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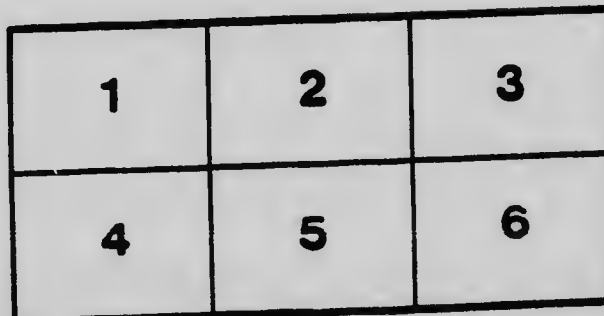
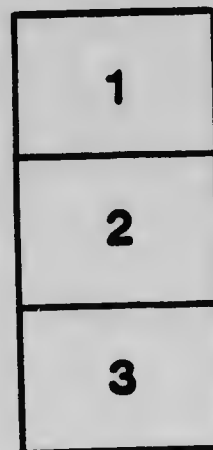
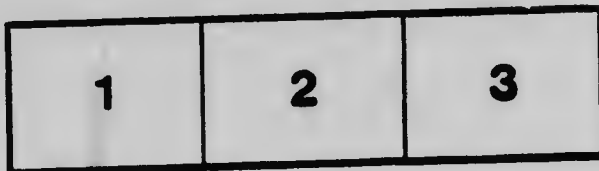
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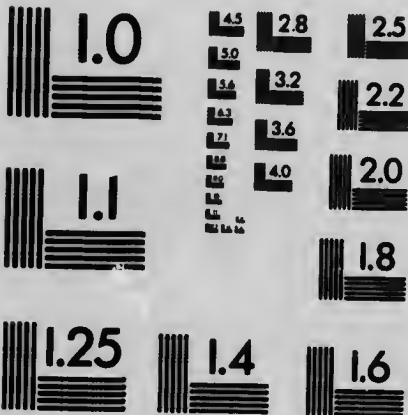
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PHRYNETTE AND LONDON



PHRYNETTE AND LONDON

BY

MARTHE TROLY-CURTIN



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HAVE you forgotten, father dear, all the wonderful stories with which you used to enchant our long country walks, when my tiny legs were unwilling, but when I forgot to complain of fatigue, asking you instead: "Et alors, *petit père*, what did the Princess do?"

I often promised you that when I would be "quite big and you quite little" it would be my turn to hold your hand very tight and tell you beautiful long stories with ogres in them.

Well, I am quite big now, much against my will, and here is a whole book for you, my dear, good, patient father; but I am still your little girl, you know.

MARTOUCHE.

(There is no ogre, just an ordinary husband.)

LONDON, 1911.



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I

WHO I AM AND WHY I AM HERE.

“GRACIEUSE, she does not like me.”
“You do not know, *mon petit ange*; with those English you never can tell whether they like you or not. Madame your aunt certainly is not demonstrative, but that proves nothing.”

We had arrived at Cromwell Road the night before from Paris, I and Gracieuse. Gracieuse had been, in succession and sometimes together, my nurse, maid, chaperon, foster-mother and watch-dog, during the seventeen years of my life—I shall be eighteen in September. As for me, Phrynette, you will get to know me by-and-by, and perhaps, like my Aunt Barbara, you will not like me.

Gracieuse may say to the contrary, but I know my Aunt Barbara has taken me *en grippe*. I can feel whether I please or not, even where English people are concerned. I knew a few of them in Paris, and underneath their “Englishism” they are precisely much as we are.

But then those English whom I knew in Paris were *petit père*'s friends, and perhaps not so English as the others here. *Petit père*'s friends somehow never did seem to have any nationality. They were all artists.

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Petit père is dead. He died three months ago : that's why I am here. I won't say much about his death, but I feel as if I could never forgive Gracieuse and the doctors for pulling me through when I had meningitis. I don't believe any other girl had such a father—such a dear, handsome, kind, clever father—or loved him as much as I did mine, or was loved as he loved me.

He was an artist and painted only pretty, fashionable women. Every pretty woman in Paris among actresses, *femmes du monde* and others, has sat for *petit père*. He never painted ugly old things, even when they were duchesses or bankers' wives. He said he could afford to choose his sitters. I think he was rich, because we had such a lovely flat, and Doucet made all my frocks. And certainly father had a very brilliant, subtle brush, like your Sargent here ; only he was more conscientious. Perhaps he took his public more seriously. Or, is it that it is only a Frenchman who knows and loves woman well enough to be her ideal *portraitiste* ? *Petit père* painted women caressingly, if I may say so.

However, I don't want you to think of him as the typical Frenchman—the Frenchman of your comic papers with the disgraceful neckties and hair cut *en brosse*. My father was very much like that M.P. of yours, Mr Wyndham (it was he Sarah Bernhardt thought so handsome, wasn't it ?) plus the circumflex eyebrows of Mr Chamberlain, but he wore no eyeglass, and had an amiable expression.

Petit père and I were always together, except when he dined at his club and came back late, but then he always brought me what he called a propitiatory present.

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However late he returned he would come to kiss me good-night, and next morning I would find something so pretty under my pillow. In this way I got such a lot of things—my pearl necklace, my silver powder-box from Lalique, the painted fan which they say belonged to Rachel, and lots of other sweet things.

In England, where, I am told, club life is a large part of a man's existence, if English fathers follow *petit père's* system they must find it ruinous, with the amount of daughters they all seem to have. I have always noticed that the English have a speciality for turning out girls. And yet they prefer boys, don't they? They are—at least they appear to be—so much proder of sons than of daughters. Now in France it is not so. If the parents have a preference at all, it is generally in favour of daughters who profit by it. I know *petit père's* father told me he was so much more pleased that I was a girl. He said girls were prettier, and better too, when they were in good hands; that woman was very much like an *automobile de luxe*, often capricious, and liable to run away from the right road. But then so much depended on the chauffeur!

I long to make the acquaintance of an English family and to see what the *rappports* between parents and children are like. In my compartment, coming over, there was a gentleman with his daughter, and they did not seem very tender towards each other. But of course you cannot judge a whole race by two individuals. They did not exchange ten words altogether during the whole time. I decided that this Englishman must be a general: at least he looked like one. He had fierce

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blue eyes, a moustache à la Kitchener, and a snorting voice.

I was more puzzled by the girl. She had a refined, well-bred face, and her hands were all right too; but she was dressed so strangely that I did not know what to make of her. She had a green silk blouse, with a lot of lace on, and horrid little bows everywhere. Then she had a sort of flat cap of mauve cloth, a white serge skirt, a long grey tweed coat like a man's, brown stockings, and the most horrible shoes I ever saw. If one might judge by her hands, her feet must have been shapely, but with those brown horrors the poor things had no chance. Why, even Gracieuse's feet seemed slender and dainty by their side. As for her jewellery, I wonder her father could let her wear such rubbish. I know my father would not have tolerated it for a moment. She had a lot of bangles, with hearts of all kinds and sizes hanging from them; necklaces with more hearts; a hideous swallow brooch such as are sold in our village fairs; and she wore her watch pinned up on her blouse, where a faint swelling indicated where her bust should have been. What class of girl was she, I wonder? In France I should have known, but here it seems more difficult to guess. She was such a contrast to the man with her, who was so well-groomed. Yet I am sure I heard her say "father" to him. . . .

Gracieuse has just called me "mademoiselle"! That means that she is cross, because I have been scribbling instead of going to bed.

But what is the good of going to bed? I know I sha'n't sleep, the mattress is so terribly hard, thin and

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full of lumps ; and there is no box spring like we have in our beds in France (Gracieuse says hers is just the same), and it feels as if it had not been remade for several years. Why, in the smallest and poorest of houses in France the mattresses are thoroughly remade at frequent intervals. How is it that English people who study comfort so much ignore that of sleeping on fluffy, elastic beds ?

And then I am so disappointed with Aunt Barbara ! That alone is enough to keep me awake at night. As the only child of her sister, I looked for a warmer welcome from her. I have not said anything yet of my mother, have I ? Well, I remember her so vaguely, for I was quite a *gamine* when she died. But we had a portrait of her at home—by my father, of course—so I know that she was very beautiful. She had the loveliest light auburn hair—at least it is considered lovely now—but I remember when I was a little girl it was not yet in fashion—it was called *carotte* then, and deemed a real misfortune. I used to suffer such impotent rages under the gibes of my little friends in my young days for having been born a *rousse*. How often then did I wish that *petit père* had not married into the tribe of the MacGuinnesses ! They were my mother's people—Scotch, as their name shows, of course. It seems by what I have heard that they all had red manes, and the men wore those funny short skirts—kilts, I think, they are called. Those little skirts were the only redeeming feature in my eyes. I used to boast of my bare-legged ancestors to my little friends and feel that, at least, if I were a *rousse* I was no ordinary child.

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I traced the family characteristic in my Aunt Barbara—that is, so far as the red mane was concerned. As for her skirts, unfortunately, they are not nearly so dashing as the kilts. They are just ordinary skirts, very ordinary indeed, and rather short in front—though that is no concession to the national costume, but simply because they are so horribly cut and hooked on all wrong. Who is responsible for Aunt Barbara's clothes, I wonder? I always denied that there could be such a thing as an English hat. I could more readily believe in French tea or London claret, and yet the concoction of my aunt's hats cannot—no, no, it is impossible—have been committed on our side of the Channel. I really think she could afford to be decently dressed and hatted. This house is a big, fine house, and the furniture must have cost a lot of money. It is heavy, solid, British-looking furniture, nothing like father's things, but good in its *genre*.

And she keeps six servants. Imagine six servants for one old maid! Why, we had only two, father's valet and the cook—and Gracieuse, of course, but then Gracieuse is not an ordinary servant. Before now I had noticed already that all the English people we met in Paris, Trouville, or Biarritz, had far more servants than French people of the same class with as much money. I think the English are rather extravagant.

The eldest chambermaid here belongs to the Salvation Army—the Salvation Army is an institution that takes upon itself the duties a sluggish State refuses to perform. It does sublime work, I am told, only the members will sing at street corners, and I don't see why

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decent hats should be incompatible with goodness, do you ?

But to go back to my mother, about whom I was speaking, I don't think *petit père* and she lived very happily together, and somehow, since I have seen Aunt Barbara, I understand many things. My aunt often tells me that she was like a mother to her younger sister, and perhaps she mentally modelled her on herself.

It was because of the MacGuinness hair that *petit père* married mother. They met at a ball at the English Embassy. Mother was sitting in front of a dull green *portière* and *petit père* said her hair was just glorious with such a background. And he fell in love there and then. He often remarked how careful a woman should be to choose a judicious setting. I wonder if such things would be noticed by the majority of men. I have my mother's hair, at least I had, until Gracieuse cut it, under the doctor's orders, when I had meningitis after father died. It is not quite close cropped, but it is still too short for any kind of *chignon*. I would much have preferred they had let me die rather than cut my pretty hair, but I was not consulted.

I don't want to know anybody, nor go anywhere before it grows again and I can hairdress nicely, though a bow of black velvet on the side of my bright locks looks rather piquant. Gracieuse says I look like a little John the Baptist. Good Gracieuse ! To myself I look like a naughty Gavroche.

The first impression was certainly bad on Aunt Barbara. I knew it at once when she asked me in a vinegar voice if this was the latest style from Paris. I

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had to explain that I had been very ill, because I had been so terribly unhappy. And then I broke down and clutched at her, and sobbed on her bony shoulder. If only she had hugged me and kissed me I could have loved her for ever. But she pushed me into an arm-chair, and said it was foolish to give way to nerves, and rang for tea. In any case my short hair may not be "ladylike," as my Aunt Barbara told me, but it is not so hideous as her front *postiche*, which does not match her back hair in the least. They call it "toupee" here, for *toupet*, I suppose. Now why, when people smuggle words from across the frontier, must they take such liberties with the borrowed article? Though, of course, in France we are just as bad. I remember how the Grants used to laugh at Biarritz at my way of pronouncing English when we played tennis together.

Under my window the garden offers me a sooty branch of lilac with timid, tiny shoots. . . . I picture to myself the chestnuts on the boulevards already gloriously green. Ah, Paris, hardly have I left you than I miss you so much. I feel the same kind of empty, painful tightening of the heart as one has when the lift starts on its downward journey. Will London always be to me such a frowning hostess? I know it is absurd to expect a big, old, important city to wag its tail like a good doggie because an insignificant little girl with red hair and black crape has come within its boundaries, but I am chilled. . . .

"Gracieuse, I am going to bed. Come and tuck me in."

II

CROMWELL ROAD

MY aunt's house is part of a quadrangle of houses, with a garden in the middle of them. All the people of all the houses have the right to go into the garden, so that there is not much privacy, and in summer if you want to take your meals on the lawn, I suppose you may not do so.

Just opposite Aunt Barbara's house is a chapel. It is the only picturesque bit in the whole place. The soot that makes everything else so ugly in London acts kindly towards all churches and public buildings. It is the most successful "faking up" work ever done. Hardy is a building finished in its hideous newness than London so gently lends it an antique cloak to hide its bareness.

There are half-a-dozen trees in the garden, with a bench underneath each tree; but you can't sit down just now, the benches are being painted, like that big, fine house at the corner, which shames all the other houses with its intense whiteness, and looks as much out of place as an European woman among the court beauties of an African monarch. However, they tell me that the other houses will be just as nice and clean in a few weeks, as they are being decorated anew for the spring. Isn't this an idea full of charm

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as well as practicability ? Now, we have our houses redecorated whenever we think they want it, or when the fancy takes us, and without consulting the seasons, but I like the English notion of making everything clean and sweet for the coming of spring. Behold ! here is the resurrection time of the year ; now shall our hearth be swept and our houses made shining with paint and gay with flowers. And every house puts on its Sunday clothes. Ah ! these Sunday clothes. That is another English institution. Of course in France our lower classes do also don their best attire and display an unwonted cleanliness on the day of rest, but it amuses me to see the English aristocracy airing their Sunday splendour at the church parade. Is it that they too have their best clothes on ? I don't know, but to me they do look *endimanchés*.

Here, in London, Sunday drags along, sleepy, heavy, stupid, like a long-drawn-out yawn breaking one's activity. Here, Sunday means that your bath is nearly cold, because you cuddle too long in bed, knowing what dreary routine awaits you downstairs. It means making a tempestuous entrance into the breakfast-room—in France we are content with one room to take our meals. On the whole, I think we are very simple in our material habits compared to the English people. Then on Sunday, though you have been told that nine o'clock is an hour at which any girl should be dressed, you rush downstairs still in your *robe de chambre*, and that gets you a long lecture on what is *comme il faut* and what is not.

I don't see what is wrong with my *robe de chambre*.

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It is a pretty, fluffy, white silk affair, with low neck and transparent sleeves. I always used to take my morning chocolate with father in *négligé*, and he never said I ought not to. He called me "Blanche Mine" when I was dressed like that. Blanche Mine was a naughty princess who had been metamorphosed into a white cat in a fairy tale father used to tell me, to make me good, when I was young. I am sure nobody ever told fairy tales to Aunt Barbara when she was young, if she ever was.

On ordinary mornings she appears at breakfast in a shirt and stiff collar and a serge skirt, with a horrid antediluvian morocco bag hanging from her waist, or rather, from her belt. She never wears any pretty *déshabillés*, loose and "comfy," nor any house shoes and silk slippers.

Aunt Barbara always seems ready to go out, or perhaps she is dressed up to suit the huge formality of the huge house. I am sorry for her. I simply could not be *sous les armes* like that from morning to night. Why, when she sits down in an arm-chair, I feel she can't really enjoy it in the stiff, high, old-fashioned contrivance she calls her stays.

As for her insisting upon my being dressed, I think it is absurd. It is not as if we had visitors or even men in the house. Imagine two solitary females standing on ceremony like that! For dinner I only wear a *demi-toilette*, because I am in mourning, but Aunt Barbara comes down in full evening dress, and she, who pretended to be shocked when I showed her a photograph of mine taken in Ostend in a swimming

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costume (just as everybody wears there), does not shrink from exhibiting her anatomy to Bambridge, the butler, or to anybody who may happen to be in the garden after dinner. Yet I know, if I were in her place, I would never wear a low gown, not that I am a prude, but why reveal one's penury?

To come back to those Sunday mornings—I am always making digressions—Aunt Barbara puts me quite to shame. By nine o'clock she is down in her purple velvet dress ready to start for church after breakfast is over. By the way, an English breakfast is really nice. At first I missed my thick creamy chocolate and golden *brioques*. But now I think I prefer bacon and egg and marmalade and tea. The tea is ever so much stronger than what we make in France. Gracieuse used to put one teaspoonful for a whole teapot, but here they put one teaspoonful per person, with an additional one *par dessus le marché*! Gracieuse says it is just like their extravagance, but I think tea must be cheaper here than in France, because even poor people also take tea, and if it were five or six francs a pound they could not afford it.

I go with Gracieuse to Mass at the Oratory, which is quite close, but even if it were far I would have to walk it or take a taxi or a cab. We never use the horses on a Sunday, nor does anybody here; for the poor brutes want the Sabbath rest too—or is it the coachmen who must be rested? As if it could overwork them to any injurious extent to sit on their box for an hour or two. Oh yes! coachmen in London have a really good time; they don't live in the house, and they do

CROMWELL ROAD

pretty much what they like ; and they are almost as sleek, as snug, as contented as their horses—in humbler imitation of him at the Guildhall. For just as royalty must be first, it would, I suppose, be treason—*lèse-majesté*, anyway—for any private citizen to possess a species of coachman surpassing the Lord Mayor's in splendour.

I wish the French *cochers* and all those who have anything to do with horses in France could see how well London drivers treat their beasts. It gives me a higher opinion of humanity to see the London horses. For I am afraid that we, as a nation, are shamefully cruel to animals. I remember how often father used to quarrel with carters and drivers in Paris for their sickening ferocity to their poor beasts. He would have given anything, I know, to be able to shoot those brutes (the men, I mean). But as that is not practical, I don't quite see what good his rages ever did, apart from the good example he set, for our French policemen won't interfere ; they just look on and grin. I was struck with that appealing notice on the top of the London 'bus : " We speak for those who cannot speak for themselves." Imagine this on a Paris 'bus ! Even supposing the authorities thought of putting it up, people would not take the slightest notice, except to make fun of the " eccentric " notion. But enough about horses, and *revenons à nos moutons*.

I like the Oratory. There are not so many chic women as at the Madeleine, where we used to go to twelve-o'clock Mass, but the men are splendid—neat and strong and quiet—and they just look in front of them without

PHRYNETTE AND LONDON

staring or leering at you. Everybody is very well behaved at church, much better than we in France. But then English people are always better behaved than we French. They look like nice children expecting a good mark. The women simply seemed *too good*. I did not see one of them looking at herself in her pocket glass, nor passing the powder puff over her nose behind her handkerchief, nor whispering to her neighbour about the people in front. They forgot their sex and behaved like angels.

After church Gracieuse and I come slowly back home. Mingled with the peculiar London smell of tar, which I am beginning not to perceive any more, comes from the basement the hot flavour of joints and Yorkshire pudding. I don't know if it is that my untrained nostrils cannot tell the differences of English cooking, but it seems as if the very same smell rose like a Sabbath incense from every English kitchen. Yet it cannot be that all these people should chance to have the same dinner! The streets are very quiet. Under the porch of the Natural History Museum the policeman basks in the subdued Sunday rays of the sun, and all the familiar emanations from his favourite regions, where reigns the Mary Ann of his heart (or, I should prefer to say, his stomach), seem in some mysterious way to contribute to his well-fed rotundity. As I passed I saw him inhale a whole joint from over the way. I inhaled some myself.

There is everywhere a depressing cleanliness on Sundays. London repudiates its dirt and picturesqueness, and every face has an aggressive and laboriously-

CROMWELL ROAD

wrought shine. You see men in top hats and frock coats and cheap ties pushing along perambulators containing Sunday-clean babies in their Sunday thin silk finery. All the young women you meet have bright-coloured blouses, with much lace, and invariably too low collars, supplemented, however, by rows of pearls and black velvet necklaces, their Sunday frizzled hair forming an unbecoming, hardening frame to faces which are not seldom really pretty. They hurry joyously along in the long, straight, soldierly strides peculiar to English women of any class, holding up their skirts awkwardly and displaying fine ankles and shockingly shod feet.

"Look, *mon petit ange*," says Gracieuse, "all these girls, they are either with young men or alone. You don't see any with their parents or grandparents at all."

"But," I said, "these are servant girls or shop girls, Gracieuse, and perhaps their parents live out of London, and they may be going to see them and spend their Sunday at home."

"Maybe," sighs my maid, "but I don't like it. A country where young girls are running about without seemly company! It is not a good sign of the people, *ma mie*."

The fact is, you meet hardly any family groups in the streets. I do not know if people die young in England, but, at least, you don't see many old people about. When you do see them, they are always forlornly by themselves and not accompanied by their children or grandchildren.

PHRYNETTE AND LONDON

After lunch I go into the garden. There is nothing to be done indoors. I wickedly (I did not know at the time it was wicked) attempted to play some Chopin, but Aunt Barbara saved me from my intended sin. "No right-minded person," she said, "plays the piano on Sunday." Yet I heard them play "Quand l'Amour meurt" in the house opposite, but perhaps they are foreigners. They are not French anyhow, or they would be tired of the tune by now!

On Sundays Aunt Barbara moves about in an atmosphere of spiritual saintliness. She passes no remarks about my French manners, and never scolds any servant. Not that it proves much real goodness either, because if one can avoid being nasty one day in the week, one can do so during the other six days of the week as well.

There are always so many people in the garden that I feel somewhat uncomfortable sitting by myself on my bench. Some nice girls pass by me in groups, talking and laughing together; one or two of them look at me as if they would like to speak to me. I would like it too, but as we have not been introduced, and as this is England, I shall be left to grow musty on my bench without ever getting to know anybody young, nice, and, like myself, alive.

I know all the people of the garden by sight. There are the Jewish girls next door, one of whom is magnificently beautiful and has the only good figure I have seen since I arrived. Her sister has just missed being beautiful too, but she looks bright and intelligent. They dress very smartly, but they wear too many jewels for

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girls of their age, and for the daytime. But how quaintly they do their hair ! It is pulled up very tightly at the back, and disposed in a huge mass at the top of the head. I saw the same style of hairdressing in a ladies' paper, and it was called the latest Parisian fashion ! Strange that I should never have seen it in Paris !

Another person I see in the garden is the mummified gentleman of the white house. But I don't like looking at him ; he is so uncanny. He is wheeled every morning on to the verandah in a bath chair by a coloured manservant. There he stays for hours, wrapped up in furs and shawls, without doing anything but just stare with fixed eyes into the garden. I picture to myself that he has been to India and come back with some mysterious illness—fever, or perhaps a snake bite, or maybe enchanted by some fakir or something horrid. He has the prettiest granddaughter I ever saw, though she is somewhat like an asparagus just now, with the thinnest legs and the shortest frocks imaginable. I am sure she has no mother, poor thing, for, although there are many ladies in the house, they can't be relations, because that little girl practises jumping over the back of a bench every day between tea and dinner in a manner to terrify the most indifferent mother on earth, and none of the ladies seems to pay the slightest attention. I am the only one in the garden to get hot and cold when the child comes nearer than usual to breaking her neck.

Then there is the pretty man opposite. I know it sounds silly in English to call a man pretty. But what word can you use for a pink and white face, the bluest

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of eyes, the straightest of noses, the roundest, smoothest chin, and an upper lip which, by comparison, renders Gracieuse's moustache worthy of a sapper? He wears the loveliest dressing-jackets. I know this because his room is just opposite mine, and he always comes to the window to get more light when he shaves, and I also go to the window to do my hair, so that one can't possibly help seeing. Those English windows have their curtains on each side only, so that unless you pull down the blinds you feel no sense of privacy at all.

Isn't it funny and nice? I know somebody, and it is the pretty man opposite. I feel so interested. I was in the garden the other night before dinner with Jim (my aunt's Pomeranian), and the pretty man came down and walked on the lawn, all by himself too, and every time he passed the bench I was on he looked in that peculiar way in which Englishmen look at women, not at all like our men do. You can't resent Englishmen looking at you. They do it so gravely, as if they were thinking about something else. First they look all about you, and their eyes stray on you only as if you were part of the scheme of things, an item in the landscape, but all the time you know better. It is not unpleasant.

We, the pretty man and I, had been in the garden ever so long, and I was beginning to feel the *fou rire* coming on, because we both appeared so unconcerned, and we both wanted to know each other so much—at least, I did—I am always attracted by handsome people. Jim came as the hyphen between us, quite involuntarily, poor thing. He was running after his

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tail in the silly way he has (though he is old enough to know better), just in the middle of the lawn, and then, as the pretty man passed—I can't think how it was, he was not looking in front of him—but there was a great yelp, and Jim came whining to me on three legs. Then the pretty man also came, looking very sorry, and he said, "I am afraid I have hurt your dog very much."

I said, "Oh no, sir, not at all."

And then we both laughed, because I said that as if it had been a question of my foot instead of Jim's paw. In France we always pretend not to feel when people hurt us in this way. Then he asked, "May I sit down and look at it?" And he sat down. I was quite at ease, because he seems such a boy, or rather, no, in his evening dress, he looks like a twentieth-century Rosalind. Only he stutters, which makes it rather difficult for me to understand all he says. I don't think he understood all my English either. However, we had not much time to practise understanding each other, because Aunt Barbara's gong started its diabolical noise. There *is* something diabolical in the sound of a gong, it is so hollow and uncanny; I much prefer a bell. So the pretty man stood up and said "au re-re-re-revoir."

III

JE M'ENNUIE

“**A**RE not some people snobs ?” I exclaimed, lifting my nose from the advertisement column of *The Morning Post*—they are always so full of joy and of surprise, those English advertisements.

“What people ?” snapped Aunt Barbara, interrupting her knitting and looking at me above her spectacles.

“Why, my aunt, listen then to this : ‘Wanted furnished flat for the season, really good address, reasonable terms, careful tenants, for Lady Day.’”

“Well ?”

“Well, fancy, Lady Day is using her title to get that flat cheaper, it is evident.”

“Lady Day is not a woman, you *petite sottie*,” and my aunt laughed in spite of herself. “It is a date corresponding to your Fête de l’Annonciation, if I remember right—a date chosen in England by general consent for universal agreements.”

It is good to see my aunt laugh, not that her laugh is particularly pleasant, nor what old-fashioned novelists would describe as a *rire argentin*, but it tells you of possibilities, it comes as a hopeful surprise to me, somewhat like the finding of a belated violet under a growth of nettles. I seize every opportunity of making her

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laugh, and that not so much for her sake as for mine—selfishness, you see. I can't live amidst depression, it is unhealthy, it is unnatural, and so I perseveringly tickle Fate in the ribs. Youth without laughter is to me like an April without primroses, but London is hardly the place where laughter comes to one naturally, especially to-day.

