evie, whenever you want a new dress at White & Howard's, say 'Bulger!' When a new bracelet seems to hit you at Kirkpatrick's or Tiffany's, say 'Bulger!' It's the only way to get 'em." Consequently I say "Bulger" every time; but it destroys my dignity as a young lady.

My twelve-year old brother Bob has lately taken to placing his setter dog on his hind legs crying: "Carlo, if you want a cookie, say *Bulger!*" Father gave him five dollars for this hideous joke the other day, though aunt Seraphia whacked Bob for it. Aunt Seraphia is unmarried and a power in our house. She is father's sister, and owns a fourth of the Bulger's Exterminator.

However, the gentlemen who aspire to my good will, always address me as Miss Bulgée. But a creature, a Western business man, young Jonas Ripley, of Ripley's Polo-Pony Liniment, since being haughtily refused my hand, I am informed, speaks of me as "That Bulger girl," though when he was an aspirant he used to call me effusively "Miss Evelyn Vallé Bulgée."

For this change in the pronunciation of our name, aunt Seraphia and myself have authority. Look at the Virginia Taliaferros, who call themselves Tolivers; the English Cholmondeleys, who are styled Chumleys! Is not Derby pronounced Darby, and McCleod, McCloud? Why shouldn't Bulger be Bulgée?

"Bulger's Bile Exterminator," placarded on fences, on barns, on dead walls and on especially-erected signs, follows me through New Jersey and pursues me across Maryland into Washington, giving me a bad day of it.

Fortunately night comes on and hides it in Virginia, and I would have a pleasant evening with a yellow-

covered novel, did I not unfortunately chance to turn over the book and on the last page see a poem eulogizing "Bulger's Bile Exterminator." I toss the volume aside with an expression of disgust.

"Bulger's Bile Exterminator" impregnates the very atmosphere. It is impossible to escape from it. Papa is an advertising genius. But if papa didn't advertise, many more people would die of the liver complaint, at least so he says, and I shouldn't have so many new dresses. We must let the pleasant palliate the disagreeable.

With this idea in my brain I permit Elise to assist me to a night toilet, and betake myself to a six by three berth and the broken slumber permitted by the railroad train as it flies across North Carolina.

I awake next morning between Charleston and Savannah, quite well pleased with myself and satisfied to see that "Bulger's Bile Exterminator" has been generally replaced along the railroad tracks by piny woods and cypress forests, as the population has grown sparse and papa is a judicious advertiser.

However, it is an honest medicine, stolen from an Indian herb doctor in the far West by papa. It has made many a man and woman happy; it has given a great fortune to the Bulgée family, and as such I should respect it, though the French tastes derived from my mother have made me not entirely of a commercial mind and character.

My figure, I am happy to say, is a Chouteau-Vallé figure; my feet and hands are aristocratic; my admirers say I have the face of a beauty, my dressmaker hints that I have the figure of a—but I won't repeat my dressmaker's remarks—she is usually most complimentary immediately before presenting her bill.

Altogether I feel at peace with myself, as after taking breakfast in the dining car I look out of the window

upon the piny woods and cypress swamps that are becoming quite the dominating features of the landscape as we approach the boundaries of Georgia; my traveling dress of pale blue being becoming to my complexion and fitting me, to use a Western expression, "to a contour."

But a slight contemplation of piny woods and cypress swamps satisfies me. I take the novel again, forgetting, in the interest of the story, the advertisement upon its back.

After a little, literature palls on me. The day is soft, Southern and languid. What a change from snowy and icy New York! My tongue, which is not usually a quiet one, is tired with its enforced rest.

I look carelessly about the car—women, nothing but women. With the exception of a consumptive gentleman going to the piny woods in Georgia, and our fat negro porter, who is getting out his brushes to dust people off in the hope of fees, in approaching Savannah, the car is entirely occupied by my sex. Will there be equal dearth of masculine attractions at St. Augustine?

The thought makes me sigh. Not that I care particularly for gentlemen, still I like to have them about me in quantities to suit. Sometimes a great many; once in a great while—*one*. But that never lasts long with me. The one gentleman soon contrives to make himself unendurable. People hint I am hard to please; my father says I am "stuck up," men declare I am a flirt, women suggest I am a jilt, but it isn't true. When Mr. Right comes I know I have a heart and a soul that will leap up in me as high as it does in the third act of a four-act melodrama.

But I shall not get married until I am at least twenty-five; the joys of girlhood in America are sufficient to make one hesitate about changing her state,

and besides I couldn't leave papa. If I did he might marry again, which would be horrible, for he is the best, dearest, kindest papa the world has ever seen, though he won't let me call him "papa"—says it is affected; makes me call him "father" and compels me to have my cards printed "Bulger."

As I am thinking this, suddenly there is a flutter in the car, every female in it attempts to assume her most striking and effective pose; every woman is trying to say something brilliant; the lady behind me has begun to speak in French to her friend.

What has caused all this commotion?

I look around and hastily assume my best attitude myself.

A god-like youth is passing through!

He is over the medium height, dressed in semi-tropical Mexican or South American style. A single British eyeglass gives an almost ludicrous effect to his sombrero and Spanish appearance. His face is, however, Saxon, and has strong eyes and strong mouth. His frame is athletic; altogether he looks as if he might be a little more than passable.

He is followed by another man, this one unmistakably English, side chop whiskers and flunkey expression.

As they pass, the young man preceding the other turns, and says with rather an English accent: "Maddox, you imbecile, where are my Havanas? Go to my compartment, bring me half a dozen cigars. I am going to the observation car."

Maddox is the servant, what is the name of the master with the English voice, who is apparently a traveling man, though he carries a valet with him?

I don't know how I have discovered this. Of course I have not looked at him.

Even while this comes into my mind I hear the

young gentleman speak again. He says: "Maddox, I will wait here for you," and takes his station at the end of the car, a point of view particularly well suited to photographing me.

Why has he done so? To look at me? If he does look, am I all right? Yes! Even in this railroad costume I am satisfactory. My foot is on a footstool and prominent. Shall I remove it? No, it is a Chouteau-Vallé foot, and is perfectly booted.

A second later, not to be outdone, I photograph the youth in my eye. He is not so very young—probably a few years under thirty. He wears a long drooping mustache, and has remarkable eyes.

A minute later and the valet makes his appearance with the cigars. There is no excuse for the master remaining longer. He strides out to the observation car; I think reluctantly. I hope so. I wish the valet had not been in such a hurry.

I pick up the novel; it no longer interests me. I relapse into a brown study. I wish I had somebody to talk to—some *man* to talk to. I could easily get up a conversation with any of these ladies.

A quarter of an hour later the bell is ringing—the conductor has called: "Savannah! Ten minutes!"—

I have been in the car twenty-four hours; a little exercise will do me good. Assisted by the porter I step out, catchy little straw hat on head, and tropical, lacey sunshade in my hand.

Elise is about to follow, but I tell her to remain, and whisper to her: "Do not take your eye off my gripsack an instant!" Does she think I want to lose my diamonds?

On the platform most of the passengers are strolling about. The day is sunny, bright and inviting. As I walk up and down to obtain all the exercise possible in my limited time I pass the gentleman who had created

the commotion in the car. He is speaking to his valet. Chancing to hear his words they astonish me. "Maddox," he says, "move lively! I feel it coming on. Get me twenty-one grains and a quarter of quinine. Fly as if a bush-ranger were after you!"

The servitor starts for the car, and as I look upon the master I notice that though certainly not over thirty he is looking extremely languid, more so than the most nonchalant Englishman I ever met, and his face has that sallow tint peculiar to long residence in hot and pestilential climates. I give a nervous giggle as I suddenly think: "Bulger's Bile Exterminator would probably do him good."

My laugh attracts his attention; he gazes at me and seems to brighten up. Does he guess I am mentally prescribing for him? Then his valet comes hurrying with the quinine powder in a glass of sherry, which this gentleman tosses off with as much nonchalance as he would a B. and S.

Very shortly he looks brighter and more energetic. His eyes lose their peculiar languor and become flashing and irridescent. They seem to follow me about, not in any bold ungentlemanly manner, but as if he had put his eyes on a picture that pleased him and didn't care about taking them away again.

A moment after I pass through the gateway that leads to the drive to the town. The railway station is crowded and a little of the fresh breeze blowing from the Savannah River will refresh me. As I wander along the road, I chance to look back. He is at the gateway—he is coming out, also. Is it because he wants to keep me in his eye? Feminine curiosity induces me to test this.

A few steps further is a grassy cross-country lane. I will turn into it and stroll along it. Some little negro boys playing ball with oranges give me the excuse. I

turn down the lane and in fifty yards have come to the blackamoor urchins, who run to me beseeching me for half-dimes and small coin in the free and easy manner of the pickaninnies of our Southern States. As I distribute my silver among them he makes his appearance at the turn in the lane, and is apparently delaying himself lighting a cigar.

Just at this moment there is a clanging bell, a shrieking whistle and the rush of a railway train from the depot. Good heavens! is it the Florida Special? Have I lost it?

Unheeding my dignity I fly hurriedly to the railway station, passing the gentleman of the quinine powders, who follows me nonchalantly into the depot. The train is two hundred yards away and sprinting for Jacksonville like a quarter horse.

"Oh merciful goodness, stop it!" I cry out in the despair of the left-behind. It is not loud but deep; it is the wail of the woman whose gripsack, trunks and costumes, everything that makes traveling life endurable, are flying from her as fast as the remorseless locomotive can drag them.

At this moment I think I hear behind me: "Blast these American railways!" It wasn't "blast" that I heard, but I write it "blast."

With this, suddenly into my mind comes the Christian thought: "He who made me lose the train is left behind also." This brings me some satisfaction; besides, if I have no baggage I have at least plenty of money. I can telegraph Elise and Mrs. Armitage.

I turn to one of several negro hackmen, who, seeing my predicament, have set up shrieks, offering to take me to the various hostelries of the city, and make inquiries as to the best hotel.

While doing this I note the gentleman who has been the cause of my mishap saying a few words to one of

the railway porters. A minute after he bolts into the railway office and, before I have finished my business arrangement with the darky hack-driver, strides out and puts himself into our conversation in an easy and nonchalant manner, remarking: "Beg pardon, you've missed the train, I believe?" saluting me deferentially with his hat.

"Yes," I reply, shortly and nervously, and am about to continue my negotiation with the hack-driver when he of the quinine powders suddenly electrifies me with these words: "If you will permit me, I think I can enable you to rejoin your train."

"Impossible! It has gone away; it has taken my baggage," I gasp irrelevantly.

"I say, keep up your pluck, you'll catch your train safe enough," interjects the young man in a kind of pat-me-on-the-back air. I stare at him haughtily, as he runs on easily: "Those beggars in there, don't yer know"—he points to the railroad office—"tell me the special will probably be detained at the Y or junction, three miles from here, some fifteen minutes, for another train. I have engaged for myself an engine and cab to run out there. Accept my hospitality and we'll be there certainly before the Florida Special leaves. Will yer?"

"Accept your hospitality?" gasp I. "Of course! Thank you—how good of you."

"Don't mention it. It was entirely for myself; I am left also. But we must step quick. Here are our engine and car."

As he says this, a switch locomotive with a small caboose attached runs up beside the platform. Giving the negro hack driver, who commences to cry out in his illogical way at the injustice with which he has been treated, half a dollar, I permit myself to be assisted into the car by the gentleman who has saved me from an unfortunate adventure.

As I look at him I forgive him for having made me lose the Special; as he gazes at me something tells me that he forgives himself also.

A minute after with feminine logic I change my mind again. If he had planned this adventure to gain my acquaintance he could not have done it more deftly. Is it possible that Miss Evelyn Vallé Bulgée is the victim of an audacious attempt to make her acquaintance?

A second's thought disposes of this in the negative. It was my own fault. I went away from the station on my own accord. Still my glance is, I flatter myself, cool and haughty enough for a Lady Vere de Vere, as I sit in the caboose car.

Whether it is my manner or whether it is English breeding that makes introduction imperative between fellow human beings, I know not; but he of the quinine powder sits opposite me and says nothing.

A minute after I would like to speak to him; my tongue has been so very quiet all day. If it keeps still much longer it will be paralyzed. But I have missed the opportunity, for we are drawn up on the other side of the Y from the Florida Special and are hurried out of our car, which must return to Savannah.

The gentleman jumps off. It is a long step from the high caboose, and I am compelled to accept his assistance to alight. He supports me in my flight to earth—gracefully, almost nonchalantly—with no suspicion of gallantry; but his touch is electrical—or is it the quinine powder?

This done, I say: "You must permit me to thank you," and put my hand in my pocket-book to produce one of my cards. But it is inscribed "Bulger," and "Bulger's Bile Exterminator" on a great sign in the Y is staring me in the face. Therefore I suddenly put my pocket-book back without producing the *carte d'adresse* and stammer—"My—my name is Bulgée."

On seeing me replace my card, the young man whose eyes have lighted up and whose hand has been extended for the same, suddenly becomes surly, lifts his hat in a dignified manner, assists me to the Florida Special, puts me on board, and departs for his own car.

I am sure he is sulky, and I dislike sulky men; but he thinks me ungrateful and I detest ingratitude. I must show him that I am not ungrateful.

As I think this, our train gets under way again, for which I am happy, as the noise prevents most of the conversation about me coming to my ears, and I am sorry to say it is not flattering. I overhear a strong-minded lady, Miss Parkins, I believe they call her, announce to her neighbor: "Wasn't it disgraceful? The whole affair was evidently arranged to make the acquaintance of the only young man on the train!"

To this her neighbor says with sneering giggle: "But Miss Assurance didn't do it. He has gone away!"

I will show them that I *have* made his acquaintance! He shall sit in the seat beside me and talk to me as if he were my—my brother.

How to do this gracefully? A minute's thought—a bright idea. This will surely bring him to me; then I am not the Miss Evelyn Bulger of old if I do not engross Quinine Powder's attention all the afternoon.

I hurriedly take my writing portfolio and scribble as follows:

"DEAR SIR:

Though I do not know your name, you must excuse my writing you this line. I insist upon bearing my half of the expense of the train. I inclose you what I imagine will be the proper sum. Yours gratefully,

EVELYN VALLÉ BULGÉE."

I spell Bulgée as it is pronounced, leaving out the horrible "r." Into this little note I put a two hundred dollar bill. The train probably cost him twenty-five dollars. He must come to me to return the balance, otherwise he is a thief.

Folding it up I give this to Elise, whispering: "You know the gentleman that brought me back on the Special?"

"Yes, miss, the gentleman with the valet."

"You know the valet?"

"Yes, miss; his name is Maddox. He helped me guard your gripsack during your absence. We were both very much concerned about you and his master. His master's name is Cranmere. He is, I believe, a very noble English gentleman of distinguished family."

Putting a stop to Elise's explanations, I say promptly: "Very well; pass into the next car and give this to the gentleman—not the valet."

A moment later Elise has departed on her errand. Two minutes after the gentleman stands beside me. His face is very red; he seems excited. With one of my sunshine smiles, I make room for him to sit beside me.

He does so!

There is a sniff of indignation from the surrounding ladies. The more indignant they are the better I am pleased. But I haven't time to think of this. Mr. Cranmere gets to business at once.

He says: "I have already told you, Miss Bulgée, that it is impossible for me to permit you to pay me for a hospitality you accepted as my guest. Besides, two hundred dollars would be enough to charter an extra from here to Jacksonville."

With this he crushes my two hundred dollar bill into my hand. He takes some time to do it; is it my awkardness or his audacity? I love audacious men.

"Will you accept my hospitality without introduction?" he remarks. "I don't know a soul in America. I only arrived in Charleston last night from the West coast of Africa by a tramp steamer which is to be freighted with phosphates. My name is George R. M.

Cranmere, once of England, now of half the world, my last address being Bonny, on the Gold Coast."

He is frankly holding out his hand; mine goes into it as I return: "My name is Miss Evelyn Vallé Bulgée, of No. 479½ Fifth Avenue, New York."

"By Jove! that's very nice of you. Now we're acquainted," he laughs. Such a hearty, cheering, careless laugh that I laugh with him; and the laugh seems to make us more intimate. Our conversation passes from the forced into the natural. Mr. Cranmere tells me easily that he has been travelling and away from England for a long time; that his last two years have been spent in the swamps of the Amazon and on the Gold Coast of Africa, and in that pestilential region he has acquired the quinine habit. "When I left Bonny I took twenty-five grains at a dose. Now I have succeeded in reducing it during the sea voyage to twenty-one and a quarter. Twenty grains make me normal, the one and one-fourth grains produce the quinine effect. For a time I shall gradually reduce it, then drop it. But I couldn't have lived without it. What I take would intoxicate an ordinary individual and make a weak person sick," he explains.

"How many times a day do you take it?" I enquire.

"Three times. Without it I should grow as languid as a guardsman on Piccadilly and as used up as an opium dreamer after his third pipe."

"You look vivacious enough now," I laugh.

"And why shouldn't I? I am in heaven." This is said so earnestly that I take it to myself and go to blushing. Noting my embarrassment he continues hastily: "Wouldn't you call this heaven after African swamps and jungles? I say, for two years, until to-day, I haven't seen a pretty white woman—black beauties don't count, yer know."

"Oh, if that's what you came to America for, you

should visit New York," I remark, and turn the conversation, which I think is becoming personal, to Manhattan society. But Mr. Cranmere has not been there and knows nothing about it.

"I suppose it's very much the same as our smart set," he says. "I've met one or two American peeresses over there," he points towards London. "They are very much like other women, I think, average about the same as English peeresses, don't you know."

He knows American peeresses! "Ah, you are in touch with English society," I remark.

"Oh, no, just at present I know very little about it. I have very little time to know about it. Yer see, I am trying to make myself a business man."

Just here with a great white flash Bulger's Bile Exterminator flies past us.

"I thought I had got rid of that thing," he laughs, "though it had followed me through India and Ceylon; I imagined I had left it for good at Cape Town. No Bulger's Bile Exterminator in Central Africa or on the Amazon. But here in civilization again behold the ever present Bulger's." Then he adds laughingly, "I say, do you like wagers?"

"When I win!"

"Very well, let us make a bet, just for curiosity. I'll lay you even I guess nearer to the number of those Bulger signs we shall pass between Savannah and Jacksonville than you do."

For a second I am covered with confusion; the next I give a suppressed snicker. I am sure I can win. I know exactly how many of those signs we will encounter between Savannah and Jacksonville. Only a week ago I heard Mr. Robb, our energetic Southern agent, explaining to papa that he had had fifteen of them erected on this very railroad to catch the eyes of winter tourists in Florida. Consequently I accept the wager.

"What shall it be?" I remark.

"A pair of gloves," he says.

"That's satisfactory to me, unless you wish to make it a dozen pairs."

"A dozen pairs! My size is eights."

"Mine is five and three-quarters."

"Very well. The one nearest to the number of Bulger's Bile Exterminators wins." With this he marks upon a piece of paper "twenty-seven."

I, after a minute's pertinent thought, pencil "fifteen," remarking, "We've passed two already. They count!"

"Certainly; they are included."

Thereupon we go to looking for Bulger's Bile Exterminators and it occupies us very pleasantly; Mr. Cranmere noting two in the piny woods and I catching one at the Waycross station, and another placarded upon the side of a pig-pen, partly erased by the razor-backed hogs rubbing up against it. As we near Jacksonville the signs become more numerous; we count seven; as we run into the station a large one faces us.

He says "There are fourteen. You are *nearly* right."

"I am *exactly* right," I return, and point to another on the opposite side of the track, placed there by the energetic Robb to catch the eyes of passengers looking from the other windows of the car.

"Fifteen! You hit the precise number," he murmurs. "By Jove! that's wonderful. I should have remembered that Yankees are born guessers. I say, can you wait for the gloves until we get to St. Augustine?"

"Yes,' I reply, "I'm not going to take the chance of losing the train again."

So we pass on and at half past five in the evening arrive at St. Augustine.

The time seems to have passed rapidly. What we have talked about I scarcely remember, save that it was interesting. What he has said to me I hardly know; only it wasn't poetry and was generally common sense. It was masculine, that's what it was! That's the definition for it—masculine!

The afternoon seems to have made us friends. As our car stops in the St. Augustine depot Mr. Cranmere remarks: "You'll permit my attending to your luggage, Miss Bulgée and getting a hack for you. I am a traveller."

With this he disappears; leaving me thinking: "A traveller! What kind of a traveller?"

A few words from Miss Parkins and her friend in the seat behind me make me start: "They act," remarks that spiteful spinster, "so that I expect when she gets up to see a cascade of rice fall out of her skirts!"

In a flash I am up and at the door of the car to prevent Mr. Cranmere doing too much for me; but really to find Mrs. Armitage and her daughter Mirabelle and Mr. Jonas Compound Ripley waiting for me.

My greetings with my chaperone and her daughter over, Mr. Ripley demands my attention. This young man seems to have forgotten that I refused his hand but little over a month ago. He chirps in his easy, Western manner: "I saw you were coming, Evie, by the Chicago papers, and thought I would drop down to St. Augustine and help you do orange groves."

Good Heavens! If Mr. Cranmere hears the familiar "Evie" he will not understand that I have known and detested Jonas since he was a boy of fourteen.

"Mr. Ripley," I reply, white with anger, "please remember that Evie has grown into Miss Evelyn Vallé Bulgée!"

Mr. Cranmere is beside us now. He says: "I've shipped your luggage for the Ponce de Leon and have

a carriage; but I see your friends are here." This last rather disappointedly.

For answer I introduce him to Mrs. Armitage and daughter, the matron responding with a hearty Western greeting: "I'm glad to see you, sir;" Miss Mirabelle with an affected, "This *is* nice, the sparse male population of the Ponce de Leon will be increased by one in to-morrow's census. You'll look real stagey in that rig in the courtyard, won't you, Mr. Cranmere? You'll match the palms." With this, Mirabelle who is seventeen and forward, begins to use her eyes upon my escort in her artless, childish way—gazing at him as she would at a gumdrop.

"By Jove!" ejaculates Mr. Cranmere looking at the chit with evident admiration; for Mirie is about as pretty and petite a minx as nature ever turned out to make ravages upon masculine hearts. Just at the border line of young ladyhood and childhood she plays both rôles with equal facility, and sometimes both within the minute. At present, to make hasty and easy acquaintance with Mr. Cranmere, she is a child, and looks it—but such a lovely one. Her golden hair is down and tumbled and floating in the soft, Southern breeze; her blue eyes are frankly looking into his—ingenuous blue eyes that are so deep one never sees beneath their surface. She is scarce five feet two inches in height, but her figure is exquisitely developed. Adorned by the white, semi-tropical costume she wears, something made by a modiste of genius to give her a half-childish, half-womanly appearance, she looks like a laughing and sometimes naughty fairy.

"By Jove!" iterates Mr. Cranmere, "matching the palms, did you say? That's what I've been doing for the past two years on the Congo, Orinoco and Amazon."

"Ah-h! Investigating the monkey language?" laughs Mirie. "You must teach me how to talk to monkeys." Then she says eagerly: "You haven't brought an ape with you, have you?"

"No-a. Why?"

"Because you would have given it to me, wouldn't you? I'd like an ape for a confidant. Abelard, here, is the only thing to whom I dare give the innermost recesses of my soul."

And she pats on the head a chocolate colored caniche that runs by her side, one of the kind that are clipped by dog fanciers into lions and tigers and have fringes put upon their legs like savage ornaments. But this one has been clipped with more than diabolical ingenuity until he has been given a pair of long chop side whiskers and a face that is almost human. The intensity of the revelations that have been made to him by his young mistress are apparently such that the dog has a pessimistic, misanthropic air that makes his acute, knowing face, with its carmine nose and blood-red eyes, weird, strange and uncanny.

In Abelard I recognize an old horror of mine—likewise in Mirabelle, for Miss Armitage, though I have not seen her for a year or two, in our school-girl days was the *bête noir* of my existence. Notwithstanding I was in an upper class she frequently brought misery upon me by her terrible method of telling *half* truths, a species of diplomacy in which, in her childish way, I believe she could have equalled old Richelieu, himself.

While I reflect, Mirie goes on artlessly chatting with Mr. Cranmere. "You think me quite a child, don't you? But I'm not. I've been out of school six months and discharged my last governess two weeks ago. I always notify gentlemen that I'm a young lady now, for fear they should make mistakes and think me a child. You know it would be very embarrassing if you

took my hand and talked to me like a father, wouldn't it?"

At this Mr. Cranmere utters an astounded: "Thanks —thanks awfully!"

Here I interrupt the conversation by saying: "Mr. Ripley, of Chicago, Mr. Cranmere, of London."

The gentlemen bow to each other as I add, "Mr. Cranmere hired a special for me to overtake the Florida. I was careless, and got left at Savannah."

This I know will make Jonas hate Cranmere. It does! It also makes him fear him. Foreigners are dangerous to American heiresses. Had Cranmere been an Englishman of title I think Jonas Ripley, of Polo-Pony Liniment fame, would have fainted.

Oh, Heavens! If Quinine Powders should be a member of the English aristocracy! Elise said he was of noble birth; he carries a valet.

Pshaw! If I think of titles I shall grow romantic and shall not sleep—rank is so very poetic—and I have sat up half the night scribbling this. What will my eyes look like to-morrow morning?

Therefore I shall simply close by saying that I got to the Ponce de Leon and dinner; then I came up here to my private parlor to rest after the fatigue of the railway and began writing this.

The day must have interested me, for I have stuck to it with the vigor of a magazinist paid by the column.

If ever I become literary I shall hire a stenographer.

CHAPTER II.

A SOCIAL POPULIST.

St. Augustine, February 28th, 1894.

HE is *not* an aristocrat! This I discovered this morning. In fact, he took special pains to show me that he was not.

It came about this way. Breakfasting in my parlor at ten, after elaborate preparation I placed myself *en évidence* on the veranda. By "elaborate preparation" I mean toilet. I was a mass of fluffy green, tinged with softest, feathery white Valenciennes, from sunshade to jupe. The whole affair was light, tropical and refreshing to myself—and to others, I flatter myself. At all events it had an effect. As I walked through the big rotunda of the hotel, five of the six gentlemen who were reading their newspapers looked up, and apparently forgot New York dispatches. The sixth didn't count; he was blind and led by a servant.

On one of the side verandas overlooking the courtyard, Mrs. Armitage is seated, and a few steps from her, her daughter seems to be entertaining with eyes, gestures and childish vivacity a gentleman whose back I do not recognize. My chaperone, when I approach, greets me enthusiastically in her frank Chicago manner, exclaiming that I look like a mermaid.

"Oh living pictures, mother!" cries Miss Mirabelle, turning her eyes upon me. "Evie only looks like a mermaid in evening dress. It takes nudity for a sea nymph!"

I hear a suppressed and surprised "By Jove!" from the gentleman and am covered with confusion.

Good Heavens! it is Mr. Cranmere. I determine that he shall see me in *décolleté* and know the little fiend *exaggerated.*

As he rises and offers me a seat with the compliments of the morning, my blushes are still on my cheeks and I know they are becoming. As I gaze at him, Mr. Cranmere is another little surprise. Instead of the semi-Mexican appearance of the day before, he is now *all* English, and his single eye-glass looks natural. A light duck costume cut after last year's London mode, white pith helmet and havelock and

tawny alligator boots adorn his athletic figure and well developed feet. He is as typical an Englishman as you could find at Government House, Bermuda, or on the veranda of Shepard's Hotel, Cairo.

"You look as if you had entirely recovered from the knocking up of the railroad trip," he says easily, inspecting me I think rather critically.

"Yes, I was *so* well taken care of," I remark, which seems to please him, being reminiscent of various little attentions with which he had honored me from Savannah to St. Augustine.

He draws his chair nearer to me, which is consequently further away from that of Miss Mirabelle, and causes her childish eyes to gleam vindictively as they fall upon me; for Miss Mirabelle is seventeen.

Sixteen is sweet, with languid aspirations curbed by governess and boarding school. Seventeen has budding social ambitions and incipient jealousies. It has not yet thrown away the animalism of the child on attaining the passion of the woman. Mirabelle, with her pretty, innocent, frank face, laughing eyes and floating locks, is at present a kind of social populist, *i. e.*, hates every girl that she thinks more fortunate than herself, especially in the matter of beaux.

She gives me another childish dig as Mr. Cranmere sits beside me. "Evie," she remarks, "Jonas will be *so* disappointed. He has gone down to Bay Street. He said you never got up until twelve o'clock, that lunch was your breakfast; but that he had the whole afternoon for you, and he hoped you would not be *very* angry with him for going away. Some men on a yacht invited him."

"No," I reply, savagely, "and I won't be angry with him if he stays away."

This remark is a mistake, it shows temper; and I have none in regard to Mr. Jonas Ripley's absence.

Mr. Cranmere looks at me in a meditative way that I don't altogether like. What will he think me—Ripley's sweetheart?

Undoubtedly, for the frank darling upon his left is now purring: "Oh Evie, don't be angry with Jonas. He has been thinking about you all this week. Every day he has said to mother: 'I wonder if Rosebud—he calls you Rosebud now—will not come down to St. Augustine when she knows I am here?'"

"Mirie," says her mother, in her quiet Western way, "stop talking!"

"Mamma, you know that is what Jonas said to us the other night!"

Mrs. Armitage does not contradict this, and I in my heart of hearts know that Jonas is very likely to have said something of the kind. Fearing in my present rage to make answer to dear little artless Mirie, I rise and languidly draw on my gloves.

"You're going for a walk, Miss Bulgée?" remarks Mr. Cranmere—I am happy to say, a little eagerly.

"Yes, in the Patio and out on the Alameda."

"Do you mind my escort? We will buy the gloves."

"Not at all," reply I, "I always collect wagers promptly," and would go down the steps into the garden, but Mirabelle's voice holds me.

"Miss Bul*gée!*" she says. "How curiously you pronounce the name, Mr. Cranmere. In Chicago we call it Bul*ger*—with an accent on the *ger!*"

"Bulger!" ejaculates Mr. Cranmere. Though he starts, his eye-glass sticks in his eye; a certain proof of Piccadilly breeding.

"Certainly, Bul*ger*," replies Mirabelle. "Don't you know Bul*ger's* Bile Exterminator? Hasn't that single eye-glass of yours been afflicted with Bul*ger's* Bile Exterminator yet? You must be blind."

"Yes, I'm well acquainted with it," answers Mr.

Cranmere with a short laugh; "I counted fifteen of them between Savannah and Jacksonville. That's what she won the dozen pairs of gloves on."

"Did she? Then I'll bet she knew just the number. She knows her father's advertising schemes. Don't you pay! Give me half a dozen for saving you the loss of a dozen."

This covers me, despite my New York season, with confusion. He will think me a robber.

God bless him, he has annihilated the child! Mr. Cranmere has simply remarked: "I shall take great pleasure in paying my wager to Miss Bulgée. She is ample authority to me for the pronunciation of her own surname."

With this he follows me down the stairs and a minute after is at my side, almost whispering, as we walk along: "I wouldn't let that child annoy me." (Oh, if Mirabelle had heard him.) "In our country, girls of her age are in the nursery. You are not angry with me on account of her? That would be hard lines."

"No, I'm not angry," I reply. "Of course, I supposed you knew my name was spelled 'B-u-l-g-e-r.'"

"I did," he says. "I saw it on the hotel register. But your pronunciation did not astonish me at all. It is common with us in England. My cousins, the Marjoribanks, are always known as Marshbanks. At Eton, Algy Cockburn, whose fag I was, would have flayed me alive if I had not called him Coburn. As for the Blounts, we always call them Blunts, and it would be awfully bad form to say Ponsonby in any other way than Punsonby, don't yer know?"

His calling up old English names has brought with it his full English accent. He is now running along by my side as though the valley of the Amazon and the Gold-coast of Africa had never seen him, and he had always walked Piccadilly and Pall Mall.

This puts me at my ease. I say easily in the language of imported English farce: "Good business!" at which he looks at me astonished and begins to laugh. This incident seems to have brought us a little closer.

"So you're connected with the celebrated Bulger's Elixir?"

"Yes," I reply; then add ambiguously, "He is my father."

"I am delighted to know this," he answers. "Perhaps it may lead to business between us."

"Business!" I gasp. "Are you ill?"

"Not beyond quinine," he laughs. "I don't want a dose of Bulger's Bile Exterminator, though I know very well what it contains. That's part of my business. I had hoped to be able to execute a commission with your father. This will doubtless explain," and he produces and hands me the following card:

Mr. George R. M. B. Cranmere,

WHOLESALE DEALERS IN DRUGS.

Representing Pink, White & Co.,
37 Tower Warehouses,
London.

As I look at it visions of the English gentry and aristocracy drift from me, and I think: "Why should a patent medicine girl be diffident in the presence of a dealer in drugs?

However, I resolve not to despise Cranmere because he is in trade. As I look at him, his face is very pleasant, his eyes honest, and altogether he is a very agreeable companion in a place where men are like oases in the desert. There are five

hundred women patrolling the courtyard in all the glory of feminine summer toilets, and not one in twenty of them has masculine escort. What wouldn't every one of the unattended give for my stalwart beau, even if he is a wholesale druggist?

A moment after I grow rather to admire the fact; for he is a *very* wholesale druggist. He tells me that the firm by which he is employed deals only in drugs in enormous quantities. They sell logwood by the cargo, quinine by the thousand ounces, cocaine by the pound; that they have large plantations of cinchona trees on the island of Ceylon; that they have now control over the sarsaparilla root coming down the Magdalena and Orinoco and a good deal of the Rio Negro product; that they have a contract with the Peruvian government and special license for handling Peruvian balsam.

"By the by," he adds, "I believe Mr. Ripley's Polopony Liniment contains a good deal of chloral-hydrate. I must see him about it. Bulger's Bile Exterminator, you know, has lots of quinine. I think I can offer your father very advantageous terms for the sulphate in bulk."

"If you came to America to see my father for this," I reply, "you had better have gone to New York."

"Oh no," he laughs. "I am here on account of the coca plum. If its seed has the properties as reported of the genuine *Erythroxylon coca*, I shall probably be able to reduce the price of cocaine fifty per cent. in large quantities—certainly twenty-five. I came here to visit Tampa and Southern Florida to investigate the matter."

"Ah! you are a thorough business man."

"Oh, just as much as you Americans. You Yankees think that nobody can trade but yourselves. You should see the English away from home. Our better classes in Regent Street, Belgravia or Kensington

dawdle—but put them in the tropics, put them in the colonies! Who controls the world? Why, the British merchant. Do you know that our firm dominates nearly all of certain branches of the drug trade, that we can give you a quotation for quantities that a New York firm would hesitate to handle?"

"No," I reply, "I have never studied the drug business. That may interest papa." But here I suddenly break out, for something is weighing on my conscience: "I don't wish to take your wager. I knew that fifteen was the exact number of signs between Savannah and Jacksonville. I heard Mr. Robb, papa's advertising agent, state it only a week ago. Don't!" For he is about to step into one of those expensive establishments that come down from New York for two or three months each year to raise prices in Florida. "*Don't!*"

"But I insist," he says, "more since you have made the confession. A wager is a wager."

"DON'T!" I cry, "I won't take them! I brought three dozen pairs with me of all lengths, sizes and descriptions. I have twenty buttons, I have seamless ones, I have riding gloves, I have all kinds. I'll compromise." He looks as if he would hold me to my bet. "I'll do anything if you won't make me feel like a robber," I mutter poutingly.

"Will you?"

"Yes!"

"Done!" Then he laughs, "It is apparently you who have lost, not I. Come!"

"Where?"

"Into this shoe shop!"

"For what?"

"To take your bet. You've been walking about in slippers on damp asphalt laid over a mangrove swamp. British walking boots are the things for you. They won't cost as much as a dozen pairs of gloves. The

difference in price will soothe your conscience. You agreed to it—*come!* So I can feel I'm not exactly a murderer if I ask you to take a walk on Bay Street or a constitutional by the banks of the San Sebastian."

The idea of a stroll with him is not altogether unpleasant to me. His manner has that easy confidence of being dead right peculiar to the Britisher. "Come!" he urges.

Half angry, half amused, half reluctant, half willing, I find myself walked into the shoe store.

"Now," he says to the attendant, "I wish the best pair of English walking boots, lady's, thick soles and low heels. Something for swamp work."

The saleswoman asks me my number. "Twos," I reply, feeling that I am now in for English walking boots whether I want them or not.

"Twos? By Jove! The average of the ladies of my family is away above that, don't yer know?"

"Do you mean to say you haven't seen my—" I pause here and blush. What am I saying?

"Your foot?" he whispers. "Yes. It's the prettiest in the world. You needn't be afraid. English walking boots can't disfigure it." Then he turns away, leaving me in the hands of the saleswoman. In her clutches my delicate green, match-my-gown slippers are taken from me and replaced by yellow, alligator-leather, double-soled, football-appearing English walking boots.

There is only one thing that reconciles me to this. Mr. Jonas Ripley returning from Bay Street chances to pass, and seeing us in the store and Mr. Cranmere paying for my boots, grows green as my cast-off slippers with rage and fury.

He must not think what he will think!

I hobble after him and cry: "Mr.—Mr. Ripley, see what I've won from Mr. Cranmere."

"A pair of boots?" gasps Jonas, turning round.

"Yes, I bet him a pair of boots and won on Bulger's Bile Exterminator."

"Well, he's given you the worth of your money," answers Jonas grimly, and passes on, though I can see him in rage kick a drygoods box that stands on the sidewalk as he goes away.

This unfortunately is true. I *do* have the worth of my money. Fairylike to my feet, my lower extremities seem weighted with lead. The boots and costume are in hideous contrast.

As we return to the hotel the snickers of one or two women so enrage me that I could kick Cranmere with one of my newly-purchased boots. If I did it would hurt him.

"I say," he says, easily, "now you feel quite comfortable. These are the things to walk in, don't yer know—*useful!*"

"You don't like the ornamental?" I pout.

"Oh, yes," he says; "these will do for balls and fandangoes," he waves the package containing my discarded slippers, "but not for tramping over damp ground. Besides, they're so comfortable, you know."

"Comfortable? If walking with weights on my feet is comfortable," I think. But I will not destroy his pleasure in having given me a present, he looks so happy over it. Therefore I contrive to keep up with his long, slashing strides but undoubtedly look weary.

Noting this he suggests: "Shall we sit down in the garden of the Alcazar?"

"No, I—I think I can get as far as the hotel," I pant. "We'll struggle to the courtyard of the Ponce de Leon. Besides, the band is beginning to play."

A minute after I drag my weary boots into the beautiful courtyard of the Ponce de Leon. This looks as it always does on a fine day, a mixture of poetry and

enchantment. Poetry from the tropic sky and feathery foliage and brilliant flowers; enchantment from the magic wand of commercial wealth that has touched the mangrove swamp and made it into a fairyland.

Beautiful women are flitting about in light summer toilets; a few men give dignity to the scene; darky footmen with jetty heads, red coats slashed with black, knee-breeches—and yellow stockinged legs, stalk like gigantic wasps amid the trees. One of these, deft by experience, sees fatigue in my eye and tête-à-tête in Mr. Cranmere's, and promptly places two chairs under a secluded palm tree.

Into one of these I sink, withdrawing hurriedly, but carefully, my present from observing eyes. Mr. Cranmere sinks down beside me. He is apparently fatigued too; his face has become languid as it was yesterday at noon.

"You are ill?" I say.

"Oh no, only the quinine hour approaches. I feel the want of the drug. Where's that beast Maddox?"

This is answered by the beast Maddox in person; that British servitor now gets to us, in his hand a glass of sherry and a quinine powder. He says: "I have been waiting for you, it's hover your time. I came hover from the San Marco, but could not hobserve you hinstantly."

"Lucky you turned up; otherwise I should have become so languid that probably Miss Bulgée would have given me my congé. As it is—quick!" My escort tosses off the quinine powder in his glass of sherry and very shortly becomes brighter.

"You're not living at the Ponce de Leon?" I say surprised, as the valet carries away the goblet.

"No, it was so crowded it was impossible to give me a room. Consequently I had myself driven over to the San Marco. There I was lucky enough to find a sofa

in the parlor, and Maddox threatens to give me notice because he's only got the soft side of a plank in the hall."

"You didn't expect to stay in St. Augustine?" I inquire.

"No. Hadn't an idea about it twenty-four hours ago."

This puts me into a quiet meditation. What could have made him stay in St. Augustine? Vanity answers, myself! But even as this flashes through my mind he dashes the cup of self-adulation from my lips by remarking: "Don't yer know, I think I can do a little business with Mr. Ripley, the Polo-pony Liniment chap. I shall nail him this afternoon for an order on chloral."

"You'll have to take *two* quinine powders," I laugh, "to *nail* Mr. Ripley on any business transaction. He's a trader."

"That's the reason I shall nail him. If Mr. Ripley can save dollars he is the man to do it, and a commission is a commission. You see," he adds, "ever since I sowed my wild oats in the army I've been infernally hard up. It's much easier running into debt than getting out of it, don't yer know?"

"You were in the army?" I say.

"Yes, cornet in the Royal Horse Guards. You can soon get into debt there," he adds, ruefully. This confession brings rapture to my soul. No one but aristocrats get commissions in the Household Cavalry, and once a swell, always a swell!

"Since then," he continues, "I have knocked about a good deal—India for awhile, the Amazon and Orinoco; a little of Peru; travelling man for Pink, White & Co. Not so bad, don't yer know? See the world and all that, I can tell you. Awfully jolly country America."

"Jollier than India?"

"Jollier than any place in the world. In what half acre of ground could you see five hundred women like these? Catchy, chic and gowned like Queens of Sheba. India has its temples, ghauts, pagodas, and all that, don't you understand; but America is the only country where I could have come to know you without an introduction. Therefore, America is the jolliest I have ever seen."

"If you speak of introduction in that way," I answer, biting my lip; he may think he has made my acquaintance too easily—"I may go back to the forms of polite society and cease to know you."

"Oh, come now, I say!" he cries out ruefully, then whispers, "You don't mean that. I haven't a friend in America to introduce me. Don't make me go back to the loneliness of yesterday, when I didn't think I had a friend within four thousand miles of me, and hadn't had a letter from home in over a year. I suppose there's mail waiting for me in two or three ports, but it never reached me—when I've been so lonely on the Orinoco, Amazon and Congo—don't make me still feel that I'm a stranger—to *you*."

His tone though English is impressive and pleading. The music of the band on the Loggia comes floating to my ear—some of Verdi's impassioned strains. Aida," I think it is—no, I don't know. All I know is there is passion in the music that enters my soul and makes me feel tenderly for this poor, wandering Britisher. I say concisely but effectively: "*I sha'n't!*"

His eyes meet mine; they are frank, honest, blue Saxon eyes, notwithstanding his skin is burned brown by tropic sun. "God bless you!" he mutters; then goes on: "I believe travel has knocked a good deal of my British *sangfroid* out of me. But *you*, don't yer know ——" he turns his face toward mine. Has the music got into his soul too, or is it the quinine powder?

If it has, it gets no further, for a voice at my elbow says: "Ah there, Cinderella!"

It is charming little Mirabelle. She continues, artlessly: "I thought I'd come over and see your English walking glass-slippers, Cousin Evie. Jonas calls them *stogies.*"

Mr. Ripley has evidently informed her of my present, and in no complimentary way. In a flash I withdraw the "stogies" from sight, but Mirabelle laughs to Mr. Cranmere, clapping her hands in her child-of-nature way: "I've seen 'em! Yes, I think half that bet would be big enough for *me.* Jonas has told the story to one of the newspaper men, it was so good. Evie, if you don't look out you'll appear in print as having *hoofs!*"

"Good heavens!" I falter.

"Not *cloven* ones, like some young lady's," jeers Mr. Cranmere, with insinuation.

But this does not sooth my wounded feelings; those boots go out of my window as soon as I get upstairs. I turn upon Mirabelle and say savagely: "Don't dare to speak of newspapers to me! I hoped I had escaped them when I came from New York. But I suppose the omnipresent, social-subject society reporter is always lying in wait. I never want to see my name in type again!"

Here Miss Mirabelle opens her blue eyes and purrs: "You don't mean that, Evie? You know you love to see your name in print. Weren't you the happiest girl in New York when you saw Miss Evelyn Vallé Bulger as one of the invited to the Patriarchs?"

"Anyway I don't want to see my name in print *here.*"

"Don't you, darling? Then you sha'n't," laughs Mirie. "I know a nice newspaper correspondent here. He'll keep your name out of the papers if I ask him,

and I will. Don't forget I did you a favor, Evie, when we visit you in New York, and do your best to make my life happy, as I am doing for you in St. Augustine. Abelard and I are going to have a nice little confab about you."

Here artless little Mirabelle, evidently overcome with some merry thought, runs away shrieking with laughter. I rise to pursue her and demand what she means, but my boots forbid running.

