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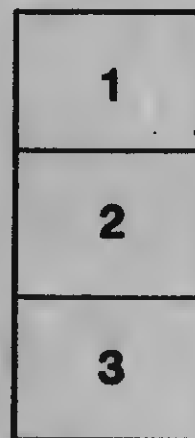
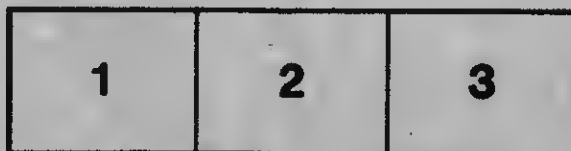
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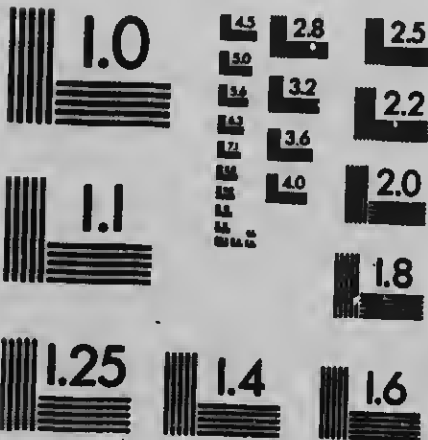
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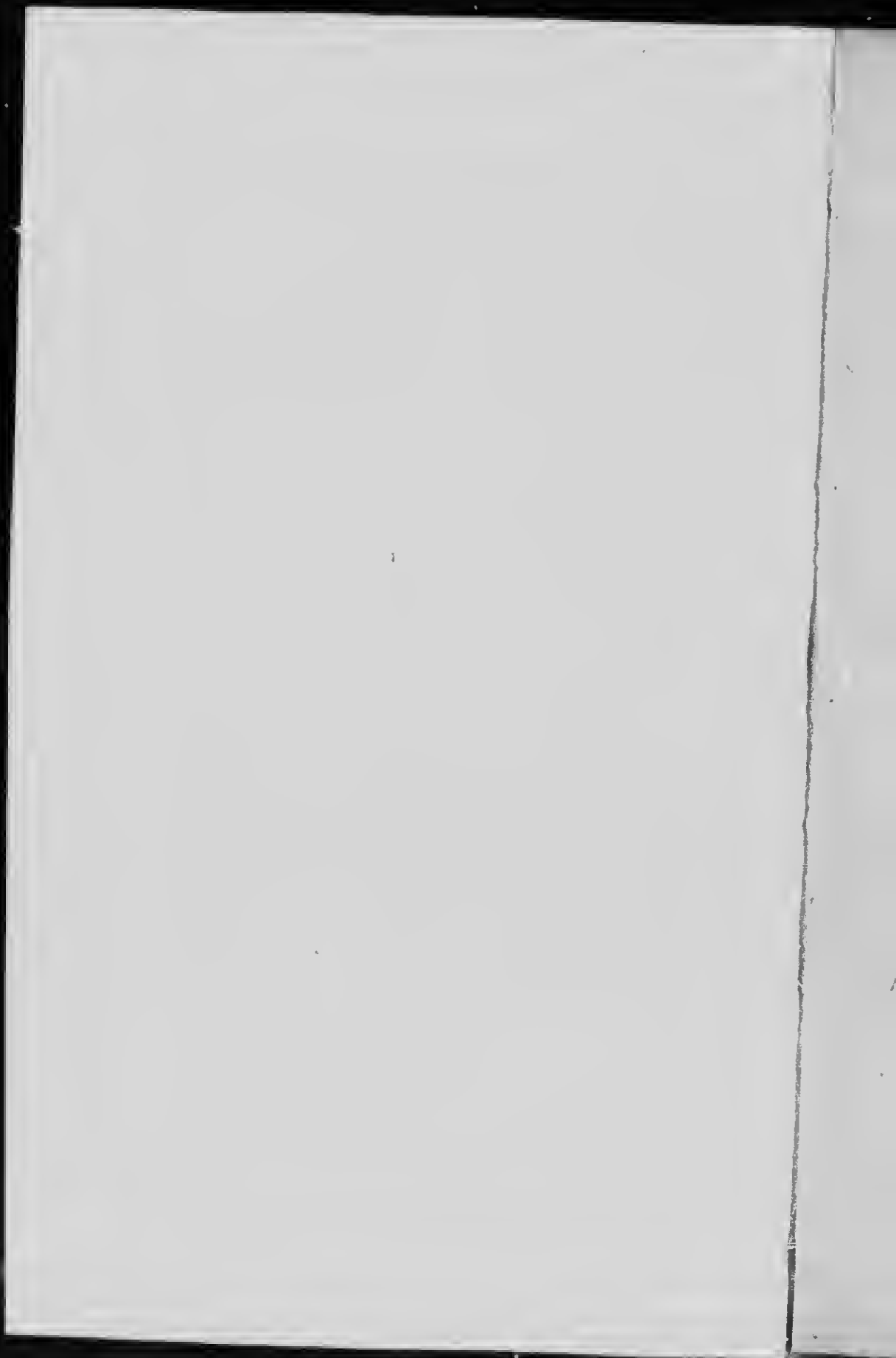
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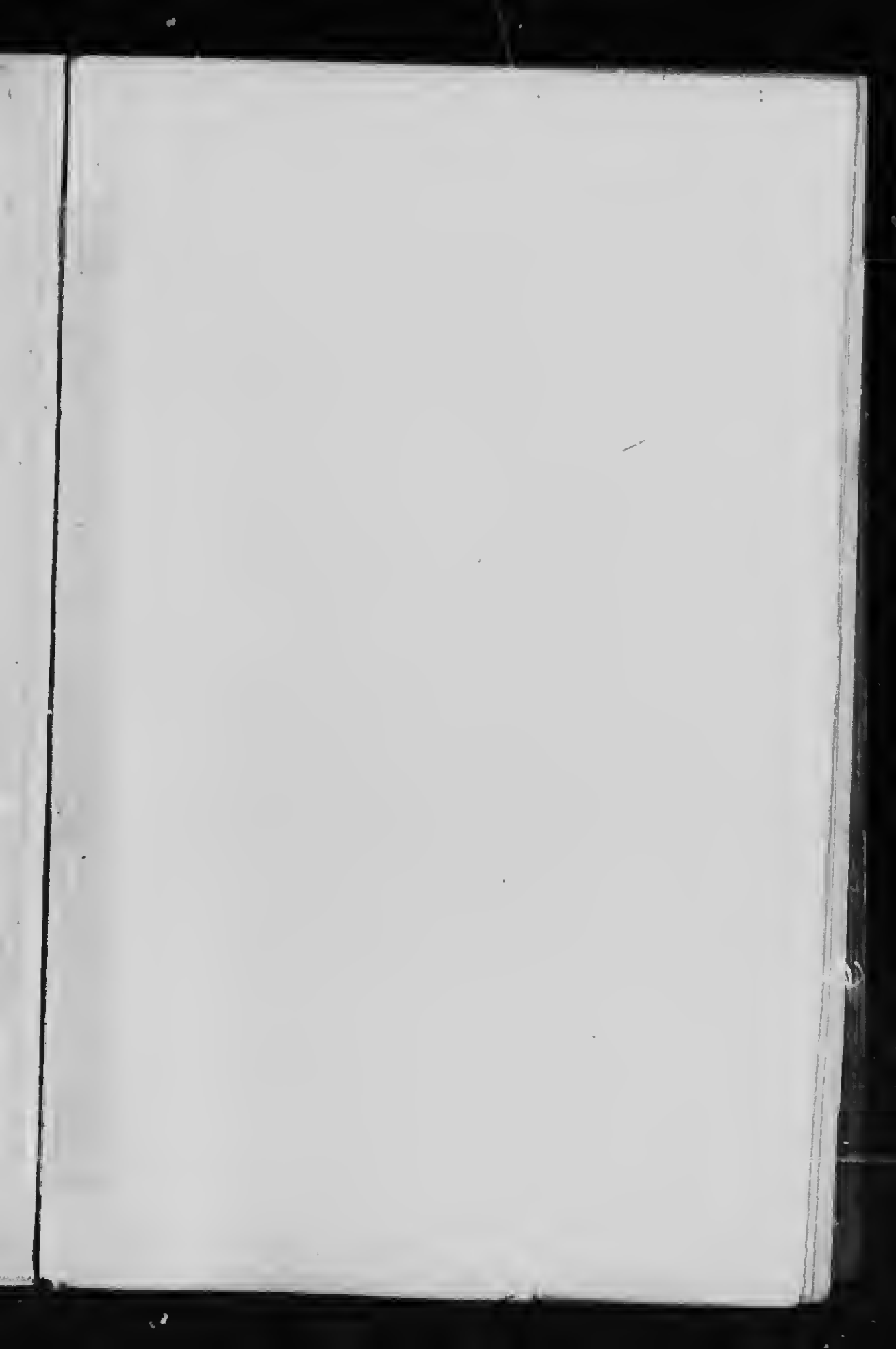
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HIS ROYAL HAPPINESS

*"I am the land of their fathers,
In me the virtue stays.
I will bring back my children
After certain days."*

KIPLING





"I'm awfully pleased to meet you," he said.

HIS ROYAL HAPPINESS

BY

MRS. EVERARD COTES

(SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN)

AUTHOR OF "THE IMPERIALIST," "CINDERELLA OF CANADA,"
"THE BURNT OFFERING," ETC.

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CHAPTER I

PRINCE ALFRED'S rooms were in Longwall Street, looking over the gardens of Magdalen, which was his college. From his second floor windows he could see the furtive deer slipping among the beeches there; and his eyes could always wander from the baker's delivery cart to the tangle of light and shade in the green glooms above the college wall. The house had been taken for him; he lived in it with his tutor and establishment, which, on account of His Royal Highness's state of health, was permitted to include a masseur-valet. Beyond that it was nobody but Soames and Mrs. Soames, picked certainly from among the stoutest and most solemn of licensed keepers of lodgings for the young gentlemen of Oxford, but not otherwise remarkable. Soames now looked smarter on Sundays, and Mrs. Soames more conscious at church. That was all; and it was very excusable, when one thinks of the devotion she put on with her clothes. Mrs. Soames had been a capital choice, and Soames the most unobjectionable corollary, knowing as they did the ways of young gentlemen at Oxford, and divining as they did that those of young royal-ties would be much the same. Only one mistake Mrs. Soames had made, and it was quite early days when she made it, in sending away, with energetic tongue, the organ-grinder who rested his back against Magdalen wall over the road, and woke discordance under the Royal windows in the name of a long dead comic opera. The Prince, it imme-

diately appeared, did not approve the action of Mrs. Soames. The organ-grinder must be made to turn his dejected back, and again produce the tune and the monkey. Mrs. Soames being even compelled to reward him in kind with the music of small change. The Prince had no ear to be shattered, liked organ-grinders, liked monkeys. The thing he couldn't and wouldn't stand was the more ambitious programme of a German band. Mrs. Soames soon learned what to send away.

Prince Alfred's rooms were on the second floor. The Hon. Kenneth Talbot had three on the first; the servants divided the attic and expanded below stairs. There were all sorts of holes and corners unoccupied though not unswept; Mrs. Soames and her char saw to that. It was an old house, with inordinate box-room; and it had never in all its hundred and fifty years been so well taken care of. There were deep windows, with inside shutters that folded back, in the front rooms, in which Prince Alfred would occasionally sit sideways, his long legs tied up in his long arms, looking down upon the life of the street. His tutor, noting this habit, said nothing, but arranged art-green muslin curtains across the lower sash, stretched between two slender brass rods. The Prince, when these incommoded him, also said nothing, but took out the top brass rod, letting the curtain down upon the window seat, where his boots did not improve it. He had been heard to remark of curtains that though they might be pretty they were useless, obstructive things, especially in the day-time, and harboured dust.

The room had been furnished by Mr. Talbot, who was a person of cultivation; and if Mr. Talbot had lived in it as well as arranged its decoration, it would have been agreeable as well as tasteful. As it was, the engravings of Old Oxford had an air of

preciosity, the furniture stood about with a selected look, the Tanagras seemed to wonder why they were there. They quite failed to attach themselves to the young man in the window recess, for whom life had always provided unsuitable accommodation, to be occupied with the temporary, unreconciled air with which he might have passed from one expensive hotel to another. The only place that looked like him was the window recess into which he was so fond of gathering his usually muddy boots. It had a pointed arch and made a simple mediæval frame above his head. Talbot, who never told him so, admired him in it.

Upon his University entry paper he was Alfred and nothing more. His rank was entered as that of "Nobleman," his father's Christian name John, his native place London—county Middlesex—school, private tutor; and it was noted that he was admitted by order of the Vice-Chancellor, matriculation no doubt being dispensed with. His royal father was dead, his elder brother John, married just before, shared the throne of England with a young princess of the House of Norway. Prince Victor, his second brother, was at that moment making a tour of the Courts of Europe, absorbed in the question of his own alliance, upon which he held views at once the loftiest and the most expedient. There were no sisters. Of the late King's brothers, one royal Duke represented the Crown in Canada, another in India. The family was held to be well buttressed at home; and its collateral members were freely distributed throughout the Empire, where they more than accomplished that whereto they were sent. The family was happily popular without exertion in the Dominions. At home it was involved in an effort to wear the ideals of an evermore clamorous democracy. The new King John candidly made

this the strenuous business of his life; Prince Victor complied distastefully; but this young man at Oxford had no need of either motive or compliance, belonging as he did so simply and profoundly to the human race. This primitive status of his by no means jumped to the eye. He was tall, and his carriage was haughty, sensitive, and his manner was shy; his features were patrician to the point of austerity. But these were appearances not readily accounted for in his character. Under them his nature was direct and humble. It would have been difficult for him to assume anything, most of all a democratic ideal, since these in a very abstract sense were already an essential part of him. The royal generations since Queen Victoria had given more and more dutiful attention to the popular aspect, as well, perhaps, had more and more truly loved the people; and this passion in the purple of his forbears had endowed the third son of the House with an inclination in such matters which compared with the metal of the demagogue as silver might with pewter. It was no compound or blend of theory and opportunity, but something which he never questioned or thought about, something secreted in him in a natural virgin vein, unsuspected by almost everybody under an exterior so misleading. Perhaps the fine lines of his face expressed the very purity of it; and it was only the common eye that was deceived.

Prince Alfred's propensities jumped very well with the time and the general practice, so well that the signs of them were accepted by the Family and its advisers as remarkably and rather precociously politic. Alfie was thought in such matters much more clever and understanding than Vic, who adored parade, and had been known in his youth to steal his brother, the Prince of Wales's equerry,

for a whole afternoon. Vic was impossible on the subject of the people; he swaggered abominably, and was cheered wherever he went. Alfred did not swagger; rather he moped. Long walks with his dog, a dog of no breeding, the most accidental dog, were his chief distraction, when he would meet other passers-by with hunched-up shoulders and a look that defied them to know who he was and take their hats off. There had been a time when a royal undergraduate was not thus molested about his private business; but the age had grown so democratic that numbers of people now insisted upon allowing themselves this liberty. Once he met three ragamuffins and went fishing with worms with them; but it got into the papers, and after that he shrank even from ragamuffins and worms. On the whole his tutor found him, as a charge, neither difficult nor anxious. His habits were all that could be desired. He never came in smelling of anything worse than beer at the Abingdon pub; and he was so little amused by the houris of the Corn-market tobacconists that he ordered his cigarettes from London. He had hardly any marked predilections, except for the river Thames and the history of England. He rowed enough to be fairly described among Etonians as a wet bob rather than a dry one, and pulled a fair oar, though not up to the form of his college, which was that year head of the river. In any case he would not have been allowed, on account of his chest, the severe training of the Eights, though the exercise in moderation was recommended, and he had not to be urged to punt. He was forever punting, mostly by himself, though now and then Sir Henry Thom and a tea-basket might be made out on the reaches of the upper river, weighing down the other end of the craft. Sir Henry was Regius Professor of History, and gave Prince Alfred a private course.

His young pupil bestowed special attention upon the history and more than special affection upon Sir Henry, who was a man oddly unsuited to Oxford in the breadth and initiative of his social views. Kenneth Talbot sometimes said in confidence that if the Prince had been his royal elder brother, he, Talbot, would have preferred some other private course for him—at all events, some other instructor. This reflection was not only futile but beside the point, since the Prince of Wales, who had been sent, by the way, to Cambridge, would have been quite impervious to the ideas of Sir Henry Thom, except in so far as they might have bored him.

Alfred had his own undergraduate friends, as distinguished from those encouraged by Mr. Talbot. A very ordinary lot, Talbot thought them, though he sensibly considered that this was a point upon which not even a Prince would profit greatly by suggestion, or at all by insistence. The more suitable young men encouraged by Mr. Talbot—Lord Anstruther, Cecil Hamilton and one or two others—privately thought Prince Alfred “not quite up to the part.” Any of these could have prompted him in the part, here and there, especially Knollys, whose instinct in Court matters came down to him with the long “o” in his name. This though in fraternal Oxford there could be no “part,” or hardly any. Such things are very subtle. The other friends Alfred, son of John, found for himself, never spoke of him in terms of criticism. They may have confided to one another the wish that there was something a fellow could do for him; but beyond that they simply liked him very much.

CHAPTER II

THAT Prince Alfred had a house to himself in Oxford, and a tutor also specially attached, was altogether the doing of his aunt, Princess Georgina, Duchess of Altenburg. The ways of the Royal Family had grown more and more democratic since the dawn of the century, and a good many people, including his royal brother, were in favour of the simplest collegian life for Alfred. But Princess Georgina, who was always drawing the line somewhere, drew it round the old house in Longwall Street looking over the grounds of Magdalen, the Prince's college. She carried Catkin, the valet, on the score of the boy's health, which had always given some anxiety, and the Hon. Kenneth Talbot on the score of his personal influence with Alfred, who was not always "easy." She had to give up the equerry. Even Princess Georgina had in these days to give up something. She mourned that she was always giving up.

When her nephew Alfred went to Oxford the Princess felt that for the time being she gave him up with rather special fortitude. She could not follow him there; she admitted that he must be abandoned to "the influences of the place," which, happily, the Family had always had reason to trust. She trusted them now, although, when dear Mr. Talbot's reports of Alfie's interests and ambitions reached her, with some misgiving. The idea of Honours—anything that Oxford could do—for a member of the Family struck Princess Georgina

as redundant. Here, of course, she crossed diplomatic swords with the tutor, who was naturally delighted with Prince Alfred's desire to excel in the History school; and again she waived the point. It was, of course, most creditable in dear Alfie, if they could be certain that his health would bear the strain. Only to be applauded. As to other matters, undergraduate friendships and so on, the Duchess could but rejoice that Mr. Talbot was not inclined to treat them too seriously. The tutor could see, at all events, that certain invitations had the honour of being accepted and no others; he was in effective charge of everything that could wear the air of function. He could also make, without seeming to make them, suitable introductions and opportunities. But preferences he could not control, or hand-grips; the short pipe or the long walk were difficult to modify. Tact, the pleasantest humour, forbearance—what was the Hon. Kenneth there for but to exhibit these things? He did exhibit them, and all he could do to allay the apprehensions of the Duchess he did.

Three of the ordinary lot, the lot that were not imposed or chosen, were sedately drinking tea in Prince Alfred's rooms. The teapot was black Wedgwood, the cups charming Spode, the tray as good an example of Sheffield as could be found anywhere. And none of these circumstances detracted at all from the toothsome-ness of the dough-cake, which was equally genuine, and marked Boffin on the under side. Prince Alfred knew Boffin as well as anybody, and helped as much as anybody to keep up his immortal name. He himself was pouring the tea, stretching his hand from where he sat to give the last drop of it to Longworth, from Massachusetts, who held out his cup over the back of the chair he bestrode; and Prince Alfred tipped the pot at such a determined angle, that the lid

dropped into the cup and knocked a three-cornered bit out.

"Now you've done it, Cakes," remarked Longworth, considering the damage.

"It'll mend all right," said Youghall, a Rhodes man, from St. John, New Brunswick, ducking for the piece.

"Permit me," said Manners, politely substituting a tobacco jar upon the saucer. "Improve the flavour." Manners was the third of the three. To Manners belonged prospectively more iron and steel in Yorkshire than he could ever quite know what to do with, but he would always be the third of the three.

"It's slopped a bit into the saucer, but that's only a matter of another cup," said Prince Alfred. "And here it is."

With which he carefully poured the tea out of the damaged cup into a sound one and handed it to Longworth.

"It hasn't made much of a mess, after all," he continued, wiping his fingers on his handkerchief. "I expect it's cooled off a bit though, old chap."

"Jolly good stuff, any way. Might a fellow ask where it comes from?" Longworth demanded.

"It's the best brew I know."

"Blessed if I can tell you. Mrs. Soames—" the housekeeper had come in with fresh Sally Lunn's, "where do we get our particular blend?"

"From Rathbone's generally, sir, but all the good shops keep it. Imperial mixture it's called. Why, sir, you've had an accident."

"Yes, I have, Mrs. Soames. I was trying to give this man tea, and between us, though it was Mr. Longworth's fault mostly, we smashed the cup."

"I like that," protested Longworth.

"It will mend," said the Canadian again, "if you take care of the pieces."

"Well, we'll do that," said Alfred. Youghall handed him the fragment. The Prince put it into the saucer and gave the broken cup into the hands of Mrs. Soames, who carried it concernedly away.

"It is always worth while," good Mrs. Soames told them all as she went, "to take care of the pieces."

The young men, having dealt faithfully with the Sally Luns, began to smoke. Longworth and Youghall were both at Balliol, Manners at New College. The wave of interest in everything Imperial abroad that rose early in the century had reached at last the grey recesses of Oxford; and Manners was of those who gladly and respectfully consorted with Rhodes scholars and their like, watching their lips for new and stimulating things, responding as a youth might, to the vague and general expectation that placed the hope of the race over-seas. It was through Rhodes men that he made the acquaintance of Prince Alfred, who seemed, as his tutor remarked, quite to "specialize" in them.

"There's wine at Anstruther's to-night. Are you fellows on?" asked Manners.

"Not me," said Prince Alfred. "My time's getting too short for blow-outs. Three weeks Monday, and Thom on my back six days out of seven. If I come a purler, it won't be his fault."

"You won't, Cakes," said Longworth. "You'll carry off the history bun all right. You're a chap that ought to be handicapped. You've got it all inside you."

"That be blowed," Alfred told them briefly. "I'm getting in nine hours most days."

They were all of the same year, but none were in for Greats except Manners, who had hopes of

a second. Longworth and Youghall had agreed that there must be some pass-men at Balliol and that they might suitably furnish two. They declared themselves simply "over" on business, with no time for trials of strength. Their business was of a more general nature; they wanted, as Longworth put it, to get Oxford into their system, and were doing just as much work as was necessary to that end and no more. Yet they had selected Balliol because they were young men in earnest, and they had always heard of Balliol as the concrete example of how earnest Oxford could be.

"Thom expects them to burst themselves on the eighteenth century, last half," Prince Alfred went on. "I hope they do. I begin to feel just about ready for 'em there."

"I see you've been browsing a bit outside the fence," said Longworth, taking up a volume dealing with the revolutionary struggle, which was not prescribed by the University.

"You've got to. And the worst of it is, the further you go the further you want to."

"Nobody has ever bottled History," observed Youghall, gently balancing a chair upon his toe.

"You can't bottle a flowing tide," said Prince Alfred. "Dip in it if you like."

"I say," said Longworth, turning pages, "these portraits of the men on both sides must be useful. Look at our friend here"—he held up a fine head of Burke. "Talk of our Declaration of Independence—he made it. They'd call him a Little Englander now. And this courtly old party who couldn't cross his Sovereign—"

"We have travelled since then," interrupted Prince Alfred. "I know my brother gets things shoved down his throat occasionally."

It was a mark of their intimacy, the freedom with which Prince Alfred would refer to "my brother."

The privilege was conceded that he should do this and be understood to invite no comment. There would be, as now, an instant of silence, or somebody would say respectfully as Manners now said with a half tone of regret, "I suppose so."

"And look at our people," went on Longworth, turning over Lord North. "Franklin, Sam Adams—there was a gnarled old Calvinist—Hamilton the Dictator. Amongst them they've got the whole show in their faces. On the walls of schools that lot would do very well as a crib."

Alfred got up, walked round the table and regarded the book over Longworth's shoulder with interest.

"Jolly true," he said thoughtfully, as his cigarette ash dropped into the eye of Samuel Adams. It was evidently a new light to him, and he seemed caught by it, stooping to look clearer at the faces under Longworth's hand. Involuntarily the pages slipped over till they showed that principal actor, George the Third; and the two young men considered the fine, florid portrait together.

"You're not much like him in the face, old dear," said Longworth.

"I don't think I'm much like him any way," said his descendant. "Not that it matters. By the way," he went on with a touch of shyness, "your people have been over there a good while, lengthy? I expect some of them carried a musket in those days, didn't they?"

Longworth looked up with rather a queer smile.

"No, sir. There was only my great-great-granddad; and I am ashamed to say he didn't. But I'm just as proud to tell you why. It was because he was shouldering his gun for the King over here in Europe with the rest of the Royal Americans; and he couldn't be in two places at once."

There was a laugh from the other two, led by

Manners, who slapped Longworth on the back. Prince Alfred did not laugh, but his face lighted up.

"By Jove! I like to hear that," he said. "He was a brother officer of mine then, your great-great-granddad, or he is now anyhow. It's my regiment—the Imperial Rifles we call ourselves now. I asked for a commission in it, sort of fancying its antecedents. Our dark green kit came out of your forests—one of the few things we had sense enough to keep."

"You asked to join that once American regiment?" said Longworth.

"I did."

"Do I understand—for that reason?"

"For that reason."

The American pressed his lips together and got up.

"Then shake" he said briefly, and held out his hand. "A thing like that makes one wish the blessed thing had never happened," he added lightly, as they "shook," awkwardly enough on Alfred's part.

"Oh, rather not!" said he. "It had to happen, and personally I'm glad it happened. I don't know any achievement of Englishmen that thrills me more or interests me as much. By Jove! what a fine executive chance they made for the race."

"It was a fairly general movement," put in Manners. "John Wilkes over here was hammering at the same sort of thing."

"Wilkes was a rascal," said Prince Alfred. "Though rascals have been useful in Parliament before him and since. You can't compare the natural growth that was going on on this side. We were fighting over there for much more than anything Wilkes stood for."

It sounded odd, the "we," even in the freedom of undergraduate intercourse. Arthur Youghall,

the Canadian, especially looked a rather doubtful assent. He thought of the Royal Arms in the old church in his native city, and how forbears of his had sailed with them in an open boat from Boston, bidden begone.

"We were on different sides," he contributed, rather dryly.

"And did that never happen before?" demanded Alfred. "It was we who quarrelled—that's the thing. Couldn't we quarrel if we wanted to? And be better friends after?"

"It was a family affair, no doubt about that," said Longworth.

"Wasn't there a little Dutch in it?" suggested Youghall.

"Precious little," said Prince Alfred eagerly. "Our Americans of the eighteenth century were as pure English as the people in any country of England to-day. Fiske will tell you that—you needn't take it from me. And what they did was English too. I'm not supposed to talk politics, as you fellows know. But that's history, I take it?"

He looked from one to another of them, colouring and hesitating.

"I don't know, my son," chaffed Longworth. "History is only cold politics—do they let you have 'em cold? Anyhow—what's become of the American tour scheme? Have they hung it up?"

"Tabby tells me it's just about through, and that I can as good as count on it," Alfred told him, with a brightened eye. "I was all over the shop in Canada when I was sixteen, and Australia two years later. So I was afraid my uncle would stick out for me to do India this time—he's running the show out there just now. Luckily there's some silly difficulty about precedence. It seems to matter a lot to the Hindoos which elephant I'm on—I'm sure it doesn't to me. Anyhow the climate's not

thought right; and it's just about decided that I get the tour I want, once this job's over."

They all looked at him with congratulation, each of them knowing very well what he wanted and how annoying it was to be in doubt about getting it, and Longworth said—

"You'll have the time of your life, Cakes."

Cakes looked suddenly depressed and replied—

"There's a beastly lot to settle first."

"Gcing incog.?" asked Manners.

"I want to, but even that's got to be discussed. An invitation's come from Washington—the papers over there got hold of my wanting to come, so I feel I've cadged it. You can't stay with the President incog.; I suppose?" He looked hopefully at Longworth. "But I think it would be a better scheme by a long shot."

"You think so," remarked Longworth. "Well—I'd like to see the incog. worn by your Imperial dough that could be preserved for ten minutes in the United States of America."

CHAPTER III

PRINCE ALFRED having been reminded just in time of an engagement to take tea with the wife of the President of his college, Manners, Youghall and Longworth presently also remembered an afternoon lecture by a returned pro-Consul, and found themselves on the pavement together and turning into the High. They walked soberly along, hatless under a whimpering of rain, their hands thrust into their trouser pockets, their gowns flapping. The undergraduate's gown is, as a point of pride, a matter of form and tradition, never new. Manners's, in this respect, was of the average, reasonably rent. Youghall's hung on his back almost as it had come from the tailor, Longworth's was a rag that would hardly have covered the shoulders of a fish-wife. There were things in the men to match, be sure: Manners was the product of the island, fresh, fair, and good-looking, broadly rather than finely finished, convinced without enthusiasm, humble without subserviency, practical without meanness. He allowed his gown to be torn. After a ragging fray he surveyed the result with satisfaction. It would never be taken for the garment of a smug; but he would not, to that end, directly damage it. Youghall was the hard-earned Canadian. His was a queer, ugly, faithful face, with a square chin of power and initiative. One would have said no charm until he spoke, and then the wide, mobile mouth somehow produced it, showing whatever was in him of deep and tender, quiet and sure, that had come out of that northern

dominion, held with so much hardship by generations lonely and ignored. You saw that he was slow; you felt that he was resourceful and that his mind was already occupied with matters simple and big, so occupied as to leave little room for anything else, and none for such an unjustified importance as a ragged gown where a whole one was as available. Youghall would take reasonable care of his gown. It was as likely to be on its peg as any of his other clothes.

Longworth's gown would brook no second. It may have been made of English cloth by an Oxford tailor, but it was an American garment. Since gowns were to be shabby there would be none shabbier. It would be thus with the policies of his life; he would always contemn the cost, would find always a pleasure in being reckless about it. It was an attractive personality, Longworth's people looked twice as he swung along between the other two. His head was eighteenth century American, the noble type, familiar with grace and dialectics and the use of gunpowder. A long, lean face it was, almost cadaverous, with a chiselled nose, sensitive mouth, clean brow, and bunch of irresistibly waving hair above it. An idealist's face, now or then or ever, but bearing the unmistakable stamp of days when purpose in New England was pitched high. They talked about the Prince, as they often did, leaving him, with all the freedom of loyalty.

"I suppose that note reminding him about Mrs. Magdalen was from Tabby," said Longworth, stooping to give a side-long caress, as he passed, to a shop cat that blinked on a doorstep.

"I wish she heard you," grunted Manners.

"He's very respectful," remarked Youghall. "For him. He might have said 'Mother Magdalen,' or 'Ma Magdalen,' and been just as alliterative and less polite."

"I beg her pardon," said the chidden Longworth, "Madame Magdalen, and from her appearance I should say a charming lady. But what must it be to have a collar and a chain, and a Tabby at the other end, like Cakes?"

"They get used to it," explained Manners. "Sort of brought up by hand that way, you know. Fearfully superior persons in charge from the month. It's a profession just to live, for a Royalty."

"Did you notice how he coloured when he got it," asked Youghall. "Went red as a coal, and looked frightfully sick with himself."

"Cakes is always forgetting," said Longworth, "I guess he doesn't find it much of a profession, just to live, according to other people's ideas. He wants to be alive at the same time."

"He's keen as mustard on everything that is alive," agreed Youghall. "Motors, for instance. We came across a breakdown the other day about a mile beyond Headington. Furniture delivery van it was. The driver seemed fairly helpless, and our friend sort of hung round and hung round. Couldn't get him away from the blessed thing. First thing I knew he was letting off ideas, and the next he was mixed up in it himself. Got it going too, after three quarters of a happy hour. Ruined his pants and came home fit to burst with pride."

"They give him one when he's down," said Manners. "He and Talbot did a Scotch tour in it last long vac., and he drove himself. I believe what he'd like best on earth would be a railway surveyor's job in Western Canada, or a lock superintendent's on the Panama Canal. Any bally thing with a use in it."

"And he's got to be a Prince for a living, and go about with two detectives. Hard luck," said Longworth, looking at the clock face in Carfax

Tower. "I must leave you fellows here—I promised to pick up some people at five, and it's that already. So long."

They were dodging the bicycles and bakers' carts of Carfax as he spoke, crossing that muddy triangle into the Corn-market. Boys with glistening red cheeks dodged out of their way, offering the London evening papers. They themselves dodged sturdy perambulators, sometimes double ones, pushed by unswerving young mothers, or stepped aside while some quaint figure, in all the capes and hoariness of Oxford, picked its nervous path across the tram-lines. Longworth led them there, and the other two turned up the Corn-market. It stretched before them full of donnish young wives trying not to linger before the drapers' windows, moving with more perambulators, more undergraduates, and pavement vendors, under the misty rain, of violets and narcissus. The shops blended in the wet foreground; further along an umbrella swung its sign over the passers-by. A hatless youth in an astonishing blazer tore past them on a bicycle, head down, sucking with deep earnestness a large black pipe. The elms of St. Giles' traced themselves upon the vista; the houses of the old judges closed it in with lines of quiet dignity; and a horse tram-car, the last left in England, bustling off ahead of them, took the colours of all. From this point of view—they had turned their backs upon Old—Oxford retires into her temples, lifting only a venerable tower or two to remind the Corn-market whose Corn-market it is. Material Oxford it was that day, going about the common business of life in damp weather, with a smell of beer in the air and not a vision in sight. They talked, after Longworth had gone, of the man who was to lecture, and the work he had done in Egypt, speaking more freely in his absence. Brimful as he was of English appreciations Longworth

was not always sympathetic about the work of pro-Consuls. Then, with a half-tone of apology, Youghall began to talk of Longworth himself.

"I say," he said, as they left the shops and strode on into St. Giles', where it broadens respectfully for John's and the Memorial, "does it ever occur to you that you'd just as soon Longworth didn't call the Prince 'Cakes'?" He spoke shyly, with a touch of effort, claiming their mutual right to a point of view about anything the American did.

"Oh, rather not," laughed Manners. "Never thought about it. Why shouldn't he? It's rather comic, and *he* doesn't care a brass farthing."

"No, *he* wouldn't care," admitted Youghall, "but it sort of worries me. I suppose we can't keep him always dressed up in the flag," he conceded, "and of course Lengthy is the best of good Americans. Is that tour really coming off?"

Manners assumed an air, an unmistakable air of seriousness and concern, mingled with just a suggestion of special information.

"If he gets through schools without a breakdown," he said.

"Seems to be going fairly strong," said Youghall, arrested.

"They're always afraid of his bellows. Weigh him every week. The poor devil was so afraid they'd take him off his job last month he put a pound of three-inch nails in his pockets. Doctor got hold of it somehow, and now they put him on the scales in bathing drawers *et præterea nihil*."

"That so?" said Youghall. "Well, I hope they let him go. He's dead keen on the U.S.A., and they'll know how to take care of him over there. Talking of Americans, did you notice that one of the Vanderbilts is going to stand for that Berkshire vacancy?"

"Herbert Vanderbilt—yes. He bought the

Duke of Covenden's property somewhere there two years ago. Well, why not? I don't suppose he's got anything else to do, and he couldn't have anything better."

"Aren't they getting a bit thick in the House?" objected Youghall. "Colquhoun—Everett—Gould—I counted five the other day."

"Not a bit too thick, old chap. They show us the way in quite a lot of directions, and there isn't one of 'em will touch his salary. Our people got over that affectation some time ago. Felt they were bound to get something back out of the taxes, I suppose. But the Americans won't. I don't think it's side, either. Of course, they're mostly very rich men. Reclaimed Britishers, the Prince calls 'em. He was talking about it only the other day—knows the life history of every fellow. Seems there's been an Astor in Parliament, steady on, for twenty years now, and the last but one held Cabinet rank. The first Lord Astor was that one's father. Tremendous Tories, every one of 'em."

"Well, *i would* object," Youghall told him, "if it weren't for our own little lot. We're ten as it is and more coming."

"The Canadian group. Right you are," said Manners heartily. "It's ripping to see those fellows taking hold. I wonder why they do it myself. It ain't any too attractive, political life in this country, the way things are jumbled up now. No particular position or kudos, outside the Lords, and this nightmare of the national credit——"

"I guess they want to have a say. It's still, you know, about the best say and the freest say you can have anywhere—Westminster—and there's a good deal to talk about."

"The remarkable thing," said Manners with conviction, "is the way your men get elected over here, particularly in the rural districts and the north."

They've only got to show themselves to a constituency, especially if they can say 'My friends, my father left this old country of yours—I mean of ours—a poorer man than any one in this room.' That father's son gets home every time."

"Yes," said Youghall. "That's so. The poor beggars have heard about the millennium so long that they relish seeing a bit of it for a change; wearing a silk hat and talking in dollars a day. They sort of feel they're getting in touch with it, sending a chap like that to the House."

"So they are, too. All the same I wonder," persisted the Englishman. "From the ordinary point of view your fellows have a great deal more to gain at home. They're turning their backs on a country of God's own opportunity to hammer at problems they had no hand in making—leaving good hopes to take up lost causes——"

"Oh, my dear chap, like everybody else in this blessed country you look no further than the parish pump. Because the industrials are getting muscular and making it uncomfortable all round you can't get your eyes off your island, and the prospects of the next strike. But hang it all, England's the nexus of the Empire still—always will be, please God. We who have been born outside can't forget that, and we look at her, you know, in the fix she's in now—we look at her through tears. Sort of proud to belong to her and sick at the way things are going, and just crazy to come and be some use."

There was enough feeling in Youghall's voice to keep Manners' eyes fixed in front of him, but not too much for reasonable notice.

"I shouldn't wonder if you were taking a hand yourself, old man. By-and-by."

"I shouldn't either," said Youghall.

CHAPTER IV

ENGLAND was thoroughly pleased—her third son had obtained a First. Prince Alfred's success was everybody's affair. The clubs in Pall Mall looked over the tops of their newspapers to comment on it; country rectories gently throbbed with it. The Hon. Kenneth Talbot, much as he disliked advertisement, was compelled to see himself in the illustrated dailies. So was Sir Henry Thom, Prince Alfred's special history coach. So was even Catkin. Oxford itself simmered blandly, well content. From many parts of the world came telegrams of congratulation, one of the oddest from the Grand Llama of Thibet.

Popular sympathy was touched by the common knowledge that the young man was not strong, and had made good against some handicap; every mother of a delicate son understood. After the ordeal, he had gone straight to Sandringham for the bracing Norfolk air; and it was presently made known that the American tour which had been for some time talked of as probable would now immediately take place. Prince Alfred's "very special interest" in the United States gave the tour the look of a reward. The boy had done well, and now he was going to enjoy himself. That was almost the way it was put, and the heart of his country beat for him in warm pride and approval. Naturally, his Aunt Georgina congratulated him more cordially than anybody, but with reserve. The Duchess of Altenburg believed there was a certain

natural law for royalty, which it was unwise to overstep. No Divine Right or anything of that sort, but just a natural law.

The Duchess had been talking of other things as she sat in her hooded basket-chair, protected against draughts under an elm on the private lawn of Kensington Palace, her lady-in-waiting near her on an ordinary garden seat, her dear Pekinese Ching wherever he liked to lie. The brightness of June was about her. Blooming borders, only glimpsed and guessed at by the public roaming through the State Apartments, stretched and curled at her feet. The sound of the traffic from both sides of the garden came dulled and softened through the trees, like a diminished form of attendance. Princess Georgina often remarked how little it inconvenienced her, "as, it is said, people who live on the brink of the cataract become accustomed to the noise of the falls of Niagara." There was, no doubt, the custom of the ears; there was probably as well the constant sense of a world hurrying about its daily business, yet always willing to be impressed and interested in the doings of the Family. That must have helped, subconsciously, to make the sound tolerable, if not actually pleasant.

Princess Georgina was the only surviving sister of the late King. A widow and childless, she had been plainly meant by Heaven to be all in all to his three motherless boys, John, Victor, and Alfred. How she had fulfilled this duty the Press amply testified; it was one of England's idylls. Report made her more responsible than any other person for the marriage of the young King John, which promised, Heaven always helping, so well for the line, the race, and the Empire. Among her intimates her great present anxiety was understood to be "Victor's affair"; but with a connection so

illustrious and an influence so responsible she was naturally never without an anxiety of some sort. Grave considerations, not always to be mentioned, lurked constantly behind her smile, which was otherwise cordial; and it was easy to see that her shapely white fingers held with every sagacity many strings. It was said that in brains and character she greatly resembled a distinguished collateral fading into history, the Empress Frederick; but it is likely that a careful examination would have found her at heart just a reactionary as compared with that other great lady. Princess Georgina felt herself, often sadly described herself, a solitary bulwark against the advancing democratic tide. She stood royally for the old times and the old traditions, and the people, encroaching always, admired and cheered her for it.

"I must say," she remarked, putting down the fluffy baby thing she was knitting, "I consider the visit oddly timed. In the very middle of the Allied Premiers. Just a little prying, as I see it. Why should the Emperor Heinrich wish to come over here at a time of what I call family reunion?"

Lady Althea Dawe put down the tie she was crocheting, with the instinctive motion that repeated, where practicable, most of the Princess's gestures.

"True," she agreed. "But the Premiers come every second year now, don't they? And England is always at its best in June."

"Oh, yes—it's easy enough to explain away. And, of course, the time may have been suggested from here. For reasons that would never occur to you, I'm afraid, my dear Althea. It may be just as well that Cousin Heinrich should feel something of the reality of the tie between us and the young Dominions. I hope he will—and much good may it do him."

"Do listen, Princess, to that darling dove," said Lady Althea.

"Sweet thing—here in the heart of London! How our Heavenly Father blesses us, when all is said and done. Socialism may be coming and capital may be going, but we have always the doves, Althea; let us remember that."

The bird flew to another branch, and the eyes of the two ladies followed it with affection. Ching, too, looked up.

"Sweetheart," commented the Princess. "Althea, feel his nose. But as to our visitors. Whatever happens, dear, I do not wish too much contact with Him at the garden-party this afternoon. Last night at dinner was enough. Nothing but explanations of how absurd and ridiculous and impossible it was that the two nations should ever go to war. One could only agree, though all the time longing to say, 'I don't at all think so,' as one saw *quite plainly* that *he* didn't. Really, he put me out of temper. So patronising. Her, if you like. But if you see me involved with Him, come up to us with a message."

"He seems to me," said Lady Althea boldly, "a domineering young man."

"Was there ever a member of that Family who wasn't? Words cannot express how thankful I am that our young people are so very different. Which reminds me, love—you must help me to contrive two words with Count Wettersee to-day."

"The one with the bald head and curly hair round it—the almost good-looking one?" said Althea.

"Oh, yes."

"Victor's affair seems almost, under the guidance of Providence, happily settled." Princess Georgina again put down her knitting. "Though I hope I shall like her better than I like most Italians. But there is always Alfie."

"Dear Prince Alfred," said Lady Althea, with suspended needles. "Yes, indeed. But isn't it early days?"

"It is. Still, one must be thinking. You know what was nearest my heart for John once—too young then, I admitted, and, of course, when he actually fell in love in another quarter, what was there to say or do except smooth away all difficulties? But *she* remains. Older now. In many ways improved."

Lady Althea's ball of silk rolled upon the ground, and Ching twitched an ear after it. Lady Althea arrested her movement to pick it up.

"The Arch-Duchess Sophia-Ludovica!" she exclaimed.

"Sh—sh, my love! How do you know there is not a reporter behind that bush? Let us refer to her as 'S. L.' All the reasons, my dear Althea, which I urged in favour of S. L. with reference to my eldest nephew hold equally well in connection with my youngest."

"I suppose they do," murmured Lady Althea.

"Of course, she being at that time only sixteen—I meant John to wait at least two years, poor dear—nobody was actually *sounded*. There is every reason to believe, however, that such an arrangement would be gladly welcomed. Heinrich has more nieces than he knows what to do with."

"I should think so indeed," said Lady Althea.

"You know very little about it," the Princess went on absently. "Still, I wish it could be as easily taken for granted," she continued, "that things will be smooth on this side of the North Sea. I often feel that one couldn't wholly count on my nephew in a matter of this kind. I'm afraid he cares very little about women—a good thing, of course, in some ways. I know you will respect my confidence, Althea—Alfred is not my favourite

nephew. In a sense all are dear, but in that boy I always mistrust a hidden obstinacy, a determination to take his own line, that is almost—shall I say middle-class?"

The Princess knitted with the firmness she would display toward anything of the kind.

"However," she continued, "I don't know why we should go to meet trouble. Yes, I must have a word with that old man. These things cannot be thought about too soon. And I should like to pour in just a drop of oil about Alfie's American visit. In the present state of feeling between the two countries they won't like him any better for going there—us either for sending him. They must be made to understand how absolutely non-political the visit is, in every sense of the term. I shall sum it up in two words—'hydro-electrics.' Alfred's passion for such things must have reached their ears. Hydro-electrics must explain everything."

"What a good idea," said Lady Althea.

"And health, of course. After the terrible strain of those foolish Oxford examinations. Very modern and very regrettable, I shall always consider that idea of Honours Schools. So unnecessary. I ask you, at the worst, is he likely ever to earn his living as a schoolmaster?"

"Oh, but," deprecated Lady Althea, "one felt so proud of him! And, as all the papers said, think of the example."

"Nor do I altogether approve—for Alfred—of this tour. He is altogether too American in many of his ideas already. And the mind at his age is so plastic. Wiser to wait—much wiser to wait. But who listens to an old woman like me nowadays? Go he must, and go he will, next Wednesday. I said all I could."

"Everybody listens to you, darling," said Lady Althea.

"There is just that one thing against S.L.," meditated Princess Georgina, knitting faster than ever. "Her being sent, in that promiscuous fashion, to a boarding-school. I always remember that foolish idea of her mother's, who was half American, you know. I wonder He allowed it, knowing what her future almost must be. However, I know her to be a good girl. Not too pretty, I confess, unless she has changed of late, with a sound religious training and all the true old ideas about what a woman should do and be. Which we must confess, love, are to be found nowadays more conspicuously than anywhere else in Germany."

"You yourself have been in America, have you not, Princess?" said Lady Althea rather wistfully.

"Dear me—what memories you evoke. Yes, I have. Twenty years ago—or is it twenty-one? A slip of a girl I was, staying with my uncle William in Ottawa. We went across to New York for some junketing, and put up with—now what was his name? A former ambassador to us here. No, it's gone. But I remember what pains we took to be civil, and how I enjoyed it all. America is enjoyable, you know, when you are young. It would upset me now. But here's Flack," broke off the Princess, rolling up her work, as an elderly person of important aspect appeared, and began to waddle toward them. "Mistress Flack, come to tell me it is nearly two o'clock, and time for me to wash my hands for luncheon."

Yet the last tender embrace which Prince Alfred received before he crossed the gangway of the *Auretania* on Wednesday was that of the Duchess of Altenburg. It was cleverly caught by a photographer, and next day made a charming incident of the Prince's departure in the papers.

CHAPTER V

"HE'LL be here in little over an hour now," said Mrs. Phipps, wife of the President of the United States, putting down her novel. "No—she's a delightful writer, but it's not a bit of use. I can't keep my mind on it. James, you have not changed your tie. James—to please me! You're *never* at your best in a brown tie. It's a bilious colour, and I've always said so. Though whatever you wear you always look America's greatest gentleman——"

The President put an apologetic hand to his tie, and gave himself a general corrective shake.

"Too late, my dear; I have a deputation before he comes. The beggars are due in ten minutes, and I shall only just get rid of them in time. Did Calder get off in the auto?"

"Ages ago. He and Hilary and Freddy Howard from the Embassy nearly drove me distracted after lunch, begging for more cards for that wild dance of theirs. We shall be suffocated as it is. I think Captain Howard was a *little* disappointed that the Cavalry weren't sent to the station, dear."

"Very likely," said the President, with his hand on the door-handle. "I hope you put the responsibility where it belongs—on the State Department. They wouldn't hear of an escort till he gets to his own Embassy. Pakenham drives him there, with Howard and the rest in a second auto, and then Calder takes him over and brings him here with the troop in attendance. Quite enough for a young man out of employment."

"Mercy, yes, I know," said Mrs. Phipps. "Do

go now, James, and get rid of your deputation. Charlie Calder is so feather-headed—I'm just praying that he won't shake hands in the wrong place or something."

"I've told him he's on no account to butt in before the ambassador," replied the President. "Don't you worry—Charlie'll get delivery of the Prince all right at the proper time. Hilary isn't staying to help you receive him?"

"No. I should have loved her to; but—oh, well, I understand perfectly, James. I think she would feel it, just a little. When one remembers what she was to her father in this house for three long years, and practically mistress of it for the last two—it would be hard for her. And who is to know whether 'Miss Hilary Lanchester' would convey any idea to His Royal Highness whatever?"

"She staying over for the dance, of course."

"Of course. James—that dance! When I think of the good old simple times when the President of the United States was not expected to vie with the Courts of Europe in entertaining, I could just sit and cry. The very most that would have been expected of the Roosevelts or the Tafts would have been a State reception, or possibly a hop of forty or fifty couples to give the Prince a pleasant evening. But we of all people in the world—plain people like us—have got to be elected to the new ballroom and the State Lancers, and the extra aides, and heaven knows what besides—and all the world looking at us to see that we do it. James, we are simply *not the people*."

"May be not," said Mr. Phipps, "but I have a sort of feeling that we'll do as well as anybody else in the meantime. Cheer up, little woman. They might have had me in uniform, and you, too, for all I know. It was a close call—a mighty close call."

"The one thing," his wife told him, "that I

wouldn't have had the least objection to. Gold braid an inch thick is what I'd just adore to see you in, James."

"Then Hilary is coming to the dance?"

"Oh, yes—she's coming. And here she is," went on Mrs. Phipps, as a door opened on the other side of the room. "James, when I think of those Colorado men and the time they will take, my hair goes three shades greyer. Send him away, Hilary. He saw you at lunch. There's no excuse."

They laughed at one another understandingly, the President of the United States and the daughter of his old friend and predecessor in office; and the door closed at last upon Mr. Phipps. Miss Lancheſter came into the pretty room towards the pretty lady who sat, so perfectly poised, so charmingly dressed, beside a buhl table in the middle of it. There was a silver bowl of roses on the table, and the glass pendants of an ever so old-fashioned chandelier twinkled overhead. It was an agreeable picture, and Mrs. Phipps, with her delicately lined face that still kept its shell-pinkness, and that air of constantly dealing with small decisions of importance which is so marked in ladies of official position, dominated it with pleasant significance.

"Well, honey, I see you've got your hat on. But you needn't go yet."

Miss Lancheſter smiled, and became at once, for all the world to see, one of the most beautiful people in it. Until she smiled she seemed a tall girl of whom you would say "How lovely," and pass on, a creature of perfect grace and deep, happy eyes; but the flash of her smile, if you caught it, very promptly turned your head to look again. Her face simply was, you admitted and acclaimed it, among the heaven-sent things in a world not too often remembered by any other—the American papers of her father's administration had not said a word

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"Well, honey, I see you've got your hat on."



too much. Indeed, you felt that the American papers, in not celebrating Hilary Lanchester's beauty more than they did, showed a calm acceptance and lack of excitement that was rather assuming. Beautiful young women might be a special American product, but they couldn't be as common as that. Such reticence was like insular indifference to criticism; it simply provoked. Looking back through the files of three years before—they seldom mentioned her now—it might even be noted that the newspapers trumpeted her far more as the single solace of the most successful President since the Civil War—as the daughter of the man who had taken the Chief Magistracy from a mob of plutocrats, and held it for a term and a half in the teeth of the biggest bosses the civilised world had yet permitted to exist—as the youngest hostess the White House had ever known. Such superlatives appeared to be her highest honour; nobody seemed to think of describing her at the same time as the most beautiful girl in the United States, because, no doubt, nobody could be quite sure that she was. One remembers the tribute of the *Wyoming Messenger* the last time the ex-President toured in the West, taking her with him. "Daughter Hilary looks as good to us, in her own way, as Dada. Though we're not asking any lady to believe that we can't do just as well right here in Wyoming."

Mrs. Phipps did not think they could do as well in Wyoming or anywhere else. Mrs. Phipps, childless and loving, gave Hilary the palm a little indiscriminately. I mean for wit as well as for beauty, for culture as well as for grace, for conversation as well as for golf, for example. Hilary had the humour and gaiety of her magnificent health. She had a sweet nature and good brains, and had worked in Paris and in Brussels creditably

enough without doing wonders. She talked—well, it will appear how she talked. Her golf was certainly unexceptionable.

Miss Lanchester said that she had sent for a taxi, and that she was due in Dupont Circle in half-an-hour. Meantime she dropped her person, like a long-stemmed rose, in the corner of a sofa.

"It just worries me to death," said Mrs. Phipps, "to think of your taking a taxi from this house. But literally every last thing with a wheel to it has gone to the station."