It is raining dolefully. It has been raining for a week, and it is cold and dark. This English Spring looks like an approaching winter.

“ Tandis qu'à leurs œuvres perverses
Les hommes courent, haletants,
Mars qui rit malgré les averses
Prépare en secret le Printemps.”

So says the poet, but if we love to listen to a poet we know better than to believe him. As a matter of fact, March has been doing anything but preparing the coming of Spring, whether “*en secret*” or openly. March, violent and ill-mannered, has simply been washing his hands of Spring and its debut. But then Spring is a rebellious child who declares he will not come because London frightens him, just as a light-hearted child in dainty garments is afraid of a dark coal-cellar, where not only will his joy be damped, but where his pale green frock will become soiled, and where his garland will wither.

“ What should I do in London ? ” Spring says unto himself. “ Would my smiles penetrate through the soot-laden windows ? And how would the Londoners welcome me if I went to their city ? Would they sing

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in the gladness of their hearts ? Would they dance and rejoice ? Would they live in the open so as to better enjoy my presence ? Would they now and then spend a day in the country the sooner to see my *avant-garde* ? No, no, I know too well my Londoners, they would do nothing of the sort to show their love for me. But the city men would just as before burrow their way to their office by subterranean routes—where neither Spring nor sun can book—in spite of the glorious embrace of my breeze.

“ Workmen would, as before, shun my balsamic scents for the effluvia of the public-house, and their wives would make my coming a pretext for a general topsy-turvydom, and offer me dust instead of incense. Society would not budge from the bridge table if I were heard knocking at their door, my arm full of daffodils. Poets alone would welcome me, but poets are in the minority; besides, have they not the fairy gift of beholding the beloved object whether distant or close ? No, no, decidedly, London does not want me, and so I will visit other lands where they clamour for me and where I bring glee. Let Londoners to their money-making, their beer-drinking, their dirt-scrubbing ! ”

And who can blame Spring to love a gay welcome ? Though such an old institution, Spring is nevertheless the Benjamin of the seasons. It is only London children who do not feel the want of gaiety, because their fathers and grandfathers before them have lived without laughter, without colour, without song. Londoners are fond of mistaking their dullness for seriousness, but they are not serious really, they are only sad—sad, like the

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prisoner, the deaf and the blind, who are deprived of the joys of life, sad as I imagine miners to be, entombed far below, far from sun, sight and sound. Was it ironically England was called "merry," or is melancholy only haunting London for preference and as a suitable liege town? In their disdain of joy Londoners have decreed that drab colours chiefly should be worn: greys, browns and russets. They will not let their streets and parks be made gay with the multi-coloured patches of the women's and children's clothes. No celestial blue, no pink, like the cheek of a healthy English girl, above all, no red, the glorious red of blood, the red of laughing lips, the changing red of a summer sunset.

I truly believe Londoners must love gloom in the concrete as well as the abstract, or else why should their capital be the worst lighted city in England, with, even in its busiest and most imposing thoroughfares, a few twinkling globes of pale anæmic light such as the poorest of provincial cities would be ashamed to own?

Gloomy, sullen London, how did you manage to become so great in spite of your dullness? And do you not feel, now and then, suffocated under the mental fog—worse even than the dreaded "pea souper"—which hangs over you, so thick, so damp, so grey?

Spring, gentle Spring, do not turn on your heels, made of two petals of a rose, but defy soot and dullness and come, you also, sparrows; lilacs, you too. Come, all of you, things young, things gay, things beautiful, and try if you cannot make those good people happy!

I haven't been in the garden for ever so long. The gravel paths with their bed of yellow water look like

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so many little Garonnes. My friend, the lilac-tree, has under the downpour the lamentable aspect of a whipped dog. You can't even see the house opposite for the rain. And the street is so bleak—obstinately dirty-looking under the prolonged shower-bath, with its few dejected passers-by, the postman, the cabby, the policeman, and the telegraph boy—all dripping and shining under their waterproof capes. Occasionally a mackintoshed maid makes a dash for the pillar-box, the only bright-looking thing in the lugubrious wilderness.

I wish the rain would stop. I have no one to talk to.

My aunt is busy making horrid little crochet things for a bazaar. She asked me if I could help her. I had to confess I could not do crochet work. She seemed surprised. "It is such a pleasant recreation," she said, "and makes such pretty trimming. Why all my—er"—she stopped—"underclothing, I trimmed myself with crochet lace when I was a girl." Of course I had thought as much. Somehow I could not imagine Aunt Barbara's *dessous* as things of transparent batiste, frilled with frothy Valenciennes.

"Well, if you can do nothing in the way of fancy work, a few pairs of knitted socks would be a useful contribution, and when our little gift, however humble, is given in a Christian spirit . . ."

"Aunt Barbara, I am very sorry, but I can't knit either."

This time my aunt looked grieved and shocked.

"My dear child, what have they taught you in the way of womanly accomplishments, and, though one must be indulgent to a motherless girl, yet I must

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reprove you for your petulance. You have positively interrupted me."

"Please, Aunt Barbara, forgive me; and, perhaps, I may be able to help you after all. I can trim hats, and I dare say I could manage a whole blouse, and father said I drew a caricature decently enough."

However, my offers were declined, and I was told that I should devote half-an-hour each day after tea to learning knitting under my aunt's direction.

"I myself knitted all your grandfather's socks, and think how proud you will be later on to be able to do the same for your husband," she added persuasively. I hope to have a husband some day, but I do hope he will not wear knitted socks.

Gracieuse also is wildly busy, putting "false" hems on all my frocks and letting out a little everywhere, "for two very good reasons." She says I am growing disgracefully, like the *mauvaise herbe*, but she says it with such a mother-hen contented chuckle, and such a proud glance at my figure that I know her ungracious words mean, "What a fine girl you are getting, *mamie!*"

Oh, *je m'ennuie*. And to make matters worse, I have a famine of books. True, Aunt Barbara, wishing to do her duty by me, however disagreeable it may be to her, put a few books on my table. One is a book of poetry, but I think I don't know English well enough to read poetry. It is funny, I understand each word separately, but reading them together I can make no sense out of it. Then the other book is called "East Lynne." It is bound in calf and has a nice musty smell that I like; there was an old quaint book in *petit père's* library that

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smelt just like this, "Les Contes de Boccace," I think it was. A rather puzzling story book, I remember—it must be because it was so old. I am half through "East Lynne," but it does not *passion* me, as we say in French. I had at first started with "Robert Elsmere." I truly intended reading it. I gave myself little tasks, one chapter, two chapters a day, chiefly when I had not been very good. But I am afraid I have no grit. I did not persevere with that system of discipline. Now, instead, I put ten sous, I mean fivepence, each time into my "conscience money" box. When I have a pound I will give it to our crossing-sweeper at the corner

I am so sorry for him. Crossing-sweeping must be a disagreeable profession. It's almost like begging. Why does not the King or the County Council, or whoever is in charge, pay these poor people for cleaning the crossings? It would save them that little obsequious two-fingered salute that always makes me feel uncomfortable when it is too muddy to let drop my skirt to give them a penny, especially when I pass our own crossing-sweeper. He is so painfully majestic sitting on his stool, with his long hair, his beard of tarnished silver, and his purple nose. He looks like Solomon on his throne. He wears a bowler hat, a veteran collar, an ancient frock coat. He is very dirty, but at some distance it does not show so much. It is pathetic—the association of his splendour and his broom.

If only I was not so old, fourteen or fifteen, for instance, then I should be sent to a finishing school—that inevitable phase in the life of every English girl *comme*

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il faut. Or perhaps I should have a governess, and she might happen to have retained some human sparks in her, if she had not been too long between the shafts. In any case I would not be eternally by myself. I think I know now what prisoners must feel ; and sometimes, in the sad hours of early dawn, for instance, when the ghostly light creeps in, one's heart feels heavy. In Paris I used not to awake until Gracieuse chose to come in, but here my windows have no wooden shutters, but just a blind, and very early the light comes and sits on my pillow, and I have got to say "good-morning to it." Then I hear the sparrows in the garden quarrelling over their breakfast, and the dog in the yard next door rattling his chain and venting his impatience in high-pitched wailings like the noise of an opening door with rusty hinges. The first morning I was very puzzled by other strange noises. They sounded like many empty water-cans joggling against one another in quickly-wheeled barrows, some this way, some that ; then above the din a long shout, a sort of war-whoop, low and guttural at first, ending in a strident high note. If it had not been daylight I would have thought of a fettered horde of ghosts bent on frightening us mortals out of our sleep, while they, poor souls, were in hell. My aunt said I must mean the milkmen !

How very, very happy my childhood must have been, and I never knew it ! And it gives me no retrospective happiness to think of it now. People speak of "sweet memories" ; there are no sweet memories, the sweeter the things remembered the more poignant the regrets. Memory is responsible for half the discomforts of heart

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and mind. I have a horror of everything that is yesterday's—from cold mutton to dead flirtations. I wish I were merely alive but without thought, and chiefly without remembrance. I would like to be a plant, a flower, a rose, or an orchid—*ce papillon fait fleur*—but not a mignonette in its genteel poverty, nor a peony, that vegetable goldfish. And I would spread my branches, dig my roots, faint with ecstasy under the sun's kiss, wink at the moon, and be told I was beautiful. *C'est chic d'être plante !*

My days are all of the same size and feel like the beads of a rosary, and I live them smoothly, absently, monotonously, even as one says one's beads.

Every morning, slowly drawing on my stockings, I meditate on what I shall do to-day. And the days seem so purposeless that I am tempted to go back to bed and sleep my youth over until my majority.

I had once an English governess who, whenever she gave me too many lessons to learn, used to say, by way of justification, in her very grammatical, if somewhat starched, French, "*L'oisiveté, my dear, est la mère de tous les vices.*" How right you were, oh, Miss Cooper ! I have been cast a prey to idleness, and I feel myself getting vicious. At least, I think it is being vicious to make a sort of armistice with the devil—no, I'll say *le diable*, because, though in French we speak of him very often and it sounds quite innocent, yet here he has a shady character. I dare say English people know best. He (*le diable*) proposes all sorts of revolutionary things, and, instead of being indignant,

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I only shrug my shoulders at him, as if to say, "You are talking wicked nonsense, and I'll do nothing of the kind. But you are rather an amusing companion." And sometimes he takes advantage of my meekness to lead me into scrapes. The other day, for instance, as I was yawning down the stairs very innocently, I heard the devil, pointing to the bannisters, whisper ever so tantalisingly, "Look, Phrynette, *ma chère*, what a tempting rail, so smooth, so slippery, so gently inclined." There was no one in the hall, no one on the landing, and I mounted the rail. It was delightful, like *les montagnes Russes*. I was coming down so swiftly. And then a door opened when I was half way down, and Bambridge and a salver passed under me going towards the dining-room. I clutched at the rail, and hung in mid-air. Bambridge had not seen me. He was passing, he had passed; then stupidly my shoe slipped and fell in the salver with a clatter, and Bambridge glanced up. I must have looked very foolish perched on my rail, one unshod foot dangling down; but Bambridge never lost an atom of his self-control. Pretending to have seen nothing, he first made as if to pass on, but, remembering my shoe, he mounted the stairs and pompously presented it to me on his salver. I felt I must apologise. He looked as if he carried the dignity of the house on his broad, British shoulders. "Thank you, Bambridge," I said idiotically. "I—er—was just coming down."

"Yes, miss; very good, miss," said Bambridge, with a very red but impassive face.

But I fear I have lost his esteem.

Pity my aunt should be Lady Barbara, and Bam-

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bridge only her butler, they would have made such a well-assorted couple.

Is it not very hard to have nothing to do—neither work nor play? Sometimes in sheer *désœuvrement* I am tempted to waylay the pretty "tweeny," so pink in her blue gown, into a monster game of hide and seek through the huge house. What a perfect little beauty, that tweeny, with her shy complexion and cheeky eyes! It is a murder, to use a French exaggeration, that such a thing of joy should be hidden in a kitchen. It seems a waste to use such a dainty tool for scrubbing stoves and saucepans. What is the good of being pretty in a basement? Would not that vanboy from Harrod's like L's tweeny just as well if she had a thick neck and flabby ears? With the light-coloured print of her working-dress, the flesh tint of her face and arms, the yellow of her hair like the fluffy down of a baby chicken, she looks like a very fragile little pastel that one cannot associate with black lead and coal scuttles. How neat and *pimpante* is the English servant in her working uniform, chiefly by contrast with her attempts at fashion on her "night out"! I think the French *bonne* would do well to adopt the natty uniform of the English maid. It would be a change for the better from her fanciful style of dress and capless chignon.

Hurrah! the sun has decided not to sulk any more. How moody is the London weather, lachrymose this morning, and now smiling through its tears, for the rain has not stopped entirely, but now it is a real spring rain, noisy and short, with large drops of tepid water that make a splash and dry at once.

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I have been in the garden. The turf is sodden. My heels do "flac, flac" on the grass, and leave a little pool at each step. I sit on the bench and the sun puts a warm, lingering kiss on the nape of my neck and sets my mane ablaze. . . . I wonder if that nimbus becomes a cropped head and if one can see where I am from the house opposite.

IV

A FOOT ON THE SAND

LAWRENCE, what a pretty name, isn't it? The handsome boy opposite is called Lawrence. He told me his family name too, but I did not catch it right, I fear. English names are not at all what they sound, so often do people swallow the backbone of a name, just leaving the beginning and the end, that I am exceedingly shy at pronouncing them. I remember a certain cabby's face when I told him to drive to *Leicestare Squouare*. Besides it is only the little name that matters—Christian name, I believe they say here—because family names after all are only accidental, while one lives up or down to one's little name; it influences one all through one's life, and, though there are exceptions, it's only unimaginative people who confirm the rule. I remember a placid chemist in Paris who was called Achille Vainqueur; it was always a new joy for me, after seeing his glorious name glittering above his door, to ask him for two sous' worth of sticking-plaster.

I have seen quite a lot of my neighbour lately, though he does not live in the square, it seems, except on short visits. It is his father and mother who live in the house opposite with his youngest brothers and sisters—they are nine children altogether!—but he

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has got rooms of his own somewhere in town. What a funny arrangement! Fancy parents and son living apart like this! How unusual! Mr Lawrence is twenty-five. I never thought he was so old. I gave him nineteen at most, but it is so difficult to tell the age of an Englishman! With their clean-shaven faces and innocent eyes, the men here cheat time as successfully as the most skilful of coquettes. He is a musician, a composer. I am so pleased. I never thought he was anything quite so interesting. He told me he has already composed a musical comedy and several songs.

It is in the garden after dinner that we *try on* our new friendship, while Aunt Barbara, absorbed by her patience, forgets all about me, and that Gracieuse is having dinner. Then I run up to my room to put on a "*nothing*" of powder and make my hair fluffy, and dash again downstairs and—very nonchalant by now—enter the garden. Soon, very soon, I see Rosalind—no, I mean Monsieur Lawrence—making an elaborate circuit around the lawn, and in the course of his meandering passing my bench. We are both very surprised at seeing each other, and he sits down. My aunt, who does not sacrifice to fashion, dines rather early, so that we have a full half-an-hour of chatty *tête-à-tête* before other people—women with bare throats in the chilly evening air and well-groomed men who look bored—come also in the garden. It is then I ask Mr Lawrence about his musical comedy. It sounds splendid—the plot, I mean, or I should say the plots; it is so full of adventures and mishaps and incidents, but everything comes right in the end, of course. It "*passes itself*" in China, or is it

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Japan, and in London, and there is a high dignitary, I am not sure if it is a Mandarin or a Mikado. He has already heaps of wives, but he wants more, and he is in love with a lovely English girl. But the English girl prefers a handsome Englishman. He is a naval officer and he loves her too, and he sings so to her very often. Unfortunately there is an Oriental woman who is just "mad" on Hayden Coffin, that is the name of the naval officer; it seems that he has married her in Scotland without knowing it, and that very little mistake renders everything very awkward. I have not seized all the details, but I could judge by what Lawrence told me that it was extremely original.

It does one good to talk nonsense, and we stay on our bench until only the white patches made by the ladies' shoulders and the shirt fronts of the men show in the darkness around us. A tiny glowing spot on the verandah at the corner house indicates where the mummified gentleman is smoking his solitary cigar. Then Gracieuse, her massive silhouette outlined against the lights of the hall, cries from the door: "*Mon petit ange*, where are you? You'll get the stroke of death"—a favourite expression of hers—but, fearing perhaps my aunt might hear and disapprove of her dear old familiarity, she resumes in the bland tone of a servant *bien stylée*: "Here is mademoiselle's cloak; mademoiselle will catch cold."

I have got an invitation, Lawrie—it seems this is the way his name should be pronounced—Lawrie has asked me to tea. He wants to play to me his musical comedy. He said his mother would have called on Lady Barbara

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and asked me to come and see her but she is somewhat of an invalid. No wonder, poor thing, with the hatching and the bringing up of so many children—so he asked me to his rooms for the next day.

I said, "Oh, but I don't dare to ask my aunt to accompany me! You see, you have never been introduced, and she does not know I have ever spoken to anyone in the garden——"

Lawrie shrugged his shoulders. "What does it matter? Are you so conventional you can't come without a chaperon?"

"Well," I said, "I would have dispensed with Aunt Barbara and gone with Gracieuse, but I am afraid I can't to-morrow because she has such a toothache, and——"

"Who wants Gracieuse?" he interrupted, rather crossly, I thought; "you see, if you don't come to-morrow we'll have to postpone my little 'at home' for I don't know how long. I am going over to Paris in a few days for the Hippique."

I explained that I never went anywhere by myself. I was very apologetic—it was really nice of him to bother with just a girl like me when he must have so many interesting men friends—yet I fear he was offended. He sulked all the evening, like a woman.

I did go after all. He invited his sister-in-law to act as hostess, so that I really had no reason to refuse. Only, unfortunately, as I heard after I had arrived at his rooms, his sister-in-law had wired she could not come. I had not asked permission to go, as it would surely have been refused. I just slipped out after lunch,

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leaving Gracieuse asleep in my arm-chair with the toothache and her favourite romance, "Les deux Orphelines," which she had carefully cut out from her journal some twenty years ago and sewn together with red cotton. That yellowed, tear-stained bundle of old-fashioned nonsense had been the comforting companion of Gracieuse in every vigil passed by the side of my bed in all my childish complaints, and now I cannot hear the word "measles" without picturing my dear, ugly, tireless old soul upright in an uncomfortable French arm-chair blowing a sentimental nose over an untidy bundle of *feuilletons* sewn together with red cotton.

I also took English leave—as we say in French, I don't know why—from Aunt Barbara, who was in *tête-à-tête* with an old gentleman. I was in such trepidation about my plans of escape that, though Lady Barbara's visitor had lunch with us, I hardly noticed him. I only saw that he was a handsome old man with much beard and little hair, who puffed a good deal. He had rather fishy eyes that stared at one when one was not looking, forgetting that women see most when they look somewhere else. His hands were also disagreeable, pale, fat, and flabby, and his handshake was unctuous and irritatingly prolonged.

I slipped out, walking on the *point of my feet*, and almost ran all the time until I had reached the corner of the square. I felt together frightened and elated—I was actually for the first time walking out all by myself! I tried to look as if I had done nothing else all my life, but felt very self-conscious. I imagined that everyone was staring at me as if to say: "Oh,

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look at that naughty girl who has run away from her *bonne*." I bought a rose from a fat old woman in a torn shawl and an elaborate bonnet trimmed with jet, and got in a cab.

I like being in a cab. It is ever so much neater-looking than our *fiacre*, and once you are used to it the unequal trot of the horse is not unpleasant. At first I thought that most of the London cab horses were lame, because of their peculiar swinging motion. Then I like to see the whole prospect of a street, and the little side mirrors are an amiable attention for the women fares. Only a cab is somewhat like the glass house of the wise—there is in it no privacy whatever; you can't use your powder puff or readjust your postiche curls without some passer-by detecting your innocent little *coquetteries*. One of those wonderful persons born with leisure and a taste for figures, a statistician, stated the other day in a French paper that among many other curious things some five hundred and sixty-seven pairs of stays were found yearly in the Paris *fiacres*, forgotten there by too tight-laced ladies, no doubt. Here such finds would be impossible, I suppose, and the seventeen-inch waist partisans will never ease their torture in the seclusion of a cab. Why, even four-wheelers are blindless! Then cannot an inquisitive cabby overhear any private chat through his little roof window, especially when, as in Paris, women are being raised to the seat of the driver? But if inquisitiveness is a woman's defect, then, as the good La Fontaine had it:

" Je sais sur ce point
Bon nombre d'hommes qui sont femmes ! "

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One of the least ugly streets of London is, in my opinion, that bit between Hyde Park and the Ritz, Piccadilly, I think it is called, with on one side the greenness of the Park opposite the handsome, massive houses buttonholed with pink geraniums, that decorative yet soulless flower.

It is a wonder to me that London, so pitiless in her contrasts, instead of being that most loyal of capitals, is not a hotbed of malcontents. As I was passing in front of the big club houses I could see through the large glass windows the fat necks of many apoplectic old gentlemen sunk in deep arm-chairs, some reading the papers, others merely digesting—all well fed and so evidently comfortable. On my left, stretched at full length on the turf, their faces over their folded arms, were the ragged yet unpicturesque British Lazaroni.

Lawrie's rooms are in Jermyn Street, a rather dull little street. Perhaps he is poor. He was waiting for me. He looked really pleased to see me. It was the first smile of welcome I got in England, and it did me good. His salon is just sweet, and almost feminine in its arrangements, with its art green wall-paper and slender-limbed mahogany furniture. Lots of photographs everywhere, mostly women's, with many "Yours sincerely" or "Sincerely yours" in huge, thick, uniformly bold characters. I always admire the English formula of politeness, it is so conveniently short, so clearly divided into neat categories, without the often delusive half tones of our profuse letter endings. Besides, it saves the writer any efforts of imagination. On the writing-table, from an embossed silver frame

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(horrid things those!) smiles a lady on horseback. Both the horse and the lady are beautiful. She has the long, oval face and rather thin, firmly-set lips of the English woman, contrasting with reckless eyes under the heavy lids. Also, like most English women, her riding-habit suits her well. This must be a recent photo—the habit, instead of fitting her closely, is of modern cut, and only indicates without insistence the mature roundness of her figure. *Tiens*, the lady has not signed “Yours sincerely.” From where I sit I can read below the horse’s feet, in a tall writing of an acquired coarseness, “To my darling boy.—VIVIAN.” So this must be his mother, though she looks so young; he is not like her in the least; he is prettier, but she has more character or I am much mistaken.

Lawie is talking to me, but I am too “comfy” to listen. He has had the genial idea of brightening the day with a fire.

“It is so beastly cold outside,” he said.

And roasting in front of the joyful glow, deep in the cushioned arm-chair, I feel as happy as a kitten in a work-basket.

“Won’t you take off your furs? No? Then open your jacket, or you’ll get cold later on.”

It is nice to be looked after, and by such a handsome boy, too!

On the mantelpiece, in a quaint high vase, some beautiful La France roses die that we may be glad. I laugh with pleasure, and point to them.

“My favourites,” I said.

He smiled back. “Yes, you told me.”

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Is he not a dear boy ?

We had tea on a sweet little table with an embroidered cloth where a clever worker—one of his sisters, no doubt—had sewn unreal poppies.

"Do you know," I said, as he handed me my cup, "I could have guessed you had a lot of sisters, somehow."

"Could you really?—two lumps, yes?—and why?"

"Oh, because—no lemon, thank you—because you steer so easily amongst our complicated little ways and things. Our vocabulary of chiffons even you seem to understand; for instance, you spoke of my jacket. Man as a rule does not differentiate so nicely, does he? To all men wraps of all kinds are known as coats, I believe?"

"Then I must be gifted with intuition, you see, because you have guessed wrong. I have only one sister, and she is ten!" And he laughed over his muffin.

Are there people who like muffins? I don't, but then I fear I am not enthusiastic over English pastry. Confectioners here are such conservatives! Since we arrived in London I "did," with Gracieuse, many different pastry shops at collation time, but the cakes in the next shop seemed to be the twin brothers of the cakes in the last shop, and they were not very "famous," either of them. When I think of the delicious creations of our *pâtissiers*, each boasting of his special *chef-d'œuvre*, baptised after its proud inventor, I find buns and muffins still more insipid.

The little library clock in silver, with the impossible landscape in blue enamel, interrupted our after-tea chat and evoked the vision of a funereal dinner in *tête-à-tête* with Aunt Barbara. I jumped up with a sigh.

A FOOT ON THE SAND

"Already six o'clock! I have just time to rush back and get into another frock, and you have not played anything of your musical comedy yet." After all I think I preferred our let-me-see-if-I'll-like-you little talk. Journeys of discovery are always exciting. Besides, Lawrie made me promise to come back, and next time we'll have some music. He really wants my opinion upon *The Mandarin*. While he was getting his hat to accompany me I made a less superficial acquaintance with the ladies in the frames. On the piano, in a very low dress, showing beautiful pearls and shoulders, is another photograph of the lady of the riding-habit, her strange coiffure—three haughty white feathers, planted straight on the top of her small, intelligent head—reminding me of a miniature hearse, or again of an Iroquois warrior in full dress. I always think it is a pity women should ever be photographed in the dress of any definite period—unless it is in that of a long-dead fashion consecrated by beauty or custom—the ridicule attached to old-fashioned clothes acting as much an extinguisher of woman's charms as real, unpalliated ugliness. I remember how a charming old lady of our friends lost all her prestige in my eyes after showing me a daguerreotype taken in her girlish days and exposing her mercilessly in a hooped skirt with her knickers falling over her white stockinged ankles. The photograph on Lawrie's piano, without having such an antique origin, showed a *démodée* silhouette, curved in at the waist in front, corroborating the evidence of the date 1905 written underneath a gigantic "VI."

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The journey back in a cab was a novel experience for me. I felt deliciously guilty alone in a cab with a man! What would my Paris friends have said? As for the man, he did not seem in such an amiable mood as he had been in during the afternoon: perhaps he was sorry his sister-in-law had not come. He hardly spoke, and had the same sulky expression as my aunt's dog when his soup is too hot! "I'd like to take some but I don't want to burn myself," says Jim very plainly when licking his lips in front of his smoking soup.