Noting that I have left my seat Mr. Cranmere says: "Will you step down with me for a walk on Bay Street this afternoon."

"Not with these boots on!" I say determinedly.

"Oh, come in anything—slippers—bare feet, if you like. Please promise!" He looks so wistful that I, recalling the loneliness he had complained of when the music and quinine passion got into his eyes, and remembering our interrupted tête-à-tête, answer: "Yes!"

"Good business!" he laughs, quoting me; then continues: "Apropos of business, I must catch Mr. Ripley a minute. Don't forget four o'clock!" And he crosses the patio to where Jonas stands talking to some Western friends at the entrance to the rotunda; while I take my weary path to my room, anxious to get rid of my abominations and become a fairy again, feet and all.

In my chamber, Elise, on hearing the story of my English walking shoes rolls up her eyes, shrugs her shoulders and mutters: "*Cette bête d'Anglais!*"

To this I cry, indignation in my voice: "He meant kindly by me. Stop talking and go to work!"

From under my maid's skilled hands I make my appearance at lunch in a natty little walking costume and walking boots, but French ones—soft, easy, *petite* and *chic*.

"You can call me Cinderella now, if you want, my dear," I whisper to Mirabelle, as I take a chair opposite to her at the lunch table.

Mrs. Armitage is at the head and Jonas at the foot, this young gentleman, in his diffident way, taking his post at our table as if he were one of the party. In fact I hear him whisper to the head waiter: "This is my regular seat." A communication which, fortified by a greenback, makes him secure, and as there are only four chairs at our table, embarrasses any act of hospitality in the dining direction on my part to Mr. Cranmere, whom Jonas now appears to regard with particular enmity, his dogged hatred of last night seeming to have been replaced by malicious vindictiveness.

As I sit down, Mr. Ripley's remarks are pertinent as to the object of his dislike. "What ineffable idiots these British firms send over here to represent them in their investments and business!" he breaks out. "No wonder they're salted right and left. Look at the fellows buying all the cattle yards in Chicago from Armour, who's dead sure to run opposition to them and run 'em out of the business, of which he holds a monopoly. See their purchase of Milwaukee and St. Louis breweries! What chance will there be for dividends from them? Do they think that the Dutch are going to buy *English* beer?"

I eat my oysters and say nothing to this, knowing it is but a peroration to a personal eulogy of my wholesale druggist. A minute after Jonas comes to the point: "Look at that ineffable ass of the English walking boots! You don't wear them now, I see, Miss Bulgée," he jeers, putting a Chicago French accent on the final syllable of my name with elaborate flourish. "Were they torturers? But what won't American girls do for these foreign adventurers, nicknamed Counts and Barons?"

"That can't apply," I remark, "to Mr. Cranmere. He took particular care this morning to inform me he was only a representative of an English drug house."

With this I present Jonas with Mr. Cranmere's card.

"Yes, he gave me one of these himself, this morning, and then proved himself a business idiot—offered me chloral hydrate at ten cents a pound under the market. And I nailed him for a contract with Pink, White & Co. for all I'll need for a year. Pink, White & Co. will discharge him when they see this document," says Jonas with a hilarious chuckle, producing the formal record and gloating over it, then replacing it carefully in his pocketbook.

"And he signed with you without knowing the current price?" I ask nervously.

"Yes. As soon as I saw he was under the market quotation, I told him he'd have to settle it on the minute as I was going to leave to-morrow. So we signed duplicate contracts," returns Mr. Ripley. Then he adds: "Don't look as if you pitied him and was glad I was going away—for I'm *not!* That was only to hurry your British business man!"

For there is rage and disgust in my eyes. What will poor Mr. Cranmere think when he discovers that he has been done as so many Englishmen have by American business adroitness? Will he imagine me a party to Jonas's sharp trade? I would warn him, but it is too late. He has signed the document. He may be discharged—and with the debts he has spoken of—poor Mr. Cranmere! It takes away my appetite. I am glad when lunch is over.

Later in the afternoon, as I sit apparently reading, dawdling away the time until four o'clock, I see Mirie in conversation with a bright, dapper-looking little chap, who is dodging about the hotel talking to a great many people and apparently doing a good deal of questioning.

A few minutes later I say: "Mirabelle, I see you have a beau."

"A beau?"

"Yes, that little gentleman with whom you were walking about."

"Oh, he's good for quiet afternoons. He's the society reporter of the Jacksonville *Statesman.*" Here the girl looks amused and giggles contemplatively, probably thinking of her little flirtation with the newspaper gentleman.

A few minutes after I see her in conversation with Mr. Ripley, and she seems to amuse him, for Jonas bursts out into tremendous guffaws, haw-haws and he-hes, and is very merry about something. Is it the contract out of which he has swindled—yes, I will use the word—Mr. Cranmere, who in his absence on the Orinoco, Amazon and African Gold Coast must have lost track of the price of chloral hydrate?

At four o'clock the gentleman of my thoughts comes slashing along, this time in afternoon walking suit, Prince Albert, high hat and faultless Piccadilly get-up of the preceding year. I rise and would tell him of the mistake he has made; but he looks so happy that I do not mention it.

However, he does. As we walk out of the court-yard, turning down the Alameda toward Bay Street, he says: "I really am quite pleased with myself. I made a contract for an awful lot of that chloral hydrate with Ripley. After a time my firm will think I'm *really* becoming a business man and raise my salary. I know it will please Pink, who says I have commercial instincts in me."

I don't dare to crush his hopes but feel miserably over it. Probably a little sympathy gets into my voice, though we talk on other subjects. This seems to please him. We pass a beautiful afternoon doing Vedder's Museum, and taking a sail in a boat on the blue waters of Matanzas Inlet; Mr. Cranmere remark-

ing plaintively as I step into the skiff: "Now your feet will get wet. I say, why didn't you wear those—"

"Those walking boots? Never again!" I reply sternly. "I am suffering from them now."

"You have given them away? You've thrown them out of the window?"

"Oh, I shall keep them."

"For use?"

"No, for a souvenir."

"By Jove! Put 'em in a glass case, don't yer know?" he says. "What sharp ideas you American girls have."

He seems so happy in my society that I invite him to the hop that takes place at the Ponce de Leon this evening.

"Delighted!" he answers. "I haven't danced with a white woman in two years. Black beauties don't count, yer know."

"Very well, we'll give you a civilized entertainment this evening," I laugh.

With this he bids me good-bye, and four hours afterward stalks into the Ponce de Leon in immaculate evening dress, patent leather pumps and black silk stockings, dressed as elaborately as he would for a ball in Belgravia.

His English style makes several New York dandies who have come ashore from a yacht rather envious. They can only imitate him *feebly*. Nobody but an Englishman could dance in his dashing British fashion—careless of toes, thoughtless of flounces, scattering dismay about him, but triumph for me; every woman whose dress he treads on turns round, looks at him and sees that I have a masculine partner, of which there is a great dearth always in the Ponce de Leon ballroom.

This evening Mr. Cranmere seems bound to make

himself agreeable. He leads Mrs. Armitage through the lancers; he dances once or twice with Mirabelle who, the second time she receives his attentions, seems troubled about something. It isn't her costume, I'm sure; as the girl looks exquisite in her French-made gown that gives a pink shading to her plump, dimpled snow-white shoulders.

She comes to me and opens her lips about to speak, then as Mr. Cranmere remarks: "This is my dance, Miss Bulgée," Mirie scowls and whispers, "Why, it's the fifth one already this evening; what a monopolist you are, Evie," and closes her lips with a snap as her eyes grow envious and vindictive.

There is something on this child's mind and now I know she will never speak it Her father was called "Shut-Jaw Armitage," and Mirabelle, though she has feminine facility of tongue, on great occasions has her father's jaw.

Our dance finished, Mr. Cranmere murmurs: "Can't I take you in to supper?"

"There is no supper," I reply sadly.

"No supper—a ball without supper? I say, don't they give suppers at balls in America?"

"Yes," I reply, "generally. Come to New York and I'll show you gastronomical displays that will make you open your eyes as well as your mouth. But these hops given by the hotel are economical and hungry."

He looks pathetic, then goes on eagerly: "Make me forget the absence of food in the presence of beauty. Please take a stroll with me on the corridor and into the garden. That costume would be so awfully fetching with moonlight effects."

In this idea I agree with him. My costume is, I flatter myself, a *chef-d'œuvre* from Paris.

"Yes, I think I could stand even moonlight," I reply, "only," here I laugh, "there is no moon!"

"Well, toss a shawl over your shoulders and come anyway. We'll let the electric lights stand for the moon," he whispers.

I don't think I would go with him, but just at this time I happen to see Mr. Ripley stalking about, evidently in search of me.

"Very well," I assent hurriedly, and permit him to place a wrap about me. For I have not, to use a slang expression, been bluffed out of my evening *costume de rigueur* by Mirie's mermaid insinuations of the morning, and am *décolleté;* a style of gown which I flatter myself is becoming to me. My ivory shoulders will bear comparison with even Mirabelle's snowy dimples.

He cloaks me so deftly that he must have done a good deal of this business in some former epoch of his life—probably when he was a dashing subaltern in the Household Brigade.

A minute after we are in the courtyard, away from the bustle of the ball yet just within hearing of its orchestra, the strains from which floating round us lend the charm of music to the tropic scene. Somehow or other Mr. Cranmere selects for us a seat away from passers-by, and where the palms shade us from electric lights. This day seems to have made us at least good friends.

We chat unaffectedly but unromantically until he chances to tell me of one of his adventures in the Andes of Peru, where a mule nearly fell with him into that tremendous chasm of the Apurimac, which is crossed at dizzy heights by that wondrous hanging bridge of withes. "If the beast's hind foot had gone two inches further I would never have seen Florida. The Condor vultures would have known how I tasted, don't yer know?" he concludes.

Then his eyes catch something in my face which even the darkness does not hide, and he says softly: "Would you have been sorry?"

"Why—I—I should never have known you," I reply with a nervous little laugh. Somehow I think the world wouldn't seem quite so pleasant as it does now.

"Of course I should have never known you, Miss Bulgée. That would have been hard lines on me," he remarks contemplatively.

Perhaps my silence makes him bold, for he adds suddenly: "I should never get one of your nice little hand-shakes, don't yer understand?"

Good Heavens! He has audaciously taken my hand and given it one of his *big* hand-shakes.

In another instant I would draw it away but before I get the chance, a voice comes to us. It says in flunky tones: "It's your time to take your quinine, sir. I've been waiting for you hall about the lobbies. Miss Harmitage directed me, sir."

"Maddox, you're—you're a faithful beast," snarls his master swallowing the quinine. Then he gives the faithful Maddox a look that makes him disappear hurriedly in the palm trees, while I utter a little prayer for Mirie.

Somehow the quinine seems to take the sentiment from both of us. I rise and say: "It's time to go in. The hop is over and the band is playing 'Home, Sweet Home.'"

"You'll—you'll forgive Maddox?" he says in his stupid English way, which makes me furious.

"Forgive *him!*" I answer. "What do you mean?" My tone is icy.

"You'll—you'll forgive me?" he stammers.

"Why?" My accent is Siberian.

"I don't know," he says gloomily, "only I thought you were angry about something. I—I hoped it was Maddox."

"I'm not angry," I sneer, "only it's pleasant sometimes to get away from the drug business." With this

I turn from him and in another instant I would be on the portico amid the lights and crowd and safe; but I don't know my man. The quinine powder is doing its work on him well—*too* well.

In another second he is beside me and has got my hand, muttering: "You shan't run off in a huff about quinine." He looks at me, his eyes are very bright, and adds: "You don't go until you promise to take an early morning constitutional with me."

"Where?" I ask.

"Anywhere. It's a constitutional I want. Promise, at eight o'clock." His tone is so determined—the hour mentioned is so early that I know I shall have no questions asked. Even Mirabelle sleeps until nine. "Yes—please let me go," I answer.

"Quite right! Meet you in the rotunda at eight."

Good heavens! He has kissed my hand.

If any one saw him!

I am half way up the stairs before I remember the elevator is running.

Some one did see him!

Coming up the unusual stairway and not by the usual elevator, I am unnoticed. As I walk along the corridor I hear a voice. It is Mirie talking to her horrid dog, which sits upon a chair gazing into the courtyard and eating chocolate caramels in the electric light.

"Abelard," she says, "you saw the naughty Evie let him kiss her?"

Good gracious! It seems to me the uncanny beast winks!

"That's right, tell the truth, doggie," whispers his mistress. "We'll hold a consultation over a girl who monopolizes the only catchy man about, won't we?"

Here Mirabelle looks vindictive in the half light. Then her mood changes. She whispers: "Show me how he kissed her, Abelard, and I'll give you a caramel."

Here, with diabolical ingenuity, she puts one of the beast's beloved candies between her own fair lips and the dog jumps up at her striving to gain the sweet. Then laughing, her mood changes again. She whispers: "Down, Englishman, down!" and tossing Abelard the chocolate, jeers: "You've got your sweet, too."

At this moment I pass her. "Ah, Evie," she laughs, calling out to me, "you should have heard us. Abelard and I were chatting about you!"

But I am too indignant to answer her. I go to my room and—idiot that I am—sit down and write this half the night; and every time I look at my digits which become inky with my work, I feel his kiss upon my hand.

Ah me; quinine is a curious drug.

Is it like opium? Shall I dream of him?

CHAPTER III.

"OUR FIRST DAY TOGETHER."

St. Augustine, March 1st., 1894.

THANK heaven, I don't dream of *him*. I sleep the sleep of the just; but curiously I awake to disgust Elise by calling her at 7:30 to array me.

At eight o'clock I am in the rotunda.

Yes, Mr. Cranmere is waiting for me; he has paid me the compliment of being eager.

"I turned out at six o'clock," he says. "I have been walking about trying to find a nice place for a constitutional."

"Do you think you need a constitutional after two hours trudging?" I laugh.

"Yes, with *you*," he replies, and looks rather fresh and ruddy under his sallow skin. His eyes are bright;

altogether he seems very breezy and wholesome in his light flannel walking suit and heavy alligator shoes.

"Don't you think we need breakfast first?"

"That is prepared; trust me, I'm a traveller," he returns. His manner is mysterious, but I accompany him through the great arch of the Loggia.

Together we cross the plaza of the Alcazar and I find myself in its pretty restaurant where, apparently, Mr. Cranmere has been before, as there is a charming little breakfast with fresh strawberries, the sweetest Indian River oranges, fish just out of the water, an omelette and salad, coffee, and a very fragrant pineapple that was plucked in Cuba only two days ago—so Mr. Cranmere informs me as he plays the host.

What would Mirabelle and her mother, and what would Jonas say if they saw our tête-à-tête meal?

However, the breakfast is good; I am hungry and I don't care.

Somehow we dawdle over this; Mr. Cranmere having got me away from the Ponce de Leon, where interruptions might take place, seems to forget his desire for striding about St. Augustine.

But breakfast is over at last, and we stroll past the swimming baths to the tennis court where my escort enjoys his cigar, and I watch some gentlemen practicing long lobs and sharp smashes at the net.

After a little of this, he says, inquiringly, in his English, not-an-idea-in-his-head manner: "What shall we do?"

"You invited me for a walk," I remark somewhat curtly.

"Too hot!" Then, tossing away his cigar, he adds: "What do you say to oranges?"

"You saw me eat two—not half an hour ago."

"But oranges off the trees; they're a different fruit. Let's go to a grove and really enjoy them." With this,

Mr. Cranmere goes into conversation with a negro hack-driver whose victoria is standing beside the tennis court. This Jehu informs us that there is "a mighty fine grove" up the San Sebastian, and it's "an almighty fine drive" to get there.

"'Clare to goodness yo' don' know the beauties of dis spot of yearth, 'less you take a drive in my carriage. I kin show yo' eberything that's bin done since de war. What I don' know 'bout St. Augustine would 'stonish Flagler hisself. My inscriptions of surroundin' scenery will be worth de five dolla's you'll pay me fer de trip," remarks the sable cabby effusively.

"Let's go with him," I say, thoughtless of chaperone.

"All right, we'll make a picnic," returns Cranmere. "Lunch under the orange trees and all that. Just wait while I make the purchases."

In five minutes he has returned, remarking sententiously: "Bread and butter, cheese, biscuits, cold fowl, a box of sardines, a bottle of champagne and a quinine powder for me. I told the druggist to be careful and make it exactly twenty-one and a quarter grains."

Then we step into the open carriage and drive away, the darky hackman putting us at our ease by remarking anxiously: "Say, boss, yo' didn't forget I was in the crowd when yo' bought dat lunch?"

For answer, Mr. Cranmere points to our packages, which indicate full rations for everybody.

At this the darky merrily chirrups to his horses and away we go, crossing the San Sebastian and following the Tocoi road through scenery which our cicerone says is "tremendous fine," but which I note is flat, quiet and uninteresting, consisting chiefly of sand, scrub oaks and dwarf palmetto's interspersed here and there with larger trees, the view being generally cir-

cumscribed, as we cannot see more than a few hundred feet on each side of the drive.

"I say, how's this?" whispers Mr. Cranmere contentedly. "Nothing to distract our attention from ourselves." We would have a pleasant tête-à-tête of it, were it not for the driver, who turns round most of the time, permitting his horses to walk, and chatting with the easy familiarity of the darky race. Finding that we pay little or no attention to him, and determined to create excitement, he suddenly rouses me with this startling remark: "Say, Missie, did you ever see snakes?" and would go into an effusive and horrible description of some fearful snake adventures with moccasins and rattlers.

Here a new phase of my escort's character develops; he says, shortly: "Nigger, stop your mouth!"

"Yis, sah," answers the darky, and turns his attention to the horses again.

"You know how to deal with him," I whisper.

"Oh, I've had experience with them. The Jamaica nigger is the worst on earth. I wasn't going to have him destroying your picnic joys and making you jump every time you trod on a branch in the orange plantation. And we'll soon be there, I think."

For the road has turned toward the San Sebastian, which sluggish stream we cross, and a few minutes after are driven in through green hedges of prickly osage into one of the prettiest orange groves north of Palatka, to be welcomed with Florida hospitality by the man who occupies it.

A dollar buys the privileges of the place; we can pick and eat and take away all we want. The proprietor shows us the best trees, and a minute after I give cries of astonished delight as I enjoy a Florida seedless orange in all its juicy freshness, plucked by my own greedy hand.

Our driver throws the cushions of his carriage on the ground for us to sit upon; the orange farmer loans us knives and forks, plates and tumblers, and a few minutes after we are in the midst of an impromptu meal. Our hackman, who calls himself proudly "Mr. Lazarus," and seems to think it a very distinguished cognomen, stands behind us disposing of what we leave, and eats so continuously that my companion remarks *sotto voce* to me: "By Jove! we've found *one* way of stopping his jaw!"

To this I laugh, as my spirits are high, and we finish up the *fête* by champagne in tumblers. Mr. Cranmere remembering his quinine, takes his powder in the wine and says it rather heightens the flavor. At all events we are both in buoyant humor as we wander about the orange grove picking the fruit and eating so many I am ashamed to remember the number.

But all things come to an end, and a few minutes after we drive away, a dozen of fresh navels lying on the seat beside us and I using a branch of orange blossoms as a sunshade.

My escort looks inquiringly at me and says: "Where—to the Ponce de Leon?"

"What! so soon?" dissent I, in a tone that seems to please him greatly.

This conversation coming to our driver's large and open ears, he turns and says: "Say, boss, do you want a real good flirting place?"

At which I gasp in dismay as Mr. Cranmere laughs: "Yes!"

"No," I say hurriedly, "I—" But the driver does not seem to hear me, and chirrups to his horses and snaps his whip. We dash across the country by a pretty lane, and following a fairly good road arrive on the banks of North River.

In front of us the salt waters of the ocean that have

come in through Matanzas inlet ripple in the sunlight—flowing softly over white seasand; behind us are glimpses of scrubby timber, palmetto and oak. The water is blue save where it gleams from the light above and the sand beneath it. The sun warms the fresh sea breeze coming in from the Atlantic to a perfect temperature. Altogether, it is a Florida beach, a Florida sky and a Florida day in Spring—which means the poetry of the tropics without its heat.

"By Jove!" remarks Mr. Cranmere, "this beats all the Boulognes and Brightons of old Europe."

A minute after our carriage has stopped and he helps me out. We stroll over the sea sand to the rippling waters. Were I alone I should take off my shoes and stockings and splash through the soft waves.

As it is I sit down and play with the sand, my gentleman making a tent over me, as he calls it, with my sunshade, which he erects, piling the white sand around its handle.

Here he enjoys another cigar, and it seems to make him both reminiscent and romantic. He gets to giving me some glimpses of his past life. Is it with premeditation?

This comes about by a suggestion I make concerning Jonas: "I warn you," I say, for I feel rather sorry for the poor innocent fellow who has been done by American shrewdness—"I warn you against Mr. Ripley. He is a very talented business man."

"Yes," remarks Mr. Cranmere. "I've had one dealing with him."

"And he has taken advantage of you?" I say impulsively.

"I hardly see how!" he answers between the puffs of his cigar.

"Why, he got an immense contract from you for some chloral something—I forget the rest of the name—away below the market!"

"Did he?" answers Cranmere. "Perhaps he did—what he thought was the market. Somehow you know at times I seem to have some business instincts in me, though where I got them from God knows. Not surely from my governor."

Here he gives a kind of wince, then continues: "Though my governor *generally* holds his own. He has *with me* pretty well always. I say, fancy a father getting the mother's jointure out of—" but he stops himself and adds: "What's the good of thinking of old times? Here I am trying to be a business man—hang me if I don't believe I'm the only one of my family who ever tried that game, though we've done our share in others—billiards, dicing, baccarat and horseflesh." This sporting enumeration is rather sadly sighed out between wreaths of blue Havana smoke.

"Yes," I remark, "this must be a great change from life in London."

"It is. But I am better here. You see I am out of the way of temptation, don't yer know? Fancy a great capital with every tradesman in it conspiring to ruin a young fellow."

"Conspiring to ruin a young fellow?" I say, astonished.

"Yes; trusting him, taking his bills, I. O. U.'s and acceptances; giving him rope enough to hang himself. By Jove!" he adds, "many's the bright young life I've seen go out; many's the dashing young blade I've known come to grief and drop out of the swim under the curse of British credit and the English race course. There was little Bertie Epsom-Downs, as dashing a cornet as ever rode to St. James in the Blues; and Captain Ferrars, of Ours, both went down after the Derby and the Oaks. Little Epsom-Downs sold his commission and is now on a cattle ranch in Manitoba I believe; Ferrars blew out his brains, but there was a woman

connected with his case; that always complicates matters, don't you see? It was the same year I went." This is said with a melancholy sigh.

"You went?"

"Yes, went out of the swim—resigned. But I stood out until the St. Leger; that was too much for me. If Ladybird had not come in second—" he mutters with a snap of his jaw.

"But your father?"

"Oh! the governor."

"Why didn't you ask him to help you out?"

At this he gives a shriek of jeering laughter that horrifies me, then mutters sardonically: "You don't know the old boy!"

In my mind is the thought: "What prescription can do him good?" With a start I remember the only prescription that ever effects a cure in such cases as his is an American heiress!"

Somehow or other this thought seems to get into his mind too. He mutters: "Yes, I know what you're thinking of. Why did I not make a rich marriage, or something of that sort? That's what the governor suggested. There was a cotton spinner's daughter—but I couldn't do it. I thought I would try and see if I couldn't become a business man. Business men make such jolly fortunes sometimes, don't yer know?"

"Yes," I remark, "such men as Mr. Ripley, who knows the price of what he buys and sells—Chloral Hy-Hydrate, for instance."

I don't know whether I have the name of the drug right, but Mr. Cranmere seems to understand me for he laughs: "I say; don't sneer at me until you know—and don't talk about it. I don't want to think of England and home now. In fact, I'm mighty glad I did take a cropper on the St. Leger. I'm very happy Ladybird did come in second. Otherwise I wouldn't be

lying in this sand at your feet, and—and looking at you, Miss Evie," (he has got to calling me Miss Evie now, though in a very respectful way). "Do you know," he adds, dreamily, "that I would sooner lie in the sand at your pretty feet than do anything else, just at present?"

His conversation is becoming personal. I rise and say: "It's time to go home."

As I look about, I start in astonishment. It *is* time to go home!

The sun is sinking, the tide is coming in. I think I hear the voice of the hackdriver hallowing to us from his carriage on the distant road. Is it in warning?

Good heavens, it is!

I grow pale, the horror of the thing is so tremendous. I gasp in fright. Myriads of tarantulas are crawling about us.

I scream, "Scorpions—scorpions by the millions—my God! we are lost!"

With a bound Mr. Cranmere is up. Then he falls back—with horror, I think. A second later I discover that he is rolling over in convulsions of laughter. "Forgive me please,—they're, they're only fiddler-crabs. Have you never seen any—any of the little beggars before?" he guffaws.

"Fiddler-crabs?" I gasp.

"Yes, scorpions!" and he bursts into laughter again.

Fiddler-crabs! I am so angry with myself—with him, that I stride away, careless now of fiddler-crabs and crushing them as they wriggle under my feet. I don't care.

"Forgive me," he says, "but it was——"

"Don't say another word; don't *dare* to laugh another laugh! A smile on your face and I'll never forgive you!"

"Do you know"—he has seized my hand now—"I

wouldn't do anything to hurt your feelings for the world," he whispers. "I had sooner be stung to death by fiddler-crabs——"

But there is something in my eye that makes him stop this and say plaintively: "Forgive me! You know Miss Evie——"

"Let me go!"

"Not until you forgive me."

Somehow I think he likes to hold my hand. But he sha'n't, therefore I forgive him very quickly.

Then we walk along together over the sand, I showing my fearless and desperate nature by crushing two or three fiddlers vindictively with my nice French walking boots, which apparently are not the thing for this kind of work.

"What's the matter?" he asks, noticing that I limp. "You're tired?"

"No, the sand—the sand in my walking boots."

"There! didn't I tell you you'd better have worn the—the souvenirs?" he laughs. "Take them off and shake the sand out. Stay, I'll do it for you."

"Never!" I cry, and stride desperately on. A minute after I give a gasp of despair. I will have to take them off, I will even have to take off my stockings; the water, at low tide unnoticed in a little creek, has come rapidly in. There are fifty yards of wading between us and the carriage.

"Hold up a minute, Miss Evie," says Cranmere; then he calls to the driver: "Sambo, bring your carriage and horses over here, the water's only a foot deep!"

"Can't do it, boss," answers the darkey. "Can't get down off the road."

"Can't you for a dollar?"

"Couldn't nohow!"

Mr. Cranmere doesn't raise his bid. He simply looks at me and mutters: "I say, do yer mind?"

I see carry-you-across in his eye, and answer blushingly: "No, not very much, if—if you don't drop me."

I haven't time to say more; even as I speak I find quinine makes a man very strong. My escort has picked me up deftly and is wading with me recklessly through the water. Somehow he holds me very tight. One of my arms *has* to go round his neck.

The next second I give a shriek—he is in to his knees. He has struck a deep hole—in another instant the water will be at his waist—perhaps he will be swimming! Oh Heavens, my poor dress! Pooh! What do I care? I swim like a duck! If we get in deep water I'll let him *think* he preserves my life. Romantic! Delicious! I cling to him and murmur faintly "Save me, save me!" My cheek is desperately near his mustache. He turns his face away from temptation and whispers: "Don't fear. It's getting shallower now."

A minute after I am placed "dry as a bone," as he remarks, on the land.

"If the hole had been over your head," I laugh, "that would have given you a chance to play the hero and swim with me."

"I couldn't have swum with you," he says.

"Why not? Are you not a swimmer?"

"Oh yes, but you hugged me too tight!"

I give an abashed "O-ough!" and run to the carriage.

However, he was very nice. He could have kissed me, but he didn't—though I believe he would have liked—Ah! what am I thinking about? We must get home, he'll take cold. Somehow I have got to taking care of him.

"Keep away from from me or you'll get wet," he laughs as he springs after me into the victoria.

"Say, boss, yo'll spile the carriage cushions. If

yo'd offered me five dollars I'd have driven over and brought yo'. I thought," says the driver pathetically, "that ef yo' didn't raise the ante the young lady would. I didn't know she'd *want* to be carried."

"Get us to the hotel as soon as possible," says Mr. Cranmere sharply. "Otherwise I may forget to give you a dollar."

This is very nice of him, as our driver seems to be a philosopher who will bring confusion upon me. Noting this, my escort does all the talking, telling me that he has no fear of taking cold, that quinine is the best preventive of that; he will take another powder as soon as he gets to the San Marco.

A few minutes after we are nearing my hotel, and I thank him for a delightful day.

"So glad you enjoyed it," he says vivaciously, then adds rather sadly: "I'll hardly have another whole day to myself in St. Augustine. I've got to work now—must get through my investigation of that coca-plum business."

"But you'll not be engaged *all* day?" I suggest.

"No, I'll be free to-morrow evening."

"Very well, come over and dine with us to-morrow."

"Thanks, awfully."

Here the carriage stops in the driveway under the hotel. Our Jehu has had sense enough to avoid the front entrance, which would necessitate a walk through the courtyard, which would have been embarrassing, as my plumes are somewhat ruffled, and Mr. Cranmere's wading business has made the lower portion of his costume certainly disreputable, as he is a mass of salt water, dried mud and sea sand.

Notwithstanding his guise, after he has assisted me from the carriage my Briton would apparently escort me to the crowded rotunda to leave me in form at the elevator; but I pause on the stair to prevent this, and turning back speak to him.

"Now go home at once," I say, "like a good boy and change your clothes."

Something in my tone seems to please him. He murmurs with sentiment: "Just fancy! Our first whole day *together!*" Perhaps something in my eyes encourages him; he goes on eagerly: "Give me something to remember it by."

"A souvenir, like your boots?" I laugh.

"Yes, those orange blossoms you carry in your hand." For I still have with me the branches of orange flowers that I brought from the San Sebastian grove.

"Take them!" His hand meets mine as I give them to him. He holds both my fingers and the branches of white feathery blossoms, very tight.

"Do you know," he whispers, "you would look awfully fetching with a wreath of those on your head."

"Most girls do," I say nervously. "Good-bye!" and run up the stairs.

At the top I gaze back. He seems crestfallen. I can't help it—I throw him a kiss. Did some demon get into my head? It will be all over the hotel. The strong-minded Miss Parkins and her severe friend of the railroad are looking at me.

"Did you ever?" remarks Miss Parkins severely.

"No, I never!" says the other lady.

I don't ask them what their ambiguous broken sentences mean. I know! The hotel will ring with it.

Then I think of Mrs. Armitage. She must have been anxious about me. Conscience smites me. I go at once to her parlor. There I find my chaperone and, as unpropitious fate will have it, Mirabelle and Mr. Ripley. At my entry Mrs. Armitage springs up with a cry of relief.

"I have been inquiring everywhere for you," she

flutters. "If you had not returned soon, Evie, I should have consulted the police. You were not at breakfast, you were not at lunch, you have almost missed dinner. Where have you been?"

"Pretty nearly everywhere," I say, and give them a short account of my wanderings about the suburbs of St. Augustine. My adventures do not seem to please any of them.

Mrs. Armitage says in a shocked tone: "My dear, I am sorry you went with only one gentleman. You know I don't give you my advice often, but you are very dear to me. As your poor mother's cousin and most intimate friend, I must tell you such excursions are unwise. Besides, you know so very little about Mr. Crammere."

"I reckon she knows a good deal by this time," suggests Mirabelle, innocently.

At this Mr. Jonas gives a snicker of rage, and asks sarcastically: "Mirie, you wouldn't have dared to do such a thing?"

"La!" cries Mirie, who is as spoiled as any child in the world, "I expect ma would have spanked me."

This is a blow at my dignity. It insinuates that I need correction. But I crush her. "Doubtless a child like you would have been," I say. With this, I remark to Mrs. Armitage that I don't feel up to the general dining-room, and will take a quiet dinner in my own room.

"You are not ill, I hope. Can't I do anything for you?" is that lady's motherly suggestion.

"No, I'm tired, that's all."

"And *he* won't be over this evening," remarks Mirabelle. "Bet she knows *he's* not coming." This idea makes Jonas grind his teeth—that is my one consolation.

I go to my room and would have a quiet dinner did

not Elise discover a live fiddler in the folds of my dress, and go into French convulsions of terror, at which I burst into laughter.

Having eaten, I work on this journal of mine; but going over the day's scenes seems to excite me. I get to having rubbishy, romantic, school-girl notions. After this, during my stay in Florida I shall merely note the more marked happenings pertaining to my history.

My adventures seem to have got into my head. Shall I dream to-night?

CHAPTER IV.

MISS WEBSTER.

St. Augustine, March 2d, 1894.

I *did* dream.

I dreamt of the fiddlers, also of his carrying me across the creek in his arms. He wasn't so good in my dreams as in reality, for when my cheek was temptingly near his mustache he—he kissed me; and I—I was not so very angry; but dreams go by contraries, you know. I should have been indignant.

I go down to breakfast in pretty good spirits. The rest of our party are here dallying with oranges and waiting for me.

Mrs. Armitage has something on her mind. She says: "Evie, Mirabelle and myself are going to Tampa the day after to-morrow. We leave on the early train. I shall take you with me."

"Very well," I assent, though I guess the reason. My chaperone has become anxious for me; she fears the British Bugaboo will devour the heiress; she wishes to remove me from the presence of the gentleman of the quinine powders. This projected move doesn't

disturb me as much as she thinks. I have an idea *he* will have to go to Tampa shortly to investigate the coca-plum, at least he has hinted it to me. My acquiescence rather surprises Mrs. Armitage, who tells me I am a good girl.

In some way to-day is not exactly like yesterday. The place seems to me dull. Mr. Ripley tries to make himself agreeable, and I attempt to make myself enduring of him; but find it impossible. He goes sulkily away to billiards or bowling or some other masculine amusement.

Left alone on the veranda I would read the New York *Herald*, but Mirabelle comes dancing to me.

I am rather surprised at this, for Miss Armitage seldom puts herself *en évidence* unless there are gentlemen about. She seats herself by me and whispers: "So you sent poor Jonas away again. Why don't you make him happy—poor Mr. Ripley?"

"Good gracious! what are you talking about, Mirie?" I say, petulantly. Then I add, sarcastically: "Wouldn't it be fine; two patent medicines joined in holy wedlock? In Manhattan society I am sometimes called Miss Pills. Wedded to Mr. Ripley, I should be sneered at as Mrs. Liniment, *née* Pills!" Whereupon I laugh bitterly, visions of New York social snubs coming into my mind, and remark: "I have ambitions!"

Here her manner astonishes me. The child says: "You're a deep one! You're a finesser, that's what you are!"

"What do you mean?" I ask, angrily.

"You know what I mean—Mr. Cranmere," she pouts.

"Well, what about him?"

"Oh, I suppose you had a pleasant time yesterday, didn't you? Orange groves, eh? Sand beach—"

"Well, what then?"

"Well, you're a wonder, that's all! Evie, at schoo!

I never thought you over cute, but now I think you're a *wonder!* Abelard and I have been having a great talk about you." And she laughs a curious laugh of insinuation.

"Stop talking nonsense!" I say. "What book are you reading?" for she has a red-bound volume in her hand.

"Oh, Debrett's Peerage," she answers carelessly. "You know we're going to Europe soon, and I think it will be well to be posted. Haven't you read it? Wouldn't you like to marry an earl or a duke, and crush out your New York snubbers?"

"Pooh!" I reply, "what chance is there of my meeting an earl or a duke?" Then I say bitterly: "I don't think my father or Seraphia will *ever* get away from business to take me to Europe."

"So the earl or duke will have to come to you," she laughs. "And you haven't read this book?" she asks, looking me full in the face with her frank blue eyes; next cries: "Evie, you're the biggest goose or the sharpest hawk that flies!"

Then she runs away laughing like a child; but I think it is a bitter laugh, and wonder what infantile idea was in her blonde head; but then, no one can ever tell as they look into Mirie's frank eyes what she does mean. Sometimes she talks like the Oracle of Delphi or Cumæan sibyl, sometimes like the daughter of a Chicago Beef Trust man—what she really is.

Pondering on this, my glance rests on the paper in my lap; excitement comes to me; a little note upon drugs puts rapture into my soul. It is quoted from the European edition. I am so happy; isn't Mr. Cranmere talented? He *is* a business man.

Armed with the journal I glide demurely into lunch, to lie, like a Seminole, in ambush for proper opportunity.

It comes very soon!

Mr. Ripley dissecting a steak gazes upon me and says: "I've just been down to the San Marco and nailed your quinine fiend again."

"Do you mean Mr. Cranmere," I return blandly, "by another chloral contract?" Then I produce the *Herald*, and read for Jonas's benefit the following:

"DRUGS. By Commercial Cable. Owing to the increased output of the new German laboratories controlled by Pink, White & Co., and the substitution for it of certain coal-tar products the price of chloral has fallen eighteen pence a pound. These quotations have been followed by the New York market, which has fallen thirty-three cents to-day, with a prospect of still lower rates."

A smothered titter from Mirie and a smothered imprecation from Jonas interrupt me.

Then I sneer: "The British ignoramus, coming over here to *do* American business men!"

"Probably Pink, White & Co. will discharge poor Mr. Cranmere," suggests Mirabelle in roguish glee.

But Mr. Ripley doesn't wait for any more such suggestions, and leaves the lunch table, though I don't think his appetite is entirely appeased, except for chloral.

Even Mrs. Armitage cannot refrain from a smile, though she says deprecatingly: "Why do you girls tease Mr. Ripley? You know, Evie, he's devoted to you."

"Yes," I remark savagely, "like the lion is to the lamb."

"Which is the lamb?" titters Mirie, at which we all laugh, and I take advantage of everybody's good humor to ask Mrs. Armitage to tell the waiter to place an additional chair at our table, as I have invited the business dupe to have dinner with us.

"Charming!" cries Mirabelle. "Put the quinine fiend's chair alongside of mine. Then he'll be next

Jonas, so Ripley can do him on another drug contract."

A good deal of the afternoon I devote to arranging my toilet for the evening.

As I am about to descend a bell boy brings to my room an exquisite bunch of violets, and scribbled on a card is the first note from him. It says: "In return for the orange blossom souvenir."

Their color suits my costume. When I appear robed for dinner I am wearing violets—but oh, laws—Mirie!

She must have devoted a good deal of her afternoon to her toilet also, and with success. Such a daring yet simple thing, made by some artist in children's dresses I should suppose; for the frock is cut, as Jonas chuckles to me, "in a kind of nursery abandon."

It is a mass of baby effects in the lightest chiffon and daintiest laces; from it, her snowy arms and shoulders gleam in infantile simplicity.

Above all, with elfish deftness, Mirabelle has composed her face for the costume, and her eyes have a childish, trusting, convent look in them.

But the whole thing is marvelously becoming, and Miss Armitage would look a girl of twelve were it not for her exquisitely proportioned figure.

Having adopted the frock this evening, Mirie apparently intends to play the rôle of the innocent, ingenuous infant. With Mr. Cranmere's arrival for dinner, in his usual immaculate evening dress, this becomes more marked.

"*Dear* mamma likes me to be a child, you know," she prattles to the Englishman, and takes her mother's hand with affected bashfulness to go in to dinner.

Here the chit drops into such a chair that Mr. Cranmere is obliged to seat himself beside her and facing me. This places him next to Jonas, who apparently doesn't like the arrangement, but is compelled by very shame to take his seat near the Englishman.

This crafty arrangement of Miss Mirabelle forces me to Jonas, and that gentleman and I go through the meal contiguously, on the armed neutrality principle. This gives me ample opportunity for watching the innocent child seated opposite to me, who now apparently has thought for nothing but Mr. Cranmere.

She follows his tales of foreign countries, her frank blue eyes open to their fullest expanse, fixed upon his. She forgets to eat sweetbreads, a dish to which I know the little gourmand is devoted, in the intensity of her interest in his narratives, and tells him so very craftily.

"Oh heavens, *sweet* mamma!" she exclaims, "they have taken away my sweetbread and I haven't eaten a bit of it. Oh, Mr. Cranmere, don't make yourself *so* entertaining. Please let me eat a little—just a little! Just give a poor starving child a chance at the duck, won't you. Don't make me laugh any more! I know it was awfully funny when Maddox, your valet, insisted on your wearing full dress to the Queen of the Congo-Bushmen's fête, and they insisted upon your removing every stitch of it so as to be in *full* court costume. Mamma, don't you think I'm too young to hear such *risque* stories!" Here she droops her eyes bashfully, and with pretty blushes devotes herself to her breast of canvas-back for about two minutes; then looks at Cranmere with open eyes, claps her hands and cries, in childish glee: "Tell us another!"

Such remarks as these, interspersed by Cranmere's excited "God bless my souls," and "I say, now, draw it mild, won't yous," and "Thanks awfullys!" set us all laughing, at which Mirie looks at us blushingly, then puts her head in her mother's lap.

But she plays her part very effectively, and looks so charmingly naïve and innocent while she is doing it, and gets in such fetching strokes under the guise of the

playful liberties of childhood, that I wonder if Mr. Cranmere will be caught by the pretty nymph.

Taking advantage of the role she has assumed, our coffee is hardly finished when Mirie seizes the Englishman's arm, and murmurs blushingly, "Mr. Cranmere and I are going to the veranda!"

"Will you let me smoke?" he says, grinning at her petite affectation.

"Oh, I love cigars! I'll light one for you. Do you know, I smoked at board—" she checks herself here, and I sneer as I see she has overplayed her part. Mr. Cranmere looks at her astonished—then disillusionized as he follows her to the veranda.

To the same spot Jonas removes himself also for his cigar and we walk after him—that is, Mrs. Armitage does. I stroll out by myself and sit a little way from the party.

Here I note that Mr. Cranmere is devoting most of his time to his cigar and very little of it to Mirie, who *will* be noticed. "Wouldn't you like to dance?" she laughs, for the band is playing in the rotunda. "Isn't it the poetry of motion?"

Thereupon she takes a few steps before him in childish glee. But he not seeming to notice this much, she goes to romping with Abelard, who, dodging waiters and hotel officials, has joined his mistress on the veranda.

With this uncanny creature she makes some very pretty pictures, grouping herself with the caniche as she caresses him and "Showing her lovely ankles like a saint!" as Miss Parkins, who sits near me, remarks spitefully. For Mirabelle's modiste, when he made the baby dress, made it thoroughly baby and did not lose his chance of giving display to her wonderfully pretty feet, and—shall I say it—yes, I will—legs!"

Noting Cranmere's defection, that gentleman having

taken advantage of Mirie's devotion to her poodle and drawn his chair beside mine, she suddenly prattles: "Oh, mamma, why am I such a child?" And fondles her mother who, looking helplessly about, whines: "Good heavens, Mirie, what *am* I to do with you?"

To this plaint of Mrs. Armitage, Cranmere whispers in my ear: "I say, if she'd take my advice she'd get a tight governess for that ballet baby, that's what she'd do."

Oh, if Mirabelle could hear him! "Ballet baby!"

"I wonder if we couldn't get away from this crowd," he remarks quietly.

Of this I see no chance; Mirie has her eyes on us. I know to-night she will haunt Mr. Cranmere.

Fortunately, Miss Mirabelle's own arts and graces defeat her ends. Two chappy young gentlemen from New York—Harold Thomerson and Regie Van Katcher—have remarked and been captivated by Mirabelle's affected childhood and exquisite poetry of motion. These youths saunter up to me and beg me for introduction to the object of their desires, which I quickly accord to them.

At any other time Miss Armitage would doubtless be delighted by their tribute to her charms. Now she gives me a savage glance—but I know Mr. Cranmere and I are free from her this evening.

Messrs. Thomerson and Van Katcher are adolescent creatures of that new style of fashionable cad who *don't* take hints, and they dog Miss Mirabelle about the whole evening, over the veranda, around the *patio*—no matter where she wanders to escape them, jollying her up if she affects temper, chaffing her delicately about what a pretty child she makes, and giving a display of brilliant "up-to-date" wit.

As I turn away I hear young Van Katcher remark: "What a mamma's darling she is! I shall put on boy's

knickerbockers to-morrow, and then we'll be quite a Fauntleroy pair; won't we, Miss Mirie?"

Mirabelle's answer I do not catch, but I note as she speaks Mr. Van Katcher looks angry, then foolish, while his companion goes into ecstasies of glee.

However, they hold to Mirie like glue, and a little later in the evening somehow a palm tree finds us sitting under it in the garden. I don't mean *all* of us—only Mr. Cranmere and myself.

"Those violets are awfully good of you, Miss Evie," he says, looking at me quite rapturously. "I wonder how it is you always contrive to look so—"

"So unlike the black beauties of the Queen of the Congo's court," I laugh. "That's not astonishing, I am a Saxon."

"No, I don't mean exactly that, I mean those violets become you; awfully good of you to wear them."