"I give you my word I can still afford a taxi," laughed Hilary. "But for the heat and the smell of the asphalt, and the crowd—the Square out there is packed already—I would have gone by the Avenue car. It's quite convenient. Did you ever know Washington so hot in June? And you, poor darling, with three entertainments this week."

Mrs. Phipps sighed, a long, gently fatigued sigh, and waved a palm-leaf fan in front of her lace bosom. She tried to smile her sense of official duty, but only her lower lip expressed resignation. The upper one crowned it with complacency.

"Hot, my dear! I remember only one June like it. We were living in Syracuse. I hadn't been long married, and I was making strawberry preserve for the first time in my life, coming as I did from a home where such things did themselves. What a lot there is in smells, Hilary. This morning a berry on the electric heater on the sideboard, and those self-sealers were all with me again. Partly the weather, no doubt. Well, to think of it! The wheel of time! Doing up my own fruit in a back kitchen in Syracuse, and now waiting for the third son of the late King of England—I did so admire that man—in the White House in my country's capital. Luckily I have you, Hilary. You are a link. You make it more human."

"The Blue Room," said Hilary, "is looking its very best. I just poked my nose in. I like the new coverings immensely."

"The President and I are to receive him there. Then I suppose Major Calder will show him his rooms. He'll want to wash his hands after the train. Perhaps, being a Prince, he'll require a bath—though it's only four hours from New York, and he must have had one this morning——"

"He will call it a tub," said Hilary. "Our English guests always talked about their tubs—and with an openness. One dear old thing, too stout to hunt any more, told me she supposed she ought to be thankful she had still a seat in her tub. They don't seem to mind. Bath is a sort of vague expression, but tub—well, tub is plain, isn't it!"

"They are plain, the British. Well, we're giving him half-an-hour for his ablutions, whatever he calls them. I hope that will be enough to get the dust of the Republic off him. Then we serve tea in the large drawing-room, and I wish we had decided on having it here, for I'm never at my best in that room in the day-time; and I don't suppose we shall have him for another moment so much to ourselves. First impressions go so far. But I insisted on making the tea. A State teapot it may be, but I handle it."

"Darling, it's an anxious task; but the taxi must be there," observed Hilary.

"Oh, no—they'll tell you. Very likely they've had to telephone—there were none on the rank this morning. And, oh, my dear—talk of fatigue—what do you think? He insists on coming down to breakfast! Which means, I suppose, that I must and will, though the President forbids it."

"Well," said Hilary, "I wouldn't mar my married life for him if he were the heir to the throne, which he isn't."

"Oh, yes; you would, dear, if it were a case of doing the proper thing or not doing it. I won't have him writing home to Queen Alma Patricia that the hostess of the White House spends most of her time in bed. I'll struggle down."

"I suppose you've got some idea of his habits from the Embassy. I remember we heard privately, when the Russian Crown Prince came."

"We inquired, naturally. Apparently, he doesn't wish to be indulged in any way. That's why he's so firm about breakfast. If he only knew! Wishes to conform to the ways of the family in every respect, Sir Arthur said. I wonder if he'd enjoy my raw fruit luncheon. It's doing me such a world of good, Hilary! Hilary—tell me—what relation exactly is your godmother to this young man?"

"Aunt!" said Miss Lanchester, with an eye that brightened in spite of itself.

"I thought so. Aunt! I wish I were aunt to his godmother. I mean I wish his godmother were my aunt—it would be something to talk about. I envy you, Hilary. And you can say quite naturally, 'How is my godmother?' when it would be liberty to say, 'How is your aunt?' She is your godmother, all right, all right. You have that much definite property in the Family. And how exactly did it happen? Recount me the tale, because I don't mind telling you, dear, I'm relying on it myself. . . . When conversation absolutely fails, I can say, 'We have here a young person who is god-daughter to your aunt, Georgina, Duchess of Altenburg.'"

"She wasn't the Duchess of Altenburg then," laughed Hilary. "She was Princess Georgina, King John's eldest sister, and she was over here with her uncle, who was Governor-General of Canada, and they were staying with my uncle,

Russell Rood, in New York, and so was I, being at that time three weeks old and half an orphan. My uncle, you know, had been ambassador over there."

"Indeed I do. The loveliest man and greatest master of American prose of his generation. Are we likely to forget him? Go on, chicken. The Princess cooed over you in your poor little cradle, and——"

"That's as much as I remember. But there was a private christening, and I've always been told she held me, and that my behaviour was beautiful."

"And you've got your silver mug. I'm sure I've heard a silver mug mentioned."

"Father's got it. He considers it his trophy—I'm sure I don't know why. That taxi is running into dollars; but before I go I must tell you—there's an immense discussion——"

Mrs. Phipps dropped her fan. "About what in the world now? I thought we had settled everything, Hilary; I *can't* reopen——"

"Nothing like that. But not a living girl in Washington except me seems to know—whether she wants to curtsy to him or not."

"What utter nonsense! We Americans don't curtsy, and never did."

"Oh, yes, once we did. To our own Governors, in the streets of New York."

"Well, all I can say is we've learned better. What *utter* nonsense!"

"I don't know—it's a pretty custom. They used to make us do it at Mademoiselle's in Brussels. And I always feel like curtseying to the President. But that's because I love him."

"Then you think it ought to be done. You want to do it."

"No, indeed! I'm the only one who is quite sure she won't. Margery Passmore, and Betty Chase, and the Carrol girls, who have been pre-

sented in England, are at the bottom of what I call a perfectly ridiculous fuss. Kate Carrol says the Queen curtsies to King John every time she leaves the table, and that all Royalties expect it, and that she isn't going to be guilty of any rudeness. But I say with you, darling, what is that to us?"

"If Prince Alfred expects it," began Mrs. Phipps firmly, "he will just——"

A sound struck through to them from the world outside, a sound of cheering, a sound that grew louder and louder.

"Hilary—it's the Prince! He's before his time! Ring! Send for the President. Quick! Oh, *where* is James? I will not appear in the Blue Room alone. No, don't go. Wait till James comes, ducky——"

But the President in his library was still besieged by the deputation from Colorado, to whom the ear of the Chief Executive was of more importance than the whole of any Imperial person on earth. Arrival by automobile is also a very rapid process, and no doubt Major Calder, A.D.C., was a little flurried at finding the Blue Room empty. At all events, a moment later the door of Mrs. Phipps' private drawing-room opened to admit, not the President, but a group of heated-looking young men, one of whom stood half a head taller than the rest, and was smiling, eagerly, delightfully——

And there was Mrs. Phipps, all alone but for Hilary, giving the most charming American welcome imaginable to Prince Alfred of England, and presenting Hilary. And there was Hilary—who curtsied!

CHAPTER VI

COLONEL VANDELEUR, C.B., had been selected to accompany Prince Alfred partly because the King immensely liked him, partly on account of his comparative youth and positive spirits, and partly again because of his American descent, which would do much, it was thought, to put the Prince in touch with what he might otherwise fail to understand, and thus help him indirectly to make himself pleasant to his hosts. The Vandeleurs had returned to England about the same time as the Astors, and apparently for much the same reasons; but the serious attractions of public duty in their re-adopted country had passed them by. They had been content to arrive and remain smart, wealthy people, assuming only the lighter responsibilities that attach to their class. Two of the later Vandeleurs had been Masters of Hounds of an historic Hunt. One had raised and commanded a Yeomanry regiment in Sussex, and had served on the staff of a Viceroy in India; and this Colonel Adrian Vandeleur, of the 7th Home Guards, remaining a bachelor and ripening happily under the most favourable conditions, was probably the finest, roundest, best flavoured fruit on the tree. Such an appointment as his with Prince Alfred would have been impossible a generation earlier. Even a generation earlier it would have been too quick a return to Republican shores in circumstances so conspicuous, bearing a King's Commission, and wearing his blue ribbon of the Bath. But once again the political instinct

of the Royal House had perfectly asserted itself as to time, place, and susceptibilities; the moment shone bright and right; the great American nation accepted a compliment, and slapped Colonel Adrian Vandeleur on the back not without a certain pride. It could be said of his particular C.B. at all events that several thousand pure island Britishers would have been very pleased to have received it.

The dinner that first night at the White House had been of the quietest, nobody being present except the Staff, the President, and Mrs. Phipps. Vandy had been splendid, playing up to the President, who twinkled with humour at being played up to, and said things that seemed to Prince Alfred of quite unapproachable originality. He had a slow, rich, dignified and unconquerable gravity, the President, which was the first genuinely democratic product the young Englishman had encountered. Nobody in his own country had ever met him in quite that conversational spirit, and after the first moment of his immersion, when he blinked a little in the new element, he took to it cordially, and splashed about with the happiest confidence. The President was a capital fellow to begin with, if one wanted to like the Americans, especially at his own dinner-table; and Prince Alfred's desire to like the Americans amounted to a romance. Mrs. Phipps, sitting beside him, felt her heart warm toward her young guest. She watched him through the evening with a moved expression; but she did not become actually motherly until next morning at breakfast, in which bacon and marmalade figured so impressively as to make a humorous reference unavoidable. Mrs. Phipps then learned what the Prince was really dying for, and her opportunity rolled out before her, from buckwheat cakes indefinitely. Nothing

could be too national for Prince Alfred's enterprise or too forgotten for Mrs. Phipps' good-will. She promised all things, in the assurance that what the *chef* had never heard of a certain old Sally of the household, as black as your hat, would know like her apron-string.

"Now, Prince," said the President in his library, removing a particularly fragrant cigar to say it, "we want to give you the very best time we can. To begin with, you might take a more comfortable chair than that—I don't know how you came to select that chair. It's the one I keep for the heads of deputations. If anything under a man could make his words brief and his stay short, that's the article of furniture. But some fellows would enjoy themselves on a rack. Try this," and, with one friendly hand, he pushed a big arm-chair into more conversational relation with his own.

Prince Alfred dropped into it, but did not yield himself to the deep embrace. He sat upright and square-shouldered, pulling a little fast and nervously at his cigarette, vividly attentive.

"It's awfully good of you, Mr. President," he said. "I hope you realise that just being here is very interesting to me."

"We must make it so—it's up to us to make it so," said Mr. Phipps pleasantly, with a gesture of acknowledgment too brief for a bow, too serious for a nod, that sent his lower chin further still into his collar. "I've talked it over with your Embassy, and one or two fellows of our State Department, and we've run up a sort of programme. But it's quite provisional—nothing in it made of reinforced concrete at all—"

"You use a lot of that, don't you?" said Prince Alfred. "More than any country in the world. I saw the figures the other day. You invented it, too, I believe?"

"Did we? I had an idea it was French. But you may be right about that."

"Are there any mills in Washington? I've seen the process at home, and I'd like to compare it."

"Well, nothing very great. You see, this city has never made any sort of claim to industrial importance, Prince—we'll show you all that out West. You would like a look at our Smithsonian institute, I presume. I've had the curator notified to have it swept, anyhow——"

"Is it an art gallery?" asked Prince Alfred, with a slightly fallen expression.

"No. No—I sympathise with you. I've been dragged round Europe. No, it isn't. It's relics, chiefly—relics of great Americans. The clothes of Washington, the bones of the mastodon——"

"It sounds most interesting. I've been working lately at our revolutionary period——"

"Cromwell?" said Mr. Phipps.

"No—Washington," smiled Prince Alfred, and his host, having nothing quite ready, made him another bow of acknowledgment.

"Yes," he remembered, just in time, "and with considerable credit, too."

"Oh, precious little. I had the best historical coach in England, and I only just pulled it off."

"I know what Oxford Honours are. Your First was an achievement, Prince Alfred, to be proud of. Were any of our fellows up?"

"Two chaps, I think. Boroughs of Texas, and a fellow from New Hampshire."

"Either of them do anything?"

"I believe Boroughs got a Second. The best Americans seemed to prefer other Schools this year," Prince Alfred told him, colouring a little.

"So you beat us on our own ground," retrieved

the President, touching, with a luxurious little finger, an inch and half of perfect cigar ash into a tray.

"It's surprising," his guest returned lightly, "when you look into it, how many of the decisive scenes were enacted at Westminster. However, I've tried as best I could to get hold of the experiment, and now I'm above all things anxious to see the result. Where shall I find it best and fullest, Mr. President? In Congress?"

"There's Mount Vernon," went on the President, eyeing him thoughtfully. "The home of the first man who held my office. Down the river. Most people want to see that. We have also, at Arlington, a very beautiful cemetery, where lie many of the heroes of our Civil War.

'On Fame's eternal camping-ground
Their silent tents are spread.'

No doubt you've heard of it."

"No," said Prince Alfred honestly. "I'm afraid I hadn't. Those are fine lines." His face assumed a serious aspect. "I should like very much to see the cemetery," he said.

The President laughed, with enjoyment, the laugh that need no longer be contained.

"But that was not your primary object in looking us up, Prince," he said. "You can give us points in cemeteries, I admit, in almost any part of Europe. Well, our talk-shop is open to you. We've no Distinguished Strangers' gallery, I'm afraid, but there's the Diplomatic Box and the Senators' Gallery, which answer the same purpose in both the House and the Senate; and our Speaker will be gratified to meet you on his own ground any time Congress is in session. I presented him yesterday afternoon—Mr. Briscoe. Bit of a Tartar,

Briscoe. It was owing to him that the last spittoon disappeared some time back from the corridors, amid bitter opposition from the West. I hope you won't be too disappointed to find no spittoons."

"I never could understand the objection to them," replied Prince Alfred. "If people must spit."

"Briscoe didn't seem to think them nice," said Mr. Phipps gravely, "and he had a considerable following. However, you may be right." He touched a bell. "Just ask Mr. Austin," he said to the boy who appeared, "to come here."

The strong-featured and sedate-looking man who appeared was duly presented. He gave Prince Alfred over his spectacles a deferential glance, that nevertheless compared him with the value of the time he was taking up.

"What, in your opinion, Austin, is the first occasion on which the House will be doing itself credit?" asked the President.

Mr. Austin smiled.

"It depends, sir, on what you call credit," he said. "But there's likely to be a pretty considerable display of talent this afternoon on the Pacific Coast Defences Bill."

"Rather soon and rather dull," demurred Mr. Phipps, looking at Prince Alfred.

"Not a bit too soon—for me—and of the greatest interest," responded that young man, throwing his cigarette into the fireplace with a gesture that announced him ready to start at any moment.

"All right," said the President. "Send Calder here, Austin, and get somebody to telephone the city papers, and the Associated. We told them the Smithsonian, Queen Victoria's statue, and the Pension Bureau, subject to change. We couldn't

possibly know that His Royal Highness would have such a strong preference for the contemporary."

"I hope——" began the Prince.

"Quite right," agreed the President. "I'm built that way myself."

CHAPTER VII

PRINCE ALFRED thus took Congress by surprise, with the exception of Mr. Speaker Briscoe and one or two others in communication with the White House; but it is safe to say that the ovation that rose and roared about him the instant he was recognised was much more unexpected by himself. He had asked specially to go, the first time, to the public gallery, and it was there that Major Calder and Mr. Secretary Westmacott, after some protest, led him, his nearest neighbours being two young ladies and a newsboy. These, to his satisfaction, moved not at all to let him pass, beyond an inclination of the knees quite different from any that he had been accustomed to; but the House below, following some electric eye-beam to the pink-complexioned, high-nosed young man taking his seat between Major Calder and the Secretary of State, sprang up and cheered out of all order. The young man only grew pinker; there was nothing else for him to do; and when the smiling Speaker had restored the House to its usual sense of decorum, Mr. Westmacott turned to him.

"You mustn't mind. It's Panamotor Ataxis. We're all suffering."

He said that because of the *Monroe* and the *Roosevelt*, which were lying practically high and dry in the two miles between Pedro Miguel and Miraflores in the Panama Canal, the locks at Miraflores having been dynamited by a pair of dismissed

employés the day on which the battleships entered from the south. The European skies being fair, practically the whole of the American navy was taking part in the Pacific manœuvres off Southern California; and was thus engaged when the appalling Cuban earthquake occurred which demanded instant national assistance. It was to this purpose that the *Monroe* and the *Roosevelt* had been detached and dispatched; and the outrage at Miraflores had caused an extraordinary wave of public feeling. That the British man-of-war *Canada* and cruiser *Antigone*, in harbour at Kingston, should start immediately for Havana was only to be expected; but they had arrived in record time. King John's bluejackets, first in the field, had practically taken charge of the shattered city, and the work there had, unfortunately, cost one or two seamen their lives. These matters had been in the papers of the morning before, as well as in the President's private telegrams, and had naturally been a theme for acknowledgment from an early moment of Prince Alfred's arrival; but the cheers of Congress gave the young Englishman another and a quicker heart-beat. He felt himself for the first time in his life vividly standing for his country, and found it a great emotion in that place. Major Calder noticed that he pulled off one of his gloves, and almost immediately drew it on again; but that was the only betrayal, and Calder put it down to confusion.

It did not stop there. There was immediate exigency; an appropriation had to be voted. Congressman Seeley, of Ohio, in moving it, spoke of the happy concurrence of Prince Alfred's arrival in Washington, and that of England's ships in Havana; and again came the thrill and tremor of overwhelming applause. To the young man in the gallery the hands clapped across a gulf of

years and generations. His heart answered them in a strange riot that would know nothing in all that had come between. He had an inclination to stand up, to make some sign. He half turned to the person somewhere in the shadow there behind who would rebuke him for failing in his part; and the power behind the throne certainly had an eye on him, but wore an exaggerated hat, and was chewing gum. The movement and the applause died away; Prince Alfred apparently just blushed through it. But that part of him that lives beyond the blood felt a new strength and a new stature when it had passed. Calder, if he had looked further than the gloves, might have seen an eye flash, and the Hon. Mr. Westmacott, Secretary of State, might have wondered with what vision.

The House passed duly to the consideration of the Pacific Coast Defences, and Prince Alfred's chaperons gradually ceased their accustomed task of pointing out this and that notable figure at the desks below. The young man's "Reallys" became too perfunctory, his ignorance too obvious, and his attention too absorbed in what just any ordinary American was saying who happened to be upon his legs. He caught with interest at forcible phrases; even common Western slang seemed rather to intrigue than to amuse him. He followed ingenuously, with knit forehead and puzzled eye; and now and then he turned to one of them with a downright "What does he mean by that?" His attention was all for the speeches, but every now and then a hasty, roving glance would betray him rapt in the scene as well. This, then, was what they had made of it, those fellows who cleared out in 1776—this, this! He watched intensely the movement on the floor, the figures that half rose, or succeeded in rising, or lumbered import-

antly out, or stepped smartly in, the manners of the messengers, of the telegraph boys. The Speaker's eye was not so alert as his. The other two sank into silence or perfunctory remarks to Colonel Vandeleur, and boredom had begun to show in all of their faces some time before the Prince gave Vandeleur a chance of suggesting that Congress would remain at its labours for some days longer, that the Senate was a more comfortable place, or that Mrs. Phipps would be glad to refresh his sight-seeing with a cup of tea. Major Calder had already once excused himself for a brief moment, but long enough, as he explained afterwards, to go outside and yawn his head off. He complained later, did Major Calder, in his good-humoured way, to Hilary Lanchester, that the Prince's idea of sight-seeing was evidently that the sight-seer need not provide any of the entertainment.

"Perhaps," said Hilary, "he is too modest to think you could be equally interested in him," which shows that she had perceived a certain amount of Alfred's character by just looking at him once, that first afternoon, when she curtsied.

"He's not what you'd expect about games," was the communication Major Calder began to make almost immediately after the drive back from the Capitol to Mrs. Phipps and tea. "I tried him with polo. I tried him with ball. Polite, but his heart wasn't in it. No great sport, and doesn't seem ashamed of it. Hunted, yes, apparently, when he couldn't get out of it. Shot, when he had to. Didn't seem to think we need feel bitter about not bein' a huntin' and shootin' country. But the pastime of goat-getting, or electing a President of the United States—he wanted to know all about that, and then some. Chased it up too. I tell

you he had me in a perspiration with some of his questions. It's no weather to drive around Washington with a Royal examination-paper."

Vandy, of course, should have stepped in to lighten Major Calder's labours, but Vandy's function in the country of his forbears at once shone out brilliantly and exclusively social. In the mixed society of a democratic capital, Colonel Vandeleur's certain scent took him at once to the side of persons whose private instinct prompted them just a little to look down upon the President, persons, who, apart from that gentleman's official position, would have no desire to know him, and even with it had very little. There was the happiest recognition between such persons and Colonel Vandeleur; and he saw from the beginning—there was a small tea party that afternoon—that Prince Alfred was rightly and properly distributed among them. In that respect he was invaluable, as it was expected that he would be. But toward public affairs the American-derived Englishman seemed to have grown insular. He betrayed indifference, might have been suspected of superiority. Before glorious men whose very features described national policies, and whose voices made you ache to know what they had to say, Vandy's most ingratiating gesture would be to drop his eye-glass and move on—strenuous politicians, mind, mighty in conventions for what they could do. Prince Alfred, spotting them across a room, would be obliged to ask about them in detail of the delighted President, as he did that very day, or to go and get hold of Calder.

In such respects Vandy must be confessed from the beginning a failure; but he was capital at weighing invitations, dealing with press-men, coming, without offence, between his Prince and a public only too anxious to shake him by the

hand. And at all meals unsurpassable—mellow, ready, so tactful that no embarrassment could so much as raise its head within a radius of ten chairs of him. Prince Alfred turned to him constantly, wore him as a sort of fourth skin, a little thick in places, but on the whole protective and probably indispensable. All his life his contact with the world had been effected through some such medium. Even in this new America he would have missed it if it had vanished, and left him all day long to decide for himself. It was only now and then that he had a feeling of his initiative burning a hole in his skins, of wanting quickly to contradict somebody's words or grasp somebody's hand. It was then that he found the Vandeleur skin a shade thick, and knew it impeding to the touch, like a fur-lined glove. He did not recognise this or say it in so many private words, but even as early as that tea-time with Mrs. Phipps after his first visit to the Capitol, he instinctively drew persons presented to him, when he could, towards chairs that were out of Vandy's earshot, or himself approached groups of which the Colonel did not form part. It was the subtle beginning, no doubt, of the work of the American germ; he had not felt these movements in his legs on the voyage, or ever before. So insidious it was that he himself knew nothing about it; and it left no trace upon the princeliness of his bearing, which moved Mrs. Phipps to a gratification which was almost more than she could express. That very afternoon at tea, as her feminine instinct played over him while he talked with ladies like the wife of the Secretary for the Navy, Mrs. Phipps was touched to the verge of inward tears by the artless effect of that early and unremitting training, upon the roots of which, down in the dark, the unsuspected microbe was already fastening itself.

"Talk of the arrogance of royalty," she announced to the President, dressing for the State dinner; "the dear thing has the air of simply submitting to more than any human being ought to be expected to bear."

CHAPTER VIII

"PRINCE, I want to have you meet to-night," said President Phipps at the breakfast table, "the loveliest girl in the United States of America."

The President covered a neat mound of griddle-cakes with maple syrup, clipped the silver jug on the last drop, and looked round the table in a manner which challenged contradiction. It came promptly from an accredited source.

"James, you are perfectly ridiculous about that child. Probably the Prince won't think so at all. And, besides, he has met her."

"I mean Hilary," said Mr. Phipps, with a slightly daunted eye, at which a laugh went round the table.

"Of course, you mean Hilary," Mrs. Phipps retorted. "Who would dream that you meant anybody else, you poor, infatuated person! Prince Alfred met Hilary the day of his arrival—the moment of his arrival! When you weren't there, but irrigating in Colorado—and it's a mercy it didn't get into the papers."

"A tall girl——" put in Prince Alfred.

"You see, he remembers himself."

"He could not forget," declared Colonel Vandeleur. "I shall remember to my dying day. Awfully fit, too, she looked. Might have ridden to hounds all her life."

"She has," said Mrs. Phipps, "in Long Island. At all events, since she came back from school at Brussels."

"I don't seem to have met her in town," said Vandeleur.

"You would not," the President told him dryly. "Miss Lanchester is the daughter of my predecessor here, and since she grew up she's had very little time for foreign travel."

"But, of course," exclaimed Colonel Vandeleur with self-reproach, "Lanchester, of course. Wonderful fellow, Henry Lanchester! You must have been proud to succeed him, sir."

"I was," said Mr. Phipps, "and I wish I could feel comfortable in any of his clothes. But Henry isn't stock size."

"James," said his wife warningly. "'Filberts,' I say, 'Filberts,'"—she addressed the table—"when the President is disrespectful to the Chief Executive in favour of that great man, Henry Lanchester. But it doesn't matter what I say, he will go on doing it."

"You should try 'chestnuts,' Mrs. Phipps," said Major Calder slyly, and the laugh was again at the President's expense.

"I hear," said Prince Alfred, accommodating Mrs. Phipps' big Persian cat more comfortably on his knee, "that Mr. Lanchester's health is much better than it was. That breakdown of his caused something like consternation in England. He was very much admired on our side, besides the feeling that, in one or two matters which you, sir, will know more about than I do, we were very practically indebted to him."

The President inclined his head as if the compliment were a personal one.

"Lanchester was fortunate in his opportunities, Prince," he said. "If I weren't forbidden to talk politics at breakfast, I could tell you something about the courage with which he took them. His health is practically re-established. That summer

in Alaska last year did the business. Marvellous country for camping. He's up there again just now, looking after a silver mine he put his foot into last year. Pretty deep mine too, and pretty high grade. I'm afraid Henry will roll out a good deal too well plated."

"Struck it rich, has he?" asked Vandeleur. "But what's the objection?"

"Too valuable to his country plain, Colonel. A good many people hope to see him back some day where he was before."

"I don't believe that will ever happen, James," asserted Mrs. Phipps. "Sharif! Prince—that cat is giving you no peace. Henry Lanchester may be all you make him out to be, but the United States of America has no use for third-term Presidents. Too——"

"Too what, Mrs. Phipps?" demanded Prince Alfred mischievously.

"Too discouraging for other people, Prince."

Mrs. Phipps and her guest laughed together in the happiest understanding. Prince Alfred stroked Sharif with the consciousness that he had never felt more at home than in this gay and impulsive little lady's house.

"Henry Lanchester," said Mr. Phipps heavily, "has only been elected once. To succeed to a post made vacant by the act of God, such as poor Allingham's apoplexy, doesn't count in this country."

"But why should Mr. Lanchester's silver mine prevent his returning to office?" asked Prince Alfred. "With us I think it would rather be a recommendation."

"Ah, well—there's the difference," Mr. Phipps told him. "You consider that the possession of wealth frees a man's mind for public duty—and it's up to us to acknowledge that yours is the logical

view, and the dignified one. But this country has a liking for poor men in politics. Too many rich men out of them, I expect. We put a fellow in here to watch the bosses—we've no time to waste watching *him*. The camel and the needle's eye is a workable proposition compared with an American multi-millionaire and any sort of public office."

"That's awfully queer," reflected Prince Alfred, peeling a banana.

"So the old Siwash woman who led Henry to the spot where the lump came from may not have done him such a good turn as she thought, or the country either," went on the President. "There's one comfort—such things take time up there. Financing, road-building, operating—it runs into years before you know where you are. I'll allow him to get it in good shape to leave to Hilary."

"Hilary's not badly off already," remarked Mrs. Phipps.

"Every cent of it from her mother," asserted the President with an emphatic hand upon the table. "Till he took to following squaw trails in Alaska, no man alive could prove money on Henry Lancaster. He simply had no room for it in his clothes."

The President leaned his large bulk back in his chair and looked round his household with a smile. It was a heart-warming smile, and took the place of many things that he might have said.

Thus disarmed he made an easy target for his wife.

"He probably had more room in them than the man who came after him, anyhow," she let fly, and Mr. Phipps' broad frame shook with acknowledgment.

"Well," he chuckled, as they left the table, "I shall ask your opinion to-morrow, Prince, when

you've seen my little girl among the other American beauties on the floor to-night. I promise you shall meet her—I'll see to it myself."

"That would be awfully good of you," responded Prince Alfred. "I had the honour, as Mrs. Phipps says, but in case Miss Lanchester does not remember me——"

Mr. President Phipps very nearly dug England's third son in the ribs. Instead, he reflected inwardly, "Pretty good—for manners." Then he glanced at the Prince, and as the shrewd amusement twinkled out of his eyes, said to himself, "I'm blessed if he didn't mean it."

As they went up the stairs to their quarters, Colonel Vandeleur, with one hand on Prince Alfred's shoulder, turned back to the President.

"If you really want to show him something he hasn't seen before," said the unprincipled Vandy, "produce a plain-looking girl."

There were bundles and bundles of English letters, the first mail in since their arrival. Very much like anybody's letters, or'y so many of them, fat ones and fashionable ones, and bills, advertisements of aeroplanes and motors, circulars from wine merchants, bucket-shops, and money-lenders, a brief epistle signed "Yours affectionately, John"; another not so well spelled from the man in Farnborough who was looking after Your Royal Highness's dog. There were some newspapers, too, his *Popular Science Weekly* that he always took in, and the *Times*, his Aunt Georgina's copy, with the Financial Supplements taken out to save postage, addressed to him by her own hand. There was a letter, too, from the Princess, one of the fat ones. It had "Kensington Palace" boldly stamped across the flap, and was the first Prince Alfred opened. His Aunt Georgina was the most faithful letter-writer in the Family. No one in absence could

escape her, and Prince Alfred always opened her letters first, to be kept in touch and get it over.

It began very brightly and chattily, as the Duchess of Altenburg's letters always did. She bent first to the consideration of public affairs; her pen did its duty by the events of the week in due recognition of their claims to notice. The weather had suddenly turned wet and rainy, very bad, she feared, for the poor farmers, whose interests she always felt to be the special charge of Providence. Alfred must have been appalled, as they all were, by the shocking colliery disaster at Rhonddha. Had he seen dear John's extraordinarily plucky behaviour in the papers—going down with the first party of rescuers in spite of all that was *very rightly* said to deter him? Nobody could be more thankful than she that John had inherited his father's priceless gift of sympathy with the afflicted, but there were lengths to which he should not permit it to carry him, and she was glad to see that the dear old *Times* had given him a good scolding. There was a word about the fall of the French Ministry, for which she was perfectly certain that poor, unfortunate M. Pinaud was far from responsible, whatever they may say, and then the Princess passed on to just the echo of a whisper of gossip from St. Petersburg, which she disbelieved absolutely, and only mentioned lest it should reach her nephew from some other source. It had to do with the projected union of one of the Russian Grand Dukes with the little Archduchess Sophie Ludovica of Sternburg-Hofstein—"my dear little friend Sophie, to whom I have been attached since she was a flaxen-haired tot of five. . . .

"Most unsuitable. He is fifty, she twenty on her next birthday, and young at that in appearance, though with quite a modest stock of cleverness in that sleek little head. You will perhaps hardly

remember her—she was quite in the *Backfisch* stage when you saw her last, though even then showing character and ideas of her own to an extent that surprised one in a German girl. I remember laughing at her sturdy remark that 'She would prefer not to marry at all, but if it was necessary she would choose an Englishman, as they made the best husbands.' It was an amusing preference, but I have better reasons than that for believing that there is nothing whatever in the Russian report. By the way, I have had a charming letter from Sophie, full of her studies and her fresh young impressions of the life about her, and I think it not improbable that she may accompany her cousin, Princess Konigsmark, to Scotland this autumn, where the Princess has taken Clavismore from the Maccleughs—you remember frowning, battlemented Clavismore? No bad refuge from a pursuing Grand Duke, say I."

Inquiries and recommendations as to her nephew's health filled two good pages, after which the Princess exclaimed that she must not forget his kind hosts the Americans, and inquired cordially after them. She was sure that by now Alfred would be impressed as he could be nowhere else in the world with a sense of gigantic enterprise and "go." The Americans more than any other people had the genius of great undertakings—one imagines the Royal lady achieving this phrase as both true and quotable. They quite worked one up—at least, that was *her* recollection. Princess Georgina grieved to think that although her remembrance of dear America and her delightful visit was so vivid, she could think of no dear American who could reasonably be expected to remember *her*. Time and distance—alas! Yet there was one upon whom she considered that she had a special claim, if not to remembrance at least to recognition. Did

Alfred know that the Princess had a god-daughter in America? Where, she grieved to say, she knew not—yet it was not altogether like a needle in a haystack, for the poor baby's father had since achieved Presidential distinction—Lanchester his name was. Only ceased to be President, to the best of the Princess's recollection, three years before; but she confessed she had neither the brains nor the memory— (“The tall girl!” exclaimed Alfred, and did not skip another line)—for American politics. Be that as might be learned, the baby was just a little motherless relative, when the Princess became its sponsor, of a former ambassador to St. James's, an old dear, long since dead. A sweet little episode, and she had often felt compunctions, and been meaning to write; but somehow she was afraid it had just remained a little episode. For one thing, people usually came, and the little Lanchester never had—shy, perhaps. At all events, should Alfred meet a Miss Lanchester—stranger things had happened—an only child whose father was once President, and who had lost her mother when she was very young, he might just say a kindly word, and hint that if she *should* find her way to London her godmother would be very pleased to see her, and possibly to present her at Court. And, remembering as she did what an excellent impression that little act of kindness made, the Princess strongly recommended that, should any similar opportunity present itself to her nephew, he should not let it go by. “The ceremony,” added Aunt Georgina, “is very brief, and the mug is nominal.”

CHAPTER IX

It was altogether unprecedented, a Royal visitor in Washington in June. As a rule, no President would be there for him to visit, no Congress sitting for him to attend. Prince Alfred considered himself lucky, and behaved as if he thought so.

"Exactly as he is about everything," Colonel Vandeleur confided to them. "Mad keen to see the works"; and his perspiring hosts, feeling a little guilty about the weather, were glad of the reassurance.

"We hope you will be able to support it, but we can't expect you to like it," said the President, privately very well aware that his young guest was liking every minute of it, liking it tremendously, and in no mood to listen to Colonel Vandeleur's hints that a day or two dropped off the end of the Washington week would be quite understood in the light of the daily temperatures. The President, with Congress, as it were, in his pocket and a world of interesting information at the touch of a button, could enjoy a little insincerity in protestations; it was Mrs. Phipps and Major Calder who really meant them. Dinners and lunches were inevitable; people had to dine and lunch whatever the thermometer said, and, as we know, Mrs. Phipps had thrown in breakfast, so far as she was concerned personally. She had moments under the electric fan of feeling she could do no more. Nothing, in all their perplexities, had been more debated than the dance. Were there, to begin with, people

enough? Resident Washington had fled in all directions. Would any proportion of it, at a card, flee back again? Where were the wives of the Cabinet and the Senate? Not many, rest assured, like heroic Mrs. Phipps, at their post. Where were the Embassies? Disorganised, largely in summer quarters, certainly empty, except for Prince Alfred's own and poor dear Lady Pak, of all charm. Then the heat. Could anybody, would anybody dance, though the ballroom were turned into a cave of the winds with fans? Major Calder was inclined to think they could and would. Major Calder was optimistic all through—offered personally to bear the responsibility.

Major Calder went into committee with Hilary, whom the President called always his Extra-A.D.C., and they invited the views of Captain Howard, of the Embassy concerned, who declared that in his experience the sun never rose on the British Dominions except to the tune of dance music, even in the tropics, and so put them on their mettle. There was also the question as to where else the Prince would have an opportunity of seeing the flower of American society engaged in its favourite pastime. His itinerary excluded summer resorts; he was understood to be too much in earnest about the most profitable use of his time. Anything, of course, might happen in the West, but was it wholly desirable that the Prince's ideas of American society should be left to form in those free areas? Moreover, nowhere, after this, could such an entertainment bear the stamp and seal of the official sample. To these deliberations, Hilary, with her invaluable experience, contributed the conviction that the most distinguished, the most desirable people within any reasonable radius would not only come but pant to be asked.

"They'll make a lofty duty of it," she said;

"they'll fly by night to be here. Neither sun-stroke nor self-sacrifice will count. They'll be here."

Hilary, as usual, carried the day. It wasn't to be anything so unreasonable as a ball, but it was to be a dance, an "At Home, Dancing." Mrs. Phipps agreed with misgivings, but she did agree to an "At Home, Dancing." London, following with interest in the thick of its own season, never realised how sporting she was; and Prince Alfred, when he heard of it, noted it among the delightful fixtures that would have to be got through, but never once thought, after the manner of his race, about the disabilities of the weather.

Nor, apparently, did anybody else, judging by the desire for invitations. Major Calder declared himself to have been the centre of an intrigue that stretched for three hundred miles to every point of the compass, to say nothing of Mount Kisco, Tuxedo, and New York. The President's private secretary declined to become such another by handing all the "dance-graft" applications over to Calder. He understood dealing with ordinary forms of patronage, but when it was in the interest of ladies, he owned himself intimidated by it. Ordinary members of Congress produced wives and daughters from incredible distances, and were very firm about them, while, as Hilary had prophesied, there were miraculously almost too many of the people one really wanted. The New York papers added columns to the excitement under headings like "Say, Are You Asked to the Ball" and gave long accounts, impossible to deny to the Press of a free country, of the proposed decorations, the supper, the number of electric fans that would whirl, and tons of ice that would melt in service of the occasion. Mrs. Phipps saw with indignation that she was to wear a "robe" of cloudiest silk muslin specially designed and embroidered in gold with the

American Eagle, and was not allowed to contradict it except at meals—"Because," said the President, "perhaps you ought to." His Royal Highness, it was understood, would appear in the ordinary evening dress of an English gentleman, wearing his decorations—a plausible assumption which the event was equally to disprove. To Colonel Vandeleur's astonishment, Prince Alfred came to him with an idea about his clothes—Alfred, who, in the words of his impressed valet, Catkin, had never hitherto been known to do more than put on what was put out, and would hardly be aware whether he was wearing a Norfolk coat or a dinner-jacket. Prince Alfred sprung his clothes upon his equerry at the last moment. Colonel Vandeleur was at a loss what to say, and finally consulted the President, an interview of serious and ceremonious doubt.

"I didn't know he had it with him," said the Colonel with a furrowed forehead. "But, having expressed the wish——"

"Exactly," said the President, and rang for Major Calder, who contributed another anxious brow, and suggested telephoning the State Department, where there was a man who certainly knew. Had Vandeleur consulted Pakenham? Oh, as to the Embassy—Prince Alfred's lightest wish—naturally, must be law to them all. Then, if Colonel Vandeleur really wished an opinion, they would with pleasure telephone the State Department.

"Telephone the Hague," suggested Mr. Phipps in lighter vein; but more convenient authority was invoked. Authority found no precedent, though a search at the other end was audible.

"But why not? It's a kind thought," enunciated the receiver in the hand of Major Calder.

"It occurs to me," said President Phipps, as they settled it, "that some little interest should be expressed in *my* clothes. But it seems to be taken

for granted that I shall appear in the creation I looked so charming in last time."

It was Major Calder who told Hilary, shortly after the Presidential party entered the ballroom after dinner, what Prince Alfred was wearing. She asked him with deep and natural interest, the uniform was so extremely becoming. The dark green shoulders were so broad, the fair head above them so erectly held, the hilt and scabbard at his side so unexpected an incident in the ordinary evening dress of an English gentleman.

"It's the Imperial Rifles," Calder told her. "That's his regiment, but he's wearing the uniform to-night because it was once ours—the Royal Americans they were, and never came back to be disbanded. The regiment sort of belonged over here in the seventeen seventies, and for to-night, out of compliment to us, he's a Royal American—without prejudice to the Imperial Rifles."

"Oh," said Hilary, watching the first presentations. "Oh——"

Her hand, as she stood looking, slipped over her heart, which was beating with a sudden sense of wild romance——

"Nobody knows," Major Calder was saying, "whether he had any earthly right to do it. Vandy thinks he's mad and certain to get into trouble at home over it. But I'm here for you, Miss Hilary. It's as much as my place is worth if you don't make your bow among the first twenty. The President as good as told me so. Think of those dependent on me, and come."

"Not yet," said Hilary. "Please, not yet. Later on, Major Calder. Please, later on."

"The first twenty, or I'm fired. Have pity, Miss Hilary. Think of my aged mother."

"There is your aged mother looking for you," she told him, indicating a jewelled, portly, and

radiant lady in full sail toward them; and when Calder turned again from the maternal greeting, Hilary was gone. In and out she went among groups that looked at her with the admiring recognition that acknowledges itself unknown, passing here and there one that accosted and would have detained her. She laughed and went by, pretending a purpose. Her face had happy intention in it; her eyes searched; as an intimate of the house, she might well be carrying out some commission or some quest. And all to cover an exquisite sudden commotion, an unaccountable impulse to fly. At the opposite end of the room she paused beside a garlanded pillar and looked back, very lovely, very undecided, mysteriously, helplessly near to the tears of pure excitement. A kind, dull face surged out of the crowd toward her, Betty Carroll's. Wasn't it wonderfully cool after all! Such a lucky drop in the temperature since yesterday, and why wasn't Hilary dancing this first extra? Would Betty sit it out with her? Betty couldn't believe her ears—they would be raided—but *wouldn't* she just! How *darling* of Hilary! Here behind the palm? Betty kissed her feet.

“. . . And do you know, Honey, what the angel has got on? . . .”

CHAPTER X

MEANWHILE, Major Calder's mother achieved her presentation, and Major Calder, who understood the duties of a son as well as those of an aide-de-camp, saw that she had a real talk of five good minutes. Mrs. Calder made the pleasantest impression, and drifted away into the important official circles that ever widened about Prince Alfred and his immediate support, with the happiest grace possible to so large a lady. Other presentations were made with equal form and felicity, while the first extras were merrily danced by young people who felt themselves unlikely to receive that distinction, and to whom, in any case, a waltz was a waltz. The scene had every brilliancy, and seemed to gain a charm, a spontaneity, from being so unexpected and out of season. Distinguished persons stood about in attitudes, in spite of their ease, equally distinguished, stars glittered, uniforms scattered their hint of high duty and gay prestige. A thousand roses broke their hearts upon the air under the flying fans, the orchestra swept like a tide of delight over all. A graceful, whirling world upon the floor before him, a world of influential office and high claims about him, a new world dancing to the old tunes, new flowers blooming in familiar petals—Prince Alfred felt suddenly the gaiety of any young man at a ball, and knew that for the first time in his life he was going to enjoy himself at one. He listened with bent head to the final reminiscence of the old lady who remembered the visit of his father

as Prince of Wales, his heart bounding with a glorious sense of enchantment and peradventure. Then he said formally to the President, "May I get rid of my sword, sir?"

Vandy took it, solemnly, and handed it to Major Calder, who in turn confided it to an aide-de-camp, in whose charge it disappeared. The old lady—she was very charming in a lace cap—leant on her ebony stick and touched his arm with her delicate fan. "There's only one time to dance, Prince," she advised him, with a smile that printed her face for ever in his memory.

There is a Royal gesture of the head which creates at once a confidential loneliness. Prince Alfred made it toward his equerry.

"Would it matter, Vandy, if I cut in now?" he said; but Vandy was saved more than a smile of embarrassment. Already the music of the second extra was throbbing to its end, and in another moment the notes of the prelude to the State Lancers sent personages looking for the partners conferred upon them, and flung the waltzers into foamy lines and groups along the sides of the room to watch the still new feature of a ceremonial dance in the White House. Prince Alfred gave his arm to Mrs. Phipps, the President sought out Lady Pak, secretaries and ambassadors fell into their places, and in the properest manner, head high and feet that stepped to a strange magic, Prince Alfred danced his first American measure straight across the heart of Hilary Lanchester, where she hid it under a palm at the further end of the room, a spot from which, nevertheless, its guardian, dissimulated in converse with Betty Carroll, had an excellent view of what was happening.

"Oh, Betty," she moaned, taking it all as a jest, "I adore him—don't you?" and Betty professed herself in the same case. So they might have

adored his painted picture; yet there was a difference, and Betty was much the more composed of the two.

"The Royal Americans—*Betty!*"

"I know," said Betty.

Naturally, Miss Lanchester was not allowed to remain undisturbed under the palm, nor even Betty Carroll, whose father held a responsible appointment in the Navy Department, and who, half-an-hour later, was seen by all the world doing her incomparable two-step with the Prince. Hilary, going from partner to partner, keeping in half wilful, half terrified mutiny well away from Mrs. Phipps, from Major Calder, from her dear President, from everybody else in the charmed circle, saw Betty doing her two-step, and gave the dance to young Jiménez of the Spanish Embassy, who was far too much in love with her, because he was the best dancer in the room. The Prince, treading the maze with Betty, treading the maze full of magic that denied him always its centre, saw her at last with Jiménez. At last, not at first, because, though his heart was keeping time to his feet, and both knew themselves involved in magic and a maze, he was paying the conscientious attention to his steps suitable to a young Englishman of his rank in life. But at last——

"Shall we stop for a minute?" he said, and they stopped, Betty not wholly sorry to stop, beside another garlanded pillar, where the eyes of all were upon them.

"That," said he, as Hilary and Jiménez passed again, with the grace of a wave of the sea, "is Miss——?"

"Lanchester," Betty told him. "We think her about the most exquisite thing there is. I should just love to know, Prince, how she compares with girls on your side."

He was watching the floating figures, and Betty thought his expression very critical.

"I'm afraid I can't tell you," he said. "I have never seen anything like Miss Lanchester. Who is that foreigner?"

He said it simply, but his tone must have carried some displeasure, for the innocent Betty, an empiricist at conversation with royalty, wondered if she had been snubbed.

"Ought I," she demanded widely later, "to have waited till he expressed an opinion? From that instant Mr. Prince gave me the marble elbow."

It is quite true that in the short space that ensued before the dance was over, nothing more was said, and that a moment later she just melted away into a seat, as she said, before his bow.

So he found her for himself, without Vandy, or Calder, or anybody to help him. She was dropping a smile when he found her, upon the old lady in the lace cap, who looked up as he approached, and clasped her hands together in the prettiest ecstasy.

"His Royal Highness, my dear," she said. It is odd that her name should have been Mrs. Endor. A widow she was—Mrs. Miriam Endor.

Prince Alfred held out his hand and offered Miss Lanchester, blushing, an American formula.

"I'm awfully pleased to meet you," he said. It was not very sophisticated American, but she understood it well enough, and a little smile bubbled up in her heart.

They looked at one another for an instant with happy curiosity, like two children, and then her eyes fell. She kept them on the many wrinkles of the gloves on the old lady's hands, crossed in her lap, and, quite at a loss, she said nothing at all.

"I hope you remember," said Prince Alfred, "that we have already been introduced. But, if not, I have credentials."

"Credentials!" said Mrs. Miriam Endor, lifting her hands. "Delicious."

"I was presented to you," Hilary said, "on Tuesday."

Prince Alfred straightened himself ever so little, and his lips took the line which Fate had given them for the acceptance of honorific formulas.

"May I have this one?" he said.

"How I wish I knew," said Mrs. Miriam Endor as they left her side together, "what he meant about credentials," and she hobbled away to find Mrs. Phipps.

Prince Alfred did not dance altogether well. Hilary actually heard him in an instant of diminuendo count "One—two—three." It made her suddenly feel quite happy and natural. Her embarrassment slipped away; she even forgot to dance gracefully in her desire that the anxious "One—two—three" should beat truly to the music and to their feet. As a partner can, she helped him a little. He was really, she thought, getting into her step when he said suddenly, "I can't dance, you know, for nuts. They say I've got no ear. Let us cut it, and go and talk about my aunt Georgina."

He took her, she thought, to the most conspicuous place in the room, in the midst of the notabilities, who stood aside or fell away at their approach in a manner which seemed to cause Prince Alfred no inconvenience, but which struck Miss Lanchester as extraordinarily unkind and disconcerting. Lady Pakenham and old Lord Selkirk, over on business for the Dominion, got up while they were still, it seemed to Hilary, yards away, and definitely left at their disposal two high-backed gilt chairs, which said in every line that they were meant for visitors of State.

"Please don't move," Prince Alfred begged them; but they had moved, smiling, quite away,

and, seeing that, he led Hilary to one gilt chair, and took the other himself. As they sat there in the natural aloofness of gilt chairs, but bending a little toward one another, she in a white and flowing gown that foamed about her feet, he a trifle rigid in his Rifles' green, they made a picture that many people remembered all their lives. Mrs. Phipps attracted the President's attention to it, and he, with a smile of pride, at once turned his back on it.

"It isn't so very warm, after all," Hilary was saying. "The fans are almost too much, near the windows, when one isn't dancing."

"No—is it?" he replied. But with mutual, solid ground between them, why waste time upon the temperature? "I have practically, you know, a letter of introduction to you, Miss Lanchester. From an aunt of mine. And messages. That is, if you are an only child, if you lost your mother when you were very young, and if your father was once President——"

Grave qualifications, but they both laughed; the Prince was so pat with them.

"Nothing was said, I suppose, about this," dared Hilary, touching her face.

"About——"

"The mole on my left cheek?"

"It doesn't seem much of a mole." He inspected it, from the point of view of the other gilt chair, carefully. "Perhaps it didn't show when you were little."

"Three weeks old I was." Should she say "Sir"? Should she say "Prince"? She said nothing.

"Were you really? When my aunt Georgina——"

"Christened me—yes."

"Oh! now you're rotting. God-mothered you, you mean."

Hilary blushed crimson. It had been a slip. Should she carry it off or confess? She rode at it straight.

"No, I wasn't—I was confused. I meant the other thing, of course."

"My aunt didn't tell me," said Prince Alfred, looking at her intently, "*what* you were christened."

"Hilary Georgina."

"I like Hilary best," he said with simplicity.

"It was my mother's name. So it had to come first, hadn't it?"

"Of course. Then—what church were you christened in?" he asked earnestly.

"The Episcopalian. You don't think the Princess would have lent herself to any other rites?"

"I couldn't say. My aunt is very broad-minded. Episcopalian," he mused.

"Not *Methodist* Episcopalian. Protestant Episcopalian," she explained. "It's what your Church of England calls itself over here."

"Oh," he said. "Then you belong, practically, to the same Church that I do. But I must not forget the messages. My aunt sent you her love and says she would be very pleased to see you in England."

"Thank you," said Hilary. As she spoke, a whirling fan sent a rose, loosed from its place in the decorations, through the air to her feet. It was a very perfect red rose, and Prince Alfred picked it up where it lay between them, and presented it to her. He could do no less, and she, perhaps, was equally obliged to lift it to her face.

"It is quite fresh," said Hilary, and it was. Fate seldom dropped a fresher rose.

"My aunt's letter was all about you," he persisted.

"Was it, really?"

"Yes—no," he corrected. "She did mention one

other person. It is odd that he was driven on to say: "A little German girl. You probably wouldn't know her——"

"Try me," said Hilary. "There were some at my school in Brussels."

"I believe she was at school somewhere—Sophia——"

"Not Sophy Sternburg-Hofstein?"

"You do know her?" Prince Alfred's tone carried very moderate interest.

"She is only one of my greatest friends on earth! Her mother was a girl friend of my mother—her marriage with the Grand Duke was an immense romance—so Sophy and I just fell into each other's arms at Mademoiselle's. How delightful that—that you should have been hearing about Sophy. Then you know her too?"

"I'm supposed to. But I have the vaguest recollection of her. My aunt tells me I haven't seen her since she was a *Backfisch*."

"We were *Backfisches* together. Do tell me whether she is going to Scotland?" For all her effort at repose, Miss Lanchester's words would scamper. "In her letter last week she was dying to, but it wasn't settled a bit."

"I understand she is going to Scotland," said Prince Alfred. "My aunt spoke of our seeing her there."

"I could just weep for joy. Poor darling—she leads the dullest life; she longs to be back at school. And all day long nothing but intrigues to marry her to somebody. Hates going anywhere for fear of meeting exactly the right person quite by surprise, and then a solemn communication and a scene. *It has happened!* Really, between the Kaiser and his wicked old Chancellor. Sophy might just as well be living in the Middle Ages—and the abominable tyranny of those two men.

She can't so much as select her own literature, not to speak of her own maid. It's a mediæval situation. Somebody ought to rescue her—Prince."

"I am sure," said Prince Alfred earnestly, "somebody will. My aunt leads me to believe that several people have already tried."

"Not," said Hilary with emphasis, "the right people. She draws them in her letters—thumbnail sketches—and I can see that they're not. You can't think what it is for a girl who has been at school and all, to be just a pawn for German diplomacy—to be moved, for the good of the Empire, into the married state out of the single."

He looked at her for a moment without answering.

"It's not nice for anybody," he then said; and there was something in his voice that surprised her with a sudden compunction. But Vandy, who hovered never too far away, now came pointedly up.

"Supper, sir, is at the end of this dance," he said. "Mrs. Phipps will be near the door into the drawing-room on the right. Miss Lanchester, may I have the honour of taking you in?"

CHAPTER XI

FOR the celebration of such a function as the President's ball, it was as necessary as ever to turn to the newspapers, especially to the newspapers of New York; and the Metropolitan Press certainly rewarded attention the day after the event, so clever it was and so imaginative. The whole word danced in it up and down close-printed columns, the whole uninvited world that had a nickel to pay. The names of the guests were there in starry rows. The uninvited world hailed them as representative and revelled in their clothes. But the chief glorying was in the uniform of Prince Alfred.

"That once American green, those buttons under which once beat American hearts as true as his to the island throne and the grey old mother over seas."