We met other cabs with happy twos in search of outside distractions, the light wrap of the woman showing against the dark overcoat of her companion. On the tops of 'buses, disgorged from shops and factories, were other happy twos, the man's arm around the girl's waist: he self-conscious, with yellow boots and a pipe; she loudly glad under her picture hat and the peck-a-boost of blouses. In the park, at the foot of each tree, like huge mushrooms grown with the crepuscule, two shadowy forms huddle together, her chair very close to his.

At the corner of Cromwell Road Lawrie said good-bye. "It's beastly having to leave you here, little neighbour of mine," he said, "but I had better not taunt Lady Barbara in her den. Until to-night, then, in the garden, au revoir."

He took my hand and drew me a little towards him as he glanced round. Except for the passing cabs, the street was empty, and, like, most London streets, very badly lit. Lawrie's girlish face was quite close to mine and I felt my eyelids quiver as when one is expecting

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a blow or a kiss, then, sonorous and rhythmic, a heavy-footed patrol of solemn-looking policemen came towards us, following the edge of the path in an unbroken Indian file.

"One, two, three," I began counting, between hysterical giggles. When I had finished counting them all, Lawrie had got out.

V

I RECEIVE A CALL

DEAR MR LAWRIE,—Please don't write any more. I had to explain away your letter, and I don't like telling stories; in fact I never do—except as a matter of convenience. And you must not say you had to be heroic to prevent yourself from kissing me. Yes, you were right. I would not have come back again if you had. Chums don't kiss, you know.

“What must I sign? Truly, sincerely, faithfully or cordially, I never know which to use, you'll choose.

“**PHRYNETTE.**

“*P.S.*—Yes, I shall be pleased to go and see you when you come back, and this time I hope to have the pleasure of making the acquaintance of madame your sister-in-law.

“*P.P.S.*—Give my love to dear Paris.”

I was thinking about that letter I had written to Lawrie a few days ago, and wondering if he would take me at my word.

To be kissed or not to be kissed . . . that was the haunting question. To be frank and unwomanly, I almost regretted that the cab incident had not terminated differently. What does it feel like to be kissed

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by clean-shaven lips? I have nobody but Gracieuse to kiss me now, and she pricks somewhat. . . . I excuse a moustache but I abhor a beard, which shows, I suppose, that I have no real sense of the beautiful, if the beautiful is (as it should be) the natural. A beard is not quite so repulsive in an old man; besides, you don't kiss an old man for pleasure, but alas, one can't be rude to one's godfather on New Year's Day, can one?

"*Mon petit chou*," said Gracieuse, "there is a lady to see you."

"To see me? It must be for Aunt Barbara. Did they not tell her she was out?"

"I don't know, *mon ange*, but Saunders showed her up, and here is her card."

"Lady Dare" I read on a bit of cardboard as large as our men's visiting card.

As I went into the drawing-room I saw a tall woman with a small waist and very opulent hips standing by the window with her back towards me. She had eighteen-carat gold hair, beautifully Marcel-waved, and an abundance of small curls artistically disposed in the interstices of her very chic hat. As she heard me come she turned and advanced towards me amidst a frou-frou of petticoats and an atmosphere of Bichara's *Nirvana*, her English gait feminised by her exceedingly French heels. I was glad to see a well-dressed, perfumed woman again—my aunt only approves of eau de Cologne. I only could see her face imperfectly because of her thick figured veil, but I guessed her to be pretty by the assurance of her attitude and the poise of her head.

"*Madem'selle Phrynette*, I believe?" she asked in

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the chanting, charming inflexions of voice peculiar to English women and children.

"Yes, madame," I said. "You see me desolate that my aunt is not at home. How much she will regret having missed your visit!"

"I don't think so," said the lady. "As a matter of fact I knew Lady Barbara was to open the United Women Anti-Suffragette League this afternoon. That is why I chose to-day for my unconventional visit. It is you I came to see. I preferred to see you alone, and I fancy you might prefer it too."

From her gold-meshed handbag she drew a sheet of blue notepaper, covered with small characterless, girlish writing. She held it up with a little laugh, the little preparatory laugh of a woman who is going to do or say something disagreeable.

"Do you recognise this, Madem'selle Phrynette?" Behind her thick Chantilly veil I guessed her eyes were maliciously commenting upon my red cheeks. I felt more annoyed than guilty, yet I *was* glad my aunt was not at home.

"How did you come by it?" I asked.

"Oh, er . . . he showed it to me. He told me all about you, in fact, and I thought I would come down, though I did not know you, and put you on your guard against the man. He is a social pest, a sneaky, thoroughly bad boy, and no decent girl ought to associate with him. *Le loup dans la bergerie*, you know—It's only right women should stand by one another—I knew you were but a child and a foreigner, so I just ran down to tell you what sort of a man you had met."

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I listened, but without quite grasping the situation. "Why did he show you this?" I asked, trying to understand.

"Oh," and she gave a pretty shrug, "vanity, I suppose. Man at heart, you know, is but a tamed savage, and where a Sioux would exhibit a necklace of the nails of his enemies, our man about town will show you women's letters and photographs as relics of his conquests."

I shook my mane vehemently.

Very intuitive, she went on with a little apologising smile. "Yes, I see by your letter that our friend has been scrupulous, not even a kiss! but don't you be mistaken, he only drew back so as to jump better."

"But yet, if he showed you so much confidence, you are friends then?"

"Friends, no, but I have known him ever since he was a boy, and there are people one is obliged to meet—same set and all that, don't you know? Besides in my case it does not matter, I am not an inexperienced little girl. Oh, Madem'selle, to write to him was very foolish, to go to his rooms——"

"But his sister-in-law was to be there."

"I know his people very well, and he has no sister-in-law. I am so glad I came in time."

I was tempted to tell her nasty things in French. I was at such a disadvantage speaking English to parry with her well-bred impertinences. "There was no hurry," I said, sitting up and stretching my inches. "I shall be eighteen in September, and I can take care of myself."

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"Don't be silly, child. I came to speak to you as I would to a sister. Why should you be angry with me?"

"Why? Because I had just *one* friend in all England, and . . . and . . . now . . ." My under lip began to give away my disappointment.

"There, there," she said, "poor little thing, was it so bad as all that?"

I said no, but that I was sorry to have lost a comrade. . . . And as she kissed me and stroked my hair, I told her, with my nose in her muff, all about myself and my *ennui*.

Lap-dogs must have a happy life of it, I always think, patted by soft hands that smell of violets, in the pocket of a sable coat in winter, carried between two plump bare arms in summer, tickled behind the ear by manicured nails in all seasons. . . . Who does not believe in metempsychosis at times? I must have been a pet dog before I was Phrynette. I found Lady Dare's sympathy wonderfully soothing.

Volte-facing is feminine tactics *décidément*. In the same half hour we two had been at claws drawn, now we were on kissing terms.

"*Donnant—donnant*," said my visitor, as she glanced at the looking-glass previous to going. "Through me you have lost a comrade, will you accept a friend in his stead?"

I went to the window and saw her get into her brougham. Woman-like, guessing I was there, she looked up and smiled sweetly as she lifted her veil. . . .

Why, Lady Dare, the Vivian of the photograph! I thought all along it was you. . . . I am to go and see her.

VI

IN A LONDON STREET

I SPENT the rest of the week as well as I could, and one day decided to explore with Gracieuse some bits of London. It seems from the top of the 'bus is the recognised way of seeing London, and that all foreigners adopt it ; so, as I am of sound orthodox principles, notwithstanding my being French and republican, up I climbed at Marble Arch after our morning constitutional in the Park, and tore my petticoat frills and soiled my gloves with the sooty rail in so doing. I must say that English 'buses are very disappointing in one respect. They never stop to consider the sex of the fare who is ascending or descending. If, luckily for you, you are a man, two strides will do it, but if you happen to be that bundle of inconveniences known as Woman, what with your skirts and your heels, and your handbag, and your sunshade, and your veil, of which the spots will always get in front of your visual rays, you must clutch on that rail with smiling, impotent rage, thinking all the while what sort of a figure you must cut from below. For the 'bus goes along in its jog-trot, unemotional, English way, without respite from the moment the 'busman has plucked you from the pavement on to the moving board. Ah, but as to the 'busman, I have only praises, high praises to pay to his Serene Usefulness. Who said that chivalry was dead ?

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I know better. It is not dead. It has taken refuge in the gentle bosom of the English 'busman and the English policeman.

I'd like to see our 'bus conductors and *sergents de ville* taking example from their London colleagues, helping, protecting, rescuing in that quiet, good-natured way they have, all the *materfamilias* encumbered with stringy bags and howling progeny, all the witless, tottering old ladies, and groping, blind beggars to be seen in London streets.

Well, I have seen Park Lane, and I am not very much impressed. I did not expect gilded palaces, of course, but I certainly imagined something different. Why English people make such a fuss about it, I really don't know, unless it is because this is a rich and aristocratic quarter, for England is the land of snobbery. Now, is it not true? You might as well confess it, just between ourselves. Why, here even Socialists are snobs, though they may not know it. They would not put up with the platform lucubrations of an obscure representative of emancipated womanhood, in her badly hanging skirt and cheap, hurriedly donned hat, but let a pretty, fashionable woman in her Paquin gown step out of her motor car and say how right they are, and how she wished she could sell her estate and her jewels and everything to help the cause, and even if she be a countess only by marriage, see how proud and pleased they are, and how sweet taste promises with a flavour of nobility and parma violet.

At the bottom of Park Lane we took another 'bus. On the seat in front of us sat two Frenchmen, one with a square beard, the other with an imperial, and

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both very French in their ultra-English tweeds. One, an old resident, no doubt, was doing the honours of the city to his freshly arrived countryman. They spoke loudly, with much elbowing and a peppering of English words, pronounced with such an unconventional accent that I felt less ashamed of my own. I was surprised when we arrived at Piccadilly. Why, I thought we were still in Paris! All the women, or almost all, had rounded figures, fussy petticoats and neatly dressed hair.

He of the square beard mused aloud, "What a lot!"

"Eight thousand," said he of the imperial, "or so I read the other day, and really it is hardly a credit to our country they should all hail from France."

"Is it more to the credit of England they should flourish and thrive so well here?" replied the square beard, with a wink and a shrug of his cotton-wool shoulders.

They both laughed, and the imperial, sitting on one side so as to be able to stare at me between two monuments, was about to reply, and I would perhaps have understood what they were talking about, but Gracieuse, who had been fidgeting on her seat, complained of the cold, though it was the first really mild day, and we got inside. From there, sandwiched between a working man engrossed in the racing column of *The Star* and a city clerk lost in the exciting report of *The Mirror's* football match, I could not see so well, yet I recognised Charing Cross, from which I had emerged three weeks ago with such a heavy heart.

"Liverpool Street!—Bank!" shouts the 'busman as engagingly as if he were paid a commission on each occupied seat.

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I had not noticed the flower-sellers before. I wondered why they all wore a woollen shawl, why they kept their hair curlers on throughout the day, and why they all had a wisp of hair escaping from their chignon, hairpins being so cheap too. I admit that the dainty *bouquetière* Louis XV., with her incredible waist, her little bit of black velvet as an apology for a bodice, and her tender coloured petticoats, would be out of place in Fleet Street, with its dirt and its odours of tar and printing ink mixed with the effluvia from cheap restaurants. But until I saw the London flower-girls I would not have believed women, some young, and even good-looking, could exhibit themselves without shame to the public gaze in so horrible and unclean a guise—and women with such a poetical occupation too. Imagine handling flowers with dirty hands!

Nowhere have I seen poverty under such a pitiful aspect as in London. The *pauvre honteux* does not seem to exist here. The poor seem unconscious that unpatched rags, buttonless boots and unwashed faces add to one's degradation. Their ghastly finery, too, renders their poverty more poignant—the women with their velvet jackets under which shows the lining, their pathetic hats with their spectral feathers; the men with their bowler hats and remnants of frock coats. There seems to be no class distinction in the matter of clothing, and this renders the aspect of the poor more ignoble. Judging by her silk furbelows (torn and stained), the old dame who sells you matches at the street corner might be a down-at-heel duchess. This does not apply only to the "submerged" thousands—the shopgirl, the

IN A LONDON STREET

artisan's wife, the little slavey, all display naively this love of false elegance. We passed hundreds of shopgirls going to lunch, not a few were pretty, but hardly any looked neat, at least what we call *bien arrangée*. Their silk blouses are badly cut and over-trimmed with common lace, their belts invariably go up in front and fall down behind, while a chic hat is a thing unknown among the poorer classes. It is aggressively ambitious, the hat of the English working girl; it is too large, too befeathered, too flowery, and seldom, if ever, poised in the right way. And if the jewellery with which the London *midinette* adorns herself were genuine, why, she would not need to be a *midinette* any longer—her plump capital would enable her to spend her life in idleness.

We got down to explore the Royal Exchange, where I explained to Gracieuse, quite uninterested but very proud of my supposed erudition, the magnificent, badly lighted pictures against the walls, knocking now and then against a fat couple of German visitors, the husband soft-hatted and in a light overcoat, the lumpy frau with her inevitable waist bag and tightly dressed hair; or again, running into a party of American ladies, as ever without their males, and easily recognisable from their English cousins by their neatness in dress and their round hips. From time to time, and from door to door, a bareheaded, good-looking, wonderfully well-dressed, ill-paid city clerk crosses hurriedly, reminding us that this is a temple of business and not a picture gallery.

Opposite the picture of a haughty lady on a white

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horse someone says: "The Good Queen Bess." My notions of English history become confused. How many Queen Elizabeths were there then? This *Good Queen Bess* can't be the same as the one I know of, who gave in turn her friends and foes a taste of the rack with feminine discrimination. The German and his wife had also approached. "The Firgin Queen," quoted the man, pointing to the figure on horseback with his fat finger. That settles it. I knew she was not the Queen Elizabeth I had read about. Or had her people, in nick-naming her, fallen into the same polite aberration that caused our King François I. of the triangular nose to be called the handsomest man of France?

As Aunt Barbara was to be out until dinner-time I decided—to complete the debauchery of the day—to have lunch at a restaurant. Gracieuse was very shocked when I unveiled my plan to her. "Imagine going to a restaurant all by ourselves like two adventuresses," to use her own expression; but she yielded as always and, shaking her head at my imprudence, followed me into Lyons'.

What is wrong with the English waitress? One sees plenty of pretty, well-formed, healthy-looking girls in shops and factories, but the Hebe of the tea-room is invariably of the depressing type, with hair tortured into strange shapes, the chest of a lean boy, narrow shoulders, and the amiable expression of a post-office employee. I always thought that in all countries restaurant girls were selected in view of attracting patrons to the establishment. Is it then that the London waitress corresponds to the English ideal of comeliness?

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The room was full and we had some trouble in securing two seats, and, once we were seated, in being attended to. There was no bell on the table, and I had to hail aloud many a flying waitress before any condescended to approach our table.

It was the first time I had ever ordered a menu at a restaurant, and I felt a little nervous when the young lady in black stood before me, looking, with her curved-in-figure, like some big interrogation sign, and, pencil in hand, gazed vacantly above my head at the wall behind me. "I want two bloody steaks," I said as distinctly as I could. Two girls opposite, with picture hats and ropes of false pearls, giggled, and a clergyman at the next table frowned at me above the cruet. I did not know my accident was so atrocious.

"Two steaks, underdone," translated the waitress. "Any vegetables?"

The bill of fare was not very extensive, but we did not dine badly on the whole, except that the "little peas" were hard and plain boiled. But we had some nice stewed rhubarb floating in its glass dish like some lovely pink seaweeds in a miniature aquarium. I wonder why in France, where we know how to render enjoyable many an humble eatable disdained by other countries, we ignore the rhubarb with its deliciously acid flavour.

The inscription, "Ladies' Coffee Room," set me musing. Who said that Paris was the paradise of women? I think London would better deserve the appellation, at any rate so far as the comforts of woman are concerned. Why, tradespeople and restaurant keepers actually seem

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to have studied her taste and her wants, thus recognising her right to exist and be comfortable outside her own walls. I dare say it hardly seems a privilege to the female patrons of English tea-rooms and restaurants to have a room all to themselves, but to us Frenchwomen it seems quite a luxury provided by very few houses and shops, indeed, in our large Paris. And yet, where could a refuge from the crowd be more appreciated by women than in French public places ?

We came back by the Twopenny Tube, which, apart from its suffocating atmosphere, I found better thought-out than our Metropolitan, with more comfortable seats and brighter lights. I charmed away the two minutes' wait for our train in admiring the unrivalled genius of the English advertising artists. Oh, "Sunny Jim," "Milo of the Invincible Sinew," sweet "School Girl," and pathetic oxen of Bovril fame, your creators are inimitable, and how grateful we should be to them for the humour, beauty and pathos they can lend to the most dismal London street.

VII

MY FIRST ENGLISHMAN

WHEN I called on Lady Dare I found her standing in the hall in her hat and cloak, ready to go out. She seemed the least bit surprised at seeing me, but rushed to me and kissed me, and said what a dear little girl I was not to have forgotten her invitation. I thought it just possible *she* had forgotten it.

"I am so sorry," she said, "I have to go out. It's Dr. Goldtze's lecture. I am taking a course. It's awfully interesting. Would you care to come? He is such a dear. Yes? Let's go then," and she swept me in her skirts into the brougham.

I sat upon something warm and soft that snarled at me and snapped viciously at my boa.

"Oh, Riquet, you naughty pet, will you let go, sir? No, I am not taking you with me. You'll have to go indoors, there is a duck," cooed Lady Dare between a shower of kisses as she released me from the horriddest, sourest-tempered of bull-dogs who ever had a pedigree. Still showing his teeth and rolling his bulgy, froggy, wicked eyes at me until I thought they would fall out of his head, he was transmitted with infinite care from the arms of his mistress to those of a man-servant, and we whisked onwards.

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"That dog's intelligence is wonderful," said my new friend. "See how jealous of you he is! His mother won a gold medal, his father was Pompom II., *hors concours*, you know. The poor thing was run over by a motor car. Here is his photograph."

And she sorted from among the *breloques* and charms hanging from her bangles a jewelled portrait of the darling's father. By its side hung a miniature.

"That is poor Archie," said Lady Dare with a very proper little sigh. "Lord Dare, you know, died three years ago of a fever—big game-hunting in Africa."

I, remembering a certain date on a certain photograph, thought that poor Archie had done wisely and shown tact.

Then suddenly Lady Dare seemed preoccupied. "Damn!" she said, "I forgot to tell Miss Meany to see the darling gets only biscuits after his walk. You see he has a penchant to overfeed himself."

"Oh, I did not know you had any children," I said, surprised.

"Good gracious, child, no, thank God, I haven't. I was speaking of the dog, but Miss Meany is a treasure, she is sure to see to it. With servants I would always be anxious about my pet, but Meany is an awfully decent sort, terribly hard up, poor thing. She is the seventh daughter of a clergyman. She has been too well brought up to be able to do anything for a living. So she takes out dogs, and looks after canaries and goldfish, and so on. She is a pets' governess, you see."

Of course it was all very sensible and practical, but I could not help laughing at the originality of this new profession.

MY FIRST ENGLISHMAN

"Only," went on Lady Dare, "Meany draws the line at snakes. I have a friend who has lovely pets, cobras and such like, and she would like to employ her, but silly Meany won't go near them."

"Won't she? How strange of her!"

My companion chatted on in this amusing and instructive way until we reached Claridge's, where a row of carriages and motors and cabs and a dense crowd of well-dressed women hardly permitted us to approach the door.

"Is this the first time you have heard Dr Goldtunge?" asked Lady Dare.

"Never heard of him before," I said.

"Oh, he is quite a celebrity here, you know; an awfully clever man, and so elevating. He positively makes one wish to improve one's self mentally. You see this"—and she pointed to a book peeping from her muff—"it's my grammar. I am going in for Greek, like lots of women I know, only I am always so wildly busy; the season is a weary treadmill, really."

I thought she seemed to enjoy the rush; she fought for a seat with the best of them, and, the seat once conquered, kept on a running fire of funny remarks on the lecturer, his theme and his tie, on the women who were there and those who ought to have been, together with the names of their husbands, or those who were to be, and of their *couturiers*, the whole punctuated by little nods and smiles right and left, the paradise bird in her hat reminding me of a weathercock under a capricious wind. I don't know that Dr Goldtunge was very elevating, his German accent combined with the buzzing

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of Lady Dare's voice were hardly propitious to a right appreciation of his eloquence. Adroit he undoubtedly was, as shown by the flocking of so many fastidious and brilliant disciples, and he knew to a nicety how to dose flattery to his feminine audience, with just one drop of truth here and there, as a clever *chef* would mix some piquant flavouring to a *crème fouettée*.

Lady Dare seemed as eager to go as she had been to come, and we rushed out before the crush and managed to secure a table for tea.

"Do you see this woman with the princess dress and her nose in the air?" said my friend; "that's the Hon. Mrs Titley. She has been a lady's maid, they say; then she went on the stage, made a hit and hooked the future Lord Deerden. Yes, very plain, but a good figure. Oh, you don't think so? Yes, you are right, not flexible enough; one guesses the active part of the stays. Anyhow she made the fortune of her *corsetière* and dressmaker. The lady in dark green? The Marchioness of Calgary, she is an American. So is the woman behind her, the one with the rope of pearls. She was a Miss Glover of Chicago, now the Countess Osgood; and the tall one with the ermine coat is Lady Warding, Miss Putt of Boston that was. Yes, lots of Americans, as you say. They are great favourites with our aristocracy. Do you see that rather fat woman with grey hair? She is a well-known writer. Homely? Well, poor thing, she has not much time to think of her looks; she is a beauty doctor besides being a novelist. Makes more out of the rouge-pot than of her inkpot, I daresay. Oh, would you like to have your frock described?"

MY FIRST ENGLISHMAN

Let's go and talk to that shabby, untidy little woman in the purple dress. She is the fashion correspondent of *The Ladies' Echo*.

And I did have my frock described. The description was all wrong, but my name was there all right: "Mademoiselle Phrynette Chédor, the daughter of the late talented French portraitist, who, we are told, is to be presented at the next drawing-room."

When I showed this to Lady Dare, she said, "Yes, it is all right, it is I who told her. I'll present you. Why, you don't look so delighted as I thought."

"Oh yes, I am very glad, thank you, only as you are so kind as to take me I thought I would prefer to go to a real ball, where I can dance. You see, I have only been to children's parties yet."

She laughed. "I fear honours are wasted on you, you little *sans culotte*."

From Claridge's we went to the Army and Navy Club. There was to be a bridge party at Lady Dare's that night, and she wanted her brother to be present. "He is such a bear," she said, "that, if I don't actually pull him out of his club chair and his *Times*, he is sure to show the white feather to-night."

Oh, I had no idea that Englishmen could be so nice. You see I only knew Lawrie, but, now I have seen Sir Austen, what a shallow, commonplace little person Lawrie seems to me. I feel sure he can't be a typical English boy. Sir Austen too is fair, and has blue eyes, but what a difference! Lawrie's eyes could only talk, Sir Austen's seem to listen as well. He reminds me of Vercingetorix.

PHRYNETTE AND LONDON

I used to hate a moustache, but now I think I have changed my mind, and I like a cleft in the chin.

From the club we drove back to Grosvenor Place. Lady Dare said she had only time to dress, and that Sir Austen would see me home. Alone with him in the brougham, I felt very shy, a new experience with me. I did not care to talk at random as with Lady Dare, because he listens to you so gravely that it makes what you have said sound quite stupid.

The newsboys were shouting the cricket result between Essex and Yorkshire. Laughingly, I pointed to the placards.

"How funny that people should take as much interest in such childish games, as if they were affairs of State! But perhaps you are a cricketer, Sir Austen?"

He shook his head. "I used to be a decent bowler once," he sighed, with more feeling I thought than the matter was worth.

Sir Austen, like everybody else I met, asked me how I liked London. I had to choose between being truthful and being polite. I was polite. I find it is only the liar who can ever be really popular.

Opposite the Oratory, we nearly ran over a one-legged man selling shoelaces.

"Narrow escape," said Sir Austen.

"Better for him, though," I mused, "if he had escaped from the humiliation of his infirmity and the shoelace selling. Imagine having to be a one-legged man through a whole life, dreading every look of every passer-by, feeling the repulsion created around one

MY FIRST ENGLISHMAN

and having to stay unlike the rest until death comes !
The intolerableness of it !”

“ No, it is not so bad as you think,” said Sir Austen, after a pause and in a low voice ; “ you see, resignation comes after a time, and it is really only now and then that it hurts, when physical perfection, strength, and youth come to taunt you with their happy intolerance.”

I cried in my bed that night. I felt horrid and miserable. . . . When we alighted in front of my aunt’s house, and I plainly saw Sir Austen in the full light of the hall, I could have cried aloud in sheer despair. His left sleeve was hanging limp and empty. Sir Austen had lost an arm. He must have seen how utterly wretched I was, for he smiled kindly as he said good-bye. But oh ! he must hate me, I have been so stupidly, so cruelly tactless. Why did I talk about maimed people ? *Oh, mon Dieu, quel malheur !* And I would so much have liked him to like me. Having a grievance against yourself is like having an aching tooth, the pleasure of revenge is denied you.

Oh dear, for my debut in English society, this is a *faux pas* ! Phrynette, you little idiot, you are, as Lawrie would say, a “ silly ass.”

VIII

IN ROTTEN ROW

NEARLY every morning Sir Austen comes to fetch me for a canter in the Row. Those are the sunny hours of the day for me. That Aunt Barbara should allow it seemed too good to be true, but, as it happens, she knew Sir Austen's and Lady Dare's mother—"a very good woman, my dear"—and, though she does not quite approve of Lady Dare, perhaps suspecting her of belonging to the smart set, yet I think that, *au fond*, she is not sorry to share her incubus (that's me) with a woman of the world. So, very frequently Lady Dare rings me up, asking me to go to Grosvenor Place. And it is such a glorious change after my aunt's dull house that I am actually glad now to awake early in the morning to think of the "jolly time" (still to speak like Lawrie) that I have in front of me. *A propos*, I have spoken to Lawrie again, only once though, and for the last time *bien sûr*. He had the audacity to come up to my bench in the garden the other night. He did not dare to sit down, though. I looked persistently where he was not, and when he said, "How do you do?" I gathered my book and my wrap and prepared to go.

"I say, you are awfully hard on a fellow," he complained. "I don't know what mischief-makers have

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been telling you against me, but you might at least give me a chance of defending myself. I have been hanging about the garden every night ever since I came back from Paris, but you did not once come down. I thought we were going to be friends, and see what a staunch friend you are, ready to believe any spiteful tongue."

Now, I did not want to argue with him, but I wanted to show him that I had very good reasons for never forgiving him, so I said with as much contempt as I could express, though it seemed hard and rather mean after having shared with him the tea of hospitality, "How can you justify your discussing me with another woman and showing her my letter?"