"Would you appreciate an Indian gift?" I suggest.

"Yes, from *you*."

He looks so pleased that I adorn his buttonhole with a few of the violets he has sent me.

Then we have a very nice hour or two—*two*, I think, for the clock is striking eleven as he rises to go, and makes one of his stupid British bulls.

He says: "I expect to have an awfully busy day of it to-morrow—coca-plum and appointment about a sponge contract in Key West. But I hope to turn up some time in the evening."

"Very well, come when you please," I return in my most indifferent voice. I am not altogether satisfied with being made second to business at a watering place—at anywhere!

"You—you are not annoyed with me?" he mutters.

"Annoyed? Why should I be *annoyed?*" My tone, though questioning, is savage.

"Well, I—I didn't know—you seemed deuced angry

when I told you I wouldn't be over before the evening."

"*Angry?*" I am a statue of ice. "ANGRY! What do you mean?"

"Well, you—you looked——"

"How did I look? I insist upon knowing *how* I looked."

"Very—very—deuced—decidedly—beautiful," he says, stammeringly.

But I am not mollified by even this. I bid him good night so haughtily that he looks wounded.

Something—I know not what—has got into me. The day hasn't been a pleasant one. I expect I was quite cross with him.

I go to bed. I am unhappy.

St. Augustine, March 3d, 1894.

To-day hasn't seemed to improve things.

In the morning I quarrel with Jonas, which is normal; I dispute with Mrs. Armitage, which is abnormal and shows I am not in my usual angelic temper. I would probably wrangle and battle with Mirie, only she isn't present.

"I believe Mirabelle is holding some consultation with her dog," laughs Mrs. Armitage to me as we stand on the veranda. "He's a curious beast," she adds, a little nervously I think, "and nearly always sleepy during the daytime, which isn't astonishing, as Mirie often keeps the poor creature up all night talking to him."

"What are they discussing this morning?" I say laughingly.

"Oh, I don't know," replies the mother. "Their confabs are profound secrets. Mirie doesn't take me into her confidence—the confidence she gives to a cur," the mother adds, bitterly.

Chancing to run upstairs hurriedly a little after this I come upon Mirabelle and her familiar and hear the last few words of their pow-wow.

"She's a jealous wretch," whispers Mirie, "and jealousy should be punished. Say she's jealous, Abelard, and I'll give you a chocolate."

At this the beast utters a sleepy, yawning yell.

"That settles it," cries Mirabelle, "she's a goner!" and turning laughingly she confronts me. A blush flies over her fair cheeks for an instant; then she purrs: "Wouldn't you like to know what we're talking about, cousin Evie—Abelard and I?"

"Pshaw! I'm not up in the dog language, Mirie," I reply with ladylike dignity, and sweep to my room.

But somehow, as I think of it, I *would* like to know what she was saying to Abelard. Did she mean *me* by the "jealous wretch?"

However I am sure Mirie's not in a very good temper for I hear Abelard giving out agonized whimpers, punctuated by the yells of torture every once in a while during this afternoon, which I devote to hurrying our packing for Southern Florida and scolding Elise. I have no Abelard.

It is the dinner hour. I come down to the meal robed in smiles and a new dress that I believe is effective. He said he would come over in the evening. Mirie is gowned very effectively, but I stare at her as I note the absolute contrast in her toilet to that of the night before.

She now appears a young lady of extreme and haughty dignity. Her gown has a mature length of skirt, though it is very light, pretty, and graceful—for all this wretch's costumes are so extraordinarily effective that I often envy her her dressmaker—still she has conjured up such a stare of hauteur, such stateliness of bearing, such indifference of manner, that she now looks as priggish a bud as I have ever seen.

Pshaw! what do I care for Mirabelle? I would be happy, but——

I have slipped through my meal as far as the desert, and am playing with a bunch of grapes when Mr. Ripley, who has been throwing several knowing winks on Mirabelle, who has relaxed her hauteur sufficiently to reply to them with surreptitious giggles, says: "I believe you showed me an article in the *Herald* of great interest to me yesterday, Miss Bulgée. Permit me to return the compliment. You like newspaper reading. How does this paragraph strike you?"

With this he passes over to me this day's edition of the Jacksonville *Statesman*, and my eyes grow misty as I read in its St. Augustine social column as follows:

"The young English traveller, Mr Cranmere, who has come to this city to investigate the manufacture of the seeds of the coca-plum into the new and celebrated anæsthetic cocaine, and who may establish by this a novel industry in Florida, has fallen into pleasant lines in St. Augustine. He is said to prefer the beautiful Miss Webster's attractions to his chemical investigations, and has been devoting a good deal of his time to showing that exquisite young heiress through the orange groves and suburbs of our midwinter watering place."

"Isn't Quinine Fiend a deep one?" chuckles Jonas.

"Oh, that *beau-ti-ful* Miss Webster!" cries Mirabelle, putting a dagger-like emphasis on the adjective. "Alicia Webster! Why, she's the belle of the San Marco."

I wonder if they know how they hurt me! They shall never see it in my face; though Mirie looks at it as if eager to read my very soul.

I finish my grapes and contrive to talk carelessly with Mrs. Armitage; but the meal over I go away by myself to a quiet corner of the portico and get to thinking. My thoughts frighten me. *The very fact that I think* frightens me. What do I care? Nothing! Of course Mr. Cranmere has a right to pay any attentions

he thinks proper to Miss Webster, the beautiful Miss Webster, the belle of the San Marco. But in newspaper society columns every young woman is a belle, every girl beautiful, and heiresses as thick as chorus ladies in an opera. The modern journalist colors his pictures with Ananias paint. I presume the girl is passable in appearance—I hope so for his sake. No, I don't—I hope she's ugly as a Gorgon. Miss Webster's the reason he's so busy on his coca-plum investigations that he has no time for the Ponce de Leon.

Even as I think this a genial "How are yer?" is whispered right over my shoulder, and Mr. Cranmere's hand is extended for mine.

"Oh, very well, thank you," I say, and return his grasp effusively. He at least shall never see that I have read of Miss Webster.

Mirabelle and Jonas some distance off on the balcony have noticed our meeting. They sha'n't observe that I am affected by Miss Webster, and I become so enthusiastically cordial that Mr. Cranmere at first seems delighted.

Then perhaps I overdo the thing a little.

He remarks, sitting beside me: "Do you know that you seem to have changed in the last day or two?"

"How?"

"How? Oh, I say, you—you don't seem to me quite as genuine." There is a hesitation in his manner, a kind of apology in his voice as he mutters this.

Good heavens! Does he dare to think that I have heard of Miss Webster, and that it affects my manner to him? He sha'n't! I'll obliterate Miss Webster from my mind. Better still, I'll make him forget there is a Miss Webster on earth.

So I call into play every art of fascination, every charm of manner, and turn them, mental and physical,

upon him. I draw my rocking chair under the proper focus of the electric lights, the exact glow to bring out in poetic gleam my white arms and ivory shoulders. My eyes look at him with intention, my voice is low and soft. I try to intoxicate him. I believe I succeed.

He becomes happy. His eyes meet mine with a radiance that is not quinine. If I didn't stay him he would say something wild, but I am still mistress of myself and of the arts of society enough to stop him at the proper moment—here in this crowd, with Mirie and Jonas almost within earshot, it would have been too embarrassing. What would I have answered him—I can't tell, and yet I know I am not flirting with him.

He rises to go, and whispers: I say, will you do me a great favor?"

"What?"

"Come down and see Fort Marion with me to-morrow morning? You know I'm going away the day after."

He is going away the day after! If I don't accept his invitation perhaps *she* will. I seize it! "With pleasure," I say.

"Meet me at 8 o'clock in the rotunda—the—ah—usual place. Will you have breakfast with me?"

If I don't accept his invitation to breakfast perhaps *she* may. "I will," I answer, very cordially.

"You have quite jollied me up," he laughs. "I m almost through with my investigation of the coca-plum business here. I can have a morning off again."

Is he a hypocrite? If so he is the most consummate one I ever met, and has the strategy of old Ovid. He brings up Miss Webster *himself*.

Just as he is bidding me good-bye he breaks out in his disconnected English way that I hate: "By the by, I say, did you see that—er—article in the Jackson-

ville *Statesman?* Rather good joke, wasn't it, about Miss Webster? Curious birds, these American newspapers, don't yer know! Very glad to see you haven't been cut up about it."

Glad I wasn't cut up about it! Of course after that I can never mention Miss Webster's name to him. I would pull my tongue out first.

Good-night," he adds, seeing I do not answer. "Awfully jolly evening. Something to tell you to-morrow morning."

He squeezes my hand. Oh, goodness, I return it! Then he goes away, apparently very jolly and very happy. What bad taste to mention her! Almost as bad as the article in the *Statesman.*

What is he going to tell me to-morrow morning? To-morrow morning he shall forget that that girl at the San Marco exists.

I watch him as he moves along the veranda. Pretty Mirabelle in her toilet *de grande demoiselle* tries to catch his attention, but he does not see her.

Pooh! It is not Mirabelle I fear; it is—oh, heavens and earth, that I should fear anybody! What misery—what humiliation!

Blushing at my own thoughts, I rise to fly from them!

I go up to my room to write this in my memoirs. I don't know how to spell a word. I'll look it up.

The dictionary is in my hand. On it I read "WEBSTER!"

It goes to the other end of the room!

THEN I HAVE A NIGHT OF IT.

CHAPTER V.

"I HAVE WRITTEN TO YER GOVERNOR!"

St. Augustine, March 4th, 1894.

I AWAKE from horrid dreams to astonish Elise again, by making her dress me at 7:30. I am probably unusually exigent in regard to my toilet. My maid seems stupid.

And yet my costume is simplicity itself. Just a plain white muslin gown, spotless as mountain snow; just two pink blush roses; just one broad azure satin sash round my lithe waist; just two of the prettiest little piquant French bottines; just two laced and broidered—but I am becoming as diffuse in details as if I were a woman's dress reformer—just snowy ruffled skirts and flounces; just silken hosiery to match my scarf; just a sunhat of Leghorn, soft, big and ribboney and a sunshade gigantic enough for an army tent, of white gleaming satin and draped by blue satin bow—and I go down.

The thing is effective, I know. As I enter the rotunda the head clerk, who is just getting to his morning's work in the office, emits under his breath, a startled: "Gee Whiz!" and he sees many wondrously beautiful toilets in a St. Augustine season.

Mr. Cranmere has again paid me the compliment of being before his time. He is waiting for me. I think my get-up takes his tongue out of him. He simply looks at me and gasps: "Thanks, awfully!"

But I can talk for two. As I look at him I perceive before me a triumph over the girl I dreamed about. "Let's run along," I say lightly, "to breakfast."

"Thanks, awfully!"

"Have you taken your quinine this morning?" I laugh. "You seem so quiet."

"Quiet?" His eyes blaze up excitedly. Then he says, determination in his voice: "If I'd known you'd look like this I'd have cut down my ration. You're—you're so exhilarating and breezy."

By this time we are in the Alcazar restaurant. Here I find as pretty a breakfast as the one of three days ago, only there is a beautiful bunch of fresh violets, the dew still on them, upon my plate.

For some reason we don't talk much, which is curious, as we don't eat much either—at least I don't.

After a little he says: "Let's get down to Fort Marion and catch the sea breeze before the sun gets up."

"No fear of my complexion," I laugh, and shake out my sunshade in all its gleaming white satin glory as we leave the Alcazar, and crossing the Plaza stroll to St. George Street and along that little, narrow, old-fashioned, mediæval thoroughfare through the city gate—the last relic of a walled town in the United States—then by the shell road past the San Marco, to Bay Street and the sea wall. Here, crossing over the moat to the barbican, we reach another bridge, which takes us into the old Fort built by the Spanish king "*Fernando Sexto.*" This I note from the inscription over the gate which is joined with the arms of Spain.

However, the Spaniards have all gone away—years ago, I believe; now a few of Uncle Sam's soldiers occupy the works, one of whom volunteers as our guide and shows us through the casemates.

"I say, let's go up to the platform and enjoy the real beauties of the place—the view from the battery. That sentry-box up there in the corner of the wall," Mr. Cranmere indicates this by a wave of his hand, "is the coolest place in St. Augustine."

"What makes you guess that?" I question.

"Oh, bless you! I ran all over the place yesterday," returns Mr. Cranmere; "and know the points of it pretty well."

This confession makes me desperate. *She*, doubtless, ran all over the place with him. However, he shall see that I can do as beautiful ruin-climbing as the Webster girl. I've got exactly the costume for it, and have done picnic acrobatics before. Therefore, with fairy feet I skip up the winding incline ahead of him to reach the parapet and get the view, that we have really come for.

Right in front of me, blue as cobalt, is Matanzas Inlet dashing straight in from the ocean through two narrow sandspits; beyond the Atlantic tossing in lazy tropic grandeur goes to the horizon, unbroken save by the distant smoke of a passing New Orleans steamer. At my very feet washing the coquina walls of the battery, the rippling waves of the inlet run north and south between wooded beaches, very blue save where the white sand in the shallows makes them gleam under the brilliant sun.

As I cry out in rapture at the sight, the breeze flying in from the open ocean plays about me and tempers the sun's rays. But it is no gentle zephyr that dallies with my white skirts and ruffles my laces, and nearly blows me away. With an effort I brace myself against it and make, as I fondly hope, a pretty picture as I stand outlined in the breeze like a dainty yacht with white sails fluttering in the wind, and flags, signals and pennons streaming to the gale. That is what I do, I stream to the gale.

Mr. Cranmere gazes at me with a muttered "By Jove!"

Is it of admiration? Did she look as well when she streamed in the gale yesterday?

Another and stronger puff!

With a little scream I give a half frightened clutch at my skirts, that seem as if they were blowing from me. Then Boreas seizes upon my enormous sunshade and figuratively I go to pieces. My beautiful white satin umbrella is just departing upon a balloon ascent; my hat is already half off my head, my tresses are waving in the wind, I myself am staggering and reeling from the force of the summer cyclone; when, with another muttered "By Jove!" Mr. Cranmere gathers me in—fluttering muslin skirts, floating blue ribbons and tossed-about chestnut hair. With one hand he seizes upon the departing sunshade, the other keeps me from falling.

"I'll—I'll do very well now,' I gasp, "if you'll only take care of that awful sunshade." This he has, with man's promptitude, immediately furled.

"You ought to know sufficient about yachting," he laughs, "to take in sail in a gale of wind."

"I'll—I'll do very well now," I stammer blushingly, for his arm is still around my waist.

"I don't think I dare trust you," and in a second I find myself promptly seated in the sentry-box, Mr. Cranmere taking post near my feet.

I of course thank him for his timely aid. He rewards the soldier for his attention, and that son of Mars leaves us to ourselves.

Our conversation after a little becomes personal. He commences to talk about himself and England again. "You know," he says, "I've been in awful hard luck for the past three or four years. Things are commencing to change with me."

"Yes; perhaps you may get an advance in salary on account of your chloral contracts with Mr. Ripley. Do you know, I'm proud of you for that," I answer. "Ripley sneered so," and I show Mr. Cranmere the clipping from the New York *Herald*.

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"Yes, but that wasn't so very clever of me. You see I was better posted than he was, that's all. But I'm awful glad you think that transaction showed business instinct. That's what I've been trying to cultivate ever since I gave up wearing Her Majesty's uniform. It's the deuce in all after you've acquired the sporting instinct, to get the business instinct."

"Is there a difference between them?" I ask, attempting philosophy. "They are both for gain."

"Yes, but one tries for a dead sure thing, and the other is willing to take chances. That's the difference between a pillar of commerce and a bookmaker," he laughs, then adds rather proudly: "You know, I am commencing to have business instinct very strongly developed in me."

"Why?" I ask, opening my eyes.

"I'm commencing to *think* of paying my debts. Mind you, only to *think* of it. I have been calculating I might compromise with my Shylocks if I could make up my mind to live in some beastly, out-of-the-way, unhealthy place well located for gathering in tonics, roots and balsams, and all that kind of thing, don't yer know? For Nature where she develops disease, always in her kindly way puts plenty of specifics for its cure just at hand. In the valley of the Amazon, where you have no end of fever right upon the mountain slopes, she has planted cinchona; the tree under which the chloral snake raises its deadly fangs, supports the twining guaco weed, to make its bite innoxious, don't yer appreciate?"

"No, I don't appreciate," I say, sharply.

Has he brought me here to gabble about philosophy?

"Yer don't?" he mutters disappointedly. Then after a little I commenced to divine the drift of his remarks. "I wonder," he says dreamily, "whether

any girl would love a fellow enough to run off to the Orinoco or the Amazon and spend three or four years knocking about with him?" He looks pathetically at me. Does he forget that he is talking to the heiress of Bulger's Bile Exterminator, who can support a husband where and how she pleases?

"What's the matter with London or Paris?" I laugh in the light slang of the day; then go on more seriously: "A man should not be above accepting some little favors from his wife—and that I presume"—here my tone is distinctly moral—"is the relationship you hinted at in regard to the girl."

Oh, gracious goodness! He has given me the start of my life. He has said in his disconnected British way: "Yes, that's what I was talking about, a wife. —By the by, last night I wrote to your governor, don't yer know?"

"You—you wrote to my father?" I am deathly pale as I stammer this out.

"Certainly! Your father's address is Abner Joel Bulger, 479½ Fifth Avenue, New York."

"O-o-oh!" This is a gasp of confusion and dismay. Blushes fly over me from head to heel. I cannot look him in the face. My manner last night must have made him *sure* of me. I turn my head away and think dizzily: "What will papa—what will Seraphia say?"

Though Mr. Cranmere says nothing I am sure he is gazing at me. I feel his eyes, they draw mine to them; falteringly, coyly and bashfully in a big blush I look up.

Our eyes meet, then mine droop, I hang my head; for as I gaze, his face changes from an astonished consternation I cannot understand, to joy, triumph—*love!* Yes, I see it there, LOVE!

I think I hear him murmur: "My darling!"

I am blushingly playing with my sunshade; in a half

crazy way I am prodding my projecting boot with its tip; his breath fans my neck; one of his hands has captured mine, the other is near my waist—my ears are open for his words of love, my lips are waiting for betrothal kisses.

When suddenly I give the start of frightened maidenhood! "Beg pardon, sir, but it's twelve o'clock, your quinine time," comes to me in Maddox's plebeian but faithful tones.

"That's right! al-always look out for your—your master," I say with a sickly smile.

With the snarl of a wild beast, George—that is, Mr. Cranmere—bolts his powder, looking the unutterable at his valet. "Maddox," he says savagely, "one would think you kept a Scotland-Yard-eye on me. How the deuce did you know I was here?"

"Well—I—I only guessed it, sir. I knew you were down here yesterday; but I didn't know you were accompanied this time, sir. Beg pardon, sir," and Maddox, unable to stand his master's glaring eyes, retires down the stairs as I rise to go.

The valet didn't know his master was accompanied *this* time? Who acccompanied him the *other* time?

My voice trembles a little as I falter: "Twelve o'clock! It's time for me to return to the Ponce de Leon to lunch," and pass out of the old coquina watch-tower.

"Yer—yer won't stay?" he asks, reproachfully.

"I can't. Mrs. Armitage will be expecting me." I am at the top of the incline now.

"Yer—yer not angry, I hope?" he stammers.

"I? With whom?" Though inquiring, my tones indicate temper.

"Why, with Maddox, don't yer know? He's so beastly unexpected!"

My answer to this is to sternly step down the incline.

Before I reach the lower casemates he is by my side, whispering: "Then I'll go with you. You won't deny me this? You—you know," he adds sadly as we stride over the enceinte, "that I get out of St. Augustine to-morrow."

"Leave here?" Despite myself my tone is anxious now.

"Yes, for Southern Florida, Tampa, and all that, on the coca-plum and sponge business. Go by the early train. I thought I told you that two days ago."

"Why, that's the train I leave by!" I say, excitedly.

"You?"

"Yes. Mrs. Armitage takes Mirabelle and myself to Tampa to-morrow morning—same train." As I speak I take a snap-shot at his face. Rapture is on it. I shall call him George from now on—in my mind.

"This is awfully jolly," he laughs. "Awfully jolly." Tampa is no end of fun—orange groves, sandy beaches, cocoanuts and sentiment, and all that."

Our eyes meet again. Yes, there is sentiment on George's face—there might be passion were this the place to show it.

Even as I gaze blushingly on him a group of tourists and visitors are coming into the Fort, one, a dapper young man with snappy eyes and blonde mustache whose face seems familiar to me. He looks at me knowingly, then at Mr. Cranmere, and a smile goes over his face. Where have I met him? As he passes I follow him with my eyes. He is taking out a note-book, and this gives me a clue. I remember, he is the little reporter of the Jacksonville paper who, Mirie says, will do on a quiet afternoon.

Just here I forget the newspaper man. I catch a glimpse of George's face—I suppose I like to look at it now—and the expression on it astonishes me. He is evidently thinking very hard. There is an amused

embarrassment on it; once he laughs to himself a little, though in a sheepish, hang-dog kind of way.

"You seem amused," I remark.

"No-a—not exactly," he stammers, then his face grows serious and embarrassed. There's something on his mind.

"I—I want to tell you," he says, then suddenly checks himself, and in his irrelevant, disjointed manner, remarks: "Awfully jolly day, this!"

"Awfully jolly," I return.

We are passing the ample balconies of the San Marco. Does he fear that she will see him with me? Then a sudden flash of triumph goes through me. George's face has told me that he loves me. He has written to my father. Poor Miss Webster! If she but knew! The thought of her distress, I am ashamed to say, makes me happy. George's manner makes me happier as we go on. It grows easier, and his conversation apparently is coming to his letter again.

He suggests: "You know very little about me, Miss Evie. You see, we've only had five days of it together. You don't even know my name."

"Oh, yes I do," I reply; "George R. M. B. Cranmere."

"You haven't half guessed it," he says, laughingly. "It's George Ramilles Malplaquet Busaco Cranmere."

"Oh, goodness!" I cry. "Where did you get all that?"

"It's after the names of battles my ancestors fought in. There's two or three more of them tacked on to me—Gibraltar and Waterloo, I believe, but no visiting card will contain them all, so I've dropped them from the list. If you want to be quite sure about it, you'll have to hunt me up in Burke, don't yer know?"

He's in "*Burke!*" That means at least Landed Gentry. Delightful! I hope he's put that in his letter to papa.

Somehow or other that epistle seems to be in his mind also. Twice he approaches the subject, but we're in the Alameda now, and the crowd is too great for confidences.

"You know er—that—that letter," he says, then as the roses fly up to my cheeks he grows embarrassed, and mutters: "Quite a crowd here, don't yer know?"

"Yes," I answer. "*Quite* a crowd. You were going to say something?"

"Y-e-s," he mumbles hesitatingly, but here a sudden determination seems to come to him; he says sharply, "That will rest until to-morrow on the train. Yer see, we'll be pretty well together on the train."

"Won't you come in to lunch?" I remark, for we are now at the entrance of the Ponce de Leon.

"I can't," he answers; "I've no end of business. I've got three or four letters to write, an experiment in the coca-plum to finish; I've got a man to see about Key West sponges. I'll—"

"You'll come in this evening?"

"Yes, over in the evening," he says, cheerily. "But it'll be late. You know I'm trying to be a business man now. You won't think any the worse of me for that, will you?" His eyes meet mine frankly but pleadingly.

"No, nor my father, either," I say. He has my hand in his. I feel a sudden thrill come through him. He turns his head, then looks at me in an embarrassed way again, and mumbles: "Thanks, awfully! Good-bye!" and strides away.

I look after him, wondering what he has upon his mind that embarrasses him. Does he love me? Yes; his eyes showed that. Oh, if he doesn't, what will he think of my coy blushes, my embarrassed manner? But he *does!* I know in my heart George loves me, and am happy.

As I stroll through the courtyard the very fountains seem to ripple with joy—the very breeze in the trees seems to sing happiness.

Here Mirie meets me, kisses me, puts her arm round my waist, and says, in her frank, childish manner: "Did you catch him?" Then as she looks in my face, discerning Mirabelle thinks she sees answer to her question, and ejaculates: "You did! you *did!* You weren't content with poor Jonas. You're the greediest girl I ever saw—and men so scarce here!" With this she goes away pouting and angry and a very curious look on her face, because I can't help laughing at her. Why shouldn't I laugh?

I go up to my room and hurry Elise in the packing. We have a quiet lunch (for Jonas is away spending the day on a yacht) unbroken save for one little ripple.

Mrs. Armitage looks at me severely and says: "You have been away again, Evie, with that Englishman."

"Yes, we did Fort Marion," I answer, airily.

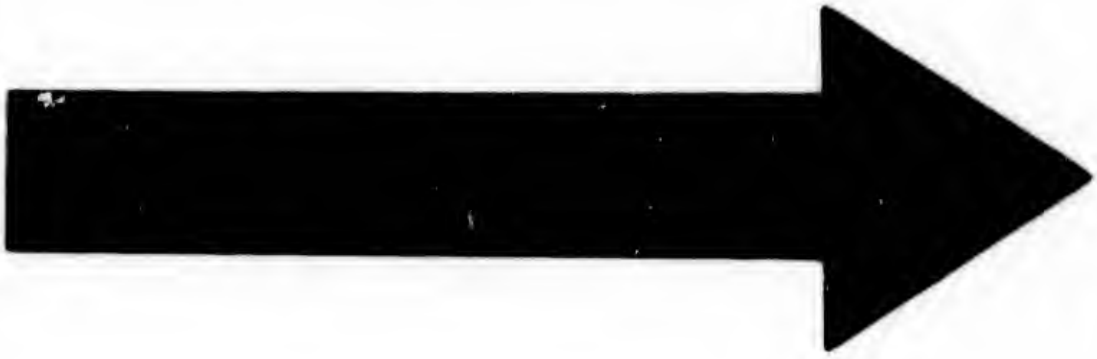
"I am sorry. I think it unwise, you know so little about him. Fortunately we leave to-morrow morning."

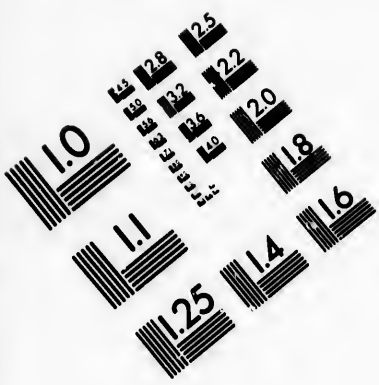
"Yes," chirrups Mirie, "*he* leaves to-morrow morning also. I was down in the ticket office and saw his name on a section in our car. My goodness, mamma, you'll have your hands full in Tampa."

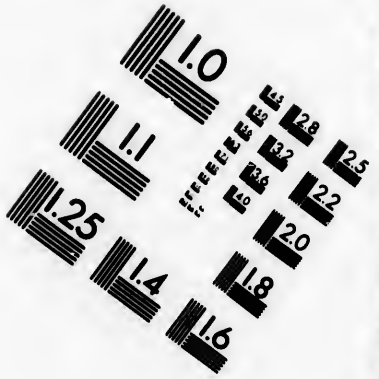
Neither of us reply to Mirabelle's wit, though my chaperone looks concerned. As for me, I am happy, even if Mrs. Armitage doesn't approve. What girl cares for a chaperone in such a case as this?

The afternoon passes dreamily to me. I read a book of sentiment. My eyes grow misty with happiness as I think of Southern Florida, cocoanut groves, eternal sunshine, and—George!

The time draws along. Arrayed for his delight I come into the glittering dining-room and dinner passes. Then I chat with two or three ladies on the







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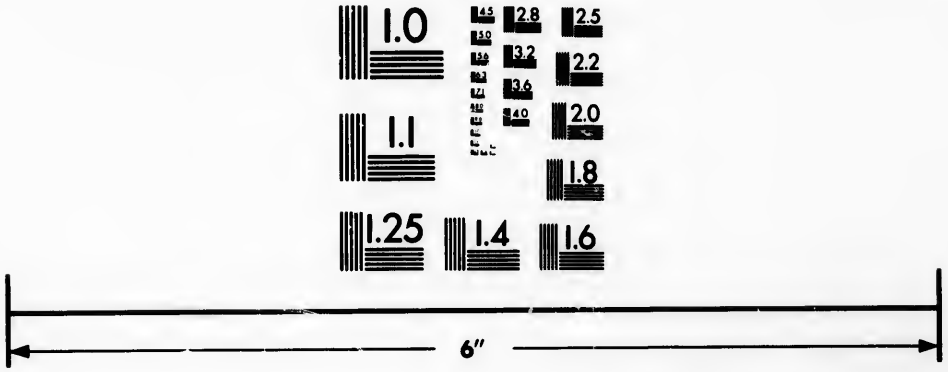

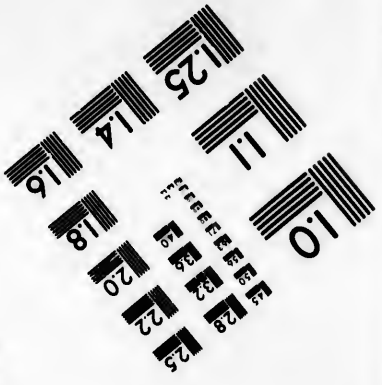

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porch, waiting for *him*. Nine o'clock—he doesn't come.

Ten o'clock—he strides in. I see him; the electric lights seem to grow brighter. George's hand clasps mine, George's eyes speak unto mine.

"I've torn myself away for five minutes, you know, from business, just to say good-night," he says happily. His eyes are blazing into mine like Romeo's in the balcony scene. My glance droops before his.

"You can't stay?"

"No, I've got a cable to send to Pink, White & Co. I've just had an answer from them about the chloral contract. I say, I want to make a little money; I'm awfully anxious to get ahead in the world, now more than ever. You see I may have somebody else to take care of, don't yer know?" My hand is still in his—he is squeezing it—so tenderly.

There are too many people about. Mirie has seen him and is approaching. I know in her childless, artless way she will interrupt our interview. Then I utter suddenly, heedlessly, something for which I would have bitten my tongue out the next instant: "You put all these things in your letter to my father?"

Good heavens! what an effect have I produced on him. At my words he blushes up to the eyes, becomes embarrassed, stammers, then suddenly says: "Good-night, I—I'll explain about that letter to-morrow morning, don't yer know, on the train. You must *forgive* me then—I—I'll tell you *everything*." And wringing my hand in an apologetic kind of way he whispers: "To-morrow!" There is passion in his voice, but wonderful embarrassment.

I am too dazed to speak as he goes away leaving me wondering.

Mirie comes up and prattles: "He didn't stay long, did he? If you'd let him take you to a palm tree

in the garden he might have lingered longer, mightn't he? Evie, you try to be *too* innocent. That isn't the way. Be innocent and up to snuff also. Abelard and I will hold consultation on you to-night."

"Don't you dare talk to your hideous beast about me!" I cry in rage.

After that I don't pay much attention to her. I am thinking of George. I go upstairs. What did he mean by explaining to-morrow? Was it about Miss—? Pshaw! nonsense! Can't I trust him until to-morrow morning! I *will!*

I go to bed and dream happy dreams.

CHAPTER VI.

FLYING NORTHWARD.

March 5th, 1894.

I AM up with the lark; I hurry Elise, I run down to breakfast. I must not miss the train, he will be waiting for me.

I am down before any one. Elise thinks I am an idiot. We've an hour to spare.

As I wait for my breakfast I look over the Jacksonville *Statesman*, which has been placed by some careful friend beside my plate. The local news done, I turn carelessly to the society column, reported by telegraph from St. Augustine. Perhaps I shall see *her* name, poor girl. She is not going with him—I am!

I do! Oh, God of mercy, I *do!* I can't read—yet I decipher these lines that brand themselves into my brain:

"We are happy to announce the engagement of Miss Webster, the beautiful heiress, to the dashing young English

traveller and cocaine experimentor, Mr. George R. M. B. Cranmere. It has not yet been formally announced, but facts look that way. The beautiful heiress goes to-morrow, we understand, to Southern Florida, and Mr. Cranmere will be of the party. How they will enjoy poetic Tampa! Mr. Cranmere has been very attentive. They did the orange suburbs one day and, we believe, Fort Marion together the other day. Miss Webster is a great heiress. *Ring the wedding bells!*

RING THE WEDDING BELLS! They ring in my ears till the room swims round me. That's what he meant by "I'll explain to-morrow!" That's why he had that hang-dog expression as we passed the San Marco. He feared she would see him!

After a little I contrive to think—if spasms of wounded self-love and stricken pride are thoughts. I shall not go to Southern Florida; that humiliation I couldn't bear.

As this comes to me, Mrs. Armitage and Mirabelle sit down beside me; both are in travelling dress and ready for the train. I look at them in a dazed, dizzy way, and see Mirie holds in her hand a copy of that cruel paper. They both gaze at me, the mother sympathetically; the daughter—I can't tell what is in her face. She looks half delighted, half frightened.

"I—I have changed my mind, Mrs. Armitage," I falter, "I can't go to Southern Florida this morning with you."

Here my chaperone in her motherly way rescues me from some of my embarrassment. She says: "Evie, I think under the circumstances you are wise. I can't postpone my trip, having made all my arrangements. What do you think best to do?"

"I—I'm going to New York by the afternoon train," I answer.

"Can I help you in any of your arrangements? I have yet a little time."

"No, I have Elise," I reply.

Then she gets up, gives me a motherly kiss and whispers: "I am sorry for you! Don't think another thought about him; I read the article this morning. The miserable creature!"

"Pooh! that's nothing!" I reply, pride coming to my aid; then raise my voice for the benefit of any open ears at the surrounding tables: "I have received a telegram from papa which makes it necessary for me to return North immediately."

With this, bidding her good-bye, I hurry off in search of Elise, who has got the trunks downstairs. I order them upstairs again. Elise thinks I am crazy.

"We're not going," I say. "At least, not this morning! We will probably return to New York," and pay no attention to her excited French jabbering.

Twice I have a desire to throw my pride away; twice I fight myself to resolution. Perhaps at the very last I should change my mind again and go to that train, but Mirie appears at the door of my room, petting her caniche.

"I've just come to kiss you good-bye," she prattles. "I'm glad you're not going with us. It would be a dreadful mistake." She still holds the Jacksonville *Statesman* in her hand.

"You've seen this—this Miss Webster?" I say, curiosity getting the better of my pride for one minute.

"Oh, yes."

"You think she's engaged to him?"

"Well, if blushes mean anything, you would have thought she was when I hinted it to her last night."

"O-o-oh!" I can't repress the sigh. Then I murmur: "She is very beautiful, I suppose?"

"Well, she thinks she beats the earth!" remarks Mirabelle. "She's got a pretty good opinion of herself, and then, she's going to have such pots of money. Oh! I hope I haven't wounded you! Abelard and I

must be going. Don't you want to kiss poor Abelard?"

But I am too overcome to reply to this. I bid Mirabelle God-speed and lock mysel. in my room. Pots of money! The miserable fortune hunter! Can I have been mistaken in what he hinted by his deluding, foolish, disjointed suggestion of a letter to my father? Have I made some fearful blunder?

Great heavens! There is a clanging in my ears. It is the bell of the outgoing train for Southern Florida. GEORGE HAS GONE AWAY!

They sha'n't see that I care. Towel and cold water, and I go down to show everybody in the hotel that Mr. George Ramilles Malplaquet Busaco Cranmere has been to me but a *pour passer le temps.*

Some of them like to torture me. Miss Parkins and friend get near me on the veranda, where I *must* overhear them. "Poor girl!" says that spiteful spinster, "she didn't catch him, after all. He went this morning with his *fiancée* to Tampa. Have you seen the beautiful Miss Webster?"

"Never," replies her chum. "But I don't think she'd have to be a Venus to give points to the Bulger Exterminator girl."

Then Jonas comes about and tries to be civil—hoping, perchance, to catch my heart on the rebound, but once or twice I hear him struggling with a suppressed chuckle.

These things make a great devil of pride rise up in me. Early in the afternoon a letter postmarked Palatka is brought me by the bell boy. I've seen enough of his writing to know it.

Then the devil does its work. In a flash I seize it, tear it into a hundred pieces, throw it out of my window, and the four winds of heaven blow it about the shrubbery of the Ponce de Leon gardens. Yes, that's right! I might have been weak and womanly and read it! Oh, Heavens! What was in it? I believe I'm half crazy.

Oh, lion-hearted Seraphia, if you were only here to comfort your poor niece—

I must get back to New York to you—to papa—

I am writing this crazy outburst on the train as it flies to the North—away from blue skies, bright sunshine and the perfume of the orange flowers. How I hate their scent. They remind me of the man who slighted me for Miss Webster.

New York, March 6th.

I am writing this with the arrow in my heart. Papa has just placed it there; on the ferryboat crossing over from Jersey City.

He and Seraphia meet me on the arrival of the Florida train, and escort me to the boat. Elise and a footman look after my wraps and baggage. To aunt and father I try to be bright, buoyant and airy—like my old self; but it doesn't succeed with Seraphia. Kind old Seraphia. Noble old Seraphia. Every plant of her number four boots means business.

In the lights of the ferryboat papa looks at me and remarks, tenderly: "You should have stayed longer down South; you don't look rested enough, my little daughter."

Seraphia says: "Abner, she shouldn't have gone! Her eyes blaze as if she had an electric light inside her. That child has run foul of a dynamo in Florida."

"Pooh! nonsense!" I ejaculate. "Just give me *carte blanche* at the dressmaker's, papa, and see the dynamo run when Lent is over."

"I rather imagine I can do that," says generous old papa. "You see, Evie, you've earned your board down South." And he pats me on the cheek.

"Earned her board!" screams my aunt. "Are you out of your head, Abner? How?"

"Why a few days ago I got a letter from a travelling agent of Pink, White & Co., of London. He

said through your kindly introduction he had made a contract with Mr. Ripley for chloral. He wrote offering me, on behalf of his firm, quinine two cents an ounce under the market."

"Don't deal with him," I cry out. "He swindled poor Mr. Ripley. He sold him chloral ten cents below the market, but two days after chloral dropped thirty cents a pound."

"Too late," answered papa. "I made a contract for $50,000 worth. Pink, White & Co. are, I learn, a perfectly reliable London house."

"Then, papa, you are *done!*"

"Humph! don't talk nonsense, Evie," says Seraphia. "I read that contract and I know we are *not* done. Quinine doesn't fluctuate like chloral. We've saved several thousands of dollars."

To this I do not reply. I am choking with rage and mortification.

At home, on Fifth Avenue, I go up to my dear old room and there I give way.

Done! all of us are *done!* Poor Jonas on his chloral contract, father on his quinine, and I done most of all —*on my heart!* Misery! what will he think of my coy blushes, my bashful diffidence, my looks of love, on a business letter to "yer governor, don't yer know?"

Oh, his miserable, haphazard, disjointed British English! Oh the humiliation! Oh, George!—George!

CHAPTER VII.

THE IMPORTED ANIMAL.

Narragansett Pier, August 1st, 1894.

To-MORROW will be my birthday.

I had intended to write no more diaries after the

disastrous ending chronicled in my last. On my return from Florida I was *ennuied* for a week. Wounded pride hurts as much as wounded heart to a girl of spirit.

I would have been *really* sick, but I was afraid Seraphia might suspect; and the whole thing ended in a burst of laughter.

Our *former* physician, dear old Dr. Plumpcheck, who has attended us for years, suddenly prescribed for me "Bulger's Bile Exterminator," and that ended in papa's quarreling with him and my getting well.

As I lay in bed I could hear papa and auntie going on about it outside. "Curse him," cries papa, "does he want to kill my beauty, my darling?"

"What has Plumpcheck done?" asks Seraphia, anxiously.

"He has prescribed, for my Evie, Bulger's Bile Exterminator!"

"Why, his constant prescription of the medicine was one of the things you said reconciled you to Plumpcheck's bills!" remarks my aunt, sarcastically.

"Was it?" says papa, grimly. "That was for *other* people's families. I'm not going to have him murder my darling."

"Well, we've lived on Bulger's Bile Exterminator for a good many years," retorts Seraphia, "and I wouldn't advise you to make any public attack on Plumpcheck."

"No," mutters papa, and he orders up a case of Bulger's Bile Exterminator.

This stood permanently in my sick room until I got so tired of the sight of it, with its flaming labels, that I really think it cured me after all.

Besides, I was desperately afraid of Seraphia's argus eyes, for though Seraphia wears glasses, unlike most people they don't seem to blind her.

So after a lazy, dawdling week I got up on Easter Sunday and made my reéntrée into New York society, people said, I believe, a little more *spirituelle* than ever.

Old DeCoursey Four-in-Hand, who has been the beau of New York since the memory of mortal man, insisted I had brought some of the delicate loveliness of the tropics back with me. But DeCoursey always flatters *young* girls; he flatters them into *petite* flirtations, which the old beau enjoys as much as he did the more excitable and fervid affairs of his younger years.

But my recovery was protracted. Not by the rush of New York society, for I love gayety and excitement; but by certain uncalled for and malicious snubs from one who had been the friend of my heart. These gave me any number of bad half hours, and put me into frightful spasms of despair, anger and vindictiveness.

One evening on coming home from Mrs. Van Dusen De Punster's musicale, I will admit I looked badly, as what girl wouldn't who had just been snubbed by one who had even called her "sister."

I was making my *toilette de nuit* when Seraphia strode in. "Elise," she said to my maid, "leave the room. I'll do your mistress's hair."

Then I knew something was coming; or my aunt, who had lately taken a great interest in my health, wouldn't have waited up for me.

"Now," says Seraphia, taking the hairbrush in one hand and my tresses in the other, and giving a ferocious flourish with the brush, "Who's the man? Out with it! *Who's the man?*" This is emphasized with a savage tug at my locks as she thinks of the wretch who has trifled with my young affections.

"There isn't any man," I say with a yell. "It's—it's a woman!"

"A woman! Then what are you crying about?"

"Who wouldn't, with their hair nearly pulled out by the roots!" I whimper.

"Did I hurt you, darling?" And Seraphia soothes me—good-hearted old Seraphia—whispering, "What's the trouble, anyway? Tell your old aunt."

Whereupon I burst out into a history of my wrongs, from Mabel Bitterroot, late of Milwaukee, but now of Paris, whose father made beer until he had made a few million dollars, then died from drinking too much of it, as many brewers do. They are not like the proprietor of Bulger's Bile Exterminator; they esteem their own wares.

Now this Mabel Bitterroot had been my school chum at Miss Reese's, on Fifth Avenue. For three years we had walked side by side on our daily promenade up that thoroughfare. Therefore I, when the Bitterroots came to New York, had helped Mabel socially. She needed it, poor girl, having little but money to recommend her. Nevertheless I pushed and pulled for her, and sho ed her into society a little way. Then she went to Paris, and marrying a French title had returned to New York Madame la Baronne de Vieille Roche, and this had put her plump into the holy of holies of Manhattan society.

Now I had, to use a slang expression, banked upon Mabel's returning favor for favor and dragging me with her into the social "Walhalla." But to my chagrin, dismay and astonishment, being well in herself, she had set her plump little back and white shoulders against the door and was squeezing me out with all her assumed French *chic* and natural Western energy.

As I finish the recital of my wrongs a terrible expression comes into Seraphia's determined countenance. "You leave her to me," she says; "I'll settle that Bitterroot girl in a way that will delight you."

"How?"

"Never you mind. You keep up your courage and she shall dance to your tune and walk into dinner after you. Have you got grit for it?"

"I've grit enough for anything," I grind out between some pearls I call my teeth, "to be revenged."

I am excited, I am bitter!

Two or three more snubs in the course of the next few days add to my chagrin. I am omitted from a dinner because Madame la Baronne doesn't care to meet *Western* people. I get the cold shoulder from the Horse Club on parade day, because Mabel de Vieille Roche doesn't think her feet will compare favorably with mine on Bertie Van Dieman's coach. Of course they won't! She wears number threes and a half and I number twos—narrow! It's a compliment in one way, but the affair makes me desperate.

Into this pandemonium of crushed heart from Florida and crushed pride from New York comes dear little artless Mirabelle to stick pins into me. Mrs. Armitage and daughter *en route* for Europe pass through New York.

During a *tête-à-tête*, little Mirabelle with her childish disregard for other people's feelings says to me, playfully but pointedly: "And how is *Miss Webster?*"

"Don't talk to me of her!" I answer. "Isn't she married to him *yet?*" The first savagely, the last, I am ashamed to say, so pathetically that Mirie laughs till the tears are in her eyes. "Didn't you see her in Southern Florida?" I continue.