Nothing was lost of the Princely compliment; the Republic smiled to it from North to South. *Life* had a charming cartoon. There were columns about the history and exploits of the regiment, and Prince Alfred was assured that he would never lose the name or the distinction of being the first Royal American since '76.

"Sentimentally," said the *Evening Post*, "we are enchanted, and politically we can stand it, since there is at present only one." The little tribute was taken in the highest spirits, but it would be foolish to suppose that the jest carried all. Pages turned back and eyes followed them, to the old quiet century before the great era of splendid asser-

tion. "After all," discovered somebody, "we were English before we were American." Just a dark green coat, black-braided and bronze-buttoned, yet what was it they were saying?

"We have fought beside that uniform once, and may again." Here and there a gentler chord sounded, simple and half-ashamed, as from a spinet in an attic, and hearts answered it. . . .

"So far as I can make out," said Colonel Vandeleur, sorting letters and telegrams next morning in the sitting-room of their suite, "there are exactly thirteen applications from illustrated papers for your photograph in that kit of yours last night, my dear boy, as well as four intimations of public functions at which you are invited to appear wearing it."

"There is also a cable from the Duchess of Altenburg," said Prince Alfred, "suggesting that I should send it home. I gather John R. has been making remarks. My aunt adds, 'Await press comments with deepest apprehension.' She must have been upset to put in that unnecessary 'with.' I think I will send it home, Vandy. There's a post to-day. That will gratify my aunt and dispose of the photographs."

Colonel Vandeleur opened another envelope and glanced at its contents with a longer face. "Cipher," he said. "F. O. I thought I should hear from 'em." He unlocked a despatch box and took out a small code book. "Gad! I hope it isn't a recall. Really, dear chap, I don't know what induced you to do it."

"I wanted to look well dressed," Prince Alfred told him, "in the eyes of my hosts. The Foreign Office be blowed! And I warn you straight, Vandy, if it is a recall I don't propose to go."

Colonel Vandeleur looked rather blankly at his charge, whose tone certainly gave a gentleman-

in-waiting to think. It was not a recall, when they made it out, but it was a very plain admonition.

Prince Alfred considered it with a sharp line between his brows and a lower lip that looked more irritated than impressed. "That's the kind of ridiculous and unnecessary quacking that goes on the year round," he said. "But it's the first time I've had my kit interfered with. Wire back and tell 'em I consider my clothes my own."

He spoke, of course, like a high-spirited youth checked in an uncomfortable and impressive way for an initiative in which he had taken pleasure and pride; and Vandy did not take his words as instructions. He had also been warned that his Prince was impatient of control, easily angered by too obvious restraint, and subject in such circumstances to a temper in which he was difficult to manage. His winning smile would fly, and he would simply turn, to authority, a very cold shoulder. Colonel Vandeleur was never to forget that what his present task most demanded was tact. Fortunately, tact was the very thing the Colonel had most in reserve. He produced a little of it now.

"I agree with you that it had better go back," he said, "on the simple ground that you won't want it after this; and a uniform case is no reward in itself for the worry of seeing it checked across the continent. Of course, I understand their attitude, in a way; but the trouble is they don't in the least realise how little a thing like that really counts on this side——"

"Silly asses!"

"As you say, it was liked and appreciated, very much liked and appreciated; but as to attaching any serious importance to a thing like that—it's only Europe, you know, that would. Still, we must remember, dear boy, that Europe will hold us to account."

At that moment Prince Alfred's valet passed, like an efficient shadow, to the door of his master's bedroom, a clothes-brush in his hand, the green uniform over his arm.

"Catkin," said the Prince suddenly, "the *Aure-tania* starts back to-morrow; I saw it in the papers. Put that kit on board. And look here, Catkin! You are to go with it—understand?—to take charge of it. You've been invaluable, Catkin, so far; but now I am going to look after myself for a bit, and you won't be sorry for a holiday. So hop it, Catkin."

The man stood dumbfounded. "Yes, sir," he said. "Yes, sir," and looked at Colonel Vandeleur, who had risen, and stood braced, as it seemed, before the emergency of his life.

"My dear fellow," he said firmly, "you simply cannot do without Catkin. You may take it from me. In this country, above all others, where you—where a man may any day be expected to black his own boots——"

"I was taught to black my own boots and do other useful things when I was ten," said Prince Alfred, "and I am rather glad to be in a place where I may be expected to black 'em again. I bet you ten bob, Vandy, I do a better shine than you do."

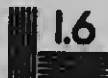
It was certainly a way of paying them back for their telegrams, especially, perhaps, Aunt Georgina. Prince Alfred's good humour was completely restored. He was pacing the room now, his hands in his trouser pockets, with a gay and enterprising face from which the shadows had been chased by an imaginary blacking-brush.

"I've no doubt you would," said Colonel Vandeleur unhappily; "but, dash it all, Prince, do consider what will be said when you are seen absolutely unattended——"



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"My dear Vandy, I've got you," exclaimed Prince Alfred, royally disconcerting. "You will save my life and take care of my money; you know you will; and what more do I want?" He looked radiant, and the line of his chin in profile was extremely distinct.

"Oh, sir," implored the faithful Catkin, "if I might make the suggestion, 'oo, sir, will see that the washing comes back correct?"

Colonel Vandeleur abandoned tact. "I'm afraid the King will be seriously annoyed," he said. "He only consented——"

"John's annoyance," said Prince Alfred firmly, "is the everlasting bane of my life. Who the devil—I mean if John is annoyed at a silly thing like that, he isn't—— Will you clear out, Catkin, and do as you're told?"

It is probable that Colonel Vandeleur, C.B., never offered to this pleasant world a more disgusted countenance. "Then—may Catkin get hold of my fellow?" he said.

"Certainly. Why?"

"If Catkin goes I hardly see myself keeping Briggs."

"Oh, no—of course. You mean you don't want to make the impression of effeminate luxury over here any more than I do. I think we're both right, Vandy; let 'em go together. They'll hold each other's basins."

"That's settled then." It was now Colonel Vandeleur's face which assumed, as he continued to dispose of letters, the shadow of gloom. Prince Alfred, with his hands in his pockets, looked out upon the President's garden, and whistled, much out of tune, but with enjoyment, the air the American microbe, industrious within, stimulated his lips to form.

The door closed upon Catkin, and, as it did, there

was a little thud upon the floor, and a round, dark object rolled out into the room.

Prince Alfred picked it up—a regimental button. "Off my tunic," he said. "I noticed it was dicky last night. Old Catkin has brushed it loose. I won't give it to him now; he's upset enough as it is"; and he slipped the button into his pocket.

Colonel Vandeleur, gnawing his moustache, emitted an indistinct "Haw!" in reply. He was looking out trains for the two servants, writing cheques and remembering the necessity for tact.

"They'll only just do it," he said. "I can't understand the reason for the tremendous hurry, Prince. There's a Cunarder every week, thank God!"

"You forget the Duchess of Altenburg's telegram, Colonel. I am afraid she would be seriously annoyed if I did not obey at once. And I never was in such a hurry in my life as I am to get rid of Catkin."

Colonel Vandeleur permitted himself to smile. "Have it your own way," he said, and thought of something pleasanter. "Well, we saw some very fair specimens of the American rose last night. We can report favourably to the President."

Alfred was a bit lacking in tact. It was often the duty of persons about him to drop a little word of suggestion in advance. But apparently not this time.

"Report," said he, frowning. The word seemed ill-chosen. "Will he expect a report?"

"Perhaps we'd better make it an anthem."

Do what he would, the Colonel could not express himself in his usual happy manner. Below his smile Briggs undisguisedly rankled.

Prince Alfred again squared his back to the room and looked out of the window. "I was just thinking about Miss Lanchester," he said. "She is, of

course, as they say, an extraordinarily beautiful young lady." He spoke in a tone that affected criticism and remoteness, and jingled the small silver in his pocket.

"She is, by Jove! Intelligent too. I wish you could have taken her in to supper instead of an old fogey like me. It's hard luck that your fate on these occasions should always be the oldest and ugliest."

"I did well enough last night," Prince Alfred contended. "Mrs. Phipps isn't very old, and she is rather pretty than otherwise—and I'm very fond of her. She tells me lots of things. She told me a good deal, last night, about Miss Lanchester."

"And Miss Lanchester, oddly enough," said Colonel Vandeleur, "told me a good deal about you—mentioned qualities even I hadn't suspected in you, Prince. Fearfully excited about that Yankee kit of yours. Upon my word, at one moment I thought she was going to burst into tears. . . . These American girls are all rather inclined to be sentimental. Cold, you know, for all that."

"The Imperial never was a Yankee kit. If it had been I couldn't have worn it," Prince Alfred told him. "But—did it really interest her? She didn't say anything about it to me. We—we discussed mutual friends."

Colonel Vandy had never in all his life flattered so successfully. The young man's eyes had brightened, and his head was up.

"Well, she hardly would, you know. Mutual—really?"

"Yes. I say, Vandy"—he turned round sharply—"how much longer have we got here? Three days? She's a sort of god-cousin of mine, you know. I'd like her asked to stay. Couldn't you arrange it?"

Colonel Vandeleur dropped his fountain pen and

stared for an instant, hard. "Great compliment to Miss Lanchester," he said; "but whether it's possible— At home, of course, as easy as winkin'. But over here—you never can tell. However, if you find her amusing I'll have a shot at it."

"I don't find her amusing," replied Prince Alfred, again giving his attention to the grounds of the White House, "if you mean larky—or comic. I'd like to know her better, that's all. I wish you would go and see about it now, Vandy."

CHAPTER XII

VANDY went. As he went he quite entered into the spirit of the thing, or thought he did. Into the spirit of this unexpected "lark" of Prince Alfred's. Prince Alfred was so little given to larks of any sort—it made the post of his equerry a trifle dull. He hummed as he went, with a smile of amusement, the refrain of a delightful old ballad—

*"Oh, the pretty, pretty creature!
When I next do meet her——"*

He had found in his Prince a touch of human nature as he best understood it, and the find gave him real pleasure. His smile broadened as he thought of it.

Colonel Vandeleur had always knocked about a good deal with Royalty, was familiar with its habits, and knew its privileges by heart. It was upon him that the Tommy Thursbys, who entertained more of the Family for longer and more celebrated periods than any other commoners in the kingdom, depended to make each visit a more brilliant success than the last. His name went almost automatically upon house-party lists which had to be submitted, and he invariably arrived two days before. His detractors said of him that he could tell you in his sleep the brand of cigarette smoked by every Crowned Head in Europe. But Vandy had not many detractors; he was too genial, and made himself too broad an allowance for the weaknesses of his fellow-men. "Human nature

being what it is," was one of his favourite formulas. He gave everybody the benefit of the doubt, and never pursued a scandal when there was a chance of its taking to cover. A pleasant fellow, Vandy, who filled his uniform very well, and as useful an equerry as could be found on either side of the Atlantic.

His present mission would have been simple enough in England. "Half a word," as he said to himself, "would have been enough there." In England these things were understood. Here doubtless he might have to explain. He was confident of being able to explain, or being able to place the little suggestion in an attractive light. It must be, of course, the *merest* suggestion, the lightest hint. That would be as much, in all probability, as would be necessary.

"Hang it all," said Colonel Vandeleur to himself, "it is a compliment."

Yet he found himself wondering, as he made his way to Mrs. Phipps' morning-room, where they told him he would find her, exactly how he would put it.

He went straight to Mrs. Phipps. Already he had found that Mrs. Phipps preferred the direct method; and did not at all appreciate having suggestions conveyed to her by the President's aides-de-camp, whose duties seemed to Colonel Vandeleur much less domestic than they might be, than they ought to be. None of the four ever seemed to exercise the least supervision over the butler; Mrs. Phipps had herself proposed to admonish the cook when the custard went wrong at luncheon. And when he, Vandy, had asked Calder for some plain Windsor soap for the Prince, he got it, but the fellow had looked at him. What was the fellow there for, if not to see that guests of the house got the kind of soap

they were accustomed to? He had an intuition that it would be no use, no manner of use, to mention this whim of the Prince about Miss Lanchester to Major Calder. Calder would bungle it. He would go straight to Mrs. Phipps. Ladies were much more understanding in such matters. Yet how the devil *should* he put it?

*"But gallantly will I tre-at her,
But gallantly will I treat her.
Oh! the pretty, pretty, pretty, pretty——"*

"Why, come in, Colonel Vandeleur. Bring your chair right over here, under the fan. The Prince understood, didn't he, my not being at breakfast this morning? The President absolutely forbade it."

"I'm immensely surprised and immensely gratified, dear lady, to find you up at all—after your most charming, most successful, but alas, no doubt, most fatiguing entertainment last night. The Prince was enchanted. I have never known him so happy at a dance."

Mrs. Phipps sat, with a little gesture of dignity, slightly straighter. "Ah, well," she said, "that's an immense reward, Colonel. I thought Prince Alfred seemed to be enjoying himself. It was certainly our privilege to make him do so—in that uniform. Colonel Vandeleur, I want to tell you—I was never so touched by anything in my whole life. And the President, though he's not a person to say much, feels exactly as I do about it."

Colonel Vandeleur's face bore no trace of even a cipher telegram. He looked gratified and crossed his legs. "It was the dear fellow's own thought," he said. "I had nothing whatever to do with it—though I dare say I shall get the credit of having had a good deal. He does seem, bless his heart! to have made a pleasant impression. He has also apparently received one, Mrs. Phipps."

The Colonel's archness was so obvious that Mrs. Phipps must have smiled whether she wanted to or not, and she did want to, being full of natural impulses.

"If the Prince has been expressing any particular admiration"—Mrs. Phipps dimpled for her country—"I expect it was for Mrs. Jack Fergus. Mrs. Jack really is a very great beauty, and she was looking quite lovely last night."

"She certainly was"—Colonel Vandeleur often confessed the facility with which he picked up American ways of putting things—"she certainly was, Mrs. Phipps, but Prince Alfred's homage was laid at the feet of somebody you think a great deal more of than you do of Mrs. Jack Fergus."

"Colonel," said Mrs. Phipps with a smile which made every admission, "I should have hated you if you had said Mrs. Jack. The Prince has been admiring my Hilary. How could he help it?"

"How could anybody help it?" The Colonel's air of regret, of being hopelessly outdistanced, though humorous, was full of the most acceptable tact. "And the pretty part of it is, Mrs. Phipps, that Prince Alfred has practically never been known to look twice at a lady."

"It's *very* sweet of him," Mrs. Phipps acknowledged, "because he must have seen so many lovely girls."

"I take it that he is no less attracted by her character. 'I so much wish,' he said to me, 'that I might have the opportunity of knowing her better.'"

Mrs. Phipps looked the least bit in the world taken aback. "How nice of him," she said with a certain quietude.

"And—it's quite my own idea, dear lady, and please don't be cross with me—I wondered whether you wouldn't perhaps indulge the Prince in his

perfectly natural and charming desire to know a little more of American girls of Miss Lanchester's type, and perhaps—if it isn't too much to ask—have her here for the remainder of his visit. Remember, it's quite my own idea," he added, meeting her round eyes.

"Have Hilary here?" she said slowly. "But—but Colonel Vandeleur, what would people say?"

"What could they say, dear lady, except that you very sweetly wanted to add to Prince Alfred's visit the——"

"And the newspapers! Colonel, you don't—you've forgotten——"

Colonel Vandeleur pursed his lips a little contemptuously. "I should not mind about the newspapers," he said. "Besides, why should they find anything remarkable in it? She ought not to be asked alone, of course. Some other lady—such things are so easy. And Miss Lanchester has often stayed here before."

"But to ask her while the Prince is in the house—after the dance——"

"They would surely understand that he might wish to become better acquainted with American young ladies just as American young ladies—or that you might wish it for him."

By this time Colonel Vandeleur felt that he really must carry this point. Dear Mrs. Phipps' opposition was too unexpected, too unreasonable, too—well, really, too provincial.

"I am afraid they would couple it with the name of only one American young lady," Mrs. Phipps told him with a flushed and troubled face.

"I quite see your point. But my dear Mrs. Phipps, between ourselves, as man and woman of the world——"

"That, Colonel Vandeleur, I am not, and never shall be. I must beg you *not* to call me a woman

of the world. It does not flatter me, Colonel Vandeleur, at all."

The Colonel leant forward with an impressive, gentle smile, and a confident gesture.

"You can hardly, dear madam, be the wife of the President of the United States and not be a woman of the world. In the best sense—in the very best sense—of the term."

"That's just where you make a mistake, Colonel. I didn't marry the President of the United States. I came along with him. And I am only too well aware how far I fall short of filling the position as it should be filled. But nothing would make me believe that any woman of the world would, on that account, fill it better."

"Dear lady," soothed the Colonel, "dear lady, no woman of any sort would fill it better. But don't—now please don't misunderstand this little pleasure, this little treat, that I thought I might try to secure for the Prince. If you knew what an innocent young a—— what an absolute baby he is, you would let them play blind man's buff together, and not have a moment's anxiety."

"You needn't tell me anything about the Prince, Colonel Vandeleur. I have the greatest affection and admiration for him. But I've got to think of Hilary, and I don't think I *could* expose her to— Suppose she fell in love with him?"

Colonel Vandeleur rose with just a hint of displeased dignity.

"My dear friend, she is much too sensible a girl. Such things only happen where they are organically possible."

"I know," said Mrs. Phipps in some confusion.

"Countries in Europe ending in 'ania.' Still—I'll speak to the President. I really can't decide by myself."

Colonel Vandeleur had approached the door.

"Please dismiss it from your mind, Mrs. Phipps," he said kindly. "We mustn't, after all, spoil our young man. An occasional disappointment is good for him."

Mrs. Phipps, uncertain and unhappy, made a step or two in pursuit. "But what will you say to the Prince?" she entreated. "I'm afraid I've been perfectly silly and ridiculous, Colonel Vandy. Please——"

"There will no need to mention it to him," Vandy replied. "You forget that it is quite my own idea, a mere butterfly thought, dear lady; don't let it disturb you, I beg"; and the door closed upon him.

Mrs. Phipps, left alone, became an immediate prey to reaction. She sat down desolately beside the buhl table and leaned her head upon her hand. Had she, after all, just shied away from the idea in nervous and ridiculous fear of some bogey that wasn't there? Had she shown herself a silly prude and prig toward the most innocent and genial of initiatives? A prude and prig dear Mrs. Phipps was in mortal fear of being considered, conscious as she was of an almost ungovernable bias toward things sweet and straight and without reproach. She took little ineffective measures sometimes to show that she wasn't really to be so frightfully easily shocked as people might imagine, measures which the President observed with an amused twinkle, and chaffed her enormously about afterwards. James would probably laugh at her scruples about this; he had been so anxious that the Prince should meet Hilary and should admire her. Besides, what was the use of consulting James? She would be certain not to agree with him, and do the other thing. No—she did wish she knew how to act; but it had better be on her own responsibility. She would not consult James.

"Then nobody will be to blame but me," she said resolutely.

There was also Hilary's point of view. Of what might she not be depriving Hilary? Of a pleasant, distinguished friendship, most valuable perhaps in later years, if it ripened and mellowed, leading to all sorts of interesting things; useful perhaps to Hilary's children. Of course she must tell Hilary—later. What if she looked reproachful? The little tribute would be dead then, like a pressed flower. Why should she not have the flower fresh, with the dew on it?

"Absurd!" said Mrs. Phipps aloud. "He's the merest boy, and Hilary's head would have been turned long ago if compliments could do it. She shall decide for herself, and I shall tell her," added Mrs. Phipps firmly, "exactly how it is."

"My darling child," she wrote, looked at the words, and took another sheet. Unconsciously she found them too maternal and impressive. "Darling Hil" looked better, less portentous. "Colonel Vandeleur has been worrying my life out this morning to get you to come and stay with us for the rest of the Prince's visit. It seems that H.R.H. condescends to *wish to know you better*. (I don't want to be satirical, for he's a dear boy, but I suppose I am not used to Royal ways, though Colonel Vandy declares that he alone is responsible, and I tell myself that he wouldn't be human if he didn't wish to know you better, and why should a Prince be less than human. Most are *more*.) So I write to tell you, darling, that you have been *approved*—and will you come? You must decide. You know our house and hearts are always happy and glad to hold you. And we will try not to be too jealous. Now fly to the arms of

"Your ever devoted

"MUMKINS."

"I won't read it over," she said, "or I will change my mind," nor did she add any of the dozen postscripts which presented themselves to her.

The letter went by hand, with all dispatch, and Mrs. Phipps curled herself upon a sofa to await the reply. Presently she rang.

"Tell Martha to get Miss Hilary's room ready," she said. "I am expecting her for a few days."

Then she picked up a book and turned a page or two, but put it down every few minutes to smile at the picture of Hilary reading her letter. "It is a compliment," she agreed with Colonel Vandeleur, "when all is said and done."

The reply came with a quickness that quite startled Mrs. Phipps. She opened it—having just decided that on the first night at dinner Hilary should wear her rose brocade—with eager fingers. And she read—

"BELOVEDEST,—

"How can you think that he wishes to be condescending! How can you think that he wishes to be anything but exactly what he is—simply and utterly adorable! You may lay my heart at his feet if you like. But oh, my love, I don't want him to know me any better! And Papa has wired that he will be in New York in a week, and that I am to go at once to Moose Lick and get the house ready. I go to-night at six. Belovedest—understand! Your own

"HIL."

Mrs. Phipps flushed and paled and flushed again. "But it has happened already!" she cried, and read a second time. "It has certainly happened already—but not in the least seriously," she smiled with reassurance. "She wouldn't write like that if— But *what* a risk I ran!"

Colonel Vandeleur and the Prince were lunching with the Secretary for the Navy; she would have to wait till tea-time, which she did with impatience. She quite wanted—why, she didn't ask herself—to let Colonel Vandeleur know what had happened. Vandy luckily, when five o'clock came, gave her an early chance, demanding a second cup.

"I thought better of it, after all, Colonel Vandy," she said, looking up at him over the cream jug. "I wrote to Miss Lanchester suggesting that she should make us a little visit just now. And she is immensely sorry, but she can't. Her father—the ex-President, you know—is returning from Alaska, and has wired to her to get their place in the Adirondacks ready as soon as she can. She leaves this afternoon."

"Poor dear girl! What rotten luck!" observed the Colonel, possessing himself of a sandwich.

"I think she will be rather glad to get out of the heat," his hostess told him.

"Where did you say they are: in the Adirondacks?"

"Old Loon Point is the name of the place—at Moose Lick—that's the nearest post-office. Not far from Sumach, where the famous Dr. Morrow lives——"

"The famous Dr. Morrow?" repeated the Colonel absently.

"The lung specialist."

"Never heard of him in my life."

"He doesn't travel," said Mrs. Phipps simply. "He stays right there and cures people. He cured Henry Lanchester when he had his great breakdown, and now Mr. Lanchester spends the best part of every summer down there in the pine woods. He's a wonderful man, Dr. Morrow."

"He must be," said Vandy, and moved away to digest Mrs. Phipps's information. It did not

digest well, and when he thought of it later, in conversation with the Prince, it had changed its character.

"By the way," said he, "I mentioned, quite as my own idea, the suggestion that Miss Lanchester should join the home party here. But I was too late, Prince; that charming girl has left Washington for the country. Pity!"

Prince Alfred half turned from the window where he was again wasting time, and cocked, as it were, an ear toward the Colonel.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Since she's not coming, Vandy, what about that notion of yours of clearing out a day earlier? These people must be dead sick of us by now, and it is infernally hot."

"Right-o," said Vandy; "I'll fix it up. By the way, did I show you this? It came by the second post to-day."

The photograph was of a small group outside a historic English country house, and Colonel Vandeleur made part of it. So did Princess Georgina, Duchess of Altenburg. The Duchess had graciously sent the picture to Colonel Vandeleur.

"Who is the fair girl on your left?" asked the Prince.

"Ah—may I see? That is the Archduchess Sophia-Ludovica. She was staying in the house—Lord Bannermore's place in Kent. Extraordinarily charming girl! Great friend of the Duchess."

"Oh, is it?" said Prince Alfred, and handed back the picture to the trusted friend of the Duchess of Altenburg, who wrote to her by return to say that His Royal Highness had seen the group and had shown distinct interest in a certain charming member of it.

CHAPTER XIII

It was at Pittsburgh that it happened, just a fortnight later. There is no doubt, as was at once so widely said, that the fortnight had been an over-strenuous one. The heat in New York had been almost as bad as in Washington, record temperatures for the time of year. And the heat had been nothing to the enthusiasm, the hospitality, and the extraordinary temptations in the way of interesting things to see.

Colonel Vandeleur had kept his influence in all social matters; the Prince had been very docile, and only too desirous to exert himself to be agreeable in any quarter indicated. He even submitted without protest to Vandy's arrangements for keeping the New York reporters off him, though he delighted in them personally, and took an extraordinary pleasure in the chronicle of his doings in the papers. Vandy, remembering Kenneth Talbot's account of how he hated publicity, could only wonder. But when it came to matters in which Prince Alfred was really interested, when it was a question of how many hours he should spend on end watching experiments at the Institute of Applied Electricity, "messaging about," as Vandy put it, with the newest hydro-aeroplane at the Aviation College, or listening to the last word in wireless, the equerry had to confess himself unable to restrain his charge in any way whatever. "He wants to drink the sea," was Vandy's explanation, and, as Vandy had no special desire to drink

anything that could not be mixed in a glass, it was rather a rueful one. But the Prince went on drinking wherever the waters of industrial science bubbled. Deep and long he drank, and almost the only respite Vandy knew was in the train, when the Prince would divide his time in their Pullman drawing-room between the wide, flying landscape and impressive advertisements of such things as the Power-Transmitting Unit of a Milliken-Milwaukee Rear Axle, which addressed him in terms he found invigorating even when he did not understand them.

"It's really the human equation back of the whole," he would read aloud. "Of course it is. One sees, Vandy, that it must be." He perpetually harked back to the human equation. It began to sum up the fascination America had for him. The term very soon bored Vandy to extinction.

They were to have only two days in Pittsburgh, and the Prince had been greatly looking forward to them, partly because of the developments in iron and steel which he expected to see there, and partly because of the remarkable compromise between the claims of capital and labour which the place could show him. From being the home of one of the most notorious monopolies in the country, it had become a city where the common man greatly prospered, where social progress thrived on a wide practical basis, a co-operative centre of international influence and reputation. They were to go to an hotel, Vandy having been obliged to rule firmly against any more private hospitality except in very special circumstances, and a suite had been reserved for them at the Grand. The Prince was so fatigued that Vandy had made private arrangements with the railway to stop the express at a suburban platform to avoid the crowd; and from there they had motored

quickly to their hotel, where they dined in peace and went to bed.

They had thought too little, both of them, of the recent return of Prince Alfred's cough, which he had almost lost at the end of the voyage. His cough was an old, habitual possession, a thing other people watched and worried over, a bore and a bogey much at the service of his Aunt Georgina. He had not even bothered about the usual remedies; indeed, Catkin, when he remembered, had gone off with the prescriptions, but it didn't matter twopence; medicine made very little difference one way or the other. There was a great deal too much to see and to do to worry about his cough; it was overborne in the rush of new experiences. He hardly noticed it. Nor for that matter had his cough been particularly troublesome the night before. He had gone to bed dog tired and slept badly.

Then in the morning, just as he finished shaving, he had a sudden tickling bout which he had to sit down to, and a moment later there it was on his handkerchief. He went in to Vandy with the bright-stained thing in his hand.

"Cut yourself, dear boy?" asked the Colonel, suspending his own razor.

"Yes, inside," the Prince told him. "They warned me about this. I'm awfully sorry, Vandy, but I'm afraid I am going to be a"—he coughed again, and the handkerchief showed redder—"a nuisance," he finished.

"For God's sake lie down." The Colonel was the whiter of the two.

Prince Alfred fell weakly upon the disarranged bed and drew his legs up after him. Colonel Vandeleur dashed to the telephone, but turned his head at a sound from the bed. The Prince was waving one hand in front of him.

"Of course not," said Vandy. Then he spoke into the receiver. "His Royal Highness is rather over-tired this morning and not altogether well. Will you kindly give me the address of the leading physician here, in case the Prince should wish to see one in the course of the day?"

He listened for the reply, anxiously watching his charge, and Prince Alfred smiled weakly with his eyes at his equerry over the spotted handkerchief.

"Indeed! On the next floor. Number twenty-two. Doctor *who* did you say? Atkins? Atkinson; Henry P. Atkinson. Thank you very much. Shall you ring him up? No; no, thanks. I'll see him, if necessary, in the course of the day. In now, do you say? Oh, yes; thanks—thanks very much."

"The best man in the city," he said, tearing into an overcoat. "Don't move till I get him"; and disappeared.

By noon the next day several things had happened. The hæmorrhage, under the treatment of the luckily so local doctor, had ceased, and not another soul knew anything about it. Such was Dr. Henry P. Atkinson's remarkable discretion, a man with the firmest lips, the most intrepid eyes and the squarest shoulders our travellers had so far seen; a splendid fellow before whom death must often have receded, with an eye on those shoulders. His manner of taking his Royal patient in his stride won Prince Alfred's confidence at once. From the beginning he saw so much more the serious case than the illustrious Prince, the case to which he showed himself, quite simply, a doctor and a friend. Alfred hardly recognised the physician-in-ordinary.

He saw the quick-gathering reporters in the

most sympathetic way. The Prince was suffering from exhaustion due to the heat and all that he had insisted on doing in the heat.

"From what Colonel Vandeleur, his equerry, tells me, he's been working as no Englishman, when he first sets foot in this country, ought to work," said Dr. Atkinson. "They're none of them keyed up to our climate, and the Prince has been trying to take grand opera out of himself from the word 'go.' Now he's got to submit to a little tuning." Vandy cabled the whole truth to the King, and telegraphed it to the Duke of Cambridge, Governor-General of Canada, Prince Alfred's uncle, who was still, fortunately, in residence at Ottawa. There at all events he would find temporary rest and quiet; there at all events he would be at home, it was considered, in the first difficulty and consternation that the news brought with it.

Out of the Pittsburgh hotel he must be got at the earliest moment possible, and long before the forty-eight hours of absolute stillness enjoined by Dr. Atkinson were over an aide-de-camp and the Viceregal doctor had arrived from Ottawa, a special train had been arranged with an invalid carriage, and on the evening of the second day after the attack the little company quickly slipped across the border.

Sir Randolph Perry, the distinguished specialist, left Liverpool the same day by the Canadian mail for Halifax, taking with him, in the second class, Catkin, silent and portentous, and two firm, high-coloured, middle-aged persons, easily recognisable in their discreet travelling dress as the pick and flower of London's trained nurses, the joint choice of Sir Randolph and the Princess Georgina. The Princess had seriously urged and threatened going herself; it seemed that her duty lay very plainly

across the Atlantic. It was not until she was able to say, "The King thinks it *absolutely* inadvisable—practically forbids it," that she abandoned the idea, after facing it with all fortitude for some hours.

The King had pointed out that Alfred had already one aunt at his bedside, and might be disturbed by two; also that, if members of the Family went hurrying over to him, it would look uncommonly as if "old Alfie's" last hour had come, which nobody had the least reason to suppose. So Sir Randolph went, and Catkin and the nurses, and Princess Georgina sent by them a tin of remarkably strengthening extract of eggs, which had done her an immense amount of good in the spring, and her fondest love.

Alfred stood the journey well, and the first of the bulletins were mere colourless continuations of what Dr. Atkinson had told the reporters in Pittsburgh. The patient's strength was "well maintained"; he was "taking nourishment at regular intervals"; he was sleeping well. For a mere case of nervous exhaustion, partly induced by the heat, there were almost too many bulletins, and their tone was too careful. But there was all Canada alarmed and anxious, very much aware of her rights where the Family was concerned, and wanting to know. And His Excellency the Duke was almost superstitiously desirous to encourage Canada's concern and desire to know, and was well aware of the importance of bulletins. When he himself had been down with pneumonia the previous spring, such a message had throbbed out every hour or so, and the country repaid the consideration with every evidence of appreciation. The bulletins about the Prince were from the beginning a little heavily worded; but the first thing that aroused suspicion was the postpone-

ment of the Governor-General's tour in the West. Dates had been made, important industrial features arranged, a great canal waited His Excellency's pleasure to link the waters of the St. Lawrence with those of Hudson Bay. The country had made up its mind that the Prince, having recovered from his indisposition, would abandon the high temperatures on the other side of the line, and accompany his uncle to the coast instead. The idea had been discussed everywhere except at Rideau Hall. Then came the announcement that the Duke would postpone his tour. Then, thick and fast, hints and surmises, statements and denials, the body of rumour that rides always in advance of the truth. And at last the truth itself.

Prince Alfred was suffering from a serious affection of the lungs, to which he had been predisposed since boyhood. The mischief was at present confined to the top of the right lung. There was no actual cavity, but a general softness of tissue. The results of the bacteriological examination were withheld; but the information was definite enough without them. Prince Alfred, in the old-fashioned phrase, had consumption; a perfectly curable case, however, with many encouraging features; no reason why His Royal Highness's lung should not be as sound as a bell in, say, a year. The new treatment—the treatment was as new as ever—had produced amazing results in cases far less hopeful, particularly the new German treatment, Dr. Stein's, and the Americans were neck and neck with him on different lines. With one accord a continent bade His Royal Highness "buck up," and with another it performed wonders of ingenuity in making immediate arrangements for him.

The second set of symptoms, alarmingly different, appeared on the day of Sir Randolph

Perry's arrival from England. That specialist had provisionally decided, on the way from the station, that his patient should leave the mid-summer climate of Ottawa without an unnecessary hour's delay. As he drove across the bridge over the tumbling river and sniffed the fine spray that cooled the temperature for perhaps twenty yards there, Sir Randolph said to himself that it was the first tolerable mouthful of air he had had since he left the ship. Sir Randolph was round and red and ample, with a white moustache and a cheek that quivered with well-being, and he depended very much on his own air, or the variety at his disposal within a hundred miles of London.

"I'll get him home by the next ship," he said to himself, while refraining, as became the top of his profession, from uselessly questioning the A.D.C. beside him in the motor. Half-an-hour later he had changed his mind. It was inadvisable to move the Prince. Absolute rest and a milk diet. General approval of the line taken by the Duke's man. A slight change in one of the prescriptions. Nothing radical, but we'll try a bottle of this. Watching. Fresh air, of course; it might not do everything, but you could do nothing without it. Was a tent possible? Well, then, a tent. Too hot in the middle of the day? Then pitch the tent under a tree—a big, three-roomed, regulation fellow, thirty-eight by twenty-seven. Sir Randolph had lived in one himself, on manoeuvres, with ideal comfort for weeks at a time. At headquarters, of course, in play-fights. No such luxury for army doctors on actual service. It transpired that Sir Randolph's career had begun only when most people's finished—in his years of pensioned retirement. But that was by the way.

The Governor-General, as they enjoyed their cigarettes together on a garden seat after luncheon,

found Sir Randolph an agreeable, entertaining fellow, who smacked very pleasantly of town. When the talk was of the patient he showed the usual professional reserve in a manner which impressed His Excellency as the very flower of professional form. He said cheerful things with his mouth, and serious ones with his eyes—eyes which rested on his interlocutor with the effect of making a confidence. His Excellency, accustomed to many forms of flattery, enjoyed a new one. As to the Stein treatment—well, Sir Randolph had an open mind. He personally did not feel convinced that *any* tuberculo-toxin had wholly established itself. But there was no reason why it shouldn't be given a trial. As a matter of fact, Sir Randolph had the serum with him. But for the present, till this immediate prostration was over, nursing, dieting, watching. The temperature chart was puzzling, and Sir Randolph spoke gravely of the new symptoms and what they might establish. It would be easy, however, to come too soon to such a conclusion, and Sir Randolph produced so many and such technical reasons to the contrary that the Duke went away to wire to Balmoral with anxiety sensibly allayed.

Sir Randolph himself wrote his first bulletin, in which he made no mention of the new and serious development which, in his opinion, had been made in the course of the Royal patient's disease.

Three anxious days later, after dinner, His Excellency, with an expression of concern, took the London specialist aside.

"The fact is, Perry," he said, "an awkward situation has arisen, which I can only lay before you. My nephew has expressed a wish—a whim I consider it, but he puts it very strongly—to see the fellow who looked after him the other day in

Pittsburgh. Atkinson, I think his name is. Seems he has taken an extraordinary fancy to the fellow. Now would you——"

"Let him come, sir. By all means let him come," responded Sir Randolph with cordial tolerance, "so long as it's understood I haven't asked for him. Unless you yourself, sir, would be better satisfied to——"

"Lord, no! I never heard of the fellow before. But if it would afford my poor nephew any satisfaction——"

"By all means," said Sir Randolph. "I perfectly understand. By all means."

His Excellency put a friendly hand under the doctor's elbow. "It's very good of you, Perry," he said. "I don't, as a matter of fact, like to deny the boy."

So a telegram was sent to Dr. Atkinson, taken by a Viceregal messenger. The same day another message, written out and addressed by the faithful hand of Catkin, went to Arthur Youghall, who had returned from Oxford to his native city of St. John, New Brunswick. If the first wire was official, the second was very private indeed. There was no need, Prince Alfred considered, for anybody but Catkin to know.

CHAPTER XIV

MANY motors and carriages had come and gone along the wooded drive to Rideau Hall, and the sentries on duty paid little attention to the taxicab that slid up behind the Chief Justice's big limousine, or to the dusty young man who got out of it, until he addressed one of them.

"How can I get this taken in to the Prince?" he asked.

"This" was his card. His way of speaking was direct and businesslike, without either a pleasant or a distant affectation, and the guard, who was a Cockney, looked at him as if he took a little too much for granted.

"You'll find His Royal 'Ighness's visitors' book just inside the door, sir," he replied, and looked in front of him with a rigidity that said plainly what was his business and what was not.

The inquirer went up the steps, and, as he looked about him at the top of them, a young man in uniform came out of the aide-de-camp's room into the hall. He also indicated the visitors' book. "I'm afraid the Prince cannot see you," he said, "but won't you write your name? The book is taken to him every evening."

"I will, with pleasure," said the new arrival, who had the air of having come straight from the train. Indeed, a suit-case proclaimed it on the taxi beside the driver. "But I think Prince Alfred expects me. I had a telegram from him yesterday."

"Oh, then, of course——" said Captain Grinling.

"Er—might I ask your name? And will you come this way?"

He took the visitor, with an air of mingled constraint and deference, into the aide-de-camp's room and left him there in the company of an Irish terrier who did all he could to be polite.

After a perceptible time he returned, accompanied by Colonel Vandeleur, who held out a winning hand.

"Mr. Youghall, I believe. Mr. Youghall is a college friend of the Prince, Grinling. Prince Alfred is much looking forward to seeing you, Mr. Youghall, but you won't mind my telling you, I know, that a great exception has been made; he is allowed no visitors. As a matter of fact, none of us knew of his having summoned you. And I must beg of you—you will understand, I know—to be very quiet and—very brief."

They were walking through the house as he spoke. Youghall remembered afterward a procession of rooms. He also remembered the swinging of Colonel Vandeleur's sword as he led the way, and his creaseless tunic and general look of fine feather. Already, by the mere person of the equerry, formal, pleasant, and distant, he felt relegated and prescribed his place. A little daunting chill fell upon his eagerness.

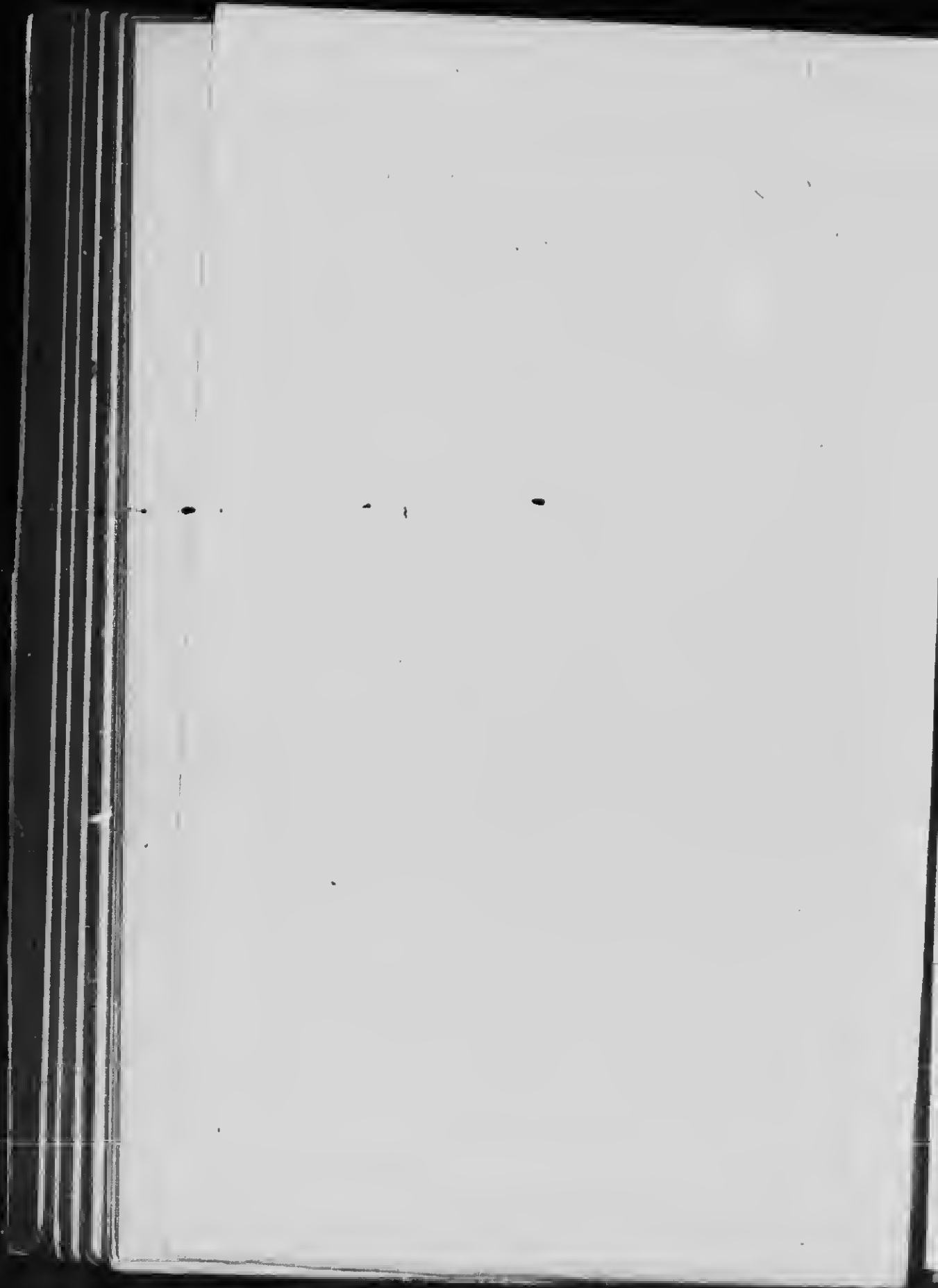
"I hope——" he hesitated.

"There has been no return of the hæmorrhage, but His Royal Highness is naturally very weak. Sir Randolph thinks it unlikely that we can get him home before the end of the month. This way. He is camped out here, day and night."

They stepped, as he spoke, out of a French window into the garden. Beyond the flower beds, in a shady spot where the trees began, Youghall saw a group of tents, before one of them a couple of stationary tunics that challenged the red of the roses.



Yougha!! grasped the hand that came out to him.



The daunting chill crept higher about his heart. He answered Vandeleur's admonitions with a mechanical, "Oh, yes—of course; I quite understand," but he could not have repeated them. The guard before the tent stood ironical in the light of the fear within it. Wasn't he already far enough away from them all—dear old "Cakes"? Vandeleur's very stride, along the path beside him, conveyed something perfunctory and unfeeling. Youghall had a sense, too, that he was keeping back things. These superior words, for all their sound of deep concern, were telling no more than was said in the printed bulletin at the gate. "Terrible shock to the King" were the last of them that Youghall heard as they passed the saluting sentries and Vandeleur gently pushed open the fly-screen that had replaced the flap of the inner wall of the tent.

Youghall, entering behind him, saw nothing beyond his uniformed person but the end of the bed, as the equerry made two steps toward it and said with precision: "Mr. Arthur Youghall, sir."

Then he stepped aside and back, and at the same moment Youghall had the impression of a nurse's figure disappearing through the wall of the tent beyond. But all he truly saw was the white face on the pillow with the blackness round the eyes and that curious straight look about the lips, like a beautiful, blurred mediæval mask. It was the beauty of it and the blurring that cried out first and so caught Youghall about the heart that he stood silent beside the bed, grasping the hand that came out to him, and fighting to keep his mouth from the betrayal of tears.

The face on the pillow smiled and spoke; something familiar came back. "Thank you so much for writing, Youghall," said Prince Alfred. "Your letter—bucked me up no end for a while. Don't

talk, old chap. Let me. There's so awfully little time. Vandy made me promise—not more than ten minutes. I wanted to see you, so I got Catkin to wire." He pointed to a chair, and, as Youghall took it, made a gesture that he should pull it closer, closer still. "Catkin is—perfectly invaluable, Youghall. He does as I tell him. The others all seem to think I'm here to take orders. Look here, Youghall—I'm not going to get better, you know."

Youghall's face quieted and straightened. He leaned forward and knotted his hands round his knee.

"Not so fast, dear old man. Not so fast, surely. You think you won't. Well, you mustn't think you won't, of course, if you want to."

"Thinking won't alter it. I'll stagger back to England, and—I don't mind dying in itself. It's the beastly public way I'll have to do it that I hate to think of. And please don't contradict me, Youghall. I know you want to buck me up and all that, but there isn't time. Just accept that I'm not going to get better, and we can get on."

Youghall nodded, with his face in arms.

"You know I was in Washington. I stayed with the Phippses—dear people. Of the very best. President, Mr. Phipps happens to be, and a jolly good President, too, I should say. There was a girl there—a great friend of theirs—"

Prince Alfred stopped and searched the face of his brother man for some hint of consternation. It did not change, except to grow braver and kinder, nor did Youghall speak. "You might help a fellow out."

"An unusual sort of girl?"

"I thought so—very. We became friends and I should have liked to know her better. But her people lugged her off or something, and it couldn't

be done. So that's all—as it should be, no doubt. But I have a notion that I'd like to be remembered—do you see, Youghall?—by that particular girl—and I've hit on a way to do it. I want you to take something and give it to her and just say, 'He thinks you might like to keep this.' Don't make any fuss. Just say I sent it on the chance. And she's not to bother to write or anything. You can do that?"

"Yes," said Youghall, "of course; I can do that." He waited, all tenderness, for the name, but it did not immediately come.

"Her father was once President and she lost her mother when she was very young," Prince Alfred went on, looking out where the sun blazed on the firs and the waving maples, and smiling to himself.

"Yes," said Youghall, and looked out, too, at the maples.

"I hope you won't mind. You and Longworth were the only ones I could ask, and I preferred you because I thought she and I would both like it better if my messenger were one of my own people."

One hand fumbled beneath his pillow, and Youghall thought he wanted it rearranged. "Can I help you?" he said, and his heart, full as it was of pity and love, found room for enchantment at "my messenger."

"No—I've got it." The head on the pillow turned away and glanced down at something in the hand beneath the bedclothes. It was just then that the clapping of Vandy's swordsheath against his leg sounded along the path outside the tent.

"Quick!" said Alfred, and held out his hand, in which the thing lay, small and round.

Youghall, to take it, fell forward on one knee. It was not pure awkwardness, for there was a grace of the heart in it. Vandy was pushing in, and one thing had been forgotten. "Name?" Youghall's

lips formed silently, looking at the Prince. Vandy was there to hear.

"I'm afraid——" began the Colonel, kindly but firmly.

"All right; we had finished," said Prince Alfred. "It was awfully good of you to come. Good-bye—Lanchester—good-bye. Don't forget my love to Mrs. Phipps."

"Good-bye, sir," Youghall said. "I won't forget."

"Did you find him very depressed?" asked Colonel Vandeleur outside.

"I think not—no."

"A little excited, I fancy. I noticed he called you Lanchester."

"Yes, he did, didn't he? We had been talking of some people of that name," said Youghall.

Colonel Vandeleur saw him politely into his taxi, and all the way Youghall felt a warm spot in his waistcoat pocket, where lay nothing more nor less valuable than an oxidised button with a laurel wreath on it, and a bugle, and the crown of England.

CHAPTER XV

Two days later Dr. Atkinson arrived in the evening from Pittsburgh. He was sent for because Prince Alfred wanted him, and for that reason only. So much was delicately conveyed to him from the beginning, and not so delicately either as to fail to put him a little on his mettle about it. H. P. Atkinson was not precisely a nobody, be it understood. So far as degrees went, both American and European, there were not ten practitioners in the United States who could show better, and, although a young man, Dr. Atkinson's name was already recognisable in the literature and Congresses of his profession. While it could not yet be said that he had arrived, he was on-coming, and he meant to come on. Research and the too constant habit of Conferences to meet in Rome or Berlin kept him poor, also perhaps the general fascination his work had for him. "If Atkinson would only specialise practically," his friends said of him; but he had an incurable tendency to specialise in directions of pure theory which he balanced with a capacity to cure people of anything and everything, deplorable from the point of view of a reputation. He meant to come on, but by means the most legitimate. He turned an involuntarily cold shoulder to advertisement, not that he did not see its uses, but the thing humiliated him. When the telegram came from the Military Secretary at Rideau Hall, he was on the point of taking a fortnight's fishing up the Saguenay, and had already arranged his work. He

bestowed the wire in an inside pocket with the reflection that it might have been a good deal more inconvenient, and told nobody of the change in his destination but the booking-clerk at the railway station. Certainly he was not an advertiser.

They could not have known at Rideau Hall that Dr. Atkinson would do this, but it justified them in their own decision to keep his arrival out of the Viceregal Court Circular for the day. It was the Duke's idea. He thought that the summoning, in addition to the Staff doctor and the London specialist, of an American medical man, might hurt the feelings of the profession in Canada. So, of course, it might. The Duke was always anxious about such things, and in this case he consulted Sir Randolph Perry, who agreed.

"Keep it informal," said Sir Randolph, "and no harm will be done. Make it, so to speak, official, and we shall have all the local fellows on their hind-legs."

So the names of Lord Alfred Yavelly and the Hon. Cecil Hyndham, who arrived by the same train, duly appeared in the daily communication of Viceregal items to the Press, and that of Dr. Henry P. Atkinson, of Pittsburgh, did not. The omission, when he noticed it in the *Citizen* next morning, nettled the young man, who, though no advertiser, was quite self-respectfully human; and it probably had something to do with his adding a postscript to a letter. The letter was written to his *locum tenens*, and concerned a case left in his care. The postscript explained the Ottawa address.

"I am here for a day or two to see the Prince, apparently at his request—certainly not at Perry's. I am not quite sure that the visit is consultative, but I don't propose to understand it, of course, in any other sense. As I see my way to certain

recommendations, and it may take a little time to make them effective, you had better address me, till I wire, as above."

The next day the Pittsburgh papers, and the day after, all the world knew that Dr. Henry P. Atkinson, to whose care Prince Alfred had been confided when the symptoms of his illness first appeared at Pittsburgh, had been summoned to His Royal Highness's bedside at Ottawa. The Duke was relieved to notice that there were no protests from the profession in Canada, who seemed to think it, on the whole, a natural thing to happen.

And His Excellency could not deny, would have been the last to deny, the marked and curious change for the better in his nephew's condition, which coincided with Dr. Atkinson's arrival, though it was an impossible thing to refer to before Perry. Not that there were grounds for sensitiveness on Perry's part. Not the smallest alteration having been made in the treatment, as the result of Atkinson's arrival, the improvement in the patient must necessarily be put down to the treatment—which was Perry's. Yet the coincidence was odd. Mrs. Gold, the day-nurse, as Sir Randolph's choice and Sir Randolph's main support, found a difficulty in knowing "what to make of" the American doctor, and showed in various subtle ways, which were quite lost upon Dr. Henry, that she made rather little. But even Mrs. Gold had to admit that from the hour when Dr. Atkinson drew a chair under his downright person by His Royal Highness's bed, having first taken His Royal Highness's hand, not for any purpose more professional than to shake it—even Mrs. Gold had to admit that from that hour His Royal Highness began to get back his colour. The mask slipped off the crusader's head, which had been lying almost as still as if on

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a stone pillow, and it turned into that of a weak and restless young man who had questions to ask and demands to make.

"Look here," he said to Dr. Atkinson at the end of his first visit. "How long can you stay?"

"That depends," the American smiled; "but probably about as long as I'm wanted."

"Are you stopping in the house?" asked Prince Alfred.

"I am—yes. I found it had been arranged, very kindly."

"Well—look here—I don't think that's a good scheme, you know. Old Perry, you see—naturally. And my uncle, you see—he's the dearest old boy, but he'll be getting orders from home. They think no end of Perry at home. You may find it awkward, stopping here. But I don't want you to leave the town. Perch at an hotel, will you?"

"As soon as I civilly can," said Dr. Atkinson. "To-morrow, perhaps. I must have a proper talk with Sir Randolph first. So far, I've been able to see him only at meals."