"But I did not *show* her your letter, I swear I did not."

He must be a clever liar, he actually looked sincere.

"She found it in my waistcoat pocket; at least, I mean"—he looked confused, and concluded lamely—"it must have dropped from my pocket, and she read it; women will do those things, you know."

"There, you are contradicting yourself, you see. As if Lady Dare or any other woman would take anything out of anybody's pocket. Besides, how could she have done it without your seeing?"

What a plausible story it was! I did not believe a word of it and told him so, and left him in entire possession of the bench, stuttering helplessly and almost crying. . . . Only now I don't feel angry with him any more. He was too pretty and looked too miserable for me to hate him; he is quite indifferent to me,

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voilà tout. And then he was the cause of my knowing Sir—I mean Lady Dare.

Hyde Park is lovely in the morning. The rhododendron beds opposite Albert Gate make me sigh with content as we canter on; they are almost unrealy beautiful, with their large fleshy petals in all pastel shades like the women's frocks, and each bed looking, in its prim magnificence, like some huge conventional Victorian posy. Then the women you meet are at their best, fresh from their bath and the morning's kiss, their *tenuë d'amazone* replacing advantageously the fussy, frilly, furbelowy and would-be artistic style of dressing and the eclecticism in colours that detract so often from the Englishwoman's smartness.

Apart from two or three oddities on horseback, the majority of the women not only ride well but look well—which is of course far more important—and seem quite *à l'aise* in their sober habit, perhaps more so, I fancy, than the French *amazone*, who seems more or less in a fancy dress in her riding attire. I vaguely felt this when comparing my three-cornered hat to the bowler worn by most women, and thought of replacing it.

"No, don't," said Sir Austen, "that quaint little hat of yours is just the kind of hat that goes well with short hair."

I think he is right.

I counted several ladies and girls riding astride. It is far more sensible and less graceful than the orthodox style, and therefore has less chance of being favoured

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in Paris than here. I did see a girl last winter in the *Allée des Cavaliers* who rode *à cheval*, but I would not have liked to be in her saddle. *Mon Dieu*, there was a commotion.

We meet many children on horseback. They are such dears, and ride with such an assurance. I believe there are more little cavaliers in the Park than in the Bois, but then, as a rule. French *mamans* are so frightened for their *chérissés*. I don't believe there can be prettier children than the little Britons, at least they typify exactly one's conception of childish beauty and charm—fairness, blondness, candid selfishness, and the absolute lack of tact of which childish innocence is composed.

At eleven o'clock we always meet, riding the most absurd of Shetland ponies, a cherub in green corduroy with a jockey cap on her limp yellow hair, who, except for the mistletoe, looks for all the world like a Christmas card. And the splendid, impassible groom who follows the sweet mite looks like some big mastiff in charge of a doll.

Oh, Rotten Row is rich in types! And if I were not riding there is nothing I would like better in the morning than watching the riders from the row of chairs alongside the Park.

On the grass, the other day, I saw two ladies painting a bed of grinning pansies, and, though one of the artists was quite pretty, yet, except for casual glances, no one seemed to notice them. There was no crowd around them, no remarks passed, it was all as it should be—very decorous and very English.

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As for the men, why, they are above comment, and they dress so well that you could not say what they are wearing. Only I wish they would not put their hats quite so much at the back of their heads. It makes you feel uncomfortable, especially when they are galloping. The first day my neck was quite stiff in sympathy from watching them. Sir Austen is one of the best-looking men there, if not the best. Even his—what shall I say—his poor arm—he lost it at Modder River—singles him out and renders him more interesting. I saw lots of women looking at him and smiling and nodding. He looks more like Vercingetorix than ever on his tall horse. But he does not seem to notice how amiable all those ladies are to him or would like to be; he just returns their salute quite gravely. It is funny that here it should be the ladies who bow first. Why? A salute is a mark of respect, and no woman could be offended at receiving it; besides, she can ignore it if she choose. Yet Sir Austen is not a bear, as Lady Dare had said. For instance, is it not awfully kind of him to take me out just because I have no father and brother to accompany me? I told him so and he laughed, and oh! by the way, his laugh is such a surprise. He has a face so serious that you expect from him a sort of patronising, superior kind of laugh; but not at all, his laugh is twenty years old, not a day more, though Sir Austen has already grey hair on his temples and many fine cobweb-like lines around his eyes. He said that he is only fit to be a guardian angel to good little girls (I shall be eighteen in September, mind you!) and that if I will only accept he will be my *right hand*

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in any of the mad enterprises I am always planning. I can't bear to hear him joke about . . . it. It reminds me of that first night and my stupid blunder. I really believe he is so very kind chiefly to show me he has no grudge against me.

Lady Dare never comes with us at these *early hours*, as she calls them. She is having her beauty sleep, after which follow numerous and complicated rites to which I was once initiated, *par hasard*. That morning, as I entered her bedroom, I only saw her maid standing by the clock and at the other end of the room a heap of clothing lying on the floor near the open window; then from the heap of clothing came an unnatural labouring respiration, and on looking more closely I saw Lady Dare, arms outstretched, and as I thought in a dead faint.

"*Félicie*," I cried, "*vite, votre maîtresse se trouve mal.*" I felt the occasion demanded of me to have a salt-bottle handy, but, thanks to my unpoetical robustness, I never need to carry such things.

"It is all right, darling. *Félicie*, are the ten minutes up yet? I am only practising deep breathing, you know." And my friend emerged from the sea of lace and silk of her *peignoir*.

"It is a splendid exercise," she went on; "it enlarges the lungs, keeps the bust in good shape, promotes the circulation of the blood, and ensures a clear complexion." And I wondered that I had not breathed properly for seventeen years and was still alive.

After this my lady stood on tip-toe in front of the looking-glass with her hands on her hips, and first

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twisted her head from right to left, and then from left to right, then upwards, then forwards, now bending on her knees, then springing up again, while Félicie was counting one, two, three. It seems those cabalistic movements, by some mysterious virtue, keep the dreaded double chin in abeyance. Who has not seen a woman in knickers, keeping away the double chin, can't imagine how droll it is! I had to go or giggle, so I went.

Gracieuse is the only one who does not seem very pleased at my trying my wings where she can't follow me. She is proud, of course, that I should be made a fuss of, but the poor soul is a little jealous of my new friends, and that makes her somewhat spiteful. She suspects Lady Dare of bleaching her hair, and she says that in the same awful tone as if she had charged her with forging a cheque.

Then about Sir Austen, Gracieuse, used to the familiarity with which French servants, chiefly old servants, are treated by *la famille*, mistakes his reserve for coldness and hauteur, and she sighs. "*Sœur Austen*, as you call him, *mon petit chou*, he is very handsome, but ah, not so amiable as *monsieur votre papa*, ah, *mon Dieu*, non, but then there is none like poor Monsieur, *ma mie*."

IX

THE MAN FROM BATTERSEA

IT is such a pity, I think, ladies no longer use patches. Nothing like *une mouche assassine* (as the patch in the day of its reign was flatteringly described by the exquisite) to attract the eye to a judiciously placed dimple. Nothing like it either to render more appetising a white shoulder, like a black currant on a sugar-coated *gâteau*, besides being of inestimable use in covering any inopportune pimple. However, if the patches are gone we still have the patch boxes. What a lovely collection of them there is at the South Kensington Museum ! I could stay there for hours with my nose on the glass case, longing to get at them.

We go very often to the Museum, Gracieuse and I. I try to make her take an interest in the patch boxes, but she does not approve much of the painted lids. She says the subjects are not proper, that the shepherds and shepherdesses would have been better employed, and earned their wages better, by looking after their beasts than being always *à se becqueter* or playing the flute ; and that if she had kept her sheep in that manner when she was a little *bergère* of the Landes her master would have made her shins smart with his wooden shoes. It seems that this was his favourite way of remonstrating.

PHRYNETTE AND LONDON

I know why Gracieuse is so plain. It's because she was so unhappy when she was young. I am sure of it. There is nothing like happiness to make one grow beautiful. I am hardly pretty at all when I am sad. It is only Greuze's maidens that can be *larmoyantes* and lovely at the same time.

How is it that some people's childhood should be spent in want of love, in want of food, in want of play, and yet that such children should manage to grow up and live and be good? I don't know that there are many, but there are some. Gracieuse, for instance. She has reason to think that she was the daughter of a French governess and of a Prussian gentleman of good family, and for all she knows they may be alive yet, but she never saw them, as her mother took the trouble to come from Berlin to Bordeaux, her native town, on purpose to give Gracieuse the benefit of the foundling's hospice education. And far better it was for Gracieuse to be left to the hospice than brought up by a mother who did not want her. I am told the English law prosecutes a woman who abandons her child. Well, I think it is a very silly, cruel law, cruel to the child, I mean. Better the *tourniquet* than the horrors of infanticide. When a mother leaves her *petit* behind her it is either that she is too poor to feed him or that she does not love him. In either case, the child is better in other hands than his mother's. I suppose such horrid things are in the course of nature. I remember we had a cat once who ate her kittens. Gracieuse gave her to the concierge!

At the hospice the authorities sent Gracieuse to the country in charge of some "honest tillers of the soil."

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I don't know why the tillers of the soil should always be honest; they don't strike me as particularly so, our *bons paysans* being, as a rule, the most rapacious, cunning, cheating rascals, who would sell father and mother for a bushel of potatoes and half-an-acre of land. Gracieuse's guardians, besides being paid by the State, drew from their charge a double profit by sending her, as soon as she could hold herself on stilts, to lead the sheep through the marshes to graze the scarce grass of the Landes. And there she stayed, as black, as savage, and as easily frightened as the cricket of the pine forest, until her first communion. She had never been sent to school, and, as she had mostly lived with animals, she had been kept more pure of thought and less animalised than country children of her age usually are. Monsieur le Curé took an interest in her and placed her as *bonne-à-tout-faire* at a baker's. At the age of fifteen the foundlings are paid twelve shillings a month by their employer, the third of which goes to the hospice and is put aside for them until their majority; and from the age of fifteen Gracieuse began to economise a little *dot* in the hope of marrying one day, poor soul! As she grew up, a strong and sensible girl, she became a *porteuse de pain*, but one day, having refused to fall into some voluntary little mistakes in a customer's bill, she was dismissed as too stupid, and without a character. Father said it was a blessing for her she was so ugly. How strange! I should have thought quite the contrary, as, if she had been good-looking, everybody would have been kinder to her. As it was, good old Monsieur le Curé found her another situation in the family of an officer,

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and there she stayed many years. And one year came a new orderly, and he told Gracieuse that he was very fond of her, and would she marry him when his military service was over; and the poor "she-turkey" said she would, and loved him as only an ugly woman can love. It seems he had a little farm in the Perigord (where truffles come from) which his mother was keeping for him during his three years' military service. The little *dot* Gracieuse had amassed by this time could not be better invested than in the interest of the farm that was to be hers. So, little by little, a pig, a shed, a plough, a little corner of land was added to her future property, and her *pecule* at the *caisse d'épargne* shrank and shrank. At last the three years were up, and the orderly went—to get the consent of his mother preparatory to the wedding! Poor simple, credulous Gracieuse!

Father had been to Bordeaux to paint the portrait of Madame la Préfète, who was rich and pretty, and he happened to be passing on the *quais* when Gracieuse was pulled out of the Garonne by two sailors. The two men were paid their few francs reward, as is usual, by the French government, and Gracieuse was carried to the hospital. When father called there the little sister of charity told him how Gracieuse had lost her *dot*, her lover, and her situation, and how she had promised to choose a place of the river where there would be no sailors about next time. Father, who was a bit of a Don Quixote, went to Gracieuse's mistress and begged of her to take back the poor thing. But the lady would not. She said she had grown-up daughters and that Gracieuse had disgraced herself—in squandering her

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money, she meant, I suppose, as if anyone was ever swindled willingly! Well, in that time people were far more particular about their servants than they are now, were they not? "Alas," as my Aunt Barbara says, "times are changing!" Then father discovered suddenly he had been wanting a housekeeper, and this is how he came back from the South with Gracieuse of the misleading name for evermore his factotum in petticoats, endowed by Providence in one of its tricky moods with the gentle appearance of a dragoon, the most faithful of hearts, a bristling black moustache, and surly manners to all but Monsieur and me. And it is Gracieuse who brought me up, in odd collaboration with father and some episodic governesses; nor am I so badly brought up either, as girls go. You see bringing up girls is like sowing seeds from a bag with the label off; you can only guess and hope it has not been a bad job until the plants are out, and then, instead of the homely lettuces you expected, it may be only light-headed *folle avoine* that's growing.

"I am neither like the one nor the other, eh, Gracieuse?"

"No, *pour sûr, ma mie*, you are like a sunshiny buttercup with a heart of gold!"

These Southerners, they are all poets at heart!

I see the man from Battersea has not come at all into my chapter yet! It's funny no woman ever takes a short cut to anything, but I am coming to him now that I have explained how it is that Gracieuse came to be with me in London looking at the patch boxes in the Kensington Museum.

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I quite sympathise with shop-lifters. They must have the soul of a collector. I am so sorely tempted whenever I am in a museum. Then, there are always too many beautiful things, and that depresses one. I felt like this when I first saw a field of poppies. I sat down, a little sobbing mite of four, in the midst of plucking them: "Oh, *petit père*, there are too many, I can never take them all!" A feminine soul is such a greedy thing! One day the *Laughing Cavalier* will disappear from the Wallace Collection and nobody will think of looking for him on the third shelf of my press between my chemises and my *cache-corsets*. Whenever Aunt Barbara or the climate is morose I run down to my Cavalier. "You see," I nod, "here I am again, come to borrow a little good temper from you who have plenty to spare." I don't like the man but he fascinates me; he is too well-fed, too jovial, too prosaic. I am sure he was a bit of a braggart in his day, and kissed the inn-servants *whether they were pretty or not*; but his good humour is communicative, and his very boldness does not allow him to pass unnoticed, just as if he were a modern, living man. When he has stared you out of countenance, he gazes after you to the end of the room and then, *mon Dieu*, if I have not actually seen him wink!

I wonder if my intentions could be guessed at as I looked at the patch boxes, for I imagine I was kept under observation by one of the attendants there—at least, I think he was an attendant, though he had no uniform. He was a short, middle-aged man, with an expressive face, wonderful brown, vivacious eyes, bushy

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eyebrows and white hair. I took the bull by the horns, as you say, and went up to him.

"This is a beautiful room," I said. "Could you show me the sculpture room?"

I never saw such a nice attendant. He took us everywhere, and showed us everything. We had another look at the patch boxes. The man agreed with me that the patches were a sad loss to a woman's ammunition of war. Then he glanced at my veil (it was of white tulle with black velvet spots), "but," he added, "some ladies have some other ways of replacing them." Now who would have thought an attendant would notice such things?

He said some of the patch boxes came from the place where he lived—Battersea, I think.

I said "Fancy!"

I am getting so English, whenever I don't know what to say I just say "Fancy," or "Oh, really!" I find it very convenient.

The man said what delighted him was to see such hoards of treasures lent to the admiration of the poor and humble, to those who so much wanted the joy given by beautiful things. Fancy a museum attendant being a philanthropist and a philosopher. They are extraordinary, these English!

I said, "Oh, but do you think they appreciate?"

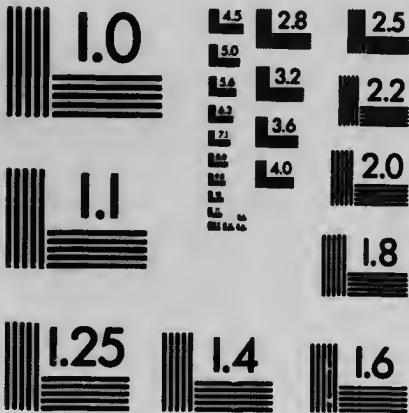
"Appreciate! Why, look at these little children around that carved dolphin. Is it not evident how much they enjoy it?"

"I think they would enjoy it still more if they were allowed to slip a string around its tail and drag it in the street."



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PHRYNETTE AND LONDON

He was evidently shocked that I should give the mob, even the mob in pinafores and knickers, credit for such low aspirations.

I don't remember all he said, but he spoke long and well—wonderfully well for an attendant—rejuvenating the old idea—that noble souls could inhabit ignoble bodies; that Art was no snob, and distributed its favours as generously in Whitechapel as in Mayfair, etc., etc. You know the kind of thing that sounds true enough, but which would be too awful if it were. I hope he is wrong.

The divine spark may be kindled in many a sordid body, but when this occurs, either the spark is strong enough to develop into a wonderful light, and a genius comes forth from the people, or the spark is smothered by the drabness and the ugliness of environment, and the body with the dead spark in it remains *of* the people, and by the compassion of Nature feels itself at ease there. It would be too awful to think of a barmaid with the soul of a Rosa Bonheur, or of a Henry Irving selling bananas at the street corner for two a penny.

We had a long discussion with the attendant about it, in spite of an obstinate cough from Gracieuse. I could see she did not approve of my familiarity, she thought it was not *comme il faut*. I don't care. I'd rather be human than *comme il faut*, and the man interested me; he was neither self-assertive nor obsequious, and inspired me with something very much like respect. I thought I had discovered a new specimen of the English working class.

Before leaving, I asked Gracieuse for a shilling to tip

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him. "A shilling, *mon petit chou*, but a shilling is twenty-four sous! that's extravagant, give him four sous if you will." As I dared not offer him twopence I thanked him as prettily as I could and we left the museum, Gracieuse still lamenting my intended generosity. Is it true that we French people are mean?

X

TEA AND STRAWBERRIES ON THE TERRACE

IF I were the daughter of a Member I would just sit down on the Terrace from morning till night every day while Parliament is open, and eat strawberries and watch the little black barges as they pass by. I think it is lovely. I don't know Venice, but I imagine it to be like this. I like everything in the House, but I love the Terrace best, with its long stretch of smooth stone floor (capital place for skipping, I should think, and, for dancing, *donc*!). With an orchestra of tziganes where stands the board, "For Members only," would it not be delightful to waltz under the moonlight? Lady Dare suggests I should lay the proposal before Mr Asquith, but somehow I don't think he looks like a man who would enjoy a *tour de valse*.

We had tea on the Terrace, the whole four of us—that is, Lady Dare, Sir Austen, Monty and I. I don't know who Monty is exactly, a distant relative or a close friend. Whenever I go to Grosvenor Place I always see him there. He is either going or coming or staying. He is a well-groomed young man with protruding teeth and a pug nose, and looks supremely silly and good-natured. Lady Dare says he is most obliging and quite harmless. I fancy he is in love with her. If we were in

ON THE TERRACE

France I should be sure about it, but I don't know what an Englishman looks like when he is in love; this one looks an ass, but it may be his usual expression. He had accompanied Lady Dare and me to the House, and Sir Austen joined us in the course of the afternoon. I was glad Monty was there, because he told me all I wanted to know about the people I picked out from the throng while my friends were chatting with leisurely gentlemen who seemed to have nothing else on hand but to do the honours of the Terrace to outsiders. I did not see Mr Chamberlain. I would have known him from his photographs in French papers. He looks the image of energy and self-confidence, and so wonderfully young. Why, he must be at least fifty! But one would never believe it, but for the fact that he has a grown-up son. Austen, he, was there that afternoon—I don't mean *my* Austen, at least Lady Dare's brother—I mean Mr Chamberlain's son. He was looking very handsome in a grey suit and an eyeglass, *tu quoque*, Austen! *Ils n'ont pas l'air tendre, ces Chamberlains!* I think I'd prefer to have them as allies rather than opponents. But, much as I admire Mr Chamberlain, senior, I do hope his Tariff Reform will not seduce the English. Why, it would be as bad as *chez nous*. Some people like complicating life, as if the skin were not mixed up pretty bad enough as it is. Why can't a French *gourmet* enjoy one of these delicious hams from England, where only they know how to prepare them, or why can't an English coquette get her perfumes from Paris, but that some silly law must make their purse expiate for their good taste? If I were a Minister

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I would abolish all duties, and taxes, and you would see what a roaring trade there would be ! Then, if the country really wanted money, I should abolish also the salaries of all political men, from President downwards ; they should serve their country for love or else stay behind their plough. To think I had to pay six francs yearly out of my *argent de poche* for the right to own a bicycle when so much money is wasted in order that some vociferous, ill-bred deputies may make Marianne blush under her Phrygian cap.

We had a chat with a jovial-looking man who was introduced as Sir Edwin Cornwall ; I remembered having read his name in the Paris papers. I said : " Oh, are you the gentleman who was kissed at the Halles ? "

He smiled and said, " I am the one. "

What it is to be a celebrity !

I like Mr Balfour very much ; he looks like a pet uncle, very quiet and amiable. Somehow I can't associate him with the shouting and fist brandishing of political life, but perhaps they don't do those things here. I asked Monty if Mr Balfour was clever, and he said, " Yes, he is a splendid hand at golf. "

" And who is that big man with the violent tie and the look of a pugilist ? "

" That's Flavin, a man of big lungs and little consequence. "

" And what are his convictions ? "

" He never was convicted, though it took six policemen to remove him from the House once, but I dare say you meant his opinions ? Well, he is an Irishman. "

" And politically, what is he ? A Socialist ? "

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"A Nationalist."

"And what does that mean?"

"Almost the same thing."

Just then a nice man came up and spoke to us. By nice I don't mean good-looking, but chatty and amiable. He is called Sir John Benn and is a Radical. I thought all titled people were Conservative!

It was an oldish man with a nervous look who took Lady Dare and me to the Ladies' Gallery. He is called Sir Brynmor Jones—Brimstone, I caught it, which is such a contrast with his mild manner.

I don't care very much for the Ladies' Gallery. It is dark, and there is not a single looking-glass! Then those steps are not at all convenient, as the women behind you brush with their skirts against your hat and make your hair all untidy. And why that grille, I wonder? I think it is most ungallant, or did Sir John Benn speak the truth in his joking way when we discussed the grille?

"*C'est parceque nous autres Anglais, sous notre air froid nous sommes très impressionnables,*" he said.

Who would think so?

As we were up there in the ladies' cage a badly-dressed, low-collared little man with spectacles was making a speech amid a flattering silence.

"And that man—who is he?" I asked.

"Oh, that is Tim Healy. You have heard of him, I dare say, in connection with the Parnell business? It is he who practically toppled him off."

"Oh, did he? By the way, what was the cause of the Parnell fiasco?"

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"Why, haven't you heard of the O'Shea scandal?"

"Yes, of course, but that had nothing to do with politics. The duality of a public man ought to be respected by his opponents if not by his personal friends. It seems so unfair that the *esprit de parti* should push a great man's antagonists to arrogate themselves as his spiritual judges. Why, it would be as logical to refuse the line to some beautiful picture if the artist happened to gamble, or deprive the stage of a masterpiece because the author was a drunkard."

We had such a discussion about it. My friends said that a leader of men ought to rise superior to the common crowd of men and set them a good example, otherwise he was unfit for his rôle of leader.

As if morals and politics were not quite different things. If people were to be so particular, I doubt whether they would find any king fit to sit on a throne, and if they expect ministers to be *rosières*, well, then! I fear I don't understand the English at all. I don't know if they *are* good, but they *talk* so good, and can look so shocked when you say something which they must know to be true. Is it that they want to deceive you or that they have deceived themselves? I wanted to shake them. Even Sir Austen was pig-headed and not quite so polite as always. Why, he hinted that my notions of right and wrong were quite French. I don't know what he meant by that, but it did not sound as a compliment by the way he said it. And after all, *ça m'est égal*! Let them pose for sanctity, if it amuses them, only the holy King David would not have had much of a

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chance if he had aspired to the throne of England, *je crois*.

I do like Mr Wyndham. He was sitting at the table next to ours with a group of well-dressed women. I like the contrast of his grey hair and young eyes. He looked so polished and refined that I wondered he should go in for politics. In France all decent people keep out of it, but perhaps it is different here. It must be so, because I saw many really nice men on the Terrace.

We also visited the House of Lords, but there were not very many Members there, and they all looked old and depressed. I recognised a dear old gentleman I had met at dinner at Lady Dare's one night, but he was fast asleep, with a truant ray of pale English sun filtering through one of the quaint windows giving a high polish to his pink cranium. Nor was he the only one with his chin in his tie. I noticed several others, mainly veterans, in a state of drowsy absorption of their waister buttons. Do they ever snore, I wonder, and does a mace-bearer come and shake them or remove them, interrupting the speaker? But they had a good excuse for their nap. There was around a sort of vespers atmosphere, less the incense. A thin gentleman was speaking. He had a weak voice and said yer . . . yer . . . every two or three words. It reminded me of a badly screwed tap with the water coming in slow monotonous drops one after another, then a stop while enough water to form a drop is gathering. Each stop gave me a sort of mental cramp. Would there come sufficient idea to shape a word, and if not what would

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happen? Would somebody giggle? Would the old gentleman wake up?

I was glad to be on the Terrace again. By this time there was quite a crowd, with two lines of white-clothed tea-tables on each side, and around them three or four light frocks for each black coat.

They showed me Mr O'Connor. Father used to receive *T.P.'s Weekly*, and I always read all father's books and papers, so I knew T. P. But I did not imagine him like this at all. I thought he would be lank and thoughtful-looking, like a sentimental Irish patriot.

"He is highly emotional, isn't he?" I asked Sir Austen.

"He is a very clever journalist," he said.

Then a strong-built young man with a flat profile came up to Sir Austen and said he was deuced glad to see him. Monty says that he is a Liberal. It is funny, because he is a lord, and it seems he is "an awfully decent chap, and was in the 'eleven,' don't you know." But I don't know who the "eleven" are. Some Radical members, I suppose.

All of a sudden I recognised a strong face on a squat figure.

"Oh, Monsieur Monty, look, do you see that little man with the bright eyes, over there, in the navy blue suit? Do you know I have met him before; he is an attendant in the South Kensington Museum. What can he be doing here? Helping the waiters, perhaps?"

"Why, Madem'selle Phrynette, you don't mean John Burns, do you?"

"Oh, is it John Burns? I seem to know the name.

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No! it's Burne-Jones I was thinking of. And who is your John Burns? A Socialist Member, I should think, by his appearance."

"Yes, and a Cabinet Minister besides."

Good gracious! Well, I am glad after all I never gave him a tip.

XI

MY FIRST REAL BALL

IMAGINE a lily upside down, that's my ball gown. It is in white satin, very tight everywhere, and I would not be surprised if it were a magic frock, because just to put it on makes one so happy and so . . . well . . . yes, so pretty.