"No," answers Mirie, with childish frankness. "That is the curious part of it. Miss Webster snubbed Quinine Powders as well as you. She wasn't on the train either. He got fearfully huffy about it. I can see him now, biting his mustache! But after taking a quinine and whiskey at Palatka he sent a letter to her, and I believe she never answered it. She's a

rather haughty girl, that Miss Webster, at least he told me so. Then you know—well, I tried to make up for Miss Webster's absence—to capture Quinine Powders' heart on the rebound, but he was all for the absent one. Even when I tried my great *fin de siècle* baby dodge of throwing myself into mamma's lap—you know I look very pretty and *enfante gatée* that way—he said sulkily: 'If the brat's sleepy why don't you put her to bed, Mrs. Armitage?' I hate him for that! I'm serving him out for that *now!*"

"How?" I gasp.

At this the artless child goes into snickers of laughter, but continues: "'Then some news came to Quinine Powders from his father or grandfather—'grand govern'r,' he calls him, I believe, I don't know what it was—from England, and so he went to Havana and from there on to London. He told me, Evie, that he thought you were the *stupidest* flirt he had ever seen."

"*Stupidest* flirt!" I break out in such rage that Mirie, who takes things very ingenuously, goes into the hall and I can hear her in bursts of uncontrollable laughter.

Once or twice during her visit, however, she looked quizzically at me as if she had something to say, but as I didn't have the heart to push her or any one else forward in New York society, artless Mirabelle apparently took a dislike to me, and passed on her way to London taking her horrible poodle with her and leaving me in a state to sacrifice every one, even myself, to obtain vengeance on this unjust world that had affronted both my pride and my heart.

Just about this time I accidentally overhear auntie and papa in consultation. "You tote her to Colorado and get her spirits up and her health back again, and I'll import the animal," she says.

"Don't you think you'd better take her with you to Europe?" replies papa.

"No, she's not well enough; besides she'd have idiosyncrasies, tastes and feelings that might endanger my plan, which I intend to run on strictly business principles. You open your purse, Abner, and back me with the dollars, and if Evie's the girl I think she is we'll socially smash them all!" With this Seraphia plants her number fours down on the floor in a way that I know means something great.

Yes, that's what I want to do, smash them all!

So when my aunt comes to me and remarks: "Evie, I've fixed it. Do you want to crush that Bitterroot girl entirely?" I cry out "Yes," with my whole injured soul.

"Would you, to squash her,"—I use Seraphia's expression—"be willing to make a marriage like hers? Marry a man with a title?"

I have put love out of my heart and am happier for doing it. I say: "Yes, if he's acceptable. I don't want to marry a drunkard nor a deaf mute nor a blind idiot; but if he's presentable and a gentleman and has a rank that will permit me to snub those who have been snubbing me, and crush those who have been trying to crush me—YES!"

"Very well, give us your hand on it, old girl," says Seraphia, confidently. "And if there's a British peer in the market I'll get him for you."

Two days afterward my aunt sailed for Europe, and I was taken by papa to Colorado, where the air of the Rocky Mountains made me a new girl, bringing the roses back again to my cheeks and the elasticity to my step that had been lost in Florida orange groves. A peculiar, devil-may-care indifference was in me; it aided my health, but papa suggested that it didn't improve me in other ways.

"You don't seem to care for anything, Evie, now," he remarks one day in Denver.

"Oh, yes I do, for you and dear old Seraphia."

Here something comes into my face that makes papa start. He sighs, "My little Evie doesn't seem the same girl that she was a year ago."

"I am not," I return. "I'm educating myself for my coming rank; I'm assuming the indifference and hauteur of the aristocracy."

But it was only assumption! What a thrill did go through me when about the middle of June, as we were dawdling over the beauties of Manitou, papa showed me a dispatch from London! It was short and pithy, as all cablegrams are, carry what they may, triumph or despair.

It read:

"Settled! Importing it with me.

SERAPHIA."

"Importing *it* with me!" I say angrily. "How does she dare to call the man I am to marry 'IT!'"

"Well, you see, Seraphia looks upon it simply as a business transaction," mutters papa hanging his head. Then he adds suddenly: "If you don't want to go on with the matter, Evie, just say the word and I'll "bust" the whole affair, though it will be the most expensive speculation I ever went into."

"What is he? Who is he?" I say eagerly.

"I don't know. Only by the price I think he must be at least a duke," answers dear papa, ruefully.

A duke! I'll do it! Visions of social triumph float through my mind. A duke! I shall be "Her Grace!" I'll crush them all, especially Madame la Baronne. Socially she shall feel the prints of my high-heeled shoes!

Looking on me my father says cheerfully: "This coming social triumph seems to have put new blood in

you. Your eyes flash, your cheeks are roses. My darling, I'm glad I had the money to get it for you."

It is with this feeling in my heart that I go back to New York, only stopping one day there.

Then the heat drives us to a pretty villa papa has taken near Narragansett Pier on the Point Judith road; Sea View I believe they call it, and quite properly, for the breakers wash the rocks almost beneath our windows, and the big Fall River boats pass us in the evening illuminated like the fairy palaces that they are.

Two days ago sitting on our veranda and gazing across the waves towards the queen of watering places, but eight miles away, I put in a plea for Newport.

But father growls: "Two villas with a lord on top of them are too much financially for me at present. Besides, you're in touch with Newport. You can sail over there in an hour, and make your Newport friends perfectly miserable when you've got him. You can show him off before them, and after the ceremony you can flaunt your cards with a title and coronet on them till they're sick. Hold your horses till you are married to him."

"*Married to him!*" The words seem to ring in my brain while a sudden chill runs through my backbone. "MARRIED TO HIM!"

I'd scarcely thought of that! All I had thought of was social grandeur, the title on my card, people calling me "My Lady, Countess, Duchess," or something proudly aristocratic. Not much thought of the giving in marriage—that had been so secondary.

He's getting frightfully near! Seraphia will arrive to-day in New York. I am growing so uneasy.

I take the ferry; carriage, flunkies and all, and visit Newport.

That puts social backbone into me. I see a Hunga-

rian Count and a Dutch Baron who are being worshiped. What will they say to an English peer? I am resolved!

Telegram from Seraphia. She has arrived on the *Teutonic* and has him with her. A house party has been invited to meet him. We've not been able to give his name; we have simply invited them to meet a titled gentleman from Europe, and this will bring them all.

Narragansett Pier, August 2d, 1894.

My birthday! I wake with a jump—the start that comes to people when something dire is going to happen.

Ah! I remember now. My birthday present, that's what papa called it yesterday—they're going to give me my birthday present. I shall see the man who——

I am very nervous and excited.

"That is right; that's Parisian, Mademoiselle," says Elise, as she dresses my hair. Elise, as usual with maid servants, has picked up an inkling of what is going to happen. "It's quite the proper mode. When I dressed the young Comtesse d'Hautville on the day her future husband was to be presented to her, the poor child trembled so I could hardly get her gown on. But her *fiancé* was the Duke de Passy, and he was sixty-five. *Ciel!* Did I hurt Mademoiselle's hair?"

For at this sixty-five suggestion I have given a faint shriek of nervous dismay.

"Yes, it's quite right, Mademoiselle, that you should have a leetle bashful excitement, it indicates the sublime modesty of the noblesse."

Sixty-five? I shudder! Seraphia can't have been fool enough to buy a sixty-five-year-old Peer of the Realm for *me*. Can she have gone on the awful theory that sixty-five won't last so long, and the title will live after him?

I nervously read the marriage service as I breakfast in my room.

"Love, honor and *obey*" adds to my timidity. I grow bashful and blushing! I begin to have the feelings of a new Sultana when she sees the handkerchief flutter at her feet. It seems to me I'm being sold *myself!*

Fortunately, I am not compelled to social duties; the house party are not here, they will not arrive until evening, and dinner.

Word is brought that papa wishes to see me in the library. Am I all right? Oh yes, my toilet is exquisite. "Is he here?" I say tremblingly to Elise.

"No, I think not, Mademoiselle; I am not sure."

"Has Miss Bulger come?"

"No, Mademoiselle."

Then I nerve myself and go down.

It is only papa, thank God! only papa! He looks quite nervous and agitated too, dear old father!

He says nervously: "I've a letter from Seraphia. She will be here on the afternoon train. She's brought with her, on the *Teutonic*, the gentleman who has agreed under financial settlements—" papa hums over this—"to make you the Viscountess Bar-Sinister."

"Only a Viscount!" I pout, disappointedly.

"Good heavens! isn't that enough? In time he will be the Marquis of Fitzminster. He is twenty-seven."

"Twenty-seven! Did she send his photograph?"

"What's the good of a photograph when she brings him this afternoon?"

"Twenty-seven! Oh, papa, you frighten me. Twenty-seven! Per—perhaps he'll expect me to love him," I falter in horror.

"Would you like him *seventy?*" growls papa nervously. Then he adds, taking me in his arms: "Do you want to throw the matter up? If you do, fire him, Evie, for God's sake! Don't reproach me afterwards. Don't

come to me and say, 'Father you have ruined my life,' because I haven't done it, you have done it yourself, you and Seraphia—curse her vanity!" Here the old gentleman breaks out in rage but finally says: "You'd better see him anyway; this—this cursed birthday present of mine," and he commences to cry over me.

But I return: "Papa, you haven't the firmness that makes a great family. It is necessary to sacrifice something in this world. A Viscountess, a future Marchioness, I'll do it! When Seraphia comes bring him in!"

Then somehow the thought of all the money he must have spent for my last fad and all his goodness to me overcomes me, and I put my arms round papa's neck and sit down on his lap and call him "dear old pap," and together we have a good old-fashioned cry.

But still I am determined!

I go away much agitated. I'll try to forget all about the matter till *he* comes. Twenty-seven! The age is a frightfully romantic one. Shall we be married soon? Oh no, not *very* soon. It's so hard to give up girlhood, even to be "my lady."

In this frame of mind I order my pony phaeton.

It comes to the door drawn by Punch and Judy, two as likely cobs as ever were under-sized and over-fed, driven by my little tiger Jimmy, as smart and cute a boy as ever wore livery.

In this equipage I rattle down Ocean Avenue, past the hotels crowded with summer visitors, by the little street that leads to the beach on which the bathing is effected that supplies the pictorial newspapers of America with views of sea nymphs in living picture dress.

The laughing crowd, the gaily costumed ladies, the whole scene is a confused jumble in my mind—all I know is I am curious to see him and desperately

frightened at the thought of beholding him. What will he say to me? Will he kiss me?—*O-o-ugh!*

I crack my whip! In my pony phaeton I fly across the bridge to the heights and drive toward the north for several miles. Turning I ford Little River, and so up the hill with the great blackberry bushes—for Narragansett is celebrated for its wild blackberries—then return home by a roundabout way past the Casino—everything in Narragansett centers at the Casino.

It is the noontide hour; the bathing has ceased; a crowd of ladies and their escorts fill the lawn in front of the Casino as I drive past. Lander's orchestra is giving out its strains; the bright summer costumes of beautiful women, the blue water, the sunny sky remind me of Florida. The band is playing one of the waltzes I danced with him in Florida—*it is Florida!*

For there is Maddox in the roadway at the entrance beneath the big arch with other flunkies and valets—Maddox!

He doffs his hat and grins to me rather reproachfully I think. Oh mercy, he has a quinine powder in his hand!

I look up on the crowded lawn, and there—Oh my heaven! *to-day*, when I am to be promised to another; TO-DAY!—George—there he is, the same Florida smile on his face—George Cranmere! gazing at me through his single eyeglass, as he did on the ramparts of Fort Marion; for there is love in his glance! Yes, I see it! I know it—it is LOVE!

The Webster girl and jealousy are forgotten. As I give him a sunny smile, I forgive him. Indifference has flown from me, love has come again! I see at the same table Mirie, little, artless, laughing Mirie, giving chocolates to her accursed caniche, Abelard! Is she playing her cards again for George as she did in Southern Florida? She can't have him!—BUT CAN I?

With one flashing crash my whip flies over my ponies' backs. Punch and Judy fly as arrows from a bow.

I must stop it—stop it! before they betroth me—stop it! before Seraphia drags me into unloving matrimony—stop it! someway—so that I and George—*stop it!* STOP IT!!

With each thought-flash my whip flecks poor Punch and Judy, who fly as they never flew before, turning into the Point Judith road and drawing up breathless into the *porte cochére* of our villa.

With a spring Jimmy is in front of the horses and I am in the library, crying: "STOP IT!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IMPORTED ANIMAL HAS BITTEN ME!

"WHAT's the matter?" screams Seraphia astounded, for she and papa are in consultation. Then she seizes me in her loving arms, covers me with kisses, and gabbles, "Here's a fine girl to marry a lord! and I've got him, Evie—got him at a bargain!"

"Is he—in—the—house?" I falter.

"No, but he soon will be; he's in Narragansett. Lord Bar-Sinister came over with me on the *Teutonic* That imp, Mirabelle Armitage came also. I chaperoned her;" answers my aunt, her face growing grim with memories of Mirie.

"Yes, she's here," I say.

"But sit down—stop panting and talk business with me and your dad. Now I've got him for you under pretty advantageous conditions. Lord Bar-Sinister by courtesy, eldest son and heir apparent to the Marquis

of Fitzminster, of the English peerage. If you want to look him up in Burke, there he is, A No. 1;" remarks Seraphia proudly, tapping a great red volume she has taken from her gripsack. "There's no doubt about him, he's genuine and prime."

"Oh, I'll take your word for it," I lisp.

"Aha! Already assuming aristocratic indifference, the cute darling," laughs auntie, chucking me under the chin. "Aren't you dying to know whether he's handsome? Guess what your lord's age is, Evie?"

"Papa has told me he is twenty-seven." This is in my most indifferent tone.

"Don't you want to know whether he's lovable?"

"No!" I utter this with a stolidity they think is assumed.

"You beat the world for an actress, Evie," says papa.

"But I *will* tell you!" cries Seraphia. "He's one of the handsomest, nicest young men in the world, though he hates me because I kept him from flirting on the voyage. He was ineffably sulky all the way over."

"What terms did you make?" interjects father, nervously.

"Well, Abner, you see, his father, the Marquis of Fitzminster, arranged the details. If Bar-Sinister had had his way, I think he would have come over for nothing. Bless you, he jumped at my offer, said it was the nicest compliment that had even been paid him, but his father, who is a knowing old rogue, insisted on making the arrangements."

"Didn't Bar-Sinister see my beautiful photograph!" I ask indignantly. I am indifferent to the man, but I don't want my charms slighted.

"Bless you, Evie, there isn't a grain of curiosity in Bar-Sinister's composition," returns Seraphia. 'All he seemed anxious about was to get the matter

over and come to America. But the Marquis—Fitzminster, you know—said that his son was so heavily strapped that he wouldn't marry any woman who couldn't pay his debts and give him proper settlements. These, he informed me, amounted to twenty thousand pounds. 'You see, Bar-Sinister is such a spendthrift,' he remarked to me, 'sowing his wild oats and all that sort of thing.' I agreed to pay his debts! Then Fitzminster gave me a list of Lord Bar-Sinister's liabilities, and I found that twenty thousand pounds meant forty thousand pounds."

"But you only drew on me for twenty thousand for that item," says papa.

"There's where I'm American business, Abner," answers my aunt, proudly. "I made every tradesman and money lender cut his bill one-half, and they were so astonished at getting anything at all out of Bar-Sinister that they cut them like chain lightning. There they are now!" and Seraphia produces from her grip-sack a huge bundle of papers very carefully arranged, and, tapping them proudly with her index finger, adds: "Receipted bills of Viscount Bar-Sinister *in full!* This over, I guaranteed the married couple jointly fifty thousand dollars a year (ten thousand pounds), and made the following contract with him, to which I've got his signature: That under these settlements and conditions he—Bar-Sinister—is to marry Miss Bulger when she appoints; if she so elects within the year. In case she doesn't elect within the year, then the contract is null and void. For the payment of the fifty thousand dollars a year I have pledged one-fourth of the stock in 'The Bulger's Bile Exterminator Company,' which is ample security. Lord Bar-Sinister, who is business to the backbone, remarked it was good for a hundred thousand annual dividend. Examine these contracts, signed, sealed and delivered!" and Seraphia would hand them to papa to inspect.

But father is looking over the receipted bills of the gentleman his daughter is to marry, and his face has assumed a dazed expression.

"Papa, what's the matter?" I cry, for he appears as if he were going to faint.

"These bills!" he gasps. "Good Heavens!" and breaks out in an excited and awful tone: "Madamoiselle De Lorme's carriage account, Paris, February 28, six thousand francs; flowers for Eloise Mortimore, one hundred and four pounds, six shillings and threepence; bracelet sent Miss Seraphine de la Cour, one hundred and four guineas. Seraphia!" Papa's voice has grown pathetic. "This man who is marrying my daughter—HOW ARE HIS MORALS?"

But here is my chance for freedom. "Bad!" I cry. "*Bad* as a British peer's. BAD! Look at those bills! De Lorme's carriages! Who is she? Eloise Mortimore, a music hall girl, celebrated for doing London gilded youth; Seraphine de la Cour, notorious also. I've seen her name in the papers; don't attempt to deny it, Seraphia, don't attempt to deny it. Marry *him?*" Here I break out: "Marry *him!* Father, would you give your daughter to a man who has such bills as these? Look!" I hold up another in triumph, for I am carrying my point; papa's face has an awful though terrified expression on it. "Rent of Georgette Blackbird's apartments, London, March 4th, 1894. You've heard of HER!"

As I mention this siren whose name has been blazoned in the newspapers of both continents as a terror to mankind, father shudders: "Good God!"

"How could you," I sob, "how could you put your lamb into this wolf's claws? Oh, papa! *papa!*"

With this I throw myself into his arms and he, holding me to his breast, cries out: "Seraphia, damn it, how dared you?"

"How dared I?" answers auntie grandly. "How dared I? He's no worse than the rest of 'em. Do you expect to go over and find a lord that's ready to sell himself and title—an angel without wings? That kind ain't in the market. I got the best *for sale.* That's all I promised—*the best in the market!* He doesn't look dissipated, he isn't a drunkard, he's way ahead of the rest of 'em, he's a handsome, nice young fellow." Then she sneers: "I suppose now you'll reproach me for wasting your money."

"I do," answers father savagely; but makes me happy by saying: "Cheer up, Evie, you shall never marry a man of his moral depravity."

To this I murmur: "Thank you, papa; you're the dearest, sweetest, loveliest old papa!" then ejaculate, "But, oh mercy! Seraphia, how could you let papa waste his money by making such a bargain?"

"Making such a bargain, you ungrateful chit!" cries auntie confronting me. "What do you mean, anyway? Turning up your nose at something you haven't seen. I'll show you whether he's a good bargain or not! As for you Abner, you poor, weak-kneed speculator in lords, I'll relieve you from any financial responsibility in the matter!"

"How?" asks father anxiously.

"BY TAKING HIM MYSELF!"

"Great Scott!" cries dad.

"Oh mercy!" gasp I.

"The contract reads 'Miss Bulger,'" goes on Seraphia excitedly. "I am technically *the* Miss Bulger. I'm not afraid of his moral character, I've been a member of the 'Society for-the-Reformation of Husbands' for ten years, and have never had a subject to work on. I can reform any man! By Connecticut and Missouri! I'll see whether Bar-Sinister behaves himself or not after I marry him! I *half* love him as

I speak—I'll adore him *in two minutes!*" Then the dear old eyes suddenly grow big with some grand emotion and she cries: "I love him NOW! I'll take him. I'll pledge my interest in the Bile Exterminator for our joint income. I'll pay the twenty thousand pounds to you, Abner, for my darling's debts! This contract is mine! I HAVE HIM!" And her jaws snap as a dog's close upon a toothsome beef bone.

"Done!" cries papa.

"Brava!" shout I.

Then dad chuckles, "Evie, I'll put the twenty thousand pounds we pull out of the fire, into United States Government's for you."

"Do," I say, "dear old papa."

That twenty thousand pounds will be so nice to add to my fortune for George. My face is very radiant.

"But," says Seraphia, sternly, "I insist upon one thing."

"What is that?"

"That my future husband—don't dare to laugh, Miss, this is the chance of my life and I'm not going to lose it!—shall remain in ignorance that this contract was not for the *young* Miss Bulger, but for *me!*—that Bar-Sinister be invited to live at this villa and be treated with all respect as my affianced husband. If you don't care to be Lady Bar-Sinister and a Marchioness some day, I do! My George is as dandy a fellow as ever walked Piccadilly." With this such a grand light of possession and rapture blazes up in her eyes that her spectacles become luminous.

As she speaks of *her* George, I think of *my* George. I seize and kiss and congratulate Seraphia, whispering: "You're the dearest old thing in the world—no, not *old;*" for auntie is growing younger and more tender as she thinks of her approaching marriage, as most women do when they are past fifty.

To this papa adds, enthusiastically: "We'll give all our entertainments and blow-outs for you, Raphie and your lord, just as we would if Evie had taken him. We'll raise the roof off, when you become 'my lady.' Haste to the wedding."

Then he, laughing, and I, hysterical, dance a jig of joy round dear old auntie, who's going to be married.

"That's all right!" answers Seraphia, "I'll just go out and take a dash on my bicycle to freshen me up, and be all ready to meet him when he comes. They're getting in George's baggage now." For there is a clatter of trunks in the hall.

So she goes away happy and contented, leaving papa looking wonderingly at me. Then he whispers knowingly, but wistfully: "Evie, there is some one else?"

And I answer: "Yes, there is; and I'm the happiest of girls that you didn't let me make a fool of myself and marry a man who has such bills before marriage. What will he have afterwards? Oh, poor Seraphia!"

"Oh, trust your aunt to take care of herself; it's George I'm pitying," chuckles papa, grimly. "Good Lord! if he sees her in her bicycle bloomers Bar-Sinister'll look two ways for Sunday."

I can't answer this, for Auntie as a wheel woman, in spectacles, knickerbockers and masculine ensemble is a picture to make men weep; at least they always do—with laughter.

To his merriment I add my share and go away happy as the slave rescued from the auction-block and think for an hour or two of *my* George.

But the agitation of the morning has been too much for me. I have a nervous attack that prevents my playing the hostess in the afternoon.

I am glad of it, as I hear the voices of the guests as they arrive from the train, and send word I'm not well enough to go down. Let Seraphia take all the honors to herself with her fiancé.

"He is here?" I ask, languidly, as father comes in to my room.

"Yes. Don't put yourself out about him, Evie," says papa. "The imported animal wouldn't have suited you anyway; you want an aristocrat, and, by Tophet! Bar-Sinister is a business man."

"A business man?" I laugh. "Let Seraphia be happy with him."

"She will be," says father. "You should see her costume for dinner. She's got on a low-necked misfit of Worth's that makes her look more *distingué* than her bicycle bloomers; and she so loving to him—coos over him, calls him her boy—Seraphia's duckey. You should see him dodge her. You'll enjoy the sight—to-morrow morning, when you are straight again."

So we'll laugh together over the imported animal. Then papa kisses me and goes down.

I have my dinner served in my room.

Suddenly it occurs to me, as I feel better and refreshed, that I'll drive into the town to the Casino and the hotels, where I may meet George.

It is like a Florida night—beautiful and warm and moonlit; he will be at the Casino; I will invite him to visit us.

A quarter of an hour afterward my pony phaeton is at the door. I descend, not venturing near the dining-room, from which come the buzz of conversation and the clinking of glasses, Seraphia's strident laugh and little Mirie's knowing accents—yes, I hear her voice.

Behind Punch and Judy I fly to the town, where I pass a delightful yet disappointing hour. I wander about the Casino; I call at one or two of the hotels where I know some of the ladies, in the hope of seeing the man whose face has come back to my heart; but neither George nor Maddox are visible.

To-morrow morning, though—to-morrow morning

he will surely be at the bathing place, and the surf will dash about so happily for us. To-morrow morning I will renew the dream of Florida.

I drive back to the house and am passing through the hall to the staircase to go to my own apartments. From the brilliantly lighted dining-room Mirie's voice comes to me. It says: "Why isn't Evie down? She'd enjoy *this*. She hasn't seen the coming bridegroom *yet!*"

Curiosity is upon me; I will see the coming bridegroom, Seraphia's future lord and master. On tip-toe I go to the folding-doors. They are open perhaps half an inch. To me comes in tones that smite me: "By Jove, Bulger! had I known I should have been interested in your Exterminator I should have given you a lower price on quinine, don't yer know?"

I look in, the blazing illumination dazzles me. Then something swims before my eyes; for there, standing in the light by the table decorated for fête, with Seraphia gazing on him as if he were her own, and responding to the congratulations offered by the guests, is——

Oh, God of mercy! The imported animal has bitten me! Am I growing crazy—my George!

How I get to my room I don't know, but no one sees me—thank heaven for that.

Then something comes in and licks my face as I lie despairing on the bed.

Oh, my heavens, it is Mirie's uncanny poodle!

The poor little beast pities me!

Abelard pities me!

BOOK II.

THE BARGAIN IN LONDON.

(*Being Scraps from the Memoirs of Jellybird Maddox.*)

CHAPTER IX.

LITTLE MIRIE AND THE MARQUIS.

Bulger's Villa, August 2d, 1894.

I DON'T know as I ought to give my hopinion in writing of the adventures of my unfortunate master, it's too ludickerous. But the astonishing hye-opener the Right Honorable George has received this arternoon makes me sometimes think that my evidence will be valuable in a court of justice, and I puts it down for future referring on the witness stand.

I'll agree to eat arsenic if he isn't a co-respondent in a breach of promise suit by one or t'other of those Bulger gals.

Since she is betrothed to 'im I gives Miss Seraphy the title of gal along with Miss Hevelyn, 'cause I knows she'd like it, if these papers is used as jurisprudence.

So without perambulation I perceed in my record of the affairs of the Honorable George Ramilles Malplaquet,

etc., Cranmere, once in Her Majesty's 'Orse Guards, next travelling agent for Pink, White & Co., drugs and chemicals, and since then, by the death of his grand-govern'r, as he calls him, promoted to the title that his father held before him (as eldest son of the Markis of Fitzminster), Viscount Bar-Sinister by courtesy; investigate *Debrett*, *Burke*, and hother hauthorities on the Haristocracy of England.

When I first had the 'onor of entering the service of the Honorable George, he was as high-tooting a cornet (I don't mean the hinstrument) as ever pranced from the 'Orse Guards up to St. James's, or did duty at Windsor Castle. He had blood and breeding to spare, but no money to distribute, for his father, Hugo Cressy Agincourt Cranmere, at that time Viscount Bar-Sinister, was as 'orsey a toff and as hard-up an old reprobate as ever looked out the windows of White's in search of a pretty ankle or a pleasing face.

Old Bar-Sinister, who is as downy as arrow-root, was only about forty-five at the time I first laid eyes on him, as he used to come lounging into George's quarters, and give his son what he called good advice.

He was a rare 'un at that; that's about all he did give his son. He had run through the money coming to him as the heir apparent to the Markis of Fitzminster, and his father, the old Markis, who was one of the same kidney, and at that time sixty-five or seventy, had given up signing checks for his eldest son before I ever knew 'im—perhaps because his 'and was paralyzed, but most probably because he was tired of it. Bless you, the old Markis hisself was head over whiskers in debt; had spent everything in sight, and if it hadn't been for the entails, there wouldn't have been anything for any of those that came after 'im.

Many a time have I 'eard Bar-Sinister, George's father, curse the Markis up and down and swear he

was robbing 'im; but that didn't stop the Markis's expenses; neither did it Bar-Sinister's the son's; neither did it the Honorable George's, the grandson's.

When I first went into service with the Honorable Mr. Cranmere the whole lot of 'em was about as badly strapped as any noble family in England, which is saying hall you can for hanybody, and every day they was getting deeper hin.

"Ah, Georgie, my boy," I have often 'eard his father say when visiting the young man's *apartmongs* just off Sloane Street, "why do you smoke such expensive Havana's?" as he filled 'is pockets from his son's cigar box.

"Because you do, guv'ner," George would laugh. "I only follow your example."

"Why don't you marry that demmed cotton spinner's daughter, Miss Wolverton, you hidiot?" Bar-Sinister would growl sometimes.

"Because, by Heaven, I can't do it! She's cross-heyed!" George would say; for the boy had a wonderful hey for beauty; sometimes I think he should 'ave been a painter, he liked female loveliness so much. I've know him to go to the same music 'all night after night just because some gal in the ballet had a leg and face to suit. "Besides, guv'ner, that wouldn't be following your example," his son would laugh.

Which was true, for old Bar-Sinister hisself had married Lady Claudia Lackland, fourth daughter of Lord Acreless, a gal of great beauty but little tin, who had died years before broken-hearted at Bar-Sinister's neglect; for, Lord love me! no exotic poet could give points to old Bar-Sinister in wickedness.

Well, one day the crash came of course! The wrong 'orse won the St. Ledger; Ladybird came in second. "There's nothen for me but to sell hout the securities my mother left me," sighed the Honorable George as

we come 'ome from Doncaster. But bless you, his guv'ner as trustee had been ahead of 'im, and *there warn't no securities to sell hout.*

Then George, pursued by duns and Shylocks, throws up his commission and, to the 'orror of his family, goes into business. I remember the hawful interview he and 'is father had over this point.

"I'll cut you off with a shilling, Georgie, my boy," snarls Bar-Sinister.

"You've already cut me off without a *farthing*," says George, knocking the ashes off a 'alf a crown Havana, for the boy couldn't give up smoking regalias even if he gave up his commission.

"You're no longer my son," growls Bar-Sinister, savage as nitric acid.

"That's demmed unfortunate for you!" mutters George, cool as a freezing mixture. "For if I'm *not* your son I shall put you into the dock to answer for robbing me of my mother's jointure."

"My God! how can the bone of my bone and the flesh of my carcass talk to me in that way and break his old father's heart?" cries Bar-Sinister, and 'e gets tears to 'is eyes, for he was mighty afraid George would persecute 'im before the Queen's Bench for taking his mother's legacy.

But George is a tender 'earted young chap; that's the reason I took to him. And the result of it was that young Cranmere got out of England on a commission for Pink, White & Co., to make drug contracts for them.

Then knock me silly! how that feller did cram over chemicals! What he doesn't know about drugs would puzzle an Antiseptic. I've got a wrinkle or two in that business myself as far as the halkalis—traces of which you'll note from my metaphor in my memories.

So together we knocked all over the uninhabitable

world, making contracts for gums, juices, etc., and he becoming a business man.

Well, one day six months ago, after enjoying the Hamazon and the Gold Coast of Hafrica together, where George had picked up the fever and the quinine habit, he came up to the U. S. to hinvestigate some medicines in Southern Florida; and 'ere his misfortunes culminated. The blooming toff *fell in love!*

I knew it by 'is hye when he stopped in the sleeping car and said he' wait there until I brought 'im his cigars.

And he had reason to. Miss Hevelyn Bulger (don't fail to pronounce it Bulg*ée* or you won't get no tips from her) was the dossiest kind of gal; skin as white as vegitable ivory, cheeks that glowed with cochineal blushes, and posing for him as beautiful as any Pear's soap advertisement in the *London News*.

I knew he was knocked silly when he missed the train at Savannah, U. S., for he's a deep one, he is—when he's quininized. The minute he called for a twenty-one and a quarter grain powder I knew he was desperate, and when he saw the gal was going to miss the train he made up his mind to miss it halso.

Miss Hevelyn Bulger doesn't guess it, but George had made a quinine vow that he'd know her afore the day was out—AND HE DID!

He knew a good deal about her; more than she suspicioned, for I 'eard him charfing the porter and looking up her name in the sleeping-car plot afore she sent the note to him that brought 'im to her side.

Not that he meant any sneaky business—only love; for he's one of the lovingest dispositions I ever saw. He gets that, along with hall his other good qualities, from his mother—for his father hasn't any to waste on nobody.

But I haven't time to hexpatiate over that Florida

smash hup. George took quinine like mad and played his cards for all they was worth, for he's wonderfully bright and smart, and quicker to act than prussic acid when he's under the hinfluence of quinine. At other times he's slow and easy going.

If I may epitomize I would say that hordinarily the Honorable George Ramilles Malplaquet, etc., Cranmere is a fairly bright, every-day young man of the hupper classes. But as he says hisself, "Put a dose of quinine into me, Maddox, and it's the same as putting a mixture of Mach'avelie or Romeo into me veins, haccording to the strength of the dose."

He took the Romeo dose when he was in Florida, and would 'ave succeeded very well but some hinfernal influence knocked his love-making into a cocked hat.

He swore it was because I hinterrupted him at the wrong times, but I believe it was a little female up to date kind of a gal named Mirie Armitage; though neither George nor I were able to discover 'ow she did it.

He was happy and cock-sure of his sweetheart the morning we left for Southern Florida; but though the rest of her party came on the train Miss Hevie Bulger, the Juliet, didn't happear, and, and though he rote to her, never a blessed line did he get hin retort.

He got so down 'earted he wouldn't take quinine, and the consequence was fell off in Romeo fire to such an hextent that he didn't 'ave the spirit to go after her and demand personal hexplanations.

Then, blow me hup! how that daisy Mirie Armitage tried to mash poor broken-'earted George in Tampa—tried to console him!

She made tropical picturs for 'im in the palm trees, holding the graceous branches about her 'ead, and giving pathetic effects with that infernal canine of hers as she calls Habelard, and making 'erself look like a

fairy gal in white Swiss muslin and big broad sashes and open-work stockings and het ceteras till she nearly set *me* crazy! But she didn't knock 'im out a little bit.

In the hevening she'd play her great baby act with her mother, who wasn't haverse to it—being a widder—for you see the little Armitage gal was just on the line between a kid and a bud, as they call 'em in Hamerica, and she played both parts as the hoccasion demanded. But George didn't care nothen for the himp, and one night on the veranda, when she tossed 'erself with childish kick-about into her mother's lap, a mass of tumbled 'air and laughing blue hyes, and a pair of feet and hankles as looked like a skirt darncer's, he growled hout: "If the brat's sleepy why don't you send her to bed?"

Arter that I think the little himp fairly ated him!

Howsomever, about that time came along the news of the old Markis's kicking the bucket, and George ad to go back to England.

By the death of his father old Bar-Sinister became the Markis of Fitzminster, and the Honorable George was promoted to the Right Honorable George and succeeded in the courtesy title of Viscount Bar-Sinister; please look in *Burke* for details.

As soon as he was in the hold country the duns and Shylocks got to worrying George again, and giving 'im a pretty hard time of it; besides, Pink, White & Co. offered, if he would get released from his I. O. U.'s, to take him into the firm; they thought a title would 'elp 'em in the drug business; so the Right Honorable George Viscount Bar-Sinister was deuced hanxious to get his debts paid in a hurry.

Just about this time, chappered by her mother, little Mirie Armitage came hinto London court cycles. How she got in Lord knows; rich American gals halways does get hin. I suppose she 'ad letters or something of that kind.

But no sooner ad the Markis, George's father, put peepers on her, than he became hattentive; and no sooner did the little Armitage gal—who between us is as pretty a little figger and as insinuating a little beauty as ever made an old sinner wipe 'is hye-glass—know George's father was Markis of Fitzminster, Viscount Bar-Sinister of the Peerage of Hengland and Baron Donnybrook of the Peerage of Hireland, than she put her whole little soul hinto catching 'im, and was in a fair way to do it; when, as bad luck would 'ave it for her, she hintroduces the Markis to an Hamerican lady, the aunt of the Miss Hevelyn Bulger who 'ad played the Juliet to George's Romeo in Florida.

This lady was nosing round to buy an English title, and she, being a business woman, came right hout with such a statement of settlement that the Markis of Fitzminster dropped little Mirie Armitage, whose mother wasn't so prompt, and turned his hattention to Miss Seraphia Bulger; and by pizen! would have signed contracts to bind hisself to the Bulger family as husband *in the future*, when all this comes to George's ears.

Then he, poor hidiot, to 'is own hundoing, thinks it was for the niece, the gal who had played the Juliet to his Romeo, that the aunt was making the negotiations.

Hall this came about through little Miss Armitage.

I can see George now as he received her *billey dux* and threw over an happointment he had made at Pink, White & Co.'s about a cochineal contract, and went to Lady Southwood's garden party, for 'is own hundoing, poor wretch!

I read the note as it lay on his dressing table and made a copy of it—arter he was gone. It was in the nicest fashionable feminine 'and, each letter was a hinch long, and the capitals went two hinches hup and down the page. It read as fellers:

"You dear, naughty Bar-Sinister:" Little Mirie knows the Henglish haristocracy and treats 'em as if she was a peeress in 'er own right. Bless you, they likes it! Just put yourself on a level with 'em, and they'll chum with you. Bow and cringe to 'em, and my lord 'em, they turns hup their noses at you and thinks you are a nobody. But to return to the letter, which read:

"YOU DEAR, NAUGHTY BAR-SINISTER:

Why have you not been to see me since I arrived in London? I have a little message for you from a young lady you met in Florida, and will give it to you at Lady Southwood's garden party to-day. You know you can come, and I know you have an invitation, though you affect not to like society. Yours sincerely,

MIRABELLE AURELIA ARMITAGE."

That hinsinuation about a message from his Florida sweetheart sent George off to Lady Southwood's garden party as quick as if he had taken a dose of Glauber's salts.

I can see him when he came back frothing over like a seidlitz powder, joy and rage beaming in his hye. From his hextatic hejaculations I got a pretty good hidea of what the little Armitage gal had told him.

For he went raving round: "My darling—jealous on account of that Miss Webster! ha! ha! ha!—Sent her aunt over to arrange for marrying me—as proof of her love!—and the idiot aunt makes a hideous mistake and negotiates with my father! Cuss 'im!—He would marry her, my Hevelyn, would he?—I'll stop him, by 'eaven! I'll stop Fitzminster if they settle a million on 'im—he sha'n't do it!"

With this George calls for one of his Machavellie doses of quinine, twenty-two and a quarter grains. That hextra grain puts the very devil hinto him.

As soon as the powder got working I knowed by his face he'd hit the plan to nail his guv'ner.

Then hoff he bolts to his father and they had a hawful hinterview. George, braced hup by quinine, laid into his guv'ner 'orrible; told him if he married Miss Bulger he would pursecute him before the 'Ouse of Lords (that's the only way you can nail a Peer of the Realm) for robbing him of his mother's jinture, and bullied the old Markis into signing a contract *not* to marry Miss Bulger. Furthermore George made Fitzminster agree to get the Bulger gal for hisself.

So the result was that old Fitzminster arranged a contract for George, Viscount Bar-Sinister, to marry the Bulger gal.

George signed it in a jiffy; Lord love ye, he was so 'appy he didn't want no settlements, but the Marquis hinsisted upon two things; the first was *that they should pay George's debts hintire*, which Miss Seraphy did like a streak of lightning; second was that they should settle on Bar-Sinister and his bride arter marriage ten thousand pounds a year, made tight by an interest in the Bulger's Bile Hexterminator.

"Do you see how I am looking hout for your hinterests, you ungrateful boy?" I heard Fitzminster say to his son.

So the contract was made for the Right Honorable George Ramillies Malplaquet Busaco, etc., Cranmere, Viscount Bar-Sinister, to marry Miss Bulger.

Bless you, George was the 'appiest man in the world coming over on the steamer. The only thing that knocked his extasy was that Miss Seraphia Bulger, who hung on to 'im like a hoyster does to its shell, wouldn't permit his galivanting with any of the pretty gals on the boat; for George has a great hye for beauty, as I have before remarked. She would 'ardly let George chat with the little Armitage gal who came over with us, as I now suspects, to see the affair hout; *for now I knows what the fairy demon was hafter!*

"I suppose aunt Seraphia means it for the best," Bar-Sinister would sigh sometimes to little sly-puss Mirie, as they walked the deck on moonlight nights, for bless you, when a man's in the state of Romeo fever that my poor master was, he's got to talk about the gal he's sweet on to somebody. "I suppose she thinks she's doing the proper thing, keeping my hyes off other young ladies, as if any woman could make me untrue to my Florida darling." Then he laughs 'appily and mutters: "As if I could think of loving any one but my Hevie!"

For the poor young chap thought he was coming over to marry Hevelyn, the beauty, when he was coming to marry Seraphy, the aunt, who was fifty odd and hof a masculine beauty that, ad it not been softened by time, would have been ferocious—Gad, how she would look at 'im through her specs!

When little Miss Armitage's blue hyes caught Seraphy a-following after and gazing after Lord Bar-Sinister, how that artful dodger would laugh to herself. Sometimes she would come tripping hup to me and tip me a sov and say: "Yor faithful old sheep-dog, Maddox, how 'appy it must make you to see your master *en route* to marry his Florida true-love!"

"God bless you, Miss," I would answer, "Bar-Sinister has been so crazy with joy that he's not been sea-sick this trip and never lost a meal." Then she'd snicker as pretty a little puss-in-boots laugh as ever helfin fay put on for man's knock out; for now I am certain she knew the hawful fate that was ahead of poor Bar-Sinister.

But God 'elp poor George, he *didn't twig* what was ahead of him, and jollied over the Atlantic as dizzy as the mouse that scents the toasted cheese in the trap.

There was honly one narsty coincidence on the voyage. We was 'aunted by a little Jewey-looking feller, whose name I found hout was Levison.

At first I twigged he was a reporter come on specially to write us hup for the Hamerican papers, for the Yankee journals gives columns and columns of sickening stuff to any gal who weds a lordling.

In fact, between us, I thinks that's one of the reasons that Yankee heiresses likes to marry Henglish lords. Before they does, the papers is hall pitching into 'em and their fathers, and saying their daddies is thieves and nobodies and ought to be in jail; but bless you, the minute the gal's posted hup for the next Hinternational Sweepstakes with a lord for the bridegroom-cup, these ere gents of the press forgets they've been blackguarding their fathers as nobodies and descendants from butchers, and suddintly discover the family is of very hancient horigin and had settled on Plymouth Rock about the time of Columbia.

But this Levison didn't turn out to be a reporter arter all. God knows what he was, but he 'aunted us. I don't mean this for a joke, but *Aunt* Seraphy *'aunted* us halso. Well, this Levison 'aunted George until George detested him worse than he 'ated Seraphy.

And when we tide up at the dock in New York, if there was two things George 'ated on earth, it was little Levison, who kept trotting around after 'im day and night, and Miss Seraphy, who stood by him warning im hoff, as it were, from any beauteous gal who looked his way and there was a good many who threw hyes at Viscount Bar-Sinister on that trip; all American gals having a sort of prejudice in favor of lords. I don't know why they has it, it ain't shared by their ludship's valets, as a general thing.

CHAPTER X.

AN EYE-OPENER FOR HIS LUDSHIP.

So George and me came to Narragansett and there was five reporters hon top of us hinside 'alf an hour. I

knows the number for I got tips from hall of 'em—from a quarter to a dollar per head. They 'adn't taken much notice of us in Florida when we was *plain* Mr. Cranmere, but Viscount Bar-Sinister brought special co-respondents from everywhere.

Two knites of the quill came over from Newport to hask him why he didn't come to that social elysium direct, hinsinuating that Narragansett was a low place.

Newport despises Narragansett. Narragansett 'ates Newport just as much as the Dutch chemist that discovered antipyrine 'ates the Dutch chemist as dropped on sulfonal. Bless you, they'd pizen each other with their own drugs!

But George grinned at the agents of the press and said two or three "Don't yer knows," and "Fine country, this's," and the other remarks usual to travelling Englishmen, when they wants to make theirselves agreeable, and sucked his cane and sat on the Casino lawn, drinking Brandy ponies out of a tea-cup; as is the fashion at Narragansett, it being a Prohibitory place as regards liquor—and consequently very thirsty.

All the time he was gazing at the passing crowd, his heart in his hyes, 'oping to catch sight of his sweetheart, Miss Hevelyn.