"That's just it," frowned Prince Alfred. "Well—look here, Atkinson. I haven't a notion what they mean to do with me, you know. They don't tell me. All I know is I won't be—effectively—consulted. I never have been, you know. There's a pretence, but, as a matter of fact—one isn't."

Dr. Atkinson nodded, with sympathy and understanding, and an interest that kindled in spite of all his reticence. The plight of the Prince was hardly less appealing than the plight of the patient. He had heard of such things, and in the American version, by which they had not suffered in the telling. His eye hardened as he remembered them.

"They made no fuss about my sending for you. I think they thought I was going out," Prince Alfred went on with satisfaction. "And now I

want to make it quite clear, Atkinson, that I've called you in—see? I'm of age, and all that, you know—I have a right to my own doctor, haven't I?"

"The circumstances," said Dr. Atkinson, "are, of course, rather special; but morally, at least, I should think that was so."

"It isn't that I'm not satisfied with old Perry and my uncle's chap, but I want another opinion."

"I understand."

Prince Alfred searched the eye that was bent upon him for an instant. Then he said—

"This is the whole of it. I want an opinion that isn't influenced by the highest considerations. Do you know what I mean?"

Dr. Atkinson laughed, but his lips looked firmer than ever afterwards.

"I think I do," he said.

"And, look here—I say—do you mind? I'd like to pay you myself. Catkin!" The valet, passing on the other side of the fly-screen, came in. "I say, Catkin, where's my cheque-book?"

"In Your Royal Highness's dispatch-box, sir, and that's with the Colonel, sir."

"Oh. No—you needn't get it. But you've got some money—of—mine—Catkin. How much have you got? Have you got ten guineas?"

"Yes, sir, I have twelve pound ten, sir, if you require it."

Catkin's expression also dedicated his person, his life, and the whole of his small change if His Royal Highness should require it.

"Oh, come," laughed Dr. Atkinson, no longer to be repressed. "Won't you wait until I send in my bill?"

"No, I won't. I want, please, to pay you a fee in advance. Go and get it, Catkin."

Catkin went, and Dr. Atkinson, plunged in reflection, sat silent by the bed.

"That's quite a dependable fellow, I should say," he remarked, in the half absent tone of doctors' conversation, "but I don't seem to remember him in Pittsburgh."

"Catkin? Oh—the best. No, he wasn't there. Been sent home. Sort of silly idea I had that I wanted to roll up my own night-shirt. Didn't work—Vandy rolled it up. Then they yanked poor old Cat back again. I was precious glad."

Catkin came in, looking infinitely dependable, with the flush that results from going hurriedly to the bottom of a trunk. The gold, in an envelope on a salver, was as dissociated from Catkin as if it had just been minted.

The next moment was as full of reluctance as any that Dr. Atkinson's practice had yet brought him. It was odd, it was ridiculous, but he had a sudden thrill of dislike to the sovereigns the Prince offered him. He positively hated taking them. No well-to-do patient's money had ever affected him in such a way before, and this being plainly Catkin's had nothing to do with it. Perhaps, though, obscurely it had. If Catkin, a mere valet— It all went through him, looking at the envelope in Alfred's thin fingers, with a constriction of the heart. The heart of a good American, trying to throb perhaps, so long after, to the old music of *Ich dien*. . . . It passed, of course.

The Prince looked worriedly at the envelope swinging from his fingers, and said—

"I haven't the least idea— Your travelling expenses and all that. You were a brick to come, Atkinson. And, of course, you *will* send in—I mean—this, you know, is only to *get* you—"

Dr. Atkinson took the envelope, folded it across, and bestowed it carefully in his waistcoat pocket.

"Prince," he said with a smile, "you've got me all right—for all I'm worth."

It was that same day, in the afternoon, that Mrs. Gold told the night-nurse she believed Sir Randolph was beginning to see some little improvement.

CHAPTER XVI

AFTER dinner and billiards the Military Secretary, Major Molyneux Winter, was doing his duty towards the American doctor by smoking a parting cigar with him.

"It used to be good," said Major Winter of the fishing about Dent du Loup, "but there's a big hotel there now, and every pool within a dozen miles stinks of money. However, you can pick up your Johnny Couteau there all right, and push on up river. If, as you propose, you leave Ottawa to-morrow, the eleven-five is the best train. That arrives you at Montreal——"

Dr. Atkinson had removed his cigar, and was considering the ash of it.

"You misunderstand me, Major," he said. "I feel that I have trespassed upon the hospitality of the Governor-General long enough, and I propose to go to-morrow to a friend in the town—McGillivray, Dr. McGillivray. Perhaps you know him."

"I know the name," said Major Winter.

"But I should not feel justified in leaving the Prince at present."

"Oh, but—you mustn't spoil your holiday, Dr. Atkinson. You needn't worry about Prince Alfred. Sir Randolph is responsible, you know."

"I should be glad to think so. But Prince Alfred this morning very directly and specifically made me responsible."

"Oh, but—I beg your pardon, but he couldn't do that without the Duke's leave, you know."

"Why not?"

"Well—I'm bound to explain to you that the King has sent Perry, Dr. Atkinson. Sir Randolph is one of the Physicians-in-Ordinary—sort of family doctor to the Court, you know. Besides being an absolutely top-hole specialist for lungs."

"I quite understand the King's point of view, but my patient doesn't seem to be affected by it."

"Oh, I say!" Major Winter faced round rather stiff and square. "Well, but—I've nothing to do with it, of course. You'd better talk to Vandeleur. But I should say that in a matter of that kind the Prince would be bound to some extent by Court etiquette, you know. The King's wishes are commands, especially where members of the Royal Household are concerned. But don't take it from me, you know. It's Vandeleur's job. You talk to Vandeleur."

Dr. Atkinson smoked on in a silence which seemed deliberate.

"If the Prince doesn't feel bound by Court etiquette, I don't see why I should," he replied presently.

"I see your point. But"—Major Winter was warming to indiscretion—"excuse my mentioning it, but doesn't the etiquette of your own shop rather come in, Doctor? I suppose you admit that Sir Randolph's in charge of the case."

Dr. Atkinson got up from the bench and stepped off the dais to give himself the freedom of a few paces in front of it.

"I might have refused to come on that account," he said, "but I supposed, of course, that the visit was consultative——"

"So it was, I am sure," Major Winter hastened to say. "I know nothing whatever about it, but no doubt it was."

"And, now that I am here," Dr. Atkinson went

on quietly, "I think that any objection of that sort is properly met by the consideration that the patient was placed in my hands in the beginning."

The Military Secretary, who had been charged with the tactful fixing up of Dr. Atkinson's departure, and who felt that he had been as little tactful as successful, looked embarrassed. He reflected gratefully that Americans were business men and accustomed to direct methods. "The fellow doesn't seem offended," he thought.

"Well, all I can say is, talk to Vandeleur," he repeated.

"I don't think that is necessary at present. But I should like to talk—with as little delay as possible—if you will be good enough to arrange it for me, Major—to the Duke and to Sir Randolph Perry."

"Separately or together?"

"Separately at first. Together later, perhaps. As to the hour, I suggest to-morrow morning, but I am entirely, of course, at their disposal. Perhaps you will mention that I shall be staying on in Ottawa for the present. But I may tell you, at your discretion, that in my opinion there is urgent need for effective consultation, and that from my point of view loss of time is extremely prejudicial. Good-night."

"Good-night to you," said Major Winter.

When the Duke was told at ten the next morning of Prince Alfred's private arrangement with Dr. Atkinson, he said it was the devil. He said it was the very devil. Here was Perry, he said. Did the fellow expect to supersede Perry? What was to be said to Perry, and what could Perry be expected to say? These medical fellows wanted very careful handling, especially men at the very top of the tree, like Perry. Winter could see for himself that it was the devil. The very devil. Suppose Perry turned rusty and threw up the case. He didn't

say it was probable, but if he did? Who could blame him? He would have the whole of the profession behind his back—in England, anyhow. He, the Duke, would have to make it a personal matter with Perry, a thing which it was possible to be obliged to do a trifle too often, by Gad. His poor nephew had been ill-advised, to say the least of it, very ill-advised. The Duke did not pause to consider that his nephew in this step could not well have received any advice. He did not pause to consider anything, but the complications the step had caused. Complications with Sir Randolph Perry—complications with Buckingham Palace. The Duke stood before the fireplace of the room in which he usually received the Prime Minister, an undeservedly ruffled Governor-General; and Major Molyneux Winter, whose duty it was to keep the Duke's path free of just such things as complications drooped contritely upon one foot on the other side of the table.

"Well, Winter," the Duke summed up, "we shall want something more definite than this, you know—we shall want to know precisely where we stand with this Pittsburgh fellow. You must see Vandeleur at once, and find out exactly what did happen. It may have been a mere politeness on my nephew's part. I must get to the bottom of it before I see Atkinson officially, if I am obliged to. Go and talk to Vandeleur."

Major Winter went, and found the equerry asking for him. Colonel Vandy had been already summoned by the Prince, and already told exactly what did happen, Catkin supplying anything his master had forgotten.

"It was clever of him to have Catkin there," added the Colonel.

They talked it over together, these two gentlemen in perfect health, talked it over heavily from

the point of view of an outraged Court and a Staff that might be held responsible. Then Major Winter took Colonel Vandeleur to the Duke, the two measuring the corridors with long important steps. Having heard, as he said, the whole story, the Duke decided that there was nothing for it but to send for Perry. "It all depends," said the Duke, "on Perry."

So Perry was sent for, Vandy and the Major leaving the Viceregal presence with measured steps and all discretion. "Whatever happens," Major Winter told his companion in perplexity, "the papers mustn't get hold of this," and Colonel Vandeleur said "No, by Jove." They found Sir Randolph rubbing his hands, a trick he could never get rid of. He showed them the morning chart, comparing it with that of the same day the week before. He told them what one or two of the indications meant. He was just about to send the chart to the Duke; now he would take it instead, very glad of the chance so early in the day. He, Sir Randolph, began to see his way.

"Whom shall I get hold of?" he asked.

"Captain Grinling's on duty, sir, but I'll take you myself," said the Military Secretary with a gravity that made Sir Randolph give him a sharp glance. He was obviously full of repressed information, and the little red doctor kept pace with his clapping sword-case, feeling more professional than at any moment since his arrival. Major Winter ushered him in and withdrew, but remained in attendance, and when the telephone bell rang in the A.D.C.'s room it was he who came. Sir Randolph by this time knew his way quite well about the house; but the Duke, upon points of etiquette, was extremely particular. Major Winter found his master beaming, and Sir Randolph even more radiant than usual. There had plainly been

no situation. When the Major returned, after seeing Sir Randolph to the foot of the stairs, the Duke told him there had not.

"I must say," the Duke told him, "Perry took it awfully well. Awfully well, you know. Perfectly willing—in fact, insists that my nephew's wish must cancel every other consideration. Absolutely. Spoke quite handsomely of Atkinson, I must say. Doesn't understand it as an abdication on his own part in any way, but is willing to accept Atkinson in practically any capacity that will gratify poor Alfie. Seems there is no possibility of two opinions on the case, which is lucky, of course. And Perry expects now to be able to get him off in a week's time—suggests the *Empress* boat leaving Quebec next Saturday. Upon that point, of course, we can get orders. Perry's view is not likely to be questioned at home. Meanwhile, no difficulty whatever about Atkinson. Great relief to me. Just see the chap—will you, Winter?—and say that I particularly hope that he will stop on with us here. Much the best arrangement. Perry ought to get something very good out of this in the way of recognition. A baronetcy—quite probable. He deserves it. And he shall have my good word—I promise you that."

CHAPTER XVII

MAJOR MOLYNEUX WINTER was not, perhaps, too well qualified for the post he held. Dauntless in the face of the enemy, and really excellent at household accounts, even Viceregal ones, which require an eagle eye, he could never be quite depended upon not to say almost exactly what was in his mind. He said it now, to Dr. Atkinson, in the satisfaction of having persuaded the doctor that, his attendance on the Prince being fully acknowledged, he would be well advised to stay on at Rideau Hall.

"You'd much better be on the spot," Major Winter had urged candidly, and Dr. Atkinson, thinking it over, agreed.

"It's very kind of the Governor-General, I am sure," he said, "but what am I to say to McGillivray?"

"Oh, just tell him you've been invited. It's really," smiled Winter, "a command, you know."

"Oh, well, that's simple," Dr. Atkinson said, thinking of the reasons he would give McGillivray.

"By good luck it's all fairly simple," replied Major Winter. "Sir Randolph says there can't be two opinions on the case."

"Does he? Ah!" said Dr. Atkinson thoughtfully. "Well, I'm to see him at twelve, you say? Very good. Please convey to the Duke my appreciation of his hospitality, and either my best thanks or my implicit obedience, whichever meets the case. I'll stay, anyhow."

In the exciting week that followed, Major Winter

was often given credit for at least that triumph of diplomacy. The Pittsburgh doctor was in the house; he could be placed under some sort of restraint; could be sent for to the library, met on the stairs, got hold of over coffee after lunch, or port after dinner. He could be kept in touch, not only with the patient's hourly condition, which was the reason the world had to be satisfied with, but with the high-play of messages and intimations that passed between the Governor-General and Buckingham Palace. He could be instructed in the significance of this, and warned of the gravity of that. Above all, he could be kept, as a guest of the house, in relations of even more than professional confidence. It was impossible, at all events, for him to give any hint of his diagnosis or his recommendations outside, whether they were accepted or not.

Whether they were to be accepted, that was what mattered so immensely, apparently first to King John and the Foreign Office and the Duchess of Altenburg, then to the Duke of Camberley and his Staff, and, most of all, judging by activity, to Sir Randolph Perry, K.C.B., as was reasonable, for his professional reputation was at stake. That it could matter to the patient was a view that seemed peculiar to himself and his American adviser, who held it, however, strongly enough for six.

The state of war was declared at noon on the day of Dr. Atkinson's first professional meeting with Sir Randolph, which will be remembered to have been arranged for twelve o'clock. Doors closed upon the two which cannot be opened, which never, as a matter of fact, were completely opened, even to history; but anyone might know that a suave and genial Sir Randolph went in, of normal colour, and a dogged and belligerent Sir Randolph came out, several shades redder. I must let the word belligerent stand; it did express him, such an astonish-

ing change there was. Sir Randolph's courtesy, Sir Randolph's confidence, had been ill-rewarded. There could be, it seemed, two opinions of the case, two opinions of the chances. Ground had been gained, if only standing-ground, by the enemy, through the mere exercise, on Sir Randolph's part, of the virtues of tolerance and professional good feeling. "Gad, sir," Sir Randolph said to the Duke as together they deplored the state of things which had come about, "I sometimes feel it's possible to be too much of a gentleman in my trade." That was the general feeling in the Household, from the Duke downward. Sir Randolph's gentlemanly behaviour, his determination that the lightest wish of the Prince should be respected, so long as there could be no two opinions about the case, had been taken advantage of. The Pittsburgh doctor had been given a status—that is how they put it in the A.D.C.'s room, simply through Perry's decency, and now he was rewarding that decency by worming himself into the Prince's confidence, bucking him up to defy regulations, and starting some damn new hare to upset the conclusions of the first specialist in England. On the face of it, Captain Grinling said to Captain Montmorency Jones, was it likely Atkinson knew or was it likely Perry knew? Which would he, Grinling, or he, Jones, elect to follow if either Grinling or Jones were afflicted with rotten bellows? The A.D.C.'s room stood solidly for eminence and authority. A shade fell upon it when Winter, to whom it said "Sir," reported that Major Minchin, of the Royal Medical Army Corps, the Viceregal doctor, who was naturally given intimate views, was "keeping an open mind." "Wobbling" they put it darkly, and it was hinted that poor Major Minchin's professional indecision was a form of watching the cat. Young men are so severe. But even the Duke,

that best of good fellows, in an access of irritated anxiety, snubbed his medical man rather severely. "All I can say, Minchin," he delivered, "is that we don't pay you to keep an open mind." Which so frightened Minchin that he fluttered more than ever, first to the enteric fever complication theory of Dr. Atkinson, and then back to the general tubercular condition which was so positively affirmed by Sir Randolph Perry.

There were symptoms on both sides, tubercle microbes to justify any view, and this against Atkinson's, that his feature had long been known for its fallibility.

"It's the commonest mistake in the history of the disease," declared Sir Randolph, and quoted case after case in which he had been privileged to expose it. The unhappy thing was the proportion of them in which death had supervened at different periods after the exposure. Certainly the balance of hope was with Atkinson. That in its way was the most irritating thing of all, it being obscurely felt that the balance of hope ought to be with the highest authority.

The acute difficulty was the immediate divergence in the recommendations of the two doctors. They agreed only upon the prime importance of getting the Prince at the earliest feasible moment out of the midsummer conditions of Ottawa. Sir Randolph, to put it briefly, was for the immediate voyage to England, and thereafter, if and as soon as the patient could bear it, a course of treatment based on everything that was established in what was known as the Neuheimer system. That was absolutely established. Sir Randolph drew the line rigidly at that. He would be a party to no false hopes based on theories, however brilliant, as yet imperfectly demonstrated. In Sir Randolph's opinion, expressed privately to the Duke, the person

of a member of the Royal House of England did not offer a suitable subject for empiricism. Nor would Sir Randolph withhold any part of his opinion from the Duke. Prince Alfred's life might be prolonged, under an adaptation of the Neuheimer system, for several years. It was the most they were entitled to hope.

Dr. Atkinson, on the other hand, diagnosing two diseases in the Prince, proposed to cure first one and then the other. Not by his own hand.

"We can get the enteric out of him in a week now," he told the Governor-General. "And then I want you to hand him over to Morrow at Sumach. Morrow's an advance picket—he's got hold of things. You must have heard of him, Your Highness. The Morrow-Committees. He's the fellow who has practically cleaned consumption out of the country towns of the State of New York. He was phthisic himself once, like most of the men who have done anything with us. We seem to want the personal stimulus. Tried everything on himself; but his own case was measles to some of those he's wound up and started going again since. I don't say it's Prince Alfred's only chance, but, taking everything together, his predispositions of all sorts—I may say that the Prince has spoken very freely to me—I would not be afraid to publish my belief that his chances are ten to one with Morrow, and one to ten back there in England doing Neuheimer inoculations."

"But you won't publish it," said the Duke anxiously.

"Why, no," Dr. Atkinson replied. "I consider I've done my duty when I've given my best advice to the patient."

"I haven't spoken to Alfred—yet," said the Duke. "I know I can depend upon the boy to do what is thought best for him. You mentioned his pre-

dispositions. Now exactly what do you mean by that?"

"Well, if he goes back to England, one of his predispositions—to tell you candidly, Highness, his leading predisposition—is to die. He sees himself lying in state—is there a place you call Westminster Hall? Well, there. Stretched out in bed with his eyes shut he sees himself lying in state, and taking a trip on a gun-carriage afterwards. He's got it all figured out."

"Morbid," said the Duke.

"Maybe," said the doctor. "His mother, he tells me, died of tuberculosis."

"Her late Majesty," the Duke returned heavily, "did at the end suffer from something of the kind. But there were complications." The dear Duke suggested that her late Majesty had been given a choice.

"Suppose we consented to the Sumach idea—I admit the virtues of the Adirondack air—would it be possible to arrange to place Perry in charge?"

"Not—excuse me if I put it brusquely—not on your life, Duke. Morrow would never consent. How could he?"

"It would look better in England," said the Duke.

"I am afraid it would serve no earthly purpose. The nurses should go. Catkin, and Colonel Vandeleur by all means. Nobody else," said Dr. Atkinson.

"You yourself——?"

"I've got a lot of people to attend to in Pittsburgh, Your Highness, and some of them are pretty sick. It's a place with a wonderful equality of opportunity for self-indulgence."

"Then you wouldn't be——"

"On hand? Oh, yes, if occasion arose. But it wouldn't."

"What does my nephew say to that?"

"I think His Royal Highness understands the situation," said Dr. Atkinson. "He believes me when I tell him nothing in the world would justify me in taking his case so long as Morrow is alive."

The Duke walked out of the room.

"Then," said Major Winter, returning to the charge with Atkinson the next afternoon, "we should be obliged to ship Perry, after ten days, to countermand the C.P.R.'s special cabin arrangements—they've gone to no end of trouble, knocking four into one—and practically throw overboard the most distinguished opinion of the British School of Medicine. Perry ain't alone, you must remember. Impossible, man. You must see for yourself it's impossible."

"Won't Perry help you?"

"Perry!"

"Why, yes. Perry ought to recommend it. Get him to go over and see Morrow, anyhow. I'll have the enteric proved on him in three days, and though that doesn't affect his views about the phthisis, he'll be so sick at having to acknowledge it that he might very well decide to lead the way out of all fuss and worry by recommending the Morrow treatment. If he were convinced, of course. And I imagine, if the Duke asked him to go and see Morrow with an open mind, Morrow could convince him."

"What do you mean by fuss and worry?"

"Well, I've got to tell you I think the patient means to place himself under Morrow."

"And you mean to help him," said Winter.

"I have helped him," Dr. Atkinson replied. "I don't suppose it will be necessary to have recourse to the Habeas Corpus Act," he added, smiling.

In three days, or, to be precise, on the morning of the fourth, Prince Alfred's condition had changed sufficiently to justify Dr. Atkinson's diagnosis of

enteric. By that time also the Governor-General had confided the matter unofficially to the Canadian Prime Minister, an astute and independent person, and, as the Duke often said both publicly and privately, a man he was proud to claim as his very good friend. It happened that Sir Hector Cameron could testify warmly to the Morrow treatment, which had re-established a brother of Lady Cameron when he was so "advanced" as to be practically at death's door. Nor did Sir Hector see how "in this year of grace" the Prince's wishes could be overridden in the matter.

"I understand the King's feeling," the Duke told him. "The Family are and have always been peculiarly attached to one another. If his brother is going to die, the King wants him to die at home. Naturally."

"But if he goes to Sumach, he won't," said Sir Hector.

"Sir Randolph Perry assures us that it will only take place sooner," said the Duke. "I may tell you, Cameron, that the worry and strain of this distressing matter is beginning to tell upon my capacity to discharge public business. It is beginning to affect the public interest. We can't have that. It must be settled somehow. I will confess to you that Prince Alfred has already asked for an official interview with me—and so far I've shirked it. But it's got to be faced some time. Vandeleur is about as much use——"

"As a sick headache," said the Prime Minister sympathetically, and reflected.

He believed in Dr. Morrow, he was up in arms for the Prince, and he knew his Governor-General.

"Look here, sir," he said presently. (It was an incorrigible form of address, one of the things for which the Duke declared he liked Sir Hector.) "What you want in this business, and perhaps what

His Majesty would like, too, is to transfer the responsibility. Well, give me permission to make it a Cabinet matter. Let us consider the question on international grounds, and submit our views to you. If they coincide with your own, your position will be strengthened with the King. If they don't, no harm will be done."

The Duke considered.

"What is your own idea of the political aspect of sending the Prince to this chap in the Adirondacks?" he asked.

Sir Hector threw back his head and inserted his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat.

"I think, in the present soreness over our action in the North Pacific, it would be quite a useful little move," he said.

"Other things being equal, that is a consideration that is bound, of course, to affect them at home," mused the Duke. "You meet to-morrow morning, don't you? Come over to luncheon and bring Delacroix."

Delacroix was the Minister of Marine and Fisheries.

It was always carefully kept from Prince Alfred that the decision arrived at with such unanimity by Sir Hector's colleagues was affected by anything but his own desire. The Duke made a point of that. He knew how much the boy would dislike the idea that political considerations, however important, had practically influenced it. When he said this to his trusty friend, Sir Hector Cameron, that good fellow made a respectful and suitable response. But what the head of the Canadian democracy murmured in his heart was, "It's a lie to say they did."

Before the week was out, Sir Randolph Perry had gone to see Dr. Morrow at Sumach, with an open mind. He sent his report by telegram, and it was

so favourable to the Morrow system as to leave the Duke, as he said, no alternative. A communiqué was issued which stated that upon the advice of Sir Randolph Perry, given after thorough personal examination of the treatment of phthisis initiated and carried on by Dr. James Morrow, at Sumach, in the State of New York, it had been decided to place His Royal Highness Prince Alfred for some months in Dr. Morrow's care. His Royal Highness, attended by Sir Randolph Perry and his own suite, would proceed to Sumach as soon as suitable arrangements could be made. Sir Randolph Perry would then leave for England. The communiqué did not include the name of Dr. Henry P. Atkinson, but a local paper mentioned that he left Ottawa the day before the Prince did, with the intention of getting five days' fishing up the Saguenay before returning to Pittsburgh.

CHAPTER XVIII

"WELL done!" said Henry Lanchester without looking up from his paper. He and Hilary were in the living-room at Old Loon Point. Hilary sat in the window-seat doing the flowers, and a stout-armed Bertha was clearing away the breakfast things.

"What?" asked Hilary absently.

"They have handed the Prince over to Morrow. The London man brings him, and leaves him. That must have taken some doing. I wonder who engineered it?"

"Perhaps," said Hilary, "he engineered it himself."

"Not so easy." The ex-President's eye travelled down the column. "Well—I'm uncommonly glad of this. Uncommonly glad. Old Morrow's cap doesn't need feathers; still, it's satisfactory. But"—he glanced at the date—"this is yesterday's paper. Did you see it, Hil?"

"Yes," said Hilary, and put in another plume of golden-rod. "If you will go off for three days at a time after black bass, Dad, how can you expect to keep in touch with—with public affairs?"

"I expect to be told. Left Ottawa at nine to-day—yesterday. C.P.R. to Montreal, and the New York Central gave him a special to Moose Lick. Spends the night there and drives to Sumach this morning. Accompanied by his equerry, Colonel Adrian Vandeleur, Sir Randolph Perry, the well-known London specialist, two trained nurses and valet.' Morrow will soon bundle those good ladies

off. 'Great interest in England'—no doubt. 'And some criticism,' naturally. But they'll get over that." Mr. Lanchester opened another newspaper. "Let us see how he stood the journey."

"Very well," said Hilary. "What I must have is some wild asters."

"Apparently very well. Hullo—what's this? 'Dr. Morrow's personal appeal.' Excellent idea to write himself. 'All that can be published to meet the natural interest of the country in the welfare of its guest will be given to the press through recognised channels'—and he practically invites the public to co-operate with him in making the treatment a success by 'maintaining the conditions of absolute privacy and peace which are essential to it.' He's a wily beggar, Morrow. You see, he doesn't say keep off; he says keep the other fellows off. Wise man. Why—come along! He's bringing the Prince up to that new perch of his on Colter's Island—they'll be within a dozen miles' drive of us."

"I wish," said Hilary with detachment, "that the doctor had thought of appealing to the public to keep away from you."

"We were a bit worried, weren't we? But we were at home, and had to put up with family ways. This young man is company. Well, Morrow will let us know, I suppose, if there is anything we can do."

"He has let us know. He has appealed to us to maintain conditions of absolute privacy and peace for his patient. I think we should be the first to respect that request, Dad."

"We mustn't seem unfriendly. I'll write to Morrow."

"I wouldn't. The doctor will understand. He would write to you in a second, if there should be anything we—you could do. He knows that we are

going away for a fortnight, anyway—I saw him at Paul Smith's last Friday, and told him so."

Henry Lanchester turned serious eye-glasses upon his daughter.

"But, dash it, Hil, let us be moderate in our self-restraint. Morrow will expect a word of some sort. He patched me up, you know, when I was a public person in our modest American sense of the word. Why shouldn't I cheer him on?"

"Do—do cheer him on. But wait till we get to the Phippses, and send him a wire from Oyster Bay. *Much* better, Daddy."

"Remind me of it, then," he said, and Hilary promised that she would.

It was astonishing, the effect of Dr. Morrow's personal appeal. The country was proud of Dr. Morrow, and with cause. He had taken a line, in his treatment of phthisis, so based on the American temperament, so characterised by American methods and habits of thought, as to place his notable victories among the laurels of his country. His long, lean person was the constant victim of the illustrated papers; everybody knew something about his daily life and beliefs; he was an American institution. That the case of Prince Alfred should have been wrested from the skill of Europe to be placed in the hands of Dr. Morrow refreshed his country with that wine of competition which was still her favourite drink. The American public, breathlessly desiring the cure of the Prince, accepted Dr. Morrow's instructions. "It is now up to us," announced a New York paper after three illustrated columns describing the preparations on Colter's Island, "to forget that he is there. The fellow who would pry upon this young Prince, gamely struggling for his life with the help and protection of our country," it was said, "deserves to be shot at sight." Colter's Island was marked

out of bounds for the camping parties of the year, and people getting off the train at Moose Lick, the nearest station, glanced at one another a little searchingly, to be quite sure that they harboured no reporters.

So Alfred sank, with every tenderness, into the solitude, high and sweet and strange, of the Adirondack mountains, and the care of an odd-looking fellow with bright eyes and a cadaverous face, who put a hand on his shoulder and told him he was going to get better. He arrived dropping with sleep, and he spent the first twenty-four hours in his clothes, wrapped up in furs in a hammock on a verandah. About him a million fir fingers pricked in a wilderness dotted with quiet lakes. Through a fine rain a great mountain loomed and smiled. There was a happy balm abroad, a still delight in living. Drowsily Alfred gave his spirit to the clear, sweet, sane habitation of these new airs. After Catkin had taken off his boots, he closed his eyes upon the faithful Catkin and would not be aware of him. His look admonition from a kind, wise face, and food from a kind, wise hand; in the intervals the mountain, too, seemed to speak kindly and wisely. . . . When he definitely woke, and Dr. Morrow looked into his sunken eyes, the physician of many saw there a little star that he knew.

Prince Alfred went first into the doctor's house for observation. He began to gain noticeably in flesh almost from the day he arrived, as was natural after the fever, and Dr. Morrow attached even more weight to the daily ceremony of the scales than they showed. He let them tell their flattering tale, adding nothing to it; and perhaps because this was new in his experience, Alfred counted the figures with more and more interest. It appeared to be something he was doing for himself. From the beginning Morrow found him docile, grateful,

touchingly attentive to orders, but lacking in something that the doctor presently diagnosed as outlook.

"I want hope—I can't even find expectation," he wrote to Atkinson in Pittsburgh. "Every day is a page which hardly thinks it worth while to turn. He's suffering badly from pre-digested life, the diet of princes, I suppose. I should like to drown Vandeleur."

Dr. Morrow could not drown Vandeleur, but within a week he had made away with the nurses. They were not necessary to his system. It must have been difficult to tell Mrs. Gold that there was a system to which she was unnecessary; but Dr. Morrow did it. Catkin struggled gamely, and Alfred himself even put in a word for old Cat; but he went in the same ship.

"Never mind, Catto," said his master. "I know it's awful for a chap with your tummy, going back and forth like this, but you shall have something to pin on your coat for it—I'll see to it myself. When I'm dead, you know."

"Oh, sir," the faithful Catkin had replied. "Don't talk about me. And, sir, if you *wouldn't* speak of dyin' when I'm a shavin' of you—I as nearly as possible cut you, sir."

Bag and baggage they all went, weeping discreet tears. Poor Catkin's sniff Dr. Morrow pardoned, but Mrs. Gold's handkerchief was a red rag to him.

"It isn't because he's their dear patient; it's because he's their darling Prince," he snorted. "What an atmosphere for a human being to get well in! Mephitic! Off they go."

There was no way of getting rid of Vandeleur, but after a day or two of observation, Dr. Morrow decided that from his point of view the Colonel was innocuous. "He isn't soaked in it like the others," said the doctor. "Besides, in a week he'll be too



"Good morning, your Majesty."

busy being sorry for himself to matter one way or the other." Vandy wasn't soaked in "it"; in fact, it hadn't more than nicely dyed him, and in the climate of the State of New York it began quite perceptibly to fade—the equerry did, the Guardsman and the C.B. Dr. Morrow's bright eye noted the process with interest; and he arranged longer and longer fishing excursions for Colonel Vandeleur, who soon betrayed a skill in catching trout and pike that washed it out in moments of enthusiasm altogether. Between Vandy relapsing and Vandy bored, the *entourage*, or Court Vandy quickly declined into little more than a fourth hand at bridge, when Dr. Morrow's young partner came over from Sumach—an event which happened, in poor Vandy's opinion, regrettably seldom. King John's choice of an equerry was more and more justified.

His place was taken, as far as Dr. Morrow could arrange it, by Abe and Riley. Abe and Riley were no body-guardsmen to Prince Alfred, but they showed him round. It was Abe and Riley that built the open camp of pine logs, where he presently went to live: built it under his eye as he lay in the hammock on the verandah. Abe it was who first announced that he was out of the hammock and "interferin'," Riley who reported him "busy as a switch engine" bringing the spruce boughs for the roof and spreading the balsam for the bed. Abe and Riley, whose wooden shack smoked round the point, were the whole *entourage* if we add Abe's mother, who had only one tooth and hung out the clothes. She, poor dear, ought to be added, for she was the only one who showed any acquaintance with the part, bowing daily from the hips as she always did, with a hand on each of them, and a "Good morning, Your Majesty." Far from such sophistications were Abe and Riley, though kind

and good in the manner that goes with an open shirt and a hairy breast inside it. Unnaturally silent at first, commiseration gave them tongue, and it was soon touched with affection. His biddableness, his ordinary trustful air of waiting to be told, made him seem to them more youthful than he was, "Not that a-way, sonny—don't y' remember I showed ye different afore?" sounded earnestly across the clearing to the doctor on the verandah, who smiled into his newspaper and made no sign.

Dr. Morrow had been obliged to grope a little—longer than he liked—but at last he had got the reaction he wanted; he was entitled to smile. The Prince was pounds heavier, slept like a baby, fished with Abe and Riley, seemed quite content. And now there were undoubted signs that the tissue was beginning to respond. Dr. Morrow was entitled to his smile. Nevertheless he frowned over it, sending out colourless advices, and making reports to Vandeleur which distinctly lagged behind the achievement.

"It's going to be all right for now," he grumbled to his assistant, "but five years hence we shall have him back. He wants more than anybody can give him, something to counteract the damned alkaloid of his life and training, that neutralises the very vital spring in him."

Abe and Riley were not enough, were surely not enough. The wilderness was not enough.

CHAPTER XIX

So far it had been the Adirondack guide-boat for expeditions, light and quick and sure, and Abe or Riley or both had accompanied to row and portage, and Alfred had mainly fished. One evening the buck-board went to Moose Lick and came back with a canoe. Abe slid it into the water when all the light of the sky seemed to be moored there, and Prince Alfred and Dr. Morrow, looking on, stood already in the brightness of the evening bonfire.

"To-morrow morning," said the doctor, as it was made fast, "Abe shall take you out in that and show you how to manage it. For the exploration of these water highways of ours there is nothing like it."

"Delightful," said Prince Alfred. "Quite safe to leave the paddles out?"

"Quite," said the doctor. "The last Mohawk left these parts some time ago, Prince."

"Ah," said Alfred. "Now you're ragging. I think it's my bed-time. Good-night, Doctor."

Next morning, when Abe came round the point to do the chores, which was early, the canoe had vanished. Abe was not disturbed, but made his way, full of morning leisure, to the camp where Prince Alfred's bed was also empty.

"Doctor's took him out," said Abe, still unperturbed, and went about his work. Presently Dr. Morrow appeared, looking for his patient, who was seldom late for breakfast; and then it was plain that the Prince and the canoe had gone together. The little group on the shore looked at one another rather blankly.

"He didn't say he knew anything about a canoe," said the doctor to Vandeleur. "Does he?"

"He was fond of the river at Oxford," Vandy said, with an alarmed eye for the empty reaches.

"So long as he keeps off them rapids round by the Neck," remarked Riley.

"He may not a-gone that way at all," Abe contributed, "but he don't figure on bein' back for breakfast. He's took a hunk of boiled bacon an' about half a pan o' corn bread I baked last night. He's fixed up till dinner, anyhow."

Colonel Vandy had got out of his coat. "I'll take the skiff," he said. "You two men——"

"I don't think, Vandeleur, that he would take the canoe out unless he knew how to manage it," said Dr. Morrow. "We'll give him an hour or so. I am very well pleased that he has gone, and I particularly don't want to chase him."

But Vandy was in the skiff and a boat length out.

"That's all right, doctor, from your point of view, but he had no business, confound him, to go off like this without telling *me*," he called out, "and when I find him I'll tell him so."

"Then I hope you don't find him," said Dr. Morrow to himself, and Vandy didn't. He came very near it, though, at a point about three miles up Wasitah inlet where the canoe was drawn in behind a thicket of tamarack and raspberry bushes; and on a grassy hump beside it Alfred sat satisfying the most gorgeous hunger of his life on fat bacon and corn pone. Through the leaves he saw his equerry labouring at the oar, and though he must have known with what purpose, he made no sign. Instead, he kept so still that a chipmunk came after crumbs. It was his first sweet moment of freedom; Vandy seemed to coast round it, ineffective and absurd. "Handles an oar very well," Alfred reflected, with a smile of irony and detach-

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ment, as the skiff shot onward. "It is not nice of me," he murmured, "not at all nice," and lighted a cigarette, which was against orders. He smoked another before he began to paddle peacefully back, and Dr. Morrow smelled them on him when he turned up to apologise for his absence at breakfast, having passed Abe and Riley apparently fishing, half-way.

"So it wasn't safe," laughed the doctor, "to leave the paddles out. Well, this gives you the key of the woods, Prince," but what he shouted inwardly was, "Now thank we all our God," which was a curious comment on behaviour certainly lacking in consideration, coupled with the breaking of a rule. Vandy took it quite differently, and held himself remote for some hours after he had changed.

"Stuffy," commented Prince Alfred kindly. "It did him a lot of good, though. Vandy's getting much too fat."

Vandy was stuffy quite often as the days went on, and it became plain that the less Alfred saw of his equerry, the better Dr. Morrow was pleased. The doctor seemed indifferent as to how his patient amused himself, asserted no control, displayed no tact, suggested nothing, praised not at all. A pleasant, rather critical interest in as much of his day's doings as he chose to tell was all that Alfred had to meet from this physician; he told more and more. The canoe became his favourite companion; hours he spent in it, happy and alone. Vandy, as became a pleasant fellow, got over his stuffiness, caught record trout, and discovered himself absorbed in New York Sunday papers.

Nothing did Prince Alfred ever see in his explorings, except now and then some little sh, animal that was new to him, and the reflection under the bows of his canoe of a gaunt young man in an American sweater that was familiar, until one after-

noon, at a clearing by the water's edge, he came upon a woodsman whom he obliged with a match.

They were both sociable. "Come fur?" asked the man, lighting his pipe.

"Moose Lick," said Alfred, "is my post office. It's a pretty place."

"I've seem homelier. That's a good ways too. Best come ashore a bit, hadn't ye? Y'look all tuckered out."

Alfred came ashore, and learned that the ranger was there to blaze out a piece of land for a party from Utica.

"What is he going to do with it?"

"Well, he reckons to put up a hotel here nex' summer. Y'see Moose Lick hev come into sech prominence lately, on account of the Prince an' all, that this party thinks it'll be a payin' proposition. Now they've got a branch line through to Delville he considers it won't be the same trouble to get truck here—he kin strike into the road to Colter's about a mile from this, an' get his connection that way. Personally I think it's a fool place for a hotel, but then I'm not payin' for it."

"So do I," Alfred told him.

"Ever seen the Prince?"

"I have—yes. He's nearly always about where I am," he added dejectedly.

"You don't say! I thought they was keepin' the public off. I'd admire to see him, myself."

"No, you wouldn't," said Alfred. "What tobacco is that you're smoking?"

"Ladybird. Now won't you light up? I've got a second pipe somewhere in my clothes." He searched them thoroughly and produced it. Alfred did not hesitate, but packed the bowl full from the horny hand extended.

"That's right. 'Be free and easy or be lone-

some'—that's what we say in the mountains. My name's Kinehan."

"Mine is Wettin," said Alfred, direct descendant of Albert the Good, though it was often forgotten.

"From New York, I dessay?"

"I came over from Canada."

"That so? Well, we get a right smart o' Canadians round here, summer-time. What——"

"That is the end of the lake?" asked Alfred.

"Well, it is an' it isn't. There's half-a-mile o' ma'sh an' muskeg afore ye get to Old Loon, but it's less land than water."

"Any portage?"

"Yes, there is one. It ain't laid down on any map, but I been acrost often. Like me to show ye?"

Alfred hesitated and looked at the canoe. "I would—awfully," he said, "but——"

"Too heavy for ye, is she?"

"Not ordinarily, but I haven't been well."

"I'll carry for you. Just as soon as not. It isn't everybody knows this portage—you oughtn't to miss learnin' it," his friend assured him, and got the canoe into place upon his head.

The portage was less than half-a-mile. Old Loon Lake sent a sweet and secret arm up to meet it. There Kinehan showed him the fresh prints of deer.

"That shows it ain't fashionable," he said, and put the canoe into the water. "Now shall I paddle you out into the open, and show you the prettiest stretch of water in the mountains?"

"Would you mind," said Alfred, "if I went by myself? I——"

"Not a mite—not a mite. Some feels that way, I know. 'Twon't take ye more than twenty minutes or so. I'll have a pipe."

"Half-an-hour. Give me half-an-hour, will you—

if it really isn't inconveniencing you," said Alfred, pushing out. "It looks ripping, and I'm awfully obliged," and Kinehan agreed.

Prince Alfred, paddling through the green shadows toward the line of green light, competed with pioneers and all hardy men. The joy of discovery was at his heart, he paddled ever so gently, kneeling in the bows and pushing aside without a sound the dead leaves that crowded round his paddle. He felt wonderfully happy, and said to himself as the canoe stole fast to the gleam of the open, "There can't be anything better than this." Where the arm joined the lake, the trees came over; it was low like a door; the branches made an arch with a point, an early-English arch, designed long ago. And under it, kneeling in his canoe, Prince Alfred suddenly appeared with his paddle poised; and before he could dip it again he had seen the girl in a boat half-full of water-lilies a little way further down and opposite, whom he looked at curiously for an instant, thinking her very like Hilary Lanchester. She, when he came into the picture, had no doubt (because in her dreams she had so often seen him there), but immediately sent him a smile. At which he fell to paddling with a stroke that was incredibly swift and strong and sure.

CHAPTER XX

HALF-WAY across he took off his cap and waved it to give her to understand that it was really he. Then as he brought himself within a paddle-length, "What in the name of wonder," he demanded, "are you doing here?"

"Getting these," she told him, and lifted a lily. It had very perfect beauty, but he did not see it; she held it too near her face.

"But where have you come from?" he insisted, looking round him for a palace or a grotto.

She pointed to a splash of white far down and half-hidden in the woods of the other side. "We live there," she said. "Isn't it lucky to find lilies so close! I want these for the table to-night—one of father's former Secretaries is coming to dinner. Quite accidentally and privately, of course, but——"

Alfred looked at her as if he had barely heard. "You are living *here!* Since when?"

"Since—since July," she told him.

"And pray why didn't I know? Why wasn't I told?" he required of her, all the prince.

"You must have heard," she protested, "that the public were requested——"

"The public! You Americans, you know," he explained, with hot seriousness, "you are extreme—very extreme."

"But perhaps you don't know very well what is good for you," she told him primly.

"I do know—very well—what is good for me," he said, and somehow must have expressed rather more, for Hilary could not make herself believe,

later, that she had not blushed at that point. "Though I don't believe I ever knew before," he added.

"Are you really better?" she asked, with her heart, and her eyes, and her lips.

"Amazingly," he told her, and gave her a shy, speculative glance. "Can you keep a secret?"

"I've kept lots of father's."

He considered. "I may tell you one presently. Yes, I can make out your house quite well. Are you a large party there?"

"Only father and me and one maid and Enoch," he learned.

"Who is Enoch?"

"Our man."

"For doing the chores?"

"Yes," she smiled. "Nobody else at all, except by accident sometimes, like the person to-night. Father won't have people. He prefers to be just us two. That is very remarkable, and I am very proud of it."

"I don't think it remarkable," Alfred told her. "If I had a daughter I should like nothing better than to do that. If she was pleasant. But I never shall have one, pleasant or unpleasant," he astonishingly confided. "Luckily I shan't be obliged to marry."

She looked at him with immense interest. Was this the secret?

"Luckily?"

"Oh, yes. I shall never be well enough, you know, for that. I've worried it all out, and it doesn't suit me badly. Because anything of the sort would drag me home, and I mean to have a shot——" he looked at her questioningly again.

"Ah, do tell me."

He made up his mind, and trusted her.

"At staying over here."

"Oh, no!" she cried. "Impossible!"

"Would you mind," he asked her politely, "not using that word? I am so tired of it. And, however impossible it is, I mean to do it."

"How?" she demanded breathlessly. The lilies were drooping in the bottom of the boat.

"I shall never be well enough to do anything," he brought out firmly, "but ranch in Colorado. That doesn't matter so much as you might think, because in England there is nothing for me to do. And I should like ranching there."

"But——"

"I've talked it over with Dr. Morrow"—he played his trump card—"and he will recommend it. They can't get round—I mean that is very important. I think we shall bring it off. But I don't know why I should worry you about it. I say—do come and meet the doctor. He's delightful."

"I can't to-day," she said demurely, with her mind whirling to Colorado. "Besides, we know him already. He's a darling. Father wouldn't be alive now but for him."

"Really! Was he attached to your father?"

"Yes, I think so. I know father is attached to him," she jested, and took up an oar.

"Oh, yes. I say—when may Vandy and I paddle over and see your father? I mean—would it bore him? He does see people sometimes, you said."

"I think he would like it very much. Any time." She took up the other oar.

"To-morrow, then?"

"He will be there to-morrow, in the afternoon. Good-bye, then, for now."

She was dipping and pulling; he could but put his paddle in.

"Good-bye. Would about five be convenient?"

"Perfectly." She was more than a boat-length

away, and he still irresolute among the rushes. He remembered Kinehan, and swung round and out. Then he remembered something else.

"I say," he called after her. "Did you get the button?"

It was far from fair; she was off her guard. But he could not possibly guess why her hand went so quickly to her neck, where a fine little chain of steel held much too strongly for any betrayal.

"Oh, yes," she returned to him across the widening water. "Thank you very much."

That was all, and it sent him paddling back to Kinehan with a slight feeling of dissatisfaction. He would have liked to know, quite awfully, what she had done with the button. He had often wondered, and decided that it would make at least a hat-pin.

Kinehan was there, waiting, and Alfred made him blaze the portage back.

"I'm tremendously obliged to you," he said as the last chip flew. "I shall certainly come this way again." He searched his trouser pockets and collected what he could.

"All I've got, I'm afraid," he said, handing the loose silver to the ranger, who waved it back.

"No," he said. "You keep your money. You may be school-teachin' or you may be bank-clerk-in', but any ways, before ye get home from your holidays you'll want it more than I do. I kin make my own livin', thank ye all the same."

"In that case," Alfred reflected rather than replied, "what you say may be true," and he re-pocketed the coins. "But, look here," he said in sudden happy spirits, "you have done me a service, you know. I must give you something." He felt about himself; he looked about himself; but there was nothing—nothing but his wrist-watch, the gift of his Aunt Georgina. It was only a gun-metal

watch, but inconspicuously on the inner case the letter A was picked out in tiny brilliants. He took it off without a pang.

"I am sure this would be useful to you," he said, "and I've got another at home."

It was years before the story got about, and nobody ever learned exactly how valuable the service was for which the Prince had given his watch to the ranger.

CHAPTER XXI

PRINCE ALFRED did not meet his equerry until next morning at breakfast, when Colonel Vandy came in with a telegram in his hand, looking as if life, after all, had moments that were worth living.

"I've had a wireless from the Taffy Mortimers," he announced. "They arrive to-morrow morning by the *Plutocrania*. They don't say 'meet us,' but if I could have a day or two off, sir——"

"Rather, Vandy," said Prince Alfred. "I'm beginning to walk alone quite nicely, aren't I, doctor? When shall you start?"

"Most of the liners make the docks about ten in the morning," Dr. Morrow observed. "You must go to-day, of course. There's a good train at Moose Lick, at noon. Abe can drive you over, if you like."

"Not Abe, please," said Alfred. "I shall want him later. But Riley can go, doctor. All right, Vandy. I say, why not take a week? The Mortimers would adore to have you escort them round, and I'll get along, somehow."

"Very good of you, I'm sure, but impossible, sir, I'm afraid. It wouldn't be at all understood—I mean I shouldn't at all care about a week."

Vandy quailed under a reminding glance from Dr. Morrow.

"But a couple of days—if you really think I might——"

"Fly, Vandy, and do all you know for Mrs. Taffy," Alfred told him, over his third cup of coffee. "I make only one stipulation—that you

don't bring her within a hundred miles of this. Personally, I am making a call this afternoon, Vandy, on Mr. ex-President Lanchester, who lives on the next lake. But you needn't worry—it's quite informal, though I'll take you another time if you're good."

"But in that case——" bristled Vandy.

"Not at all, Colonel—not at all. Abe shall portage me, and I'll do the rest myself," Alfred assured him, and Vandy, who by now knew that when he was addressed as Colonel further discussion was apt to be unfruitful, went off to pack.

Dr. Morrow had beamed on the adventure. "If I had known you knew them I would have got hold of the Lanchesters before," he said. "They can't do you anything but good. Talk to Lanchester about your ranching scheme, Prince. He's the very man to advise you."

As Alfred paddled up the north arm of Old Loon Lake that afternoon at a quarter-past four, looking very like himself in boating flannels, he wondered whether he would. The ranching scheme had taken such possession of his imagination that he saw life nowhere else. The innocent Abe had started it there with tales of other patients; it had been perfect food for the American microbe, now flourishing in his veins. Long hours he had thought about it and worked it out, sitting with his fishing-rod in the sweet primeval solitudes that so invited him, hours in which the Princess Georgina was preparing an excellent bargain for him in a country house on the Berkshire downs, and Sir Randolph Perry was expressing to his intimates the belief that he would occupy it not longer than three years at the most hopeful calculation. All his life, while he was well, this Prince had coveted the common lot; now in his weakness the opportunity seemed to have come. Thinking

of it, he went so far as to say of his break-down, "It would have been worth while."

He would not return. He would take up land out there and raise cattle. He would send for his dog, and for Henry Hake who had charge of it. Hake worked on a big stud farm in Norfolk; Hake knew a lot. As to allowances, if there was any difficulty, he always understood he had a little of his own, and it wouldn't be long before he could pay his way. If the worst came to the worst there was a railway company that helped you a bit in the beginning with stock and so forth—no, that was in Canada; but it must be the same on this side. This was the country, not Canada, for his special requirements. In Canada they would worry him, on account of his birth. They would be practically compelled to worry him; it wouldn't do. But in Colorado it would be different. In Colorado he would be just a rancher earning his living—paying his way. His bosom swelled.

Morrow was all for it, and now Morrow, he reflected as the dark water slid past, advised consulting Lanchester. It was also true that Lanchester was Hilary's father, and probably no end of a good chap. On the other hand he was, or had been, a politician, a fellow, in Alfred's experience, whose arguments were just as likely to be against you as for you, and unanswerable in any case. He would be careful at all events not to put himself in the position of being obliged to accept Lanchester's advice.

As he drew nearer he made out the ex-President coming down through the clearing, a tall figure even more significant there in the woods than it would be in the streets of cities. Lanchester grasped the canoe, and they beached it together. Then, as Alfred sprang out of it, they ceremoniously lifted their straw hats to one another and

shook hands, each quite remembering, there in the pine-trimmed wilderness, who and what he was.

"This is an immense pleasure, Your Royal Highness."

It was the merest instant of mutual measurement; it faded on a glance into kindness and good-fellowship.

"Isn't it!" Alfred agreed, as they turned together into the path.

"The marvel is your being able to do so much so soon. We have reason to congratulate ourselves. But Morrow is a great fellow."

"Not half such good reason as I," Alfred told him, "and it's uncommonly kind of you to let me hop over like this. My equerry," he added earnestly—"I hope you don't mind, but I had to let him go to New York to-day."

Mr. Lanchester's smile conveyed that he did not feel himself slighted. He went on talking about Morrow as they walked to the house. There were no flower-beds; it was no more than a lodge in the wilderness, but it had a verandah, hospitable with rugs and big wicker-chairs with rockers. Alfred's eye searched the verandah, but it was otherwise empty. They sat down there, it was the pleasantest place, still talking of Morrow, and after an interval Alfred said that he hoped Miss Lanchester was well.

"Quite well, thanks," her father told him, "and at the moment, I imagine, in the kitchen boiling the kettle. We, too, have lost our staff to-day. She has gone to the circus at Moose Lick."

"Oh, but, couldn't I—I mean, couldn't we——" Alfred paused, blushing furiously, and Mr. Lanchester gravely helped him out.

"Be of any use? We might. Shall we go and see?"

They went through the living-room towards the

kitchen, and it was odd that the heart of an English prince should beat so high in an American pantry. As they opened the door Hilary, in a big blue apron, was bending over the oven.

"Oh, Dad," she mourned, pushing the pan back again, "I've been trying tea-biscuits, and they're such a bad success."

For just a funny perceptible instant the two comers stood silent, with a half-guilty sense of being somewhere, somehow, where it was not lawful or expedient for them to be, and then she flashed round at them.

"Oh!" she cried out upon them. "You must be *very* hungry! How do you do, Prince Alfred?"