Fancy, there are still some horrid, musty places in provincial France where it is not considered good taste for a girl to wear silk until she marries. I am so glad I was not born in Carcassone! Instead of my usual velvet bow, I had a white lily about each temple like Sarah Bernhardt in the *Princess Lointaine*, and I had put on my pearl necklace. With my white shoes and stockings I felt like a *pierrot*, if it had not been for my dancing skirt instead of the pantaloons.

"Will I do like this?" I asked Lady Dare when she, Sir Austen, and Monty came to fetch me for my first real ball.

She looked at me up and down, you know the sort of mental inventory women take of one another. She made me revolve slowly, then walk, and at last snapped my frightened suspense by declaring I was "too devey for words." Monty said I was "a stunner," but Sir Austen said nothing at all, which rather humbled my

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vanity. I think he might have paid me just a wee compliment out of kindness, even if he did not mean it.

It is the first time I had a really low dress. Perhaps a little more *embonpoint* would not be amiss; anyhow there are no angles, are there? And I would not care at all to be a Rubens beauty, but at the same time I feel grateful to Sainte Phrynette, *ma patronne*, that I am not growing, like so many English girls, all freckles and yards of bones.

It was Lady Dare who said I was to have a low frock, and she took me to Dover Street to a friend of hers who is a dressmaker. At first I thought she was—how do they say, “pulling my leg?”—but it is quite true her friend *is* a dressmaker. It seems she was hindered in life by a very old title, very little money, excellent taste and expensive inclinations. Generally good taste helps to spend money and seldom to make it, but in the case of Lady Blades—*Léontine et Co.* for the business world—it turned out to be a good asset, and my frock is quite delicious. I think it is very plucky of her. What a good example to democratic France, where any girl of the *bourgeoisie* would think herself branded for ever had she any association with business. Governessing and piano-teaching at starvation wages are genteel enough, but a counter, *fi, donc!*

Lady Dare said that Lady Blades is such a nice woman, besides being related to a peer, and that nobody has dropped her now that she is “*Léontine.*”

I notice that a change of nationality is part and parcel of the stock-in-trade in the dressmaking business if one is to judge by the number of “*Madame*” Browns and

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Smiths spreading out their amusing conjunction in so many windows of the modistic quarters. The cause cannot be surely that an English origin is a certificate of inefficiency in the handling of frills and furbelows and in the art of gowning. I wonder if our *English* tailors are of the same genuineness as the London *French* dressmaker. We think in Paris that no one can equal English tailors, but as a matter of fact, though their coats are very chic, they hopelessly fail to rival our French houses in the question of skirts.

I was rather nervous when we got to Queen's Gate, where the people who were giving the ball are living, because I had not been particularly invited; and, though it was very nice of Lady Dare to bring me with her, perhaps her friends might not be pleased to have a stranger forced on them in that way. In my anxiety I clutched at Lady Dare's hand and sighed aloud, "They won't turn me out, anyway."

They all laughed, and Monty said it was the duty of every British subject to love me, if only because of the "Ongtonte," and Sir Austen snapped out, "Oh, don't talk such rot," which shows that if going to a ball makes a girl glad it can make a man rather disagreeable.

If I had known there was to be such a number of people, I would not have felt so nervous. Why, a dozen of uninvited Phrynettes might have been let loose in the throng and nobody the wiser. The lady at the top of the stairs did notice me though. She was the hostess, it seems, and such an attractive, interesting-looking woman.

Lady Dare spoke a few words to her and she turned

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towards me and shook hands as she answered, "I am so glad you did"; then she smiled exceedingly sweetly to me and said, "I knew your father in Paris, mademoiselle," and before turning to greet other people she gave me a friendly pat of her fan and said, "*Amusez vous bien, surtout!*" Now, that is a nice woman. Why isn't she my aunt instead of Lady Barbara?

All my nervousness came back when we entered the ballroom—such a lot of people, such a merciless light, and such a space of floor to have to walk over. I kept as close to Lady Dare as I could, and wished I had a high bodice on. Then the musicians started a waltz, and I felt brave and elated again and chokingly happy, as if I had been watching the passing of a regiment.

Monty bowed and started saying, "Will you do me——?"

"Rather," and I almost jumped into his arms, and off we went. I had heaps and heaps of dancers, I had really, and I had not believed I would, as I did not know anybody; but Lady Dare and Monty introduced a lot of men to me. Sir Austen never did. He behaved perfectly horrid all through the night, and, if I had depended on him to bring me partners, I might have *done tapestry*, as we say in France, alongside the matrons and the old girls the whole evening.

It is astonishing how very different English etiquette is from French. In France if a girl dared to go and sit on the stairs or in the conservatory with her *danseurs*, and whisper with them in narrow dim corners, and admire the stars from the balcony, now with this man, now with that, no one would invite her to one's house

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afterwards, and her mother would bring her home directly; but it seems in London it is quite *admis*, and a girl is not expected to come back after each dance to sit by her mamma. It is ever so much more amusing, really, because like this you get to know your partner, and talk need not be as idiotic as when you try to converse through the *lanciers*. And so I did just like the other girls, of course, but although I collected an ample provision of partners it somehow always chanced to be the old ones that wanted most to dance with me, at least they were well over forty, I should say. That was rather annoying. And Lady Dare had such a swarm of black-habited *éphèbes* buzzing around her. I'd much have preferred dancing with them than with my pickled admirers. It's rather unfair that all through life women should only have a negative choice.

With the exception of the Hon. Mrs Marvin, the lady of the house, Lady Dare was the best-looking woman there, I think, at any rate, the best dressed, and had without doubt the most unimpeachable *décolletage*, showing genuine milky English skin like a white pansy, and without the too pronounced plumpness of Frenchwomen of her age, nor the somewhat angular structure of some Englishwomen. I must have looked like a growing backfish compared with her. Oh, well, *après tout*, isn't youth in itself a charm as potent as the perfection of maturity? I think if I had the choice I'd prefer the budding slimness of the little Egyptian slave that graces the sculpture room of the Tate Gallery to the mature attractions of Cleopatra. It seems that *ce bon Octave* was of the same mind, or was it Hadrian—no, it

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was Octave, I am sure, whom I always imagine like an Englishman in a toga, polite but not easily inflammable. Oh, Miss Cooper, did you but know the shameful result of your conscientious, methodical knowledge-cramming! All my Roman emperors, together with the eighty-six departments and my multiplication table, are just one huge *salade russe* in my giddy brain at the present time.

I never saw such an exhibition of busts and jewels before as in that London drawing-room. It seems that English ladies who hardly dare tuck up their skirts to cross a muddy street have not the same compunction as regards the upper part of their figure. I know the occasion required that women should be *en grande peau*, and I see no reason why one should not lend one's shoulders to the beautifying of the general *coup d'œil*, but I don't think it contributed to that result for the dowagers to exhibit their parchments. I can't imagine a French grandmother showing so much of what is left her—even if she has *de beaux restes*—nor indulge in the light colours worn by some English matrons on the wrong side of fifty.

I saw quite a goodly number of pretty faces about, but I noticed too that English beauty presents itself to the eye more as the result of analysis than as a fact that imposes itself upon you, or, in other words, that the prettiness of a pretty English face consists more in the symmetry of features and quality of skin than in expression or general attractiveness. Some English-women make me think of pink and hairless cows, if such animals existed. They have the same slow dignity

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of motion, the same reposeful contentment, the same large, liquid eyes, beautiful and expressionless.

I think Englishmen look ever so much nicer in evening dress than our men do, perhaps because it has become like a second skin to them, wearing it every night, as they do, but I am told they don't wear it on their wedding day, though. Fancy, it must make one feel as if one was not really married, I should think, with the bridegroom in ordinary clothes, just as if he was only going to pay a call.

"The Marvins are very rich, are they not?" I asked Lady Dare.

She gave a speculative pout. "Well, no; pretty well off, that is all."

"But to give a ball like this must cost an awful lot when everything is so lavishly done. In France it would be only very wealthy people who would think of entertaining on such a scale. Do you know that Kubelik is to play? I thought the Marvins must be millionaires at least."

"Oh, *c'est très possible*, but you know we are not in France, and here there is always more display and a more luxurious atmosphere than among French people of the same station. Then you forget that an English millionaire would buy a French millionaire twenty-five times over. *Pounds*, my dear, not *francs*!"

The ballroom was sweet with the perfume of Marie Henriette roses, red, fresh and plump, like farmers' buxom wives. Roses were spreading themselves everywhere, and their red patches looked so well on the yellow brocade of the hangings that I thought our hostess

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must be still nicer than I had judged her to be. The smaller room where they were playing bridge had a wild profusion of shy feathery mimosa fluttering sensitively among the pale blue silk *tentures* on the walls.

"Do you think Mrs Marvin had anything to do with the decoration?" I asked from a rather depressed Lady Dare as she emerged from the card-room.

"I am sure she chose it herself. A florist's own selection always leaves its trade mark, don't you think? Have you seen the room where the musicians are? It is a perfection of pale green and arum lilies."

"She must be a very charming woman!" I mused, following with admiring eyes the slenderest, best-groomed, smartest figure in London, that of the Hon. Mrs Marvin, in a princess frock of pale yellow satin, her auburn, naturally wavy hair arranged just right, and without any of the would-be "ornaments" the majority of Englishwomen are so fond of.

"I know someone who would be very pleased to hear her so warmly praised," said Lady Dare with that little uncertain feminine smile, half sincere and half envious.

I shook my head interrogatively towards the balcony, where Sir Austen sat smoking, morose and solitary.

Lady Dare answered "Yes" with her eyelids.

The smell of the mimosa, despite the open windows, was getting rather sickening, the dance music sounded commonplace. From under the electric glare I could see that Lady Dare's eyebrows were too black and that she had put her rouge too high.

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"Yes," she went on, "he had a very bad attack, some years ago now, of course"—and she shook her left arm—it was horrid to see her do that—"and then she is married and my dear brother is a twentieth-century Joseph, though I don't compare our charming hostess to Potiphar's wife, mind you. I am sure she never had the slightest suspicion of his *état d'âme*."

I felt very tired and longed for darkness and my own room.

"Isn't it very late?" I asked.

"Oh no, just three. Do you know I would not be surprised if he had a return of the old complaint to-night, judging by his general liveliness and amiability. He would not let me have a five-pound note just now to take my revenge out of old Lady Mumford; it's perfectly shameful the way she is winning. What is wrong with you, child? You look like Ophelia in her mad scene, you are as white as your lilies. I told you you were overdoing it. You remind me of a pastry-cook's boy on his first day in the shop. You'll be sick of dancing before the ball is over."

So that was the reason of his melancholy mood, and of course Mrs Marvin is very beautiful. I do wish we were going home. . . . Oh, dear! what a crush. I think it is absurd for a private ball to be as crowded as a market-place. . . . And yet she said it was several years ago. It is not often men remain incurable when it's only their heart that's impaired. . . . Oh, *Dieu*, all these women, they laugh so loud and so wide, and they have very ugly teeth most of them.

I refused everyone who asked to take me in for

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supper until the last moment, thinking that perhaps he would come and ask me, but he did not, and I had to go in with an old fogey who *would* speak French and make jokes I did not understand. So I just laughed when he laughed, and said, "*Ah, ça c'est drôle,*" to show some interest. Then he spoke of the "Moulin Roodge" and Paillard, and lots of other places I had never been to or even heard of, but of course I pretended I did. I was not going to let him take me for a *provinciale*, so here and there and *au petit bonheur* I dropped a "*Oui, n'est ce pas,*" . . . "*C'est aussi mon avis,*" and so we got on all right, but after that I had such trouble to shake him off. Once he asked me if my husband was there. I said I was not married, that I was only seventeen, and he rubbed his chin and said, "Oh, by Jove, girls grow fast in France." I said, "Some girls do. I am pretty tall. English people imagine that all Frenchwomen are black little fatties. They are not really; it depends what part of France they come from. A Normande is not at all the same type as a Marseillaise, for instance."

Later on I saw my old man talk to another man with many nods and winks as if he were telling a spicy story, and then look in my direction, and I felt that the story, whatever it was, was about me. It feels horrid to have men talk about you, I'd prefer the women's backbiting after all.

Nasty old thing! *va!* . . . If I had known, I would have gone without supper rather than put up with him. But when we went out I saw an opportunity of revenging myself. The old gentleman was at the foot of the

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stairs, looking up, perhaps waiting for us. Slyly I passed very close to him, staring all the while in front of me at some distant and non-existing object, and trod on his foot as hard as I could with my sharp heel and my teeth clenched; but oh, oh, I have no luck with old men! *Ma parole*, if he did not take it as a favour! He caught us up in the crowd of cloaked women and muffled men, and, with a leer and a grin of mixed pain and pleasure, squeezed my hand, and was carried out by the tide like some *débris* of an old battleship that is of no more use but keeps being tossed in the way. I dare say, *c'est bien fait pour moi*. And I thought that all Englishmen were all so beautifully correct!

In the course of the evening, as Mahomet did not go to the Mountain I went to Sir Austen on his balcony, and pretended not to have noticed his "bearishness," so as to make it easier for him to be nice again.

"Do you know," I said, "I haven't missed a single dance; fancy, not one! Why did you never come, and I kept a seat between your sister and myself for a whole quarter of an hour? *C'était bien la peine!*"

"I did not want to spoil your evident enjoyment," said a hard voice in the darkness, "nor to condemn you to dance with a cripple."

"Oh, please don't," I begged. "I . . . Why, you are not at all like my brother Austen to-night. Everybody has been so nice to me, and you——"

Just then the band started a lively two-step, and Sir Austen said in the glacial, pig-headed tone which makes you hate an Englishman when you don't happen to love him:

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"Pray don't let me detain you, I dare say some of your extra nice partners are looking for you at this very moment."

I got up and went and danced, and flirted, and sat on the stairs, and *did* the conservatory, and made sweet eyes to all and sundry, and felt miserable, and cried in the arms of Gracieuse that night, and went to sleep therein. I never felt her putting me to bed, and next morning I had a headache. And an English ball is not at all so amusing as I thought it would be . . . *voilà*.

XII

I LUNCH OUT

IN a short, neat little speech the Duchess pronounced the exhibition open. I had come because I knew there would be two or three portraits there painted by *petit père*, and also because the "Exhibition of Fair Women" sounded alluring. I went intending to gloat over sapphire eyes and maize-coloured tresses, but I think the exhibition might more properly have been baptised, "Exhibition of Clever Painters." And the crowd was so thick one could hardly be seen. I sported my new white hat, one of those sweet little things of the size and shape of a nursery table, and towards the end of the afternoon it looked like a crazy kite that had got entangled in a thorny tree, so great was the crush. To see all these people drawn there by the desire to be admired and to admire feminine loveliness reminded me of a certain recent paradox of one of my countrymen, M. Marcel Prévost, the subtle word-painter of the modern Frenchwoman, the genial dissector of her soul. "No time," had said M. Prévost, "has been so indifferent to Beauty of Woman as the present." Tut, tut, *mon cher compatriote*!

On the contrary, I think beauty is not only as admired as it ever was, but also more longed for. And the craving for it has become quite democratic. My aunt's tweeny

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uses glymiel, you have only to look at her smooth skin to know it. We don't bathe in asses' milk, but we are quite extravagant in oatmeal soap. Padding has become almost as perfected as statuary. Well, but certainly, why not? Not only is it right for women to pad who need to, but it is actually wrong for the scraggy ones who won't. Principles? bah, prejudices! A Paris frock, which needs not be ashamed of the curves it reveals (be they real or otherwise) is a far stronger moral stay, really, than any such principle. You walk well with a white conscience, but you walk with still more assurance in a smart dress. Any subterfuge that helps beauty, why, it's decency in its most æsthetic form.

The only reason M. Prévost can have to say such a thing (I was a bit angry at it, as if it were a personal slight) is that though feminine beauty charms us just as much as ever, we want something else besides. I think the days are past when a Nell Gwynne could live in history, and yet, I don't know, in these days of Board Schools, there would be no reason why she should drop her haitches.

Now tell me then, if beauty were not as irresistible to-day as when Eve was combing her hair by the quiet pool, do you think actresses and music hall stars would so often exchange their paste tiaras for genuine coronets, *allons donc*? Beauty still makes queens—and unmakes kings. Man still kills and thieves for the sake of a pretty face, only don't you see that, what with his business and his club, and his telephone calls, and his new Mercedes, and the bijou aeroplane he is going to buy when it has become a bit less risky, the modern

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man has a thousand interests that overfill his life? whereas his forefathers drifted through existence with but fighting, drinking and love-making to justify their *raison d'être*. And admiration of feminine beauty occupies now a proportionately large place in the scheme of things. The Amadis of the Stock Exchange thinks none the less about his lady fair because he brags less about her. *Dieu merci*, there are other ways of wearing the colours of your dame than by flaunting them on your lance for the whole malicious world to see!

Not only is appreciation of beauty as great as ever, but it has also become more fastidious. Who would to-day admire a Rubens' fleshy beauty, except on his canvas? What man, unless he be a Belgian or a Mahometan, would make a woman's attractiveness a question of *le voir du pois*?

To be beautiful in this year of grace one must first have health, *n'est ce pas*? I don't know of any schoolgirl who would be silly enough to strive after an "interesting" paleness by vinegar-drinking and tight-lacing, like her dear, delightful, silly great-grandmother did. She knows too well that she will appear far more attractive in the eyes of the modern man with her face rosy and aglow from outdoor life. And to be rational is to have good taste. No, we women need not be frightened, I am not anyway; our beauty (this is merely a way of speaking, *vous comprenez*) has never been better understood than it is now, and surely to understand is to appreciate. True, the troubadours of yore sang more often in praise of woman's charms than do Fragon and Farkoa, but

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then those songsters, they had only two inspiring subjects for their poems—War and Love. I'm afraid a close acquaintanceship with the fair Isabel or Guinevere of their lays would dispel our poetical illusions on the subject of those beautiful damsels and on the good taste of their admirers. For Guinevere and Isabel spent their days in the seclusion of their dungeons, without sun, fresh air, or exercise. Imagine how their complexion must have suffered! And neither Guinevere nor Isabel knew the luxury of a bath. Imagine—no, better not!!

Many of the originals were in the exhibition that afternoon, and, by a regrettable chance, challenged comparison with their other self on canvas by hovering near their portraits all the time. I suppose painters can't help it; it's the artistic temperament which must be responsible for the transformation of a substantial, homely little woman into a gossamer beauty—as a skilled cook changes a rabbit into a hare. The wise should no more trust the sincerity of a beautiful portrait than the description a lover gives of his *fiancée*. No woman, even of an undisputed loveliness, is ever satisfied with either photograph or portrait unless it presents an outrageously flattering version of her gracious self. And the artist has a hard task to maintain his favour with his women patrons if he happens to be more truthful than complaisant.

When deploring the vicissitudes of an artist's lot father was very fond of telling the story of his second portrait of *la belle* Madame de X. She had been a strikingly handsome woman, and was still in possession

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of no ordinary good looks, but hers was the autumnal apotheosis of the woman of forty-five. Father had a great regard for her, even outside the fact that it was with a portrait of her, painted some fifteen years ago, he had won the first friendly nod of that snob of snobs—Success. But the second portrait of Madame de X. proved to be a more difficult achievement than the first.

“*Oh, cher maître,*” would say Madame, “look how puffy you have made my eyes appear. *Mon Dieu*, and my chin, why, I do declare you multiplied it by two!”

The tug-of-war between the conscientious artist and the man of tact was long and painful, but it requires a strong moral courage and no small cruelty—the two, alas, are frequent companions—to say to a charming woman, “Madame, like all things human, with time your *contours* have lost a great deal of their purity.”

So father yielded at last to the sweetly murmured, “*Retouchez, retouchez, cher maître!*”

Almost all the concessions we women get from man are through sheer, gentle, pitiless obstinacy. When Madame’s husband first saw the portrait he had an exclamation of somewhat excited admiration. “Who is this devilish pretty girl?” he asked.

Opposite a Helleu girl, one of the large family of slender-necked, almond-eyed, large-hatted ladies reminding one with their small, refined heads and elegant attitudes of as many lean thoroughbreds, we came upon Mrs Marvin. She was in the midst of a thick, well-dressed little court, but found time nevertheless to say a few nice words to me.

“We have just been admiring your father’s ‘*Femme à*

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la Harpe,' Mademoiselle Chédor," she said. "I have at home a portrait of my girl painted by him. Would you like to see it? Yes? Well, drop in to see me one of these days, or come for lunch, and we'll have a long talk about Paris and your friends there. How would Thursday suit?"

I felt as pleased and proud as if her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen had invited me for a friendly little chat to Buckingham Palace, for, in my opinion, Mrs Marvin was the ideal of the English lady. She had distinction without the *raideur* that detracts from so many of her country's people, and without, what is still worse, that loudness and gesticulation affected by not a few women of the smart set, which they mistake for ease and liveliness. I had seen Mrs Marvin only once since her ball, and then for a short afternoon call with Lady Dare, when she was surrounded with other callers. And that day I had to be content with admiring my idol from afar as I nibbled my *petit-four*, and if it had not been for a kind old gentleman in spats, whose face was singularly familiar to me, I would not have spoken to a soul.

"Why did not Mrs Marvin introduce people to one another?" I asked as Lady Dare and I were leaving the house in Queen's Gate.

"Oh, because in town we are all supposed to know one another."

"I think I prefer the French custom of introducing people and rendering the conversation general. And who was that nice old gentleman with the spats? I seem to know him by sight."

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"I think not," said Lady Dare with a retrospective smile, "but you may have seen him as a hen, an owl, an old worry or what not, in the *Westminster*."

"*Oh, mais c'est vrai!*" I gasped. "How clever of Carruthers Gould, now! I remembered the old gentleman's face at once. Wonderful. Do you think there is a chance of my meeting him one day?"

"Who? *La victime ou le bourreau?*" Lady Dare asked laughingly.

"Oh, Carruthers Gould, of course, and Barrie, and Bernard Shaw, and Anthony Hope, and Mrs Frances Campbell, and all my pedestal-mounted friends."

"Well, perhaps you will one day, if you are good. Ask Austen. He has quite a taste for geniuses though he is so stupid himself, but you know Mr Shaw has a beard"—I sighed—"and as for Barrie——"

"Geniuses ought not to marry," I protested. "They can't be expected to jog-trot through life in double harness but to gallop and prance through vast fields *ad libitum*, unsaddled and unbridled. What could be more pitiful than poor Pegasus dragging a loaded cart?" I thought of father and, guessing at his silent, patient years of henpecked married life, I sighed again.

"And so you like Bernard Shaw, do you, my dear? I should have thought that a foreigner would not understand him well enough to appreciate his humour."

"Like him! understand him! appreciate him! Why, *j'en raffole, moi, de cet homme!* I have read 'Man and Superman' three times. It's perfectly delightful to find your own pet ideas (which you dare not think

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aloud because the world is full of Aunt Barbaras, and that you are a *jeune fille comme il faut*) to find them in a witty form and handsome cover."

On the eagerly-waited-for Thursday I went to Mrs Marvin's and found her in company of an elfish, grey-coated little creature, who gave me a *peur bleue* by jumping on my shoulder and steadying itself there by gripping at my curls.

"Don't be frightened," cried Mrs Marvin, coming to the rescue, "she won't hurt you. Pamela, you naughty! How quickly she took to you, my dear." By her tone I guessed that the fact served as a high credential for me in her mind.

"What is it?" I asked, as I surveyed the queer pet at a respectful distance.

"A lemur; isn't it a sweet thing?"

It was a sweet thing, with the coat of a chinchilla, the most beautifully ringed tail, and the quaintest, whiskered little face, comically serious like that of an old-fashioned child.

"And she is such an affectionate companion. See what a welcome she gave you. Her husband is somewhere about the house, but he does not possess the same social accomplishments as Pamela, so he is not often admitted here. I had a lovely cobra once, but——"

"Why," I interrupted, "then you are the lady snake, no, I mean the snake lady." Oh, those possessive nouns! She seemed surprised.

"What, has the fame of my cobras travelled as far as Paris?" she asked.

"No; Lady Dare told me about it."

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She laughed. "La Renommée with her trumpet and her hundred mouths is nothing compared to one's woman friend, if only you know how to choose her. With a bevy of feminine acquaintances you possess the most effective and the cheapest form of advertisement with the necessary amount of detractory criticism thrown in. . . . Yes, I used to keep snakes. This is their house, that glass erection over there by the window of the small drawing-room. You never saw more beautiful pets, but unfortunately the last died some months ago while I was away paying country visits; perhaps I ought to have taken them with me."

"It certainly would have enlivened things a bit," I suggested.

"Yes, they were such dears," she went on quite seriously, "only you see they require such meticulous care, and a special housing and *régime*, and I was afraid——"

"Of giving so much trouble to other people's servants?"

"Well, yes, that also, but chiefly that my pets might suffer from inexperienced hands."

Englishwomen would not dream of taking their children out when visiting, but their animal pets are their *vade mecum*. Riquet has been almost superseded in Lady Dare's favours by two tiny Russian puppies with red eyes and silver collars, and each, in a pocket of her lace coat, pays calls every day.

Fancy, there is a Mr Marvin after all! I always imagined my new friend was a widow, or divorced, or separated, *je ne sais pas moi*. But it seems that he had been away

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on a yachting cruise the night of the ball. I did not see him for luncheon either. He was on a shooting expedition, big-game hunting in India or Africa, I forget, but far from Queen's Gate anyhow. England abounds in vagabond husbands. I wonder why, now. I'd rather have the companionship of a woman like Mrs Marvin than the hides of dozens of tigers. I don't know that my countrymen are model husbands, but when they neglect their wives it's not for such fierce, unlovely creatures as panthers and lions. It must be less humiliating for women, chiefly women with any feelings of solidarity, to be left for their *bonnes petites amies* than for the felines of distant jungles, must it not?

The lunch was very nice, and so was Mrs Marvin's cousin, who dropped in for lunch. He was a big soldier man just back from Egypt. He told us of his soldiering experiences, and I—who does not like soldiers, on principle, I mean—I must admit that two of them were very much to his credit, though related with a manly and simple reticence that went well with the strong limbs and the innocent sunburned face of my *vis-à-vis*.

"I just met Barclay as I was coming here," he said to Mrs Marvin as he helped himself liberally to the jam omelette.

By the way, and while I think of it, my Aunt Barbara has a good cook, Lady Dare is proud of hers, and Mrs Marvin has a *chef*, yet I have never had a decent omelette either at my aunt's or at my friends' houses. The unctuous, flabby, golden omelette—like unto a little sun served up folded in a dish—is apparently a rarity here.

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Omelettes are invariably overdone. Now for the soldier cousin.

"I have just met Barclay," he said.

"Barclay, the man with the shattered foot whom you carried on your back out of the shell range at Colenso, Cecil?"