But the little Armitage gal sat at the same table at the Casino and took all the trouble off George's 'ands as to the knites of the quill, working hup her own social glory in as cute and catchy a manner as ever I seed an aspirant for social grandeur hexhibit; for, bless you, she jollied with every reporter till she made him think she was 'alf in love with him, and laughed and told them she hexpected to marry a lord some day and would send 'em notices of her future hengagement, and chirruped: "Bar-Sinister knows what he's in Narragansett for!" Then she tickeled George's nose with a straw she'd been sucking sherry cobbler through, to show 'ow

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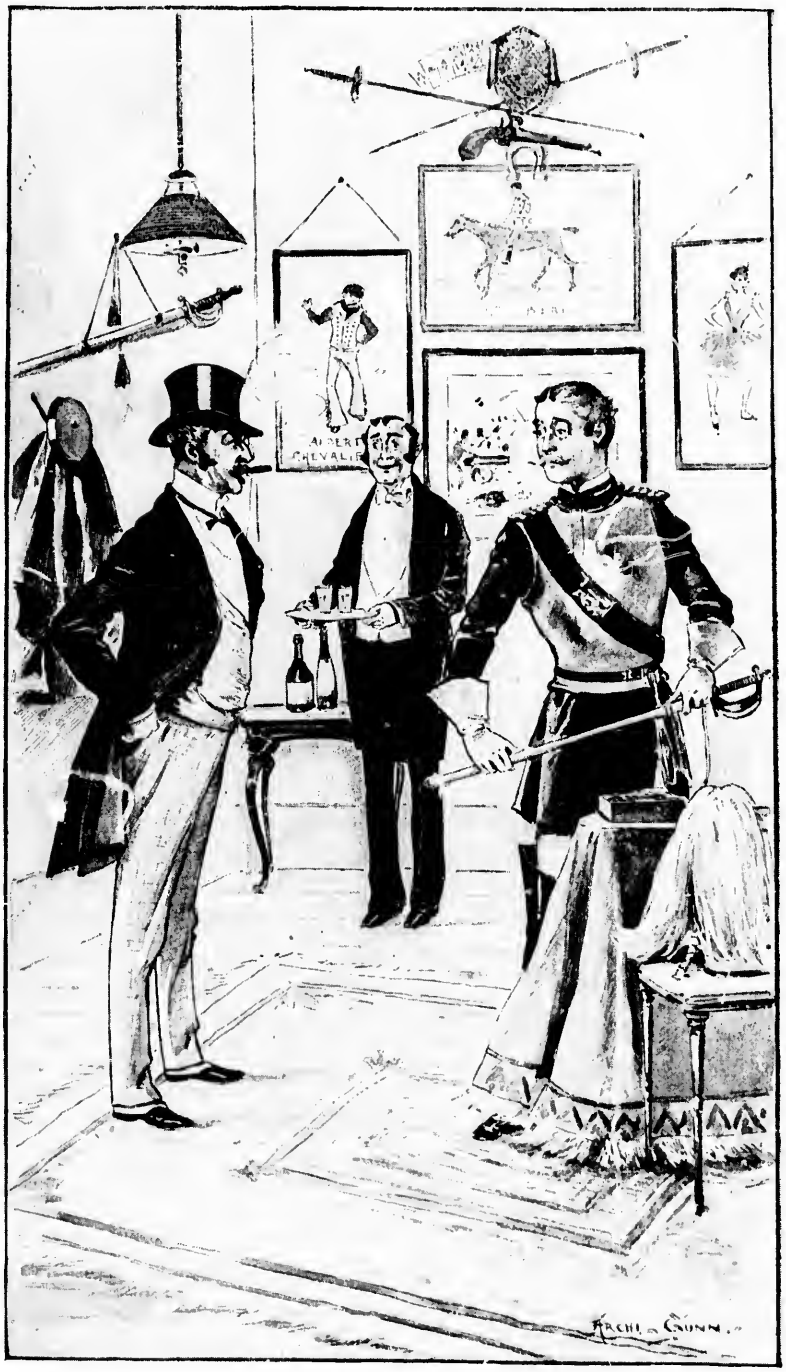


intimate she was with the British nobility, as she giggled, "Everybody knows the beautiful Miss Bulger has a villa here."

At which George haw-haw'd from very 'appiness and looked sheepish.

But the knites of the quill *did* know Miss Bulger had a villa in Narragansett and kept their hyes out for her; and one of 'em suddintly says: "Jingo, here she comes!"

Then I, who had been standing near the railing, overhearing their remarks, glanced hup, and by Jove! there she did come, the beauteous Miss Hevelyn, in as knowing a hequipage as ever lady drove, two plump cobs flying afore her, and as cute a little tiger as ever was 'orsewhipped sitting behind her.

She was arrayed in a cold, pure, snowy, bismuth white; she had little flecks of blue like cobalt salts a-dancing from her dress, and a contorted expression on her face.

Suddintly she sees me and gives a start and 'alf pulls hup her team and gazes round kind of frightened like; when getting squint at Bar-Sinister her hyes light hup, extatic like. His peepers catch hers and a dazed and joyous expression seems to come into them.

Then suddintly like a flash something seemed to strike her, and I could see her face grow pale as if she'd 'ad a dose of aconite hinside her, and a kind of twitching hagony comes over her lips as if strychnine was at work on her witals.

Quick as a tetanic spasm she slashes her whip over her cobs' backs and flies like wild hup the road, nearly knocking me down as I gazed hastonished at her, and most running over a grass-widder who was standing in happropriate hattitude letting a young toff in yachting costume tie a shoelace as had come unloosened. These widders is great at that at Narragansett.

By ginger! what an heffect it had on George! He didn't pay no more attention to the reporters arter that than he would to so many misquiters on a South American river, he'd grown so heager to see her. Alf an hour arter when the hinvitation came to take us hup to the Bulger's villa he gave the 'ackman double fare to get us there quick.

Arriving at a beauteous place with lawns that run down to the sea we were hushered into the library to meet the gal's father, as he supposed.

I wasn't hushered in but stood—I couldn't 'elp it—in a little hanteroom taking squint of their interview; for they was both so much in a hurry, old Bulger and George, that they didn't notice whether the door was closed or not.

Their meeting was hexquisite and cordial. The old gentleman hembraced George and welcomed him, and said: "My Lord Bar-Sinister, the lady will be in soon, she is himpatiently awaiting you. Then we can make harrangements for the 'appy ceremony."

"The sooner the better," cries George, heagerly, and casts his hyes about for his darling, while the old geezer tells him as how the contract is all right, everything is signed, sealed and delivered, and 'ands over to him the bunch of respited bills that Miss Seraphy had paid for Bar-Sinister in Europe. This was of such dimensions as made George hopen his hoptics in hastonishment. "I didn't know there was so many of 'em," he stammers.

"Oh, don't mention it, my dear Lud Bar-Sinister," says old Bulger, who is a pretty nice old chap—by the way, he gave me a ten dollar bill this hafternoon. "You know haristocratic young gents"—I could see the Honorable George quiver as he said "gents"—"never keep much account of 'ow you throw away your cash and the bills pile up on you. I know it by my daughter

Hevie. By Goliah! she has no hidea how she falls on my checkbook, God bless her," and the tears comes hinto the old geezer's peepers as he talks hof his daughter, and tears comes hinto George's hyes also as he hears her father speak of the gal he loves.

"God bless her," mutters George, "where is she?" Then 'earing a noise houtside he suddintly jumps up and looks out of the window 'oping to get a glance of his Hevelyn.

But as he looks, he starts and glares and rubs his hye-glass and chuckles: "What is it?"

"What is it?" says Bulger, coming hup to his side and tapping George on the shoulder, playfully. "What is *it?* My dear Bar-Sinister, that is your future wife, my sister, Miss Seraphy Bulger!"

At this George gives a 'orrid gasp, like as if he 'ad the death rattle in the throat, and drops comertoes into a near-by chair. With this, I squints out to see what had hit him so 'ard, and when I looked hout I pitied him!

There was Miss Seraphy, spectacled and in bloomers, riding a bisycul, smiling at George and kissing her 'and at him!

And what a sight she was! Pen cannot describe it!

She didn't look like a man, she didn't look like a woman; she looked more like a wax figger of hold age on a spree; and every time she'd kiss her 'and to George, he'd reel and gasp, "Ah-h!—By Jove! —Awfully kind—don't yer know—Oh-h! Quite a little romantic surprise—By Jingo!" Haw-hawing, ho-hoing and he-heing and chuckling to hisself like maniacs does on the stage.

Then he suddintly gives a kind of fainting gasp and mutters: "Could you give me a B. & S. quick?"

"Certainly," says the old gentleman, and rings the bell; and while this is being brought him I look in and

see George trying to sneak his hand into his pocket and get a quinine powder to put it into the brandy.

So I runs in and says: "You are faint, my lord; I 'eard the bell," and when the B. and S. came I fixed a Machaveli's quinine dose.

A minute after he had strength enough in a kind of crazy way after he had got the medicine, to laugh sort of 'isterical when Seraphy came into the room and looked at 'im through her spectacles so as it frightened George—*she loved him so!*

"As you remarked, my lord," says old Bulger, "it is quite a romantic surprise. What a flirtation you must 'ave had on the steamer."

"Then everything is—is settled?" mutters George, a *feller do see* look in his hye.

"Of course; 'ere are your bills, I O U's, etc., all respited," says Bulger. "Here is the contract giving the 'appy pair an income of ten thousand punds a year, secured by a fourth interest in the Bulger's Bile Exterminator, and there is your future bride, my dear Bar-Sinister. I wish you 'appiness," and he shakes George's hand, smiling and 'appy, and didn't know he was dooming the poor chap to despair unutterable. Then he laughs: "Kiss her, me boy, kiss her!" and rubs his 'ands; sometimes I think like a fiend, for he seems to rather henjoy the hinterview.

But Bar-Sinister when he's got a Machavelish dose of quinine hinto him is the deepest man in the world. He pulls hisself together, laughing: "That's right, that's the way I like to 'ave you talk—business, money, *cash!* I'm a business man first and a lud afterwards. When I come to America I drop the lud and am only business. This is a business kiss, Seraphia," and he goes up to her and I see him shudder, but he kisses her—not perhaps where she would have liked, but right on the forehead. Then he looks at the bills in a

knocked out kind of way and I 'ear him mutter to hisself: "*Noblesse oblige!*"

That's what they almost all of 'em mutters when they're being condemned to death in history, "Noblesse oblige." That's what they says to theirselves when they lose a 'undred thousand on the Derby and pays their gambling debts but forgets their tailors and washerwomen—"Noblesse oblige!" That's what they says when they runs away with another feller's wife, and swears in a court of justice they never set hyes on the woman—"Noblesse oblige!" That's what they ejaculates when they wants to do anything particular 'orrid and hidiotical—"Noblesse oblige!"

I've been hinvestigating the affair, but I can't tell what it means; sometimes I thinks it's a hoath at their own foolishness; sometimes I thinks it's a prayer to 'Eaven; sometimes I thinks it's a sort of fetich like they has in Hafrica for the particular use of the haristocracy and the nobility. I hit a hackman one day who was particular cheeky, and remarked "Noblesse oblige!" But it didn't work in my case. "I'll hoblige ye!" cabby said, and up and at me, and in two rounds I was out of it. "Noblesse oblige" honly works with the haristocracy.

This time it didn't work with George, for Seraphy gave him a kiss that made him quiver from head to 'eels and whispered, "You darling duck!"

After that when Bar-Sinister looked at her he trembled, hespecially when he gazed at her boots; they was so determined that he knew she would fight for what she'd got.

But finally the hinterview came to an end, and I got him to his rooms—magnificent *apartmons;* but every time he'd gaze at them receipted bills—and what a pile of them there was!—he'd mutter to hisself "Noblesse oblige," and look a pictur of despairing hagony. But

lawks bless you he 'ated the look of 'em. By cutlets! we 'adn't been in the room a minute before he cussed 'em, and tossed 'em into a drawer as if he wished they was hoff his mind. Then I gave him another Machivolly (I don't know hexactly how to spell this name) dose of quinine in his room, and as I dressed him for dinner, every now and then he'd throw up his 'ands and groan, and mutter "Noblesse oblige!"

Well, hinspirated by "Noblesse oblige," and quinine he pulled hisself together.

I rigged him out, and he went down to a swell dinner party given in honor of his betrothal to the future Lady Bar-Sinister. Whenever I mentioned the future Lady Bar-Sinister, when I was a-dressing of 'im, master would nearly go under.

But lawks! George goes down 'igh and savage, and I follows arter him, standing round the corridors, ready to give him a dose of quinine if he is taken sudden, for without it I fear he might burst hout and throw the whole thing hover, hespecially when Miss Seraphy takes his harm so cheerful and beams on him through her specs —how he 'ates her specs—and hintroduces him to the young ladies of the 'ouse party; Miss Ruth Wayback, of Boston, and Miss Arorer Tolliver Johnson, of Virginie, two deuced fine girls.

During this, little Mirie goes hinto hexplosions of hinnocent laughter in a corner, where she has got two or three toffs round her and is making herself particular agreeable to the swellest of the lot, Childers Winthrop, who has the reputation of being the most Puritan blue-blooded sport in the country, and little Arvid de Polac, who is doing the heavy from Paris; but bless you, the butler tells me he is an hagent for French wines, honly he hasn't got found out yet. Though I twigged during the dinner party that he suggested to Mr. Bulger to horder fifty cases of Eszterhazy Sec from New York;

for, bless you, young Arvid de Polac never takes horders hisself.

They has halso in the house Baron Munkaczy, the 'Ungarian from Newport.

To-morrow when the news gets over there that the Bulgers has got a right down Henglish lord at the villa, Mr. Jonathan, the butler informs me, we'll 'ave any quantity of the Newport swells hover here, their specialty being foreign nobility; Narragansett's being gals in French bathing undresses.

In my usual insinivating way, I made myself *en famile* with the butler and the other hupper servants; the butler has showed me where the private liquers is on store for the privileged.

About this time dinner was announced, and they all goes in to as dossy a feed as I ever hadmired, not baring Belgravia or Kensington, and I keep wandering round the big 'all and keeping an ear hopen for Bar-Sinister, thinking he may want another quinine powder.

Well, the banquet was about half hover, when something hawful 'appened!!

I was a-wandering round, the lights was turned down in most of the rooms, for the night was hottish, when hup flies a pony pheaton to the door and hout steps the beauteous Miss Hevelyn.

She 'adn't been down to the dinner party; her maid Elise had told me her young missus was under the weather.

I sees Miss Hevelyn come in, and hinstead of going hup to her *apartmon*, she walks hinto one of the parlors and looks through a pair of folding doors hinto the dining room. Perhaps George's voice had caught her, for he had been 'igh and mighty this evening, trying, I thinks, to drink despair hout of 'im with wine as well as quinine.

Anyway, Miss Hevelyn looks hin!

I don't know what she seed; but she give a little sort of a gasping sigh like birds gives when you wring their necks, and most fainted. I don't think she would 'ave got hup the stairs if it hadn't been for my 'elp. She was so knocked out she didn't know that I 'elped her up to her room.

Lay yer forty shinners to a quid, at this 'ere minute she thinks she walked hup stairs with 'er own blessed legs.

Well, arterwards, when master came in from the dinner party, I told him what had 'appened.

"Does she love me?" he mutters, for I had given him another dose of quinine and he was blooming smart. "Is it some 'orrible joke upon us? What the devil does it mean?" Then he looked at the drawer what 'eld that big bunch of knocked out I O U's, and shivered, "Noblesse oblige!" and went most crazy and got to cussing hisself and crying out against Seraphy. "Maddox," he moaned, "she's terrible; she kissed me! She's trapped me; she owns me! She's as jealous as a tarrier. Maddox, when I think of my wrongs I'm—I'm glad I'm going to marry her. When I'm 'er 'usband, Maddox, I feel like weeping for her—she will be so demned *miserable!*"

Arter a turn he calms down a bit and I gets 'im to bed.

As I rites I can 'ear him groaning now!

As I rites little Mirie Harmitage, whose rooms are near us, just round the next corner, is playing on her banjo and singing to the moon merry little love *chantsons.* Sometimes I think she's a fiend incarnadine, 'cause now I knows what was in the little demon's mind in England, how she laid her plans and won her little game. For, by causing George to bust up and destroy the contract of marriage his father, the old markis, was making with Miss Bulger, the markis was left

hopen to marry her, which is hexactly what little Mirie Armitage wants. By contracting George and binding him by the payment of his debts and a big lot of money down, to Miss Seraphia Bulger, George was pervented forever from marrying his Florida gal, Miss Hevie Bulger; so the little himp knocked two birds on the 'ead with one stone. She got vengeance on Bar-Sinister for turning hup his nose at her, and she has the markis left hopen to marry her and make her a peeress of England.

But, knock me silly! how did she separate the beauteous Miss Hevelyn and George down in Florida when they was cooing together like two turtle doves?

That I 'ave not been hable to guess yet; that Bar-Sinister, braced hup by quinine, has never been able to helucidate.

Hall I knows is that now, as matters stand, George is a-groaning in his sleep, in the next room, in desperation! Miss Hevelyn, one passage away, is knocked out and groggy with love; Seraphia Bulger is sleeping her old maid sleep proudly triumphant and dreaming of her George and Qupid; and little Mirie Armitage, dear, artless little Mirie, is singing her prettiest banjo solo, arter the manner of Christy's minstrels, hon the balcony outside her room, and looking hup to the moon as sententious as if she was a blooming hangel.

"Wow-*Wow!*-We-ough!"

I 'ears the whining of her cussed cur.

It is that demned Abelard agoing to make a night of it!

BOOK III.

THE FRENZY AT NARRAGANSETT.

CHAPTER XI.

"MY YOUNG MAN!"

THE next morning none but a magician would guess that in Mr. Bulger's magnificent villa, Sea View, Narragansett Pier, such heart-tearing episodes had been transacted the day before, as have been recorded by Maddox, valet to the Right Honorable George Cranmere, Viscount Bar-Sinister.

Miss Evelyn Bulger, the beautiful hostess of the assembled house party, appears in the breakfast room as blithesome and gay as any belle at Narragansett; which if not the most exclusive is probably the most dashing, and certainly not the most demure, of American watering places.

There is perhaps a trace of hauteur on the face of the exquisite young hostess as she greets the Right Honorable George in the crowded breakfast room.

She murmurs: "Delighted to meet you and *re*-welcome you to America as my aunt's fiancé, Lord Bar-Sinister. I *believe* I had the pleasure of seeing you in Florida last winter. You were then Mr. Cranmere, I

remember!" Miss Evelyn places a little languid emphasis on the "believe" and "remember" as she favors Bar-Sinister with a veiled glance and the hand of hospitality.

"Ya-as! Thanks awfully for remembering me, Miss Bulger. I was afraid you had forgotten me, don't yer know?" returns George, who has swallowed a Machiavelian powder from the hand of the faithful Maddox.

Then the two gaze at each other; for one second nonchalantly, the next, love's memories brighten both their eyes.

George is looking even more dashing and fresher than he did in Florida; though perchance a trifle more English, his face having lost a portion of its tropical bronze. He is the same George Cranmere the girl has dreamt of ever since she fled from him.

As for Evie, under the discipline of passion her face has become more *spirituellé;* and she has that rare brunette beauty that grows in loveliness as it becomes more delicate. Her whole appearance would be ethereal were it not for the brilliant, almost vindictive, vivacity that lights her countenance; this is displayed even in her dress, for the girl has arrayed herself to recall the past—and is a souvenir of Florida.

She is in a costume that gives her the dreamy languor of the tropics, the heat of this August day permitting a mass of shimmering, snowy, floating stuff to be gathered about her lithe figure and bound at the waist by a pure white satin scarf, to grant many charming hints of the graceful beauties of the form it drapes yet outlines. Two dewy blush rose-buds fluttering upon her maiden bosom give the only color to the picture she makes, save when from beneath the light laces of her skirt flit little feet slippered and hosed in the same delicate hue.

Her eyes of soft hazel by their glances give George some terrible twinges of recollection, and there is a pathetic look in his face as he mutters: "By Jove! When I look at you, you make me think Florida was but yesterday!" British nonchalance and the cruel position in which he is placed cannot entirely crush down the sigh that floats between his white teeth as he looks on the dazzling beauty of this girl he has loved, does love, and *will love!* He knows this now—more than ever since he fears he has lost her.

But the young lady has made up her mind to torture him, and she murmurs lightly: "How impressionable you are! Florida seems to me as distant as if it were in the last century."

"Don't yer know, you rather alarm me," says George in contemplative but savage tones, Evie's speech having made him for a moment vindictive. "I say, how *old* yer must feel."

Would it have made either of them happier if the girl knew that George, as he shaved himself this morning, has muttered in piteous tones to Maddox that for tu'pence he would cut his demned throat; or if Bar-Sinister could have gazed upon the secrets of beauty's bedroom and discovered the imprints of Evie's pearly teeth in her dressing case door, where she had bitten it in trying to calm her spirit the preceding night?

But neither of them has time for introspection, for the room is quite full of people who are hungry, and breakfast is on the table.

As they sit down, in comes Seraphia proud as a peacock, but more modest than that strutting bird. She blushes when any one looks at her, but over her diffidence is a good-natured smile that makes her very spectacles gleam; though there is an expression of dissappointment, almost of reproach, upon her face as she gazes at the cynosure of all eyes, her betrothed, Viscount Bar-Sinister.

For poor Seraphia has been haunting the corridors all the morning to catch this young gentleman for betrothal greeting, and would have gained her wish but for the watchful Maddox, who has suddenly whispered: "My lud, she's just gone hinto the library, now's your time—*Scoot!*" At which the Honorable George has skipped agilely down the oaken stair and slipped into the breakfast room, where, surrounded by the house party, he is secure from sweetheart greetings; especially as the company is large and the young ladies of it have a habit of lingering in groups about Bar-Sinister, a lord not having much chance of solitude in an American watering place, its belles being too anxious to know if he has brothers.

"Oh, Lord Bar-Sinister," says Miss Wayback, as they sit down at the breakfast table, "you must bring over your brother to be your best man!"

At which Seraphia, with sudden blush, taps George upon the shoulder, then covers her face with her hand and flutters: "Please don't speak of it!"

"I should be most happy to accommodate you, Miss Wayback," remarks George, "but I haven't a brother, unfortunately for him. Judging by myself, I believe you young ladies would make him very comfortable over here, don't yer know?"

"*No brother?*" mutters Ruth, in a disconsolate tone, to the intense rage of Mr. Winthrop, who sits beside her and loves her.

"No younger brother?" laughs Mirie, who is making a very comfortable breakfast opposite. "What a pity there's no more like you, isn't it, Evie?" There is a fairy-like emphasis upon the last that makes both her victims writhe.

"No, but I've got a cousin who may suit," replies Bar-Sinister, grinding his teeth over a mutton chop—he is delighted he is eating, as it gives him a chance to

grind his teeth unobserved—"young Marjoribanks, of the Second Life Guards. He'll be a lord some day if four cousins and two uncles die. Perhaps he'll answer. Shall I bring him over?"

"Oh do, cable him at once," cries Miss Wayback. "It would be delightful."

"*Cable* him!" screams Seraphia. Then fearful blushes run over her and she gasps: "Is the time so short, George?" and goes into a bashful spasm at which there is a general smile.

"It needn't be," replies Bar-Sinister, grimly. "Besides," he interjects this nervously, "I have got an uncle and also a father." Here he looks at Mirie and suggests: "Shall I bring him over to do the paternal act?"

At which little Mirabelle dallies with her omelet gracefully and says: "I dare you! If you do, *I'll marry him.*" For this child of nature and art has a playful way of meeting attacks straight from her dimpled shoulder and counters with the precision of a champion pugilist.

This idea not being particularly to the taste of his lordship, he devotes himself to his coffee so suddenly that he has a fit of coughing at which Seraphia grows pale.

Then the breakfast runs on in the way breakfasts generally do in country houses where the guests have plenty to talk about, sufficient to eat and drink and haven't had opportunity to bore each other.

Miss Evelyn, occupied by her duties as hostess, has but little time for anything save general conversation. She says a few words to young Arvid de Polac about the next polo match at Newport, in which he is to take a hand; she has a little conversation with Mr. Childers Winthrop over the cruise of the New York Yacht Club, in which his yacht will sail; she has a laugh or two with

Baron Munkaczy over the latest *bons mots* he has brought from Paris; but still she chances to note that George's style of conversation has greatly changed from that of Florida.

This young nobleman seems to be continually harping on business in almost an offensive way, at all events in a manner that makes Seraphia decidedly uneasy. She wishes her fiancé to appear *only* the aristocrat. "By Jove!" he says, "did I ever tell how I did Jonas Ripley, the Polo-Pony Liniment Man, in Florida on a contract for chloral—did him up brown, put him to sleep with his own drug," and goes into a bragging, self-laudatory account of his Florida transaction with the astute Jonas that makes Abner Bulger at the head of the table chuckle, and call out: "Bravo! Bravo! Did him up! That's right! Do up all the rival patent medicines in the country!"

"Do yer know," replies George, "since I've an interest in Bulger's Exterminator I think I can make very good contracts for you with Pink, White & Co., of which I am the junior partner."

"You're in business?" ejaculates Arvid de Polac, in supercilious astonishment.

"Oh, bless you, we're *all* of us going into business across the water, don't yer know? There's Lord Cameron, he's in wines. He told me he had an agent over in Newport, do yer know?" At which young Arvid grows red as his own claret and devotes himself to the good things of the meal, of which there are enough to delight a sybarite; the table being decked with flowers, and the whole appearance of the Bulger villa that of continuous *fête*.

The day is beautiful, the breeze from the sea soft, the sun has driven away all traces of Narragansett fog; in fact, as Miss Aurora Taliaferro Johnson remarks, "it is just the day for a dip in the surf."

"Yes, it will soon be the bathing hour," returns Seraphia with determination, and rises from the table; for she is anxious to get tête-à-tête with the young gentleman sitting by her side.

Then the company drift out upon the verandas to lounge about until it is time for the beach, the party breaking up into little groups. But Seraphia's looked for tête-à-tête does not take place, as Miss Mirie Armitage, from no higher impulse than a Yankee would denominate as "pure cussedness," has determined upon "chevying up" the Honorable George and making Seraphia feel the *full* weight of her fifty years; and Miss Evelyn Vallé Bulger has decided to show how exquisitely beautiful and fascinating she can be, because she doesn't wish George to escape seeing the loveliness he has lost.

She knows now that had it not been for her own reckless, jump-in-the-dark act, tossing away the unknown Lord Bar-Sinister before she had ever seen him, that she would now be occupying Seraphia's shoes, which, despite their size, appear to her as if they might be very pleasant number fours. She guesses now that George came over to marry her, not her aunt; that was the reason he had jumped at the contract. Seraphia had told her all that, just before she had caught sight of those awful receipted bills, the record of his debauchery. She could forgive George, Miss Webster in Florida—that was not a vicious flirtation, even though it had caused her to flee from him and the land of palm trees. But his expenditures brand George Cranmere, Viscount Bar-Sinister, forever as a man to whom she would not dare to trust her happiness—*because she loves him!*

"The more I adored him," sighs the girl to herself, "the more unhappy he would make me. Those bills are the sign manual, not of the light frivolity of careless

youth, but of the confirmed and continuous libertinage of the roué. Were he free I would never be his!"

Still she wishes him to know the value of her own fair self that he has lost forever. In her agony she will attack every one, even poor Seraphia, who has worked so hard to get for her a title; proud Seraphia, who is now enjoying her first engagement.

It is with these views that Miss Mirabelle Armitage taking her best pose on the veranda, and Miss Evelyn Vallé Bulger, striving to look as she did on her last day with him in Florida, find themselves near Bar-Sinister, who seems very happy in their company, as this saves him a tête-à-tête with Seraphia.

"You don't mind a cigar, I suppose?" he remarks, producing a weed, proceeding to light up, and taking convenient chair between the two young ladies.

"Oh, not at all," answers Evie. Then, in spite of herself, she says, a little twinge rippling over her face: "You remember I enjoyed it in Florida!"

"So did I,'" adds Mirie, promptly. "You have my permission also. But I should advise you to gradually drop the habit."

"Drop the—the habit?" This is a gasp of astonishment from Bar-Sinister.

"Yes. Seraphia detests cigar smoke, and you know you wouldn't make her unhappy for the world. There's nothing like educating yourself to matrimony gradually before it comes."

"By Jove! Seraphia had better educate herself a little," remarks George, ruefully; and inwardly resolves, if despair comes upon him in the shape of a honeymoon with Seraphia, that he will surround himself with a continual cloud of Havana fumes for protection from his bride's attentions.

"I hope you enjoyed yourself this morning, Lord Bar-Sinister," queries Evie, affecting nonchalance.

"Of course he did," jeers Mirie in her most polite tones. "Didn't I see his fiancée waiting for him before breakfast?"

"Oh cut that!" laughs George, uneasily. "Seraphia and I have altogether too much sense to be demonstrative, don't yer know? We're not children, like you, Miss Mirie. People of mature minds take upon themselves the marriage obligations *solemnly*."

"You look it," remarks Mirabelle; and thinking this shot will probably be her best, rises and goes away.

Then for a minute George and his erstwhile sweetheart are practically alone.

After an uneasy pull or two at his cigar, which apparently doesn't draw very well, Bar-Sinister remarks: "Did you hear my story about Ripley and that business transaction in St. Augustine? Did it take you back to Florida, Miss Evie?" He sighs a little over the word. "It did me."

Then, despite herself, the girl cannot help giving him one stab, and a deep one. "I should think a business man, like you brag about being," she says, scorn in her voice, "could make his own living. I should imagine a good, stalwart, strong, powerful Briton like you wouldn't include marrying in his other trade arrangements."

"Oh, by Jove! Come now; don't yer know it's your advice that made me embrace matrimony? You said, don't you remember, while sitting in the sentry box at Fort Marion—that a wife should be happy to share her fortune with her husband. I only acted on your suggestion. To tell the truth, I thought some one over here wanted to give me a hint that she would like to share her fortune with me. Not that I wanted her fortune; I wanted *her*." Then he sighs very slowly and very softly: "Don't you guess whom I wanted?"

Just here Bar-Sinister looks up and mutters an

astounded "By Jove!" and Evie blushes deeply, for Seraphia stands between them, staring at her niece.

"What have you been saying to Bar-Sinister—I mean George?" she says coyly. "Are you teasing him? I shan't permit anyone to tease my Georgie—shall I George?"

"No, for God's sake, don't!" groans the young man in a melancholy and convincing way.

"Teasing him?" returns Miss Evie, forcing a laugh. "No, I was only what is called in England 'jollying' him up. But as it is time for the beach, suppose we all drive there? That's the programme, I believe.—You will come?"

"Won't I!" George's jaws snap together with the words.

Thereupon Evie, affecting nonchalance, strolls to her own room to make preparations for the beach.

But she is followed by eager steps, and Seraphia's impatient hand is laid upon her shoulder and Seraphia's angry voice is in her ear just as she enters her apartment.

The aunt says to the niece: "Now, Miss, a word with you. I won't have you jollying up, as you call it, my young man. Do you hear what I say? *My young man!* You might have had him yourself. I got him on purpose for you, but you refused him. Now you seem to repent your bargain."

"I! How do you guess that?"

"By your looks! Haven't I seen you blush every time he grins at you? I told you he was as dandy a young fellow as ever strolled Pall Mall. You wouldn't believe me. You would throw him over. Now in justice to me don't you step between me and my bargain. It isn't fair! You young girls get round him and try to make him discontented with his lot. I wouldn't have done it to you. As for that little Mirie Armitage she'd

better look out, or I'll—I'll whale her!" This is said so savagely, that Evelyn breaks into an uneasy laugh; but her aunt goes on pathetically, "Now you promise me to let my George alone. A bargain's a bargain. I've paid his debts; I've taken up the contract. Evie, if you have one speck of the business honor of the Bulgers, respect it. Don't dally with my last chance, for I'm desperate. Do you hear me—*desperate!*"

Her appearance is such that it puts contrition into Evelyn; she cries: "Auntie, I—I didn't know you loved him so."

"I didn't love him yesterday; but now I've got him, I love him more than I thought it would be possible. My spectacles gleam every time I gaze on him. And you—taking him from me—you are heartless!"

"No," murmurs Evie, despairingly, "I promise to let him alone."

And Seraphia, beaming on her, whispers: "Then I've a surprise for you, you're such a good girl," as she pats her niece on the shoulder. "Do you know what I'm going to make you?"

"No!" There is anxiety in the answer.

"My first bridesmaid!" and Seraphia flies out of the room, for she has seen George walking down the path as if anxious to get into the town by himself, and is determined to be his companion in his stroll to the Casino.

Fortunately she does not note the effect of her words. For at the mention of first bridesmaid Miss Evelyn Vallé Bulger grows very pale. Then as the door closes with a bang, cutting her off from the outer world, Evie throws herself on her bed, and rolls, tosses, tumbles about, moaning to herself in a state of agitation that makes her look very beautiful though marvelously unconventional. Fortunately there is no one to see her, not even Elise.

After a few moments of vivacious agony, the girl rises, dashes a tear from her pretty eyes and mutters: "It is the bathing hour! The double-dyed villain shall see what he has lost! That's what he is, double-dyed! I'll—I'll show him!"

For this young lady will swim in the surf this morning.

She is perfectly satisfied that she has the prettiest bathing suit in Narragansett; she is equally sure that she fills the bathing dress to perfection; she knows she is a very naïad in the waves and can swim and dive like a sea-nymph; and is furthermore satisfied that Seraphia dares not don bathing costume and enter the surf before that crowd of assembled lookers on.

But she doesn't know Seraphia!

CHAPTER XII.

IT IS THE BATHING HOUR!

SUMMONING her maid and giving her directions, pretty Miss Evelyn joins the rest of the party, and after a merry and short ride finds herself upon the beach at Narragansett Pier—that beach celebrated by pictorial newspapers; that beach young men, who have not visited, dream of as a sort of briny Elysium, very much as the followers of Allah dream of the paradise of Mohammed and its myriad houris; that beach where amid laughter and love the sea nymphs of America sport in the sunny surf to the joy of American newspaper reporters, who delight to weave fantastic stories about female loveliness undraped; that beach where many a young Adonis has received Cupid's shaft between plunges in the breakers, and many an

enthralled swain has found his disenchantment amid revealing waves and clinging bathing suits.

"By Jove!" remarks the Right Honorable George, gazing over the human panorama; "This reminds me of the surf at Tonga Island; only the girls didn't wear anything there and were not as handsome." He rolls his single eyeglass with a sort of Cyclops gleam over the young ladies of the party.

"For shame, George," mutters Seraphia, with reproving modesty.

"Perhaps we wouldn't be as handsome if we were in isles of the Pacific," replies Mirie, archly. "Very few American girls could stand Tonga!"

"*Ciel!* you should see Boulogne sur Mer," interjects little Arvid de Polac, anxious to show that he is French and foreign. "I'll warrant there isn't a titled lady in that surf at present," he points to Narragansett water. "Over there, you know, especially at Trouville, we have marchionesses, comtesses, baronesses and aristocratic sea-nymphs."

"Ya-as, here we have only heiresses bathing," returns Bar-Sinister with a slight chuckle. "Polac, you have the chance of your lifetime. Save an heiress from drowning. It's better than the wine business I can tell you!"

At this young Arvid, who blushes under the insinuation, is happy to bolt into a bathing booth to make toilet for his embrace of the sea.

In a moment the rest of the party follow his example. George would make his preparations for a duck also, but Seraphia, determined to keep him from joining the alluring nymphs, indicates chairs on the platform of one of the booths, and suggests, "Let us sit down here and enjoy the beauty of the scene, dear Bar-Sinister."

Thus compelled, the Honorable George sinks into a

camp stool beside her, and does enjoy the beauty of the scene; for Narragansett at its best and bravest is in the height of its season, and the day is as perfect as an Italian one. The soft blue waters of the bay flow in upon the white gleaming beach in a sort of lazy surf. In front of them upon the sands stroll maidens in white muslins and straw hats mixed with girls dressed à la mermaid, who have been into the waves or are just about wooing the embrace of ocean.

The costumes of these bathing beauties, though not as light and debonair as illustrated newspapers make them, still in some instances approach the graceful draperies depicted by American periodicals, at least sufficiently so to give color to the wondrous pictures they have given of Narragansett, to astonish and delight the world.

"By the by, you don't mind my smoking?" says Bar-Sinister, pulling out a cigar, and looking meditatively and inquiringly at Seraphia.

Her answer horrifies him. "No," she whispers, "you have taught me to *love* the odor of the Havana!"

This awful revelation of his power frightens George. With a gasp the weed goes into his mouth and he lights it in a nervous, agitated way, as if he felt he was making one of his last appearances in the happy ranks of bachelors.

A puff or two of the soothing cigar, and he pulls himself together and mutters: "That's rather fetching," indicating with a wave of his hand a very chic costume worn by a maid who proudly regards herself as the queen of the surf, and as such dresses in white in contradistinction to the dark blues and magentas of her surrounding companions. "I say, she would be in ball dress if she had a train," George continues. "At present she reminds one of the ballet, don't yer know? She would make her fortune in a music hall."

But this admiration does not please Seraphia. She changes the conversation by remarking severely: "Why did you make young Polac blush by mentioning the wine trade?"

"Because he *did* blush, that's the reason! I like to chevy him up a little. He doesn't guess it, but I know he's the agent for Lord Cameron over here for wines, champagnes, etc. It's ineffably caddish to be in trade and be ashamed of it. Now, I glory in being a business man, Seraphia. The proudest moment of my life was the first time I made a thundering cute operation—that's what you call it over here, isn't it? Do you know, I glory in every sign of 'Bulger's Bile Exterminator;' the bigger it is the better I like it. It indicates business energy; that's what I like, don't yer know; *business energy!* That's what I admire in you, Seraphia, BUSINESS ENERGY!"

But Bar-Sinister's remarks on business energy suddenly close with a muttered "By Jove!" of excitement and admiration, as two nymphs come under his eyeglass.

Evelyn and Mirie, draped with bathing mantles, have wandered to the beach and now have thrown them to Elise preparatory to wooing the ocean. Mirie he scarce sees, for the beauty and graces of Evelyn's naïad figure is too much for the business energy of Viscount Bar-Sinister.

"I—I say, I'll go in for a plunge myself!" he stammers, getting up; and before Seraphia can detain him has bolted into the men's department to assume bathing dress.

His betrothed, who cannot follow George, stands undecided and annoyed.

Two minutes after, with an agile rush before Seraphia can stop him, Bar-Sinister is on the beach, has plunged in, and George and Evie are tossing quite near together in the surf of Narragansett Bay.

With a playful "How are yer?" the Englishman starts for the raft floating a couple of hundred feet beyond the wading line. But Evie is by his side, and perchance would reach the goal before him did she not stop to give a half playful half vindictive duck and souse to little Mirie, as they overtake her.

"Don't we look like children of nature?" sputters Mirabelle, as she struggles on to the raft after them, and looks her character very much, being in a petite bathing dress contrived especially to make masculine hearts beat very hard under salt water, for it displays quite craftily every lovely outline of her pretty little muscles as she sports in the waves.

"*You* do," says George, grimly, compelled to admiration despite himself.

"What, more than Evie?" mutters Mirabelle, regarding Evelyn, who is preparing for a sea-nymph dive. Then she adds, with astute vindictiveness: "Wouldn't your father, the old Marquis, like to be here? You know he does so love to play—with children!"

"Did he like to play with you, Mirie?" laughs Miss Bulger, as she disappears under the water that foams about her as she shoots off the raft.

"Follow my leader," cries George, and goes after her.

"Keep the pot boiling!" yells Mirie, recklessly, and disappears in their wake: and the three go into a merry game of "Follow my leader," in divings and duckings and enjoy themselves wondrously in the warm water as they play à la porpoise about the raft.

But there is one on the shore who, though she isn't the old Marquis, would like to join them. The bereft Seraphia meanders up and down the beach as near to them as the water permits, careless of incoming ripples that wet her feet, and calling wildly to heedless George to come on shore.

But he cannot hear her; at all events he doesn't hear her; which is exactly the same thing in her case. So wandering up and down like a hen looking at her ugly duckling in the water, Seraphia paces the weary beach—suddenly a look of tremendous determination comes into her eyes and her jaws close with a bull-dog snap, muttering, "I'll do it!"

Five minutes after a figure that produces astonishment, almost dismay, passes through the crowd that play beside the waves of Narragansett. In solid black from head to heel, Seraphia Bulger looks the picture of womanhood in its most advanced form; *the form that cares not what is thought of it!* Not that she is a skeleton, for Seraphia weighs a good one hundred and sixty pounds; but most of this is bone, and the articulations of her joints are wondrous in their development. Besides, a solemn determination in the way she enters the waves, a savageness in the bend of her big Chinese straw hat which is fastened over her head, indicate she is a maiden with a purpose, and that purpose is to drag the Right Honorable George Cranmere, Viscount Bar-Sinister out of the water.

"Oh cracky!" jeers little Jimmy, Miss Evelyn's cute groom, to Jellybird Maddox, who is taking in the sights of the beach beside him. "There's a *fine de bicycle* figure for you."

"'Ush you little ruffian," answers the valet. "Don't you see it's my missus, as is to be, you're talking hof? Corblimy! she looks like a fair knock out for master or meself;" for Seraphia's appearance inspires awe.

But, unheeding remark, she marches straight as the tide will permit her toward the raft, every now and then lifting up her voice and calling out "Ge—orge!"

But "Ge—orge" and the sea nymphs are having too pleasant a time to pay much attention to anybody else.

Step after step Seraphia takes, first to her knees,

then to her waist, then desperately almost to her shoulders. Here she pauses faltering and cries out "GE—ORGE!"

She can hear the giggles from the girls as Bar-Sinister is sousing them; she can hear little Mirie cry: "Oh, George, push me up on the raft again!" She can see George swing the lithe graceful form of Miss Armitage on to the floating caisson. Then she sees him do the same for Evie—who looks even more enchanting than petite Mirie—*lingering over his pleasant task.*

Now all this makes Seraphia frantic. Not a stroke can she swim; but there is the raft almost within hailing distance. Another step or two and George *must* hear her! Her determined disposition will risk a great deal to carry its point. She doesn't know the danger of the sea; this is the first time she has ever been in its deceitful but alluring embrace.

She takes a step or two further out and yells "GE-ORGE!" And as the salt water comes round her and bobs her about, she makes up her mind it will be the last time.

It nearly is!

Just then Evie poses herself upon the raft preparing for another header, and makes such an alluring picture, outlined against the sky and tinted with the sun's soft rays, in a bathing dress of light blue even to silk stockings that display limbs graceful as Venus rising from the sea, that Seraphia cannot bear it any longer.

She takes another step; the water deepens. As she does so a combing breaker blown in by the freshening wind takes her off her feet. She is afloat, or rather she isn't afloat, for she sinks, and with a muttered "Save me, George," which is unheard by the laughing merman and sea nymphs on the raft, Seraphia Bulger, with the roar of waters in her ears, goes down—for the first time.

When she comes up again, the tide, which is now ebb, is drifting her out to sea. She splashes, she cries unheard by the laughing throng near the shore and the trio about the raft, who are too much occupied in their own aquatic sports.

Even now they might notice Seraphia, did not at this moment artful little Mirie, who doesn't think she is receiving attention enough from George, pretend to be drowning *herself* and insist upon being dragged on to the raft and slapped and revived and made much of; a process which is entered into with so much athletic zest by Evie that Mirie very shortly shrieks not to kill her, she is all right.

Alone, unaided, her mouth filled with salt water at every yell, Seraphia gives just one more frantic scream. The water is closing round her; she is already about to take her second descent to Father Neptune's caves, when a wiry looking, Israelitish little fellow, who has been sporting about by himself, no one apparently knowing him, with a red Turkish cap over his dark, crisp locks, and a bathing costume that is as near nudity as Narragansett authorities permit, evidently sees her.

For with a muttered, "By sinking funds! there's Aunt Seraphia! If I let her die it will ruin me!" he puts vigor into his strokes, and catches her just in time.

But he has very hard work to keep her on the surface, for Seraphia, like most people in danger of drowning, loses her presence of mind and would embrace her supporter with a fatal fervor did he not hold her at arms' length. This he does, shouting lustily for assistance.

"There's some trouble over there!" cries Miss Evie, who is still mounted on the raft. "Quick, Bar-Sinister, there's trouble over there!" and she dives and swims toward the two struggling figures in the water.

But she doesn't get there first, for George's rapid overhand stroke soon places him to the fore.

He calls out encouragingly: "Keep her up! Be with yer in a minute!" And very shortly the young lord does join them and glares in intense astonishment, for confronting George and holding up Seraphia is his little Israelitish pursuer of his trip across the Atlantic.

A second after Evie, the naïad, is with them, and all three together propel Seraphia into shallow water, where she is brought upon the beach in a somewhat dazed condition, having swallowed, as Mirie remarks, as she paddles along beside them, more salt water than would pickle her.

But on the beach Miss Bulger is not too disconcerted to remember the little fellow who saved her life. "How can I ever thank you?" she says, looking at the aquatic little man. "How can I *ever* thank you?"

"Beg pardon, don't you remember me? I was on the *Teutonic* coming over."

"Oh, yes, I recollect. Please wait for me till I have made my toilet," and Seraphia, assisted by Evie, hurries into the ladies' portion of the booth, while George and the rescuer confront each other dripping on the beach.

"I am happy to have saved her for you, my lord," says the little man, "very happy. More happy than *you* can imagine." This last is uttered *sotto voce*, but with significant emphasis.

"Oh, I'm very much obliged to you," replies his lordship, "very much obliged to you. Yer see, I didn't know she was in. Thanks awfully! Do the same for you next time." And with this rather enigmatical remark he strides into the gentleman's portion of the bathing house.

The affair has created little or no excitement; most of the crowd upon the beach have thought it a romp,

so the episode has passed very quietly. Twenty minutes after, Seraphia, coming out, finds her preserver very handsomely overdressed, and murmurs her thanks again. "I believe I remember you on board the *Teutonic*," she adds.