"We are," he defended himself, as they shook hands. Hers was still dusted white with her baking; he closed his fingers carefully on the trace that came off. "Mr. Lanchester thought," he explained, "that we might help. I hope the bread-and-butter isn't cut. I don't wish to boast, but I'm rather a dab at cutting bread-and-butter."

"Let us all cut bread-and-butter," moved Mr. Lanchester, but Alfred protected the loaf.

"Believe me," he said earnestly, "you won't do it as well as I. Couldn't you, sir, get out the jam?"

Mr. Lanchester met his daughter's eye and laughed. "I'm afraid," he said, "there isn't any jam, Prince. But have you nothing, Hil, of a jammy disposition? Couldn't we run to some crab-apple jelly?" He looked hopefully toward the dresser.

"The next to top shelf, on the right," Hilary commanded. As the jar appeared, "I made it," she told Prince Alfred, dealing faithfully with the bread-and-butter, and he looked at her, as that daughter of Eve knew he would, with more admiration than ever.

They made the tea and found the tray and talked

with much naturalness and some little humour, and were ready to carry all to the verandah where they were to have it for the view, when a sudden smell of burning came and expanded in the kitchen air. "My biscuits!" cried Hilary, but Alfred was at the oven door with his handkerchief, and had the pan out before her. The three considered the charred remains.

"I put you off," declared Alfred confidently, "asking for jam."

"We should have remembered," cried a wrinkled Mr. Lanchester, "that you *would* be a dangerous fellow in a kitchen. If you had any historical sense, Hil, you would be scolding him severely."

The two young people looked at one another, and as Hilary turned away her head she said quite divinely, "But he isn't refuging here from his enemies, Dad."

"I believe," said Alfred reflectively, "that I have enemies in Europe, but I am sure I have none in America. Shall I take the tray or the tea-pot, Miss Lanchester?"

"Father will bring the tray, I will bring the tea-pot, and will you, please, bring your beautiful bread-and-butter," Hilary told him, and in this procession they went.

Perhaps when you can chaff a prince about his forbears there is no barrier of any great importance left to friendly intercourse. There seemed, at all events, to be none that day. No doubt Alfred's heart, already gentle towards Hilary, opened the more trustfully to Hilary's father, and Hilary's father was a man to be trusted with any heart. It was not, certainly, only his own head that made him so important to his country that she could never leave him alone in his retirement, it was his generous share of everything that makes a man no more valuable than dear. "Lanchester's character

so touches everything he does," said his more friendly enemies, "that he's a positive danger in a democratic country." Perhaps that is why this English prince found such comfort with him, and ate his bread-and-butter with such serenity of soul. In half-an-hour Alfred had forgotten that he ever made stipulations with himself about confiding in Henry Lanchester. In another his whole scheme, his dear plan for living and doing, in the freedom of a man's estate, was out and before them on the verandah. Hilary, as he talked and told, looked far out on the water, but Lanchester listened closely. His smile gave Alfred all his good-will and pleasure, his eyes thought of other things. Things to be acknowledged and conceded, counted and balanced, but strong among them the American conviction that there was nothing, after all, that could not be done.

"Don't say it's impossible, sir," Alfred finished, "because if you do I shall be horribly inclined to believe you."

"Let me think it over," said Lanchester, with non-committal, and Alfred, whose instinct for such things was subtle, felt that he had taken the enterprise upon his shoulders.

CHAPTER XXII

ON Monday Mr. Lanchester returned Prince Alfred's visit, and stayed to lunch. Vandy was punctually back, and did everything that a fellow deprived of his uniform could do to make the occasion what it ought to be. It was, no doubt, the Taffy Mortimers who had recalled him to a sense of the capacity he was there in, and the gravity of its duties, the Taffies with their hushed inquiries and their religious eyes when the talk was of the Prince. Colonel Vandy certainly returned from New York with the conviction that it was time for them to pull themselves together at the camp, and the presence of the ex-President at lunch made a suitable opportunity. That he succeeded to his own satisfaction it is not possible, with truth, to say. Whether it was that poor Vandy was pulling alone, or whether it was that nobody noticed, or whether indeed Prince Alfred deliberately set himself to be rebellious, he couldn't afterwards well decide; but the tide of conversation that he tried so hard to improve upon in the interests of punctilio did, before long, seem to sweep past him altogether. Not once did Prince Alfred refer to him, turn to him, or appeal to him; not once did he feel himself the least shelter, or even the least convenience to that young man. They might have been just lunching, four gentlemen together, four gentlemen from anywhere, for all Vandy could do with his deference to stamp his Prince with a difference. Now no equerry likes himself a mere pebble on the shore, and Vandy gave it up in the long run

with due discretion; but the little annoyance that he felt must be mentioned, because it was the beginning of heavy misgivings in Vandy's mind. Listening to the keen notes of Alfred's talk with America's most famous specialist and most influential public man, Vandy was alarmed to observe that the Prince was getting something seriously like out of hand. It was not so much what he said as the spirit with which he said it. "He's fearfully bucked up," noted the Colonel, "about something," and noted it with gloom.

"What about this idea of his of going West?" asked Mr. Lanchester in a private moment with Dr. Morrow before he went back.

"Well, what about it?" Dr. Morrow was alert for obstacles.

"I like it—if he can bring it off."

"He will have a much better chance in this country," the doctor said. "I shall recommend it as an after cure, for two years."

"They will agree to that, I imagine, but they'll make him report himself first."

"No. I won't have any reporting. He can send Vandeleur."

"For two years," reflected Lanchester. "After that, it's your idea——"

"That he'll be strong enough to take his own line. Exactly. It's lucky he's an orphan. A king-father or a queen-mother might give more than the usual trouble, I suppose. A brother won't have so much say."

"A brother on the throne," remarked Lanchester, "may have quite an uncomfortable amount of say. Not to speak of Ministers, a Privy Council, a House of Lords and Commons, a question of allowances, and an aunt."

"Oh, the aunt——"

"When the aunt is the Princess Georgina,

Duchess of Altenburg, Morrow, it isn't a case of 'Oh, the aunt.' I met the lady once, when she was a girl, and for a sort of simple, private reason I've kept my eye on her ever since. Her influence with the reactionary party over there is considerable, and she regards the Royal Family not merely as the apple of the British eye, but as the core of the British race. To domesticate a nephew in a republic—anyhow in this one—would seem to her an act of centrifugal destruction. I understand she's an affectionate aunt in her way, but she'll look at it monarchically, and she'll stop at nothing. You'll be up against the aunt, Morrow."

She may look at it any way she likes. I look at it humanly. What could she do anyhow?"

"Use moral suasion, I suppose, coupled with practical measures. I don't know what they've got on their Statute Book for the restraint of princes, but she does. And the King is wax in her hands."

"Practical measures," retorted Dr. Morrow, "means money. Look here, Lanchester, there's nothing in that for the aunt." His eyes grew brighter than ever. "Why, darn it all, if he wants to carve out a career in Colorado steers for his health, and there's any difficulty at home, the United States of America will endow Alfred—by public subscription. Tell that to the aunt!"

The ex-President shook with laughter. "Quite so," he said, wiping his eyes. "I can't imagine a more popular object. Any newspaper would pay for the job. They wouldn't let it run to an unfriendly act, would they? 'The Expropriation of a British Prince.' The Duchess would certainly see it like that. All the same, it would be a very good alternative to offer her. She wouldn't like it. But neither, I'm afraid, would Prince Alfred."

"No," Dr. Morrow said regretfully. "I'm afraid

it could merely be used as a bluff. It's only an idea. As a matter of fact, it would spoil the whole scheme for him. I hardly think I'll mention it."

"Don't," advised Mr. Lanchester.

"But I want to see the thing done, Lanchester, and I'm going to stand by. Here's a natural man growing up in a royal Prince and asking for a job. Leaving out the question of his health, what is there for him over there? Third horse in a tandem harnessed to a motor-car, that's about his situation, and looking at him just as a human being in that fix I feel infernally sorry for him. Apart from that he's my patient and I'm curing him, and that's my pull. And apart from that again I'm personally in debt to him, Lanchester."

His friend sent him a questioning look, which the doctor seemed at pains not to see. Then he swung round.

"For making me so extraordinarily fond of him. You know my shrivelled life, Lanchester—how it hangs by my head. Since my brother—I haven't known I had a heart. And it's great to find it, old man—it's great."

Henry Lanchester, who largely lived by his, could only nod. Then he smiled with some tenderness.

"What is it?" he demanded of the doctor.

"What's his black sorcery?"

"How do I know," replied Dr. Morrow, "what it is. There's no formula for it. I know that I'm his doctor, and I try to keep it at that, but, as a matter of fact, I'm a pretty good imitation of his slave. Then you're with us for Colorado?"

"Absolutely. I should like it very much. I have been in American politics and am now out of them, but there's no time that I can think of when I wouldn't have liked it very much."

"I might have known that," laughed Morrow.

"We're all acquainted with your one weak spot, Lanchester. Before you go out with the boys again come over to me, and I'll trepan it."

"A fellow who's got to take to the woods from June till October to keep alive, isn't likely to see much more of the boys," the ex-President told him, holding out his hand.

"You disgraceful old quitter! You want to come to the woods, that's what's the matter with you. I'll get you back into public life a long time before you're ready, you can figure on that," Morrow assured him. "In the meantime I wish you would give the Prince the freedom of the bungalow over there. He came back on Saturday no end of a fellow."

"I think he's got it. He's been in the kitchen anyhow. And if he wants to go there again, I don't know of any way of keeping him out."

"That's just it," the specialist agreed. The ex-President took up his paddle, and as they waved good-byes upon each of their American countenances sat a conscious and an ambiguous smile.

That was in the beginning of September. Before a week was over the freedom of the bungalow on Old Loon Lake had become no idle phrase to Prince Alfred, or to Abe, who still did the portaging and the waiting, or to Vandy, who came once to satisfy himself that all was as it should be, and afterwards usually stayed at home because it wasn't suggested by his master that he should go. To the freedom of the bungalow was added a wider freedom of the wilderness. Lanchester made Alfred the companion of his own expeditions; they shot and fished and climbed together, further and further as the Prince's strength responded. Long talks they had, each with so happy a kindness for all that the other stood for, talks in which each did his best to disillusion the other's too ardent gaze across the

ocean, and each felt his generous admiration little troubled by all that might have to be admitted. They were oddly like long parted relatives making admissions to one another, excuses for one another, all in the confidence and the privilege of the family. They talked mostly, of course, about the human side of things, sometimes about the ideal side, or the historical, leaving the politics of the day alone, except in so far as they illustrated these. Prince Alfred had too little knowledge of politics, and the ex-President perhaps too much, to make that ground inviting. But a wonderful sincerity grew up between the older and the younger man there out of the world, in which soon there was nothing hid that was Alfred and very little that was Lanchester. Alfred turned to him, in a manner which he found infinitely touching, for approval of all he planned. His determination not to marry—now that must be sound. Mr. Lanchester ought to hear old Morrow on eugenics.

"Has Morrow advised you not to marry?" asked Lanchester.

"Not lately. He did at first—when I got it out of him. I'm positive he's right."

"That must have been before he thought he could cure you."

"How does a fellow know he'll stay cured? Besides—over here—I've all sorts of reasons. I say, Mr. Lanchester, when I've got my show started out there, will you and Miss Hilary come and stay with me for a bit, if I can make you comfortable?"

Mr. Lanchester agreed that he would; and later, beside the fire that blazed up the big chimney in the living-room, Hilary agreed that she would too. Hilary never came with them on their expeditions, but she was always a part of the warm intimacy of the return, always daughterly, always gay and

friendly, always, he whispered to himself as he paddled back over the stars in the water, a darling—a darling. His love grew in him happily and innocently; it was enough if she were there, to be shared with her father, who also was so "jolly" to him. Poor Alfred's heart embraced them both. They stood, together, for all that he wanted; and all that he thought he wanted was his independence, his Colorado ranch, and the life-long friendship of these two. Perhaps Hilary wouldn't marry either. Girls often didn't—millions in England. And he slept untroubled, and woke in high spirits, and chaffed Vandy, who grew more and more preoccupied, about his waistcoat measurements.

Vandy grew more and more preoccupied. He could not make up his mind, for some time, what he ought to do. This intimacy with the Lanchesters seemed to him to be disproportionate, Dr. Morrow's influence had always seemed to him to be disproportionate; indeed, in the matter of proportion Vandy felt himself at sea and without a pilot. He put it, when he finally decided to express his fears to the Princess Georgina, a little differently. "I cannot help seeing," he wrote, "that Prince Alfred is beginning to lose his bearings over here. I cannot help feeling that it would be well if I could be reinforced."

He wanted reinforcement for every reason, did Vandy, being heartily sick of mounting guard alone, but he was hardly prepared for the strength in which it was promptly conceded.

"I will come," wrote the Princess Georgina, "myself. Sailing on the 15th, in the *Icelandic*. Bringing Althea Dawe. Travelling incognito, of course. In arranging for us you may say that the King is extremely gratified at the remarkable improvement Prince Alfred has made, and that I come at his wish to express His Majesty's thanks,

as well as my own, personally to that excellent Dr. Morrow. It will interest me extremely to see the glorious Adirondacks, and I shall be prepared to stay as long as may be necessary."

Vandy, who was certainly out of condition, found himself perspiring.

CHAPTER XXIII

"DADDY," said Hilary to her father, giving him his cup of coffee, "the Kaiser absolutely won't hear of it."

"Won't hear of—oh, the niece's affair. But they must have known it would be hopeless. Heinrich would never allow a Catholic to share the throne of your friend's Grand-Duchy. He has trouble enough with the Black Block already from that quarter."

"Poor Sophy! It must be horrid to have a throne and to want to share it and not to be able to. It seems they took their courage in their hands at last and approached him—Karl-Salvator did—with all the proper formalities. And his rage was unbounded. And he has sent the wretched Arch-Duke off to take military command of some frontier post or other, miles from Berlin and his beloved laboratories. And as for poor dear Sophy herself, she's arrested."

"Oh?"

"I wish you would show some *little* feeling, father. Sophy is *aux arrets*, those are her very words. It's a punk thing they can do over there——"

"'Punk' is not——"

"An expression that you care to hear me use. I know, darling. But I love it. And this trick the Emperor Heinrich has played on Sophy is as punk as punk. There is no other word. She has the three ugly rooms in the Neues Palais that she most hates of the whole two hundred, and she mayn't

walk out of sight of the palace. And not a step without that old Baroness Fertigsleben beside her and some chamberlain or other behind her. Don't you *agree* it's punk?"

"It's restricted," said the ex-President, sugaring his melon, "certainly. Can't her mother do anything?"

"Her mother! The Princess Anne *sent* her to Potsdam. Her mother's just the person who delivers Uncle Heinrich's orders—she's terrified of her brother. Well, when I tell you that he took Sophy away from her mother when she was three days old! He arrested her because poor Sophy, being too miserable about Karl-Salvator, was guilty of a piece of *lèse-majesté*. I must say she *was*. The Kaiser had a review of his old Markovians to console her. You know she is honorary colonel of the regiment, and has a perfectly gorgeous sort of uniform all white and silver, with a lovely big hat and ostrich plumes in it—she described it all to me once in one of her letters. And she canters up to her place at the head of the regiment and leads it past the Emperor and his Staff, saluting with her whip. A perfectly ideal thing to do, of course. One of the few that would induce me to consider being born a German royalty."

"Profitless, Hil. And a great deal too late in the day."

"Yes, I know. And of course it was *infinitely* nicer," remembered with remorse the youngest mistress the White House ever had. "But I wish you could have made me a colonel, Daddy. I should have loved to lead your Virginians past you and salute you with my whip. It was awfully nice though, just as it was," she reflected. "I adored it. Father—father mine—*let's do it again*."

"If you would give your parent some of that omelet which is slowly perishing before you, and

go on with your tale of the only young woman I know of who has been properly brought up— Besides, I thought you had renounced the pomps entirely, Hil, and were all for the simple life.”

“Ah, well. Yes, precisely. Now you shall hear!” threatened Hilary. “It was a most *Kaiserlich* silly thing to think of to console anybody, but poor Sophy went through with it. I would have had a headache and sent my second-in-command. But anyhow— And she wore, of course, her Black Eagle that he gave her, with the orange ribbon and the rosette on her hip—lovely it must have looked. And afterwards they were having coffee, she says, in that funny *tassen zimmer*, Sophy still naturally very miserable, and the Emperor, after worrying her for some time, very severely, ‘with fire-blazing eyes’ she says, told her she hadn’t put it on properly. Well, when he said that, Sophy, feeling as she did so awfully miserable— *she threw it on the floor*. The Black Eagle! His Black Eagle! Wasn’t it awful? And rushed crying out of the room before him and without leave or anything. Luckily, only Marshal von Konigsdorf was present, and he’s a dear old man, very fond of Sophy. But he couldn’t get her not arrested, and *Der Einzige* hasn’t spoken to her since.”

“Well,” said Mr. Lanchester equably. “It was no way to treat a Black Eagle. Did she rush to her mother?”

“What an idea you have of mothers. Believe me, Daddy, they do not always do so. Sophy’s mother was at their own castle in Sternburg-Hofstein and wrote to her that she was lucky that the Emperor didn’t *reissen Sie ihr den Kopf ab*. So much for the reigning Princess of a Grand-Duchy kind of mother.”

“I feel that she is a woman to be respected more



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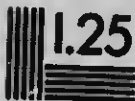
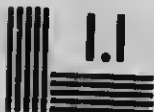


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than some fathers. But I sympathize deeply with Sophy and her scientist. I hope she may win him yet. And if I may now demand your attention to something else——”

“Oh, father! You’ve heard from Governor Daniels. Are they talking seriously—our people?”

“I *have* heard from Jim, as a matter of fact. And though he may be talking seriously now he will soon cease to do so. The news is, Hil, that Maurice Blattenheimer has offered us three million for the Silver Squaw. And we had enough before. It’s very perturbing.”

Hilary opened her eyes a little wider, and laid her fork, with particular care, upon her plate.

“But you did expect him, didn’t you, Dad, to pay something for it?”

“Something, yes. Say my travelling expenses, and a little over. But nothing like this. The man is taking advantage of us, Hil. I suspect him—he’s a boss, I suspect all bosses. What does he want to give me three million dollars for?”

“Why, for the mine, Daddy.”

“Yes—I suppose he’ll put it that way,” groaned her father. “And those agent fellows will excuse themselves with the fact that the Alaska Ore Properties were willing to pay two million five hundred thousand. And I’ve got to be satisfied with the explanation and pocket the three millions, or work it myself, which might pay—Lord have mercy upon us—even better. But this seals every vow I ever made to keep out of politics, daughter.”

“But, father——”

“Yes, it does. It puts us, with every advertisement, in the millionaire class, and the people hate the millionaire class, and I hate it myself. Lucky Lanchester! The man with three million dollars—three million Silver Squaws about his neck. No, Hilary—the primaries would have no use for all

those squaws—they're not popular in politics anyway——"

But Hilary let the jest pass. She sat with her hands clasped tight in front of her, lost in thought, out of which, the next instant, resolution soared.

"Father, darling! This unlucky mine. Don't sell it at all. Give it away. And do—do run again for President. The people are dying to elect you—you know they are. And I'm dying—I'm dying to see you elected. If they won't have you with a silver mine which you found by yourself and perfectly honestly—give it away."

"No," said Henry Lanchester, getting up from the table, "I'm afraid they wouldn't care about that kind of man either. But we'll digest this later, Hil. For the time being the point is that Simcox will be here at three this afternoon about it, and I've got to see him, and Prince Alfred is also coming at three, and he and Enoch and I were to have tarred the second canoe. You will take care of him, please. I'll join you at tea-time. Simcox will be gone in an hour."

Hilary also left her place, and walked to the window.

"Bertha and I," she announced, "were going after cat-tails this afternoon. They're lovely and brown now—in another day or two they'll be all burst and spoiled. Couldn't Enoch be showing Prince Alfred how to tar a canoe?"

"Quite impossible. You must take him with you instead of Bertha. He is really not difficult by himself—rather delightful. Let him take his own line, and you'll find him a dear fellow and very entertaining."

"I'll do my best," said Hilary, with a lip that quivered between a smile and something quite different.

CHAPTER XXIV

WITH care and precision and a clasp-knife Prince Alfred was cutting bulrushes and handing them to Hilary, who laid them in the flat bottom of the boat, heads one way, stems the other. He was at great pains to pick out the longest and finest. She took them from his hand with a touch of sedateness that became her as sweetly as possible.

"I suppose," he said presently, "that you want these merely for putting about, don't you? Just to look pretty?"

"Isn't that reason enough to want them?" she asked.

"Of course it is. But I should like it so much better if we were getting them to do something useful with."

She thought a minute. "Like strewing the stone floor of the banqueting hall of the castle," she laughed.

"Yes, something like that. Didn't they live gloriously in those days? But I don't suppose we should have been allowed to do it, all the same. It would have been a lout's job. Steady!—I'm sorry." A bulrush had gone into the water.

"Silly of me not to take better hold of it. But I'm not so sure about 'gloriously.' Think of the bones mixed up with the rushes, and the hounds growling, and—and the potato-skins."

"We shouldn't have had potatoes," he told her. "The chief seneschal would never have heard of them. I say—isn't that enough? Right-o." He scrambled into his place again and from there he

contemplated her for a moment, a little flushed under her wide hat, in satisfaction and in silence.

"Do you happen ever to have seen a Holbein of the Lady Vaux?" he asked her.

"No—why? I mean where is it?"

"The original's at Windsor, I think. You're not a bit like her—she's rather a beefy old thing—but I'd like awfully to see you in the head-dress she wears. It has little flat wings along the face, edged with pearls, and a sort of jib-sheet of velvet sticking out at one side with a veil on it. I've always remembered it awfully well. I don't know why."

"It's odd how one does remember things."

"I think it simply dear of you to let me come like this instead of Bertha. It's rather rough on Bertha, of course."

"My father was so distressed. A wretched Mr. Simcox telegraphed this morning——"

"Yes, I know. I say—do you mind too awfully? About the wretched Mr. Simcox?" He looked a trifle dashed.

Hilary let the water play through her fingers. "No—not too awfully," she admitted.

"Because I'm uncommonly grateful—really. There are some things I want to talk to you about."

Hilary looked at him bravely. "Do," she said. "I'm afraid father's advice would be best, but——"

"He's splendid, isn't he? But this is more a matter of feeling. Something I want you to help me to decide."

Hilary, clasping her hands about her knees and considering the tips of her shoes, gave him a very silent attention.

"You know I am expecting my aunt."

"Oh, yes." She looked up quickly. "On Saturday, isn't it? Are you quite sure that Dr. Morrow

has everything? He knows, doesn't he, that there are simply stacks of linen and things over here?"

"He said something about two pillow-cases. But that will all be looked after——"

("There has always, always been a chamberlain for such purposes," she thought to herself. "Of course.")

"That isn't my difficulty. My difficulty is this. Am I bound to tell my aunt about the Colorado scheme?"

She reflected. "Why should you be?"

"It's not easy to explain, but in England I should feel I was, and over here I don't, somehow."

"Does Colonel Vandy know yet?"

"Rather not! I'm not bound to tell Vandy. That would upset my apple-cart, and no mistake. It would be his duty, you see, to upset it. *Nobody* knows—except Dr. Morrow and we three."

"Wouldn't it be the Princess's duty to upset it too?"

"I'm afraid she would think so."

"And could she?"

"She could have a jolly good try."

They exchanged glances full of anxiety and understanding.

"Can't you depend on Dr. Morrow?"

"Dr. Morrow told me yesterday that my lungs were as sound as his. He will help, of course, but if I am as well as that—and I told her I wanted to live in Colorado——"

"I see. She wouldn't hear of it. She would say it would break her heart."

"No," said Prince Alfred gloomily. "She wouldn't say that. But she would use other arguments just as useful."

"Then I wouldn't—I wouldn't tell her," cried Hilary. "Your American feeling is right for when

you are in America. Over here we don't tell everything to aunts."

"You keep 'em in the dark?"

"Yes—when it matters as much as this matters, and they might, with the best intentions, do harm," Hilary pronounced.

He looked at her with all his heart. "I love to hear you say it matters," he said. "To me, of course, it's everything on earth. And a few things," he added simply, with his eyes still on her face, "and a few things in heaven."

It was only as if he had kissed her hand, but something in it frightened them both, and as for an instant they looked at one another, tears gathered in her eyes and in his.

"Dear Alfred, I think—you mustn't say those things," she told him, very sadly.

"You're quite right—I won't. But, Hil dear, I hadn't finished about my Aunt Georgina."

"I'll send the pillow-cases."

"Bother the pillow-cases. You'll come and see her, won't you?"

"Why, of course—father and I—if you think she—"

"I think she would expect it. She never travels without her visitors' book. And she is your god-mother, when all's said and done."

"I hadn't forgotten it," Hilary told him demurely. "Oughtn't we to be getting back? I'm sure it's five."

"I remember it all the time. And if I do decide to tell her about the ranch scheme—I don't think I will, but if I do—you'll back me up about it, won't you?"

Hilary straightened her hat and took up the tiller ropes.

"I don't feel," she said, with some discernment, as he slowly dipped the oars, "I don't feel as if I

should be exactly the right person. Father might. But I am sure the strongest ally on your side will be Dr. Morrow."

They rowed back through the flaming woods, over the golden water, with hardly another word. How, indeed, could they talk, with two worlds imposing silence on them? But when he had beached the boat and shipped his oars, and turned to help her out—

"After all, I'm twenty-three," he said.

It did not seem a very apt thing to say, and perhaps Hilary thought so, for as she put her hand in his she made no reply.

CHAPTER XXV

THE Princess Georgina travelled as the Countess of Yorick, the Lady Althea Dawe was registered as Miss Revelstoke. Their incognito was respected even in the harbour of New York, respected beyond anything that either of the ladies probably dared to hope. People looked at them, bowed slightly, and let them pass; even the reporters let them pass. It was the first thing the Princess said to Dr. Morrow on the Saturday afternoon when Colonel Vandy finally got them seated in the buckboard at Moose Lick, outside the station. "We have been quite unmolested," she said, "quite unmolested." She also gave out immediately that she meant, if possible, to return by the liner sailing the following week. It would be far too short a visit, but for her part she was never so happy as at sea. Bundled up in a deck-chair, the voyage was one long delight. For her dear friend it was perhaps more of a rest-cure; a statement which Lady Althea applauded with rather a plaintive smile.

There was something firm and fine and intimidating about the Princess which reached Dr. Morrow's consciousness at once. He felt it, and thought well to reply to it. As he and Vandy tucked the rugs about the ladies—

"Your nephew was very anxious to come and meet you himself, madam," he said. "I was sorry not to be able to allow it."

"Ah," Princess Georgina replied; "yes. We did hope, did we not, Althea, to see his dear face on the platform. And as he is now so well, Dr.

Morrow, may I ask why you thought necessary to forbid it?"

"I'm afraid we must use 'well' as a relative term," Dr. Morrow, who sat in front beside the driver, leaned back to say. "Crowds are very bad for him."

"But there were only, beside ourselves, one gentleman, two men with guns, and a dog," objected the Princess; and, indeed, Moose Lick had definitely said good-bye to summer visitors.

"Precisely. But if it had leaked out that Prince Alfred was to be here, it is just possible that there would have been quite a few more."

"Oh, yes—in that case——"

"Moose Lick has been out of bounds for the Prince all summer, and we weren't taking any risks. But I think I may promise that he shall be allowed to see you off, madam. Especially," the doctor added gallantly, "as nobody could suppose that you would be leaving us so soon. I hope the hamper under the seat is not inconveniencing you. Abe, when was that mare shod last?"

Vandy, squeezed in beside the doctor, looked straight in front of him. Dr. Morrow's attention was fixed upon the mare's off hind-leg; and the long, significant glance which the two ladies exchanged went unobserved. The silence that fell, however, was not broken until Colonel Vandeleur began pointing out and naming the misty peaks that showed as the road wound into the woods. Riley followed with the two maids and the luggage, and so, before the October sun had drawn the last of his red fire out of the maples, the arrival was accomplished.

It was a most affectionate arrival. Dignified, graceful, and affectionate. Dr. Morrow stood by, with a careful eye upon his charge, as it took place. The Princess advanced with outstretched arms; Dr.

Morrow watched Prince Alfred surrender first one cheek and then the other to be kissed, and heard his studied replies to the ejaculations that fell like a warm shower-bath about him. The Princess, with her head up, wept into a handkerchief that seemed the emblem of authority; Lady Althea cried also, unashamed.

"Out of the jaws of death!" exclaimed Princess Georgina. "If ever there was a Divine interposition, darling Alfie——"

Dr. Morrow went into his own room, and there, being of an impulsive disposition, emptied his rifle several times out of the window. Later, at supper, Princess Georgina remarked that she thought she had heard shooting.

"It was a *feu de joie*, madam, in honour of your arrival," the doctor told her.

"And a very pretty thought," said she.

It was soon plain that the Princess had no desire for anything like an official interview with Dr. Morrow. She gave him the King's messages with every circumstance that could enhance their significance, except privacy. She expressed her own gratitude with effusion, wondered, and exclaimed, and begged to know Dr. Morrow's marvellous secret, as if it could be communicated over a cup of tea, hinted the immense reputation the doctor had made for himself in England, "where the interest is naturally enormous," but adroitly avoided drawing upon herself any professional fire whatever. Observing that, the doctor reserved his ammunition; and this was the harder for him to do as he had also to note that Alfred, that first morning, ate less than half his usual breakfast, spoke carefully, and seemed "all out of proportion" troubled about the punctilio which should attend his aunt.

The doctor had an eye upon the party; the Lady

Althea had an eye, which was also intelligent, upon the doctor.

"That man," she said to her mistress, "will never permit it."

The maids were gone, leaving the ladies to rest in their double-bedded chamber.

"Permit what?"

"The dear Prince to return with us."

"He may not be anxious for it, as every day the arrangement continues is of untold value to him. But he must permit it, if Alfie wishes."

"Do you think, darling, that Prince Alfred does wish it?"

"I have not spoken seriously to him yet; but I think he will. I am very sleepy, Althea. This air is marvellous—I think you may leave Alfred to me. Good-night, Althea."

"Good-night, darling," said the Lady Althea obediently; but from the pillow she kept one pathetic eye upon Alfred's log cabin in the starlight, where a lamp was burning, and did not sleep, faithful creature that she was, until it was put out.

That was on Sunday night. The next morning Colonel Vandeleur said to the Princess Georgina—

"Visitors in a place like this are hardly to be expected, Princess, but Mr. ex-President Lanchester and his daughter, of whom I know you have heard a great deal——"

"And nothing but what is delightful," interposed Her Royal Highness.

"And who are practically our only neighbours, propose to pay you their respects to-day. It was arranged that we should let them know, if you had quite recovered from the fatigue of the journey, whether you could receive them."

"Abe or Riley can go over," observed Dr. Morrow.

"Nothing," declared Princess Georgina, "could

give me greater pleasure. Mr. Lanchester has been quite extraordinarily kind—I should be glad of an opportunity to thank him. And it will be a special pleasure to meet the young lady, who, as I dare say you all know, is my goddaughter——”

“I didn’t!” exclaimed Dr. Morrow. “Now that’s what I call remarkable.”

“It’s not what I call remarkable,” said the Princess equably. “I have altogether stood sponsor to forty-five—forty-five, or it is forty-seven infants, Althea?”

“Forty-seven, Princess. The last was Lady New Forest’s. You remember Lord New Forest gave five thousand toward the expense of dividing our dear Bishop’s diocese, and you said you couldn’t refuse.”

“There is no reason, Althea, to go into whys and wherefores. I only hesitated really because Lord New Forest—being born Isaacson—had never, so far as I could ascertain, been baptized himself. It did seem to increase one’s responsibility. But you will all understand my added interest in Miss Lanchester. I hear, by the way, that she has grown up very beautiful.”

The Princess looked round inquiringly as she spoke, and her gaze rested last upon Alfred, who responded “Very,” in a tone of indifference far too profound.

“Ah, well, we shall see. You may say, Colonel Vandeleur, that twelve o’clock will suit me perfectly. That will enable me to get my letters done, and leave all the time that will be necessary for the visit before luncheon.”

“Abe is chopping wood at my place,” said Alfred to Colonel Vandy, as they got up from the table. “I’ll send him to you.”

Something in the way he said it struck the gentle ear of the Lady Althea.

"*He is going to write,*" she whispered to the Princess, as they stepped out upon the verandah.

"*He is going to write to her himself.*"

"Let him," she heard in return. "My dear Althea, a young man must have his amusements."

CHAPTER XXVI

Two hours later the Princess was happily engaged in conversation with Mr. Lanchester, while Alfred and Hilary devoted themselves to the entertainment of the Lady Althea. There was no doubt, from the poise of Princess Georgina's grey head and the deference of Mr. Lanchester's, that she and the ex-President were discussing matters of international importance. Lady Althea was sweetly interested in local ones. Alfred looked a good deal, with absorption, at his boots; but all were doing well when the Princess, at the end of one of her own sentences, said with easy graciousness, "Now I think I must be allowed a chat with you, Miss Lanchester. Shall we take a little walk, or shall the others take a little walk? Ah, well," as the others filed out, "perhaps that is best. Now will you come, please, and sit over here beside me? That's right. This is a day to remember for us both, is it not, dear Miss Lanchester? When we think of the circumstances in which we last met. Such a dear wee thing you were. So pathetic, so helpless."

"It makes one feel very big now," said Hilary sweetly.

"Yes, no doubt. And very *old* now, for my part. Very old indeed, my dear. I was your age then. Ah, me!" A pleasant smile rode on the sigh. "Now tell me, dear, what do you mean to do with your life? Not yet engaged?"

It was quite a fair question for a godmother, but Hilary had to remember that it was.

"No," she said, "I am devoted to my father."

"Ah, yes—you two. It is easy to see what you are to one another. I lost my own father very, very early. I know what it is to *miss* a father. But I should have married—I should have married all the same. Marriage is the only career for a woman, don't you think?"

"Perhaps the happiest. We marry a good deal over here," said Hilary with sudden spirit.

"To be sure you do. Yes, I have always understood so." Just the suspicion of a stare came into Princess Georgina's eyes, and vanished. She put her hand into a black velvet bag and drew out a small packet.

"I have taken my godmother's privilege, my dear, and brought you a tiny gift," she said, and handed it to Hilary, with a gesture born of many prize-givings. It was an exquisite little brooch in an open shell, with silver cupids in it, and a garland of roses.

"Oh, the darling!" cried Hilary. "Is it really for me? Thank you so much." Just an instant she hesitated; then very gracefully and prettily she kissed Princess Georgina's hand.

"It has charm, I think, the little thing. I am so gratified that it pleases you. Something old, I thought, might, in this country where all is so new. Marquisate it is—do you know the work?"

"Oh, very well. By *Weise*, isn't it? I have some earlier bits, a pendant or two and some earrings among my mother's jewels, but nothing so sweet as this."

"Ah, yes, your poor, dear mother. Was your mother an American, dear?"

"One of her ancestors was a signatory of the Declaration of Independence," said Hilary proudly.

"One of her ancestors—but it was only the other day!" slipped from the Princess. "Ah, yes, she

retrieved, "no doubt that is a great patent over here. And your father's people—were they signatories, too?"

"Oh, my father's people—no. But they are our romance——" Hilary launched out, and stopped.

"Mayn't I hear the romance?"

"Should you really care to? Well, once upon a time—I mean about the end of the fourteenth century, there came over from France to the English Court a young man who called himself Henri de Lancastre. And he said that the Duke of Lancaster was his father and that his mother, who was a French lady of noble birth, had been married to the Duke by Catholic rites at a village in Auvergne, and that she died at his birth. He had been brought up by the priests, so the story goes, who now had sent him to England—does it interest you?"

"It sounds a fascinating tale. Pray go on."

"Of course it's all must and dust and rust now," smiled Hilary. "And has been for centuries. But King Richard was quite nice to him, and made him a Knight banneret and a Captain of the Guard, but the Duke, who didn't seem to want him about, after a time got him sent to Ireland to quell a rising of some sort, and he must have been there when the Duke died. Anyway, the next thing was the King's seizing the Duke's estates—which you must know about so much, much better than I do"—Hilary appealed.

"I've forgotten all my history, I beg you will go on."

"And I suppose Henri de Lancastre thought he had better not come back. Anyway he didn't, even when his half-brother came to the throne. He must have been on bad terms with his half-brother."

"Very likely."

"So he stayed on in Ireland among the kernes and outlaws and married one of them, and became

just a squireen there, and brought up his family, and he called his eldest son Henry Gaunt Lancaster. They were there in Tyrone till the end of the seventeenth century, sinking to be tenant-farmers and publicans and all sorts, but always the eldest son being called Henry Gaunt. Then the last of them came to America, but some time before that the name had been corrupted the way we spell it. And here we are, father and I—and his name is Henry Gaunt Lanchester."

The Princess started, ever so slightly, and then laughed merrily. "What a very amusing story," she said. "You must tell it to Prince Alfred. Or perhaps you have already told it him."

"No," said Hilary. "It has not occurred to me to tell him. You asked me, you know."

"To be sure I did. And what a delightful romance it is! John of Gaunt married often, and not always wisely. The last time his governess—the Beauforts owe themselves to that; but it took an Act of Parliament, and the Pope, too, had to be at a little trouble about it. This episode must have been after the death of the first wife, while he was conducting that unlucky expedition against Charles. He married in England, he married in Spain, and now you say he married in France, too. And an ex-President of the United States is Henry Gaunt Lanchester. How very droll!"

Hilary placed the little box with the brooch in it definitely on the table, and sat up very straight.

"He is, but please don't mention it," she said. "He used to be Henry G. but he dropped the 'Gaunt' as soon as he thought of the Presidency. It would not make him any the more popular, I am afraid, in this country."

"I shall forget it at once," said the Princess placidly. "My dear Miss Lanchester, I am a well of forgotten things." She turned a leisurely glance

out of the window. "I see Prince Alfred has taken Lady Althea out in a canoe," she said. "I am amazed—simply amazed—that my eyes should behold him do such a thing as that again. And yet I should not be amazed. He had the prayers of all England—twice every Sunday in the churches, and I am told in many a Nonconformist chapel, too. And how happy we are in the instrument selected. I esteem it a privilege to have met Dr. Morrow."

"I think most people do," said Hilary quietly.

The Princess joined the tips of her fingers together, and her eyes, on the couple in the canoe, were gentle with gratitude.

"My dear, dear boy! I stand to him, as you may know, Miss Lanchester, and have long stood, in the place of both father and mother. And I thought, I am sure at one time we all thought, that so little could be done—that he was not to be spared to enter upon the future which opened so greatly to one in his place in the world. And now we have him back, to pledge his sword anew to his King, and to dedicate his person, to devote his life, to subordinate his every interest and hope and ambition to the service of his country. Standing as he does so near the throne, you will realize how great his opportunities are. You and dear Mr. Lanchester have shown him such kindness—I am sure I may safely let you partially into the plans that are now maturing for his future happiness"—the Princess at last brought her gaze back into the room and let it rest calmly upon Hilary—"for his future happiness in marriage."

Hilary smiled sweetly. "We should love to hear," she said.

"I must name no names, but there is a certain dear little friend of mine not a thousand miles from Potsdam—an alliance that would cause as deep satisfaction in some chancelleries as it would cause

dismay in some others. You will understand that one cannot speak freely of these things, or you would, my dear young lady, if your country had any foreign policy, which of course it hasn't."

"I beg you pardon——"

"I assure you I meant no offence. And that is why we must now begin to hurry Prince Alfred's return a little, I grieve to say. This air—I so deplore his being obliged to leave it. I myself feel a different creature. But a certain important Individual, whom we must sometimes humour, is showing a little impatience, and—well, I may tell you that the meeting of the young people has actually been arranged. You will see it all, if you look, in due time, no doubt, in the papers. It will be quite impossible to prevent them from drawing their conclusions."

"Actually arranged," said Hilary.

"I will even—if you will consider it a very great secret indeed—whisper where. At Clavismore, the seat of the Maccleughs, near Dunfermline. My dear little friend is coming to be with her aunt, who has taken the place for the shooting. The visit was to have been earlier, but has now been postponed to the end of October, by which time my dearest Alfred—Ah, here you are, Mr. Lanchester! To take your charming girl away from me, I fear! You should not have had her a moment sooner, but we had just finished our chat."

They made their farewells. Hilary's eyes were very bright, her manner more than usually self-possessed. A sudden little silver bell had struck in her brain.

"*Sophy!*" it tinkled. "*Sophy-Sternburg-Hofstein!*" "*The Arch-Duchess Sophia-Ludovica of Sternburg-Hofstein!*" It ran into a chime.

CHAPTER XXVII

THERE were three days of pleasant expeditions by wood-trail and water, expeditions which gave Princess Georgina the measure of Alfred's extraordinary return of strength. She mentioned it and marvelled over it all day long. Once or twice, when he picked up his own light canoe for a short portage, or dragged a heavy log to the fire, she protested; and then he, poor fellow, was betrayed into boasting, broadening his shoulders, showing her the muscle of his arms. It was on his lips to say to her, "Old Morrow says my lungs are as dry as his," but he checked himself in time. "You see how the place suits me," he told her instead, and she, clasping her hands replied, "But it has been everything to you, Alfred."

It was not till Thursday morning that Her Royal Highness sought an interview with Prince Alfred. Lady Althea thought this was leaving it rather late, but the Princess said that she would do it in her own good time and way, and in that time and way she did it. After breakfast she said—

"I should like to look at the lake from your quarters for a little while, Alfred," and they went over together, he carrying rug and shawl, and insisting on it against Vandy's attempt to take them. He made her comfortable in his own arm-chair outside the hut, and sat himself on a wooden bucket that Abe had left upside down in the sun. Thus balanced, with his hands thrust in his trousers pockets, he waited upon what she might have to say.

But the Princess was not in a hurry. She opened her velvet bag with deliberation and took out her knitting. Abe, who was cleaning fishing-tackle at the edge of the water, went inside, and came out again with a soft red felt hat, which he placed on the ground beside Prince Alfred. Then he lifted his own with awkward ceremony to the Princess, and retired further along the lake.

"That good fellow is your body-servant, I suppose," said she.

"Abe? Oh, Abe is my counsellor and friend. Abe's no end of a good chap."

"He evidently thinks you ought to put your hat on."

"Well—do you mind if I do? The sun does rather get one in the eyes."

"By all means, put it on. But what a very peculiar colour! Is that the latest fashion in New York?"

"It is rather gay, isn't it! We wear them in the woods about here to prevent other fellows shooting us by mistake," he told her. "There used to be quite a number of accidents that way."

"Really? What a clever precaution! I hope you always wear it, Alfred. How terrible it would be if—but such a thing is unthinkable. You haven't asked much about home affairs, Alfred. But I suppose the *Times* has kept you informed." The Princess knitted busily.

Her nephew glanced not quite comfortably through the door of his cabin, where more than one tight roll of that newspaper tied and addressed by the lady who now questioned him, lay in a corner.

"Yes, thanks awfully, Auntie George. It was simply too good of you to take all that trouble."

"A pleasure to me. It has been an interesting summer in many ways. Have you noticed the extraordinary popularity of Victor's betrothal? We are all so pleased."

"Does he like the Russian girl?"

"Like her? He adores her. And between ourselves, Alfie, I do not think he was altogether prepared to. But before he and darling Sacha had been in the same house for three days poor dear old Vic was her slave. It was really most amusing. But she subjugated us all, I assure you. Even I, with my natural dislike of foreigners, came *sous le charme*."

"How jolly," said Alfred absently, and picked up a twig of balsam.

"*Doushka*,¹ *doushka*—it is nothing but *doushka*-ing. And now, dear boy, about your own plans. You will not——"

"It's not possible, Dr. Morrow says, to make them very far ahead," Alfred cut in hurriedly, "but so far as I know at present——"

"I was going to say you will not be surprised to hear that ever since the more reassuring reports of your health began to reach us your affairs have been occupying a good deal of attention, Alfie. Naturally. And one part of my mission here is to tell you that matters are afoot."

Suddenly and with great speed, Alfred's intention, which had been bubbling near the surface of his mind, sank to the bottom of the sea there, deep, deep down, where a mermaid watched over them with a face like Hilary Lanchester's. He began to strip the balsam twig of its greenery.

"Yes?" he said.

"To begin with, Alfred, we are all hoping—John particularly is hoping—that you may find yourself able to return with me."

"Next week? Absolutely impossible, I am afraid. If only for the reason that I have promised the Phippses to spend a day or two at Washington before I go," countered Alfred. "I believe that has

¹ Darling.

got about, and after the ripping way this country has treated me——”

The objection told. Princess Georgina laid down her knitting to consider it.

“I think you should have given us some intimation of that,” she said. “It does make a difference. I could not be involved in a visit to Washington—I have not come prepared for anything of the sort. What is the earliest date then, Alfred, that will enable you to make this visit before you sail?”

“I am not thinking of the visit at present, Aunt. Dr. Morrow strongly advises me to winter here. He has very kindly offered me his house, as more convenient for messing. And he will look me up, he says, every fortnight or so. I thought Vandy might go back with you—he’s frightfully fed up with this place—and somebody else could come if it’s absolutely necessary.”

“Major Scrope might be appointed. It would be some little acknowledgment of his wonderful work on the Brahmapootra. And Kenneth Talbot is dying to be sent,” temporised the Princess, lost in thought. “You certainly have the gift of attaching people, Alfred.”

“I’d like Scrope. But not Tabby, please. He’d die of it. There isn’t a knick-knack about the place,” said Alfred with an encouraged eye. “The man I most want is Henry Hake. He might bring my dog. Hake and Tinker would both be no end of use to me here.”

“I don’t think Hake could come. He’s married—the housekeeper’s daughter, at Sandringham—and his wife is expecting. Tinker, dear thing—I saw him just before we started—was as fit as fit. I said to him, ‘Any message for master, Tinker?’ and he barked loudly. I am sure he understood.”

“Hake married! He never mentioned it!”

"He wouldn't, perhaps, writing about the dog. So Dr. Morrow recommends you to winter in this lonely place. Surely all its advantages could be had, if necessary, in Switzerland! I hope he will think so, for I fear, Alfred—I very greatly fear—that it is impossible."

"What makes it impossible?"

Princess Georgina let her hands and her knitting fall into her lap, measured the distance to Abe, glanced about her, and drew her chair a little nearer to her nephew.

"There are the gravest reasons why you should return at once to England, Alfred. You have become part of a very important policy between ourselves and the Wilhelmstrasse. I tell you this at once, because, knowing your character as I do, I am sure you would prefer it to any beating about the bush. I have to some extent managed Victor,—you, Alfred, I should never attempt to manage." She paused and smiled at Prince Alfred, who stopped peeling his balsam twig long enough to say—

"I should be glad, then, Aunt Georgina, if you *wouldn't* beat about the bush."

"Certain negotiations with the Kaiser's Government would be materially assisted by—don't jump—by your marriage to one of the young German Arch-Duchesses, Alfred. There are, as you know, three, an alliance with any of whom would be extremely *passlich*. But Heinrich has reasons of his own for preferring that it should be Sophia of Sternburg-Hofstein; and I happen to know that it is his special wish that you and she should meet at as early a date as possible. We propose, therefore, your health having been under Divine Providence practically re-established, to carry out the original plan of last June—it matured during the Kaiser's visit—that Sophy should come with her aunt to

Clavismore, and that you should find yourself in that neighbourhood. The Arch-Duchess Valerie is my cousin by marriage and she has very naturally already invited me——"

Alfred put up his hand, and the Princess Georgina had an instant of remembering that this was the King's brother; while she was only his aunt. The young man's face had gone very white and sharp, his mouth had taken its most "difficult" line.

"I would rather not know anything more about it," he said. "I shall not marry. My health will not permit it."

"Be reasonable, Alfred. You are recovered."

"Not enough for that. Ask Dr. Morrow."

"But I have asked Dr. Morrow. Without making any fuss about it, I said to him only this morning, 'I hope we may now consider that the state of the Prince's lungs would be no bar, for instance, to marriage,' and his reply was, 'None whatever.'"

"I can only say that he talked very differently in July. I know what his ideas are upon that subject. And I know what my own are."

"My dear Alfred, those notions are all very well and to be encouraged among ordinary people, but princes have nothing to do with them. Princes *must* marry. It is their first duty, not to themselves, but to their country. What horrors there have been that wise marriages, and plenty of issue, would have prevented!"

"The Succession doesn't lie with me."

"You are very near it. John has been bitterly disappointed so far—bitterly. There is Victor, of course, but who knows? He is far from strong. We urge nothing upon you that would be repugnant to your feelings, dear boy, only that you should allow yourself to receive an impression of a

very dear and good girl, and let matters take their course. It is most unusual to explain with all this candour in advance, but knowing you as I do——"

"It is useless to talk to me about marriage, Aunt Georgina," said her nephew, and threw away the twig of balsam as if it had been the happiness of a lifetime. He said no more, but looked at the ground, and that was the moment when, as the Princess told Lady Althea afterwards, her heart sank within her. It sank depressed but not despairing, not by any means despairing. There was plenty of time, and in England plenty of influence. Here in the wilderness the Princess was alone, at home she would be reinforced, she warmed to think by what overwhelming allies. In the end the highest, best course must prevail. In the meantime——

"Be that as it may, Alfred—I hope you will change your mind, but be that as it may—you will understand what a very awkward dilemma would be forced upon John and all of us by any failure on your part at least to appear at Clavismore. Everybody knows, Heinrich better than anybody, that you are perfectly well, and he is more than usually jumpy just now. *Victor's affair was to him a great disappointment.* Dear Sacha had more than one suitor, you must know. Heinrich has set his heart upon this marriage. It may not take place, and quite probably Sophy may not be able to bear the sight of you—very likely, indeed, if you look as you are looking now, dear boy. But the meeting we are committed to—the meeting in courtesy must take place. I am here to tell you that from your King, Alfred, and to beg that you will so order your affairs as to consult his pleasure in this matter, as well as the interests of your country."

The Princess had risen as she spoke, and stood, velvet bag and knitting notwithstanding, a very

august and impressive figure. Prince Alfred also got upon his feet. He stood looking at the ground for a full moment before he spoke, his hands in his pockets, frowning, as Lady Althea heard afterwards, quite detestably.

"I must not detain you, Aunt Georgina, if you really wish to go back to England by the next ship, as you say. I do not find it convenient to go with you, but you may tell John that I will carry out his wishes, and be available, without prejudice, for this occasion you speak of by the last week in October. On the definite and clear understanding, which I must ask him to take the trouble to cable me, that I shall not be in any way prevented from carrying out the orders of the doctor who has saved my life, and returning here for the winter."

"My dearest Alfred——" exclaimed the Princess, and approached him with outstretched arms. But he, like no prince, but a very unmannerly young man, evaded her embrace and disappeared into his cabin.

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN the short time that remained of his aunt's visit, Alfred showed what the Princess described to her companion as a thoroughly nice spirit. "Considering," as she said, "that we had something very like a little tiff." He devoted hours every day to her entertainment, made all arrangements himself, and took immense trouble about the details of a rather lengthy expedition to Lake Bonaparte, the spot which the Princess desired, of all the mountain region, principally to see. It came off without a hitch. The Princess found the place profitable both for its beauty and its moral. "When one reflects that here, in this lonely and primitive retreat, a would-be King found peace to meditate upon the reverses that attend a too vaulting ambition, one is touched," she said handsomely, "one is touched to the heart. Poor, unhappy Joseph Bonaparte!" The Princess enjoyed it immensely, and talked of the ill-fated family most of the way back. She was never quite convinced, she said, that we in England had not treated that family's ill-fated Head with greater severity than was really necessary; and Dr. Morrow abandoned every belief he had ever held about the matter, because he could not find himself, with any comfort, in agreement with this lady. He was an odd man in many ways, Dr. Morrow.

Mr. Lanchester had immediately placed his house at the disposal of the party for the explora-

tion of Old Loon Lake, and a day was fixed. That was the single occasion on which the Princess was compelled to own to over-fatigue and excuse herself. With that one exception the way she entered into everything was astonishing. Lady Althea went to represent her, and the Princess openly lamented the loss of so delightful a party; but her nephew took bitter counsel over the incident.

"If it had been a female Lobengula, with rings in her nose, she would have gone," he said wrathfully, in his first moment of privacy. This was what his aunt Georgina would have called tiresome of him, as he must have known that the ladies of his family did not ordinarily return visits, and that the claims of a female Lobengula would have been quite special. But by now there was no longer any doubt that Alfred was in love.

The world was aware, in an unofficial way, that Princess Georgina with a lady-in-waiting was in the act of a visit to the interesting patient at Colson's Point, and Dr. Morrow began to complain of the telephone at Sumach. There was no telephone at the camp; he had seen to that. The idea had perhaps got about that if the Prince was well enough to enjoy a visit from relatives, he was well enough to contribute something to the entertainment of the American reading public. Dr. Morrow was compelled to sit up the greater part of one night in the composition of what he called another coat for the wolves. It kept them off for the time, however. No reporters appeared. The doctor had not yet announced the completion of the cure. He asked the newspapers, like good fellows, to wait for that; and they did.