"The same, an awfully decent fellow. I had not met him since. He walks with a crutch now, poor beggar."

"Well, and what did he say?"

"Oh, nothing much, 'Hullo, old chap, glad to meet you,' and asked me up to his club for dinner to-night."

"So as to be able to thank you more properly for saving his life," I suggested.

"Oh no, I hope—I am sure, he won't mention it again. If I expected he'd kiss me for it I'd rather not have saved him, don't you know."

I never knew anybody fight so shy of any emotional display as the English. Perhaps they know it would not suit their *genre*. Bears are magnificent creatures, but no one enjoys seeing them dance, *n'est ce pas?*

The soldier cousin is, it seems, as skilful a surgeon as he is a devoted comrade. He told us how by sheer luck, and without the slightest practice or anatomical knowledge, he once set the fractured tibia of one of his men.

"Can walk now with the best of them, wounded leg same length as the other."

"Was it longer before?" I chaffed.

"Oh, don't be so *rosse!*" said the soldier cousin.

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It is not polite but it is admirably colloquial. Father used to say that the French of an educated foreigner was the most *châtié*, the purest of French. It may have been so in his time, but is it a sign of decadence that the French of all my English friends is more slangy than grammatical ?

Pamela was one of the party at the luncheon-table. I have seen girls tripping on eggs at country fairs, but that is nothing to be compared to the lemur's performance amidst glass and china.

"Do you object to Pamela being there, my dear ? No ? I am so glad. She always behaves like an angel, you know. She never breaks or disturbs anything. But some people don't care for animals. My mother-in-law, for instance. Last time she came for dinner I had to send Pamela away. Poor little thing. She felt it very much, I assure you. And all because Lady Marvin fancied Pamela had dipped her tail in her *potage*."

"Some people have such prejudices," drawled out the soldier cousin with hardly a twinkle in his placid blue eyes.

I had just fished one of Pamela's hairs out of my claret, but I liked Mrs Marvin so much, and her pet was so pretty to look at that I would willingly have swallowed a hair with each mouthful rather than complain.

"As for me, *j'adore les bêtes*," our hostess went on. "To be happy I must always have some about me." Here the soldier cousin bowed quaintly. "They are so refreshing, now that it is the fashion for everyone to be clever."

"Your turn to bow, mademoiselle," said my *vis-à-vis*.

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He might have been born on the other side of the Channel, might he not ?

“ My favourite pet,” continued Mrs Marvin, “ was a green and yellow snake not much longer than one of your curls, child. It was so tame, it used to nestle about me and stay like this for hours. One night, I wore a green frock, I remember, and I had an inspiration. How well my snake would look as a diadem in my hair ! I thought. I coiled it so around my chignon, it matched my dress to perfection. When I came down everyone said what a lovely hair ornament it was, and how original ! They thought it was a new jewel, you see, but just as we were sitting to dinner my diadem began to get tired of its immobility, I suppose, and oh dear, you never saw such a sensation. There was a unanimous stampede. The lady next to me screamed, half rose, and then fell headlong into the caviare in a fit. I never wore my snake again when I had guests.”

The soldier cousin, who decidedly is a *pince-sans-rire*, muttered his contempt of hysterical women who make a fuss about nothing.

After lunch I asked Mrs Marvin if I might go to the nursery and see her little girl.

“ In the nursery ? Why, my dear, did you think Sybil was a child. She is older than you, soon twenty, and engaged to be married. She is away just now with some friends on the Riviera. I need not say her young man is also in those *parages*.”

Mrs Marvin, fascinating, youthful Mrs Marvin the mother of a young woman of twenty ! I suppose I looked my stupefaction, for my hostess had, as she pinched my

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chin, the pleased look of a woman who has been either unconsciously or very adroitly flattered. These are the two kinds of flattery acceptable for a woman of taste.

"I am sure Sybil would like to make friends with you," she continued, "but you must come back again when she returns."

I promised gladly. What a lucky girl, that Sybil! I envy her so! Not because of her "young man," mind you. By the way, I thought it was only housemaids who had "young men." But if Mrs Marvin says it, it must be right. Who would believe that in a year or two Mrs Marvin might be a grandmother? The idea seems absurd! She looks and is so young, so breezy, so full of energy. I cannot imagine her framed by an arm-chair and a foot-warmer. But the majority of Englishwomen, I think, retain their first youth much longer than most of my countrywomen. I make an exception in favour of some everlasting stars of our stage. Do Englishwomen, then, drink *en secret* at the fountain of Jouvence? Perhaps the principal cause of their enduring brightness may be that they have far more numerous interests in life than we Frenchwomen care to have; and it is good. It keeps them mentally and bodily active and young. A Frenchwoman's thoughts are compassed between the four walls of her house, or, to be more just, between the ramparts of her town. She cares nothing for politics unless her husband and her son are political men; she travels, but without enthusiasm, and never enjoys her travels thoroughly unless all her children are travelling with her. She has many acquaintances but very few friends; her own kith and kin suffice to her want of

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affection. She has no independent life of her own, she lives for and through her own family. It is often admirable, but it is also *du chauvinisme en petit*, and as such has a narrowing influence on one's mind and range of utility.

XIII

AT PRINCE'S

C'EST *drôle*, the majority of my countrywomen manage somehow to appear pretty even when they are not—which is not seldom—while many Englishwomen succeed in appearing plain when possessing all the elements that go to the making of attractiveness. Someone said to me the other day: "What, do you really admire Miss X.? But she is generally considered a frump."

Now Miss X. has a perfectly charming profile, which in itself is salvation from plainness. Let her hair adhere less rigidly to her temples, let her wear higher collars and lower corsets, *et voilà une petite femme pas mal du tout. Très simple, il ne s'agit que de savoir*

It is chiefly when you see an agglomeration of women belonging to the "smart" set that you are struck with the inappropriateness (*en voilà un mot!* It ought to have been German), the inappropriateness (*ouf!*) of the term applied to that category of English society. Yesterday, Sunday (yes, Sunday! Is not London getting very sacrilegious?) I went to Prince's Skating Club with Mrs Marvin. There were about a hundred people on the ice, but I only saw three really smart women there. Three per cent; small return, isn't it?

Mrs Marvin was undoubtedly the queen of that steel-

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shod crowd, in her princess frock of black velvet of just the right length, displaying only what should be displayed of two nervous, shapely legs in black silk stockings. The two other most chic skaters, after my friend, were, one, a certain Miss F., *piquante et menue*, looking as if she had stepped out of one of Willette's clever hoardings, and making up for the briefness of her skirt by the hugeness of her toque, with the feminine sense of logical justice which makes us add to the train of our evening frocks the inches we deduct from the top. Then, third in smartness, a little kittenish thing in grey velvet, with the languorous eye and stayless grace of a nougat vendor at a Turkish bazaar. *Mon Dieu*, I have no doubt she is perfectly *comme il faut*, but, well, she would not have looked out of place at the Palais de Glace after five.

Among the things I jotted down in my notebook yesterday is that the skating Englishwoman seems to have a fondness for feathery hats and anachronistical streamers. Also that flirting is more briskly practised around the rink and in the tea-room than on the ice itself, the exertion of skating being, perhaps, a sufficient safety valve for the energy of the skaters. *Tiens, mais*, by the way, would not the same reason explain the relative indifference of Englishmen towards women? Hunting and golfing and cricketing and footballing, and—I don't know the names of all their games, I am sure—doesn't it take it out of one?

English people don't skate with their bust and their hips as French people do. They skate well and correctly, and never seem to get hot. The best skater at Prince's,

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however, is not an Englishman. He has an unimaginable, indescribable grace, and a cruel face, a face of the eagle type. As he swooped, poised on one foot, in a narrowing circle, he reminded one of a bird of prey, swift, sure, and pitiless. Strange how you can easily see the animal in some people. Mrs Marvin's comparison was more charitable than mine, if not so true. She said the man looks like Mercury of the fleet foot and the mocking smile. Anyway I noticed that most of the women followed him with fascinated eyes. It is a fact that we do like a "*souppçon*" of brutality in the opposite sex.

Is it in obedience to the law of contrast that the walls of the skating rink represent views of the torrid desert? I suggest to the management fjords, icebergs, and polar bears when the present frescoes will have gone the way of all things. "O Appropriateness, thou art but a name!"

XIV

MY EX-FIANCÉ

C'EST *très ennuyeux*, it seems that I am a poor little *sans-le-sou*. My aunt told me this morning when I asked for some cash for my spring hats. I never imagined I was to be an heiress, but father always said I would have a nice little *dot*, *une petite dot rondelette*, two hundred and fifty thousand or three hundred thousand francs about. That is not bad at all as French *dots* go. And now I am not to have any *dot* at all except a miserable little annuity father took for me when I was a baby and when he was poor. How horrid, and I so much wanted that new hat with the mauve Lancer feathers !

So that's why, of course, my cousin Jules and his *maman* have not written to me since their letter of *condoléances*. Jules Louis François Marie de Tréveret is my cousin germain and future husband, at least so it had been arranged between father and my Aunt Octavie at the first communion dinner of my cousin and myself.

"*Sont-ils gentils ensemble ces enfants. Hé, hé, on en reparlera dans dix ans,*" they had said. Jules and I then were both twelve. Since, we have not seen much of one another except on our respective patron saint days, and for the *Fête des Rois* and New Year's Day,

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when we invariably dined at my aunt's little hotel, Boulevard Haussman, by the flickering light of many candles. For Aunt Octavie's mother-in-law, to whom the hotel really belonged, objected both to gas and electricity for the very good reason that neither was in use when she was born. This, I believe, was the very same reason given in England for refusing a full-fledged lady barrister the right to practise. "No precedent," said *ces Messieurs du Barreau*. . . . I have a girl friend who is an *avocate* at Brest. She is cut out for the work, if any human being ever was. She has not her tongue in her pocket, I assure you, and she is so very inquisitive by nature that cross-examination is a real pleasure to her.

I think the best qualification for the Bar is a feminine temperament. But if we had lady judges, pretty murderesses would not escape with a sob and a smile as they do under lenient and too gallant Frenchmen.

As to my Aunt Octavie, I have not kept a very gay remembrance of her dinners, during which I used to keep close to father as much as I could to escape the retail cruelties of my Cousin Jules, who, when his mother and Monsieur l'Abbé were not looking, made faces at me, stole the dessert from my plate, pulled my hair, and kicked my shins under the table. Fortunately, we were not allowed to play by ourselves—a boy and girl, *vous comprenez*, it would not have been proper—or else the little monster in long curls—his mother could not be persuaded to cut his hair short before he was thirteen—would have simply tyrannised over me, knowing very well politeness would have forbidden me to denounce him to our hostess. Ugh, the sly, mean little monkey!

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Of course penniless Phrynette would never be good enough for Monsieur Jules. They need not have feared I would become a *crampon*. I never intended marrying my cousin really, only it gave me great prestige with my little friends—the fact that I was engaged—but father would never have forced me, *bien sûr*. My *ex-fiancé* is now in Dax with his mamma, who has rheumatism, and his *précepteur*, l'abbé Pothin. I wish them joy of the mud, and I have no wish to see them again. I am not for you in any case, Cousin Jules. I am becoming so English that I dare intend to marry whom I please.

“Why was I not told sooner I was a poor, penniless orphan, eh? Tell me that, Gracieuse.”

“Well, *ma mie*, thou wert so ill and so sad then, I had not the courage to tell thee, and afterwards, when thou lookest as if thou wert taking taste to life again, I thought to myself, Ah! the poor little cabbage, she'll know it quite soon enough.”

If I were the heroine of a novel, fair and distressed, the right thing for Gracieuse to do would be to put her modest, hardly-earned savings at the disposal of her adored mistress, but in reality Gracieuse intends doing nothing of the kind, and her savings, if hardly-earned, are not modest. My maid has two pretty houses at Rueil on the outskirts of Paris, and the rest of her funds is too well invested for her to draw from the hoard, even were I disposed to accept such a sacrifice, which I am not.

“You will have all that, *ma belle*, when your poor Gracieuse is no longer of this world. It's thanks to

MY EX-FIANCÉE

ce cher Monsieur I have invested my *économies* so safely, and his darling will have it all when I die."

Meanwhile Gracieuse considers that it is my aunt's rôle to play the mother-hen to the unwelcome duckling, even to the finding of the worm.

"She is rich enough, *ma mie*, and she has nobody but herself and her church and societies to spend upon; let us keep what I have as a *pear for the thirst*."

It annoys me very much to be so dependent on Aunt Barbara. If we loved one another I would not feel humiliated in the least, but as it is— And she was not at all sympathetic for poor papa when she spoke of the state of his finances this morning.

"Ah, if poor Emily had lived she would have seen that money was not squandered in that shameful way, for your father earned what he wished—do you hear, Phrynette, literally what he wished—and what is left of it, pray? Ah, it costs money to be an amiable man."

"But, my aunt, how could he have guessed, the poor darling, that he would be young?"

"One must foresee; when one's pictures realise each a little fortune one has no excuse for leaving one's daughter with a mean little annuity of twelve thousand francs, and after having brought her up in such extravagance, too! You came here with a wardrobe fit for a Trust King's daughter, and yet your maid told me that after all bills had been settled she had just sufficient money for two tickets to Charing Cross. It was lunacy on your father's part, guilty lunacy, and as a Frenchman your father was still less excusable, for he had around him the good example of the struggling working classes,

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where the poorest parents deprive themselves of so many small luxuries to make secure the future of their children. Ah, my poor sister, what she must have endured! By the way"—my aunt drew from the chiffonier of her sitting-room a small box and an open letter—"this was forwarded to me by your solicitor, with all your father's papers, as you were then unable to attend to any business. I had this necklace estimated," tapping on the lid of the box with her closed spectacles, "estimated. It is worth a little fortune. You will keep it or not, as you please. I should certainly advise you to keep it, as I consider it in the light of a restitution; it's only to be wished that all the other sharks had shown as much decency of feeling as this—er—person."

The letter on mauve paper, with gold initials, and highly scented, informed M. G. 've that "Madame Corah de Ste Colombe, *de l'opéra Comique*, having learnt with much regret that the little girl of her poor friend, Maurice Chédor, was left without any personal fortune, would be glad if Mlle Chédor would accept this *babiole*, a token of *bonne camaraderie* of M. Chédor, as a souvenir of her father and as a mark of sympathy and deep regret."

"Of course I can't accept it!" I exclaimed, flushed, and with tears that would roll down, "since you say it is so valuable, but what a kind woman that Madame de Sainte Colombe must be. What a delicacy! I must write to her at once and thank her. Strange, father never spoke about her; perhaps she was chiefly a friend of my mother though, and stopped visiting after mother died. But I have seen her on picture post cards, I

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remember, and she is lovely, *les plus beaux bras de Paris*. I'll write to her now."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said Aunt Barbara as she closed both the jeweller's box and her thin lips with a snap. "Either you are very foolish or very innocent, but in any case you will leave the matter to me and your solicitor. Now go and put on your tulle frock. I expect the Dean and his wife for dinner, and, Phrynette, do me the pleasure of smoothing your hair."

XV

THE DIVINE SENSE OF HUMOUR

I DON'T know what it is that makes London's mood so sober. There is a lack of elasticity in the very air, like in a long drawn-out November day. No wonder the English have no sense of humour, *pas un grain*, not for two sous (Punch and the English judges have acquired all its reserved rights), and sometimes their unconsciousness of the droll things of life is irresistibly funny. This morning I received a spring catalogue of dainty lingerie, beautifully illustrated and got up—English firms are unsurpassed in this respect. For me, as for all women, catalogues have a great attraction. I love to make a leisurely choice of things I don't intend to buy. Was it in fun or in all business-like seriousness that this frothy, frilly, attractive petticoat was baptised "The Invincible"? Price, 82s. 6d. It is really cheap at that! Frai! virtue, there is your chance. And to you plain sisters is evidently destined "The Conquest," this irresistibly smart Van Dycked underskirt. *Pauvre Van Dyck, où va-t-il se nicher?*

Apropos of skirts, and speaking of lack of humour, I met an editor the other day, a "real, live" editor of a great daily as you people say, I don't know why. Are editors, as a rule, supposed to be chimeras, or corpses, or what? It was a Sunday morning, in the

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Park, near the statue of the patient Achilles. All the same *ça doit le gêner cet homme* to be in such meagre clothing—I mean Achilles, not the editor—while all these people circulate around him in their glorious Sunday best. Lady Dare and the editor were, it seems, old acquaintances, and conversed together. Lady Dare is really a charming talker for an Englishwoman, and little by little she made me talk too, very much against my will, for, though I know English pretty well (don't I?) my accent is merely a matter of moods and choice with me. I have a thoroughly eclectic taste as regards pronunciation, and when talking to a strange person feel but unstably secure, but if that person ever ventures a puzzled "I beg your pardon?" then it is all over with me, all my English is gone. And some English words have a teasing knack of resembling one another so closely, as I have learnt to my humiliation on several occasions, once, for instance, when I complained that the "frog" made me cough. Another time I created some repressed amusement among the assistants of a boot shop by asking for very high "wheels," and on another occasion, when I pronounced the old English "kipper" of Jacob's seafaring tales to be quite delightful. However, that Sunday there was no mishap, and I aired my very best English for the benefit of our friend, the editor.

It was the Fête of St Jean, and I spoke of the way in which the day was celebrated in France. I described the quaint custom of lighting bonfires on the *grand'place* in small provincial towns and villages, and how the more agile portion of the population jumped, with a small straw cross of St Jean in their hand, over the

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flames, the men in their blue linen suits, the girls in their cheap multi-coloured bodices, *coiffées* with a bright handkerchief, or the white cap with flapping wings like a seagull in the wind.

"It sounds very picturesque, your celebration of St Jean," said the editor; "it would make very good copy, topical too. You'll pardon me, Lady Dare, won't you, if I talk shop, but I wonder if Mademoiselle would write for me all that she has just related to us so charmingly?"

Of course I did not let myself be "prayed," and my "copy" was in in two days after. Oh, the pure yet intoxicating joy of one's first article! I had it very badly, but what tamed my pleasure was—and it is there the English sense of humour comes in, or rather does not come in—they made such an extraordinary alteration. Now, have English editors the right to do that? It is rather *sans-gêne*, and the maiming must often be prejudicial to the writer, I should think. This is the alteration in all its prudishness run mad. I am quoting. "The girls in their cheap multi-coloured bodices" ("and skirts"), added someone whose moral sense will take nothing for granted. O Decency, what absurdities are committed in thy name!

"It can't be the editor It must be some other ass," said Monty.

I had asked Monty to punctuate my article for me, and also to verify the orthography, but the latter he declined to do, saying that I spelt infinitely better than he did. Fancy *not* being able to spell correctly in one's own language, and, still worse, confessing it!

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Between ourselves, I think Monty is more or less of an ignoramus, yet he is a Cambridge man.

What can he have done there all these years, if he cannot even spell properly ? It seems he was a splendid bat (whatever that is ; my dictionary says it means a nocturnal bird, it must be some pet name, no doubt), and that on three occasions he made a hundred in each innings, so Sir Austen says (that must have something to do with Greek verses, I should think). It seems also that as a footballer he is just A1 (I am quoting). But that does not help him when it comes to decide whether "dependence" should be spelt with an *e* or an *a*. And I did not know that English boys were sent to a university merely to develop their muscles. I do not think that as a rule Englishmen are as learned as our men. While, for instance, French students go through a course of law as a finishing touch to their general studies and preparatory to the embracing of any career, here it seems young men only study law who intend practising it as judges, barristers, or solicitors. The English are so practical that even as regards education they go in for specialising ; they leave botany, astrology, chemistry, natural history, and other "y's" to those who intend distinguishing themselves in any of these branches, with, however, the exception of geography. I give them a good mark for geography. As a nation of travellers and colonists they no doubt find it useful to know the globe *dans les coins*. The same can be said of the girls' education. Certificates, brevets and *baccalauréats*, so common in France even among the poorer classes, seem here to be a distinction sought only by girls whose

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ambition is to become a teacher or a governess. Perhaps this may account for the many little slips revealed sometimes in the conversation of even educated Englishwomen. It was only the other day that Lady Dare amused me, when we made a rather distressing discovery in our plate in a restaurant, by declaring that she had no idea maggots were laid by flies.

"Well, my dear, and why should I know?" she said sensibly enough, "I never intended rearing up maggots."

But there is one thing one must concede to the English and that is their tenacity, their energy, and, above all, their method. If not particularly quick, English people are very thorough, and they apply their thoroughness to play as well as to work. It is quite an English proverb, that which says: "What is worth doing at all is worth doing well." They believe in training, and they act according to their belief.

A girl is drilled in accomplishments as a soldier is in warfare. I know of no other girl who spends so much time and trouble towards acquiring the amenities of life as the English girl. Let us take deportment, for instance. We have in France an equivalent word—*maintien*. *Maintien* is supposed to be taught by the dancing-master, but as a matter of fact it is no longer taught at all. It is an art considered as natural, allied to inner refinement, like, for instance, the sweet inflexion of a voice, and therefore taken for granted. Now in England deportment is taking quite a large place in a girl's education. They have given it an imposing Greek name, "callisthenics," and there are few prettier sights than a callisthenic class full of juvenile students deporting

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themselves to the accompaniment of musical bells and spirited piano-playing. I had never seen a scene of this kind until the other day, when I accompanied the "Asparagus" little girl with whom I have made friends to her class, and I had a real pleasure in watching the charming *vue d'ensemble* of all those little people, marching, bending, pirouetting in cadence, the graceful tension of their slender arms, the dainty precision of their brown-stockinged legs. What perfect, exquisite little legs have English children, I notice! Firm little legs, neither too thin nor flabby, strong, agile little legs that tell of a healthy out-of-door life, of much kicking of balls, of much skipping, of much running after hoops. Unfortunately, the grace of the English children is merely the evanescent grace of all young supple things, and it seems a pity that the long and troublesome study of deportment should show so little effective result in the finished article. I mean the grown-up girl. After several years of callisthenic training the English girl has not lost the stoop of her shoulders, nor the limpness of her arms. Callisthenics may have increased her vitality, but it does not seem to have developed her bust, nor curved her back at the waist, nor enlarged her narrow, immovable hips. The English girl is spirited, proud, dignified, self-reliant, *mais vrai*, you would never guess it by seeing her walk. Her walk is humble, and an humble walk is not pretty, is it? It makes you want to tell her, "Look up, *ma chère*, look up, there is nothing to be ashamed of."

I don't want you to think I found nothing to

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admire in the English girls. I do; indeed, I do. I adore their hair, for instance (not the way they dress it, though), and their skin, and their expression, so candid and everlastingly young, and above all their exquisitely modulated voice—their *speaking* voice, I mean. (There is in punctuation a mark of interrogation and a mark of exclamation. Why not one of emphasis? It would better serve its purpose than merely italic type.)

The professor of callisthenics was in herself as great a curiosity to me as was her profession, though perhaps not so great an advertisement as the efficiency of her methods in producing elegance of attitudes and bodily beauty. Imagine a clean-shaven, middle-aged, medium-sized gentleman, who, for a wager, or on a Carnival day, would have dared exhibit himself in a skirt. Short hair under a masculine straw hat, stiff collar, uncompromising tie, straight coat and skirt, and mannish feet—the maiden professor had everything of a man, except, perhaps, pride of sex. One thing puzzles me. I saw this lady inside her classroom, but I would like to know if she really dares show herself outside in this half-masquerading attire, and whether the street arabs show themselves merciful. I suppose they do, or her sensitiveness—the most powerful element of a woman's soul—would cry for the routine of the inconspicuous long hair and a frock. Why are the street urchins of a less sarcastic turn of mind in London than are the Paris gamins? Is it due to good taste (yet this is an unusual quality among their class), or is it due to lack of humour? One thing certain is that they do not lack observation, nor a certain harmless and would-be witty way of

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thinking aloud about the object of their observation. I experienced it once at my expense, if that is not too big a way of talking about a very trivial little adventure. It was a fine, warm day, pregnant with spring, with a lurching sun playing hide-and-seek from behind the London smoke and partly veiled like some Oriental beauty. I felt that my black and crape would be out of unison with the day and, as Sir Austen had promised to fetch me to visit the Wallace Collection, I had put on a pretty new frock of so pale a grey as to tempt all the dirt of London, with gloves, hat, etc., *en suite*, as they say in England.

It felt quite delicious walking by his side, and we amble with *ensemble* too. I have just time to make two steps for his one. He has the long English stride with a sudden lurching forward of the shoulders which our snobs of the boulevards are at such pains to imitate. To judge of a woman's walk and mien in the streets one must see her with a man by her side. They complete one another. He lends her strength, she lends him grace, like seaweed on a rock. (Funny how all simple-minded people, like savages and myself, are fond of similes.) When I had received from every passer-by more than the usual share of attention that any fresh girl of seventeen with a new frock, which fits her well, has a right to expect, a growing uneasiness caused me to ask Sir Austen :

“Do you know what a tape is, Brother Austen?”

“Most certainly,” with an offended air.

“Well, then, be so good as to walk a little behind and tell me if I have not got a tape hanging somewhere, or

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perhaps it is the braid of my skirt that has come undone. Be quick, but don't look as if you were looking. You understand ? ”

After a few seconds of keen anxiety on my part, Sir Austen caught me up.

“ Everything is just ship-shape ; no trace of any tape . . . or . . . or . . . things.”

“ Oh, but there must be something. Don't you see how people stare ? ”

“ Well, of course they stare, but——”

“ Oh no, it is not that, it's—— Why, it is my boots.”

And it was my boots. I was wearing patent boots with grey uppers, and everyone was taking stock of such an unheard of footgear. Yet, what will you ? I could not, even to please people, wear brown boots with a dove-grey frock, could I ? I bore the inspection bravely until an imp of a shoeblack, with a spiritual smile on his lips and a black brush in his hand, humorously solicited my patronage with a caustic :

“ Shine, miss ? ”

“ The grinning idiot,” said Sir Austen, but we both laughed and, renouncing the pleasure of the promenade, finished the journey in a cab.

I will not give up wearing French boots for the sake of the populace, but, like the shoes of the Empress Josephine, I sha'n't walk in them.

How is it English boots are so clumsy ? No need to be a shoemaker to know that a short, pointed boot will make a foot appear broad and squat. It is merely a matter of perspective. I'd rather go barefoot, *ma parole*, I would, than wear British-made feet-covering. I don't

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deny them any merit except smartness. They may be good, but goodness is not everything. Look at my aunt, for instance. She is good, and yet who cares for her? Nobody in the whole world but me. Yes, I am beginning to love Aunt Barbara, in spite of herself. I don't know why, for I certainly do not *like* her; perhaps it is the fault of my "*artichoke heart*," as father used to say—a leaf to everybody, see? Now Lady Dare, on the other hand, is not exactly what you would call . . . No, no, Phrynette, *de la charité, ma chère*. Well then, to come back to a safe subject, the English boots. They may wear splendidly, but that makes it worse. An ugly thing has no right to endure.