"Yes, certainly; permit me," and the little gentleman presents his card; which is

RAPHAEL LEVISON, M. D.

"Ah, Dr. Levison," she says, "let me thank you once more. My brother will wish to add his thanks to mine. Cannot you come to Mr. Bulger's villa, Sea View, on the Ocean road?"

"Thanks, I know it very well. I took a look at it yesterday," says the little gentleman.

"Well, can't you join us at dinner, Dr. Levison?' remarks Seraphia, hospitably.

"Delighted, thanks! What time did you say?"

"Seven o'clock."

"All right, sharp seven!" replies the invited one.

"You don't practice medicine here?"

"Oh, no, I don't practice medicine," he adds with a little chuckle that rather astonishes Seraphia; but she murmurs, "Thank you once more. Au revoir till seven."

Then, as the party go home, she whispers to her niece that she has invited Dr. Levison, the gentleman who has saved her, to dine at their villa.

"I am delighted that you did," remarks Evie. "I know that papa will want to thank him himself.

and I shall be most happy to do so over again. Only to think, poor Seraphia! One more plunge and you would have been lost, and we were laughing and never saw you. George—that is, Lord Bar-Sinister and Mirie and I were practicing somersault diving. We never thought you would venture in."

"No," says Seraphia grimly, "*probably not!*"

But of all of the party George apparently cares less about Dr. Levison than any of them. When the invitation is announced to him he replies: "That's right. Thanks, awfully." But in his mind adds: "That demned little fellow is following me again. I wonder what he wants with me? Can't be a detective, don't yer know!"

But he hasn't much opportunity for meditating on little Levison, as Seraphia demands all his attention, once or twice saying under her breath: "George, fancy if I had gone down the third time—*fancy!*"

This fancy sends George into such a melancholy frame of mind that he eats nothing at lunch though he is very hungry, and the meal is an exquisite one as regards cuisine and service.

All this coming afternoon he knows he is doomed; Seraphia has already announced it to him. She is going to take him over to Newport and introduce him to some of her fashionable friends. The betrothed has planned this as a triumphant visit to the fashionable watering place, where she is going to crush several friends whom she regards as enemies, by exhibiting her English lord to them; this youth who is going to make her Lady Bar-Sinister; this fiancé who is about to give her opportunity of sneering at the Hungarian counts and French barons with which Newport is decorated this season.

So, very shortly after lunch, Seraphia takes departure for Newport, followed by the majority of the party.

On this pilgrimage she is accompanied by her captive,

who is in a sulky and sarcastic mood, and is thinking: When I come back I shan't be able to kick that little beast Levison out of here, because he has saved my Seraphia's life. I shall owe him forever a debt of gratitude. By the Lord Harry! I shall have to embrace him and take him to my heart for saving Aunt Seraphia, my betrothed. Who is he, anyway? Is he after me for something? He haunted me on shipboard—dash me if I don't believe he's followed me to Narragansett. What the devil does he want? *Doctor* Levison! Is he a rival drug clerk? Does he want patent medicine orders? Whatever he is, I'd enjoy tossing him out the front door, if a window wasn't handier.

BUT GEORGE, VISCOUNT BAR-SINISTER, DOESN'T KNOW HOW MUCH HE WILL LOVE LITTLE LEVISON SOME DAY.

CHAPTER XIII.

"IT DOES ME GOOD TO SEE A SWELL'S HEART BREAK!"

MISS EVIE BULGER does not accompany the Newport party. The girl is not in good spirits. When alone, she gives way to a curious romantic melancholy, which is mingled with flashes of spiteful rage, all of which are to be intensified, because when George Cranmere returns she is going to love him more than ever she did before.

She doesn't know it now, but she soon will.

This peculiar increase of passion is brought about by the visit of a society reporter in search of items for one of the New York dailies. From which city he has

come upon this specific business. The international marriage has received certain telegraphic comment in the morning New York papers, and this gentleman has been deputed to make a special trip to Narragansett to write up a three or four column Sunday article, illustrated with photographs, etc., according to the usual sycophantic manner of many of the New York dailies on such international marriages.

This gentleman drives straight to Mr. Bulger's villa, and sends up his card. "Please give this to Miss Bulger at once," he says, to the footman who answers his ring. "Tell her my visit is of great importance, immediate and imperative."

There being only one Miss Bulger at home the flunky does not take the trouble to make explanations, but delivers the card to Miss Evie, who looks at it with astonishment, then thinks: "I wonder what he wants me for? Well, the quickest way to discover, is to see him."

A few minutes after she walks into her parlor to bring return astonishment upon her visitor. Looking at his card, she murmurs, "Mr. Roberts, I believe."

"Yes," remarks the representative of the press, rising. Then he mutters, in apparent embarrassment: "I—I beg your pardon!"

"I beg yours!" she replies, rather haughtily, and indicates with her fair hand a seat.

"But I sent my card to Miss Bulger."

"Certainly."

"Well, would you excuse me—Miss Webster—I—I believe—"

"*Miss Webster?*"

"Yes, Miss Webster; I saw you in Florida.'

"Miss Webster!" The name strikes Evie curiously; then memory comes upon her. As she looks at the gentleman before her, she remembers him as the society

reporter of St. Augustine, the one that little Mirie had said helped her to pass quiet afternoons. "Miss Webster!" she repeats, loftily. "You make a mistake. My name is Miss Evelyn Vallé Bulger."

"Impossible!—I wrote three articles about you as Miss Webster—Miss Alicia Webster."

"About ME?" she falters; then cries out savagely, "How dared you think my name was Webster?"

"Why, your companion, the daughter of your chaperone, Miss Mirabelle Armitage, told me your name was Webster!"

"Good Heavens!" the girl gasps, then grows very pale, but forces herself to ask again, as if she cannot believe: "Did Miss--Miss Armitage tell you my name was Webster?"

"Why, certainly. I once heard you, at the Ponce de Leon, spoken of as Miss Bulger, and inquired again from Miss Mirie, but she assured me that your name was Alicia Webster."

"She said my name was—Oh, Mirie! Mirie!" whispers Evie, her hand seeking her heart to stop its throbbing.

"Yes, of—of course," stammers the gentleman of the press, for the young lady's appearance makes him fear she will faint. "I didn't doubt the information, as it came from one of your own party, and the daughter of your chaperone."

"Mirie did that and you believed her—YOU—" and there flies a light into Miss Evie's eyes that makes the reporter know the young lady has given up all idea of swooning. But the girl calms herself by a tremendous effort and utters politely: "What do you wish?"

"I wish any information in your power to give as to the marriage of Viscount Bar-Sinister and Miss Bulger."

"My aunt! I will tell you all about it so you need make no mistake this time." This Evie says, feigning a

lightness of tongue that is not in her heart; for there is a great terror there as well as love. This man, if he guesses, what an article it will be for his paper—the niece enamored of, the aunt engaged to the English lord—this man facing her, who will, as a matter of business, tell of her Florida flirtation!

If he sees George he will recognize Bar-Sinister as the Mr. Cranmere of St. Augustine; and this shrewd, journalistic investigator will suspect, will reason—will find out, will *publish*,—Oh, my heavens!—will PUBLISH!

As this flies through Evelyn's brain, she determines she must get Mr. Roberts away before the party returns from Narragansett.

This she will do by the only means in her power, and, somehow or other, the girl contrives to keep herself calm and give the gentleman of the press all the information he wishes, even purloining a portrait of Seraphia for journalistic use.

Then as he goes away, the affrighted young lady laughs to herself: "I've fooled him! he hasn't my secret. Mr. Roberts, of the Jacksonville *Statesman* and the New York *Earth*, hasn't divined my secret!"

But he has!

"Isn't she a stunner," thinks Mr. Roberts, as he drives away, "and very agreeable and accommodating as to news. Miss Bulger alias Miss Webster rather overdid it. Wonder why she was so extremely affable. She nearly fainted when she discovered I had written about her as Miss Webster. What did I write?"

So on his return to New York, this young journalist looks up in his scrapbook the items he has written about Miss Webster and Mr. Cranmere in the Jacksonville *Statesman*, and the next day, chancing to see a snap-shot photograph in a Newport paper taken of Viscount Bar-Sinister, he recognizes the picture as that of the George Cranmere he had seen in Florida, and

begins to piece out the story little by little in his subtle mind; though he doesn't guess the whole of it.

Still, coupled with the girl's agitation and his Narragansett interview, Roberts knows sufficient to make two or three very exciting and interesting columns with startling head lines; but, curiously enough, only gives a prolonged whistle and mutters to himself: "Poor girl, what a beauty! And what a little fiend that Armitage infant is!" and doesn't write his ideas up, though the temptation is tremendous, as the New York papers commence to use very big type about this time in regard to the international marriage of the Right Honorable George Cranmere, Viscount Bar-Sinister and Miss Seraphia Bulger.

And Beelzebub below sheds tears over this journalist, who spares a maiden's heart at the sacrifice of a three column racy article at two cents a line, and growls to Lucifer: "Here's a chap on the New York press who'll never make an editor! Curse his conscience! we could have had fun down here if he had only written her up. The niece might have committed suicide. As it is, I expect the aunt will, before they get through with her!"

But neither of these catastrophes suggested by His Satanic Majesty takes place.

Miss Evelyn Bulger, the reporter being gone, now paces her chamber, muttering: "George loved me; I was the Miss Webster; the girl he was reported engaged to. I was jealous of *myself*—my Heaven! fool, dolt, idiot—JEALOUS OF MYSELF! What simple but subtle ingenuity! Ah! Machiavelian Mirie! The more attentive George was to me, the more I'd suffer from *newspaper accounts* of his love for *Miss Webster!* That's why I fled from him. He was innocent of wrong in Florida—George was innocent. I may misjudge him now. But no; those awful bills! If it were not for

them I would love him now. And she who has done this for me—Mirie! To whom I owe six months of latent misery—*Mirie!*"

Thereupon she clinches her hands and writhes and moans; and if dear, artless little Mirie could have seen her victim at that moment, she would have known she had as fine a revenge as ever vicious infant had upon reigning belle.

Perchance on her return to Narragansett with the Honorable George and the rest of the party, Seraphia, did she know what produces Miss Evie's sudden headache and keeps her from the dinner table this night, would not be so happy as she is. For the day has been one of great social triumph for "the betrothed" in Newport. Bar-Sinister has made the great hit of the season and she has shared his glory. Invitations have been showered upon them, dinner parties are to be given them right and left; and to the dance arranged for the next evening at the Bulger villa half of fashionable Newport is coming.

"We don't need," whispers Seraphia proudly to Abner, as the company gather together in the drawing-room, "to send out a single invitation in Narragansett; we could even drop the cottagers. The Newport boat has been specially chartered and we will have a concourse of the smart set. Besides, two steam yachts are coming over."

Then she gives the signal for dinner, and taking the arm of the Honorable George, who has been stimulated by a convenient quinine powder, follows the procession to the dining-room.

Little Levison, who has arrived and received Mr. Bulger's thanks for his natatorial feat, is seated upon the other side of her. Seraphia has been very kind to him, and has given him Mirie to take in to dinner; which makes, as Miss Armitage giggles to herself, one of the

epochs of her life—she has never eaten so little nor laughed so much.

For little Levison is a *rara avis.* Arrayed in a dress suit that gives enormous display of glazed and snowy shirt bosom, collar and cuffs, and diamonded like a hotel clerk, the little creature seems a mass of complaisancy, affability, jabber, crisp oily dark curly hair, grins, grimaces and assurance, and keeps Miss Mirie in successive spasms of mirth that punctuate the courses of the dinner, especially after he has taken a glass or two of champagne. "By Derby day!" he whispers into the pearly ear beside him, "I like American swells."

"Do you? How curious!" answers Mirie. "What is the peculiarity of American swells?"

"What they buy there's no discount on. Those curtains over there—old-gold in *genuine* metal upon *real* silk damask. Lord love 'em! they'd bring money at auction, they would. I was in a *new* earl's mansion not long ago, and—so help me bob! everything in it was Brummagen. Bless your sweet face, how the dealers had swindled his ludship. He'd bought new French china for old *cloisonné*, and as for bric-á-brac, you would think his house was filled with art from Radcliffe Highway. Now, in this villa I haven't put my hand on an article that isn't genuine, and couldn't be pawned—even to the knives and forks."

"Yes, burglars would have a picnic here," laughs Mirie, delighted.

"Wouldn't they?" returns Levison. "They *couldn't* steal anything that wasn't worth money. Look at the plate I'm eating off—genuine old Sévres, pictures on it painted by Maglin, six—humph! seven guineas apiece, and cheap at that, let alone duties. Everything here's of value. When I puts my eye on a thing I know just how much it's worth."

"Do you?" replies Mirabelle, biting the end of her

handkerchief to prevent herself from laughing in his face. "At how much would you value me?"

"You? Let me inspect!" Here he puts his eyes over her; "I should think your get-up was worth rising five thousand guineas. I've no doubt you paid more for it—that ruby there upon your finger is a very nice one, but there's a little flaw in it. Without the flaw it would be worth three thousand pounds itself; rubies are rubies. The dress you wear probably cost you a good deal more than it's worth. These French men milliners are extortionate beasts to you Yankee ladies. As for your twinklers; well, since the African output has lowered the diamond market, they wouldn't go for very much—two thousand guineas. Of course I don't know the inside trimmings of your vestments; they may be very valuable, some ladies is. But I should put you down at about six thousand pounds round in the market."

"Ah! I'm worth more than that," says Mirie.

"Oh, of course you know I don't value you according to the Eastern method. I suppose in Turkey—where they do these tricks sometimes;" here he gives a hideous leer, "you'd bring a good price aside from your general get-up."

"Yes," laughs Mirie. "But I bring more in England. I am worth about two million there."

"Pounds? So help me!" gasps the financier delighted.

"No—dollars!" giggles Mirabelle.

"Oh, an American heiress and not married yet. What a shame! What a shame! You'll let me furnish your house for you in Belgravia or Kensington—of course you're going to marry a lord. That's the ambition of all heiresses in this country. I'm over here on—". But the gentleman suddenly checks himself and pleads: "If you don't let

me buy your articles *de luxe*, you'll be swindled on the other side, sure as you're a Yankee!"

"Ah, you're a purchaser of precious things!"

"No," he replies; "at present, I am a collector."

"A collector of beautiful things?"

"Well, some people say I am a collector of *very* beautiful things," and the little gentleman goes into such an insinuating chuckle that Mirie looks at him, wondering what is in his mind; but, all the same, thinks it is a rare joke finding such a creature at Mr. Bulger's villa, and determines to get him an invitation to the german, imagining his dancing must be unique.

Just here she suddenly remembers how her escort has haunted Bar-Sinister, and wondering what his business is in America, proceeds to examine him; and though Levison is not a man to be pumped easily, astute little Mirie, when she retires with the rest of the ladies from the dinner table, looks curiously at George, Viscount Bar-Sinister, and getting away by herself laughs as if her very heart would break.

Now, this conversation has been generally in whispers, and most of it has been drowned by the noise of the dinner table; but a few words of it have reached the Honorable George's ears and have caused him to glare once or twice very savagely at Miss Mirie's escort. "He's not the kind of a creature I like to have sit down at table with me," thinks Bar-Sinister to himself. "I can stand most kinds of queer people, but hang me if I can stomach pawnbrokers—for cuss me if I don't believe that's what the fellow is. I'll have a talk with him and draw him out after dinner." Which George, Viscount Bar-Sinister does, to his own misery and despair.

Most of the guests have wandered on to the veranda. Bar-Sinister, enjoying the last of his cigar, has lingered at the dining table over an extra pony

of brandy, a thing he always needs after Seraphia has sat beside him for an hour or two; Mr. Levison has lingered also. He cannot tear himself away from some Burgundy of 1874, for Levison is as good a judge of wines as he is of other things. He taps, knowingly, a few of the plates, and holds them up to the light, admiring the delicacy of the china.

After contemplating him for a minute or two, an expression of disgust comes into George's face; he rises and strides toward the door. But Levison has a nature that resents his not being noticed. He cannot leave people alone. He springs up lightly, and following Bar-Sinister, remarks, bowing: "Your lordship's very humble servant!"

"You—you have the advantage of me," observes George, assuming the vacant stare that has helped the English nobility out of many a tight corner.

"My lord, I had the honor of pulling Miss Seraphia Bulger, your fiancée, out of the breakers this morning."

"Oh—ah–h, yes, I remember now; many thanks, many thanks, thought your face was infernally familiar," and George strolls into the library. "Egad, he won't follow me here," he thinks.

But Levison does. "Permit me," he says, and presents one of his cards

"Yes," remarks George, "of course, Raphael Levison, M.D."

"You remember me now? I presented you with one on the steamer coming over."

"Oh, ya-as!" returns Bar-Sinister, grimly; "on the steamer coming over there were a number of bores."

"Yes," ejaculates the little fellow eagerly; "yes, my lord, *frightful* bores!"

At which George, looking steadily out of his eyeglass, snarls: "And you were the *cursedest* bore of the lot. Gad, we thought of getting up a petition to the

captain to throw you overboard. If we'd known you swam so well we'd have done it. I see by your card—it isn't exactly clean, you should use a finger bowl after dinner,"—Bar-Sinister tosses the bit of pasteboard away, produces a handkerchief, and coolly wipes his fingers—"I see by your card you are a doctor!"

At this most aggravating procedure a vicious gleam comes over the face of the ill-treated one. He jeers: "Ah! of course—I'm a doctor, and am about to perform an operation on you—he, he, he! I'm about to *bore* you again. My lord, I'm *not* a doctor!"

"So you acknowledge yourself a blasted charlatan. M. D. on your card—what does M. D. stand for?"

With this comes little Levison's revenge. "It stands, my lord, for Manager of Debts," he whispers. "That's more genteel than collector."

At which the Honorable George laughs: "Collector! By jove, a month ago you might have frightened me, Nebuchadnezzar!—I beg your pardon, I mean Raphael."

But unheeding this interruption Levison goes on: "And I have followed you from England as a special agent from your creditors there to collect their bills the day you marry Miss Bulger."

To this George jeers in sarcastic laugh. "My creditors! I have no creditors, don't yer know? My creditors have gone to the—bow-wows! Ah! thank you, that's right, Maddox," he adds, as his valet appears with his usual after-dinner dose of quinine. "Thank you, twenty-and-one-quarter grains? Always on the look-out, Maddox. I drink, Mr. Shylock, to my creditors, who have passed away!"

"I have in my pocket, my lord, despite your hilarity, the power of attorney to collect sixty-four hundred pounds seven shillings and six pence, with interest," says Levison, and produces from a worn porte-monnaie

a document that makes the Honorable George open his eyes. He looks it over carefully, then turning to his valet who is just withdrawing, remarks: "Maddox, go up to my room, bring me that large package of receipted bills; I wish to show it to Mordecai Levison, M. D."

"You may jeer at my name, my lord," returns Levison, snarling, "but I don't think you'll joke when you look at those receipted bills."

"No, I never jeer at *receipted* bills; I'm not well enough acquainted with *receipted* bills to take the liberty of being facetious with them, don't yer know. But here they are!"

With this the valet enters with the large packet that Seraphia has brought with her from London. "You can go, Maddox," mutters George, and his servitor having departed, he remarks: "Now, Abednego, permit me to prove to you that your trip across the Atlantic has been as unprofitable to you as it has been demned unpleasant to me."

Thereupon, tapping complacently the bundle of documents, he pases them over to the little financier, and jeers: "Receipts in full from every creditor I have *on earth*. You'd hardly undertake to do business for those that are *in heaven*, Dives—I mean Raphael; you'd never climb up the golden stairs to give them their dividend, don't yer know? By the Lord Harry, you'd cut up the golden stairs and put them in your pocket!"

But George's jokes and merriment come to an untimely end. Levison examines the bills, chuckles over them and says: "Yes, I recognize these receipts, for I gave most of them myself."

"The devil you did! And you came over here to bother me again about them, you infernal scoundrel!"

"Don't use words that are actionable, my lord. This whole affair is a little trick of your father's."

"Fitzminster's?"

"If you'll examine them, you'll see they are the bills, not of the *present* Viscount Bar-Sinister, yourself, but of the *preceding* Viscount Bar-Sinister, your father. Do you know Mademoiselle de Lorme, for whose carriages he paid in Paris? Are you acquainted with little Baby Bascome, of the Gaiety? Did you guarantee the rent of the flat of Miss Mortimore? Ha, ha, ha!" chuckles little Levison. "The Markis is a deep one, he's deeper than his son. He conducted the negotiations for you, he, he, he! And he gave Miss Seraphia Bulger *his own bills* to pay, not *yours!*"

"She paid Fitzminster's bills!" gasps Bar-Sinister, and drops overcome into a chair. At last the imperturbable stoicism of the British swell gives way for one short moment as he mutters between his teeth: "The infernal cad—my father!"

Perchance he would permit himself to be overcome with emotion, did not Levison jeer: "Why, every three-ball shop in England is laughing at how the 'Markis' did his son."

But here the triumph ceases. Bar-Sinister remarks, quietly: "The Marquis never did his son. It was an understood thing that Fitzminster's bills were to be paid, Lazarus—I beg your pardon, Meshech."

"I beg your pardon, my lord, Raphael Levison," returns the little man, savagely.

"Oh, what do I care about your demned name, Shadrach," remarks the Honorable George. "When I marry Miss Bulger——"

"Yes, Miss Seraphia Bulger," interjects his persecutor, eagerly. "When you marry Miss Bulger I'll come to you."

"And, by Jove," says the Honorable George, "when you do come to me, I'll kick you downstairs. A fellah can't rob his wife to pay such chaps as you. And now, oblige me by getting out—*quick!*"

His manner is such that Levison does get to the door quick; but he leaves a dagger in the heart of the Honorable George, who is looking over the bills and muttering: "Yes; I don't recognize them. My God! I never was such a profligate as these would make me. There's no doubt of it! And my governor, who did me out of my mother's legacy, has now paid his debts with my sale, the infernal swindler!" Then the unhappy aristocrat puts his head into his hands and sighs out between despairing lips, "Evie!"

Looking upon his victim from the door, little Levison chuckles to himself: "It does me good to see a swell's heart break! How he lied to me, ha, ha! to save his father's the Marquis's good name! How these aristocrats wince when their family honor is touched."

And a swell's heart *is* breaking! For with a set face Bar-Sinister is thinking: "This is a cropper! I can't face my creditors in England now. I am doomed to marry Seraphia. Where can I get the money to pay the advances she has made for my father's debts? There's no hope for me! By the Lord Harry, I shall have to kiss her wrinkles and love her gray hairs! Ah! governor, you knew your son would keep those bills good, because he cannot tell the world his father is such an infernal swindler and a low down cad."

Then George's head sinks, and the tears of despair are in his eyes.

CHAPTER XIV.

MIRIE, THE DIPLOMATE

But here a soft voice whispers in his ear, in exquisite tones that bring increased despair to him. It says

lightly, laughingly, almost jeeringly: "Don't you require another quinine powder, my lord?"

It comes from Miss Evie, who has wandered down stairs, to fly from a self-communing that is driving her distracted.

More beautiful, if possible, than Bar-Sinister has ever seen her, her cheeks are alabaster, with two rose-buds on them; her hazel eyes beam with nervous yet saddened sentiment. Did she wish to torture him by the beauty that is lost to him, her careless costume, a mixture of evening dress and *négligé*, would be the very thing for the business. From it her soft arms come out white and gleaming with every graceful gesture. In its loose folds of draping white she would seem a statue did not the nervous strain that has come upon her endow her with simulated vivacity to hide her misery.

As he looks on her, George's face grows more set and his lips even paler than before. He rises, and mutters in a half-broken way: "Evelyn!"

"Excuse me, that is not the name by which I am known to you, sir," she remarks, warningly. "You have forgotten yourself, but I do not forget." This last is a sigh.

"I don't forget, either. Good Heavens, how I would like to!" mutters the poor wretch. "I only remember Florida, don't yer know?" And the quinine powder commences to give brilliancy to his eyes as he thinks, affrightedly: "Curse that creature Maddox, he has given me a *Romeo* dose, not a Machiaveli; I shall tell her my love—despite myself I shall take her into my arms and kiss her."

"Then how could you, if you recollected Florida, agree to marry—" whispers the girl. But here she suddenly cries: "Oh what am I saying? What hold have I upon you, what right have I to speak of Florida to you when you are the——"

"The victim of a grand mistake," bursts in Bar-Sinister. "I came over here thinking *you* were the Miss Bulger I was to marry, that here I could tell you that I—I loved you!"

"Don't dare to speak to me of love—the betrothed of my aunt! Don't dare to speak of it to me *now!*" shudders the girl.

"You shall not think me indifferent to you. By Heaven, you treat me like a villain because I must marry Seraphia. Isn't that punishment enough? She paid all those bills——"

"*Those bills!* Yes, that is the reason I think you are a villain. I could have loved you but for those condemning documents; those bills that brand you as unworthy the love of any woman, for, I HAVE EXAMINED THEM!"

To this George utters a horrified "Good God!" But the girl goes on, scornfully but sorrowfully, "I read their record of your depravity, iniquity and debauchery and I discarded you—from my heart! The man whose bills are such as those is only worthy the contempt of women who respect manhood. I don't pretend to be a saint, I'm not even one of the advanced women. I could have pardoned a venial sin, but those —*those!*" she waves her hand toward the papers on the table.

"My God! They are not——"

"Don't dare to try and explain!" interjects the girl nervously. "Don't dare mention them to me!"

And there are flashes of contempt on Evelyn's beautiful face, as that fetich of his class and his blood rises up before him, and "*Noblesse oblige*" would destroy even hope, for George mutters brokenly: "No, I cannot!—But for Heaven's sake——"

"Keep away from me by THIS!" cries Evie, desperately.

And their love would be lost and their happiness would be beyond regain; but the girl in her excitement has placed her hand upon one of the damning documents, and holds it up waving him off with the record of his own sins; for George's eyes gleam, and he is losing his head as this beauty stands before him like a statue of Justice, implacable, unpardoning.

As she gazes at him the endorsement on the bill catches her eye. "*Account of Marion de Lorme, Paris, February 28th, 1894.*"

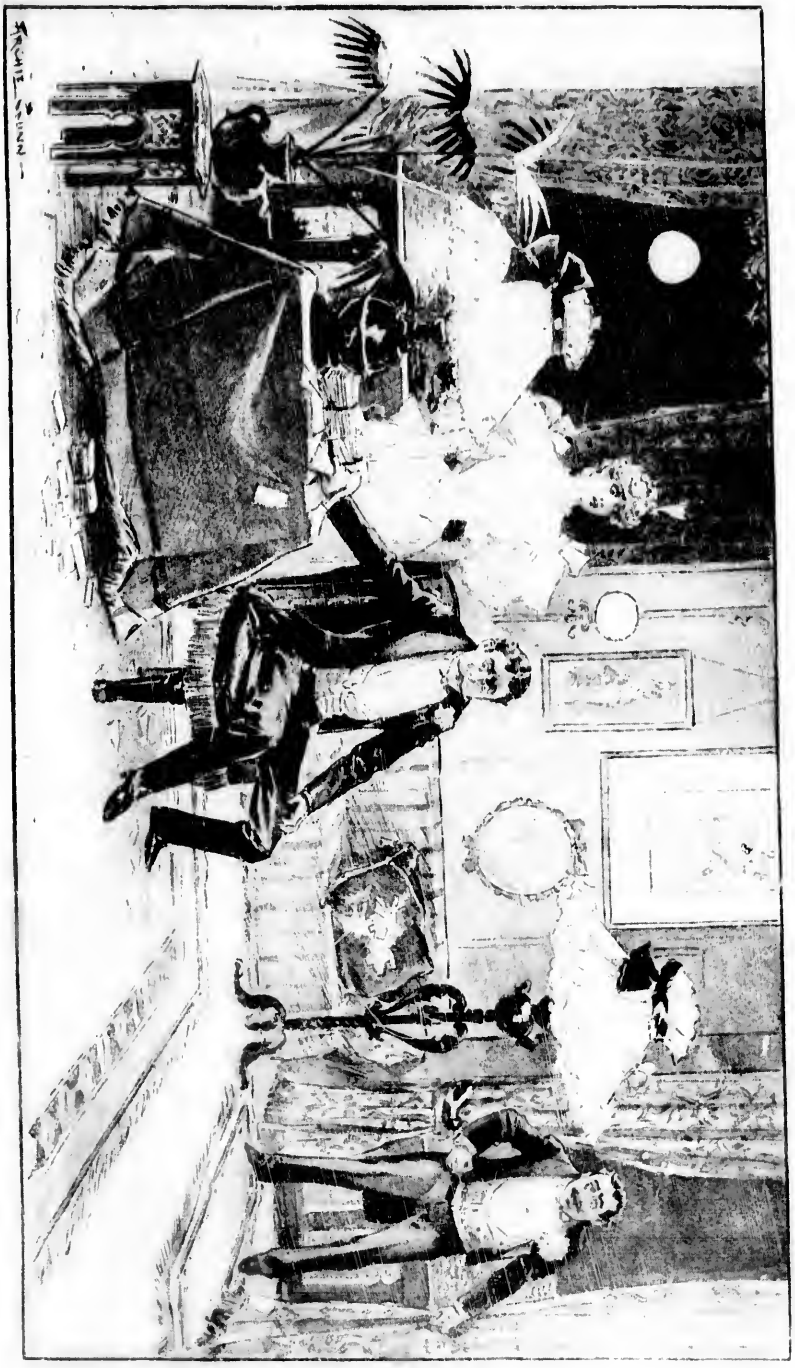
"How can you dare to look at me," she cries, "with this bill dated February 28th, 1894, in payment of a worthless woman's debts for Paris rioting, the very day you met me in Florida! Paris rioting—the very day you met me in—" Evelyn checks herself suddenly; then screams, as if half delirious with delight: "Ah, it is impossible! *That day* you were on the train with me journeying to Jacksonville. Why——"

In a flash her fingers have run over the papers. "Georgette Blackbird, March of the same year. You were in St. Augustine then! Marie Reeves, London, 1893, when you must have been in Africa. George, these are awful mistakes, terrible LIES! Tell me what they mean—tell me! You owe it to yourself, *you owe it to our love!*"

And he whispers to her "Yes, curse *noblesse oblige!* I've—I've been offered up enough. Besides, I have no right to sacrifice your respect for me, your love for me. I'll not bear your contempt, which I don't deserve. THOSE ARE MY FATHER'S BILLS!"

"Ah! Thank God! George—your father's bills——"

"When he was Lord Bar-Sinister and I was George Cranmere! I can tell it to you, because if you love me, my good name and the honor of my family will appeal to you. Don't whisper it to any one, keep it as I will—



safe from the world. My governor, when he made the negotiations for me, which I thought were to bring me to your side, insisted upon settlements. I didn't want settlements, I only wanted you, nothing but you, Evelyn—*you!*—you hear me darling, YOU! But my father forced certain financial arrangements. One was the payment of my debts. But he didn't give in my bills, which amounted to a paltry six thousand pounds, but his own, those he contracted when Lord Bar-Sinister, for forty thousand. For these are all his,—his wickedness not mine; not *mine*, Evie, not MINE!"

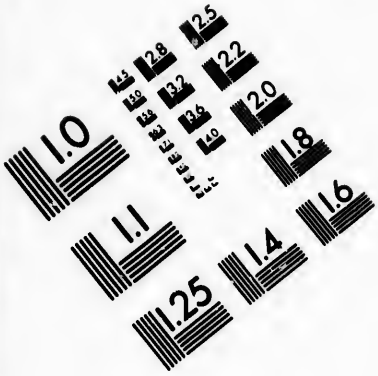
"Ah, thank God! George, thank God!" Then they would be in each other's arms; then she would receive kisses she would think of afterwards with shudders; but there is a coming step!

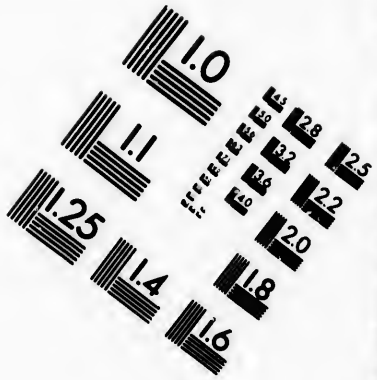
And like guilty people—not youth, loving youth with honest passion, these two shrink apart and look at each other in a startled way, as Seraphia's voice comes in to them, saying: "George, dear, I've been searching for you!"

It is the betrothed one, seeking her own; and the niece, as the aunt comes in, grows shamefaced and turns away.

"Evie, I'm delighted you are better and are downstairs. You do look as if you had really been sick," says Seraphia, kissing her. Then she steps to Bar-Sinister, and whispers: "My darling is also pale. I shall have to nurse my Georgie. But I have an important communication to make to you. You needn't go, Evie," as her niece moves toward an open window. "It's even necessary that you know it. She won't mind a little confidence between us, will she, Georgie, dear? It will interest her, too, for she is to be my first bridesmaid."

At which the niece gives a shudder, as the aunt continues: "Our marriage-day must be advanced."





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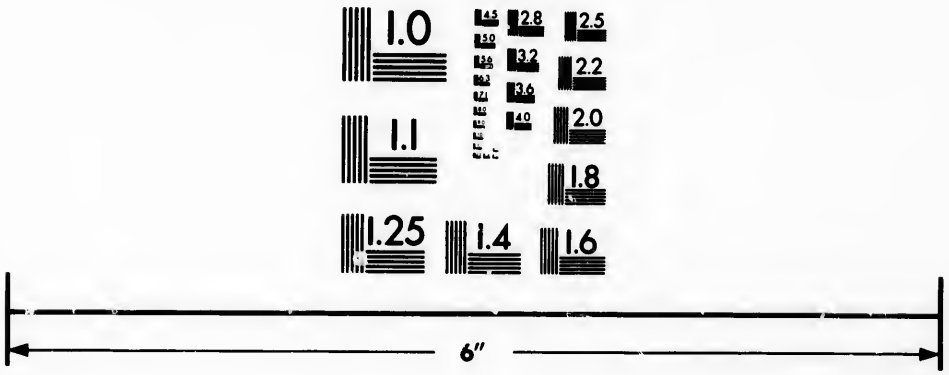

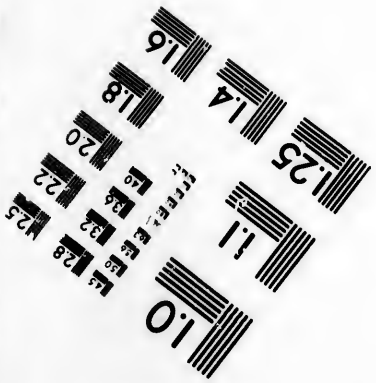

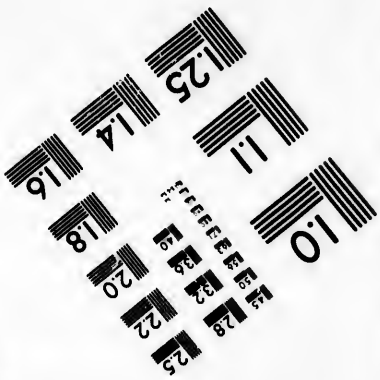

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"Ad—advanced!" echoes George in a kind of embarrassed stutter.

"Yes; certain comments in the newspapers make me think it best not to postpone too long the dawn of our happiness. Our wedding will stop journalistic comment. What do you say to a week from to-day?"

"A week from—from to-day!—thanks, thanks awfully!" stammers Bar-Sinister; then he mutters despairingly, "Well, that's as good as any other demned time."

"Then come with me, dear; I shall whisper it to a few of my particular friends. Abner will be so delighted —come!" For George is standing in hesitation, a half-formed resolution in his mind to tell the truth, throw up the whole thing and let the row come now. The face of Evelyn as he gazes at her makes him desperate.

But as he gazes, his eye catches the huge package of receipted bills; he winces, and follows reluctantly the lady who has purchased him, to the veranda.

Laughter and the buzz of happy gossip and small talk coming to her from the balcony drives the girl from it. Evelyn cannot face the merry crowd in which she might even betray her misery.

With a sigh she goes up to her own room and would have a miserable hour or two with herself did not a little playful rap sound upon her door. It is Mirie's pretty knuckles that beat the tattoo.

To Miss Bulger's faltering "Come in!" the Armitage infant, waving a weekly magazine in her hand, enters recklessly, to her fate.

"Oh, it's you!" mutters Evie, turning her head, for fear the girl will see the menace in her eyes.

"Yes, I thought you'd like to see *this!*" babbles Mirie excitedly. "*Town Tattle* has got Seraphia in it. It's rich and recherché. That's the reason aunt Sera-

phia's so eager for the marriage to take place so soon. I'll read it to you. It's *awfully* clever. Every line in it is a hit below the belt."

Then from that journal, devoted to gossip, the little minx reads, excitedly and merrily, as follows:

"Bulger's purchase came over in the *Teutonic* the other day. Bulger bought it in London as a gift for his sister, Miss Seraphia Pills. It is a lord, and is staying at Bulger's villa, Narragansett. Miss Bulger will soon be Lady Bar-Sinister."

"Atrocious!" cries Evie.

"Atrocious?" dissents Mirie, opening her blue eyes astonished. "Why I envy Seraphia. I've been dying to have that wicked paper print something about me; it makes a girl the rage. Newspaper notices change the bud into the belle. Why—why how curiously you are looking at me, Evie! Oh cats! what did you do that for?"

This last is in a frightened tone, for Evelyn Vallé Bulger, has stepped to her bedroom door, locked it, and put the key in her pocket.

"What's—what's the matter with you?" gasps the Armitage infant. "You're—you're melodramatic.—Help!"

For an awful Medea look is upon Evelyn's face! "Why do you cry out 'help,' little Mirie?" she jeers in rasping voice. "Why are you so frightened, you household pet?" then mutters vindictively: "Is it because you remember *Miss Webster's newspaper notices?*"

Here she might put vengeful hands upon the pretty imp did not Mirie break out into a shriek of laughter.

"Miss Webster! Oh, wasn't it funny? Miss Webster—ha, ha!—he, he! How jealous she was of *herself!* The sweeter George was on Miss Webster the more Miss Bulger used to fly up! Ah, how I did laugh that last night at the Ponce de Leon. Ha! ha! ha!—he! he! he!"

"Don't dare to laugh *now!*" And the look upon Evie's face is so awful that panic comes upon Mirie, and she casts eyes about to see if there is a convenient paper-knife for the tortured one to stab her with, or a handy hat pin with which the beautiful Lady Macbeth standing before her may fall upon her and assault her.

Seeing that panic has seized Miss Mirabelle Armitage, Miss Evelyn Vallé Bulger, breaking into a harsh laugh, sneers: "You miserable child!"

"Yes! that's the reason I did it. Because I was such a child," answers Mirie, poutingly. Then she cries out: "You stupid, I wanted to do a favor to you!"

"A favor *to me!* What do you mean?"

"Yes, in my childish innocence I'm always sacrificing myself, and this is one of the rewards I get," and tears come into Mirie's bright blue eyes.

Then she babbles: "You remember, Evie, you told me how you disliked seeing your name in the papers. I said I'd do the trick for you. I did it! I kept your name out of the social columns. I told that Mr. Roberts, of the Jackonville *Statesman*, that your name was Miss Webster. Then, of course, your *real* name didn't appear in his journal, did it? Wasn't it cute of me?"

"Cute to—to ruin my life?" sighs Evelyn. Then, rage overcoming her, she breaks out in candid pathos, for she well knows the astute little wretch before her has probed every beating of her heart: "But why, when you saw my suffering, didn't you tell me? When you saw I was distracted that morning we were all going to Southern Florida—the morning I would have been so happy! Why didn't you open those deceitful little jaws of yours and give me *one word of truth* —one word that would have saved my life's happiness for me; one word to make me know that the man I loved was true to me?"

"I—I'm such a child," pouts Mirabelle, pleadingly. "When I'm frightened I'm such a child. I was scared you'd do something awful to me. I was afraid Ma——"

"Oh, if you *were* a child!" mutters Evie, looking at at her with evil eye.

"Yes," babbles Mirie, "don't you wish I were a ten-year-older? Wouldn't I catch it? But I'm not; I'm eighteen, and a belle, just the same as you."

"Oh, yes, a belle! You are jealous. You thought George slighted you; so, not content with separating us in Florida you've come over here to see him marry Seraphia and break my heart—both our hearts, for he loves me."

"Oh how you misjudge me," cries Mirabelle, a saint's look in her eyes. "I wanted to make you happy; but I'm always being put in false positions. I—I have wept tears of blood over it." And with this astounding revelation she produces some exquisite Judas tears and utters a little truth. "If people will only let me have my own way I'll not bother anybody."

Then she astounds Evelyn by murmuring: "If—if you'll forgive me I'll fix it."

"Fix it? You! How?"

"Never mind how, but I'll fix it—some way. I can nearly always fix things. Besides, I wouldn't like to have a row with you, because, Evie——"

"Why?"

"Oh, because! You'll find out some time. But, oh, birdie, won't it be a joke on old Seraphia if I can fix it! Bar-Sinister'll enjoy it also. Wouldn't he like to see you now, with that lovely hair all down your back and those beautiful ivory shoulders—mine are only snow, you know—Oh, how I envy you your ivory back."

And the little playful wretch presses her lips upon

the ivory shoulders and laughs: "George's kisses; I've kissed them for George!"

But Evie, shaking her off with a suppressed shriek, rises up a mass of blushes, rage and despair, and mutters: "How dare you—how dare you speak of him!"

"Oh yes, I will, because he's in love with you. But you'd better book him at once. George doesn't come of a stable family in *affaires d'amour*. He may take after his father. You'd better nail George when he's in the humor. He adores you now, because he thinks he can't get you. Fix things with him at once."

"How can I fix things with him *at once?* How can I fix things with him *ever?*" cries Evelyn, despairingly. How can I play the traitor to my poor aunt when she was true to me and brought him to America that I might marry him?"

"Did she do *that?*" screams Mirie in astounded unbelief. "And you threw him over? Jingo!—You're not over bright, I'll admit, Evie; but why did you toss Bar-Sinister over?"

"Because I saw his receipted bills, that now I know are his father's!" says Evelyn shortly, as if anxious to end the interview.

"Ho! ho! Greenhorn, you've struck it at last!" laughs Mirie. "Wasn't it beautiful! When I dropped on Fitzminster's little game of getting his own I. O. U.'s paid, I—I loved the dear old rake for it—I admired him so much! Fitz is such a daisy!"

Here Miss Armitage would be very jocular, but Evelyn breaks out in awful rage: "You knew I was maligning George and didn't tell me, you miserable! You, with your fiendish tricks, have ruined my life, and if you don't undo your villainy I'll——"

But Miss sly-boots says sullenly: "You needn't threaten me. Why shouldn't I help you? Up to

to-day I had every reason to wish Seraphia married to George."

"Why?" Miss Bulger pauses, astounded.

"Oh, never mind why, you'll know in time. This morning I received a cable from mamma that tells me all is settled. I'd—I'd like to be on good terms with George, for I am to be—never mind what! I'll help you!"

"How?"

"I don't know how, but sometimes my childish brain has flashes of more mature intellect. Evie, sometimes I'm real cute."

"Then put your elfish diplomacy upon this matter, or by——"

"Yes, let me go; you needn't catch hold of me! Jingo! don't—don't pinch my arms, they're awful tender——"

"Swear it!"

"Yes, I'll swear it on the Bible. Perhaps I can fix it—I *will* fix it! Evie, don't! Ouch! that was an awful one. Mercy!—yes—don't! Unlock the door! I swear it!" and with a scream the Armitage infant flies out of the room, and in the hallway communes with herself: "Josh! That was a *narrow* escape! She looked as if she might murder me. I'd better keep my promise to her or George will never do what I want him. How shall I manage it? I'll look the ground over to-night. Perhaps I may get a hint from some one of the party."

Thereupon she slides down the banisters and joins the gossiping throng upon the veranda; and there chancing to see Levison bending over Seraphia and admiring the jewels the betrothed is wearing this evening for George's sake, a sudden, but extraordinary idea comes into Mirie's vivacious brain.

A few moments later she beguiles the bill broker into a corner conversation, and having craftily led the way

to it, remarks: "I presume you are anxious to get back to wife and bairns in Europe?"

"Wife and bairns," laughs Levison. "Do I look like a married man? So help me! Nothing would tempt me into that box but one of you pretty Yankee heiresses. There's a good many of 'em about here, aren't there?" This last a little eagerly.

"Ah! you'd like to follow Lord Bar-Sinister's lead, would you?" giggles Miss Mirabelle. "May you have good luck!"