The Princess Georgina had suffered much from reporters, and one of the pleasures of her life was to outwit them. To this end, while it was generally

understood that she was to return from New York by the *Magnific*, she quietly arranged to sail from Montreal by the *Empress of the Seas*, where she would be met and seen off, entirely in the manner of a happy thought, by her brother at Ottawa. "My brother at Ottawa" the Princess always called the Duke, and those whom she addressed felt pleased and grateful. All but Dr. Morrow, who would hardly have been won if she had referred to the reigning sovereign of Great Britain and Ireland and many other places as my nephew Jack. To further confound curiosity, the Princess decided against the express, and in favour of a slow train. She said, with truth, that she would be able to see much more of the country, and Lady Althea would be much less likely to be sick.

The ladies with their maids were to make the journey alone; it would be quite an adventure, as the Princess said. Colonel Vandeleur, who was again to have escorted them, had strangely contracted mumps, and was in quarantine. "How he has managed to do it in this air," commented the Princess, with some displeasure, "passes my comprehension," and walked herself carefully round the shack in which the unhappy Vandy was confined. The Princess, especially away from home, would never leave anything to chance.

So when No. 99, Mixed Accommodation, steamed into the station at Moose Lick, there were upon the platform besides the ladies and their maids only His Royal Highness Prince Alfred, Mr. Henry Lanchester and Dr. Morrow. Abe and Riley cannot be counted, as they were obliged to stay with the teams. Dr. Morrow had ordered a "drawing-room." Mr. Lanchester brought some marvellous roses, also commanded from New York. The ex-President did not share Dr. Morrow's antipathy to the Princess. "She has her little

ways," he said, "but she takes the world with a high hand. I'm delighted to have come in contact with her," and the roses were a tribute of perfect sincerity. The unexpected flowers gave pleasure to the Princess; if looks could express it, they gave even more to Alfred. He sought in the toilet-room himself for a glass of water for them, and pulled out the little side-table to stand them on. In the bustle of settling in nobody but Lady Althea noticed how gently he touched their petals. The Princess at once had the window down, and Alfred busied himself for her comfort, disposed of her dressing-bag, hunted out her salts, and found the copy of the *Spectator* which she had been reading on the voyage over, and had not finished. Dr. Morrow and Mr. Lanchester, on the platform, responded to parting compliments through the window. For the second time Her Royal Highness embraced her nephew.

"And now, dearest Alfie, I think you must get off."

"I assure you, Auntie George, there's loads of time. Where is your lavender-water? I know you never go a yard by train without your lavender-water."

The lavender-water was found, and the Princess launched once more into appreciation of Alfred's thoughtfulness.

"But now, darling boy, you really *must* get off," she told him. "Dr. Morrow, lay your commands upon him. He must, mustn't he? Good-bye once more, my dearest Alfred, and do go."

Prince Alfred, looking out behind his aunt, sent Dr. Morrow a look. The doctor took out his watch.

"Three minutes more," he said cheerfully. "Are you quite sure, madam, that you have that pre-

scription for lumbago?" The Princess searched in her velvet bag.

Number 99, Mixed Accommodation, gave a slight but meaning jerk, and began slowly to move.

"*Alfred!*" cried his aunt.

"Only shunting," said the incorrigible Morrow, with his eyes on Alfred's face.

"I say——" began Mr. Lanchester. "Are you sure of that, Morrow?"

But Number 99 had quickened noticeably, and was fast getting into what, for her, was pace, and pace with definite intention. The Princess disappeared for a moment; then her head came through the window and both hands wildly waving. Then the train rounded a corner, and was rapidly lost to view.

"May I ask whether that was the intention?" asked Mr. Lanchester of the doctor on the platform.

"It wasn't mine," said he.

"Then what in the name of common sense is he up to?"

"I don't know what he's up to," replied the doctor. "But I'm backing him, anyhow." His face had all the complicity of a school-boy in the prank of another.

"We'll consult the time-table and find out the first stop," Lanchester said. "Shall you send Abe, or go yourself? Or can I be of any use?"

"My dear chap, I shall neither send Abe, nor go myself, and I'd rather you weren't of any use, thanks all the same. Abe will put up the team and wait around till he comes back, or wires—that's as much as I'm going to do to interfere with him. Come over and have lunch, will you?"

"Don't you feel the least anxiety?"

"Not a mite. I know my young man. There's Abe. I'll instruct him. Are you coming?"

"Why, yes, thanks, I think I am," said Lanchester, but he looked concerned; and as they drove away into the woods behind Riley his glance travelled more than once to the railway line, as if he expected to see Number 99 reappear.

That, however, was placing too much confidence in the Princess Georgina's high hand with the world. In the drawing-room car there was no commotion until the gathered momentum of the train put an end to all supposition that it was moving for its own convenience from track to track. Alfred then, to excitement from the ladies, got up and hurried to the platform of the car, but was rapidly overtaken by Althea Dawe, who clung to his arm with high and terrified protests. The Princess, too, left her seat and followed, but it was only to express extreme annoyance.

"Althea, I beg of you, cease that silly shrieking. Of course he can't get off with the train moving at this rate. I will have it sent back."

"I'm afraid we can't," her nephew informed her.

"Oh yes, we can." The Princess rang, and sank again into her seat. After a moment or two, and not less, a negro porter entered, in a spotless white coat and all the fatuous dignity of his kind.

"Will you please stop the train?" said the Princess briefly. "This gentleman has been carried on by mistake."

"No, Mam. Dis here's a passenger train, she ain't no trolley. She don't stop now short o' Cascade. The gentleman kin git out thar if he want to."

It is possible that if the porter had known whom he was addressing he might have used other terms, though there is no way of vouching for it. The Princess had one imperative impulse to tell him, but caught Lady Althea's eye in time. Not for this had she outwitted the reporters of New York.

Neither was she bandying words with the creature before her.

"You may go," she said, but authority in a white coat was not going at that moment. He began to dust the chair-backs.

"Want I should send the newspape' boy?"

"You may go," repeated the Princess.

"I know I may, but I got to do my business," the porter replied, and slapped a cloud out of a plush seat. "You seem to bin lettin' a lot o' cinders in at that there winder. I got to git it up."

"Don't touch that window," said Alfred. "And make yourself scarce, will you?"

But the fat person of the negro was already leaning across Lady Althea and negotiating the catches of the window. It was fat, but it could not have been muscular, otherwise Prince Alfred could not have expressed his feelings as he did. With one stride he seized the porter by the collar of his spotless coat, jerked him back from the window, and with a well-aimed kick sent him flying through the door of the coupé into his own linen-closet, which happened to be open just outside. He went with such single intention that his spotless coat remained in Alfred's hand, and had to be thrown after him.

"He won't trouble us again," said Alfred, and he didn't. He went instead to confer with the second waiter of the restaurant car, who advised him, after consideration, not to take out a summons for assault, on the ground that whoever the parties in the drawing-room might or might not be, they was sutt'nly some folks.

Meanwhile the Princess and Lady Althea, rather humbled by the explosion of the irate male, had found it providential that Alfred had been carried off in the train.

"These things never happen," observed his aunt

Georgina, "without a purpose. The man might have given us a great deal of annoyance. But how, Alfred, will you get away from this Cascade place?"

He took a time-table from his pocket and consulted it, she was long afterwards to declare, as if he had never seen it before.

"There's a train back in half-an-hour," he told her, but did not say, as she was later to remember, that he would travel by it. "Morrow will leave one of the teams, I know he will. I'll be all right."

"The doctor will hardly leave the station himself until you return, Alfred," she rebuked him mildly. "He seems to be rather a character, but I can't imagine him doing that. Well, it is not, dear boy, as I could have approved if it had been in any way foreseen; but as it is, I shall immensely enjoy another hour of your company."

With which, and no further ado, Her Royal Highness removed her bonnet, put on a comfortable travelling mutch, and opened her *Spectator*.

CHAPTER XXIX

"WELL, Prince, and what did you think of the metropolis of Cascade?" asked Dr. Morrow next morning at breakfast.

Alfred usually lunched out of doors and dined alone with Vandy, but always breakfasted with the doctor, who then looked him over for the day. Vandy being still in bed, the two were alone.

"Nice little town," said Alfred cheerfully. "I spent two or three hours there, strolling about, very pleasantly. Got my hair cut."

"Find anything to eat there?"

"Didn't want anything to eat. We lunched on the train."

"You don't seem to want much this morning. What's the matter with that mush, Highness?"

"Nothing the matter with it. Yes, there is—the colour. I hate yellow things to eat, doctor."

"Ought to be finished, Prince. Try a bigger spoon. I'll let you off with one sausage. Cascade isn't one of our show places, but if you wanted to get your hair cut there, there's a shorter way than by rail, you know."

"So Abe told me, coming home. Up the North Arm and along Mud Creek and then across. But I shouldn't have had the pleasure of going with my aunt," said Alfred. "And the creek isn't always good, Abe says."

"Sure to be, this time of year, and after the rain we had in September. Not that I've ever tried it, but I don't do much business in Cascade," the doctor told him. "It's a burg I generally pass by."

I wonder how the ladies are getting on at Montreal?"

"They'll be quite all right," said Alfred confidently. "Major Winter of my uncle's staff, was to meet them at Utica on the quiet, and my uncle himself and one of the other fellows at Montreal. "I have no anxiety."

"No," said Dr. Morrow, giving him a thoughtful glance, "you don't look as if you had. Feeling fine, eh? With the nerves a *little* on the outside, I think. A quiet day, please."

"All right. I can have Abe, I suppose? I want to send him over to the Lanchesters with a note."

"Have him, by all means, son; but you won't find Henry Lanchester. He's gone to New York to-day about that absurd mine of his. Won't be back till Wednesday."

"Oh—is he? Really? Thanks for telling me. But I think I'll have Abe all the same, doctor. And afterwards I want him to go to Moose Lick with a telegram. You said I might have anybody I wanted now, and I'm wiring for a friend of mine named Youghall. That's all right, isn't it?"

"Why, of course. You'll find Abe cutting up venison, I think, out back. We run on low gear, though, to-day, please. It's a long hill, you know, Prince."

They got up to leave the table, and as they went through the door together Alfred's arm slipped round the shoulders of his physician.

"You don't know how much I owe you, doctor."

"Humbug," said Morrow. "It's the other way."

Alfred went to his own quarters and wrote his note. It was addressed to Hilary, in his irregular, careful hand that formed every letter and no more; and though it seemed to be important he wrote

it only once. There was no delay about the writing of it, because he had put everything ready beforehand, even to candle, wax and signet; and he chose his best note-paper to write upon. Then, for a protection against Abe's fingers, he cast about him and found a piece of clean brown wrapping-paper. Hilary, when she received and read it, put it tenderly back into the clean brown paper, and there she keeps it to this day.

They met the next morning at ten o'clock, one as punctual as the other, on the near side of the portage to Old Loon Lake. Hilary walked across, leaving her canoe. She was dressed in her roughest and oldest of short tweed coats and skirts—Alfred had said an "expedition"—rather shabby brown boots, and a little soft green hat that knocked into any shape over her eyes. But for her lovely face and the spirit in it she might have been a wandering tree.

They waved and called, he paddled close, and she got in upon her cushion in the bows, he holding the canoe steady with his paddle.

"This is splendid," he said, but pushed off without a word of the explanation she was waiting for. She searched his face for it, and saw a growing satisfaction as the water quickly widened between the canoe and the shore. But something else was there, something new. She wondered.

"Why so fast?" she asked him.

"We have a long way to go," he told her.

"You said rather a special expedition," she said, "but I didn't gather that it would be a long one."

"I'm afraid it will take most of the day."

"Then I'm afraid," said Hilary, "that I can't go."

"You will when you know," he told her. "You'll feel that you must. It will be your duty, you know."

"Please stop paddling and tell me."

"I'll tell you, but I won't stop paddling. Have you ever been to Cascade?"

"Never in my life. There's nothing to do at Cascade."

"There is to-day."

She looked at him puzzled, and out of a certain timidity that crossed her mind she said—

"How is Colonel Vandy?"

"In bed," said Alfred. He, too, seemed willing to gain time. "You never saw such a jaw," he told her. "We exchanged a few words this morning through the window. Vandy's were mostly bad ones."

"Oh," she laughed, but could think of no more to say. Nor, apparently, could he, except about the great matter which filled his mind, and before which she was already troubled, without knowing one word of it. He kept silent for another moment. Then he plunged.

"Do you know what my aunt came over for? That's a silly question, because you couldn't. She came with instructions to get me out of Morrow's hands and back to Europe as quickly as it could be done."

"I was sure of it!" exclaimed Hilary.

"I've been given my orders, and in such a form that I can't disregard them. I must go. It's too beastly, but I must. Morrow, who knows all about it, has written for passages for us on the 20th."

"Next Tuesday!"

"Yes. But there is something more. I am not only to go back at once, but I am to go back in order to become engaged to be married!"

He looked at her as if he had exploded a bomb-shell before her, but she made no special sign.

"Hil," he appealed simply, "doesn't that distress you?"

"If—if it distresses you, it does. But I have always known it would have to come," she said. He should have made some gesture of tragic indignation, but all he did was to throw his cap into the bottom of the canoe and rumple his hair.

"I believed that I could stand out against anything of the sort because of my lungs," he told her. "But Morrow, dear old chap, gives me a clean bill of health. That would be all right, but unfortunately he gave it to my aunt, sort of accidentally. But there you are, you know. The fact is, Hilary," said Prince Alfred wretchedly, "*I'm awfully well*, and old Perry will find it out when I get home in about ten seconds."

"You can't expect me," said Hilary, "to be sorry for that."

"And Colorado? And all we are going to do?" His eyes gloomed at her.

"There is that. I'm awfully sorry about Colorado. But perhaps you will feel differently, now that you are well, and will find a great future over there. I think it is quite likely that I shall have interesting things to do too, in my own country. My father will almost certainly consent to nomination again; and if he does the people will make him President. And he depends a great deal upon me."

There was a curious aloofness in her tone. It was almost as if she wished to assert some dignity or impress him with some circumstance with which he had nothing to do—she, Hilary!

But he caught at it. "All the better!" he cried. "I do hope he will. But Hil," he said gently, "you care a little about me too, don't you?"

She who a moment ago would teach him how little she cared, said—

"You know I do."

Alfred reflected. He did know. It was the

happiest, openest secret between them, this thing that they never talked about, and had been for weeks. But he had to be careful.

"You don't ask who it is that my brother John and my aunt Georgina and the Foreign Offices and a few other people want me to marry," he said.

"Because I know. It's Sophy," she told him. "And—and you are awfully lucky, Alfred."

"My aunt told you!"

Hilary nodded, and now he could see that in spite of all she could do her eyes were full of tears.

"I see. My aunt has always got some game on," he said in a tone of anger. "I see," he said, and indeed he did see.

"And I know from Sophy, too. I heard from her yesterday, and she has found out from her mother, and she is almost in despair——"

"About having me! There's some other fellow!" Alfred's face glowed with such radiant hope that Hilary answered with a little peal of rather unsteady laughter.

"There's the Archduke Karl-Salvator, who is scientific and a frump and a Catholic, and whom she loves desperately, poor Sophy. And for all those four reasons the Kaiser won't hear of it—and prefers you."

"The blighter!" breathed Prince Alfred. "But that's a great relief to me, Hil. Not that it would matter, unless—I know the women of that family. They always do as they're told. The Austrian lot are very different. And I know just the amount of pressure I would have to resist if I went home and it were possible for me to marry. That's why, if you will help me, dear Hil, I mean to make it impossible."

"How?" She turned startled eyes on him.

"By being married already—to you," he delivered. "That is what we are going to do in Cascade." He had all the air of proposing to her a supreme and delightful escapade, and she managed to control her pounding heart sufficiently to rebuke him.

"You shouldn't say wild, impossible things that we ought not even to think," she told him. "I am not going to Cascade."

"I am," he said, and in fact they had already turned into the North Arm.

"How absurd you are," she said, with her eyes on the strokes of his paddle; and for a moment neither of them spoke. Alfred felt at a disadvantage. At any moment she might bid him take the canoe back over the way they had come, and he knew that if she did so bid him he would be obliged to obey.

"I can't talk and paddle," he said, and sent the canoe gliding under the boughs of a spreading cedar. Then he laid his paddle across his knees, and leaning over it with his chin propped in his hands, he addressed her seriously.

"You see, Hil, dear, there's only one thing to consider. Either it's your duty, or it's not your duty. That's the way I've been brought up to look at things. Now I don't want to make any special claim on you, Hil; but it's plain that I'm a human being, a fellow being, in a most awful hole. And there's your friend Sophy, she's in a hole too."

He paused and she nodded, with no mirth in her wet eyes, at her dear, explaining lover.

"Now see what you can do, by just marrying me this morning, and I've arranged everything. It was absolutely nothing but to fill out a paper—names, ages, occupation and so forth—which I've got with me. The recorder will do all the rest. Won't take ten minutes, once we're there." At

this he looked a little anxiously at his watch. 'See what you can do, Hil. You can make this ridiculous marriage between me and Sophia-Hofstein impossible, and so save two lives from shipwrecking each other.' Some of these expressions Alfred had not improbably thought of beforehand. "Two lives, Hilary. You put everything on the rails again for Colorado, because as a married man they wouldn't have any particular use for me at home, and there wouldn't be half so much opposition to my coming back; and in the long run everything would come perfectly right. Don't you see that it would? And, Hil dear, I don't mind telling you—I've *depended* on you in this. "I don't see," he added finally, "how you can get out of it."

Hilary listened gravely. Somewhere in the back of her mind laughter was stirring, but all that her heart would allow her was a little tender smile.

"It can't be my duty to make it impossible for you to do yours," she said.

He threw up his head, galled in an old place.

"Well—if you take that line! If you agree—but you don't—you can't, over here. That was the very thing I counted on to make you do it."

"Was it, Alfred?"

He had hunched his knees under his chin, and was looking at her over them, suddenly forlorn, dismayed. Something that was there before, something eager and sure, had died out of his face. She saw it die, and it hurt her. His happy confidence had faded—she would not join hands with him in this enterprise. After all—if he *had* depended on her. But—

"You see, Hil darling, I'm only asking you to do this provisionally, you know—I mean as a provision. Only to give me a claim to you. Later on, when I can afford to marry, we can have it all

done properly, with the parson and bridesmaids, and everything else you can name. And I don't mind telling you I'm surprised, Hil, that you don't see it not only as a duty but as a very plain duty. You oughtn't to put self first in a matter of this kind, Hilary—you oughtn't, indeed."

"Alfred," she told him reproachfully, "if any one else had said that, I should find it *funny*."

He looked a little hurt.

"It isn't as if you disliked me, Hil."

Oh, her prince—her prince! It was not, indeed.

"*Alfred!*" she half sobbed. "You—you tell me it's my duty. But why should I marry, any more than—you—for such a reason as that?"

Their eyes met over this posing question and clung together.

"But don't you love me?" he asked again. She did not reply, and he got up carefully in his place, holding by a low branch of the cedar.

"Hil, I am going to kiss you," he said.

It was not an easy thing to do from the bottom of the canoe at her feet, but he did it, and not once only. Far from repelling him, Hilary stroked his hair.

"You love me, and yet you won't marry me," he argued, with that advantage.

"But you don't seem to expect anything like love to—to influence me," she expostulated.

"It was *my* reason," he told her. "Of course. But I thought you would prefer duty. One ought, you know. Please, Hil, darling, may I kiss your eyes?"

"We shall upset!" she cried, but they did not upset. He scrambled dutifully and successfully back to his place and took up his paddle.

"Now may we go to Cascade?" he asked, as one who, not without some trouble, has made his point.

For another long moment Hilary hesitated. She sat looking at him, bright-eyed, her elbows on her knees, her face on her clasped hands, and twenty questions trembled on her lips. Then she looked out upon the sunlit water and laughed, and threw them all away. He had depended on her!

"Yes!" she said gloriously to fate, and again to Alfred. "Yes, let us go to Cascade."

And they went. The sun shone on them all the way, and there was a following breeze to help the paddie that never wearied. They found the rheumatic old recorder in the act of making the first fire of the season in a box stove of ancient pattern, and his mind much occupied with the grievance that his supply of logs had been cut too long. He kept them waiting while he showed them how the logs smoked at one end and stuck out through the door at the other. Then he married them to his requirements under the statute of the State of New York, putting on his spectacles to examine the licence. The bridegroom's declaration had been easy. He was Alfred Wettin, and his father was John Wettin. He was born in London, England, and his occupation was "prospective settler." Hilary, over "residence," was uncertain. Alfred had filled in Baltimore, where he knew she was born.

"We live in so many places," she demurred.

"Whar does your pa pay municipal taxes?" asked the clerk, with his eye on the stove.

"Oh—in Baltimore," she said, so that city remained.

"You've come a long way to get married," the recorder told her, using the blotter with his palsied hand, but he did not know how far, the old man.

"I say," said Alfred to his wife when the brief matter was concluded, "do you mind waiting while I make his fire burn?"

So she did, taking a very humble chair for a princess, and Alfred applied himself to the box stove until it roared. It was not perhaps a bad beginning, the tending of another's fire. Hilary watched it with happy eyes.

"Oh, Alfred," she said, as they went down the steps to the side-walk, thick with autumn leaves, "I'm not sorry—I'm not sorry! You're a very human being!"

They bought crackers and cheese at a grocer's shop, and left their certificated licence with the town clerk, and made all haste back; but the sun was low when they started, and the long lanes among the pines and the maples were already misty and purple. They made all haste, and Hilary took a paddle too; but evening had descended before he left her at her father's door, and would not come in to supper, though she shyly asked him to.

"No," he said. "We've only taken a precaution, Hil—you mustn't let me forget that. I'm quite as happy as I need be for a while. If I came in, you see, I might be too happy to go away."

"Good-night, then," she said quickly, and gave him her cheek to kiss. But self-denial has its limits, and he kissed her at his own pleasure.

"Good-night, my wife. I'll see your father to-morrow," he said. "Let me tell him."

Hilary stood in the door and watched him go. A lantern tied to a stake at the landing-place shone upon him and his canoe for a moment, and with one backward wave at her he shot out over the dark glass of the lake. She went in then and looked at the clock, and found that the memorable hour was six. He had gone away into the future at six. That line of the clock hands, cutting him and the world into two, was always to stay with

her. It was her first moment after the magic of their adventure. She sat down in it to try, as she told herself, to "realise" what she had been led to do; but the only thing she quite realised was the wish that her father was there.

After a while she went out and sat in the warm, bright kitchen with Bertha. . . .

And he, her prince, made good way to the portage where Abe was waiting, and hailed Abe cheerily. Riley wasn't back from Moose Lick with his passenger when Abe left; he would be by now. As Abe paddled up Alfred saw the solitary figure of Youghall in the light of his own window, pacing and waiting. He leapt from the canoe, shouting greetings.

"My dear old chap, this is top-hole! Absolutely ripping! Bumped you to pieces, I expect, getting here—the road's in a shocking state. It's good to see you, old man. No end lucky you could come."

"Naturally I could come," said Youghall, half stopping to look at him. "But what—what have they done to you over here! You're not the same man!"

"Another chap—yes, ain't I?" Alfred responded joyously. "I tell you, Youghall, old Morrow's some doctor."

"You've even learned American," gasped Youghall.

"Have I? Well, that's all right." With his hand under his friend's elbow, Alfred had been hurrying him towards his own quarters. Almost pushing him in, he shut the door and faced gladly round upon him.

"Congratulate me, Youghall. I've just married Hilary Lanchester."

Youghall sat down upon the first thing that was convenient.

"You've just—married—a girl," he repeated slowly.

"No—not any old girl. I've just married Hilary Lanchester."

"I—I see," said Youghall.

"*Congratulate* me, old chap," insisted Alfred, slapping him on the shoulder.

"Oh, I do—I do congratulate you," said Youghall hastily. "She seemed—everything that could be desired. But—dear man—how will you ever bring it off?"

"I have brought it off," Prince Alfred told him. "If you had been a bit earlier you might have been best man." He sat, flushed and triumphant, on the edge of his writing-table, and twisted his legs under it. Youghall got up, and looked as if he would never sit down again. He folded his arms against the astonishing news, and stood looking at the floor.

"The girl I took the button to?" he said, not without a feeling of complicity.

"Yes, old man. You did me a good turn that time. I don't mind telling you that I've found out she's worn it ever since," he added shyly.

"Oh, Youghall, she's—she's glorious."

Youghall's eye wandered, in its consternation, to the table. "Telegrams," he said. There were three, rather thick ones, marked Foreign, piled neatly. One was addressed to Colonel Vandeleur.

"They can wait," Alfred told him, with an indifferent glance. "I've got something more interesting to think about. And, Youghall, here's the rest of it. I go home next week to satisfy them about some silly obligation or other. Then I come back by Morrow's orders to winter here. And after that he's going to send me to ranch in Colorado, old man—to ranch in Colorado! That's where Hilary comes in—the darling!"

He was swinging his legs now, in the joy of that anticipated freedom, and having got it all out, he had taken up one of the telegrams, while Youghall stared at the floor.

"Perhaps there's somebody waiting," he said, and tore off the end.

It was a long telegram. Alfred read a line or two, threw himself off the table, and walked over to the lamp. There, with a face that grew more and more changed and charged, he finished it.

"Youghall," he said, "I'm glad you're here. The *Victoria* went down this afternoon in a squall, and both my brothers—were on board. Every soul was lost. You might—open the other telegrams, Youghall."

It was like Youghall that he fell upon the messages without a sound. One was full of details, the other of instructions, neither had any word of mitigation or relief.

Youghall read them through heavily aloud. Prince Alfred sat huddled in an arm-chair and heard. Once or twice he said, "Read that again, will you?" Then he put his hands over his eyes.

"Old John," he said. . . . "Old Vic. Hard luck on those two."

Youghall had turned his back, and was looking out into the night. Presently he came again, as it were, into the room.

"Brace up, old man," he said, with the tears running down his face. "You know what this means. I've got to say it. Long live the King!"

"I suppose you've got to say it," Alfred repeated mechanically. "Vic, too," he said. "Vic would have liked it. . . . I'm glad you're here, Youghall," he said again. "Morrow's at Sumach. Will you go over and tell Vandeleur? Come back in half-an-hour. I must think a bit."

At the door a consideration struck the King's

messenger with the force of a bullet. He wheeled round.

"And you've married Hilary Lanchester!" he almost shouted.

Alfred lifted his head.

"There is that," he said. "I'm glad to remember that. Thank God I did it in time."

CHAPTER XXX

"I AM amused to think," said Abraham Longworth, after dinner at Manners' Club, to his host and Youghall and the other man who was dining there, "I am amused to think how enviable, two or three generations back, they would have considered our conditions to-day. The schools question settled, the Church on her own legs, small owners thick as measles, provincial Parliaments looking after all the town pumps of the United Kingdom—Ireland almost happy. And yet——"

"And yet there is more to do—that's all it comes to," said Youghall. "I'll have my pipe, thanks, Manners, if I may. It's queer, though, how quickly the old problems look archaic once they're settled. Nobody remembers the broken heads."

"Women voting, now," contributed Manners.

"Yes, and a fat lot of difference that makes," said the other man, "to the sum of politics."

"It makes this difference," said Youghall, lighting up. "They've killed Utopian Socialism. The babies did that. They had to be fed, you see, in the meantime, and the men heard about it. But they've doubled the strength of the manuals in the House and made it, indirectly, ten times as difficult to find the money for any sort of defence."

Youghall spoke with feeling; he was Under-Secretary for War. It was wonderful climbing for a man of thirty-one, but the New Party still eyed him with confidence rather than with criticism. Manners was private secretary to Lord Farwell,

Postmaster General. Longworth had returned from Boston and entered the House the year after Youghall; he, too, belonged to the New Party, which had been called into existence chiefly by the menace of the industrial situation. That was grave, was recognised the world over to be grave. The New Party in the House of Commons, frankly individualistic, formed a counterpoise to Labour there; but its ranks were full of hot-heads, Colonials, Independents, Americans, and its alliance was always a matter of some anxiety to the Government's Tory Whips.

"I rather regret some of those reforms you've mentioned," Youghall went on. "They took up the stage, and made something to fight about, something that wasn't too near the bone."

"It was thought the limit when the Right to Work went through," Manners said; "I've been looking up some of the speeches. Right to Work! And we are up against the third reading of a Right to Leisure Bill! Of course in one respect the situation has improved——"

"You mean the King," put in the other man, and Longworth took his cigar in his hand to say—

"You English are the most impossible people to postulate on the face of the globe. You chop off a King's head for interfering in politics, and for four hundred years you say no fellow that wears the crown of England must know that politics exist, because if he did it might happen again. You're good at learning a lesson. Then a fellow like Alfred comes along, and says 'I'll be king, but I want a man's job as well,' and you're all as pleased as Punch."

"It's extraordinarily queer that Labour, of all things in the world, should have given him his chance," said the other man. "Last thing you'd expect."

"That's what I say—it always is, in these islands, the last thing you'd expect. What I want to know is how he got into this close touch. I don't say with Labour Members, but with the Unions themselves," said Longworth. "Not half an easy thing to negotiate."

"Oh, it's all very informal," Youghall told them; "but it hangs together somehow. There's the sporting instinct of the working man, and the kingship of the King, and his known keenness on all that these fellows in the mills and arsenals have to do."

"I've heard he picked up a lot of notions that time he was in the States," interrupted Manners.

"Maybe," Youghall went on, "Sir Charles Kitson had a good deal to say to it in the beginning. He saw the chance, and saved his own Company—he knew the men wouldn't rat once the King had got their word. Then it got fashionable."

"And now there isn't a Union meeting in the North that isn't conducted under his portrait," Manners said. "Do you remember at Oxford, Youghall, how he used to swot at mending his own bicycle?"

Youghall smiled. For so young a man he was uncommunicative as a rule, but to-night they were all there together more intimately than had happened since the Oxford days. The other man was a good fellow, too.

"I knew how it would be," he said. "I came over with him, you know, when he—had to come."

"Wasn't he in the woods somewhere when the thing happened?" the fourth man interrupted.

"He was in Quebec the next day," said Youghall. "He sailed under the salute of his own Proclamation. It was a thundering thing for us Canadians, happening there, you know."

"Would be," put in Longworth.

"They knocked him together some kind of a Staff in Ottawa, but his own equerry had crooked up, and I came along as sort of private secretary *pro tem*. They sent him on the Canadian Dreadnought *Iroquois*. It was her first commission. I remember our overtaking the *Empress of the Seas* off the Banks——"

"Why do you remember that?" asked Longworth.

"Oh, nothing, only the Princess Georgina was on board, and I used to think he'd just as soon we did overtake her," said Youghall.

"Did he talk to you much—about things?" asked Manners.

"Now and then. He said once," smiled Youghall, "that he had as good a right to work as any man alive. I believe they've heard that, in the Unions. It doesn't make him unpopular."

"Why the devil doesn't he marry?" asked Longworth.

"Ah—that I can't tell you," Youghall said, and his close-lipped mouth only opened once again, for some minutes, except for the convenience of his pipe.

"Isn't he known as the Hope of Europe?" asked the other man.

"I hadn't heard," said Youghall. That was the time it opened.

"He ought to marry," Longworth insisted. "He's throwing away his best card with the populace—the photographs of the children. I wonder the illustrated press doesn't get a question asked."

"It looks rather," Manners contributed, "as if lovely woman simply didn't interest him. Our Court has been as virtuous as virtue since Victoria, but I hear as things go now there's hardly a petticoat about the place."

"There's the Princess Georgina's," said the fourth man.

"As far as that goes," replied Manners discreetly. "Yes. But no petticoats with frills. At least so my wife tells me."

There was a Lady Bidy Manners, who had apparently been complaining.

"Don't we hear of a lovely lady at Farnborough?" Longworth said. "I don't usually talk scandal, but I can't hear the poor fellow deprived of all natural sentiment——"

"There's nothing in that," Manners told him. "She tries hard—that's all."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Longworth, "if he demanded to fall in love. He's a queer chap, for a king. Were you here, Youghall, for the Coronation?"

"Yes," said Youghall. "I've never been away."

"He made a rather pathetic figure, didn't he? Not a dry eye in the Abbey and all that sort of thing."

Youghall took out his pipe to reply, but anybody could get in a sentence before the words came out.

"He was alone, of course, and young. And not too strong, even then," Manners said. "I felt sniffy myself."

The fourth man, whose name was Nicholas Henry, Sir Nicholas Henry, a baronet, a mine-owner, and more of a veteran than the others, pushed back his chair to tip it, dropped his cigar-stump into his finger-bowl and laughed.

"I was in the Automobile Club in January of last year, when Amberley dropped in on his way back from being told that he meant to write his Speech from the Throne himself," he said. "His face was worth seeing. He thought the foundations were rocking. I know Amberley very well—fagged for him at Eton—and he told me what had

happened. 'With all respect for the great abilities of my Cabinet,' says the King to Amberley, 'I prefer to express my ideas in my own way. But I shall be delighted to give you the opportunity of correcting the spelling.' He never could stick Amberley. Always hated having to send for him. I never saw the old man so hot. 'We'll correct more than the spelling,' he said, to me of course, not to the King. But I don't know that they did."

"It was a rattling good speech," said Longworth. "Quite prudent; but as personal as a message to Congress."

"It's just as well the Liberals went out when they did," Manners turned to Sir Nicholas. "He gets on much better with Caversham. Caversham applauds our impulsive monarch, and plays him like any other card. More than once I've heard him say, 'I want to carry the King with us.'"

"It's a long time," Sir Nicholas remarked, neatly removing the tip of his second cigar, "since the ace and the King were seen so much together in politics. I believe Caversham encouraged him in that notion of sending for ministers two or three at a time to discuss things."

"He told the Chancellor of the Exchequer," said Manners—"have a light, Henry?—that he wanted to understand the Bills he's got to sign. 'What in the name of the Constitution does he want to understand 'em for?' Naseby said to my chief. 'That's *our* business.' But he could make no objection, of course. And now the Cabinet meets at Buckingham Palace rather oftener than in Downing Street. Does business too. Seems to work well enough."

"It would," remarked Longworth sardonically, "in this country where every known sign and precedent's against it."

"I've been told that the precedent that worked

with the King was that of George the First," said Manners. "He was the chap, wasn't he, that gave up Cabinet meetings because he hadn't enough English to follow the proceedings, and they bored him. King Alfred, I understand, thought that was a precedent that ought to be wiped out. And if it pleases him—It's not dangerous, so long as he consents to take only a formal part——"

He looked round as if challenging objection, but none came. Longworth ever so slightly shook his head. They sat silent for a moment, thinking of the King. They were all four his trusty lieutenants, and the country was full of just such lieutenants as these. There was a wide-spread cult of the King. Men liked what they knew of him; women could never know enough.

"So long—yes," said Longworth. "But there's something heady about the King——"

"Let's hope he'll keep it," joked Sir Nicholas. "By the way, he'll be disappointed at the news from Washington."

"Treaty scotched?" asked Manners. "I haven't seen the evening papers."

"Gutted with amendments, in the usual style. Very disappointing, but I was afraid of the Senate," said the older man. "The President takes it badly, they say."

"Don't believe all that," Longworth advised them. "Dickinson was never half so hot on it as he got credit for being, on this side. He let himself in for it in the beginning with that speech at the Pilgrims' Dinner, but it ought to have been recognised that he wasn't playing politics—too near the end of his term. He'd like it all right, but he knew as well as anybody that it wasn't a practicable move just then. I believe he was quite surprised when Ballingham leapt into his arms in reply at the Mansion House. 'I suppose I've got

to go through with it now,' I hear he said, when the ball began to roll up big meetings, and Archbishops and foreign secretaries over her; but a treaty of arbitration and alliance is the last thing any President of the United States would want to leave in the pot just as he's going out of office. They may be turning the lights on a grand lodge of sorrow at the White House this afternoon, but Dickinson's quite pleased to pickle that cucumber for the next fellow—and he's wise."

"Then it can't come up again before the election," said Manners.

"It could, but it won't," Longworth said.

The last sleepy waiter had disappeared behind the screen. The fire, long burning for them alone, had dropped low; and through the window came a stroke of Big Ben. Longworth looked at his watch.

"Time for my bye-bye," he told them. "You fellows going back to the House to-night?"

"I am," said Youghall.

"Faithful hound." Longworth thrust his arm affectionately under Youghall's, as they made their way to the cloak-room. The two were close friends, with a common policy and a point of view from which they looked in the same direction and saw the same things. The American was a leader among the younger spirits of his party, yet had already earned the nickname of Common-sense Longworth, because he made such constant and such plaintive appeal to that quality.

As they went down the steps together, Youghall said—

"Who's going to be the next fellow over there, Lengthy?"

"Do you mean which party will win at the polls?"

"Which man will win out of the present lot of likely candidates?"

"I should say, out of the present lot of likely candidates—nobody," said Longworth. "This is March. From now till September is the time of falling stars. The fellow who wants to know the planet that will stay must wait. Can I drop you in the Yard?" He had hailed a taxi.

"Thanks, I'll walk," Youghall said; "I like this clean, wet wind."

He turned westward along Pall Mall, still alive and moving with the gleaming rainy lights of the spring night, though pedestrians were few. At the first pillar-box he stopped, unbuttoned his overcoat and took a rather bulky letter out of the inside pocket of his dress-coat where, since he bestowed it when he left his rooms to dine with Manners, it had made more of a bulge than his tailor would have approved. The letter was addressed in his own handwriting to Miss Hilary Lanchester, at her father's house in Baltimore, Ohio. It was bulky because it contained another, superscribed to the Hon. Mr. Arthur Youghall at his address in Whitehall Court, in the handwriting of his sovereign. Once every fortnight, and no oftener, the Under-Secretary for War received such a missive, and always, without further examination, he re-addressed it to Miss Hilary Lanchester, at her father's house in Baltimore, Ohio, or wherever she happened to be. He had now been doing this for a period of a little over five years.

CHAPTER XXXI

FIVE years had gone, years full of storm and trouble and change from which England had swung clear, only, it seemed, once or twice through a miracle, aided, no doubt, by some dexterity. Anxious years in the Chancelleries of every capital in Europe, and in Washington no less than in Westminster. On that side of the Atlantic tides of industrial unrest beat and lashed and were calmed only to rise again; sectional interests threatened the validity of American foreign relations, and even the integrity of the Union. Under it all a short record slept in the books of the clerk of the town of Cascade, in the Algonquin Division of the State of New York, which, if the world had known anything about it, might have added a good deal to the confusion of the time. But it slept undisturbed; the world knew nothing. Spring after spring the horse-chestnuts along the side-walks shook out their leaves, and the pomp of summer passed, and the snow fell upon the roof and steps of the town hall; and the entry receded further and further into files little likely to be sought or searched. The old recorder, too, was dead; and the new appointee, a bustling fellow from a local newspaper, had no spectacles for the past. He hustled till he made the rate-payers put in a furnace, so even the box-stove was gone.

The thought of crying it upon the house-tops did visit the mind of the chief of the three who knew of the record; but Arthur Youghall, who, as we know, was close to Alfred during the whole of the ten

days that lay between him and the great Memorial Service in the Abbey for the King and the Prince, whose bodies were never found, had frequently opportunity to convince him of the impossibility of such a course. The arguments that Youghall used will leap into every mind, and need not be told. They were overwhelming. Above them stood guard his promise to Hilary; that alone sealed his lips. And presently the high rites and solemn duties of his return began to multiply over the act of that October morning like the clods that fall upon a coffin. The record was in the coffin—only the record—but by the day of his Coronation it lay in a grave that was filled. When he thought of it, it was to remember how safe things are in a grave, and to smile with the knowledge that he had a wife alive in the sun to be his one day, when they could see their way—when he should prevail. And soon after, they would make a splendid formal, trumpeted visit to the United States, and among the places of interest they would most surely see would be an old castle in the air that hovered over the ranches of Colorado.

And Hilary, from the moment that wonderful mantle of silence fell upon her with Alfred's letter the morning after, moved in it like a young abbess, and kept it unbroken by a whisper, even to her father. For that she had authority: often to herself she cited it, "Let me tell him." It was the last thing he had said. Alfred should tell her father when her father should be told and not she; but she could not let it be yet; she wrote and begged that it should not be yet. A kind of fear, and the commotion that rose in her breast, at the thought of such a tale to him, forbade that Lancaster should know—pushed the telling away until something should happen to make it necessary—or harmless. What could happen? Well, she

might die. She had dreamt sometimes of dying, and the world discovering then that she had been a queen under the statutes of the State of New York. As time went on her dying seemed the only simple or probable solution of their strange dilemma. She began in perfect health and very fair spirits, to imagine that she looked forward to it. But it was always, by some ingenious arrangement of circumstances, in Alfred's arms that she died.

Greater than the temptation to tell her father—which indeed was no temptation, so clothed was it with terrible possibilities of wider disclosure—was the temptation to tell Mrs. Phipps. The October days in the woods soon grew intolerably isolated and remote after that sudden chasm had opened in her private life, and before Alfred had landed in England Hilary was again with her beloved friends in Washington. After that first romantic burst of confidence in June, she had barely mentioned Alfred's name to the dear lady of the White House. Perhaps, as the matter grew in her bosom, it became less of a feather-weight to be tossed about in a letter. Even when the Prince began to see them often at Old Loon Lake, she spoke of him only as fishing with her father. Her letters held him at a distance. Mrs. Phipps, for her own peace of mind, let herself be deceived, until her girl came back to her in the autumn. Then, with an outward gaiety that noticed nothing, she soon mourned in private, for she thought she had learned enough to tell her that Hilary was hopelessly in love with the young man who had already opened Parliament at Westminster in his own person as King of England.

Happily, Hil would sometimes make a jest of it.

"Honey," said Mrs. Phipps to her one morning

among chifions, "I am going to marry you this winter."

The implication was that Mrs. Phipps could wait no longer to choose the trousseau.

"Not this winter, please," Hilary laughed. "Give me a little longer darling, for my mourning."

It was a note that sweetly mocked a little; there was no trouble in it. Mrs. Phipps was puzzled. "Can there be anything like a flirtation still?" she thought.

That was Mr. Phipps' last year of office, and their girl stayed with the President and his wife longer than usual, to their great satisfaction. Hilary had the newspapers for information, and her letters for more intimate support; but there was something in the wide staircases and spacious rooms of this house that had once been her father's, that also upheld her in those first few months. Unconsciously she sheltered in its great moral distinction; its walls rose about her a monument greatly achieved and splendidly assured. It was the only place from which she could look with any equanimity across the Atlantic, and she liked to date her letters from it.

A mysterious agency dropped quantities of London papers and magazines into her lap. She had to implore it to stop; the very postman was amazed. After the first number, which looked so odd in her bedroom, she had not the courage to open the Court Journal. The *Times* entered her circle wherever she was. But it had few readers in America of the corner she looked at first, the left-hand top corner of the eleventh page.

Youghall wrote to her with great regularity, copious letters, but all too discreet. She had to be satisfied with them every other week. Alfred himself never failed. No fortnight passed without his letter, and for long they were full of the Prince

she knew. Simple and direct, accounting and explaining, thoughtful and gently loving, she discovered again in his letters her Alfred of their wonderful romance. And hopeful, always confident and full of plans. Hopes and plans that were a little vague, based on the democratic march of the world, and that still in a year, were no more than hopes and plans. In a year he grew restive, and it was the day after the august ceremonial of his Coronation that he first wrote and begged her to come to England. "I am helpless here," he wrote. Perhaps he had not known, before that anointing, how helpless. "The disposal of our lives is with you." Many of her friends visited England every summer; some of them took houses in town regularly for the season. He could see her if she would come. They could contrive to meet. He argued and entreated, finally in affectionate but set terms he commanded her to come. And she kissed his letters and did not once dream of complying. The mere thought of such an enterprise, with its phantoms of claim and surrender, shook her like a leaf. And pride came in to uphold terror. She was her father's daughter, whoever else she was, and that was honour enough. She would be nothing in secret, and she had not the courage for any acting on that stage. She clung to her father sometimes with a timidity that touched and puzzled him.

So the time passed with them both. As soon as his strength permitted, the young King Emperor was prescribed his royal tours. India and the Dominions took natural precedence upon the programme of their Sovereign; the prospect of an American visit was remote. Still, he would come, he told her. Soon he would come, and then they would at least sit upon gold chairs together again and look into one another's eyes. . . .

That was after he accepted her refusal and stopped hoping, as he hoped for so long, that one day would show him her face in the crowd or the carriages as he went upon the formal duties of his office. Often, then, some curve of eyebrow or lip would send its owner home boasting. "He looked straight at *me*, and smiled." That trick of searching stayed with him long, but at last he lost it. She would not come; she was afraid of the King.

He had no great facility with his pen. His letters never failed or faltered, but they grew a little grey. He described functions to her, and gave her his opinion of public men. Hilary compared them with the published letters of sovereigns, and told herself that but for a little bit at the beginning and the end these, too, might be printed. . . .

Time passed. In the autumn of the Presidential campaign before the Phippses left the White House, Henry Lanchester had a critical illness which very nearly left Hilary alone in the world. He rallied—in the end splendidly; but it placed him, for the time, definitely out of the calculations of his friends in politics. The party put up Colonel Dickinson, and elected him, a man with a record of successes in Mexico and great independence of temper, but no tactician, the sort of President who decides his own future with his first message to Congress. Hilary went no more to the White House or to Washington.

She lived, however, as her father's strength returned, much in New York, where his business interests centred, and a good deal among those people in New York to whom every wave that washes over breaks in authentic gossip of the Courts of Europe. In the beginning the newspapers told her of the Boy King; as years went on the society weeklies chatted to her about the Bachelor King; and the time came when she was

to hear from a well-informed friend at a ladies' luncheon, choosing between a chocolate ice and a pink one—

"She has a house near Windsor, and they say it is quite well known. . . . Personally I have always believed it would be in the end the Hereditary Princess Sophia of Sternburg-Hofstein. She is known to have been waiting for him with a patience! Though, of course, her mother's death and her accession and all that, in these last two years, has made an excuse to put it off, which he, they say, has jumped at."

"Poor Sophy," observed Hilary; "I used to know her at school at Brussels. We still exchange letters at intervals. Not pretty, but a dear."

"Really? Well, in my opinion you are corresponding with the future Queen of England. But the—other—isn't pretty either, she's magnificent. Quite worth staying single for, the Countess Waldogradoff; and the longer it lasts the better she'll be pleased, I imagine. They say her influence is very much valued in her own country—"

"Why doesn't *she* marry him?" asked Hilary innocently.

"Oh, my dear lamb, she's no class to marry royalty! Besides, she's got a husband," said Hilary's entertaining informant, and turned from such painful lack of sophistication to her other neighbour.

"I see," said Hilary, thoughtfully.

She did not believe a word of it—not a word.

CHAPTER XXXII

No one in the Court circle referred more often to King Alfred's lonely state at Buckingham Palace than did the Princess Georgina, Duchess of Altenburg, or in more affecting terms. There seemed to her no reason why a Court should not also be a home, or based on one, and it was known among her intimates that nothing that she could do to make it so would be shirked, whatever the weight of responsibility involved to a woman by no means as young as she was. The Princess was the nearest and most suitable of King Alfred's relatives for such responsibility—she had one sister, Princess Anne, but an unhappy marriage had sent that lady into a High Church sisterhood, of which she had for years been Abbess—and Buckingham Palace contained many suites of apartments. And the health of the King so wanted watching. The venerable pile in Kensington Gardens would also have been much more convenient in many ways for the young Queen-widow than the residence selected; and the Princess Georgina, in spite of years of the dearest associations, would gladly have embraced the duty of giving it up. But she failed to receive any hint that such a sacrifice would be welcome. Her nephew had apparently no desire to turn his Court into a home, in so far as his Aunt Georgina's knitting would have that effect. He asked her support at garden-parties and at race-meetings—and her name frequently figured among those who had had the honour of dining, the evening before,

with His Majesty the King. When, so pathetically alone, he acknowledged curtsies at his Drawing-Rooms, her dignified grey presence was the first to bend before him; and when the Court gathered behind and the debutantes began to flutter past, she stood nearer than any other woman to his bowing figure. But the King jealously preserved his loneliness, even in the midst of his State-prescribed *entourage*, and domesticated nothing but his dog Tinker and, later, a kitten given him by his friend Arthur Youghall, the Canadian M.P. Tales were told of this kitten and the King's affection for it; of its flexible silver collar, worked in tiny turquoises, "I am the King's Cat." Not in any way a remarkable kitten, except for the fact, which hardly any one knew, that it had been born in Baltimore, Ohio.

Nevertheless, as time went on, the importance of the Princess Georgina inevitably increased. In addition to her natural prestige, she could speak with personal knowledge of the practices of four reigns. In those democratic days she became a kind of residuum of Court tradition, and an oracle whose voice was ever a faithful echo of the past. It was she who saved the State dinners from the cinematograph. Ambassadors flattered her, she was the personal friend of all Cabinet Ministers of the first rank, and was supposed to have more power than any one to "steady the King." He did sometimes consult her, and always profited by her advice.

An evening party in an historic house of Berkeley Square offered to Baron von Warteg the opportunity he wanted for a chat with the Princess. From her throne upon the sofa on the dais she gave him her hand to kiss, and he bent over it with the grace that never failed to enchant her in so definitely stout and middle-aged a person as the

German Ambassador. Graciously the Princess accepted the retirement from the sofa of her host, and Herr von Warteg obeyed the gesture which gave him a seat beside her. They talked of the warmth of the room, of Princess Georgina's recent influenza, of the daffodils in the Park.

"And we are living among events, is it not so, *Kaiserliche Hoheit*? The times are not dull. No, they are not dull at all."

"True, Baron. In some ways we could wish them duller—in others perhaps more exciting," the Princess replied, with a smile, which brought forth from the Baron a kind of purr of response. Old as she was, the Princess would always dance.

"This American affair now—you do not feel yourself the least vexation, I am certain, *hein*?"

"My good friend, why should any one feel vexation? They took the first step; we naturally responded to an overture so full of good feeling. Now they reconsider, *voilà tout!*"

"Yes, yes," the Baron nodded weightily, reflectively. "Yes. And—a bargain with the Americans—in my country we think it not altogether well. They are fickle, the Americans."

The Princess shook, ever so lightly, the fan of admonition at the Ambassador.

"You mustn't abuse our kinsfolk, Excellency."

"Kinsfolk! Ach, yes. Removed a little. And in a sense our kinsfolk also."

"Ah, yes, in that sense the kinsfolk of all Europe, dear Baron," the Princess replied sweetly.

Baron Warteg's sleepy eyes opened a trifle wider. He may have been thinking of the wrecking of a newspaper office in New York by a German-American mob the week before, as a protest against the treaty.

"Maybe, I do not say. But—in a way, too, such a good thing, that treaty. And on both sides

the *people* so pleased, is it not? I think one day you will haf that treaty. It is my opinion."

The Princess closed her fan.

"When I hear the voice of the people, Baron, I am tempted to shut the door. When I open it again they will be saying something else!"

"You are tempted—ach, so!" Baron von War-teg laughed a short, fat laugh, not calculated to disturb his dinner. "But this is the fourth time they have tried already. What two peoples want four times one day it will happen. The King should not be discouraged."

"Ah, Excellency, if all our friends only wished us as well as you do!" smiled the Princess, and turned not one grey hair. "The King looked well, did you not think, at the unveiling this morning?"

The unveiling was of a statue to Abraham Lincoln, to which the treaty was hoped to have given more than a sentimental significance.

"His Majesty seemed in the best of health. But he does too much, Princess. He is everywhere. It is splendid—he thinks never of himself—but——"

"And will you tell me, Baron, what there is to keep him at home? No ties—no interests——"

The Baron nodded sympathetically. This was a matter upon which the Princess would be less reticent, an old subject between them.

"If you could but see the private rooms at the Palace! So bare and barren! No little nothings scattered about that tell of a woman's hand! No *charm*, Baron."

"No sharm—no, Princess. It is that to me which is so sad also. Ach, well—— And the fruit is dropping, Princess. The fruit is dropping from the tree."

"Not yet *the* fruit, Excellency. I admit the marriages in Holland and in Norway——"

The Ambassador waved his hand. He had been

thinking of the Arch-Duchess Valerie and Augusta of Ritterstein-Walpeck, both married within the year, and Princess Georgina knew it.

"But my dear little friend Sophia——"

"She still hangs by the tree," stated the Baron, heavily pursuing his figure. "It is true. She still hangs by the tree."

"Now in this our hope is the same, Excellency. *Cartes sur la table*. Is it because of that hopeless affair with Karl-Salvator, or is it because of her uncle's wishes toward us?"

The Baron von Warteg leaned back on the sofa and poised his head so delicately on the end of his neck that it vibrated there for a second or two, with an effect of immense consideration. When it had ceased to shake he swung it round at the Princess.

"I think it may be some thing of bosc. But soon, too, that fruit must now drop. I naturally from time to time from Witterling hear, and he has said to me that poor girl for her *kinder* about her begins to ask. And so—if nothing happens in May——"

"Something *must*," said the Princess fervently. "Something *must* happen in May."