XVI

DR MACNAMARA SAYS IT IS PRONOUNCED "GOFF"

IF you sound the "l," people know at once you are a rotter—at least so I am told.

You can't possibly play golf and look tidy; your hat won't stand it, and when you brandish that thing above your head, up goes your blouse out of your belt, and you look so baggy. You can't wear decent shoes because your heels make holes in the ground and the men say you are spoiling the turf. I know all about golf. I almost played it once.

We went to spend a week in Herne Bay, Lady Dare and I. She had been ordered a rest cure, but she said that if she stayed in town she would not have the moral strength to go through with it; so she chose Herne Bay, because she said there was nothing to do there and nobody to see, so she would rest *perforce*. And in fact there was nothing to do, but there were golf links. We stayed at the hotel, Lady Dare, I and Félicie.

It is the first time that I have lived at a hotel. When we went to the sea or the country with *petit père* we always rented a chalet, as most French people do, and there we settled with Gracieuse, the cook, Fernand—father's man—the cat and my white mice. Father gave me one each time I consented to have a tooth pulled

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out—milk teeth, of course. Father hated hotel life and everything and everybody in a hotel—the tip-begging waiter; the Janus-faced proprietor, obsequious with the client and rude to the staff; the anæmic lady at the desk; and, above all, to eat in the same room with anyone who can pay for his meal, and sleep in a room which any diseased traveller may have rendered a hotbed of microbes. Of course *petit père* used to talk in this way because he was a Republican. For tolerance to offensive promiscuity, for broadness of mind and Christian-like love of your neighbour, give me a Tory. I know I'd prefer to travel in an empty third-class carriage with a first-class ticket than travel first with third-class passengers, especially in France. But then I too am a Republican!

I don't know how it is Gracieuse let me go at all. Lady Dare said Félicie would do for both of us, so Gracieuse put a paper bag of camomile in my box, in case I should eat too many chocolates, and slipped her scapulary around my neck, and said I was not to take it off on any account, and that I was not to go to sleep without making sure that all the windows were well closed. Gracieuse, like most French people of the older generation, has a dread of ventilation. Usually she herself makes the inspection of the windows, and it is only when I am sure she is quite gone that I dare get up to pull down the sash. I like fresh air, but I don't like hurting her feelings. She made me promise to wire for her if I had a sore throat, as her sister's "little last" was taken in one night by croup.

"And now go, *mon petit chou*, and don't do anything

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rash to turn my blood. Remember that thine old beast of Gracieuse has only thee, *ma mie*."

Monty turned up two days after we had arrived, which made things quite homelike. We asked news from town as if we had been away and without papers for two months instead of forty-eight hours. Monty said that he had gone for the eleventh time to see Maud Allan, and that he had just seen from the placards that Cambridge had beaten Oxford, so that he had bought a sky-blue tie, and how did we like it? Some people have a disjointed conversation, haven't they? I thought there must have been an important examination going on, and perhaps Monty had a friend at Cambridge. Lady Dare cried "Hurrah" and ran to fetch a pale blue scarf, to match the tie, I suppose. English people have quaint ideas sometimes.

Monty went to reconnoitre the place, and came back enthusiastic about the golf links. So next morning Lady Dare appeared at breakfast in a sort of knitted woollen jacket that hid her pretty waist, a peaked cap that hid her pretty curls, and flat shoes with round toes (horror!) that took away fully two inches from her stature. If that is the right costume for golf, I don't think I shall like the game. Of course she looked pretty all the same, because when you have really good features nothing can make you look ugly, but it's not enough for a woman to be pretty, smartness is of far more value really; and if there were not such a number of women aware of the fact, why, la rue de la Paix might put up its shutters.

On the links there was a rustic pavilion where one could put the golfing instruments in and flirt, and a few

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men disporting themselves in red-and-black-striped coats that made them resemble large cochineals. One of the men Monty knew, and introduced as Dr Macnamara. I wondered how his patients were getting on while he was playing golf; however, if he loses his practice it is none of my business. I said golf looked such a pleasant, easy little game I'd like to try, and Dr Macnamara said he would teach me; but afterwards, when I had knocked his shins with the sharp side of the little stick with the iron end (you know what I mean), and when I kept on sending samples of earth and grass in his eyes, I think he must have repented. It is a sad fact that we almost always repent of our generous impulses. However, they all said I was getting on famously, and that perhaps I might hit the ball next time, so it was very encouraging; but I think they said that because they saw I very much wanted to cry.

I find golf has a deteriorating influence on the manner of men. It's not flattering for a woman when a man has no eyes but for a tiny flag in the distance, no care for any other progress than that of a silly little ball. . . .

I don't care for golf, *décidément*. I don't believe any French people really care for it. We have golf links at most of our watering-places, but they are only patronised by English golfers and French snobs, and with the latter it's only a pose. They play golf because *tout à l'anglaise* is the fashion, just as some ingenuous young men that I know in Paris send their washing to be done in London. Of course it comes back with more holes, more starch, and less finish than if it had been given

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to a French *repassouse*, but then one must sacrifice to chic. . . .

They played golf until lunch-time, and I looked on and said between two yawns that it was so interesting to watch them ; then we left the links *en groupes*. On the way back I said I was noting down my impressions of England and English people for the amusement and edification of my children. I told Dr Macnamara that, as he had been so kind as to teach me golf, he was to be in my impressions. He said it was very generous of me, but he hoped I would not put his language in too. I promised I would not, so I have not. Someone among the men remarked I looked wonderfully young to be the mother of a family. I said, "Oh, but I am not, I am not even married yet, but of course I shall be. In France we have not so many 'old girls' as there are here. I don't know why. I suppose it's because Frenchwomen don't like being single. It's so lonesome, and then you can't go anywhere by yourself except when you are so old you don't care any more to go anywhere. Then when I am married I won't be like all the French people I know. I won't be satisfied with just one or two children. No. I want a dozen—half-a-dozen boys and half-a-dozen girls, the boys first, so that they can take their sisters out when they are grown up and help to give them a *dot*."

Monty said, "Capital plan that, but what if you have no children ? Will that precious book of yours be lost to the world ?"

"Oh, well, in that case it would be for my grandchildren, of course !"

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It takes little to amuse the English. They all laughed at everything I said, except Lady Dare, who kept on pinching my arm, I can't think why. I suppose she is sorry she has no children. Yes, that must be it. Yet, why should some people be humiliated not to have children. I don't think there is much individual merit in it, nor, if you ask me, in collaboration of any kind.

Sir Austen is down in the country. He has a seat somewhere in Buckinghamshire; does it mean there is also a Parliament there? I don't like asking questions about everything I want to know, because it seems all my questions are laughable, so I prefer not to know rather than be ridiculous.

Still I think I am improving in my English. I can see that as I read over my diary—no, this is not a diary, there are no dates, you see; it's only a nonsense book that I commit to for want of having anything better to do. Keeping a diary is a very inconsiderate thing to do, as it serves only to get your friends into trouble. And suppose you leave unlocked the drawer in which you keep your diary? It's too terrible to think of, unless, of course, you don't write the truth in it, but then, what is the use of it? To help one to remember things? Bah! One recipe for happiness is to cultivate a short memory. All this sounds very deep and clever. I don't understand it myself, but *petit père* used to say it, so it must be true. All the bits of wisdom disgorged by my Swan fountain pen (it looks like an advertisement) are echoes of *petit père's* philosophy. He knew everything, I believe. Why did he not give me more of his cleverness! With him it was a strong, deep-

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rooted plant ; with me, though I am not stupid, you know, cleverness springs at odd moments and unexpected places, like ill-sized, unassorted sprouts.

“ Dates and debts,” *petit père* used to say, “ are things to be carefully forgotten.” I don’t know what dates he’d rather not remember, but I don’t think he could have had any debts ; he was too kind for that. Why is it that people here speak of their debts as proudly as they brag about their bags of game ? It is a smart thing to have. I think one can sacrifice too much for smartness. For instance, Lady Dare was telling me the other day about that book she is going to lend me, and she said, speaking of the woman in the book, “ and then she took a lover, not because she cared for him particularly, but because it was a smart thing to do, don’t you know ? ” Well, when I am married, if I have lovers, I say “ if ” because one never knows. I am not like Mathieu de la Drome, who can always in his *almanach* infallibly predict in January what weather there will be in December, at least Gracieuse swears by him. Well then, if I have lovers—I use the plural because these are, like oysters, always mentioned in number. Speaking of a woman who has one lover is banal, but lend her a half-dozen or so and at once she becomes more interesting, less ordinary, you want to know more about her—there must be something in that woman. So that, as I was saying, if I have lovers (oh dear, I’ll never get out of this sentence, I am tired of them already) I think they will require judicious choosing. It’s like choosing a hat—it is all very well for it to be smart, but the thing must suit your type first. O^f course one must be up to date,

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but that's not the chief consideration. And I don't think I'll wear a toque this winter. I tried one at Lewis's the other day—you know, one of these huge, hairy things like a foot-warmer. But "I do not love me" in it. Imagine a *grenadier de la garde* who would not grow up.

I hope we sha'n't stay long in Herne Bay. It is not *folichon*. And golf is so disappointing!

XVII

THE " PARADOU "

" **O**H, I want it, Brother Austen, I do want it so! Look at the darling little windows, and at the chimneys covered with ivy. If I were to write to the King and say I would be a model caretaker, do you think he might let me live there? I would not mind showing tourists over if necessary, at least I would mind, but I would be polite to them. As it is no one lives there, it's happiness wasted, and goodness too. One could not help being good under that thatched roof. I'd be as happy there as life is long!"

No, Sir Austen did not think I had much chance of getting Queen Anne's cottage in Kew Gardens, the loveliest cottage one can dream of, set in fairyland. Leading to the cottage is a lane, grass-carpeted and mysterious between the trees, and on each side of the lane imagine a sea, a bluish-mauve sea (like an Impressionist's vagary), an undulating sea of bluebells. They are so thick, they hide the green of the grass and that of their very leaves. It is all blue, blue, blue. It throws me into a frenzied enthusiasm. I feel like a colt in a rich green field. How I'd love to throw myself in all that blue, to writhe in it, to roll in it, to crush it, to kiss it, to sleep in it and awake in the morning with

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the feel of it under my cheek, with blooms in my hair, and clutched in my hands.

Austen says I am a pagan. If to be a pagan means to love the real things like the trees and the sun, and the pools so enigmatic, and the wind that lifts your hair as you run, and the smell of crushed grass, and, *oh, je ne sais pas moi*, all, everything that makes you happy to be alive, then, yes, I am a pagan. And so is he, for he loves all these things, though not so exuberantly as I do. If he did not I would dislike him—more, despise him. It's very uncharitable, I know, but I have a contemptuous dislike for people who can't hear music, and can't tell blue from green. They can't help it, it's true, well, neither can I. They are inferior beings, incomplete, not quite human, don't you think ?

We discovered a tiny pond, with a tree up to the waist in it, and pink and white nymphæa, solitary and majestic, sitting on the water like on a throne.

"It's here they found Ophelia," I said.

"Yes, where the water is black, over there under the pink nymphæa."

I am so glad he lends himself spontaneously to make-believe. I am so glad he understands. If he had seen in the sleeping little pool merely six feet of stagnant, insanitary water, there could have been no communion between us at all.

What lovable flowers are water-lilies ! There are flowers one can admire but feel no tenderness for. Take the mignonette, for instance, and the pansy, the geranium, the dahlia, the foxgloves, so many of them—pooh ! their personality does not appeal to you. And

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then think of the rose, the lily, and the lilac—oh, the lilac, those intensely white grapes still green at the tip, and so perfect, so crisp, so compact that you want to bite them. There are huge bushes of them in Kew Gardens near the sun temple—purple, blue, pink, mauve, violet, and dead white. They called me from the cottage. I came straight to them, guided by the smell. But to come I had to tear myself away from the rhododendrons. You never saw such a wealth of blooms. And the colours! from a faint flush to a deep flame. They were so noble, so magnificent, I could only say, "Oh!" and gasp at each beautiful towering bush, but I love the bluebells best.

"Zola must have seen this, Brother Austen, when he wrote of the 'Paradou.'"

"Perhaps. But no, there were also fruits for Albine to pluck, here only flowers for Phrynette to see."

We had tea in the Gardens under a creeper-covered pavilion on the side of a large avenue. In that avenue you can see where the "little people" meet at night and dance; the trace of their tiny feet has worn large rings on the grass. Austen says he knows an Irishman who is quite intimate with the "little people," so there! I have so often wished I could be superstitious; one is never lonely who has fairies, goblins, *farfadets*, gnomes and djinns, legends and beliefs for companions.

We could not very well help seeing the Pagoda, but we kept away from it as much as possible and, quite unexpectedly, behind some evergreen bushes, we stumbled on a shrub of pink briars, lovely, fragile, complicated little briars of the colour of blotting-paper. A whiff of remembrance came to me at the sight.

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Around Aunt Hortense's domain, where *petit père* and I spent so many happy holidays, there are fields and fields of the same briar, and oh, I remember so well. We used to get up at four o'clock in summer, father and I, to have a peep at the rising sun in the pink horizon. There in the south of France the dawn is short and dazzling. I still can see the streaked sky, the orange sun between the rents in the white mist, and the briar as far as one could see, each twig tied to another by dewy webs. Then, suddenly, no mist in the dancing air, no shadow on the pink earth, no cloud on the indigo sky, the sun had become a burning mass of gold, and *petit père* and I returned to our beds, chilly but radiant, for three more hours' sleep. To come upon that clump of pink briar in Kew Gardens was almost like stumbling over a tomb—France seemed so far—and then, *petit père* . . .

I knelt and put my arms around the shrub, and buried my nose in it.

Sir Austen is very gentle mannered; he wiped my eyes and the knees of my frock almost as tenderly as Gracieuse would have done.

Have you seen the roses in Kew Gardens? Of course you have. Everyone has, I suppose, who is in England in June. Before we had seen them at all behind the yew hedge I had said to Austen: "Oh, but it smells like France here!"

And then we turned the corner, and here was a bed of blood-red Victor Hugo, in all their glory. And the Caroline Testout, and La France, and the William Allen Richardson in their buds of the colour of the yoke of eggs, and those magnificent German 'Fraus,

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pure, large, healthy and prolific. O the delights of such a collection ! It made me perfectly unhappy. And then there were other people, quite a crowd, looking at those roses, and I felt jealous.

They were Philistines, all of them, I know. Could I not see they were far more interested in Sir Austen and myself than in the roses, and I even heard a girl say to another, as she took stock of my frock :

“ You see, the skirt is gathered on the hips under the tunic.”

Barbarian, *va !*

If I had a garden of my own, I would have high hedges all round it, and no one would enter it without showing *patte blanche*.

We did not see all the Gardens, we could not, in only one afternoon. We spent half-an-hour in Norway, among the pine-trees, which we left at the turning of a lane for a French garden of the seventeenth century, the pride of Le Nôtre. But we were very glad when the pretentious little alley between borders of box brought us to the English country, with around us the sweet, enervating smell of new-mown hay—not Bichara's *Nouveau Foin Coupé*, which is very, very nice, you know, Bichara, but which (not even yours) smells of anything but hay.

I clasped my two hands around Sir Austen's arm, and made him stand still

“ Brother Austen.”

“ Little sister ! ”

“ I am not going home to-night, nor you either, I won't let you. We'll hide here somewhere and let them

THE " PARADOU "

shut us in. I must see those fairy gardens by moonlight. We can sleep in the hay. You'll have this stack and that's mine. We'll be very 'comfy,' but if I call, come at once. I may have a spider in my neck."

He laughs.

"Oh, but I mean it. Oh, let us. Why not? I won't catch cold, it's quite warm this evening."

"No, you little temptress."

"Oh, do say yes, do, do!" and I dance excitedly around him.

He shakes his head. "What about Lady Barbara and Gracieuse, eh?"

"Oh, it's all right, they know you are with me."

"That does not make it any the better, I am afraid. Those absurd *convenances*, Phrynnette, you see."

"*Convenances!* Oh, Austen, *voyons!* but you might have had a girl like me for your daughter if you had not wasted so many years!"

There, I am afraid, my tact slipped from me in my excitement.

Austen still says no, but he laughs no more. And he spells no with three n's, so it's no good insisting any longer. (All the same, I like a man who can pit his will against mine.)

Slowly, soberly, regretfully, we pass under the fragrant arch of the rose walk, towards the gate where the lion and the unicorn keep watch over our "Paradou."

On the threshold Sir Austen stops and turns with a sigh towards the enchanted land behind us. There, I knew it! He also would have liked to see the little pond, *à la* under the moon.

XVIII

BOND STREET

LADY DARE was not at home that afternoon, but I was told Sir Austen had said he wished to see me if I called. I found him in the library, standing by a huge wood fire—the only kind of fire one ought to have, really. It is so much more beautiful than a coal fire, and the crackling of the logs and the sparks stimulate one's mind in the dulness of a closed room.

Sir Austen's smile of welcome interrupted a frown.

"*Eh, bien ?*" I said, pushing away a pile of papers from the corner of the writing-table, that I might sit there, "have you speculated on the Stock Exchange and lost, or did you risk too much at bridge?"

"Neither," said Sir Austen, kicking a log back into the blaze with the energy of crossness. "I leave the one to fools and the other to women. But to-morrow is Vivian's birthday, her thirty-fifth birthday."

"Twenty-eighth," I corrected.

"Oh, is it to be her twenty-eighth this year?" he asked with a smile—brothers are so ungallant. "The deuce if I know what I am going to give her." And he pulled his fair moustache as if for an inspiration. "She has so many things, too many things."

"Give her a book," I suggested.

"Oh, she has no time for reading. You have no idea

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how hard-worked a London smart woman is. Vivian has got *The Times* craze, like everyone else, but she makes Monty read the books that float on the surface, so to speak, and tell her about them while they go shopping together."

"Give her a jewel then. A woman never has enough of them."

"But I know nothing about trinkets. Will you come with me and help me to choose?"

A quarter of an hour afterwards both of us were doing Bond Street. I like Bond Street. The shops there are less aggressive, the goods more discreet, and the women more refined than in other streets.

We almost quarrelled, because I would not go into the shop before I had inspected everything in the window. He said that was not the way to buy. I said it was the way women always did their shopping. Then once in the shop he seemed to lose all his nerve. Why, he would have bought the very first thing the man showed us. But I did not let him. I had come to help him through, and I said, "Oh no, not zat!" so often that I could see he wanted to say "Damn!" and run away. It's funny men would face the silent death of the Sahara without a tremor, but it is with a craven heart they explore a jeweller's shop. Yet I could not let any old thing left over from the deluge be passed off on him simply because he was only a man with money to spend. So I protected him as best I could. I wanted something artistic, but—it sounds strange and yet I assure you it is true—I saw nothing artistic in the shop at all. Plenty of splendid stones—yes, pearls, white, chaste and

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demure, like an English debutante; rubies like the loose grains of a pomegranate; topazes like the dregs of a glass of Chartreuse; turquoises like some bits of serene sky set in a ray of sun; and diamonds beautiful, though not at all so beautiful as a drop of dew—the parting tear of dawn—on a cabbage leaf. There were millions of francs' worth of gems in that shop, I dare say, but I saw no jewel I'd really care for—no design, no chic—it was all so conventional, so *démodé*. I thought of our Lalique, and Boutet de Monvel, and other less famous artisans of art, who had made the setting of a jewel more admirable still than the stone, and wondered that London—London, the universal provider—could offer nothing else to its fair women than those soulless ornaments.

We bought a funny little charm for Lady Dare, a small monkey of diamonds with a grinning face of rubies. It was a rather useless and not over-beautiful thing, but somehow I thought she'd like it.

“You see,” as I explained afterwards to her brother, “she is so fond of beasts.”

“She is overfond of puppies, anyhow,” he exclaimed. The anger in his tone made me look up and follow the direction of his eyes, and as a smart brougham whirled by I saw in it a large blue hat which I knew well, and very close to the hat a pretty boyish face that I knew still better.

“Why,” I gasped, “that's Lawrie!”

Sir Austen turned round in a rage. “What,” and he looked fierce, “did she, did she introduce him to you?”

“No, not exactly,” I said; “but we are almost neigh-

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bours, you see." And I told him, well, not all—not all, certainly, but that he had spoken to me in the garden.

"Well, you are never to speak to that man again," Sir Austen commanded—it is extraordinary, but I positively enjoyed his commanding tone—"he is a vile little creature. You would not understand how much so, but you must promise me never to have anything to do with that contemptible little *bel ami*!"

Of course I promised. I was only too glad to be let off so easy, and my dissimulation made me feel very humble indeed, and also mean. It is very hard to be mean with Sir Austen, somehow.

Fancy Lady Dare allowing Lawrie near her after all she told me against him, and knowing him as she does. Perhaps she hopes to regenerate him. That's real Christian love. And Sir Austen called him a "*bel ami*." Oh, my pretty Lawrie with the nun's face!

It was to be a day full of incidents. Crossing hurriedly to avoid a taxi-cab my heel caught in the lace of my petticoat, and down I went, with my knees in the gutter, while the car actually passed over the hem of my skirt. I was up before I had time to realise I had fallen, but I felt giddy, and everything seemed to be unreal. I had a vision of Sir Austen bending over me with a very pale face—I would not have believed he was so easily upset—and I thought I heard a voice asking, "Darling, are you hurt?" But it was not like his voice, so I must have imagined it. Like everybody who falls down and feels ridiculous, I laughed and shook my curls and said I was all right, but as a matter of fact my knees felt as if they had been peeled off, only I could not make

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sure in the street, and my frock was just a picturesque ruin. But Sir Austen had gripped my elbow and was getting me away, for I had collected quite a little crowd. What a curious lot Londoners are ! They are more like gaping provincials than *blasés* citizens of a capital, are they not ?

The grip conducted me into a passage, and then up a stair, and before I knew where I was we had entered a well-lit tea-room full of smart women. I was acutely conscious of my mud-stained skirt and soiled gloves, and I knew too my hat must be at the wrong angle, but I still felt the hot grasp on my arm and I walked in the full glare realising how it is that a woman can be heroic at times, and feeling like Joan of Arc braving *the* enemy after the archangel had appeared to her. We sat in a corner as far as we could and had tea. Oh, that tea . . . it made me drunk. . . . I could not eat ; everything tasted like blotting-paper. I knew it was not the fault of the pastry, though it was English, but because, whenever I have a great emotion food chokes me. Every time I go to confession I starve myself for days before, and almost faint with inanition in the dreaded box, though my sins are not particularly atrocious, just like everybody else's, I suppose, and my confessor is a dear. . . .

It was so delicious to be there having tea with a real, grown-up, serious-looking man. All the women looked at us, and I felt so proud. Fancy that it should be none of these English ladies sitting here with him, but just me, Phrynette, and my frocks not quite long yet, and my hair like a page's !

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Once I felt on the seat for my purse, and he put his hand down to get it for me, but instead of my purse he picked up my hand by mistake. My nerves must have been unhinged by my accident, because I felt as if I had been touched by an electric current. I was galvanised. It's extraordinary; nobody else's touch ever made me feel like that. Then all my limbs got soft and nerveless. It was the same sensation of happy weakness one experiences when one gets out of bed after a long illness. I felt the blood leaving my face, and all I could do was to prevent my eyes from closing.

"Phrynette, what is wrong? You are not well?" he said, almost like Gracieuse, and so kindly I thought I would cry.

"*Oh, mais si,*" I said. "*Oh, si!*"

I could not find my English words. I was so happy, it was like being in France again.

"It is your fall," he went on anxiously. "Are you sure you are not hurt?"

"Yes, I am hurt, and it's lovely."

"Have another cup."

The English seem to think that all ills are to be cured by drinking or eating, don't they? Whether it is a sore heart or a headache they'll say, "Have a cup of tea," or "Have a whisky-and-soda," as we would say, "Take some distractions," or "Take antipyrin."

It is funny that almost all the women there were either by themselves or with other women. There were a few men sprinkled about, but too young-looking to be their husbands. How is it English husbands are so seldom with their wives? I read the other day that an

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Englishman dispensed more easily with woman's company than she with his. Now I think that is very true. It is one of the first things that struck me here. Give an Englishman his cosy corner at the club, his favourite paper, his cigarette of his special brand, and his whisky-and-soda, and, for many hours at any rate, his fellow-biped might become an extinct product of the creation. Perhaps I exaggerate; but one fact is certain, that an Englishman can be quite satisfied far from the company of women, and that the most devoted father, husband or son will, on the whole, spend very little of his time with his womankind.

Of course we have many bachelors, too, in France, but no woman-hater. I have always wondered how monasteries could exist in our country. The worst of French husbands is more in the company of his wife than is the ideal husband in England. And it is very seldom that you see an English boy escorting his mother about. I know many a *jeune fille* in France who is kept in gloves, perfume and bouquets by her brother, and who is accompanied and chaperoned and spoilt by him. Until he marries she monopolises a great deal of his leisure, for with Frenchmen the love of club and sports is more often than not only a pose, which they are pleased to consider chic.

There may be some psychological reason for it, peculiar to the Englishman, with which I, as a girl and a foreigner, am not acquainted, but it certainly seems difficult to reconcile their aloofness from their womankind with the regard and true chivalry which an Englishman shows towards women. A Frenchman will be very quick

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to resent any lack of respect towards his wife or sister ; but, as a tribute to justice, it must be admitted that he himself is not troubled by many scruples where other men's wives and sisters are concerned. A pretty woman, or a young woman, even quietly dressed and perfectly *comme il faut*, cannot walk alone for ten minutes in a French town without being subjected to objectionable attentions from men of all classes. People wonder that unmarried girls of good family in France are not allowed to go about unaccompanied ; but they do not realise that this would mean to submit sensitive and refined girls to a very uncomfortable ordeal. I notice that strangers are very apt to criticise (and perhaps in this respect English people are the greatest offenders) what they regard as the absurd customs of another country, without stopping to inquire whether they may not have their origin in the peculiar circumstances of that country.

One of the delights of England for my country-woman is that healthy latitude and independence that the Englishman's courtesy enables her to enjoy. Englishwomen, who are used to going about free and unmolested, do not know what it means to the girls of France—their first outing in London without a chaperone, walking alone without being followed, looking at shop windows without being spoken to by the inevitable *vieux marcheur*, sitting in a public carriage without being subjected to annoyance by the cad opposite or the man next to her. Though the London woman takes it for granted, to the Parisienne respect from the man in the street—at least, freedom from insult at every turn—is a delightful, almost incredible novelty.