Thereupon the idea that is already in her vivacious brain suddenly develops itself, and getting away from the object of her cogitations this young lady becomes very merry, chuckling: "Wouldn't it be fun? Oh my, if I could! He's not married! Couldn't I?—Perhaps I can! But no—that's too theatrical, too improbable. And yet it's no more wonderful than making Evie jealous of herself in Florida. If George is brilliant enough, *I can!* I wonder if Seraphia will permit me a tête-à-tête with her own beloved Georgie?"

Miss Mirabelle sets about this matter so astutely that while Seraphia is attending to her duties as hostess, the *intriguante* encounters George, who is bound for his bedroom in rather a surly mood, and has interview with him on one of the corridors and tells him *lots!*

She is compelled for the very sake of her plan to make a clean breast of it—Florida transaction—Miss Webster and all; and during some of this conversation Bar-Sinister looks at her with a very ugly expression, biting his moustache and saying: "I'd like—to——"

"Oh yes, you'd all like to," laughs Mirie, "but you won't. Seraphia will like to also in a day or two." Then she continues, giving George certain acute suggestions that make him gaze at her astounded, and mutter to himself as he turns away: "By the Lord Harry, she's the smartest little imp this side of Satan."

But for all that the plan is so extraordinary and desperate that Bar-Sinister isn't in a particularly good humor, and in his own chamber, after receiving from the hands of the faithful Maddox his evening dose of quinine he groans: "Egad, scripture is right, the sins of the fathers are visited upon the sons." Then he murmurs hopefully, "She believes in me—she loves me—I'll win her yet; by quinine! I'll win her yet!"

So cheered with this drug by which he swears, George Ramillies Malplaquet Busaco Cranmere, Viscount Bar-Sinister, goes to bed and sleeps the sleep of the just; a performance that is not participated in by little Mirie, who uses her subtle brain half the night, and chuckles over her extraordinary plan the other half.

As for Evie, she who has conscience, she suffers from it. She thinks: "If I win—poor Seraphia!" But love is stronger than ethics, and she excuses herself with: "It is for George's sake I do this, *not my own!*"

CHAPTER XV.

LOVE IN A BRIAR PATCH.

THE next morning the sun rises bright and warm on Narragansett, but it rises on a surly George. "Dash it," he mutters to himself, as he makes his morning toilet, "I can't stand very much more of this. The old woman is getting to love me."

His pleasant frame of mind is not improved by the appearance of a letter, which is brought in to him by his faithful Maddox.

"It has come across the water," remarks the valet.

"Oh, trust you for reading the postmark on it, you beggar!" observes Bar-Sinister; and gazing at the en-

velope, he adds: "It's in my demned governor's hand," and opens it to read the following remarkable epistle:

"My Dear Boy:

I suppose this will find you cursing, in your usual undutiful way, your poor old father, for by this time, I presume, you will have learned from little Levison, who has gone after you with the papers, that your I. O. U's, post obits, etc., have *not* been paid by the lady you are about to make Lady Bar-Sinister.

This trivial mistake occurred in this way: I didn't dare to have my bills, especially those connected with La Belle Blackbird, liquidated by my future mother-in-law, who is, I understand, a hard-shell Baptist, and would probably not look leniently on the frivolities and peccadilloes of my youth. That infernal Blackbird has made herself so cursedly notorious lately that she would be sure to catch the name.

Under these circumstances, and desperately pressed for the ready, I permitted Miss Seraphia Bulger to pay *my* debts instead of *yours*. Some day, of course, I'll make it up to you, if not in the flesh, in my last will and testament, for you know I can't leave anything away from you, as it's all entailed.

Besides, I am aware Miss Seraphia Bulger dotes on you to such an extent that she'll pardon any little indiscretions that may appear in your own accounts, especially as I know you have been a remarkably strait-laced prig.

But I still think best to give you a hint that little Levie has *bought up* all your bills for himself at about a third of their market value; for I am happy to say that now among London tradesmen our name is as good as gold.

I should advise you to hint to your Shylock that your bargain with Miss Bulger is off, that you won't be married to her. Then make some kind of a compromise with him; he'll probably take about fifty per cent. *before* your wedding, but I don't think he'll let you off for less than cent for cent and interest after the ceremony. A word to the wise, etc.

Might I suggest that it wouldn't be well to inform Miss Seraphia the true status of the bills she has paid for you. It might give her a bad opinion of your family, which would, of course, include you. With this hint, and hoping that you will bring

matters to a sudden close, as I am anxious to welcome my new daughter, Viscountess Bar-Sinister, I remain,

Your loving and indulgent parent,

FITZMINSTER.

P.S.—From the preceding, you can probably form an idea that I am about to be married myself. This is now fixed, so I do not hesitate to tell you that I am shortly to give you a very beautiful mother. The young lady who will soon honor me by becoming the Marchioness of Fitzminster is Miss Mirabelle Armitage, who is at present, I believe, with your party in America.

For some reason or other, you in one of your uncontrollable freaks of temper, must have put some slight upon her when she was a child—in Florida, I think it was. Try and be dutiful to her in the future. As an observer of the world I don't hesitate to advise you that the greatest mistake a young man can make is to slight beautiful and innocent girlhood. In two or three years the affronted child may become one of the belles, perhaps one of the leaders of society, and will not forget, when she is in a position to requite, any snub received when she was younger. Take the advice of a man who has lived in this world to study it and who loves you, perhaps, more than you deserve.—F."

This precious Chesterfieldian epistle makes George whistle to himself and give out ejaculations, sometimes of rage, sometimes of surprise; but after reading it a second time he mutters to himself: "Good Gad! that's the reason she wants to aid me. Little Mirie doesn't want Seraphia posing as her daughter. That would make Miss Sly-puss too venerable!"

And George is right; Miss Mirie has precisely this idea in her head this very morning as she sits stroking her caniche's chocolate coat and looking into his knowing brown eyes.

To him she communes plaintively: "My poor Abelard, aren't they treating your little mistress shamefully? They'd give her a child of fifty when she's only eighteen. But she won't have a wrinkled, gray-haired baby, will she? If the worst

comes to the worst her daughter sha'n't be over twenty, and handsome. But to prevent this unhappy accouchement, my Abelard, little Mirie must do some work."

Which she does, sending off a letter that she writes with much care and biting of the pen and inking of the fingers, to the little gentleman she has met the evening before.

Dispatching this by her own maid, as if rather fearful of anybody seeing it, she claps her inky hands together and cries: "Abelard, wag your tail. I think your little mistress has cut the Gordian knot, though Seraphia would like to cut my throat before I've finished with her. Oh, you dear cute Abelard, wag your tail; you're the only one who sympathizes with your poor mistress. Wag your tail for a chocolate, darling!"

As the beast sits munching his candy and observing her with wary eye, for his mistress is of a capricious disposition and sweets are sometimes followed by slaps, she suddenly cries: "Great goodness! I forgot all about his letter. I wonder what old Fitz has to say. When I'm away from my ancient I forget all about him!" With this she opens an epistle addressed in similar handwriting to the one Bar-Sinister is perusing in an adjoining room, and after reading it, giggles to herself: "Isn't my marquis a funny, wicked old boy? Just you wait, you dear old rake, until I'm married to you! Then, Abelard, we'll have fun, won't we, with venerable Fitzminster? Wouldn't he love me if he knew what I was over here for! Wheugh! George must let me have 'em for what I'm doing for him. Besides, he doesn't love his papa. Bar-Sinister is an unruly son, isn't he, Abelard? What a family I am marrying into! Don't you pity your poor little mistress? No, you don't; you know your little mistress is so cute she can take care of herself anywhere. Wag

your tail, Abelard, and I'll give you another chocolate," which Abelard does, knowing obedience is his only safeguard from having his ears well cuffed, and delighting in chocolates, of which he has assimilated such a quantity that they have possibly added to his peculiar brownish color.

Whereupon Miss Mirie skips down the stairs and flies into the breakfast room in a very merry humor to find Evie looking pale, anxious and lovely, George handsome and surly, and Seraphia dignified, but proud and happy, for it is one day nearer her wedding.

She has just finished arranging for the festivities of the evening—the german that will take place at the Bulger's villa. Rather an impromptu affair as to invitations, it will be an entertainment of sumptuous details. Lander's orchestra will play, the supper will be served by Sherry, floral decorations have been telegraphed for from New York. These do not take any great amount of Seraphia's time. With a well-trained corps of servants and an almost unlimited balance at her banker's, to entertain like Lucullus is simply a question of giving orders. The orders have been given early in the morning; Seraphia is now prepared to devote herself for the rest of the day to George.

"You have so little of unmarried life before you, Bar-Sinister, you must give it *all* to me. I am really becoming a sentimental creature, don't you think so? Does it make you happy to have me jealous of you, Georgie?" she murmurs into his ear.

"Oh, demned happy," remarks her fiancé and victim. "So demned happy that I feel like enjoying a plunge." And he looks longingly after Arvid de Polac, Miss Aurora Taliaferro Johnson and some other odds-and-ends of the house party, who are just now departing for the beach.

This suggestion would be eagerly accepted by Mirabelle and Evelyn, who are within earshot, but Seraphia puts her veto upon it.

"George, how can you look at the awful breakers that nearly drowned me?" she whispers, a veiled reproach in her voice. "I should think you'd tremble every time you heard the cruel surf."

This is enforced by a rather petulant pout and pathetic tremblings; for Seraphia, filled with the approaching joys of marriage, is no longer the stern business woman of yore, but is growing into the simpering and affected maiden of intense sentiment and jealous heart. She is in a state of mind that makes her fear the influence of all young and pretty girls upon George—most of all of Evelyn's. If she were asked she could hardly tell why. Even in her own mind the aunt scarce guesses the reason of this occult jealousy of her niece, save that she now knows George and Evie have met before in St. Augustine.

So try how he may all this morning, Seraphia's fiancé gets no opportunity of converse with his erstwhile Florida sweetheart. Once he would follow Miss Evie into the grounds, where she has gone to pluck some flowers; but Seraphia detains him to hold her worsted. "I'm working a comforter for you, my boy," she says. "You ought to do your little share. I think you look beautiful this way, so domestic!"

So Bar-Sinister sits before her in surly mood, holding the worsted in his brown hands and resembling Hercules under the domination of Omphale. A picture that gives Mirie spasms of delight.

A few minutes after George suddenly drops the wool and bolts from the veranda. Evelyn is standing upon the rocks that are washed by the surf; but Seraphia, tossing her work away, is following after him. She has an inborn suspicion of that amusement that

is such a favorite at Narragansett Pier, yclept "Rocking," and doesn't intend George to indulge in it with anyone else.

Under her suspicious eyes tête-à-tête would not come to the British Romeo and American Juliet this whole summer day were it not for dear little Mirie.

Looking at the trio on the grounds she calls out from the veranda: "Let's go blackberrying!"

"Blackberrying?" they echo.

"Yes. Jimmy, your groom, Evie, tells me there are any amount of blackberries on the hills back of Little River."

"Where's Little River?" remarks Seraphia.

"I don't know; but let's go blackberrying anyway!"

This proposition is jumped at by Bar-Sinister. "It will be so delightfully romantic," he whispers into Seraphia's ear. "I shall just drag you over fences, don't yer know?"

And Seraphia, confident that she can stride through briars as fast as any one, and if necessary climb stone walls with as much agility as the younger girls, assents to this, for she is excessively afraid George will make a bolt for the surf in spite of her. On land she thinks she can hold her own; in water the two sea nymphs, Mirie and Evie, will have much the vantage of her.

So it comes to pass that very shortly afterwards, Seraphia and George with Miss Wayback and Mr. Childers Winthrop leave Sea View Villa in a run-about wagon, and are followed by Miss Evelyn in her pony phaeton, driving Miss Mirabelle Armitage; little Jimmy, the cute tiger, sitting behind on the rumble, and guiding them to the land of briars and berries.

"Mirie," whispers Evie, "you remember your promise of last night!"

"Yes, and your pinches!"

"Forget those, please, and see if you can't help me to have a word in private with him."

"Oh, I'll fix Seraphia," says Mirie, confidently, "provided you'll stand a new gown. In my efforts for you among the blackberry bushes this one is going to be ruined."

"Done!" remarks Miss Bulger. "How will White, Howard & Company suit you?"

"To a contour. They charge enough." This is in whispers, for Jimmy has very large and open ears, as he sits behind them.

So they drive along Ocean Avenue past the hotels fronting the bay, past the Casino, past the bathing beach, upon which George gazes with longing eyes and at which Seraphia gives little shudders, and skirting Canonchet Lake cross the old covered bridge, and journey along the road upon the heights that leads towards the north.

A couple of miles of this and they turn to the west, ford pretty Little River, skirt the lake, climb the hill, and are in the land of sand and rocks and briars and blackberries.

"This 'ere's the place," remarks little Jimmy. "I've fetched some tin pails for you. We can sell 'em for ten cents a quart at the hotels."

"As I pick, I eat," laughs Mirabelle, "so I sha'n't be a source of revenue to you, Jimmy," for she has divined that Jimmy hopes to have the selling of the berries for his own financial aggrandizement.

"It will be quite a new sensation for me to eat something I have earned," remarks Miss Wayback; then she gives a little scream as Mr. Winthrop, mounting the stone fence, agilely slings her over.

"George, your arm!" commands Seraphia. "There must be a stile about here or some bars to let down."

"Billygoats! Ain't the old 'un skittish about her ankles?" whispers Jimmy to Maddox, as the two at some distance are arranging an impromptu lunch;

for this faithful servitor has, with his usual quinine powders, accompanied the driver of the light wagon.

"'Ush, you reprobate," returns the valet, then he gives a surprised exclamation of admiration; for George, having remarked, "There's no other way," has jumped on top of the stone wall and cried out, cheerily: "Come on, girls!"

Responding to his invitation, indomitable Seraphia, who, despite her fifty years and high-heeled French boots, considers she is included in the *girls*, and has fought her way up the stone fence, and been swung down upon the other side by her fiancé, who has not found it such an easy matter to handle his betrothed's hundred and sixty pounds of solid flesh and bone.

"Great Scott! Ain't they scorchers?" whispers Jimmy with a gulp of admiration, as Evie and Mirie with an agile scramble mount the stone fence and jump recklessly to sand and blackberries on the other side. "Did you see 'em?" he adds to Maddox. "They're as clean-limbed as thoroughbreds, they are—and such stockings!"

"Get to work, you little villain. Pull down that 'amper, and don't guzzle any of that champagne syruptitous!" guffaws Maddox, and the two prepare for the return of the party, who have wandered off into the briar patch laden with tempting berries, thinking they have the field all to themselves.

But they haven't.

Mirie's last ripple of laughter and childish shrieks of delight have just died away in the distance when little Raphael Levison, with gingling watch-chain and ostentatious jewelry, chances to drive along in a one-horse buckboard.

"What are they doing over there?" he asks, indicating the last disappearing feathers on the girls' hats.

"Our ladies is in there blackberrying, and is going to have a *slight dejurney à la forks*, after they gets through with pricking their fingers," answers Maddox.

"Well I'll join 'em," says Levison, in that easy, invite-yourself manner peculiar to his class. "Here, tiger, hold my horse!" and he tosses the reins to the astonished Jimmy and scrambles over the stone fence in hot pursuit.

"Ain't he a cussed familiar beggar?" mutters Jimmy to Maddox. "I don't believe he's even good for a quarter on this."

"Knock me silly! I think if master gets him over there he'll choke the life out of 'im," mutters Maddox, "he 'ates him so."

Curiously enough little Levison after he gets into the briar patch is not seen by any of the party; probably because they are too much occupied with their own affairs.

George picks and eats—Evie picks and eats—Seraphia picks and puts them into a pail. But though George and Evie pick toward each other, Seraphia always picks between them, and they would have a disappointing day of it did not Mirie, picking on the same bush with George, take convenient opportunity to give him a hint.

Then George picks like lightning!—not with regard to the number of berries but as to the ground he covers. He picks as if he were running a foot race! Seraphia picks after him, burdened by the pail and embarrassed by her skirts—for if ever Seraphia wishes for masculine attire it is as she struggles through blackberry bushes innumerable after the nimble George.

Then somehow or other in the tangled masses of that briar patch, which extends for acres and acres, his affianced loses George. The briars are sharp, and scratch her, but she forces her way through them reck-

less of Parisian toilet, and scours the field with such perspiring energy that she would probably find the object of her search did not little Mirie come running to her down a by-path and cry: "They're over here, I think! I heard their voices this way!"

This suggestion puts tremendous energy into Seraphia's frame; despite the burning sun overhead and uncertain path beneath, she follows Mirie recklessly as that sprite skims along with agile feet, dodging under limbs, jumping over undergrowth, and going through some of the very hardest spots in the swamp.

A quarter of a mile of this, and Mirabelle, still leading, runs Seraphia, who has become an exhausted and perspiring mass, into a tête-à-tête formed by Miss Wayback and Mr. Childers Winthrop.

This young lady and gentleman do not seem to regard the appearance of the two intruders with even complacency. "I thought you had very good berries over where you were, Mirie," remarks the young lady querulously. "I didn't think you'd come over here and pick mine."

"I wouldn't have come if I'd seen you *picking*," laughs Mirabelle, sarcastically. "I thought you'd got all you wanted."

"So I have," returns Miss Wayback. "More than I wanted of thorns. Besides, I thought a snake bit me in the finger."

"Did he suck it?" inquires Mirie. "I observe you've taken off your glove."

"A snake!" cries indomitable Seraphia. "Show me the reptile and I'll kill it!"

"No! It was only a thorn after all," murmurs Miss Wayback, blushing. "Let's go back to lunch."

"Yes! I feel quite exhausted," assents Miss Bulger, "I think George and Evie must have already taken your view."

So they scramble back, hot and dusty, with fingers well stained by blackberry juice, toward the carriages, Seraphia keeping up a desultory search for her fiancé and niece. "They must be at the wagon," she suggests.

"Yes, they're doubtless at the wagon," remarks Miss Wayback, sententiously.

"No doubt they're at the wagon," giggles Mirabelle, sarcastically. For the imp will make fun though Seraphia's countenance tells her it is dangerous.

They are not at the wagons; to Seraphia's horror George and Evie have not returned.

"Probably they've found a nice blackberry patch all by themselves," remarks Mirie. "We'll look and see if both their lips are black."

At this covert insinuation Seraphia puts horrified and suspicious eyes on Miss Armitage; then cries excitedly: "Let's find them, quick! They're lost. Perhaps a snake has bitten George."

"Ah-h! Garden of Eden!" whispers Miss Iago into the betrothed's jealous ear, and is so pleased with the effect this conceit has upon her victim that she goes into an ecstacy of childish glee. Throughout all this day the mischievous elf seems to devote a good deal of her vivacious energy to producing the tortures of jealousy in varying phases upon Seraphia's ardent but overburdened soul.

"Quick, let's seek for them," cries Miss Bulger, then mutters to herself: "That minx, Evie, trying to allure George away after she promised."

Here tears gather in Seraphia's anxious eyes, and she would instantly conduct energetic pursuit, for she has already commanded Maddox and Jimmy to scour the field, did not at this moment little Levison make his appearance, wandering from the blackberry patch.

He looks concerned, disconcerted—almost frightened

for certain natters have come to him from a neighboring thicket that have brought agitation upon him.

"Oh, Mr. Levison, have you seen them—Bar-Sinister and Evelyn?" queries Seraphia, running to him.

"I haven't had the honor of being introduced to Miss Evelyn Bulger, yet," remarks Mr. Levison, "but my lud is down there and there's a very pretty feminine voice with him."

This is impressed upon his listeners by a slight chuckle. At this moment, to bear out Levie's information, George and Evie make their appearance, strolling toward the wagons.

"I say, we got an uncommonly fine lot of berries down there; you ought to go and see 'em!" calls out Bar-Sinister as he approaches.

"Yes, they—they look like—black thimbles," adds his companion, as if anxious to say something.

"Did you leave any?" asks Miss Armitage, suspiciously.

"A few! We aren't so greedy as you are."

"Yes, I see both your mouths are black!" cries Mirie, with a latent insinuation of inflection that puts tears of anxiety into Seraphia's eyes.

At this remark Miss Evelyn turns away her head, and devotes herself to the impromptu luncheon, which is also attacked, especially as regards the wine, by Mr. Levison, as he indulges in some playful jokes upon blackberry flirtations.

His wit makes Seraphia look suspicious, and George scowl, though he cannot insult the little money shark in the presence of the ladies, who are laughing at Levison's remarks, which hit harder than any of them, save Mirie, imagine.

During this meal, Evelyn Vallé Bulger once or twice steals surreptitious glances at Seraphia, then turns her

head away again with a kind of hang-dog expression upon her lovely, but blushing face.

Though she makes pretence of gastronomy, she doesn't seem to have much appetite, but Bar-Sinister does, and eats and drinks in such a reckless way, that Maddox remarks, *sotto voce*, to Jimmy, "My lud is guzzling as if he wanted to kill his thoughts."

"I should think he would," answers Jimmy, "when he's going to marry *her* in six days. I'd drink myself to death, I would! Can't you spare me another taste of that fizz?" These two are having a little bottle of wine by themselves near the side of the creek, where a convenient thicket screens them from the notice of their betters.

But the meal is very shortly finished and Seraphia, rising suddenly, remarks: "Looking as we do, I think we'd better drive into town the more retired way, by the South Pier road. I couldn't stand the gaze of the gaping crowd at the Casino and hotels—after blackberrying."

"No, *you* couldn't," assents Mirie, at which there is a laugh, for Seraphia's face is bereft of powder by perspiration and her hair and costume have suffered from contact with the briar patch.

The rest of the ladies are not much better off and they readily agree to the roundabout but more private drive to the Bulger villa.

So the party scramble into the vehicles, all save Mirie, who, for some mysterious reason, cries out for the direct road. "I must get into town at once," she says. "Seraphia, I expect a new costume from New York for to-night's dance." Then she puts pleading blue eyes upon the little bill collector and suggests: "You'll drive me in your buckboard, won't you, dear Mr. Levison?"

"Won't I?" cries the gallant little money shark.

"I'll do it for you quick as a diamond flashes in the sun."

"Very well, take care of yourself, Mirie," cries Evie, who seems to be endowed with a curious nervous excitement this afternoon; and, whipping up her ponies, disappears among the trees further up the hill.

The run-about with the others would follow her, leaving Mr. Levison standing by his buckboard, into which he has just assisted Mirabelle; but George, after the wagon has gone a few paces, tells the driver to stop. "I say, Miss Armitage," he calls out, "you'd better join Miss Evelyn. I can signal her to stop. Mordecai there won't care very much."

At this cognomen there is a snicker from the wagon.

"Raphael!" screams the little financier. "You seem to make a joke of forgetting my name, my lord, but I can tell you, blackberry patches isn't the best places to hatch black doings. It won't be moonlight to night, my lud." This he grinds out between his strong white teeth.

"Keep a quiet tongue in your head, Shadrach," mutters Bar-Sinister; but he says no more and the wagon drives on up the hill, Mr. Winthrop and Miss Wayback giggling; though Seraphia has a half frightened, half suspicious look upon her face.

Left with Mr. Levison, Miss Mirabelle opens her frank blue eyes and puts them upon her escort as he is gathering up the reins in an excited and savage manner; then she makes this curious remark: "So Bar-Sinister and Evelyn Bulger are going to elope, eh, Mr. Levison?"

"Yes. That was a fine idea when you invited me to the blackberry party. How you must hate 'em," mutters the financier.

"Yes, I hate *him*," replies Mirie. "I'm a good hater, and so are you. I hate him well enough to——"

"To do what?"

"To give you revenge upon George, Viscount Bar-Sinister, for the insults he has put upon you."

"Yes, I might have an even up with him, but it would cost too much blooming money," mutters Raphael, ruefully. "If I told the old woman she might throw up the whole business, and where would those bills I am collecting come in—those beautiful bills I bought at thirty per cent. on their face?" iterates Levison, the champagne he has taken at the impromptu picnic having made him somewhat talkative.

"I'll show you how to take vengeance upon him without the loss of a cent of money; in fact, it may give you more!" returns Miss Sly-puss.

"More!" cries Raphael, his eyes growing big at the thought of further gain.

"Yes, I shall suggest to you a plan by which you will probably become very rich. You'd like to marry an American heiress, wouldn't you?" purrs Miss Armitage, looking archly at him.

His answer astounds and horrifies her. "Yes, so help me bob! I'd like to marry *you!*"

"Oh!—Oh my!" and Mirie dodges the financier's disengaged arm, which would glide audaciously round her charming waist.

A second after he gives a shriek of anguish as Mirabelle laughs at him: "Attempt that again, Mr. Levison, and I'll stick you with my hat pin once more." Then she whispers sternly, "Keep on your own side of the buckboard, please. I'm already spoken for. Come to business. Tell me when they elope."

"At half-past eleven to-night, from the road in the trees across the drive from the Bulger villa. He's to have a carriage there at half-past eleven to-night."

"Did Evie consent?"

"Oh, at first she said no, but then we are aware how these things generally turn out when they both love each other awful," chuckles Raphael.

"Very well, here is the scheme for *our* revenge. But I must whisper it," for they are now in the crowded part of Narragansett, near the Casino.

With this Mirie unfolds to little Levison such a bizarre, original and extraordinary plan of action, that the financier first stares at her astounded, then breaks into chuckles. "So help me, you're a world-beater! How much did you say that pretty Evie Bulger was worth?"

"Oh—more money than you'll ever get any other way!"

"But she may discover me."

"Not before you have fled together far enough to place the game in your own hands, if you manage the matter discreetly. That will mean revenge for me."

"But, gad, Lord Bar-Sinister will break my blooming neck!" and at the thought Raphael grows pale.

"No, he won't, he dare not say a word! That will make his marriage certain to Seraphia, and you sure of your collection."

And as they ride on, she whispers to him such cute suggestions that Levison rolls his eyes and ejaculates: "My! you're smart enough to be a dealer in old masters, you are."

"Never mind how smart I am; are you smart enough and have you pluck enough to do it? You say, the carriage will be waiting at half past eleven. I'll show you how to work it."

"So help me, Ill'—I'll do it!"

"Then I'll borrow George's cloak and hat for you. Remember—at half past eleven, if you would wed a Yankee heiress and have revenge."

"By the five books of Moses!" mutters the little fel-

low, "I'll not fail you! We're pards now!" and putting Mirabelle down in the *porte cochère* of the Bulger villa, he drives away, chuckling to himself: "Lord, if I can only get my courage up. That Evie is beautiful as Susanna amid the Elders, and that Mirie is downey enough to be the wife of a pawnbroker, she is! Isn't it picturesque how she hates her cousin!"

As for the subject of his eulogy, she stands looking after him, thinking: "By any one who didn't know my generous nature, I should be misconstrued, but I'm always sacrificing myself for others in my childish, artless way. Oh, fire-flies! I believe old Seraphia would wring my soft little neck if she guessed." With this, she giggles all the way up the stairs, and getting to her room, tells her maid to put out an exquisite gown of tulle that Pingât has made for her in Paris, showing that little Mirie doesn't always tell the truth about the dresses she is expecting from New York.

A few minutes after, hearing the noise of the arriving party, she slides down the banisters, and Seraphia being occupied by change of toilet, obtains a very quiet tête-à-tête with George, during which the two speak under their breath.

"I say, did little Levie drop?" remarks Bar-Sinister, grimly.

"Yes, I think I have arranged it all. Have you done your part?"

"Of course! I've ordered two fast horses and carriage to be in waiting at the proper place to-night, and I've given instructions for them to drive the eloping couple to Westerly to catch the midnight train bound for New York."

"Did Evie consent to elope?"

"Not a bit!" returns Bar-Sinister. "She hesitated, but, God bless her, at the last she said she couldn't do it. She said, 'I'll break my heart honestly or I'll be

happy honestly, George. I can't have Seraphia despise me—honest old Seraphia, who brought you over for me.'"

"Then Evie won't go?"

"Of course not; but the way you suggested is much better. It'll place the onus of the affair on Seraphia," he laughs.

"Very well, you must persuade Evie to thoroughly arouse her aunt's jealousy, and to make the appearance of eloping—to be in her room dressed for departure at 11.45. Do you think you can do that?"

"Not the last part of it," remarks Bar-Sinister, gloomily. "Evelyn won't be a partner in our trick upon her aunt, I'm sure of that." Then he sighs romantically, "Mirie, I'm in love with an angel."

"Oh birdie! Go and quininize yourself!" jeers Mirabelle, merrily, to this suggestion.

But George goes on moodily: "As for the jealousy part, I presume I can work that up on my own account."

"Very well. You make Seraphia frantic and I'll do the rest," says Mirie, confidently..

"I say," Bar-Sinister asks, suspicion in his voice, "you're not after some new and more infernal ruse against my happiness than that Florida one, Mirie?"

"No, I'm always true as steel," answers Miss Armitage, and her blue eyes look very frank and ingenuous.

"Then why are you doing all this for Evie and me?"

"Because, my boy," she whispers, "you are going to give me some of those La Blackbird bills Seraphia paid for your wicked old father. THAT WAS ONE OF MY OBJECTS IN COMING TO AMERICA."

"By Jove!"

"That will even you with Fitzminster, and those bills will be very convenient to papa's bride after marriage. Trust your mother, Georgie," she laughs, and

goes away merry and light-hearted, though she leaves him stupefied.

But getting to the privacy of her own chamber, Mirabelle's face becomes meditative. She murmurs: "How can I ever do it?" Then remarks pathetically to her poodle, who rubs his chocolate nose in her hand: "Doggie Abelard, if your little mistress can do this she has a brain that discounts Solomon's, and is, oh! so very much brighter than that dyspeptic, ecclesiastical Romeo after whom I named you. For do you know, Abelard, it was once the ambition of my childish soul *to marry a monk?* But I'm more practical now, dear old Abelard. Have a chocolate?" SMACK!—"I told you I'd box your ears if you didn't catch it. Stop your miserable canine yelping and let your poor little mistress THINK!"

CHAPTER XVI.

NEWPORT VISITS NARRAGANSETT.

IT is evening. Sea View Villa is alight from turret to foundation. Lander's orchestra are tuning their instruments, screened from the dancing-room by palms and evergreens, and Sherry has taken possession of the kitchen.

Seraphia, dressed as a bud, and standing beside Evelyn, is assisting in receiving the guests. "Don't we look like twins?" she says proudly to her fair niece; for a very naïve and girlish idea has come into the betrothed one's head as regards her toilet.

She has brought two exceedingly juvenile and artistic costumes from Paris, both originally intended for her niece. Upon the announcement of her engagement to Bar-Sinister Seraphia has given but one of them to Evie;

the other she has had extended and let out to suit her more robust figure.

This one she wears this evening, and as both gowns are of white gauze, with about the same gimcrack effects as to trimming and general style, and as Evie chances to have decorated her exquisite self with the other one, the two Miss Bulgers, younger and elder, this evening resemble each other as to costume quite closely—though in no other way.

For Evelyn to-night looks even more ethereally beautiful than perchance she has ever done. A kind of nervous intensity seems to be in every glance of her eyes and pose of her head; a flush of excitement is upon her fair and delicate cheeks; her eyes, though wondrously vivacious, seem to conceal tears. Whenever her aunt speaks to her, Evelyn turns away her head, blushes rosy red and grows curiously embarrassed.

"What are you playing the startled fawn act for now?" whispers Mirie, who looks like a floating snow-cloud, pure and immaculate in white lace and chiffon, from which peep dimpled shoulders. "He is not down yet—you'll make Seraphia suspicious."

And Mirie is right; the betrothed's latent jealousy of the morning becomes more active as the night goes on.

Once, unable to contain herself, the aunt whispers to her niece: "Evie, why don't you look at me? Is it because your conscience twits you about me and George?"

To this the girl gives no answer save a slight laugh, and moves nervously away.

"Oh my soul! Would she rob me of him?" shudders Seraphia, and trembles as she gazes on her niece's beauty; for the contrast as they stand near each other, in almost similar toilets, makes the aunt appear older than she otherwise would.

This fact impresses itself on Mr. Bulger as he bustles about. "Take my advice," he says in his practical, hard-headed way, "and don't run opposition to babies, Seraphia. If you want to dodge pneumonia hoist your old black silk dress again—*quick!*"

"Why, Abner, what nonsense!" his sister giggles indignantly. "George likes me in girlish costume. When I become a frisky matron and settle down I'll think about black silk. As it is, attend to your business and get that band going!"

Then she looks around for George, but he has not yet made his appearance.

Curiously enough, over his dressing table, in the room above, the young gentleman of her thoughts is holding a conversation with his valet that would make Seraphia jump did she but hear it.

"You don't mind my going downstairs, my lud, and 'elping the butler with the swells?" asks Maddox.

"Not at all," laughs George; then he adds suddenly, and in a whisper: "Before you go, one thing."

"Yes, my lud."

"Is everything arranged as I told you?"

"Yes, my lud."

"The carriage with the driver ordered?."

"It will be ready at half-past eleven, as you directed."

"In the shrubbery?"

"Yes; in the road that leads through the trees, just opposite 'ere."

"Hm—fast horses?"

"Yes, yer ludship," mutters Maddox, who has a perturbed appearance.

"You understand me; that you go also?"

"Yes, sir."

"The driver has instructions as soon as both are in the carriage to drive to Westerly and catch the first

express that passes through after twelve o'clock? Be very careful. The one for New York."

"Yes, sir.

"Then," says George, with a sigh of relief, "so far, so good. Now, listen to me," he adds, to Maddox. "Have a twenty-two and a quarter grain quinine ready at half-past eleven, sharp. Sneak it into a chocolate ice-cream, and get it to me in the refreshment room. It excites too much infernal comment if you bring those powders in sherry."

"Yes, sir," mutters Maddox, a frightened look coming into his face.

"Very well, you can go; and keep yourself demned sober. And if you breathe a word——"

"I won't, sir."

"Very well. Remember there's a hundred pound note waiting for you at the end of this affair, Maddox."

With a slight laugh on his lips Bar-Sinister strides out of his chamber and down the stairs, remarking to himself: "Now then, to give Seraphia a touch or two more of jealousy and make young Shadrach hate me a little stronger, and then I must trust dear, devilish little Mirie. By Jove! what a crush there is. So much the better, general privacy is a general crowd!"

For the Newport boat having arrived, special carriages chartered for the occasion are bringing up such a mass of coroneted aristocrats that Maddox, who strides down to the aid of the Bulgers' flunkey, remarks: "By Jinks, you've got as many blooming titles in there as we 'ave at a ball in Belgravia, including the foreign counts, which I don't count."

And Mr. Maddox tells the truth, for of titles there are enough and to spare. Some of them may be a little shady; not all of them would probably bear the inspection of the Herald's College, or comparison with

the Almanach de Gotha; but here they are, and Seraphia is happy—happy and proud; for George is standing by her side now.

"Darling, you've kept me waiting," she flutters. "How handsome you look. How that white carnation boutonnière becomes you. Did he receive it with his Seraphia's love?"

"No. I got it with a blarsted pin in it, which butchered my finger," replies Bar-Sinister savagely. But he hasn't much time for lover's speeches, as his fiancée makes it a point to introduce him to every one; and being anxious for the social glory of the guests of the House of Bulger, goes into slight descriptions of their genealogy and standing in the community, especially where they have no titles.

"My lord," she says, "let me present you to Miss Amelia Pandora Back-Bay. Miss Back-Bay, Lord Bar-Sinister."

"Howdy do? howdy do?" says George, forcing himself to be affable.

"Miss Back-Bay," continues Seraphia, anxious to impress the young lady's social importance on her fiancé, "is a scion of one of our oldest families—came over with the Puritans."

"Oh, ya-as," assents Bar-Sinister, "Plymouth Rock, and all that, don't yer know?" Then he adds rather snappishly: "I say, don't yer think I've read history, Seraphia?"

At which Miss Back-Bay, who is Boston from the tips of her gloves to the ends of her dancing slippers, laughs and remarks: "You didn't come over to assimilate history, did you, my lord? Cupid, not Clio, called you to America. Let me congratulate you"; and gives him such an insinuating glance that Seraphia giggles from very joy, but goes on presenting.

"George, permit me to introduce you to Miss Grace

Rappahannock Courthouse. Miss Courthouse is one of our oldest Virginia families—came over with the ——"

"Oh, ya-as, I know," chips in Bar-Sinister eagerly. "Came over with the Indians. Howdy do? Howdy do?"

At which Miss Grace, though she is generally proud of having streaks of Pocahontas and Pottawattamie blood in her veins, turns away rather discomposed.

"Madame la Baronne de Vieille-Roche, Lord Bar-Sinister," remarks Seraphia, getting away from the embarrassed Indian maiden. "Madame la Baronne has told me that she met you, George, at Monte Carlo."

"Oh ya-as, thanks awfully," replies George. "Ya-as, it's no telling who the deuce you do meet at Monte Carlo!"

Now this style of conversation does not add very greatly to Viscount Bar-Sinister's popularity this evening, but upon no one invited to the Bulger villa does he make such an unfavorable impression as upon little Levison.

After a few turns around the room with his fiancée hanging on his arm, George succeeds in making a disappearance somewhat similar to that of the blackberry patch in the forenoon. A crowded ballroom is about as convenient a place for mysterious disappearances as the slums of a great city. And Bar-Sinister promptly and mysteriously disappears from Seraphia's vision.

To avoid her, he plunges into a little anteroom. Then, looking at his watch, he mutters, rather nervously: "A quarter past eleven!"

At this moment he finds himself confronted by Mr. Raphael Levison, who, in dress suit and very elaborate jewelry, thinks himself a swell among swells.

"My lord!" says Levison, who can't bear not to be noticed, bowing before him.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" remarks George, a sneer on his lips. "Didn't know you'd turned waiter, Potiphar—I beg your pardon, I mean Pharaoh. I'm always forgetting your demned name."

"Sir," remarks the little man, drawing himself up, "my name is Raphael Levison, as I have told you before; and I'm not a waiter, unless it is waiting for you to pay your bills."

"Ya-as, I remember." Bar-Sinister adjusts the binocular in his eye and looks over the gentleman confronting him, with a placid stare. "You're waiting in America to collect six thousand and odd pounds the day I marry Miss Bulger. Hope you're a good waiter—don't get tired and all that sort of thing, yer know."

"Don't fear me, my lord," mutters Levison. "I'll stick to you like a postage stamp."

"I say, how the devil did you get in here, anyway?" queries Bar-Sinister in his most nonchalant tone.

"Like you, I was invited. I didn't sneak my way into Mr. Bulger's german; but I'm going to dance it with Miss Evelyn. Ta! ta! they're preparing for the cotillion."

"You are going to dance with—with Miss Evelyn! You are going to put your greasy arm around her beautiful waist?" falters George, looking in something like horror upon the little bill collector. Then he breaks out: "By Jove, if you dance the german with her, I shall ask permission to lead one figure of it. And in that figure I will kick you around the room and tell them it's the latest imported fad for the cotillion, the Harvard-Princeton-Yale-football figure, don't yer know. And they'll all follow my lead, don't yer see, and jump on you. They'll think it's the proper thing, you know, to imitate me, those little chaps in there—the new

English figure will be a success, don't yer see! But there won't be much left of you to enjoy it, demned if there will!"

"If you lay a hand on me, so help me—or a foot either," mutters little Levison, "I'll blow on you. I'll tell how you are marrying the old woman for her ready. I'll tell her you love the pretty one—the one you think would be contaminated by my arm in the mazes of the dance. I will, by the soul of Potiphar and Pharaoh and every other blasted thing you've called me—I'll tell her!"

But just here Seraphia comes in commandingly and says: "George, I've been looking for you. This is our dance, Bar-Sinister."

On this George gives a sardonic laugh and whispers into Levison's somewhat oily hair: "Tell her! Lay yer two to one in monkeys—yer don't *dare* tell her!"

But Seraphia's figure is so imposing, her mien so majestic, her eyes so indomitable, that little Levison quails before her and has not the courage to inform her that any man is marrying her for her money, or that any man is going to elope from her.

Looking on this George gives another vicious laugh, and leads Seraphia away to walk through the Lancers by her side.

"By Heavens! I wonder if you'll laugh to-morrow morning at me, my lord," snarls Levison, after his departing persecutor.

Suddenly he gives a horrid snicker.

Mirie is looking at him from the door of the apartment like a wandering fairy. Her bright eyes gaze inquiringly upon him; she steps to him and playfully whispers: "Are you ready for your Lochinvar act to-night?"

"So help me! Give me two more glasses of champagne and I'll do the trick, if he kills me for it. Won't

it be a joke on him? Won't he offer up horrid curses when he discovers the little joke we've played on him?"

"Come!" whispers Mirie, unheeding Mr. Levison's excited ejaculations. Then she quickly leads the way out of the room followed by her co-conspirator, though just at the door the fairy cannot repress a merry elfin giggle. Levison fortunately thinks this is caused by glee at the despair that is to come upon the Right Honorable George, and proceeds to his adventure quite sturdily.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE QUININE ELOPEMENT.

In the ballroom, Bar-Sinister has scarcely finished his dance with Seraphia when Mirie appears among the moving throng. She gives him a look that tells its tale. At his first opportunity George flits from his fiancée's side and has private converse with the elfin sprite. Her eyes are big, mysterious and excited.

She whispers: "Now is the time to do your part."

"Is Levie booked?"

"Yes, I've just left him seated in the carriage and waiting for the coming one."

"You don't think she will recognize him?"

"Hardly; I've taken the liberty of disguising him in your hat and overcoat."

"God bless you for the theft," mutters George, wringing her hand.

"Now, do your part; get Evie and devote five minutes to making Seraphia supremely jealous. Then disappear both of you. Of course, if your fiancée sees you here or about the grounds she won't believe you're

going to bolt, and that's an end of the affair." Then she adds consideringly: "When the carri..ge has driven away I must see you at once. We must prevent all scandal, if possible."

"Yes, I have thought of that," says George. "I've got Jimmy in another turnout ready also. I shall pursue them in the form of the indignant lover to force him to marry her."

"Oh, what fun it will be," giggles Mirie. "Get Evie and make Seraphia jealous first, then count your chickens."

With this sage advice, Miss Armitage places herself near the "betrothed's" side to do her part in the affair.

Now, this kind of business being very much to his liking, George departs about it with unusual vigor, and for the first time since the morning gets word with the beautiful creature whose loveliness this evening makes his eye-glass, that he carries so superbly, quiver with anxiety—he is so afraid he will lose her.

On seeing him Evelyn mutters reproachfully: "Didn't I ask you not to speak to me until—until I could answer you in an honest way, and not thrill with shame every time I look at Seraphia's trusting face?"

"You can surely accept my attentions," answers Bar-Sinister, chewing his mustache, "as you do those of any other gentleman in the ballroom."

"Well, then, not one word," whispers the girl excitedly, "of what you spoke to me this morning. Don't make me blush every time I think of you. Don't look at me so."

"Of course not! Just give me a dance, to keep my eyes off of you—won't yer, now? Once—just for Florida!"

His eyes have something in them very hard to resist. "Yes," answers the girl impulsively.

He passes his arm around the dainty waist that trembles under its lace and satin in answer to the caress of his gloved hand. They dance together—the music takes them back to St. Augustine when the band on the Loggia first stimulated the passion in their souls.

"I say," he whispers, "isn't this paradise, don't yer know?"

"George, remember your promise," falters the girl and withdraws from his arm. "Seraphia's looking!"

"That's what I want her to do," says Bar-Sinister, cheerily. "I want her to be deuced jealous!"

"Of me? Horrible!"

"Because if she is I think she will break off with me to-night. In any event I tell your father to-morrow morning. I can't stand this double dealing any longer."

"Oh, George!" murmurs Evie, "neither can I! Tell me all about it."

The next moment they are seated side by side in a cool part of the conservatory.

This last, in Seraphia's present state of mind, drives her distracted, for she is not able to get to them at once. A French Count insists upon monopolizing her. At any other time his attentions would be pleasing. Now they are distracting, maddening.

"You vill permit me to remain by ze side of ze beautiful queen of ze fête," murmurs the Parisian. "I could not leave you if I were to be sent away. Your exquisite niece, she is ver' beautiful too. *Mon Dieu!* She should be transplanted also. Ah, zat would be to me *un beau plaisir!* One of ze beaut'ful Miss Bulgers to England, ze other to France, that is not far, you could visit. Ah! ze loveliness of this country will soon be taken from it. *Pauvre Amérique!*"

"Yes, yes, Count," murmurs Seraphia; "but—" this is almost a gasp, "where is my niece? Where is Lord Bar-Sinister?"

She starts from the Count's side; for George and Evie have suddenly disappeared.

She would follow in pursuit of them, but at this moment Mirie suddenly clutches her arm and whispers: "Seraphia, I've got something *awful* to tell you."

"Yes, but where's George and Evie?"

"You must listen to me first, it is—come this way, keep your nerves quiet—it's about *them!*"

"About *them?* Tell me at once!"

"No, promise to be calm."

"I am calm."

"Promise to be quiet."

"Don't you see I'm quiet? Don't buzz about me like a mosquito—get to biting!" mutters Seraphia.