"That we shall see. The King, at least, will be in Paris. The lady will also be in Paris already. They meet. *Wir kennen nicht mehr*. But there are things which some one dear to him and close to him should speak to His Majesty——"

The Princess inclined her head. There was no one more close to His Majesty, presumably no one more dear to him, than she. They talked together for another five minutes, not more, and in that time spoke of matters of which the high privacy is seldom broken to the world. One word, perhaps, may be told. The Princess learned, and it was news to her, that the Arch-Duke Karl-Salvator had resigned the army. "He is now altogether become a doctor, that poor man," Warteg told her.

"Two castles of his into hospitals he has turned. The Pope has begun to decorate him. He will not now marry." It was all to the good.

There were, perhaps, not many matters upon which the desire of the Princess Georgina's and the Baron von Warteg's heart was united, but the marriage of King Alfred and the Princess Sophia of Sternburg-Hofstein was one. It was a simple course, an obvious course, a right course, and yet one that seemed so beset with impalpable difficulties that the end in view could not be said to be in sight. Alfred would never state his objection—could indeed have no objection—to the girl he had not seen since she was in pig-tails, yet with one excuse after another he had hitherto declined to look upon her again. If he had shown initiative in any other direction his aunt would have forgiven him, but less interest it was impossible to exhibit in the daughters and nieces of his "cousins" of Europe. He told her once he had married Britannia, and was very well pleased with his wife. When a whisper began to be heard about that odd, magnetic creature, the Countess Waldogradoff, the Princess was not displeased. She welcomed any influence, however indirect, that might lead the King to realise that there should have been a nursery in Buckingham Palace for at least the past three years.

At long last, however, Alfred seemed willing to take the first step toward the most desirable alliance—unless he proposed to wait until tots of six and seven were grown up—that remained for him in Europe. Knowing as he did, that the Princess Sophia with her aunt, the Grand Duchess Alma, was to spend the second half of May in Paris, he had not refused to fix the last week for his return visit to the President of the Republic. It was an immense gain, a clear indication, it was thought,

of the dawning of a new state of grace in His Majesty toward the duties and privileges of his royal estate. The meeting would at last take place, with as little formality as could be managed, and if nothing transpired *then* to encourage their faint spark of hope——

"But it will," said the Princess confidently. "They are coming to take me to supper, so we must chat another time, dear Baron. It will—I know it will. In the end, in these matters, the right thing *always happens.*"

The Ambassador was on his legs. "I gif you a German watchword, Royal Highness, for the time that is to us now left. *Sei nur brav!*"

He bowed low with this last word.

"*Geschelen!*" cried the Princess gaily, as she sailed away to supper.

CHAPTER XXXIII

It was impossible to say that a ball at the Élysée would not be acceptable to King Alfred as an early fixture of his week as the guest of the President, although His Majesty danced so little—seldom at home, and even more rarely abroad. His Majesty was known as the most serious young man in Europe. It was also generally understood that he did not dance very well; and there are positions in life from which it is not desirable to compete at a disadvantage. But the King would be charmed with a ball. “Of the two,” he said to Lord Despenser, his private secretary, comparing it with the equally inevitable gala performance at the opera, “it’s much the less likely to give one a headache.” And the visit was to have real attractions for Alfred. He was to be shown all—or perhaps nearly all—that had been accomplished in the science of aerial navigation in France in the last very eventful year in that direction. It was arranged that he should receive du Rozet, the marvellous du Rozet who stood still in the air. France was more than ever mistress overhead. At the banquet he was to speak of it in terms of congratulation that were none the less fine for being so simple, things he had thought of himself to say, though he did accept something from Despenser about the air offering the natural career for a nation of *beaux esprits*. He was to decorate du Rozet. It had not been arranged, but he privately meant, with all the grace and impulse of the

impromptu, to accompany du Rozet as passenger in some excursion aloft not yet outworn by familiarity. These were to be the pleasures of the visit, the thing apart from politics, which made it to him so specially worth while, but he held himself equally responsive to the ceremonials by which, he told himself, he earned his living. Already in his tours he had won a reputation for dependability in fulfilling the least important of his engagements. "The King never disappoints," was a common phrase at home and abroad. He sent no substitute and made no excuses, even in his own dominions. Paris certainly could rely upon him to look happy at the festivities in his honour, however they might differ to his taste.

Alfred was aware that at one time or another during his visit, the unpremeditated meeting with the Princess Sophia would take place. He accepted that, too, as part of the inevitable. In the last year or two it had become increasingly difficult to evade this contingency; it had buzzed like a perpetual blue-bottle in his life. On this occasion he meant, ever so humanely, to squash the blue-bottle. He had no illusions as to inflicting any distress upon the Princess Sophia in doing it. He was perhaps even better informed than von Warteg about the state of her mind and heart. For such talk, from Court to Court, the way is short, and already the world had drawn about the thwarted affection of the Princess Sophia and the Arch-Duke Karl-Salvator, a sentimental halo of fidelity without hope. King Alfred had first learned of it long ago, in a far land, one memorable day on the waters of an enchanted forest, and had never forgotten. He sometimes rehearsed to himself what he should say, when at last their respective tormentors should succeed, and leave him discreetly alone with poor Sophy to make better acquaintance. What he

could say would depend, altogether, upon what she was like; he had the vaguest notion what she was like. But what he would desire to convey, with every friendliness, would be something like this—

"Gentle cousin—because you *are* my cousin—we both know exactly what they are up to, don't we? And without seeming in the least to pry into your affairs, I want to take this opportunity of assuring you that nothing will ever induce me to allow you to be worried about it. I give you my word. And if you will allow me, as your cousin, to say so, I think he's the best fellow in Germany, as well as no end of a doctor. And my advice to you, dear Sophy, if you will accept it, is to do as I do. That is, tire them out."

As the time drew near he wondered, quite with a lively interest, whether she would be the kind of person one could say that sort of thing to, or whether from the beginning he would have to find phrases, and take precautions and manoeuvre, as had been for the last five years so much the tiresome habit of his life.

He was thinking about it again as he adjusted the blue ribbon of the Garter preparatory to the State dinner which was to precede the ball, thinking of it at that intimate moment before the looking-glass which, in spite of ministering valets, must precede such functions for Kings as for deputies. It would save a great deal of trouble if Sophia was that kind of person. There was just a chance of it. She had been at school, and at school, he said to himself, "she was a friend of my wife." She ought to be open, and frank, and simple, approachable in open, frank and simple terms. But the odds, he recognised heavily, were against it. He would almost certainly be obliged to fence and dissemble, and there was nothing he was worse at.

"I shall have to let her make most of the running," he counselled himself. "Otherwise she'll see through me in two seconds." And he remembered again the polite and dignified set of observations about the world in general with which he would convey to her that nothing was further from his mind than marrying any one in particular.

Catkin, who was still with him, had ventured to say at some point in his assistance, that this was the first ball His Majesty had attended in what might be called foreign parts since the occasion at Washington, "when I put out your Rifles uniform, sir." This time it was the ordinary evening dress of an English gentleman, and no pranks. Accompanied now by the symbols of the Most Exalted Order of the Garter, and the star of the Legion of Honour. Catkin was better content.

Perhaps it was Catkin's remark, helped by some reaction from the high, formal occasions through which he had been passing with such distinction and acclaim all the day, that suddenly filled Alfred's mind with a sense of the old freedoms of talk at Colson's Point, with the presence almost of Morrow, of Henry Lanchester—of Abe, good old Abe. It seemed to blow in at the long window with the spring wind, from anywhere, from nowhere, and it took such possession of him that he deliberately sat down to feel it, with a smile on his lips. Words came back—and the scent of balsam boughs, and far over the water the drifting leaves of birch and maple. . . . He sat, stirred and smiling, and when he came out of his reverie it was with a wonderful high beat of the heart. Through the dinner he was full of talk, with a restless, questioning eye; and when it was over he put on his gloves for the ballroom with a readiness which brought a sigh from the stout President.

"*Ah sire, la jeunesse—*"

It brought him back the tap of the old lady's fan in the White House, and her word to him, "There's only one time to dance, Prince." Well, he had danced, and perhaps he would dance again. Again, as he entered the ballroom to the familiar music of his own national anthem, he felt that former magic in his feet. It quickened strangely with the heady, rapturous lift of the *Marseillaise*. . . .

And what the world saw watching, under the sparkling diadems of the Semitic plutocracy, or the more tarnished and distinguished heirlooms of the Faubourg—what the world saw watching, all smiles and vivacity and exquisitely measured behaviour, was a tall young man, with a very dignified carriage of the head, *plus beau même que ses portraits*, accompanied by a soldier Staff splendid in red and gold and rows of medals conspicuous as the valour that won them. That was what the world saw, the privileged world, breaking into two to make an aisle of passage to the higher place roped off where the ladies of the Cabinet were gathered, and the Embassies, and where, for a little, all was ceremony and *empressement* and bows from the waist. The Bourbon ballroom never saw a scene more brilliant, or, when the young King of England led forth, in the *quadrille d'honneur*, the grey-haired wife of the President of the Republic, an occasion more moving. It was danced, the *quadrille d'honneur*, with marked precision on the part of England, with infinite grace on the part of France, and when it was over another impalpable fine strand had been woven in the famous understanding, stronger and happier as it was than ever.

So pleasant, so charming, so motherly was the

wife of the President that Alfred impulsively said to her—

"Do you know, you remind me immensely, madame, of my very dear friend in America, Mrs. James Phipps."

"Madame Fipe! But, sire, she is here now— she is with us to-night, that lady!" exclaimed Madame Berthou, all happiness. "In this crowd it is impossible that Your Majesty has yet seen her. But she is here."

"The wife of the ex-President?" demanded her guest.

"But, yes! At the last moment almost one has asked a card, from the American Embassy. Some part, she is with us," beamed his hostess. "Is it permitted that we send to find Madame Fipe?"

Alfred, with a bounding heart, expressed his pleasure and remembered his self-control.

"It will be delightful to see her again," he said. "Perhaps a little later in the evening? She may be not yet arrived."

It would indeed be delightful to see her again. It could not be three weeks, he calculated rapidly, since Hilary had been with her, with them both for their silver wedding, in the University suburb of Boston, to which they had retired. He would get, if he could only ask for it with discretion, a word of Hilary which would be almost warm from herself. But he must show no impatience. He set himself to describe to Madame Berthou some features of the White House at Washington, and on the whole to congratulate her that her own official dwelling should be much as the last Napoleon had left it.

Presently a murmured word from Lord Despenser conveyed to him a reminder.

"I believe, madame, that my cousin of Sternburg-

Hofstein is also my fellow guest to-night," he said. "I should like, if I may, presently to pay her my respects."

Madame Berthou nodded gaily toward a sofa opposite, but at an angle, and withdrawn in an alcove, about which all that he saw immediately was a confused flowing of skirts.

"Her Serene Highness is already seated quite near by," she said. "That is her Chamberlain now speaking with the President, and the German Ambassadors is just leaving her now. I will myself," said Madame Berthou, rising, "bring Her Serene Highness to speak with Your Majesty."

But Alfred was already on his feet.

"No," he said impulsively, "I will go to my cousin." To himself he was saying, "I'm not going to have her marched up in the face of Europe to be refused. That's *too* hard luck."

Madame Berthou glanced over her shoulder, and an A.D.C. brought his heels together beside them.

"Captain Ducheyne, then, will conduct you, sire," said she, with a smile that made her more motherly than ever. His Majesty was of an amiability, of a *désinvolture* most touching.

The famous orchestra was pouring its soul out in a waltz, the floor was full of whirling figures. Never had he seen so many short, black beards twirling furiously round and round. That was the thought that crossed Alfred's mind as he accepted the conduct of Captain Ducheyne toward the sofa upon which sat Her Serene Highness the Princess Sophia-Ludovica of Sternburg-Hofstein, in pale green satin, more or less surrounded by persons in attendance upon her. The Ambassador for Germany moved, with a gratified air, a small chair

which stood in the way; the Chief Chamberlain of Sternburg-Hofstein took a pace or two backward with the intention to efface himself. The world, the great world of Europe, delicately chatting and unaware, was on tip-toe, and every glance was charged. Then it all happened, so quickly—so quickly, that many would not believe their eyes. Three steps away the King was noticed suddenly to stop and grow pale. Then he completed his advance to the sofa, where he bowed to Her Serene Highness, and to the other lady seated beside her, a young lady of great beauty but white as death, with equal formality. There were those who said he addressed one sentence to the Princess; there were those who said he addressed two; but there was only one report—it flew—of what he did. After a bare minute he turned to the beautiful American lady, white as a lily beside the Princess, and said—for the second time in his life—"May I have this one?" With astonishment the Chief Chamberlain of the Court of Sternburg-Hofstein saw her rise and float away with the King upon the ballroom floor. With astonishment the Ambassador for Germany also, and perhaps not without astonishment Her Serene Highness herself saw them float away.

"I sink," growled His Excellency, "that His Majesty 'as mistook those two ladies. If not, it is an affront—"

He said it in French, to the secretary of his own Legation, but the pronunciation was the same. There was barely time for him to say this, and to turn about with the intention of bringing his support to the deserted Princess, when between him and her sacred sofa was suddenly thrust the person of a tall, thin gentleman with a straggling fair beard and a head like a saint in a window. Never-

theless he brought his heels together before the Princess in the manner of this world, and offered her his arm, which she took with the look of a Princess who dreamed and was very afraid. But she took it, and they, too, floated away.

"*Lieber Gott!*" said the German Ambassador, and lumbered away to telegraph in full to Potsdam.

Never was a dance so short as that danced by King Alfred of England with Miss Hilary Chester of Baltimore, Ohio, never, in the pause, were words exchanged less to be forgotten or reported. When Mrs. Phipps, from her corner among the dowagers, saw it happen, she felt the extremely guilty pang of the accomplice who does not approve, and found herself explaining to the wife of her country's Ambassador. "Oh, yes, he knew them very well in the Adirondacks, when he was just Prince Alfred." At the end of the dance she summoned all her fortitude, for she saw them approaching, and before many moments she needed it.

"I have told His Majesty," said Hilary, with a wonderful bloom in her cheeks and a proud light in her eyes, "that we leave for Genoa to-morrow night, but he says, darling, that he must come to tea with us at our hotel. May he?"

"Yes," said Alfred, "I must, whether I may or not, dear Mrs. Phipps."

He could not have put it, Mrs. Phipps said next day, in a way that was more characteristic. She said it in the act of opening the *New York Herald*, which, in its description of the ball at the Élysée the night before, remarked upon the somewhat unexpected presence there of the Arch-Duke Karl-Salvator of Heringen. Two days later that enterprising journal was the first in Europe to announce the betrothal of the Arch-Duke, with His Imperial

Majesty the Kaiser's full consent and approval, to the Hereditary Princess Sophia-Ludovica of Sternburg-Hofstein. The announcement added that the arrangement had long been pending, but that the religious difficulty had been in the way. This was now happily settled. The boys were to be brought up Catholics, the girls Protestants.

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CHAPTER XXXIV

THE King was sitting with the kitten on his knee when Mr. Arthur Youghall was ushered into his presence. It was eleven o'clock in the morning, the middle of his working hours. The French visit, just over, had accumulated business for His Majesty, and his desk was covered with papers. He had arrived from Paris only the night before. Notwithstanding all that awaited him, Alfred would see none of his people that morning until after Mr. Youghall had been and gone. Colonel Sir Francis Oldboys, His Majesty's Assistant Private Secretary, through whose room Youghall passed to get to the King's, looked up without enthusiasm to return his salutation. It was not a thing the Household altogether understood, that the young Canadian Under-Secretary, who was so plainly no courtier, should be so often sent for, while more important people were kept waiting. Of course, the King was keen on Youghall's shop; but that didn't explain his sitting up with him half the night at Sandringham, for instance, when he had seen all his other guests safely to their rooms. Youghall's was one of those outside influences so difficult to calculate; and the Court was somewhat disposed to show him the empty face of toleration.

A sheet of blackened blotting-paper on the floor, and an inky stream across the topmost page on the desk, told their own tale. The kitten, purring unrepentant under the King's caress, looked ready for another spring.

"Good-morning, Arthur. Sit down, will you?" Alfred held out his hand with careful regard to the equilibrium of the kitten. "Columbia has been in mischief again." His tone was rather pleased and satisfied with Columbia.

"I see she has. Can I do anything?"

"No, don't bother. Some of the fellows will see to it. Well, I'm back. Have you heard what happened?"

"You made a speech, sir, you dined, you flew, and you—danced," replied Youghall gravely, yet with a twinkle.

"I see you do know. Drop it, Columbia!" He liberated his thumb. "I wish you wouldn't 'sir' me in private, Arthur. You know how I dislike it. Couldn't you call me 'Cakes,' as old Longworth used to?"

"No," said Youghall steadfastly, "I don't think I could call you 'Cakes.'"

"Well, hang it, old chap, I must have somebody to address me in terms of humanity occasionally. And you are closer to me, Arthur, than anybody else in the world—you know you are."

King Alfred, still playing with his kitten, turned upon his Under-Secretary for War the happiest face he had offered to the inspection of any one since the day of his Proclamation. Youghall perceived it, and hardened his heart. There was something suspiciously like boyish cajolery in the King's voice.

"I could never stick Lengthy's doing it," he said. "Beastly cheek. But if it would warm your heart to know it, your health is drunk as King Cakes in half the pubs of the United Kingdom."

Alfred laughed delightedly. "Good!" he exclaimed. "That's ripping! I'll tell Despensar that—he's so stuck on propriety. Then—it is generally known, Youghall—talked about?"

"It is very generally known. And I'm afraid it's the talk of Europe."

"My one little dance with the wrong lady! If they only knew how little she was the wrong lady! I say—I consider the Kaiser has behaved awfully well. Don't you think so?"

"In the circumstances the Emperor is thought to have done the only possible thing. They say he ought to give Karl-Salvator the Black Eagle for saving the situation," Youghall said. "But—of course—he is in the worst sort of a temper. I believe he took it out of Lady Poindexter at his reception on Friday night rather badly. Poindexter has hinted that he'd like to be transferred."

Sir Herbert Poindexter was the British Ambassador to the Court of Berlin.

"I hope he won't do anything so silly. I'm sorry for Lady Poindexter, but they must realise by this time that Heinrich has no manners."

Few things apparently were of less consequence to His Majesty at that moment than the feelings of his representative in Germany; but Youghall shook his head.

"I couldn't help it, Youghall," pleaded his Sovereign. "There she was, you know."

The Under-Secretary felt his defences melt within him. "Any man in the circumstances would have danced with his wife," he said grimly. "It's easy to exaggerate the thing. It looked a little intentional, which, of course, it wasn't; that's all."

"I was able to call upon my cousin, and bring my congratulations before I left. I did all I could," Alfred assured him. "I never saw a pleasanter young woman. Her aunt wasn't over-civil. Aunts," he reflected, "often are not. But now that we've got through with all that, Youghall, I have some things to say. Come over here, will you? I don't want to shout."

Youghall brought his chair closer, and sat down in it with every appearance of resistance possible to a loyal subject.

"You obliged me extremely just now by saying 'any man would have danced with his wife.' I infer that you do think of her as my wife—you do consider her to be that."

"You know how the law stands, sir. But if you do, I do," said Youghall.

"Why should there be a special law for me!" cried Alfred passionately, throwing down his pen. "I claim the protection of the law that sustains every man in this realm, except those of my family, in his private affairs. I claim the protection of the common law, Youghall."

"For God's sake, not so loud."

"One way or another, Youghall, I am going to make an end of this. I have her permission. She started for Italy next day, but she left me free to act as I thought best. She agrees that we have rights as—as human beings, Youghall, which God gave us, and which no power but God can take away. I never supposed I could bring her to this, but I did. She thought we ought to wait, and we have waited; but now she's perfectly game."

Youghall sat further back into his chair, thrust his hands in his trouser pockets, recrossed his legs, and said nothing. The King bore it for a moment, and then remarked plaintively—

"I wish you wouldn't sit like that, Youghall. You make me think of the Treasury Bench."

"Sorry, sir," the other laughed with contrition. "But you had the floor, you know. Won't you go on?"

"Well, I've said it, haven't I? Somehow or other, we are coming out into the open, I and my wife." He folded his arms and looked very reso-

lute. "Somehow or other. I ought to say at once, Youghall, that I haven't sent for you to ask advice about that. I have made up my mind. But the great point, of course, is how, and there I expect your help."

Still Youghall did not speak. The kitten set itself to lick its master's finger, and he smiled down at it.

"Yes, kitty," he said. "Before you are a cat, England will have a Queen, I hope. I will, anyway."

"I know the difficulties," the King went on, "and you have always told me that I should never get the consent of the Government to my marriage to Miss Lanchester of America. But supposing I ask for the recognition of that lady as my wife? She is not a nobody, is Miss Lanchester of America. Supposing I just myself sent a notice to the *Times* to-day of that event at Cascade, with the dates? Who is to prevent me?"

Youghall, under a heavy brow, smiled at him.

"Why, the *Times* would," he said. "Yes, sir, I think the *Times* would."

Alfred started up, and put two or three stormy paces between them.

"You will please consider that we are not jesting," he said over his shoulder. The kitten, dislodged, humped her back upon the floor and yawned.

Youghall also rose to his feet.

"I was never further from jesting in my life," he said; and, indeed, he had not that appearance.

The King walked over to the window and stood there for a moment looking out. The clock that had measured the labours of Queen Victoria ticked in the silence, through which Youghall also, with bent head, stood and waited. Presently Alfred turned.

"I'm a bit wrought up, Arthur. Bad nights, and so on. You'il—forgive me. But I do mean what I say."

"I see you do, sir. And I am here to take your instructions."

"Yes," Alfred assented. "But also to help me to give them. That's even more important."

He flung himself again in his chair as he spoke. The kitten immediately re-established herself; and Youghall, too, resumed his seat.

"Look here, Youghall. Do you really think there would be such a row? Look here—if you consider history! Who was the mother of Queen Elizabeth? Just a plain gentlewoman. Who was the grandmother of Mary and Anne Stuart? Just a pretty barmaid. Why should the heavens fall, anyway, if I elect to marry a beautiful, well-born, wealthy American lady whose father has held the highest office in his country—and whom I have married already?"

Youghall's face wore the expression of one who had heard these things a great many times before. He ventured to indicate it.

"We've been over all that pretty often," he said. "It would be impossible to calculate the effect of such a disclosure upon the country in normal times—the disclosure either of the fact or of Your Majesty's wish to make it a fact. In normal times, while you might carry the Commons with you—the rank and file—you could expect nothing but the antagonism of your own order, the aristocracy, and the classes who support the Crown."

"The aristocracy marry whom they please."

"Yes, but they won't let you do it. To their eyes, you see, it's knocking two legs from under the throne," said Youghall, possibly with more force than elegance. "But we needn't consider what would happen in normal times, because, for

the purposes of this argument, the times are not normal."

"You mean——"

"I mean this. For the fourth time, as you know, sir, the Americans have held out to us the prospect of a treaty of arbitration, and this last time of effectual alliance. For the fourth time they have won our eager co-operation in advance. No one has done more than you yourself—and you know what has happened."

Youghall, as he talked, mechanically urged with his foot a revolving book-case, and sent it slowly circling.

"Their Senate has again cut the thing up till it's worthless," he went on.

"I know—I know. Go on."

"The point is, we are beginning on this side to question their good faith in this business. There's a feeling in the House—you can't be surprised."

"What are you getting at, Youghall?"

But the slow-spoken Canadian would make his point in his own way. He gave the book-case another push, and continued—

"I believe it's unjustified. I believe the American people honestly want the treaty—have wanted it every time. Every now and again they throw up a President who wants it too. And every time the will of the people gets caught in a steel trap in the Senate. The fact is—you couldn't convince them of it, but the Americans are better than some of their instruments. It stands to reason that the man they make their Chief Executive to-day represents them more truly than the institutions they set up at the end of the eighteenth century. And President after President, standing for the people, has wanted this thing done."

The King had taken up his pen and was drawing

a key pattern round the inky havoc the kitten had made.

"Yes, Youghall—but do let us stick to the point."

"I am sticking to it—or getting to it. I only say that, these things being true, we need not suppose, in spite of the jealousy of the Senate, or the hostility of the Irish and the Germans, assisted as we know it to be from this side—we need not suppose that the treaty is at all indefinitely postponed."

"Well?"

"But the irritation over here just now is such that not only would the chances for the consent you require be hopeless, but"—and in spite of himself Youghall's manner grew weightier—"the refusal would be couched in terms so wounding to American susceptibilities as to put the chances for any treaty whatever practically out of court for a long time. I know the Americans, sir, and it would be so. There are men in the House—there are men in the Government—who would not scruple to use the opportunity of such a debate, if such a debate were imaginable, to repay themselves for the rather humiliating position we have been occupying lately. I can only say that I believe the damage to what would be a long step toward the effective solidarity of the race would be very great indeed."

King Alfred listened, and in silence went on drawing his pattern. The kitten, watching on his knee, followed the motions of his pen with quick little movements of her head.

"Then what do you want me to do?"

"To wait, sir. To wait till we get the treaty."

"To wait for what will never happen. The *Times'* Washington correspondent said at the time that it would never happen. I have waited, Youghall. I will wait no longer."

A second of silence passed.

"Then what am I to do?" asked Youghall quietly.

Alfred threw himself back in his chair.

"My God! was there ever a man more helpless than I am!" he exclaimed. "Do you mind stopping twirling that thing round and round? I beg your pardon, but you've annoyed me. Yes, you have, Youghall; you've annoyed me very much. There are people who say both countries would be better without that treaty."

"Yes, there are; but I do not believe them."

"And if it did come to pass—what then?"

"If it did come to pass, in the great satisfaction that would be felt about it, what you propose, if you still proposed it, would be, though difficult, far more possible," said Youghall cautiously.

"If I still proposed it! To wait—you invite me to wait until this thing in the air, this relegated thing, this impossible thing should become an actuality! Are they all as cold-blooded in Canada as you are, Youghall?"

The day was raw and the fire had burned low. King Alfred went to it and stirred it with the poker. He stood over it shivering.

"A great deal of quiet work is being done on both sides that will not stop until we succeed," said the Under-Secretary. "And this last majority against in the Senate was very narrow. All we want is a President who is a bit of an idealist, a strong man and a stayer. We may get him in November—"

The King picked a piece of coal out of the scuttle, but it dropped from the tongs and crashed on the hearth.

"I think—I think you ought to put the coal on the grate, Youghall, and not leave it for me to do—"

There was a quiver in his voice. Youghall

dashed at the fire, and mended it. Then he met his King's miserable eyes, went closer and put an arm about him. So they stood for a moment.

"Thank you, Arthur. I'm all right. It's this everlasting fighting—and nothing there to fight. Always in the wrong, I am. That takes the heart out of a man, you know. You can go now, dear chap. Tell Oldboys as you go through that I shan't want him for a quarter of an hour."

He had gone back to his chair, and Youghall, at the sight of his face, remembered with a tightening of the heart how it had looked on his pillow in the tent in the garden at Ottawa.

"I will wait," said Alfred. "Of course. On what you tell me I can do nothing else."

"At all events till November," softened Youghall, but the King did not look up again.

He went out with so serious a face that Sir Francis Oldboys, to whom he delivered the message, felt indignant. This was the kind of worrying to which the King's interest in public affairs was constantly subjecting him. Ten to one the fellow had been talking the shop of his Department! Sir Francis pulled down his waistcoat and fumed again. Then he set himself, and the matters upon which he should take His Majesty's pleasure, to wait yet another quarter of an hour, while in the next room the King his master stroked the kitten on his knee.

CHAPTER XXXV

"It was perfectly delightful to see him again, Hil darling—perfectly delightful; and to be singled out in that way for a personal visit——"

"Well, considering, Mumsie, that he spent a whole week with you in Washington, he couldn't very well have done less."

They were sitting, Mrs. Phipps and Hilary Lancaster, in their *lit-salon* in the *Rapide* that glides out of Lyons about eight o'clock in the evening for the south. They had left Paris the night before, but Hilary would go no further than Lyons; no further, Mrs. Phipps suspected, than the easy reach of the Paris newspapers. All day long in their driving and sight-seeing her girl had been quiet and withdrawn. From her behaviour since the ball it might be supposed, thought Mrs. Phipps, that to dance with a King of England and to receive him intimately the next afternoon were things that might happen any day of the week. Yet Mrs. Phipps could not deny a certain uplift that would not allow itself to be talked about.

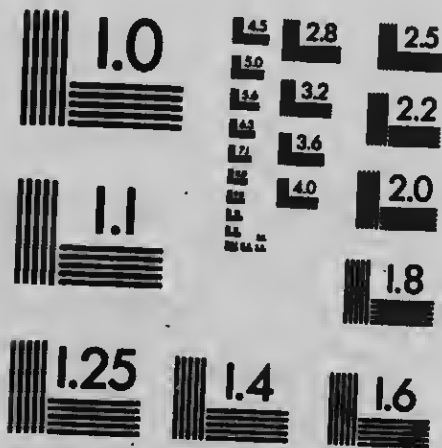
Now, in the pale grey interior of their compartment, a moment of expansion seemed to have come. The maid they were sharing had done what she could for them for the night and gone back to her own carriage; the berths had not yet been made up. They were sitting tiredly together after their long day. Hilary's hand had crept into her friend's.

"Things were different then. James and I have



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been forgotten for four years. It was nice of him," insisted Mrs. Phipps. "But I was going to say, Hil, that delightful as it all was, if I had realised what was going to happen I don't think, dear, that I would have dared to come."

"I don't see why," said Hilary unguardedly.

"Don't you, Hil—don't you? Can you remember his face when you and he came up to me, and not see why?"

"Mumsie, you are very prone to exaggeration."

"That's what you said when I warned you about Jiménez."

"Jiménez!" she cried scornfully. "Henrico Jiménez was a wretched creature who had lost more money than he could pay. The inquest showed that, darling. He didn't shoot himself for love of me—please don't say it, or think it."

"I don't say it, and I don't think it. I only say that it was another case where I was told I was very prone to exaggeration. Hil, why hasn't he married?"

"I didn't ask him, Mumsie. Do you think I ought?"

"They say nobody can understand it, and it's put down in some quarters to the influence of that Madame Waldogradoff. But I can't help thinking he looks much too nice and straight for anything of that sort."

"Appearances are often deceitful," said Hilary. "But I agree," she added, with a pang. "Oh yes. He does. P. L. M."—she traced with the tip of her umbrella the letters woven in the white coverings of the couch backs—"Paris, Lyons, Marseilles. No, I don't greatly believe in the influence of the Countess Waldogradoff."

"I'm glad these designing women seem to have no taste for Presidents. Hil, it was *most* unfortunate that I should have had one of my heads

yesterday afternoon. To collapse that way before he had been five minutes in the room——”

“You couldn’t help it, dearest. It was wonderful that you were able to receive him at all, considering what your heads *are*. He was very concerned,” Hilary said dreamily.

“Yes—wasn’t he? And so resourceful. I thought it simply sweet of him to recommend his own remedy, something he knew to be good. And to send the equerry off for it without a moment’s delay like that.”

“Yes,” Hilary replied, turning her head ever so little aside, “he is resourceful.”

“I shall never forget his standing there beside those pink repp curtains and writing it himself: ‘Neurotophil.’ ‘And if you can’t get it at one chemist’s, try another,’ he said to poor Captain the Earl of Man and Manx. Why Man *and* Manx, I wonder? Clanking about in all his glory after neurotophil for me. For one solid hour, poor fellow. But I must confess it was worth it.”

“It was, darling, wasn’t it?” said Hilary innocently. “And let’s hope he took a taximètre. What shall we do about the window? Can you stand it as much open as that?”

“Yes,” said the little lady, “I like it. So long as the door is quite shut. What I cannot stand is the awful smell of tobacco in the corridor. Well, darling, my conscience troubles me—really hurts—about deserting you as I did.”

“Try a little more neurotophil, Mumsie.”

“Ah, you may laugh. But when I think that I’m the only Mumsie you’ve got—— And that my flower may perhaps—may perhaps be planting herself in a garden where she can’t grow——”

The train was hurrying fast through the early summer night. Outside the lights of little towns passed, a river, a bridge. The motion was violent

and jarring; there was every reason for looking out of the window, and every difficulty in the way of speech. For a moment Hilary, her hand still in Mrs. Phipps', took refuge in these conditions. Then she gently withdrew it, and bent over her friend and kissed her.

"Now that you have said it, dearest, you will have a better night," she said. "And here is the what-do-you-call-him to make up our berths. If you think you can manage, I'll go and see where Rose has tucked herself to sleep."

That was all that passed. They arrived at Genoa next day. By the time they were settled in their hotel Mrs. Phipps was again threatened with the distressing headache which seemed to have been only half dispersed in Paris. Hilary put her to bed and sent Rose to Cook's for their letters. For her there was a telegram. It was not unusual. She and her father were the best correspondents in the world, but at major moments they always wired. Hilary opened the envelope without any special heart-beat. She had no premonition of what it was to contain. Purposely, when he sent her off to Italy with Mrs. Phipps, Lanchester had kept his plans to himself. She was absolutely run down; he was more than thankful that she wanted to go; and a hint of what was hatching would have stayed her, he knew. So his message came to her at the first time of her life when she was not thinking at all of her father. It was a word to her before his decision was given to the newspapers.

"Don't take a day off Europe daughter but daddy is once more out with the boys"—in the old joyous jargon that they knew, he and she, so well.

Her hands, with the paper in them, dropped in her lap, and as she gazed straight in front of her, her eyes slowly filled. Her father! All this

time— She pressed the slip with its perfunctory handwriting to her lips, and the tears ran over. And he had let her go—where she wanted so much to be—and now she was thousands of miles away from him. "Don't take a day off," he said, and had seen her sail, smiling, with a cabin full of roses, and had gone back alone, to this. She knew all that it had meant and would mean. A pang of disloyalty assailed her. She had never failed him before.

And then a thought came, as if the sun burst into her mind, and her eyes shone through their tears in that hidden light like any other stars.

"If—and if—and if— No one could say. No one ought even to think. But *if*— She would owe it, as any royal Princess would owe it, to her father.

CHAPTER XXXVI

MRS. PHIPPS was quite a politician in her way, but she would not consent to Hilary's returning to America before the end of August. She had got her girl, she said, and she meant to keep her. Mrs. Phipps pleaded Hilary's health, and what was more powerful with Hilary, her own. She thought herself over carefully, and could find nothing organic to urge, nevertheless the strain of "recent years," Mrs. Phipps said, had been great; she wanted just the rest Europe was giving her, and Hilary did, too. Recent years had done something to Hilary, something a little mysterious, something which her friend would never quite catch or determine, but which made change of scene and charm of old palaces just as necessary for her as for Mrs. Phipps. There were other grounds, too. Mrs. Phipps was quite a politician in her way and it was as a politician that she spoke when she said—

"My dear, we can't be any manner of use to them at present. They don't want us. In our country politics are the business of the men. What have we to do with drawing up a campaign against the trusts and the bosses? No. Miss Lanchester, travelling in Europe with Mrs. James Phipps, who has been more-than a mother to her for many years, is a great deal the most suitable thing for Miss Lanchester to be doing just now, while James is happily occupied in getting a solid Convention for Hel... at St. Louis."

"If you really think that——" said Hilary, weakening.

"My dear, you would simply be in the way among the lot of men he will get round him at old Loon Lake this summer."

"There's a hotel on Old Loon now," said Hilary, with absent eyes. "At Prince's Portage. Stage-coaches all the way from Cascade. All the way. Oh, yes, Daddy will make it his head-quarters for July and August anyway. And I'd love to be with him, though, I *wouldn't* care to—drive there from Cascade."

"He won't open his mouth till September, dearie. James didn't. You will be back for his first tour in the West. And then you will drive with him everywhere, Hil, and sit with me in a highly reserved box at his meetings. But I *don't* see you waving his portrait from a gallery, or leading some silly song about him, like that Gallegher woman at the last Convention. And among the wolves on the platform, darling, you don't go except across your Mumsie's dead body. Leave the men to the men."

"I have," said Hilary, with what her friend more and more often described as a far-away look in her eyes.

"Perhaps," she added, "it would be easier over here."

"The suspense, you mean, dear."

"Yes—the suspense."

So they wandered from one old yellow town to another, and Hilary lived upon her letters, and made of sky and sea and street and palace the framing of her dream. The statues in the gardens trooped obedient to it, and when her news was good the grape-vines danced. Always on Sundays she would find out the English colony's little church, and kneel there and listen to the surpliced chaplain pray to the "only Ruler of princes."

"Most heartily we beseech Thee with Thy favour

to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lord King Alfred." . . .

The first time it seemed strange, and her murmured "Amen" was as low as a marriage vow. But it soon became her beautiful and special duty, and she grieved when Sunday found them where no service was. Mrs. Phipps was a Churchwoman, too, and a good one, but she looked upon Hilary's unflinching attendance with—must it be said?—something like a jealous eye. Frankly, she confessed to herself, she did not altogether understand it. In every way to be desired, of course, but Hilary hadn't that sort of temperament. Mrs. Phipps worried a little, sometimes, seeing her start off in the rain, and once she came back with a cough. She was even getting too fond, at service time, of the dim interiors of the church of the country. Could it all be going—dread possibility—to end in something like that! There were times when Mrs. Phipps condemned Kings with all the vivacity of the Declaration of Independence.

Their news from home varied. At first the announcement that Henry Lanchester had consented to accept his party's nomination was received with applause, wide and sincere. The country rejoiced that a man so identified with her best traditions should again be willing to take office, if he could get it; and his party press teemed with tributes to his "intellectual honesty," his political acumen, his personal charm. But when the clapping had died away, a voice raised here and there qualified the approval, pointed to the "practical issue." The great practical issue was, of course, that the party should elect its man, but it seemed there were others, that might perhaps be called sub-practical issues, very important. Hints appeared that the party managers were not unanimous; factions drew off, other names were men-

tioned. One day, after they had settled for the heat in a villa at Como, Mrs. Phipps had a letter from her husband, in which he said—

"I expect you will be as surprised as I was to know that Joe Amundsen and Dimmock and Rafferty have been round to ask what I should have to say to the ticket. I wasn't over polite. 'Well,' I said, 'gentlemen, I think you ought to know more about me than that. As to my position I'll just tell you one thing. Henry Lanchester consulted me before he agreed to run. So far as I am concerned that's all there is to it. But for your own soul's good I may tell you that you never were further out in your lives than in coming here today. Lanchester can carry New England, I can't. It would take a wizard of a wise man to know what the Middle West will say to him after his putting food stuffs on the free list, but there I think with him and I'm not changing my mind. Apart from that the people prefer him to me a hundred ways. Go home, gentlemen,' I said, 'and get wise'—or words to that effect."

But Mr. Lanchester's political friends were not all so loyal to him as James Phipps. By the end of July it was understood that at least two other candidates would seek nomination from the Convention in September. Mrs. Phipps and Hilary, by the lake of Como, read their names with indignation.

"Who in the world," demanded Hilary, "is Barker Hutchinson of Kansas City? I never heard of him."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Phipps consolingly. "But we may safely leave him to James, darling."

Mrs. Phipps was confident that candidates left to James would vanish like snow upon the desert's dusty face. But time went on, and they did not vanish. Lanchester was the party's official selec-

tion, but rebel hordes waved pennons and put up leaders, and murmured among themselves.

"Is it possible that father would withdraw?" asked Hilary, with a failing heart.

"Not while he has James," Mrs. Phipps assured her.

Hilary asked a great many questions of her friend's riper experience, because she had a great many to answer in the letters that arrived, weekly now, from England. Some of them Mrs. Phipps was able to answer and some she was not. She failed, for instance, at all satisfactorily to indicate the scope of the President's powers in a struggle with the Senate or to define his influence as compared with that of the Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Relations.

"It's you who ought to know these things, honey," she declared. "You are much more lately from school than I."

But Hilary didn't know them with anything like the requisite exactitude, and had to confess it, a state of things which brought across to the lake of Como from a bookseller in the Haymarket three stout volumes, freely marked in pencil, among them Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, a little out of date, but still much recommended to inquirers in the neighbourhood of the Haymarket.

King Alfred's interest in American affairs had been marked since the day of his accession, and was natural enough, as the Princess Georgina often explained, since without the aid of America it was doubtful whether he would have been spared even to ascend the throne. But it was thought by many of those nearest him that some abatement of it might very well have been shown—at all events, some temporary abatement—upon the rejection at Washington of the treaty on which so much depended for the Anglo-Saxon future. It was thought, for

instance, not precisely the moment for His Majesty to be dining, as he did before the end of July, for the second time in six months, with the American Ambassador.

"They were uppish enough before," said the Princess Georgina.

But the King dined where he would, and if it was his pleasure to partake of his favourite asparagus soup from the gold soup-plates, with the eagle screaming at the bottom, of the American Embassy, there was no more to be said. After all, perhaps it was as well that we should show ourselves completely indifferent.

The ladies had curtseyed themselves out, and the Ambassador, the Hon. William Curtis Corcoran, in a chair beside King Alfred, had got to the end of the probable effect of the rain upon the young partridges, when the King, as he described it to Mrs. Corcoran afterwards, simply bolted into American politics.

"I am taking a very deep interest, Mr. Corcoran, in your coming Presidential struggle in the autumn."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Corcoran, looking gratified.

"Well, sir, so am I. It may mean a great deal to me, in a way which I might describe as personal. It may mean my head."

"So much as that?" exclaimed Alfred. "Oh, I hope not. That would mean too much to me, too, Mr. Corcoran. I think," he added gravely, "that they gave you your job the same year they gave me mine. I hope nobody will turn either of us out."

The American Ambassador laughed richly. He was a popular fellow, a man of the world, and got on excellently at the Court of St. James, though there were malicious publicists in his own country who said that the Stars and Stripes never flew in London except on the King's birthday. It was not the case.

"I should deplore either event, sir. But even the minor one gives me some natural anxiety. If the Republicans come in a lot of us will have to pack. J. B. Thompson would have, more or less immediately, something like six million pounds worth of places to empty, and my country's devoted band of ten Ambassadors would be the first to march."

"Six million pounds!" exclaimed King Alfred. "Appalling! I'm thankful they don't ask me to do anything like that. Then you must have studied the situation very closely, Mr. Corcoran. Perhaps you can forecast the result."

The Ambassador shifted in his chair.

"I'm afraid I've been too long away from home," he said. "And I never was much in politics anyway. J. B. Thompson has a good record as Governor of the State of New York, and his party are standing solidly behind him. We've come through a bad financial year, and there's a lot of unemployment, put down, of course, to low tariffs. The Democrats have had a good many years of office. All that, of course, is in favour of a Republican success."

"Yes, yes," said the King. "It would be, I suppose. But hasn't ex-President Lanchester a very great hold upon the country?"

"Henry Lanchester has been out of practical politics for eight years. That's a long time, sir. I think he will carry off the nomination all right——"

"Oh, you do," said King Alfred, with obvious relief.

"Oh, yes. His elimination would cost them too many votes. Tammany isn't the power it used to be. The party would be all shot to pieces. But I doubt whether Lanchester can win in industrial States like Pennsylvania and New Jersey; and, of course, as you know, sir, there are certain foreign influences, particularly strong in the State of New

York, which will be dead against him on account of his known attitude toward this country."

"Yes," said the King, smiling. "We have heard something about that. I don't know, Mr. Corcoran, what one ought to wish politically, or whether one ought to wish at all, but I am afraid I must confess that this election has a strong personal interest for me. I know Mr. Lanchester so well, and admire him so much——"

"Really, sir?"

"Yes—rather! I assure you he was almost the only friend I had when I was being patched up in the Adirondacks—except Dr. Morrow—and the best one anybody could have. I often feel that I owe him more than I can ever repay. So of course——"

"You want to see him elected," smiled the Ambassador, as the King hesitated. "Well, so do I. But I am afraid, sir, your cigar has gone out. May I offer you another?"

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE Ambassador was right; in the end Henry Lanchester received the nomination of his party by an overwhelming majority. Mrs. Phipps and his daughter heard of it in mid-Atlantic.

"What did I tell you, honey?" demanded Mrs. Phipps, waving the marconigram at Hilary in their state-room. "Did I or did I not say we might leave it to James?"

Whether or not it was wholly due to James was no doubt difficult in those whirling circumstances to decide and now impossible; but the fact remains that the triumph was a great and notable one, and launched Mr. Lanchester upon his campaign with no overt disaffection in the ranks behind him. Mrs. Phipps was true to her promise, and gave Hilary back in time to be photographed beside him on the observation platform of the first special that took him touring about the country. She was there for her full value, tall and beautiful and happily smiling, with her hand on his arm, there to be as she always had been, his solace and his delight. The gathering, applauding, listening world was glad to remember her again, somebody on the reception committee always had a wonderful bouquet for her. She was alone, she was lovely, and it was known that Lanchester had given her the price of the Silver Squaw in order that he might not be embarrassed with it. She became in her devotion to him almost too much a part of the handsome conception which the people for the second time were making of Henry Lanchester; and

his party managers had to advise him to leave her now and then judiciously at home. But on the whole they were very well content, and so was she.

The issue was incalculable. The Republicans abode by their early choice of ex-Governor J. B. Thompson, and squadrons of Big Business gathered ominously behind him. There were insurgents on both sides, who would commit themselves only in the great silent vote. A superficial view declared that Thompson was a man of business with a square jaw, and that Lanchester was a happy optimist with a long chin. Lanchester's character was exploited to his disadvantage. He was an idealist, had always been an idealist, witness his unpopular friendliness to England in the interpretation of the findings of the Boundaries Patrol Commission, eight years before. Certainly, later, the Hague had upheld the ex-President, but such leanings were dangerous; it would have been more satisfactory if the Hague had flown in his face. The foreign-born population was strangely excited against him. Neither German nor Irishman nor Pole nor yet the veriest Dago could tolerate the suspicion that Lanchester would favour the general purposes of his own race to the possible disadvantage of those which gave them their alien tongues. They had an active press, extraordinarily active, and there seemed to be more money about for electioneering purposes than could yet have been acquired even by the well-known industry of such colonists.

Putting down the Sunday edition of an unexpected convert to these views one morning, Lanchester said to Hilary—

"It begins to look bad for the treaty, Hil, even if we do get home."

She had not to ask which treaty. They had often

talked of the fate of the instrument that President Dickinson was leaving in coma, and of its chances of coming back to life in Lanchester's Administration.

Hilary knew her father's views, and they made the very tissue of her hopes.

"Why, father?"

"Well, I see they've pulled the *Mercury* over. I've been warned Truscott was shaky, and it was only a question of the price. Let every nation cast its bread upon the waters. We used to send American dollars to Ireland; now after many days we are getting them back—at least Truscott is. No, it looks bad for the treaty."

"You'll never give it up, Daddy?"

"I'll never give it up, but I may have to give up the hope of seeing it through myself," said Lanchester. "Which is a merely personal consideration, of course. It's only a question of time."

"Even as a personal consideration," said poor Hilary, "I think it stands rather high."

Then came the "facer" of the stolen telegram. The day after the Democratic Convention at St. Louis offered Henry Lanchester to the country as its undoubted choice for the Presidency, King Alfred of England sent his warm congratulations and best wishes to Mr. Lanchester by cable. It was one of those thoughtless things that the King would sometimes do before breakfast, without consulting anybody. It was only natural, as he said to those who remonstrated afterwards, when a friend goes into a big scrimmage, to buck him up a bit if you can. And it had that effect; it gave pleasure to the recipient and newly warmed his heart toward the young King carrying the unsought burden of the state to which it had pleased God to call him, of whom Lanchester had often thought with sym-

pathy as the years went on. There were telegrams from many sorts of persons, and Lanchester pinned them all on the wall above his roll-top desk; but there was only one from a King, and a morning came when Hilary, who looked at it often, found that it was gone. Neither the floor nor the waste-paper basket nor the rubbish bin would reveal it. Only Lanchester had any clue at all, and he but faintly remembered that a telegram had fallen from the wall to the desk when he invited Sullivan to write a note there, and that Sullivan had absent-mindedly been pleating a scrap of paper between his fingers as they talked. They had not long to wait, either for the apostasy of Sullivan or the appearance of the telegram in the *Mercury*. The head-lines were sickening.

"THE KING OF ENGLAND ELECTS
HENRY LANCHESTER.

"We understand that the Only Henry, as he girded on his armour for the fray, had the happiness of receiving the following cable from the young monarch over the sea—

"Congratulations on your nomination, and my wishes for your success."

"ALFRED."

"They don't give Alfred much of a say in home politics, and as he's an energetic young man he is taking an interest in ours, and in the prospects of England's best friend, Mr. Lanchester. Quite nice and kind and right, Alfie. One good turn deserves another. Will Henry Lanchester deny that he received this telegram?"

Henry Lanchester could neither deny the telegram nor ignore the use that had been made of it.

To the three party managers and the publicity man who was in his library before he had finished breakfast, he said—

"My dear fellows, don't sit round like mutes at a funeral. It's a knock, and Sullivan deserves boiling, but I think we can make good. This is what I propose to publish."

The publicity man fell upon the typewritten slip.

"The Associated Press is authorised to say that the version of a private telegram stolen from Mr. Lanchester's desk, as reproduced in the *New York Mercury*, is incorrect. The text of the telegram runs as follows—

"Warm congratulations on your nomination, and best wishes for your success.

"ALFRED R."

"The telegram was one of many from personal friends, and Mr. Lanchester regrets that the rat who sold it to the *Mercury* had not intelligence enough to copy it correctly."

His advisers demurred, but Lanchester insisted.

"It will be ten times as damaging if I look ashamed of it," he said, and the event justified him. The uproar was tremendous, but when it had died down it was not altogether certain that "Young Alfred's" interest in his friend's election was altogether unpleasing to the country. Of course neither Lanchester nor any other American had the right to be on such terms with a King. On the other hand, as the stalwarts pointed out, such a view as that was undoubtedly hard on the King. And in any case it was generally admitted to be commendable that Lanchester hadn't "turned Alfred down."

But the other side made the most of it, and it seemed to barb the arrows of J. B. Thompson when he told thousands of people—

"Lanchester is a dictator, and if you re-elect him to the Presidency of this country you will never get rid of him. He will cling to office like a leech till the day of his death."

There were many who saw it like that, and some, no doubt, who had visions of Perpetual President Lanchester sending the secret of his undying rule under seal to his possibly less fortunate friend on the throne of England.

Through it all "daughter Hilary" was tireless and undaunted. Her pulse throbbed with her father's. She knew every line of his face, and daily read the writing there of hope or of depression, carefully as he tried to hide from her the tale of the campaign when it bore against them. The newspapers counted the tucks on her skirts, and tried to lift her into the sphere of opinions. But for the ladies who came to interview her she had only one pleasant word.

"I know very little about politics, but I want my father to win because I believe in *him*."

Nevertheless, it gave their friends a watchword, and they used it. J. B. Thompson, grey and arid and certainly blameless, was running rather as the chemical reaction of certain measures might run. His worst enemy couldn't call him very human. Nobody particularly and personally believed in J. B. Thompson, unless it was his wife. But the enthusiasm of his party, when the sediment had drained off, was all for Lanchester the man.

It was a fluffy, foamy, noisy campaign beyond the common, but under it the people were thinking all the time, thinking not only of desiderata like economy and efficiency, but of such fundamental

things as probity at home and honour abroad. And when the day of decision came, because he seemed to give these matters a suitable place among his country's ambitions, for the next four years they elected Henry Lanchester.

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CHAPTER XXXVIII

"BUT, Daddy," remonstrated Hilary, "they're absolutely as good as new."

They were in the Blue Room in the course of a tour through the White House, planning how the appropriation for upkeep should be spent. It seemed to the President that the damask furnishings of that State apartment might be replaced with advantage. "I don't like the pattern," he said.

"Don't you? Dear Mumsie Phipps chose it; I helped her," remarked Hilary pensively.

"Oh, well, if we are going to be sentimental! Perhaps underneath we should find one that I chose myself," retorted Mr. Lanchester. "What about the curtains, Hil?"

"They seem perfectly fresh."

"Another disappointment! A new carpet anyway."

"I suppose we ought to have a new carpet," Hilary agreed. "We might try for the same colour."

"Now here," said the President, as they entered the ball-room, "we can revel. Those tapestry panels, Hil—really, you know; and such archaic, pretentious, frivolous things as these; quite unsuited to a democratic country. To the lumber-room with them!"

"Those two little gold chairs—you would banish *them!* Indeed, Mr. President, you shan't. I love those little gold chairs," cried Hilary. "I don't care about the tapestries; the Dickinsons put them

up and they're hideous; but the dear Phippses sat on those chairs, father."

"Then they must need overhauling at least," said her parent firmly. "But, Hil, this is depressing, you know. I had hoped to be led into a perfect debauch of extravagance, and to be obliged to remind you that you were spending the people's money; and you round on me like this."

"I rather like keeping things as they were. I've so much looked forward to seeing them again, dad—as they were. It's a darling, beautiful ball-room. But those Dickinson panels shall be razed to the ground; then it will be almost quite as it was."

"Well," said the President, looking at his watch, "I must be thinking of earning my living. Templeton is coming at ten."

Templeton was Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations.

"Father, is he—going to talk about the treaty?"

"I think he is going to talk chiefly about the claims of his son-in-law to be Consul-General at Paris," said her father; "but he may have something to say about the treaty if I encourage him to do so. He'll need some encouragement. The treaty is very sound asleep, daughter."

"Well, encourage him. You might give him the Consul-Generalship for his son-in-law and *then* encourage him," said the unscrupulous Hilary. "You know I consider, father, that the country has sent you here to put that treaty through. It's the only conclusion anybody could come to."