"Come into this supper room so you can scream when I do bite," whispers Mirie. "There's nobody here yet." So they enter the portion of the Bulger mansion devoted to the pleasures of gastronomy, for the supper room has not yet been thrown open to the guests. Here they are alone.

In a bay window, even now occupied by its little table covered with snowy damask, cut glass, and ornamental china, and prettily decorated with flowers, for it is the very one that Seraphia has selected for George to sit by her side at supper, the anxious betrothed turns and says: "Mirie, speak quick, you have something to tell me?"

"Yes, but drink a glass of champagne first."

"I've had four already."

"Then take something to quiet you—and please sit down."

"But I can't, I must see George," exclaims Seraphia. "It is about him you wished to speak to me? I must see George—he has gone away somewhere with that minx. Ah, here is Maddox!" For the door has just opened and the faithful valet is entering, a chocolate

ice cream in his hand. In a flash she is by his side imperiously demanding: "Maddox, where is your master?"

"I don't know, ma'am," says that servitor nervously. "He—he told me to bring this 'ere hice cream to him in the refreshment room."

"Then he can't be far off," says Seraphia, with sudden relief. "I'll take charge of the ice cream. Go at once and find your master for me. He must be about if he gave you such directions—Go!" for Maddox hesitates.

"Beg pardon, ma'am, but this 'ere hice cream——"

"Go!"

And her manner is so imperious that Maddox mutters sullenly "I go!" and leaves on the word.

"Now," says Seraphia, sitting down beside Mirabelle, "I'll eat this ice cream while you tell me."

"But I'm afraid! You will be so excited!" falters Mirie, nervously.

"No; ice cream always calms me," says Miss Bulger, though she puts anxious eyes upon Mirabelle as she swallows the first spoonful of the confection. "I think Sherry ought to be ashamed of his glacés," she mutters. "This is the most extraordinary chocolate I have ever eaten."

"It's some of his new imported styles, probably," remarks Mirie.

"But you were going to tell me."

"Oh, I don't want to," says the little imp, playing her part.

"But you must. Did you bring me here to make an idiot of me?" And Seraphia's voice is very stern.

"Well, then—but I hate to betray George's confidence," mutters Miss Sly-puss, holding her head down and working up the affair deftly.

"George's confidence! What confidence has the

man to whom I am betrothed from me; what confidence that you *dare* not tell me?" And Seraphia's excitement is such that she pegs away at the ice cream, notwithstanding it is undoubtedly the worst that celebrated caterer, Sherry, has ever put before the public. "Tell me; don't hesitate!"

"Well, then, *poor* Seraphia"——

"Don't *dare* condole with me! Confide in me first—the truth!"

"Well, then, Seraphia, George and Evie intend to elope to-night."

"George and Evie!—to-night?" gasps the jealous one, dropping the last spoonful of ice cream on the floor with a little yell. A moment after she mutters, "I won't believe you. My niece wouldn't do such a thing. She's been true to me all her life." And there are tears in her eyes. Next she mutters, "What horrible suspicions you are putting in my head, Mirabelle. How dare you! I know your truthless tongue."

"Indeed, I have told the truth," whimpers Mirie, for Seraphia's manner is growing more and more excited. "You—you saw how confused Maddox was when he was here a few minutes ago; you saw how he hesitated. He doesn't return; it's because he is going with the eloping couple. They are now on their way to the carriage."

"*What!*" This is a snort of agony as Seraphia springs up, almost knocking the table over. "You'll prove it, will you?" she whispers, "*you'll prove it?*"

"Yes!" whispers Mirie, impetuously.

"Then do so. Do so, or by the living Jingo I'll—I'll whale you! I've done it to girls as big as you when I was a school ma'am in Michigan. Your only safety, Mirabelle, is *to prove it!*"

"And if I do," answers Mirie, trembling, for Seraphia's eyes are beginning to glow with a new and

baneful light, "what then? You'll talk to him and he'll persuade you that I lie, anyway," and she commences to whimper: "You believe every word he says. I'll prove it, *but you must prove it to yourself also!*"

"How?"

"By taking Evie's place in the wagon beside George. He won't know you in the darkness if you are wrapped up well, if you'll only appear bashful and modest and diffident. Then when he gets you to New York he's got to marry you."

"Yes, he belongs to me, I bought him! I'll have my pound of flesh! If he's faithless why should I be honest? I'll play the trick on him and that minx, that Jezebel! Evie—Evie whom I loved! Oh-oh!—Ah-ah!—Eh-eh!—I lov'd!" And Seraphia sheds tears that are like unto those of drunkenness. "Evie—for whom I bought him—who threw up the bargain—and George—George whom I adored so I have given up business and put passion in my soul—to whose eyes I have written poetry and become the sweet singer of Michigan:

> Bar-Sinister, my haughty lord,
> Whose soul can touch thy Cupid's chord?
> What blushing maid's so sweet to thee
> As thy beloved Seraphia B.?

Don't dare to laugh in my face, you little minx! Do your part of the work. Save your own worthless neck lest I wring it!" And Seraphia takes the fair, white column that Mirie prizes so much in her hands and looks into Mirabelle's affrighted eyes with glaring optics.

"Oh heaven! Mercy! What's the matter with you, Seraphia—what's the matter with you?" gasps Mirie, trembling, for in truth Miss Bulger has now become terrible. Though Mirie doesn't guess what is the matter with her.

But it is twenty-two and a quarter grains of strongest bi-sulphite of quinine that is working on her powerful frame in a way that produces the weird effects of an overdose of cinchona on humanity. First, strange and terrible excitement resembling drunkenness; next, the ringing of bells in the ears, and deafness and confusion and sleep. The former only is upon Seraphia now—excitement.

"Come!" she hisses, as she stands over the shrinking plotter. "Where are they, the *perjured* ones?"

"George is waiting for her in the carriage," whispers Mirie, quaking, "and Evie is upstairs putting on her wraps to join him."

"AH-HA!" This is a whoop from Seraphia.

"Oh heavens! don't—don't kill them!" falters Mirie, who now shudders at the demon of jealously she has conjured up.

Did the imp know that Seraphia was medicated she would probably die of fright.

"I'll spare her life," mutters Seraphia, "but I'll rob the Jezebel of he love—that's all, HER LOVE! Come with me, minion!" Then she strides from the room dragging Mirie, and they go to a dressing closet in the hall, where Seraphia seizes a long dolman, for use in wet weather, and wraps it round her ball dress, muffling up her face.

As they pass into the darkness of the grounds Mirie, though almost half scared out of her wits, notes the aunt does not look so unlike her niece in the half light; her face is concealed and her ball dress is almost the same.

Guided by Miss Armitage, Seraphia gathering up her skirts flies across the grounds, mounts the little stile and jumps into the road, then flits through the carriages which are awaiting the guests at the fête, and enters the little shaded driveway that opens into Ocean Avenue almost opposite the villa.

Here she suddenly pauses and mutters, "Ting!—Ting!—Don't you hear them?"

"What?" gasps Mirie.

"My wedding bells!" whispers Seraphia—"Ting—*Ting*—TING! On to the nuptials!" And she drags the girl forward, and in fifty yards comes to a vehicle drawn up in the shade, the driver of which looks eagerly at them.

"This is the carriage, Evie," whispers Mirabelle, with an emphasis on the name. Seraphia answers with a grip of the hand that nearly makes the Armitage infant squeal.

Maddox is standing beside the carriage. "Is your master inside," asks Mirie.

"Yes," mutters the valet. "Would you please step inside, Miss Hevelyn?"

With a little squeal, half of horror at discovering it is true, half of joy because she has defeated her conspiring niece, Seraphia skips into the carriage with a vigor that astounds Mirie—the vigor of twenty-two and a quarter grains of quinine.

In a flash the door is closed, the blinds drawn down, Maddox springs up beside the driver and says, "Westerly, and fifty dollars if you make it in two hours!"

Slash goes the whip and the carriage flies into the road en route for the nearest railway station at which the midnight express stops.

Turning from this scene in a somewhat perturbed and wondering state of mind, Miss Armitage finds herself just as she enters the grounds of the villa confronted by George.

"I say, has she gone?" he asks eagerly.

"Yes."

"Thank God! And little Levison?"

"He's in the carriage with her."

"A thousand blessings on you! Then I'll order up the other carriage, Jimmy will drive," he says determinedly;—then falters. "But heaven help me, I'm—I'm down in the mouth. I've been looking for a chocolate ice cream that beast Maddox was to leave for me in the refreshment room."

"You—you won't get it," giggles Mirie hysterically, for Miss Sly-boots has nearly been frightened out of her life by Seraphia's frenzy.

"Why not?"

"Seraphia has eaten it."

"Then, by Jove! she's taken my twenty-two and a quarter grains of quinine with her. Good heavens, she's cinchonized!"

"Cinchonized? What's that?"

"Quininized, you'd call it," laughs Bar-Sinister.

"Quininized!" gasps Mirie. "That's the reason she went crazy and scared the life out of me! Quininized!" and the minx laughs till there are tears in her sparkling eyes. A moment after she murmurs, "You—you must go in pursuit of her!"

"That's what I'm going to do, but I'm not going to catch her until I get to New York. Maddox can do more for her quininized than any doctor upon earth. He knows all about cinchona symptoms. He's had some fiendish experiences with me, I can tell yer," says George, laughing. "Now, then, to explain to Evie."

And coming up to the Bulger's villa, from which Lander's music is still floating merrily, they enter the house to find, fortunately, the guests devoting themselves to supper so strenuously that nobody's absence has been noticed.

"This is luck," remarks the Englishman. "It's *pâte de foie gras* and champagne and truffled turkey that crowd is after, not scandal."

Almost at the door of the mansion they meet Evelyn.

She says anxiously: "Mirie, what have you done with Seraphia?"

"Come in here, we'll tell you." And getting her away by herself the two explain the matter to her, though they don't dare to tell her that Seraphia has gone away quininized; for the girl breaks out at them indignantly:

"Why did you do this thing?"

"Because I loved you," whispers George. "Your aunt is all right. Keep quiet; avoid scandal. Maddox is with her; everything is as straight as a trivet. Your aunt will be married, *but not to me.*"

"Oh, this is atrocious," mutters Evie. "Mirie, it was infamous in you."

"There!" pouts Miss Armitage. "You asked me to help you, and now I've done it, you turn upon me, you, who will some day be—never mind what. Evie, you are a monster of ingratitude!"

And she runs upstairs to rearrange her toilet, which has suffered somewhat from Seraphia's grip, and chats cheerily to the sleepy, chocolate-colored caniche, murmuring to him, "Wait until I'm her mother, Abelard, then Evie will be sorry she has been so undutiful a child!"

As for George he bolts to his room, takes a twenty-two and a quarter grain quinine powder and gets inspiration from it. Putting a couple more in his pocket, he comes downstairs to find his adored anxiously waiting for him.

"No one guesses yet," she whispers, as they pass out into the grounds together where they can be more alone. "Our guests are all still at supper, but papa—he must know."

"Not a word to him," interjects Bar-Sinister, "or he may kill poor little Levie. Keep your father in the dark until my telegram."

"Your telegram? From where?"

"From New York. Maddox has directions to let me know at the Waldorf exactly where they are in New York. You play the hostess here. Tell your guests Seraphia is over-fatigued, and then naturally, my—my sweetheart having retired," he winces at the word, "I have gone to my room for a pipe. But I'm not going to my room for a pipe, I'm going to compel the marriage. And when I come back, pray God I will be able to say to your governor, 'Old boy, we've loved each other ever since we met in Florida, six months ago'—haven't we, Evie?"

"Oh, George!" murmurs the girl. Then she suddenly utters an agitated exclamation, blushes, flutters, turns her head away and droops her glorious eyes, for George, who is now quininized, and very active and smart, has forgotten he has not returned from New York, and Evie has received his first kiss of love—no, the blackberry kiss was the first.

"Run into the house, keep the ball rolling, dance until morning," he adds, and going from her finds Jimmy with two fine horses in a light wagon. His valise is already in it.

He whispers to the little tiger: "Get me to Westerly in time to catch the 2:37 express for New York and it is five pounds in your pocket."

"How much is them in dollars and cents?" asks Jimmy.

"Twenty-five."

Smack! Slash! goes the whip! Jimmy doesn't waste any time discussing the matter, and the carriage flies in pursuit of the other one, which George calculates will catch the train just ahead of them, the one passing Westerly at 2:21.

Some two hours afterward at that railroad station Bar-Sinister learns that a carriage has driven up and a lady and gentleman, assisted by a valet, have entered the

2:21 train and are now en route for New York, about fifteen minutes ahead of him.

"Jimmy," he whispers, "drive back and tell your young mistress that it's all right—by Quinine, it's all right!" and boards the 2:37 express which comes dashing in.

At seven in the morning he arrives in New York and fifteen minutes afterward is at the Waldorf. Here, receiving a telegram that has been sent him by Maddox, he mutters: "At Bulger's town house," and orders a cab to be called.

As he is leaving the office the clerk remarks to him: "There's a cablegram just come for Mr. Raphael Levison. We don't know his address, but he was here inquiring about you several times immediately after your arrival, my lord, on the *Teutonic*. Do you know where he is?"

"Yes, I'll see him in about ten minutes," replies Bar-Sinister, pocketing the dispatch.

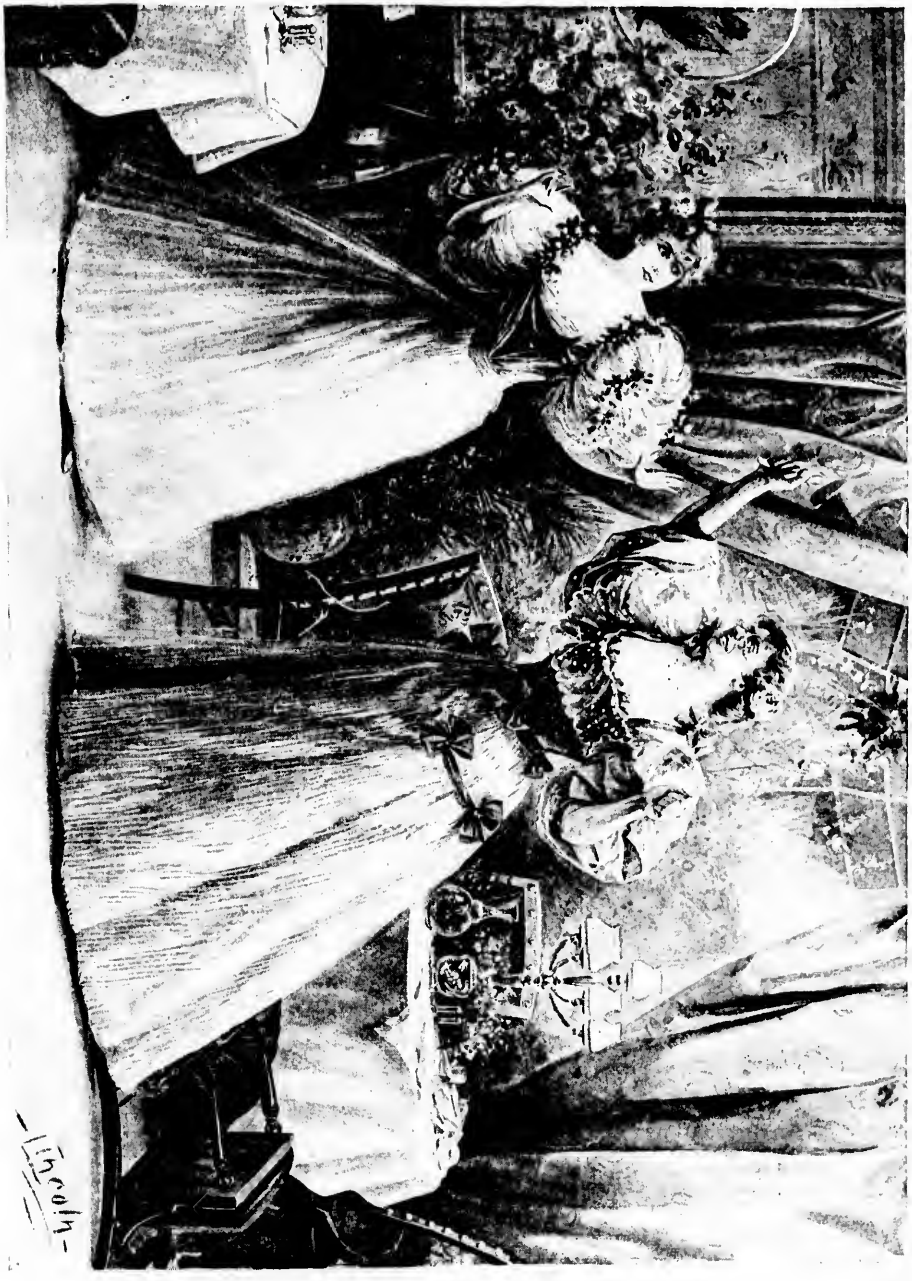
He is just stepping into the hack when a young man walks up and remarks: "I saw the telegram addressed to you that came in early this morning, my lord, and have called to know if you have any further communication to make about your approaching marriage?"

"Oh, ya-as, ya-as, I remember you, you are the reporter on the Jacksonville *Statesman*, I believe. Saw you in Florida, don't yer know," returns Bar-Sinister.

"Just at present I represent the New York *Earth*," answers Mr. Roberts.

"Quite right! Call on me at Mr. Bulger's town house, 479½ Fifth Avenue," remarks George, consulting Maddox's message. "About two hours from now perhaps I shall have something of interest."

With this he gets into the cab and drives rapidly to the Bulger mansion, murmuring to himself *sotto voce:* "Am I quininized up to proof for this affair, it's so



vital?" Then he feels his pulse and laughs to himself: "Yes, I'm medicated for a fight to a finish!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CONTESSA DI TESSE FERRARA.

THE carriage in which Seraphia and Levison are seated leaves Narragansett Pier behind it and dashes along the road toward Westerly.

On the box beside the driver is Maddox, chatting to the man about the time he's making, and throwing out hints as to the fifty dollars that he's going to get if he drives them to Westerly in two hours. This fifty dollar bill rests on the driver's mind so much that he talks of nothing else, but all the time Maddox has one ear open for what takes place in the carriage.

He expects moment by moment some sudden ear-piercing shriek of recognition from Seraphia when she discovers little Levison not Viscount Bar-Sinister is by her side on this Gretna-Green journey. He is listening for the muttered execrations of Levison when he realizes that beside him sits not the exquisitely beautiful Evelyn Bulger, but the masculine and mature Seraphia Bulger.

But curiously enough none of these sounds reach Maddox's listening ears. As they arrive at Westerly he thinks to himself: "This 'ere's hextraordinary, not a blooming sound have I 'eard from either of them in the two hours."

Which is true. Seraphia, quininized, has such curious feelings, such jumping nerves, such tingling chimes of bells in her ears that her nervous agitation keeps her from being communicative. The night is dark, but

she knows George in his familiar mackintosh and derby sits beside her. That is enough, she is happy. Every ting! in her ears seems to be her wedding bells. She will not disturb him. The further she gets from Narragansett Pier in his company the more certain she is of him. When she arrives in New York it must be a minister, and a quick minister at that, to take from her at once, and forever, all further worry at the attractions of her lovely niece. Therefore Seraphia holds her tongue.

As for Levison, he shrewdly reflects that the further he gets the beautiful Evelyn from home without discovery the more certain he is of success. He has a shrewd idea that perchance—here his little heart gives a mighty throb—perchance to hush up scandal, he may win this beauty by his side. For he has no doubt of the identity of the lady sitting beside him. He has already heard her called by Maddox, Miss Evelyn. Though cloaked, she is in the young lady's ball dress, he is sure of that. Why she does not speak to him he wonders, but finally imagines her silence is due to the embarrassed modesty of a girl making her first elopement. "So help me," he thinks to himself, "Miss Evie has never played this game before, no wonder she's a little diffident. If she spoke to me I should have to answer her. My voice would let the cat out of the bag, and it's a cat that will jump very high when it does get out of the bag. Better keep it in for the present."

He therefore says nothing, but simply slips his arm round the waist beside him and gives it an affectionate squeeze. Then Seraphia cuddles to him beautifully, thinking it is George's arm.

So they come into Westerly, just in time to catch the 2.21 train for New York. Levison springs lightly out before his companion, takes Maddox to one side,

and mutters: "Not a word to her. It's a hundred dollars to you if you keep us apart on the train," and skips agilely into the smoking car.

"All right, my lord," says Maddox, touching his hat.

"Which way has Bar-Sinister gone?" falters Seraphia, from the carriage.

"Into the smoking car!"

"What did you say—car?"

"The smoking car!" yells Maddox. "He thinks it's more delicate under the circumstances that he should be separated from you," adds the wily valet.

"He must not see me, do you understand? He must not see me. It's a five hundred dollar bill, Maddox, if his lordship doesn't see the woman who loves him on this train. Ting!—*ting!*—TING! How my head rings!"

"What's the matter with you, ma'am?" asks the valet, who now notices her excited appearance. "What makes you so 'ard of 'earing?" For he has been compelled to yell several things into her ear.

"Oh, I don't know—ting!—*ting!*—TING! It's my wedding bells! Maddox, you hear me,—my wedding bells, for you know I love him—my wedding bells—ting!—*ting!*—TING!"

"How long have you had them wedding bells, ma'am?" asks the servitor, anxiously.

"Almost since I ate that ice cream you left with me to give your master."

This revelation has an awful effect upon the valet. He thinks wildly to himself: "Quininized, by Jove!"

But knowing these symptoms very well and how to alleviate them, having had several peculiar experiences with his master, Maddox hastily assists Seraphia into a railway carriage at some distance from the smoker, produces a little bromide and prepares to give her a quiet sleep until she reaches New York.

"You'll telegraph for me, Maddox, at New London," yells Seraphia.

"'Ush! Don't talk so loud!" mutters the valet.

"I'm not talking loud—I can't hear myself!" bawls the lady. "Telegraph to the Reverend Augustus Sloate, number 57 Madison Avenue. He's to marry us on our arrival in New York. Telegraph him from New London to meet us at the Holland House—no, telegraph him to meet us at number 479½ Fifth Avenue."

"The minister!" chuckles Maddox to himself as he administers the bromide. "She's a rusher. Wonder if she'll want the minister when she sees who she's going to nail?"

Soon, Seraphia having gone into a confused slumber, Maddox steps to the smoking car and says craftily to Mr. Levison, who is now puffing a cigar in a nervous manner: "I think you ought to raise that hundred you promised me, sir. I have a hawful time keeping her from demanding to see you. I have told her that it's your delicate courtesy to a lady as has permitted herself to fall into an hembarrassing situation with you, sir. But she says she wants the man of her 'eart by her side."

"I'll give you two hundred," whispers the financier; "but for God's sake tell her that I am so much of a man of honor that I wouldn't go near her to-night for a hundred thousand pounds in Bank of England bills. Tell her, so help me, that *noblesse oblige* is the motto of the Bar-Sinisters."

"By touts and welchers," mutters Maddox, returning from this interview with some of Levison's cash in his pocket, "when such as him gets to shouting *noblesse oblige*, the haristocracy will soon want a new war cry."

But he has no further trouble on the train. He tel-

egraphs Miss Bulger's message to the minister in New York from New London, and sends at the same time a message for Lord Bar-Sinister, addressed to the Waldorf.

By remarkable coincidence, little Levison dispatches a long cablegram to Rome from New London also. "It's very important, get it along at once," mutters the bill-broker to the telegraph clerk.

So at a little after half past six in the morning of a fine stewing August day the train rattles into the Grand Central depot in New York City. In the smoking car Maddox holds consultation with Levison.

"I'd better put her into the carriage first," he suggests. "She might be frightened on seeing you; she's got a curious hidea that it's my lud as is with her. Let me get her settled in the 'ack, then you can join her."

"Quite right," whispers Levison, slipping an extra five dollar bill into Maddox's hand.

So, a convenient Jehu being summoned, his carriage is drawn up beside the station, and while Mr. Levison keeps himself out of sight Maddox conducts Seraphia to the cab and helps her in.

Then she, covered with maiden blushes, murmurs into the valet's ear: "You—you can bring George to me now."

Maddox looks perturbed; he hardly knows what they will do to each other when they meet. But there is nothing else for him, and he falters: "This way, my—my lud!"

At the word, the financier skipping down the steps of the station springs into the carriage, saying: "My dear Miss Evie——" Then he pauses, his eyes roll, he glares at Seraphia dumfounded.

"Why, Mr. Levison! did you come on the train with George and me?" ejaculates the lady. But just here

the extraordinary appearance of the bill-broker strikes her. She sees upon him Bar-Sinister's mackintosh and derby, and stammers: "Oh, my soul! eloped with *you!*"

"Yes, so help me! we've both been put upon by that lying imp of Beelzebub, Mirabelle Armitage," screams little Levison.

But this horrible revelation, coupled with her impromptu medication of the night before, is too much for old Seraphia. She gives a broken-hearted, gurgling gasp, "George—my heaven, *what will he think!*" and falls fainting into Levison's arms.

Closing the door, Maddox jumps beside the driver and says: "Now, cabby, for your life, 479½ Fifth Avenue like blazes. Lady's sick inside!"

And away they rattle up Forty-second Street and along Fifth Avenue to the Bulger mansion, which fortunately is not far off, Mr. Maddox sitting beside the driver on the box, looking very much concerned. Behind him in the interior of the vehicle Miss Seraphia Bulger in a comatose condition, and little Raphael Levison holding her hands and muttering in a dazed way: "So help me, by the living Jingo it was a plant of that infernal Bar-Sinister and that little Judas Iscariot, Mirabelle Armitage, to put the old woman off on me."

He has furtive thoughts of jumping from the carriage and fleeing; but before he can make up his mind to action they arrive in front of the Bulger mansion, which is kept open for the summer by a couple of women servants who have been left in town.

Maddox jumps down and opens the door of the carriage, and together the two assist Seraphia into the house. One of the maids, who has answered the door bell and who seems astonished, immediately assists Seraphia into the dining-room, and there they bring her to.

But this is a rather slow matter, and Levison, who is a good-hearted little chap in his way, stands by waiting until this is over. But even while engaged in this, the front door bell is heard to ring, and the servant answering this comes in and says, in a startled voice: "The Reverend Augustus Sloate is in the parlor. He has called here to perform the wedding ceremony."

At this the partially revived Seraphia gives an awful scream of despair, and the shock fully restores her senses, that have been coming gradually to her.

She mutters: "The minister who was to wed me to my—" and with this becomes the Seraphia Bulger of old. Fire gleams in her eye. She commands: "Leave us together, all of you," and places her hand on little Levison's shoulder, who looks at her warily yet agitatedly. The expression on her face makes even Maddox obey her; he slinks out of the dining-room with the two maid servants.

Then turning glaring eyes upon little Levison she exclaims: "You villain, who played this abominable trick upon me!"

"But it wasn't my trick. So help me bob! It was that little imp of Satan, Mirabelle Armitage."

"Yes, with you as her accomplice; or why were you in that carriage awaiting me? Why were you disguised in the garments of Bar-Sinister? Why did you keep away from me on the train? Answer!"

"Well, you see," falters little Levie.

"Yes, I see," screams Seraphia; "you wanted me for my money, you Lovelace! But you'll not get it; and I'll make you suffer for it; I'll—I'll sue you for abduction."

"Can't yer see it was a mistake?" snarls the unhappy bill-broker. "Do yer think I would have squeezed yer waist so tight for two hours if I hadn't believed it was your beautiful niece?"

"Squeezed my waist! Oh, good heaven! Oh you shameless Lothario! I can't look you in the face. What shall I do? What will George think of me? Out of my sight!"

"But can't this here matter be patched up?" suggests Levison, uneasily.

"Out of my sight—out of my house!"

"Bar-Sinister won't mind," falters the abductor, as he agitatedly opens the door.

"But, by Jove, Bar-Sinister does *mind!* He is here to make you do justice to an injured woman!" And with these words George strides in, forcing little Levison back into the room. His eyeglass only adds to a fearful, melodramatic scowl that is upon the young nobleman's face.

"Oh, George! you have come to—to marry me! The minister is in the parlor." And Seraphia would falter to Bar-Sinister to faint in his arms.

But he says sternly to her: "Faint in *his!*" and points to Levison, who stands with a frightened grin on his face.

Then Seraphia doesn't faint in anyone's arms! She stands between them and turns her eyes from one to the other; and there is something in them that makes George know, with a sinking of the heart, that if she doesn't marry Levison, she will marry him.

But he is bright and quininized this morning; he has received Maddox's message from New London, at the Waldorf, and has come straight up and so is just on time. His valet, who has opened the door to him, has told him the situation, and he prepares to act, though with a shudder as he sees Seraphia's glance, imploring, beseeching—*loving!*

Twice she tries to catch his hand, but thinking of the minister in the next room, he defeats this by keeping his arms gloomily folded. "I am here as your brother!" he mutters morosely.

"Oh George," moans Seraphia.

"I have followed you," he continues, "to force the man who has deceived you to make the only reparation in his power—marriage! I am here as a representative of the Bulger family, Mr. Levison, and shall fulfill my commission to the extent of shooting you if you do not wed your victim instantly! American juries look very lightly upon violence, if done to protect the honor of American womanhood."

"Yer—yer don't mean it!" gasps the little bill-broker.

But here Seraphia almost brings despair on George, by saying sharply: "I won't have the wretch!"

"But you must!" commands Bar-Sinister. "It is your one chance to retain the respect of the world."

"You—you don't believe in my innocence?" she sobs.

"I do, but the world won't. As your best friend, as the man who was engaged to you—*yesterday!*" there is a tremble in Bar-Sinister's voice as he says this.

"Oh George! George!" and Seraphia would go to his arms.

But he says sternly: "Yesterday! Not *to-day!*—because you have given your heart to another. Else why should you have fled with this man? Why did you disappear from the ballroom in the middle of the fête to enter the carriage with him and be driven away—you must have planned it before."

"Oh, that little fiend girl, Mirie! If I had her here!" screams Seraphia—"Oh, how the world will laugh at me!"

"No," answers Bar-Sinister, suddenly. "The world will laugh at *me*. I am the jilted one, don't yer know. You have fled from me, not I from you." By a great effort he gets a little pathos in his voice as he says this. "The papers will say that you were over-

come by gratitude for this man who has saved your life; that at the last moment you couldn't sacrifice yourself, and fled with him. That's about the manner the papers will put it. I'll see that they put it about that way. The derision shall be all for me. The blarsted press will jolly me up mightily over the jilting you've given me, Seraphia, don't yer see?" Then his voice grows stern again as he adds: "But I have promised that the family honor shall be protected from this seducer!"

At this Seraphia affrights both the men. Her eyes blaze, though her lips are pale. She mutters: "Call him that awful name again, George, and I shall kill him myself!"

Her looks are such that Levison quails and would make for the door did not George block his passage. "I beg your pardon," mutters Bar-Sinister, "but that is what the world will call him, if you kill this man yourself, or if you let him run away, or if you do anything but marry him. Your brother——."

To this Seraphia utters a faint cry, "Abner! My God! what will he think of me!" puts her face in her handkerchief, hangs her head and sinks down on a near-by sofa, convulsed with sobs and confusion.

Her shame would arouse conscience in George did not the minister in the next room make him careless of everything but his own release. "One word, Levie," he whispers to the bill-broker, and leads him aside. "I've a better argument for you than cold *lead*—cold *gold!* The lady you are about to marry is worth——"

"Oh, I know what she's worth to the dollar," cuts in Levison, who has apparently been figuring up this matter in his mind.

"Yes, and she'll make an excellent helpmeet for you, and she'll love you after marriage. What Seraphia

wants is to be married; that's the important thing with her, and you are the man to do it."

"But she threatens to kill me," mutters the financier, sulkily.

"Well, let that come *after* marriage," laughs Bar-Sinister, cheerily. "You'll get along beautifully together."

"If I promise," pleads little Levie "will you pay those bills of yours after you are wedded to the beautiful Evelyn?"

"Pay my bills with—with her fortune?" stammers Bar-Sinister. Then he breaks out: "I'll—I'll pay, if I can, with what money I can make myself as a business man. My wife keeps her own. But you—you little cent per cent abomination, take what's in front of you—take this lady with her fortune, which is bigger than you'll get in any other way! If you don't——"

And George's glance is so stern that the financier gasps: "I—I promise! So help me bob, I promise!"

Then Bar-Sinister steps to Seraphia and whispers: "I congratulate Mr. Levison; he is ready to go through the ceremony."

"But his name—his horrid name," moans the lady, from the sofa.

But here Raphael takes George suddenly aside, and whispers to him: "Perhaps I can fix the name for her. I sent a cable to Rome. I thought it would please the other one, you know, the beautiful Miss Evelyn, who I imagined——"

But Bar-Sinister's eyes have too horrible an expression in them for Levison to go further. He mutters: "I cabled over that I would buy an estate I have had my eye upon in Tuscany. It carries a title with it."

"Is this the answer?" asks George. "They gave the dispatch to me at the Waldorf. They asked if I knew you; they said you had inquired about me the day I was in New York."

He passes the missive to Levison, who, opening it, cries: "Ye've hit it! I'm a count!"

As Bar-Sinister reads the cablegram he utters a little laugh, and walking to Seraphia again, remarks: "You object to Mr. Levison's name, what would you say to being the Contessa di Tesse Ferrara?"

"Tesse Ferrara? What do you mean?" cries Seraphia, rising with astonishment.

"The gentleman you are about to marry has just come into his family estate, he tells me," laughs George, "and has become the Count di Tesse Ferrara."

"The Count di Tesse Ferrara!" murmurs Seraphia. Then she looks at the little financier, who is bowing before her, blushes, and murmurs falteringly—yea, almost romantically: "Raphael!"

And George knows the matter is settled.

"The wedding must take place at once," he remarks; then suddenly suggests: "Miss Bulger, you had better have your money settled on yourself. The ceremony must be postponed for an hour or two for that."

"No need," says Seraphia, "I know American law well enough to know that everything I have remains mine in this country. Let the minister go to work."

At this little Levison, who is now really the Count di Tesse Ferrara, for he has purchased a small Tuscan estate that carries a title with it, says sulkily, as if by no means pleased with American law, "Yes, let's get it over!"

So Seraphia enters the parlor upon her new fiancé's arm, George following after them as if he were afraid they would slip away from him at the very last.

Here the Reverend Augustus Sloate gives them his greeting, and is introduced by Seraphia to both the gentlemen.

"I received your telegram this morning, Miss Bulger," says the divine. "I presume this happy affair is

with the knowledge of your brother? Though, of course, that is unnecessary."

"It is with her brother's consent," replies George, stepping forward, anxious to aid the good work along.

But here the minister horrifies him. He says: "Certainly. Please stand in front of me, Lord Bar-Sinister. Now, Miss Seraphia!"

"Oh, you're making the same awful mistake nearly everybody else does," simpers Seraphia, blushing. "It is the *dear* Count I am going to marry."

So George stands looking on as the minister takes away Seraphia from him forever and binds her to Raphael Levison, ex-pawnbroker, and at present financier and Count di Tesse Ferrara. As he sees these two, who have persecuted him for the past few weeks, joined together in holy matrimony, a grim smile comes over Bar-Sinister's visage. He thinks, "Egad, this *is* killing two birds with one stone!"

Then as the minister demands, "Who gives this woman away?" "I do!" replies Bar-Sinister, and mentally chuckles, "*Freely!*"

The next minute Seraphia Bulger is Seraphia Levison, Contessa di Tesse Ferrara; and George gives a mighty sigh of relief, and murmurs: "Both mine enemies!" while Maddox, who is looking on from the door, indulges in a sardonic grin.

CHAPTER XIX.

"ABELARD—HAVE A CHOCOLATE?"

HALF an hour after, the happy couple having been driven away to take train for hastily arranged honeymoon at Niagara, George says to himself: "Free!" shakes

himself like a big Newfoundland dog, and dispatches a telegram to Narragansett.

Then he has an hour or two of it with the reporters, and tells them a tale that makes them open their eyes about the wedding that has just taken place, the nuptials of the elder Miss Bulger with the Count di Tesse Ferrara, an Italian nobleman of high lineage, who had risked his life to save hers at Narragansett. He himself, George states, knows all the details of the affair, being the affianced of the bride's niece, Miss Evelyn Bulger, and having come down to wish his future aunt-in-law God speed and good luck.

Not all of his comments are swallowed by the gentlemen of the press as easily as he thinks they are, and some of the articles in the New York papers the next morning make Bar-Sinister grin and some make him curse.

But he has got beyond thinking of reporters now; only one thing is in his mind as he, accompanied by Mr. Maddox, takes the train to Narragansett Pier, and early in the evening at the little railroad station finds a pony phaeton driven by a beautiful girl in light summer costume, with little Jimmy sitting in the rumble, an extraordinary grin upon his face.

Their conversation is so low as they drive to the Bulger villa that though the tiger opens his ears with all his might he doesn't catch a word of it, notwithstanding George tells the whole tale to Miss Evelyn, who gazes at him astonished, and will hardly believe that Seraphia is now the Contessa di Tesse Ferrara.

At the house this information as to Seraphia's title is received with absolute jeers by Mirie, who laughs: "Is everyone a nobleman in Italy? He isn't an Italian! Only ladies can *buy* titles--we know, don't we, Abelard!" And goes romping about like a child with the chocolate-colored caniche. A moment after she

whispers in one of the dog's long ears: "Abelard, what *lies* Bar-Sinister is going to tell old Mr. Bulger in a minute!"

For George and Evie have gone in to see the young lady's father.

This gentleman with many exclamations of astonishment and concern listens to the story of his sister's marriage. Then he says, sternly: "And you deceived me all to-day, making me think my sister was indisposed. Evie, why didn't you tell me about Seraphia's elopement last night? The thing might have been prevented."

Here his daughter astonishes him more, for she mutters: "It was better that it shouldn't be prevented. George—George, tell him why it was better that it should not be prevented."

"Because," says Bar-Sinister, "Mr. Bulger, this thing has been a terrible mistake. I came over here expecting to marry your daughter, but not as 'papa's birthday present,' which I understand your servant girls dubbed me. I loved her well enough *before*. I came over here imagining it was a partnership in your business that was offered me by a young lady who wanted to make up for the very cruel way she had treated me in—in Florida. I'll only come in that way *now!* I may be a lord, but I'm a *business* lord. I've won her love, at least I had won quite enough of her affections to make her beastly jealous in Florida, don't yer know. If my title does her any good, if it makes her any happier to go in first to dinner and be the snubber instead of the snubbed, I am glad. But I would rather she would love me as plain George Cranmere, of Pink, White & Co., than as Lord Bar-Sinister. I don't want her money—I only want her *love!*"

"Aha! Miss Webster gave you that in St. Augustine, George," laughs Evie, blushing.

"Miss Webster? Oh, yes. I say, you're Miss Webster. That imp upstairs told me all about it, don't yer know? But I—I forgive you"

"Do you, George? How generous!" With this the girl is nearly in his arms, but Mr. Bulger calls out in a horrified tone of voice:

"Good heavens! Don't touch his hand! Evie, remember the bills Seraphia paid for him. You yourself said you could marry no man with such a record of debauchery."

"Yes," murmurs Evelyn, "but I don't visit the sins of the fathers on the children." With this the girl leads her father away and whispers to him the true history of this matter, while George looks out of the window, but curses his father's crimes that are now causing his son to get red about the ears.

A minute after he sneers: "Egad, Mr. Bulger, those bills should frighten little Mirie. See what the New York papers say about her in their English news." And producing a morning New York journal Bar-Sinister reads this curious announcement by cable:

"Marriage in High Life. At St. George's, Hanover Square, on the 20th inst., will be celebrated the nuptials of the Most Honorable Hugo Cressy Agincourt Cranmere, Marquis of Fitzminster, and Mirabelle Aurelia, daughter of the late Jonas Armitage, Esq., of Chicago, Illinois. The bride, we are informed, is to have two million dollars dowry, her father having been one of the magnates of that Western city. The Marquis bears one of the oldest titles in England, and in his younger days was famous on the British turf. He is not as young as the coming Marchioness of Fitzminster by some years."

"Is it true?" gasps Evie. "Mirie, *our* mother!"

"Yes, that's the reason she helped us. She didn't want a gray-haired daughter," laughs George. "You'd better go up and pay your respects."

This Evie does, and Mirabelle tells her she is going

away the next day and will leave New York the day after for London, under the chaperonage of Mrs. Westingwell. "I don't suppose you'll be over for the wedding. I presume I shall be a little ahead of even you and Bar-Sinister," she laughs. "Nevertheless, though you've been as ungrateful as a girl can be to her mother, I shall welcome you as my daughter. Tell George I expect him to keep his promise. I have stayed here for those bills. I must see him about them now! Evie, remember as your coming mother, I take precedence over you, child. Let me go downstairs first. Room for the future Marchioness of Fitzminster!" and, screaming with merriment, the coming *grande dame* slides down the banisters to have interview with her future step-son.

"George," she says, "tell me all about it. Was Seraphia very angry at me?"

"I don't think you would have lived if she had got her hands on you."

"How quinine must affect the nerves," laughs Mirie, "and the passions. I have been experimenting. I quininized Abelard this morning. He doesn't like it, and nearly bit me. But, George, I did the trick for you. Remember your promise."

"What promise?"

"Fitz's bills. Just a few of those receipted ones. La Blackbird's expenses will suit me a little better than any of them: she was the worst of the lot, I am told. Then if Fitzminster is a little jealous of his young bride, as old gentlemen are sometimes apt to be, I can read him a lecture upon his youthful follies. Georgie, present them as a wedding gift to your papa's bride. He'll be so happy when he sees them."

"By Jove, what a move it will be on the governor," mutters George. "You know he always likes to see *receipted* bills." With this gives her her wish.

Later in the evening—the house party having fortunately drifted off with the Newport guests, and there being no one to embarrass them—he and Evelyn get all the palm trees out of the conservatory and put them on the veranda, and seat themselves cosily in them and say: "This is Florida!"

"Yes, by Jove, St. Augustine," remarks Bar-Sinister, "without Jonas Ripley, though."

"And lacking Miss Webster," laughs Evie. "Shall we go over the water," and she points across the rippling waves that are coming in from the Atlantic, "like the others?"

"Well, I hardly think so," says Bar-Sinister. "You see I'm the local agent of Pink, White & Co. in America, and I've got some money to earn, some bills to pay. We're not quite like the rest of them, don't you see! You haven't thrown yourself to the ladies' Juggernaut over here, that idol of social precedence, of foreign title that they import to bow down to and worship and let foreign counts and English lords crush them under the ancient regime, and take their pretty little hearts and pretty big fortunes out of the country that they belong to. You see, over there," he points toward Newport, "a wary French Count or Hungarian Baron with an eye on the proper girl, in three or four weeks' work, with good luck, can take out of the country as much money as five—yes, perhaps ten thousand laborers can produce in a year. That's a pretty heavy handicap on Brother Jonathan, isn't it? Now I'm going to be a little different from most of my kind; I'm going to let the girl and the money stay in this country for awhile. You see, ours is a kind of a love match. It's rather different from the fadish international marriage that young lady upstairs is going to make."

"Yes, how I pity her," murmurs Evelyn. "How I pity any woman who cannot say to her future husband,

'I love you, not for your rank, but for what you are!"

"Beg pardon, sir," says Maddox, "but I believe it's quinine time!"

At which they both start apart, and George says, sulkily: "Maddox, you're a faithful beast—too faithful a beast. Up to my marriage, you'll omit interrupting me if I die for it."

But they have no reason to pity Mirie. Six months after, people that came from England said that she was having the pleasant time, not her husband.

An acknowledged leader of fashion, her arts and graces and childish loveliness had captured London society, especially the male portion of it, to such an extent that her husband, old Fitzminster, was doing the jealous act himself, and having a very hard time of it.

This may be true, for one day about this time, returning from a garden party given by the Countess of Cowes near Richmond, the young Marchioness of Fitzminster, in the privacy of her *boudoir*, thus addresses Abelard, the chocolate-colored caniche: "We're giving him a lively deal, arn't we, Abelard?" Then she brings her pretty white teeth together, and mutters: "The old villain! He would reproach me with Colonel Malvoisin of the Life Guards, would he? Yes, he would, were it not for his naughty receipted bills. Abelard, these keep old Fitzminster in marching order, don't they? Some young ladies are crushed by the Juggernaut of international marriage, but we ride on top of the idol; don't we, Abelard, my boy? What are you winking at me for, you insulting camp-meeting prig. Do you mean to insinuate that I'm rather overstepping the bounds of *fin de siècle* flirtation with my dear handsome Colonel? Have a chocolate?" *Smack!* "I told you I'd slap you if you didn't catch it!"

"Ki, yi!—Ki, yi!—*Ki! yi!*—KIOUCH!"

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