"Is it?" said her father grimly. "My lamb, if the treaty had been an active issue I'm afraid we shouldn't be here."

"But you have always said the people wanted it."

"They don't want it at election time; and a few friends have managed to make me look rather too

nice in a Court suit, Hil. Any sort of treaty sticking out of the pocket——”

“Court suits,” interrupted Hilary, “have no pockets—on the outside anyway. You are given buckles on your shoes and a sword instead; black velvet you are, and a cocked hat. And you carry it up your sleeve.”

“The hat?”

“No; that is worn under the arm. Your handkerchief, of course.”

Her father faced round upon her. “Do you know,” he asked severely, “that New York’s greatest newspaper to-day called you the Daughter of the Democracy—I omit the adjective; you are quite vain enough as it is—you, who this morning instruct your father as to the correct pocket in which to carry his hat when he goes to Court? How does a girl know these things! I am forced to believe, Hilary, that you have somewhere about you the makings of an anglo-maniac.”

They had reached the door of the library. A messenger passed them with the bag from the post office on his way to the secretary’s room. Hilary, with her eyes on the bag, forgot to laugh at her father’s pleasantry. The English mail should be there, an English mail for which, ever since the last, Hilary’s heart had been ticking with the clock.

“May I come in and get my letters?” she asked nervously.

“Do,” said he. “Read them here, if you like. I’m taking it easy this morning. Nobody before Templeton.”

Henry Lanchester’s lean person slipped comfortably into the revolving chair in which he had written his last letter from the White House eight years before, and which he was occupying again with, if anything, a deeper sense of responsibility

and a wider perception of power. He took from the top of a pile a letter with a red tag and began to read it. A slip hung from the letter, upon which fluttered plain in the handwriting of the President's private secretary the words, "and advances this argument." Hilary walked to the window, wondering who advanced the argument and what it was, and whether it would greatly affect her father's mind upon the resuscitation of the treaty of arbitration and alliance with England. As a matter of fact it had to do with an American railway loan to China; but Hilary just now had only one formula for the foreign business of her country.

The stenographer came in, learned that he would not be wanted until twelve, and withdrew. Spring scents drifted through the open window; down on the lawn a fat robin hopped among the fallen blossoms of a big horse-chestnut tree. Hilary stood looking at him. He hopped across a wider prospect than the White House lawn, a far, frightening prospect. Hilary would not see it; she was glad to watch the robin instead. It was likely, more than likely, to be for to-day. Her last letter had given her full warning. Sitting there in his chair, all unprepared and unaware, her father would presently be confronted by their great, their overwhelming secret, would become a party to it, not only as her father, but as President of the United States. And already he had so much to think of, her dear old father, already from morning to night he was followed by such a herd of vast contingencies. And now she—Hilary!—who had always tried to spare him, must bring him, in her very hand, truly the most dumbfounding situation of them all. Desperately sorry for her father she felt, as her glance stole over his lined face—just desperately sorry. The robin flew away. Vacancy on the lawn. Nothing to look at but the Prospect.

How long they were taking in the secretary's office in sorting out their private letters!

Presently Secretary Kennedy himself appeared at the door and, seeing her, retreated. Her heart came into her throat. Could it be that Alfred had written to her father and forgotten to put "Private" on the envelope? Could it be that Kennedy already knew? No, she told herself with a frightened flash of laughter, Kennedy would have fainted at the door.

The President put down the tagged letter, and took up his notebook, a thick, portentous notebook bound in leather. There would be time to enter the main points of his reply.

But his daughter Hilary, usually so tranquil in her movements, so still in her repose, and this morning restless as a canary, dropped into a chair at his side.

"Father dear, isn't it very desirable—that Mr. Templeton should know—just how strongly you feel about this question of the treaty?"

"Desirable from whose point of view—Templeton's, the Senate's, the country's, or mine?"

"From—from everybody's," floundered Hilary.

Her father regarded her gravely. "My dear, I can't help thinking you are a little obsessed by that matter," he said. "Why worry about it? Not good for you, my girl! Go and ring up Kitty Kennedy, and get her to play golf with you."

Go and play golf with Kitty Kennedy, and leave the President perhaps to commit himself to the view that the treaty with England might be consigned indefinitely to the limbo of Utopian politics!

"Yes, dad, I will. But do tell me—have you settled in your own mind your line about the treaty?"

"My line is, Hil, and always has been, that that

instrument, when it is made effective, will be the absolute political insurance of every nation that uses the English language, and the greatest power for good on earth. We know that in one very simple way—by the character of the opposition it excites. But whether—ah, here's the mail!"

Hilary sat motionless, mesmerised by the little pile on the desk. It was there—the big square envelope in the handwriting she knew so well! Her eyes followed it helplessly as her father took it up and broke the seal.

"Three for you, Hil. What a fat one from Westminster! If you were a political young woman I should think you were corresponding with His Majesty's House of Commons with a view to pulling off that treaty. Hullo! here's a letter from His Majesty himself. On the whole I'm glad he's got out of the habit of using the cable."

Hilary, with a hand that dragged a little, picked up her letters. She looked at the door and longed to get upon her feet and go—to any spot where there were neither Kings nor Presidents; her own room would be the perfect place. But she could not leave her father alone with the news in that letter. Neither could she sit still so near him while he read it. He had put it down for an instant to rub up his glasses. They would need rubbing up! Hilary rose and walked casually, tremblingly, over to the window, where she opened her own thick letter with the Westminster postmark.

"You'll be interested in this, Hil."

She would be interested in it!

She had opened the fat letter from Westminster, and it was shaking in her hand.

"It's really a charming letter; he seems genuinely pleased. You must read it. But don't leave it lying about. He sends kind remembrances to Mrs.

Phipps. Odd that there's no message for you. I suppose little girls don't exist officially over there. Well, I'm about due at the offices. I mustn't keep Templeton waiting."

"Father!"

"Yes, Hii? What is it? You know you mustn't keep me now, dear; I'm——"

"It isn't odd—that there's no message, father. I've—I've heard myself."

"Have you, girlie? Well, that's all right."

"And—and there's *another* letter for you, father. Here it is."

She held it out to him at arm's length, clinging to the window. They had kept the bond between them, Alfred and she; he was to tell her father, but at her good time and pleasure. This was his way of finding out what her good time and pleasure was. And partly because of her fears for the treaty, but chiefly because her heart refused to bear its burden any longer, she had brought herself to the decision that the moment must be now.

She stood holding the letter out and shrinking against the window recess. Lanchester crossed over to take it, looking at her through his glasses rather humorously. "Why, it isn't so exciting as that, is it?" he smiled, and stowed the letter in his breast pocket. "I'll read it when I come back."

But she had her arms round his neck. "No, no, father; no, no! It is—rather exciting. You must read it now—you *must!* I——"

He saw with amazement that her eyes were shut and that tears were raining down her face. She clung to him so, struggling with great sobs, but insistent—insistent about something. "Why, daughter," he said, with tenderness, and put his arm around her and put her into a chair. There

he stood helplessly, patting her shoulder. "Why, daughter, what——" As she did not speak again—he saw, indeed, that she could not—he took the letter out of his pocket. "Why, certainly, dear; I'll read it now, if you wish me to."

As he opened it Henry Lanchester had a flash of remembrance that it was a young man as well as the King of England who thus addressed him, a little oddly, through his daughter. Unfolding the pages, he sent an austere glance over his spectacles out of the window; but there was no counsel among the tree-tops. He looked again at Hilary. She had hidden her face. A sudden apprehension beset him; there was romance here! Romance, without leave, filled the room—threatened, as he looked at Hilary, to fill his heart. But how could a King of England bring romance to his house? There was none to abide that question. He drew a chair near to Hilary's, took it, and plunged into the letter.

As he turned the first page he put out his hand toward his daughter and Hilary's crept into it, and that was the only movement he made till the end. He read the last page twice, and still no sign. Then carefully he read the letter over again. Hilary, not daring to look, felt her heart beat to a slower measure. If she could have believed it would be as quiet as this! If she could have thought that this, only this, was to be the scene of her forebodings! Still her father made no movement, except to fold the letter, and when he spoke his words did not seem altogether for her.

"Dear fellow," he said. "Dear fellow." And after a moment, "It's the boy in the Adirondacks Hill—it's just the boy in the Adirondacks, come to great estate. We loved him there, didn't we? I loved him there, too, daughter. And now—this is

all very amazing, a very great matter indeed. But he's a dear fellow, girlie."

He was stroking her hand now."

Hilary sobbed, and in an instant she was in her father's lap with her arms around his neck. "Yes, he is, isn't he, daddy? Oh, he is! And it—has been—so awfully lonely for him, daddy—all these years! Awfully *lonely*—you know."

"Yes, yes, dear."

"Hasn't—hasn't—*hasn't* it, father?"

"Of course it has, my dear. Yes, yes; of course!"

"And he—he isn't strong—father."

"No, dear; not very strong, I'm afraid; but pretty well, isn't he, nowadays?" He was stroking her hair, but she had not yet looked up. "Wonderfully well, from all I hear; and everything on his side, my dear—youth, hope, and you! Think of your old crock of a father, and what a giant you and the doctors have made even of him."

The girl's arm crept closer about Lanchester's thin neck and a wet kiss brushed his cheek. "Father, I want to—I should like to—take care of him now. Don't you think I might? Don't you think I ought? No matter what——" She had lifted her head and was looking at him at last with her brave question.

Half unconsciously he took her hands from about his neck, as if he restored her to herself. "There's only one answer to that, daughter. If you ought, you may—no matter what. And I suppose—I suppose I shouldn't be expected to grudge you." His smile had just that hint of winter in it which comes in the smile of any father who is asked by anybody on earth for all that he has. "And now we must think," he added.

At that she started up. "Oh yes, father, you

must think!" Hope showed behind her wet lashes. She pulled a chair nearer and sat down, clasping her knees and bending toward him a face that was still very pitiful. "And oh, daddy darling," she told him, "if you could realise the blessed comfort it is that at last you *know*."

"I expect it is, daughter," he said. "These secret affairs are always wearing."

"And this was more wearing than most," Hilary said humbly.

"Naturally, daughter; that must have been so."

"It was a thoughtless thing to do—what we did, daddy. But if you knew how he hated the idea of Sophy Sternburg. And Heaven knows we meant to live on a farm."

"You didn't know, you couldn't have known; at all what you were doing, either of you," the President told her. "But it may be—nevertheless—" he added absently, "that you did no harm."

Silence came between them for a moment, and with it came great considerations and stood in the room. Henry Lanchester's eye, looking over his daughter's head, grew suddenly bright. He took a long breath, as if to make room in his heart for some familiar vision new come home. He sat quietly so for a little, the stain deepening among the furrows of his cheek, looking again and again at the letter; but a word escaped him before he began to question her which showed what thought was riding on his blood.

"England . . ." he said musingly. "England rocked our cradles, Hil, over here. Yes. And defended them."

Then he asked her for a detail here and a detail there, though there was little that she could tell him. Alfred had sent a scrupulous chronicle.

"He writes very sensibly. He presses for the treaty before the marriage. He thinks that it would be more difficult afterward. He is right. It would be."

"Then you—don't think our marrying—altogether impracticable, father?"

"How can it be impracticable when it is already done?" The President swung round upon her. "We have not to consider its practicability, thank Heaven! Nor do I feel altogether disposed," he went on, "to think too much of that side of it. It's true he's a King, but you, little one, are not precisely"—he smiled at her—"a beggar maid."

"You mean the Silver Squaw," she ventured.

"No," he answered absently, "I don't mean the Silver Squaw."

The matter seemed to grow, there in the room, too momentous to be discussed. Their talk was like the flying and settling of harbour birds about some great ship moving slowly, disregardingly, into port. The President, at all events, seemed to feel it so. He lapsed again into silence, and his face began to wear the impersonal look with which he fronted heavy affairs of all kinds. He hardly looked at Hilary, so detached, so busily constructive was the gleam in his eyes. It was as if, having lighted that torch, she might as well go out of the room. She could not long bear, poor Hilary! to be so lost, being new to the part of a bride blessed by politics, though not, in her happy case, by politics only. She sat through another moment and then got up a little unsteadily.

"I know, father, it's awfully important. Don't think I don't know. And you are President, and Alfred is King, and of course you both want the treaty above everything on earth. But,

father"—her voice quivered and broke—"I'm me!"

With quick compunction the President came over to her, and put his arm about her, and kissed her. "Ah, my dear," he said, "what should any of us do without you?" Then he held her at arm's length, proudly, for an instant, and looked her up and down. "And how long am I to have for the treaty?" he asked.

"I thought about six weeks. Alfred says he won't keep *you* waiting," she told him happily.

"Alfred! Six weeks!" exclaimed the President, with a glorious laugh. "I wish he had some of my committees. You will give me a year, please, your majesties. Yes, perhaps—in a year——"

A moment or two later the telephone bell on the private secretary's desk rang sharply, and Mr. Kennedy received a message. The President much regretted that unforeseen circumstances would prevent his keeping his appointment with Mr. Templeton that morning. Would Mr. Kennedy make a personal explanation, please, and postpone the interview to the President's earliest possible free hour next week? Would Mr. Kennedy kindly make a point in the meantime of looking up the docket of the Anglo-American Arbitration Treaty of the year before, with the particulars of the vote in the Senate on Article III, the particulars of the vote on the aliens' amendment, "and any other old particulars"—there was an extraordinary ring in the President's voice, Kennedy thought—"that might be available."

"So he's going to have a shot at it," Kennedy said to himself, with the receiver in his hand. "Well, he's the only man in the United States that can make it politics, and as the other side

is pretty well bound to come in next time anyhow——”

Then from the instrument came the small, serious sound of words not intended for the secretary's ear :
“*This makes a very great difference, Hilary.*”

“Wonderful influence that girl has with him,” observed Mr. Kennedy to himself.

CHAPTER XXXIX

ON a dripping morning in the following April three people of importance drove, one after another, to the north door of Buckingham Palace and were there discharged and received. Lord Caversham, of Bury, the Prime Minister, was the first to arrive in his motor, enter the lift, and be taken by a tall young man in uniform to the room in which the King usually gave non-ceremonial audiences. Then rolled up the carriage of the Princess Georgina, Duchess of Altenburg, the cockades of her coachman and footman all diamonded by the rain. She in turn ascended in the lift, and went along the corridor chatting with the young man in uniform, and was launched into the presence of the Prime Minister, to whom she almost curtsied by mistake. Last and almost late, Sir Bute Rivers, Foreign Secretary, hurried in out of a taxi, bringing a despatch-box, of which the young man in uniform relieved him, as he too was conducted to the room where chairs near the table were already occupied by the Prime Minister and the Princess Georgina.

They spoke about the weather, disguising, as such great people have learned to disguise it, their interest in anything more unusual than the way it poured in the night and thundered before breakfast. Only the eyes of the Princess, wandering circumspectly about the room, rested at length, thoughtfully, upon the despatch-box on the table.

A moment later another equerry entered. "His

Majesty the King," he said, and Alfred walked into the room.

His subjects rose to take his pleasure, and waited, with a wonderful grave deference of attitude and of glance, the approach of the slight figure. Who shall speak of that gesture of the heart toward the King? Very boyish still, he came to meet them, confident of their tenderness and their homage—for a thousand years the symbol of their race. And as they looked at him there out of their lined faces, wrapped in their own interests and conventions and personalities as they were, he was more than life to any one of them. Which was no new thing either, but as it had been for a thousand years.

In response to his aunt's curtsey Alfred kissed her, shook hands cordially with his Ministers, and said to Sir Bute Rivers: "Have you brought it?"

"Corcoran ratified yesterday afternoon, sir," said the Foreign Secretary, unlocking the despatch-box. "The ink is hardly dry," he smiled, and unfolded a document.

The King glanced at the signatures.

"I congratulate you, Sir Bute," he said; and then to them all: "Pray sit down."

He himself took the high-backed chair at the end of the table, facing the door. Lord Caversham, the picture of genial influence, sat at his right; the Princess Georgina placed herself affectionately at his left; the Foreign Secretary drew a chair under the lean and acute personality that belonged to him in line with hers. The despatch-box lay on the table; and the treaty of arbitration and alliance between England and the United States of America lay in the despatch-box.

The Princess said to herself that the King was looking better than he had done for months.

Nevertheless she took in certain signs in his general bearing with some anxiety. "He is going to be difficult," she murmured to herself. "Whatever it is, he is going to be difficult." She pulled the black veil, raised to receive her nephew's salute, firmly down to her chin and sat up very straight. Lord Caversham put one finger in his waistcoat pocket. Sir Bute Rivers swung a leg.

"I have asked you three to come here informally like this," Alfred began, "because I have something to communicate which I think you three ought to be the first to know."

A tremor passed through the hand and wrist which the Princess Georgina had laid, in its black kid glove, on the table. Her worst suspicion, a terrible foe to her peace, flashed through her. Alfred had not married in order the more conveniently, at the first propitious moment, to abdicate: Was the crown, then, at last to be thrown to the demagogues? Louder than ever they were howling, the demagogues, in the reign of King Alfred the Second. She did not dare to glance at the Prime Minister, who was giving his Sovereign a pleased and confident attention. Bute Rivers looked at the inkstand on the table.

"You, Princess, are my nearest relative. You, Caversham, stand to me for the country; you, Sir Bute, for everything outside it. That's why I've got you together like this."

A slight shade passed into the attentive regard of Lord Caversham. Princess Georgina's little finger, which had been restless, ceased to move.

"First, I wish to say a word about this treaty, not from the point of view of the Anglo-Saxon race—we all feel it's a jolly good thing for the Anglo-Saxon race—but from England's. Here I've got to speak with modesty, I know, before you, Lord

Caversham, and with care before you, Sir Bute. But we all know how things are with England. I'm not going to talk about the upheaval of the manual interest or the difficulty of getting money for any sort of war purpose. But"—he took a pamphlet from his breast pocket—"have any of you seen that?"

On the red paper cover in plain black lettering ran the title—

"WILL ENGLAND BREAK AWAY FROM THE EMPIRE?"
and underneath—

"WHY NOT?"

They considered it in turn. The Prime Minister smiled sadly. Princess Georgina uttered the word: "Abominable." Sir Bute Rivers looked as contemptuous as a man might in the presence of his King.

"I point it out to you only as a straw. But you see one hundred and eleven thousand of these straws have been sold; not distributed—sold at threepence. And it is written by Andrew Organ, the man who leads the Labour party in the House of Commons. Well, Sir Bute?"

A word was obviously trembling on the Foreign Secretary's lips. "Organ told me himself, sir, that in his opinion, if the treaty came through, this country would be more cheaply defended inside the Federation than out," said he.

"He must be an insincere sort of beggar then," Alfred replied, "to have written a thing like this."

"Electioneering, I fear, sir. Mere electioneering."

"*Mere electioneering,*" said the King, and looked at them, first one and then another. "Is it so bad as that!"

His Ministers had no answer ready. The Princess sighed.

"The First Lord was informed from Ottawa last night," remarked Lord Caversham pleasantly, "that the Canadians would budget a million for Air this year."

"Dollars?" asked Sir Bute.

"Pounds," said Lord Caversham.

"That's good hearing. But Canada has lately been doing rather more than the people will stand," the King said. "We don't want to see the Gordon Government turned out over an Imperial Defences appropriation."

"No, we don't," said Lord Caversham.

"You will perhaps wonder what my point is," Alfred went on, "now that the treaty is accomplished."

They did wonder. Princess Georgina turned upon him a face which said dutifully, "All in your Majesty's good time," but which also expressed immense relief. If he had dreamed of abdication he would not be making such a fuss about a treaty.

"The treaty is ratified. Sir Bute has told me that both the Americans and ourselves have had to fight the Continent of Europe to get it. It's a great treaty; it gives Anglo-Saxon affairs the benefit of business management, and it brings us all together against outside interference; but its enemies in the Senate have succeeded in throwing one or two clauses in certain circumstances under the necessity of interpretation. Sir Bute has kindly brought the treaty this morning so that, if necessary, we could consider those clauses."

"For my part," said Lord Caversham agreeably, "I've been kept in touch. Thanks to you, Rivers, I think I know what we might call the weak spot to which His Majesty refers."

"I am all too familiar with it," remarked Sir Bute; and the Princess Georgina bowed in a manner which said that she entirely accepted the situation, whatever it was.

"I thought you would say that," said King Alfred. He was still, Lord Caversham thought, extraordinarily youthful in his manner sometimes. "So we can get on."

He paused for a moment nevertheless, and seemed to take counsel with himself. Then the lines of his face grew firmer, although his lips were quite composed and pleasant as he said—

"That weak spot means that, in spite of all my friend President Lanchester has been able to do on his side—we know under what difficulties—and we on ours, the intention of the treaty in one very important particular will be dictated by the good will of the American people. And the effectiveness of that good will is and must be embarrassed by influences not friendly to us, which are only half American and which will, in response to suggestion from Europe, always attempt, so far as we can see, to give a direction to American foreign policy."

The Prime Minister nodded slowly. The Princess Georgina suppressed a little yawn, looked dreadfully ashamed and pulled down her veil more briskly than ever.

"I know you will agree with me that anything that can be done on this side to safeguard that good will ought to be done." He looked at them one after the other in a way that made it a question.

"By all means," said Lord Caversham.

"Everything in reason," said the Foreign Secretary.

"Anything that *I* can do," murmured the Princess. "Those international guild fêtes last

August—one can at all events just appear with a pleasant word or two——”

“Very well,” said Alfred. “I have determined myself to take a step in that direction. I am accustomed to arguments that deal with my marriage as a national asset, and lay before me the duty of cementing this or that European friendship to England. I do not say that such considerations should or shall dictate my marriage; but that is the aspect in which you may all properly claim to be consulted about it and that is the aspect in which I lay it before you. I hope to receive your approval of my intention to propose marriage to Hilary, daughter of Henry Lanchester, President of the United States.”

The Princess Georgina’s hand, transfixed on its way to her veil, fell upon the table. “*I feared it!*” she exclaimed, and with a despairing motion of the head threw the situation without reserve before the Prime Minister. All the safeguards of the Constitution went into his lap with that gesture. “Heavens, Lord Caversham!” she cried, as for a moment he did not speak, “don’t twiddle your thumbs! Tell the King he is mad!”

Lord Caversham ceased to twiddle them, looked very thoughtful, paternal, a little sad. Sir Bute Rivers sat restraining himself, shaking his foot from the ankle.

“I fully recognise—I think we all must—the admirable purpose which your Majesty has in view in suggesting this step,” the Prime Minister began.

“I don’t suggest it, Caversham. I’m afraid you must understand that I intend it.”

The Princess, with an audible “Oh!” lifted both her hands and dropped them again.

“Then we may take it, sir, that you have—er—

graciously sent for us in order that we may be informed," said Lord Caversham with suavity.

"Partly," said Alfred; "and partly in order that you, as my Ministers, may place before me any practical difficulty there may be in my way with a view to finding the best means to overcome it."

His Ministers, for the first time, glanced at each other.

"Perhaps, sir," said Sir Bute, "in a matter of such extraordinary importance, some opportunity for private conference—our colleagues——"

"By all means—as to details and so on—later," the King replied, "but I want to know, here and now, if you don't mind, what you two think. Please be quite open."

"Looking at your Majesty's proposal from the outside—as I understand it is your Majesty's desire that I should do—it would be considered, I fear, a subversive act by other Courts of Europe," said Sir Bute Rivers. "It would be thought to be laying an axe at the root of all monarchical tradition."

"I suppose you were bound to put that before me, Sir Bute. But I have no such respect for the remaining Courts of Europe that I feel compelled to make great personal sacrifices to retain their good opinion," Alfred told him. "What I care chiefly about in this matter is what my own people will feel. My people are my family. I want them, of course, to love my wife and to approve of my marriage."

Lord Caversham's thumbs were again slowly revolving. "So far as the Statutes are concerned," he said, "I believe that except for the religious disability there is nothing to prevent the Sovereign from marrying whom he pleases. The matter would necessarily come before Parliament only in the form of a vote for provision."

"Of that I should be independent," said Alfred. "I have my mother's money, and Miss Lanchester has a silver mine—or the price of it," he added, colouring boyishly.

"The throne of England cannot be bought with a silver mine!" exclaimed Princess Georgina, and took out her handkerchief.

"The throne of England is not for sale, Aunt Georgina. Perhaps, now that you have heard——"

But the Princess, with her unoccupied hand, clutched the table. "N-nothing," she succeeded in saying, "will induce me to leave this spot except your absolute c-c-command, Alfred."

"Then where are your salts?" he asked sternly.

She found and applied them. The moment passed, the triviality of a great hour. All great hours have them.

"The vote for provision would have to come," said Lord Caversham. "As Her Royal Highness suggests, you would hardly expect the people of England to permit their throne to be financed with foreign money, sir."

"American dollars!" murmured the Princess into her handkerchief.

"I don't know," said Alfred calmly, "why we should be so sensitive nowadays about American dollars. It was trying to get too many of them—or their equivalent—that lost us the country."

"I may suggest to you, sir, that the character and the result of such a debate might do more harm to international good will than the marriage might do good," Lord Caversham went on.

"I am always being put off with that!" exclaimed Alfred.

The Prime Minister slowly opened his eyes. "Put off by whom?" he may have reflected.

"It entirely depends upon the feeling of the

country. Parliament is a democratic concern. And I believe the people of the country would show any Government the way out that tried to snub my wife." He was very royal in his high-backed chair, as he said that. His aunt glanced at him with trembling admiration. Sir Bute Rivers sank from the Right Honourable the Foreign Secretary into the third baronet. Lord Caversham looked suddenly aroused, as if he gathered, for the first time, that he would be obliged to cope with something.

"Your Majesty," he said, "I cannot conscientiously lead you to believe that your proposal could be seriously entertained by any of us who have the honour to advise you. The Crown and all that belongs to it is too dear to the country, and the risk to the Crown would be too great. Such an alliance would be resented by the whole fabric of the aristocracy, upon which the English monarchy reposes—to what point I dare not ask you to look."

"Oh, Alfred," moaned the Princess Georgina, "give her up!"

The King smiled ever so slightly. "My dear Caversham," he said, "the English monarchy reposes on the hearts of the English people and nowhere else, and the whole fabric of the aristocracy may jolly well put its head in a bag. But I was afraid I would find your views still clouded by these old obsessions. I should like to persuade you that they belong to the political childhood of this country, but I'm afraid there isn't time. I take it they *are* your views—finally?"

"I fear that no reconsideration could alter them," Lord Caversham said.

"They are certainly mine," said Sir Bute Rivers.

"And mine," repeated Princess Georgina, not without a ray of apprehension in her glance.

"I thought they might be," said the King. "Now, I will tell you something else." He leaned forward and touched the electric button on the table.

To the inscrutable person in black who appeared he said: "Mr. Youghall is in my study, Bates. Ask Major Coningsby to bring him here."

CHAPTER XL

"It's still raining," the King remarked, turning in his chair to look out of the tall window, as they waited for Youghall to appear.

The Princess blew her nose for response. Lord Caversham, lost in his waistcoat, apparently did not hear. Sir Bute Rivers said, "It is," with non-committal air.

They sat plainly in opposing forces there in the lofty, dignified room in Buckingham Palace with the windy April morning dripping and storming on outside among the trees of the Palace garden—the King, young and confident, alone against usage and tradition, the high custom of his ancestors in the Princess, the pride of the Kingdom in Lord Caversham, the scorn of his fellow monarchs in the Foreign Secretary. There they sat, silent out of respect to him, ranged solidly against him in this thing that he wished to do, and only just convinced that their hostility must be serious, one thinking of the prestige of Royalty, another of his own great governing world, and another of the face with which he should meet the Ambassadors of Europe on the next occasion. And outside, but not too far away, roared the Commonwealth.

Alfred lifted his head and listened, as he always did to that sound, with a smile.

The door opened; the equerry walked in. "Mr. Arthur Youghall, sir."

The Princess looked around as Youghall entered,

and did not like the confidence with which he seemed to be restoring his handkerchief to his breast pocket. Little things have an extraordinary power to indicate. "Why, in any case, send for this nobody?" she asked herself.

But Alfred was, indeed, most incalculable.

"Will you sit here, Youghall?" said the King, indicating a chair near him, one a little detached from the group at the table. "I think you know everybody? I have asked you to join us in this informal discussion, because you are familiar with some of the facts that are involved, and will be able to correct my recollection of them if necessary."

Youghall bowed, first to his Sovereign and then to the little council. He took the chair and drew some notes from his pocket. His manner was deplorably Parliamentary.

"Mr. Youghall," said the King to the company, "is acquainted with the intention of which I have told you, and perhaps will be able to help us in considering to what extent it should be influenced by a certain circumstance."

Alfred was now speaking carefully, with the effect of remembering words already prepared. The Prime Minister was looking at him keenly. He had entirely ceased to twiddle his thumbs.

"You are all aware that I spent most of the summer and autumn of the year of my accession in camp in the Adirondack Mountains in the State of New York, undergoing a cure for phthisis. President Lanchester, then ex-President, and his daughter were living at their cottage on Old Loon Lake, near my camp. I had already met Miss Lanchester at Washington——"

Here Princess Georgina, as if at some overwhelming thought, raised her clasped hands and dropped them again.

"And I soon formed one of the greatest friend-

ships of my life for her father. I also became very deeply attached to Miss Lanchester. As you know, Doctor Morrow, to whom I can never be grateful enough, cured me. He did more than that"—Alfred looked at them very directly—"he made a man of me, of me who had been, I am afraid, very little more than a Prince."

"Alfred!" breathed his aunt. Was there no way of enforcing *lèse majesté* against a Sovereign?

"Hearing of my restoration, you in England, no doubt rightly enough from your point of view, took up the business of my marriage; and you, Princess, charged yourself or were charged with a mission to intimate to me what was expected of me, preferably in a certain direction. By that time I knew that there was only one woman in the world whom I wished to marry, and that it would not therefore be consonant with my feelings to marry any other."

"Believe me, my dearest Alfred, these difficulties have occurred to every——"

His uplifted hand stayed the torrent from the Princess. "Aunt Georgina, if this is really too much for you——"

"No, no! Oh no!"

"I recognised, nevertheless, that it had been made necessary for me to return to England, and I very greatly doubted if I should be able to prevail, at all events within a reasonable time, against influences which would be exerted to keep me here, or possibly against arguments which would be advanced to compel me to make the conventional Royal marriage. I decided to lay the situation and my plan for dealing with it before Miss Lanchester, and, with the knowledge she possessed of my feelings, to let her decide. I have now to tell you that she nobly consented

to marry me at once, and that on September fifteenth of that year, at the registry office of the town of Cascade, in the Algonquin District of the State of New York, she became my wife."

"Impossible!" wailed the Princess Georgina.

"No, Your Royal Highness," observed Youghall, putting, as the Princess said afterward with exasperation, one word after the other, "I happened to have business with Prince Alfred—as he then was—the same evening, and I saw the record the following day in the clerk's books. I have a copy of the marriage certificate with me here. The original is, of course, in Cascade."

Lord Caversham leaned forward. "What Her Royal Highness means, I take it, is not that the marriage did not take place, but that His Majesty is under a misapprehension in supposing that the lady is his wife," said he; "and in that I think she is supported by the statutes."

"I know precisely what you mean," Alfred said; "the Royal Marriages Act. Here it is." He opened a stout volume bound in time-worn calf, which lay upon the table. "'An Act for the Better Regulating the Future Marriages of the Royal Family. Anno Duodecimo Georgii III,'" he read. "I'm glad it was George the Third. I've always wanted to pay that fathead something back."

"Alfred!" his aunt could only moan.

"Here we are: This provides that the marriage of any descendant of that illustrious ass, Aunt Georgina, made without the consent of the Sovereign, 'shall be null and void to all Intents and Purposes Whatsoever'—unless he is twenty-five years of age and persists, and one House of Parliament consents, and so forth. That doesn't apply, but it shows that even then the matter was practically laid before the people. However, there

it is plainly enough. Null and void, with penalties for anybody assisting at such a marriage as prescribed by the Statute of Præmunire, made in the sixteenth year of the reign of Richard the Second. Well," said Alfred, with an extraordinarily equable laugh, "*they* won't hold any way, since I married in America."

"The provisions of the statute are no doubt antiquated," remarked Sir Bute Rivers dryly; "but as you say, sir, it is the law." The Foreign Secretary had drawn his legs under his chair, and was tapping about the table with a pencil. He looked oddly like a hornet.

"There is, I fear, no doubt about it," said Lord Caversham.

"Even the penalties for assistance," said Sir Bute, with an involuntary glance in the direction of Youghall, "would be found, I imagine, to be operative."

"I entirely acknowledge the assistance," said Youghall promptly, "though it was mostly after the fact. And I'll stand for the penalties."

"Be careful, Arthur," said Alfred, with twinkling gravity. "Your estates may be forfeit to the Crown, you know, and your person, please remember, placed at my disposal without the protection of the police."

"At any time, sir," said Youghall quietly.

"A curious situation, certainly," said Lord Caversham. "Connivance in an offence against the Sovereign committed—er—hum. But no doubt the Courts would be able to unravel it. There is, I fear," he repeated, "no doubt about the law."

The Princess saw hope as a star appearing. "Don't you see, Alfred, that it must be so?" she said, folding the hands of meekness under prescribed conditions.

"I am not married, you consider," said the King. "And the lady who married me?"

"If you are not married, sir, she cannot be," said Lord Caversham a little tartly. "It stands to reason."

"I wonder," said the King.

"It is a curious position, certainly," Lord Caversham said. "You, sir, are not married under the law of your country, and the lady is married under the law of hers. But that, if I may be permitted to say so, was her affair at the time——"

"No," said the King, with the first sound of anger in his voice. "It was my affair! I was in a rotten position, and she helped me out of it."

"That way of putting it does you honour, sir. But I fear the lady must look to American law to free her from her very difficult and embarrassing situation," said Lord Caversham gravely.

"Such things are so easy in America," breathed the Princess.

The Foreign Secretary had been looking at the copy of the marriage certificate. "She could obtain a divorce," he remarked, "from the gentleman described here as Alfred Wettin. A divorce, after all this time, for—ah, well, in legal language, for desertion—easily. There need be no publicity."

The King looked at his Foreign Secretary with an expression that was not pleasant; but he controlled himself and said in an even voice: "She will never obtain a divorce for desertion by Alfred Wettin. But I think we must make an end of this, gentlemen. I repeat to you that I propose to offer marriage to Hilary, only daughter of Mr. Henry Lanchester, President of the United States of America. I would like, for reasons of public policy, to do it with the consent and approval which you are in a position to arrange; and I ask you

now, with the facts before you, whether I can depend upon that consent and approval or not."

There was just a perceptible pause.

The King waited. Arthur Youghall leaned forward and waited also, looking at them all.

The Prime Minister replied: "I am deeply distressed, sir, to give you pain in a matter which so intimately concerns you, but I feel compelled to say that I cannot answer for the Government in the sense you desire."

"I support Lord Caversham," said the Foreign Secretary. "I can do nothing else."

The Princess Georgina only looked.

"Then," said Alfred, "in order to put myself right with the people in advance, I warn you that I shall feel at liberty at once to authorise the publication of the facts, both here and in America. If you choose to repudiate the marriage——"

"It is no marriage, sir, under the law of this country," said Lord Caversham, stroking his chin.

"It is a marriage under the law of the country to which I owe my life," said Alfred quietly. "And if you then choose to repudiate it——"

"Acknowledging our indebtedness, sir, which is greater than yours, we should have no resource but to repudiate it," said Caversham, as the King paused.

"The responsibility will rest with you."

There was again silence.

Alfred looked, almost with astonishment, at the demeanour of the people before him. It was immensely concerned, full of reluctance, but quite firm and unimpressed. He had trusted the wings of his imagination, and they had not brushed an eyelash out of place belonging to one of them. He had unrolled his great story, and they had put it aside as if it were a fairy tale. They sat,

stolid and unwinking, for what they saw an historic principle and nothing more. He had not moved them. He had played his last trump, and he had not moved them.

"The responsibility," said Lord Caversham heavily, "would indeed be great. But I fear, sir, it would rest upon you and the lady concerned."

At that Arthur Youghall, with a sudden movement, threw himself back in his chair and thrust his hands in his pockets.

"My position is entirely a moral one," said Alfred, but there was a hint of dispiritedness in his tone.

Lord Caversham was quick to see it. "Your attitude, sir, is unimpeachable. Your position is what the law makes it. So far as the marriage in New York State is concerned the lady could not be accepted here as your wife, nor could your children succeed. Under this statute, as you yourself recognise, you were not legally qualified to contract marriage without the consent of the Sovereign. I fear, sir, you have no—practicable—alternative."

"Oh, my dearest Alfred," ventured the Princess, "you must do what becomes a King."

He turned upon her a curiously bitter face. "And is that less," he said, "than becomes any decent chap? If it is——" He straightened his shoulders. An excited relative might easily have thought a burden about to fall. The clock ticked ten times while they waited for the end of the sentence that did not come. "You must forgive me for saying," Alfred told them, "that I find this discussion even more intolerable than I expected it to be. So would any one of you, in my place." Then to Lord Caversham: "You would repudiate that marriage?"

"It would be our duty to repudiate it. Yes, sir;

we should repudiate it." At the game of bluff the Prime Minister was perhaps the better man.

"Then perhaps," said Alfred, "more harm than good would be done by publishing it; and I may reconsider making it known. But I maintain my intention as I first laid it before you. I must ask you to understand that."

The King rose as he spoke, very pale, and the others with him.

Lord Caversham laid a hand upon his arm. "Forgive me, sir, but I beg you will also reconsider that intention. We should be false both to you and to the country if we did not oppose it in every possible way. Such an action on your part would be anti-Constitutional. It would threaten the very existence of the Throne."

Alfred shook his head. "I have nothing more to say," he told them simply, and turned as if to leave them.

Then spoke Arthur Youghall, leaning against his chair, which he tipped forward under him.

"I'd just like to add one word," said he in his deliberate way. "You all make out that His Majesty was not married to Miss Lanchester at Cascade, New York, because, as a cadet of the Royal Family of England, he couldn't do it without the consent of the Sovereign. Your objection, if the premises were correct, is perfectly valid and unimpeachable. But the premises are not correct. That marriage took place on September fifteenth at two o'clock in the afternoon. On September fifteenth the late King John and his brother were drowned at eleven o'clock in the morning. The person who married Miss Lanchester at Cascade, New York, was certainly the third Prince of the Royal Family, but he was also virtually the King of England—had been so for some hours when he married. So I imagine

you'll find the law won't cut the knot for you, gentlemen."

Alfred gave Youghall a swift look of astonishment, and then surveyed the opposing cohort.

He had seen the same expression on the face of Lord Caversham once before, when the Prime Minister heard an unexpected vote announced that sent him out of office. Sir Bute Rivers, from a bullying baron enforcing the authority of a sacred piece of paper, shrank again into the third baronet looking to the Peerage.

"Mr. Youghall would give us to understand," stammered the Foreign Secretary, "that it was His Majesty who married."

"It was nobody else," said the Under Secretary.

They stood for an instant looking at Youghall, who had closed his mouth, as the Princess said afterward, as if nothing more would ever come out of it.

The Prime Minister took a step forward. "Then, sir, we can only appeal to you, for the sake of the honour of England——"

Alfred looked at him steadily. Doubtless the Prime Minister might have been more fortunate in the name he invoked for his purpose. Lord Caversham's eyes fell. There was an instant of silence, and then it was as if the King had laid his hand upon his sword.

"Gentlemen," said Alfred, "you have taught me many things, for which I thank you. There is perhaps one that you may learn of me. The honour of England is mine—and mine is England's."

And it was Youghall the Canadian, standing by with folded arms, who found the buoyant word of reply.

"Surely," said Youghall the Canadian.

The Princess Georgina, for all her dismay, was

the first to respond to the new polarity of the situation. She threw up two crumpled sleeves of resignation before the King. "Oh, Alfred," she said, "if it is for your good and for England's, my arms are open to her."

The King kissed her. "As they were before," he said, with a funny tenderness.

And his Aunt Georgina through her tears echoed him: "As they were before. There is this to be said"—she addressed Lord Caversham—"she is my god-daughter."

"I admit the complication," said Lord Caversham, more, it seemed, to Sir Bute than to any one else. "I admit the complication."

Alfred left him admitting it. "I will notify the Privy Council to-morrow," he said. "And I need not say, gentlemen, that as to what I have disclosed to you this morning the public interest, as well as my own, demands your absolute discretion. I should like to see you later, Youghall. Will you lunch if you are disengaged? Good-morning, Caversham. Thank you for your patient attention. You, too, Sir Bute."

And so, having shaken hands, the King walked out of his audience-chamber, leaving Youghall, as he afterward reproached himself, to the lions.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for War was nevertheless sound and whole enough when he met his Sovereign for a private moment before luncheon. His welcome was ambiguous. Alfred approached and seized him by the lapel of his coat.

"You unthinkable ruffian!" he said. "You unspeakable brute! You have had it up your sleeve all these years! Why, in the name of my married majesty, didn't you point it out before?"

"There would have been no holding you," said

Youghall without excitement, "and, in advance, it would have shattered the treaty. Maybe more. You see that, don't you, sir? And I knew you wanted the treaty."

He was a slow fellow, this Canadian, Arthur Youghall. It must be admitted that he could wait.

The butler announced luncheon.

CHAPTER XLI

THE treaty had been signed at last in the first week in April of the year after Henry Lanchester came to the White House for the second time. It was not a perfect treaty, but it was a very powerful and suggestive instrument nevertheless. It lay like a great artillery piece on the field of politics, and many eminent persons, mainly of foreign extraction, walked around it in natural speculation. There were those who said optimistically that it would be scrapped before it was fired. Meanwhile it was as impressive to the world as any long-conceived ideal is apt to be when it finally takes shape from human hands. The authors surveyed it with no great excitement on either side of the Atlantic. There was the general sense of an old-standing matter of family business at last arranged, and the relief that follows that. A certain satisfaction perhaps, as well, in the rather magnificent spectacle of family unity which the event offered to outsiders, and in his own country an even greater pride in the President who had fought down the old fears and suspicions and through his personal influence brought Congress to his point of view. The triumph of the treaty seemed there to have even more a sporting interest than a national one, and from its mere difficulty added immensely to the popularity, which was rapidly becoming prestige, of Henry Lanchester.

"No other man," said more than one spokesman for the Union, "in the face of the corrupt interests

and the self-protectionists could have pulled it off."

But the President himself was of a very different opinion. "My dear fellow," he was reported to have said to one who congratulated him in those terms, "it was as inevitable as the Declaration of Independence. Next chapter, my dear man; next chapter."

And the quiet, free thought of his country registered its agreement.

There it lay, the great gun, brought into international position in the first week in April. And other weeks began to pass and nothing changed upon the face of the world. It was a little flat after so much anticipation. The great achievement began to shrink to the size of a pigeon-hole in the Foreign Offices concerned. Presently there would be the lightest coating of dust upon it. A little bickering even began over an Alaskan railway survey across a bit of British Columbian hinterland. . . .

Meanwhile the Secret was very well kept.

That little coating of dust, so early, so premature, was allowed to accumulate. Certain official organs of the continent of Europe were permitted to rejoice in the strong language used in Vancouver and Seattle over the Alaskan Railway dispute. While that tea-cup was seething, a distinguished nobleman, who had in his despatch-box the credentials of an Envoy from the British Court, arrived in Washington, made communications to President Lanchester, with the general purport of which he was already familiar, and departed without provoking any particular comment. The newspaper correspondents noted that the President and his daughter seemed to have become, of late, more inseparable than ever, that he was seldom seen anywhere without Miss Hilary now.

And then, one morning, without a word of warning, the world at large, and England and America at home, were informed by authorised communication, issued from the highest quarters, of the betrothal of King Alfred and Hilary, only daughter of Henry Lanchester, President of the United States of America.

For a day it was unheard-of, amazing, impossible. A plot—a plot of Henry Lanchester's—to establish an Anglo-American dynasty; a strange, most doubtful act of kingly derogation. All the voices of reaction called out at once and together there and here, here and there. They were sharp, sophisticated voices, but they had to cry very loud to make themselves heard above the wide acclaiming-chorus of delight that took no thought of politics, but only of the drama of the dear, common heritage playing about two who were high and beloved among their peoples. Just joy it was, and that great wisdom of the heart that will prove itself master of destiny in spite of all—just unconsidering joy that set Londoners dancing in Trafalgar Square, and somebody a-ringing that old bell in Philadelphia, whose notes carried across the Revolution.

And it was remembered, as indeed it ought to have been, how Prince Alfred had danced with his future bride at a June ball in Washington in the uniform of that unforgotten regiment, the Royal Americans.

Then, when the tumult a little subsided, a sober voice here and there said: "Why not?"

And a little later, when a certain far rolling in the air could be heard, it was perceived that the gun had spoken!

CHAPTER XLII

It was a wonderful night at sea, still and soft and starry. The engine of the battleship *Hengist* had slowed down until she was moving almost imperceptibly. The lights of the rest of the squadron, spaced behind, seemed not to move at all. At the end of a favoured voyage they were a little before their time. The arrival was for nine o'clock next morning at Southampton.

The *Hengist* glittered from every porthole, a leviathan she looked, all diamonds. On the quarter-deck, Admiral Lord John Beresford, in command of the squadron, explained the comparative strength of the navies of China and Japan to the Marquis of Courthope, the King's Proxy. In the cabin, Her Grace the Duchess of Dymchurch and Her Grace the Duchess of Cley, Ladies of the Bedchamber, General Otis, G.C.M.G., in conduct of the escort, and an aide-de-camp, were talking of the match as if they had arranged it.

Up from the hold swung luggage of all sorts and sizes. The bluejackets, piling it on the main deck, came and went in procession.

At the foot of the companionway Mrs. Sattersby, Bedchamber Woman, whispered with a maid. "She is really asleep?"

The maid nodded. "Peaceful as a lamb, ma'am. And under her pillow the prayer-book that was her mother's."

They looked at each other fixedly, and tears came

and stood in the eyes of the Bedchamber Woman and the maid.

In London the streets were packed with people out to look at the decorations. The night was flowerlike there, and the heart of that old cradle of the race was ever so stirred to romance. The King's bride was to be a June bride; so thousands of people thought it natural to wear a rose. On the great day, the day after to-morrow, everybody would wear one.

All tongues were engaged upon one subject. The policemen on point duty, if they had listened, would have heard many things dropped into the summer air:

"She's to be married from her own Embassy. The American Ambassador is to give her away. They say the pearls the people of the United States gave her are the absolute pick of the world. Even at that they couldn't spend the money. Thousands and thousands go to the International Seamen's Widows' and Orphans' Fund. . . ."

"Why didn't her father come?"

"Oh, well, you see he couldn't—any more than the King could go there. There are reasons for all those things. The President did come a little way—in a battleship with a squadron to escort the *Hengist* as far as Sandy Hook, wasn't it? Then she left under a salute to the British squadron. Rather fine, just for a girl. . . ."

"They say he fell in love with her last year at a ball in Paris," a girl said.

"Did you see the *Times* article? It was headed 'The Idyll of the King.' One simply felt there was nothing more to say. . . ."

"The Princess Georgina meets her at the station——"

"And *he* at the garden gate of the Palace—doesn't he?—the inside one. Oh, yes; as private as it can be."

"Will he kiss her?"

"I should hardly think so. Kings and Queens don't rush into each other's arms like ordinary people. It's a political marriage, of course. Nothing else would justify it. . . ."

Those were ladies.

A big man with a white moustache spoke to another on the steps of his club, saying, "War isn't the chief menace. We're getting together to tackle our common problems. The industrial revolution is adjourned for fifty years"—and he went on about his business.

Two others, held up at a crossing, were more discursive.

"Wonderfully little fuss," said one, "wonderfully little there's been. Thought the women, at least, would have been up in arms—all the Duchesses wanting to scratch her eyes out."

"Two of them have gone to look after her."

"Must be some principle, you know, underneath it all, unconsciously recognised—some principle of political gravitation."

"When you think of it in those terms it isn't so odd. He's the crystallisation of the political instinct over here. Lanchester's its crystallisation over there. That's all that brings the crowd out to-night."

"And just as human beings, you know, they ought to bear comparison very well. The President has got to stand for the American ideal, and so the people make him of their best; he hasn't really much relation to the machine. We take our Princes as they come and educate 'em; the Americans pick theirs and elect 'em. That's all the difference."

"A Sovereign doesn't marry a woman," said the first, lighting a cigar; "he—marries—a State. King Alfred might have married Germany. He might have married Russia. He marries America. It's more in our line—America."

"All the same, I wonder he had the courage," said the other, "considering that political initiative isn't exactly among our virtues. Or Caversham the common sense."

The policeman dropped his arm. The philosophers passed on. Their homes were in Addison Gardens.

Abraham Longworth and Arthur Youghall, walking arm in arm along Piccadilly, exchanged the last word that shall be reported.

"No," Youghall said, "the world is too small for new races, old man. You can't make one out of two hundred years and a few flavourings from Europe. We're one lot and, please God! nothing of so little consequence as a form of government shall permanently divide us, or our inheritance."

It was a great deal for Youghall to say all at once. He must have felt it.

"Even so," said Longworth. "And behold we are a great people, for we do as we like! We do as we daffodil please; and then it is sacred and splendid and lasts for ever. What was that you said about a Naturalisation Act?"

"It will be introduced by the Government before the end of the present session," said Youghall, "to safeguard the succession—as in 1706 for a lady from Hanover—in order to ensure 'that the said Princess be and shall be, to all Intents and Purposes, deemed taken and esteemed a natural born subject of this Kingdom, as if the said Princess and all persons lineally descending from her had been born within this Realm of England, any Law, Statute, Matter

or Thing whatever to the contrary notwithstanding. And she is a Princess," added Youghall.

"She is—a Princess of the Blood," Longworth told him.

And these faithful fellows, too, passed out of earshot into the indeterminate crowd.

Even that night the illuminations were magnificent. The hotels in the Strand surpassed themselves as usual. Behind one bright window stooped a robust but somewhat anxious figure over a suitcase, smoothing out its wedding garment. Many persons, or their valets, may have been occupied in the same way in London that night, but few with a better right. The figure was that of Dr. Henry P. Atkinson of Pittsburgh, and the large square invitation stuck in the looking-glass was addressed to him. Doctor Morrow had been unable to come; but Doctor Atkinson was there, athletic as ever, and going on to a Congress at Berlin.

"I wonder," said he to himself, lifting upon the bed a shirt that had been done up in New York at reckless cost, "if old Perry will be there. I'd like to meet old Perry, and shake him by the hand, and ask him what he thinks of British monarchs remade for export in the United States of America."

In another place Mrs. James Phipps fluttered and smiled, and remembered and wept; and the ex-President expanded a little as he thought of the *Hengist* and her attendants coming into port, and contracted a little as he thought of the half-naturalised vote of the State of New York and the chances——

"Three years," he said very privately to Mrs. Phipps in the act of retiring; "we've got three years—and that ought to be enough."

"Enough for what?" asked his wife.

"Well, my dear, enough to ensure the permanent

good will of the American people in the form of a vested interest—perhaps two or three little vested interests—in this Throne institution."

"I think, James, that you ought to be a little more choice in your language," said dear Mrs. Phipps, "when you are speaking of Thrones!"

Next morning the international festival waxed high, and men slapped one another on the back for no better reason than that they came from opposite sides of the Atlantic. Privileged and unprivileged, America was there to bring her daughter and rejoice. The twined flags floated; every wind brought the music of one nation or the other.

It was nine o'clock and the sun was shining; half-past nine and the sun was shining; ten o'clock and she was coming, and the sun still shone.

Far down Victoria Street the multitude saw the first sign of her in the two companies that marched before her carriage. Very well set up, they came on, doing her honour in their dark-green uniforms, the escort the King had sent from the regiment of his own choice, to bring her over the seas. Very well set up they were, and thought, no doubt, quite highly of themselves, simple men of the Imperial Rifles, stepping well and proudly. And on they came with their Colonel at their head, people waiting only till they should pass, when there came a voice from the multitude—

"Three cheers for the Royal Americans!"

Then a great roar went up and rolled about Westminster and Whitehall, which was heard distinctly in New York, in Philadelphia, and even in Boston, Massachusetts. And with it, to those who listened well, came the sound of an invisible marching. . . .

And through the midst of it drove a pale girl with wonderful dark eyes, sitting beside that

familiar and beloved figure, the Princess Georgina, just looking and timidly smiling at the people that were to be her people, while the Princess bowed and bowed. . . .

They sat together, in the evening, in a quiet room of the Palace where their high, encroaching world, with all its exactions and instructions, had left them for a little with friendliness alone.

There she sat, so unbelievably near him, so almost his own—their high state dissolved into that. There were roses in the room, and a green twilight from the garden—all that seemed to matter. She had come far to meet him there; she looked perhaps a little tired.

He regarded her very tenderly, and leaned toward her, and took her hand, and stroked it. "The Abbey is a beautiful place," he said; "and it belongs to us all. You will not be afraid, my dear love—to-morrow."

Hilary smiled upon her husband. "I know it is a beautiful place," she said; "and I know I shall not be afraid, my dear love—to-morrow."

The King kissed her hand.

THE END

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