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It may be that the once and deservedly renowned French politeness has also been a victim of the guillotine, but the fact remains that we of the twentieth century know it only by hearsay. Politeness and the respect of cult and the art of conversation are with us, the modern citizens of France, things of legend, which we are told existed once; things quaint and pleasant, like the smell of the lavender still floating about in your grandmother's *escritoire*, or like the smothered sounds you can draw from her spinet, but things not to be associated with our dashing modernism.

I do not assume that these old-world virtues have survived better in England than with us, but the English at least possess still the essence of politeness, which, after all, is the best part of it, and which in France is fast evaporating. The Englishman may not be charming, but he is respectful. The Frenchman can be charming when he chooses; no longer does he know how to be respectful. And the pity of it is that women, even perfectly honest women, are forgetting what respect to them means; they are becoming quite satisfied with the coarser kind of admiration, much as an untrained palate might enjoy a *vin ordinaire* in preference to some old *cru* of a less pronounced flavour.

It is possible that the Englishman gets much of his well-bred correctness from the fact that the women with whom he mixes are of his own class, whereas, apart from the women he meets at home, the Frenchman's lady friends could not be received by his mother. When you meet him in the part of chevalier servant to some fair companion, you may be sure the lady is either

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a close relation of his or someone whom his female relatives would pretend not to see. So the Frenchman has to cultivate two different vocabularies and two different behaviours, and it is no wonder if he does not seldom get confused in his somewhat complicated code of manners. If this is one of the real reasons for our men's decadence, much benefit to the morality and politeness of young France might be brought about by a freer association of nice girls with their brothers' friends; but, in the present state of things, what French mother would be disposed to try the experiment?

If the Englishman's life is chiefly spent with male companions, if he keeps business and home apart from one another, it may, as a compensation, cause him to idealise woman. While in France woman is mixed up in every phase of man's life, while she is his helpmate, his partner, his companion, and not seldom his servant, perhaps his constant familiarity with her has the contrary effect. There is still in every Frenchman a great deal of the Oriental way of looking at woman. And the French wife knows it, but she goes on helping her "man," be she duchess or *midinette*. She will forgive again and again, she will let him squander her *dot*, and will learn how to do with fewer frocks (the delight of every Frenchwoman) in an ever-pitiful attempt to patch up the fortune and happiness he has wrecked. If she happen to be a shopman's wife, he needs no book-keeper or manager; she will be there from morning till night, the slave of the ledger, careful of every centime; while he too often will leave the heavier part of the business to her capable hands and turn his attention

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to a domino party at the nearest café. If she be a peasant's wife no one on the farm will slave harder than she. There is scarcely any labour which she will not undertake.

In every sphere woman is too often the man of the house. Nowhere is feminine influence more active, more felt, and less recognised than in France. And nowhere among the civilised nations is man more dependent on woman, more attached to her, and—less respectful.

And on the whole I don't know that the English-woman is not the happiest and the English husband the best, only I hope I am not letting myself be influenced by . . .

"A penny for your thoughts," said Sir Austen.

"Well," I replied, "you don't set a very high value on them."

"Oh, that's an idle remark," he protested, "it is what one would say."

Yes, it is what one would say! I have noticed before that people here are very fond of ready-made sentences. Perhaps it is only when you are quite intimate with them that they take the trouble to shape their own thoughts for your benefit.

Dear Sir Austen, I wonder why I like him so much. He is not a bit like *petit père*, and I thought once I could only like a man just like *petit père*. He is not what one would call clever—not witty, anyhow. He does not shine in conversation, but only says what he has to say in his kind, well-bred voice. He is just straight, strong and simple, and I like him to be just that. It would not suit him to be more subtle, or to talk brilliant, clever nonsense.

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I can like even his pig-headedness, and his prejudices, and he has many. I have stopped using powder because he does not approve of it. Though that is, of course, utter narrowmindedness on his part. Powder does not give one a complexion, but it idealises the skin with a touch of mystery pretty much as the veil does to the features. To argue that it is an artifice is *rot*, as Monty says. What is *not* artifice in the feminine toilette? What is the curling iron if not an artificial aid to loveliness? What are corsets? Were we intended to measure twenty-two round the waist? Were we born with nails as pink and shiny as the inside of a shell and with toes distorted by too narrow boots? Why should some artifices be permissible and others considered wrong? The humblest little French servant uses powder as she uses hairpins, as a matter of course, and she is right to think it is more becoming to her face than a rope of false pearls.

That powder of mine has already caused an explosion in our household. One day I found Aunt Barbara *en arrêt* before my dressing-table, her accusing index pointing to my powder box.

"What is this, Phrynette?"

"My powder box, Aunt Barbara. Look, isn't it cleverly engraved, that little nude woman combing her hair?"

"Nude woman indeed! And a powder box! Where did you get it?"

"*Petit père* gave it to me."

"Just what he would do. Ah, I always told your poor mother your father had no sense of right and

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wrong. Don't interrupt me, please. An overgrown boy, that's what he was. Powder box . . . ugh . . . road to perdition. . . . Now I'll confiscate this unless you promise never to use it again."

I promised, of course. I find a pocket powder puff just as convenient; but here you have the explanation of woman's hypocrisy in a nut . . . in a powder box. Had I been brought up by Aunt Barbara I'd be a vile little sneak by now. Let tutors, aunts and husbands be as tyrannical as they please . . . *le diable n'y perdra rien.*

"And your birthday, when will it be?" asked Sir Austen, as we drove back to Aunt Barbara after tea. "I wonder if you'll let me give you a small trinket when you are an old lady of eighteen?"

"Well, etiquette forbids it, you know. At least, it would in France as you are neither my father, nor my brother, nor . . . nor . . . nothing."

He laughed. "And yet I am very substantial, am I not?" Then seriously, and in a very soft voice, "I wish I were your brother, little one, as I can't be your father, nor . . . nor . . . nothing, as you say. Let's pretend I am your big brother. I'll call you Phrynette and you'll call me Austen. *C'est entendu*, Phrynette?"

"*Cui*, Austen."

"Then let's shake hands over it."

What is wrong with me? I fear I am ill. I have had the measles and they say you can't have it twice. I have had influenza and growing pains, but it's not that either. It is a kind of fever, and I can't sleep at night. Perhaps it is the climate.

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I am rather troubled, too, because he said he also had a birthday and that he was going to ask me for a present —there was something he wanted very particularly and he would let me know. Now I'd gladly give him everything I have, only I have nothing worth offering a man. He would not care for girls' things and trinkets, I suppose, and I am terribly hard up. I could not buy anything really nice enough for him. It's Gracieuse who has the finances since father is gone, and she keeps me rather short, and I don't like asking Aunt Barbara. I hope Sir Austen won't ask for anything very dear.

XIX

A PATRIARCH AND A CAD

I AM afraid I am in love. I can't say for certain, because it is my first attack ; but by what I have read about it, it seems very much like it. First of all people lose their appetite, do they not ? Well, there was *compote* of pigeons at dinner and I had just one tiny helping, and I adore pigeons *en compote*. I think, *ça y est !*

Very often now I feel as if I had run through the desert. I am hot, all is empty, and my lips feel sandy. It is then I think of kisses and strawberry ices, and at night search with my feet for the cool places in the bed. At such times one's arms feel so useless. If I were a painter or a sculptor I'd never represent an angel with arms, only wings, arms cling so to the earth, they are so strong and so weak, so human.

I wonder whether it ever happens to other people, sane people, I mean, to beat the air with their arms, and look at them, and kiss them, inside where the blue veins show, and sigh and blush ? I hope I have not " a spider in the ceiling," as Monty would say if he happened to know French decently, I think the classical English translation is " off your chump," is it not ? I do hope it is not a sin to kiss one's arms (why should it be ?) because I'd have to confess it, and it makes me ashamed

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somehow to speak of these things in the confessional. Though of course Father Francis is not a man. I think it is because of the dark I feel so nervous, I never know whether he is looking at me or not.

There is nothing in my catechism about arm-kissing, so I'll just say nothing. If Father Francis asks me, then I'll tell—that's fair.

Speaking of confessions, I wonder what has become of dear little Gabrielle, to whom the confessional was like the ante-chamber of paradise? She must be in a convent, I suppose, she was so good. At fourteen she was in love with one of the vicars of the Madeleine—it was a beautiful, spiritual love, like that of Sainte Thérèse for Jesus, and as she did not sin enough to go to confession as often as she wanted to, and did not dare to repeat always the same stock sins, she used to invent all sorts of shocking misdeeds. Once she asked me if I would advise her to say she had attempted to poison her *fräulein*. I dissuaded her.

"Thou seest," she used to say to me with her pretty head on one side and her long mystic eyes half closed, "*mon vicaire chéri*, he will get tired of my having been lazy three times since last confession, it's too mild. If I were a real sinner now he might get really interested in the salvation of my soul."

Well one day she discovered in the "Guide to Confessions" a beautiful sin—I mean a sensational one, something so black or so inexplicable that she would never tell me afterwards what it was. Very likely she did not understand it herself. But whatever it was, *mon Dieu*, what a tremendous sensation it caused, what a

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scandal! She was refused absolution and told that damnation was her fate if she did not reform such unnatural and precocious perversity. Nothing so terrible ever happened to me. But then I never was so good as Gabrielle. I say as little as possible; why should one give a bad opinion of oneself even to one's confessor? I let the father ask, and when I don't quite understand I always say "yes," to be on the safe side, see? *Et voilà*. Ah! but it is an exhilarating sensation is confession! when it is over.

Another sign of love is that everyone grates on me now. When Gracieuse puts the room in order at night and helps me to undress, I, who used to hate being alone, long for her to go away and leave me to think silly, half-formed thoughts, and look at length at myself in the glass from full face and profile, to see if I am at all lovable. I do so wish I had a Grecian nose! How can people take you at all *au serieux* if you have a *nez retroussé*!

"Say then, Gracieuse, dost thou think I am pretty?"

"Pretty, my little angel? Why, *bien sûr*, thou art pretty. Thou art the portrait of thy papa, *ma mie*. Maybe thy hair is a little red, but then I am told some people like that. Thou art as pretty as the Saint Virgin!"

Well, that is a comfort, but perhaps that is only Gracieuse's opinion. And Sir Austen . . . Why, yes, of course it is Sir Austen, who else?

It seems my destiny to sigh for the inaccessible. When I was little I wanted to live at the top of the Eiffel Tower, and now I am in love with an heir to an earldom. It is hard lines, as Lawrie used to say. I know.

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Sir Austen likes me, but just as I used to like my white mice, because they were pretty, amusing and tame. It feels soft and nice when they run up your sleeve, and they trust you so. But one does not marry a white mouse.

I have a post card with the photograph of Miss Gabrielle Ray as Cupid. He sent it to me because he said she was rather like me, and that is the only concrete souvenir I have of him. I cherish that post card and I am jealous of it. I am not so pretty as that really, and he must see the difference. I sleep with it under my pillow, and when the light is out I rub my cheek against it and laugh and cry. Whoever invented love or imported it to civilised countries discovered a very foolish thing indeed. He should have taken a patent with all rights reserved. I can see no sense in it at all, and still less satisfaction. Those who speak of love's joys, I think they make it all up. I don't believe they know anything about love whatever. It does not feel like joy in the least. My life was not very happy before, but now it is horrid, and I am not referring to the loss of appetite, that is nothing—I am not "*carried on the mouth*," as we say in French. But I live in a state of suspense and discomfort; you know the draughty waiting-room feeling, when it's foggy outside and one is not sure when the train is due. My aunt noticed I was getting thin, and that "the round of excitements I had been through with my new friends must be the cause of it." So much for the perspicacity of aunts in general!

She happened to say this before the fat gentleman with fishy eyes. I call him mentally Mr Churchwarden, because my aunt says he is one, and I don't remember

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his name. He said if Lady Barbara would excuse him . . . yer . . . he thought that distractions were good for young people . . . yer . . . no, not late hours certainly, but innocent relaxation, yer . . . and what would our young lady say to a visit to Madame Tussaud, eh ?

The young lady—that was I—did not say anything, but Aunt Barbara gushed out : “ How very kind. Why don't you say thank you, Phrynette, and go and put your hat on directly. Not the one you had on yesterday, it is a ridiculous object.” It was a ravishing thing from Carlier. Father had chosen it with me and paid one hundred and fifty francs for it.

I did not care at all going to see Madame Tussaud ; if she were a relation of the churchwarden I was sure not to like her. I had an idea she might be keeping a school for other young ladies, and perhaps they would ask me to play the piano, and I hate to play before strangers ; and they would be sure to say grace before dinner with their eyes closed, which makes people look so hypocritical and makes me want to tickle them, and then they would show me their crochet work and their post card albums. I don't care very much for the society of girls. They are all about the same—the well-brought up ones, I mean—those that are always given as an example at school and at catechism. They only talk about marriage, and frocks, and naughty novels they have borrowed from their married friends. At least, most French girls I know are like that, but perhaps English girls are more interesting. I don't know, I haven't met any yet.

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Once in my room I stamped my foot and said very earnestly, as I have heard some golfers say, "Damn Madame Tussaud!" I can very well understand men say "damn." It *does* afford relief to your feelings. I think it's because it begins with a "d." To pronounce "d" you clench your teeth, and that grinds away your bad humour. Any other word beginning with a "d" would do it just as well. I have tried to say "dear" instead, and it gives quite as much comfort. You try it.

Another thing I did not care for was to go alone with Mr Churchwarden. If he had not been in such a holy office, and Lady Barbara's friend, I would instinctively have classified him with those elderly gentlemen, the pests of Paris boulevards. Far more persistent in their attentions than younger men, perhaps presuming on their patriarchal looks to offend with impunity, they are a perambulating nuisance let loose. You can't stop to buy a bunch of violets, or drink in a millinery window, but some *vieux marcheur* should come and rub against you and mutter some audible appreciation of your face and figure.

Fancy Madame Tussaud being a Musée Grevin, only larger! I was so glad that I could even put up with the churchwarden. I made him hold the catalogue while I guessed ~~who~~ the wax people were, and he was to tell me when I was wrong. I guessed quite a respectable lot, except that I took King Canute for Charlemagne and Shakespeare for Charles the First. Dear old Dickens I knew at once. I read all his books when I was young, and though I jumped over the preface I always had a

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look at his portrait and wondered what he and the people of his time could see in the little goat beard and low, turned-down collar. We have so much better taste now. I fancy that Dickens is perhaps more of a personal friend with the French young people than with the English growing generation; but then what would there be for us French girls to read if it were not for English novels? Humane, big-hearted, brainy Dickens, it makes one feel good but to think of him. I love him in spite of my critical judgment. When I have wept myself unsightly over little David, or laughed aloud at the *bonhomme* Pickwick until Gracieuse catches the contagion and has to stop her knitting to wipe her eyes, my critical judgment tells me, "Why, can't you see those unblushing coincidences Dickens forces on you would not pass muster to-day in any halfpenny paper serial? And as for the people you are sobbing for, they are as unreal, taken as characters, as the touches about them are realistic. Did you ever meet a girl like Emily, or like the other honeyed maiden, what's her name, in Bleak House? *Allons donc!* It's only the *jeune fille a marier* before the eligible *parti* in her mamma's drawing-room that is at all like the Early-Victorian heroine."

Well, even so, what if I prefer beautiful nonsense that makes me vibrate, to a well-built, plausible modern society novel, with people so real that you could put their true names instead of those the author has been at such pains to discover outside "*Who is Who?*" And, after all, imperfections won't make a man worshipped any the less if only he is a genius. . . .

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Why, we have had great actors with bad elocution, and beautiful women with unsymmetrical ears.

At the end of the gallery I got an awful disappointment. Mr Churchwarden took me opposite a little wax man, dusty and yellow.

"And this, who do you think this is?" he asked.

"I don't know; some forger, I suppose, seeing that he has got a pen and a sly look."

"Pooh, pooh! My dear young lady, you must not judge by appearances in a place so mixed as this. This is Rudyard Kipling."

"I am so sorry!" I gasped.

Some clever person once said, and rightly, that no first disillusion could make us suffer as much as any vulgar toothache, and yet that disillusion did give me a sharp pull. I had done a little of hero-worship in regard to Monsieur Kipling—hero-worship is part and parcel of every girl's growing troubles—and there was my idol, mean-looking and moth-eaten behind a glass case! If only celebrities knew how advantageous for them it would be to remain the Interesting Unknown, how they would dodge the camera and Madame Tussaud! I believe Miss Corelli is as wise as she is clever.

Mr Churchwarden told me the melancholy story of a wax lady in black who spent all the sunshiny years of her life in the shade on suspicion of having poisoned her husband. It seems the husband was a brute, the lady beautiful, and faith in her innocence very strong, yet the poor thing was entombed in prison, and, as if that was not bad enough, at Madame Tussaud's also

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Unfortunately for her case, the lady had *un ami*, a thing unheard of in England, *vous comprenez*, and as her story was related to me it sounded very much as if the poor soul had been tried on one charge and convicted on another.

I must say our French judges are ever so much more tactful and sympathetic. No woman ever gets a hard sentence, but if a woman is beautiful she must not let worry wrinkle her pretty forehead. She may indulge in private chemistry to her heart's content. If the worst comes to the worst, why, there is a nominal sentence and every consideration, and, after all, two or three years of a quiet life are a splendid rest cure for women of a vivacious temperament.

We stopped in the hall to listen to the would-be *tziganes*. They were playing a French waltz, the only decent thing Machin ever wrote, accidentally, I suppose. When I say decent, I mean the music, for the words were almost as silly as that of English favourite songs, without being as proper. But of course the propriety of a song does not much matter in France, because when a song is successful two sets of words are written on the same tune, one for general use and the other for the drawing-room; or else, when it is the same words, certain couplets are underlined so that girls should know that they are not to sing these *devant le monde*—else their innocence might not discriminate.

Now I can understand why some women fall in love with *tziganes*; the one that ogled me had a doubtful collar and, alas, not at all doubtful nails, and I don't like a man to show the white of his eyes, but not quite

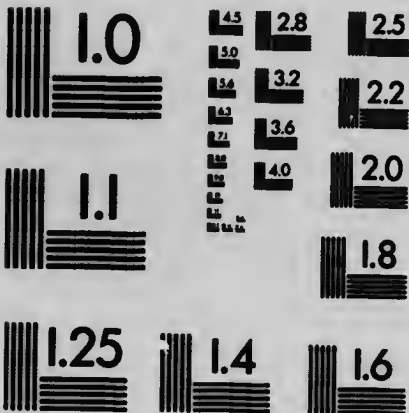
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all tziganes are dirty, and while they play they have a certain fascination. I can chiefly sympathise with princesses who have the tzigane mania, because the poor things as a rule are only served high personages, distinguished and uninteresting; and, as you say in English, "anything for a change." It's like garlic after *blanc-manger*. The smell of the garlic is horrid, I admit, but the eating of it is not so bad, I assure you. As for me, if I eloped with a tzigane I'd make him play to me all the time he was with me—I could not put up with him otherwise—and I am sure the princesses are awfully sorry once the violin is in the case. Like the French boy I knew, who proposed after each ball he went to, it was not so much the charms of the girls as the smell of the cut flowers, the sweet and just a little sickening blending of the different perfumes of the different women, and perhaps also the champagne. Well, to us women music is like champagne, *ça énerve*. Only we can't get out of our—"scrapes," I believe, is the term—as easily as men, chiefly as Frenchmen, because in France we have no breach of promise law. It's a pity in a sense. In theory it is a splendid law, but in practice I don't think any nice girl would sue a man she had ever loved, and have all her letters read aloud, nor consider a handsome cheque as sticking-plaster for her broken heart. I know I would not go to court on any account, not if I had been jilted a thousand times, to be stared at and have my frock criticised by all the women who crowd the court whenever there is any delicate matter to be judged. If I put on a brave face they'd say I was a brazen girl; if I looked shy, that



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PHRYNETTE AND LONDON

I was ashamed of myself, as I ought to be ; and if I did neither the one nor the other, they would be sure to say I was an unfeeling, mercenary sort of a girl. No, thank you !

It was in the chamber of horrors that the horrible thing happened. I was standing with my back to the churchwarden, fascinated by the placid-looking couple who murdered a dozen or so of servant girls, and *tout-à-coup* a large face came between me and the assassins (no, between the assassins and me, that is more polite), and the churchwarden kissed me, yes, full on the lips. Ugh ! . . . If it had been the murderer himself who had done it I could not have been more, how do you say ? flabberblasted. I was taken so much by surprise that I could not think of anything crushing or dignified to do. I wiped my mouth and just said " Oh ! " like this, as when a splash of water gets into your eye, but when I saw him still advancing, with his prominent waistcoat, his bulgy eyes, and his hairy hands, I quite lost my nerve. I never thought of my hatpins nor of using my cape to blind him like the matadors do in a bull-fight, nor, simpler still, of calling the attendant ; besides, I don't think I would ever have called the attendant. Imagine the fuss ! I made two steps backwards, then tucked up my skirts and ran like a coward. I got a last peep of a panting churchwarden from behind Mr Roosevelt, but I reached the door before him and shrieked to an astonished cabman to " Drove quick, quick." When I am excited all my verbs are hopelessly irregular. The cabby looked as if he suspected me to have run away with one of Madame Tussaud's cele-

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brities concealed in my wrist-bag, but he applied the whip to his horse nevertheless—it's the first time I ever saw a London cabby use the whip otherwise than as a pretext for picturesque gestures.

I suppose when I marry, to be quite honourable, I'll have to tell my husband that I have been kissed. He will be annoyed, but no more than I am. All the way home in the cab I was in a rage. I felt so humiliated, and humiliation is like the sting of a nettle, the after-rankle hurts more than the actual pricking. Fancy that the first man who should kiss me should be the churchwarden. How hateful! Kissing someone you don't like is like drinking from someone else's glass, both are rather disgusting, I think. I would not have minded so much if it had been Lawrie, because *he* was young and pretty, I mean of course before I . . . at least . . . that is . . . not now, *bien sûr*.

Now in France this would not have occurred, because I would have been on my guard. The man would have talked or looked naughty and betrayed himself from the very beginning, but my English patriarch looked so paternal as he explained to me who the wax people were, that, in spite of my presentiment that he was a cad, I was quite off the defensive. I wonder that the English people cut such indifferent figures on the stage when they are such splendid actors in real life!

I did not go straight to Aunt Barbara's after leaving Madame Tussaud. I drove to Grosvenor Place, and there re-enacted the "scene of the crime" for the enlightenment of Lady Dare and of Monty. I was glad

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Sir Austen was not there, I don't think I would have cared for him to know about it somehow. . . . They were very sympathetic. Lady Dare rearranged the velvet bow in my hair, and Monty said that "Mr Huggins is a stinking brute." I said, "Well, he *is* a brute, but I would not say he was . . . how did you say . . . malodorous." They laughed, and Lady Dare protested it was too bad to speak slang to a poor foreigner.

"And what is wrong with his wife?" I asked. "Aunt Barbara always calls her 'poor Mrs Huggins.'"

"Well, she is in a nursing home," said Lady Dare. "She is supposed to be somewhat of an invalid, but it is drink really."

"Drink! He married his cook, then?"

"What makes you think that, child? No, she is a lady, and a rather good sort, too. I used to know her pretty well once."

Fancy a lady, and she drinks! I thought it was only cooks who drank because of the hot work. At least that's what Aunt Barbara's cook said when she was found in a fit in the cellar. She was the first drunken woman I had seen in my life, and I wondered that my aunt should keep her, but she said that if she sent her away the next one might be a worse drunkard and a less able cook. It's terrible. I could understand their drinking in a way, if they got drunk on champagne—sweet champagne only, though—or nice claret, or anisette, but on beer; fancy, what a lot of beer one must ingurgitate before "getting gay." Why, it's like the torment of *la goule* in the good old times, the question by water.

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Lady Dare says lots of ladies take spirits now. I am so glad we Frenchwomen never get drunk nor take spirits except in the shape of a *canard*. The *canard* I mean is not a duck ; it's a lump of sugar you dip in your husband's *petit verre* after the coffee. It is sweet and melts in the mouth, but there is not Cognac enough in it to make a fly lively. I think I'd prefer to have any other vice than the drink habit, because some you can hide, but what are you to do with a red nose ? How awful !

XX

A FAMILY DINNER AT BAYSWATER

IT was one evening after tea at Lady Dare's. She was sitting at the piano, playing softly, "Oh, Dry those Tears," the sweetest of English songs, I think; perhaps because it is a Spanish woman who wrote it. I was sitting on the floor with one arm around her waist, thinking how nice it would be to have an elder sister like her, for under her superficiality she is very feminine.

Her song and my thoughts were cut short by a shrill and prolonged ring like the ring of a telegraph boy, and a girl and her brother entered the room. The girl wore a tweed costume, mustard and cress, and a round brown hat of cloth with a green scarf tied anyhow around it—you know the style of English costume you see in *Le Rire*. Her hair was twisted at the back of her neck symmetrically, like a coil of oakum, and she wore a net—yes, a net, fancy! It's hardly if you could find a few provincial old ladies in France still wearing these atrocities. She had a pleasant, open face, and could have been pretty if she had cared.

I did not notice how her brother was dressed, so, like most Englishmen, he must have been quite right; and he was very good-looking.

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"Madem'selle Chédor," said Lady Dare, "this is Miss Young. Mr Young, Madem'selle Chédor."

Miss Young snatched at my hand, crushed it, let it drop as if she had no further use for it, and said, "How d'you do?"

"Very well, thank you, and yourself?" I answered.

Now there is nothing ungrammatical or Frenchy in what I said, is there? The girl laughed in my face, then turned to Lady Dare, and for half-an-hour paid no more attention to me than if I had been a footstool. Only when Lady Dare had taken her brother away to the dark room to show him some negatives, she came, sat opposite me, crossed her legs, put her elbow on her knee, her chin in her hand, and stared at me.

"So you are the new pet," she said abruptly. "What's your name?"

"Phrynette Chédor."

"Phrynette, is it? Ripping name, Phrynette. Mine is Marjorie. What is your hobby?"

"What is a hobby?"

"Oh, don't you know, the thing one likes best?"

"I like being petted."

"You funny creature, that's not a hobby. Mine is hockey. Do you know hockey?"

"No; it's a kind of needlework, I suppose?"

She laughed. "Needlework, fiddlesticks. I say, Mademoiselle Phrynette, I like you awfully. Will you come and see us? I am sure the girls will be awfully taken with you. Do you know Bayswater? No, I don't suppose you do. Nobody lives there. That's where we live. Let us say Thursday. Oh, Thursday is the seventeenth, isn't

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it ? Our test match is coming on that day. What about Friday ? For dinner, mind you, not lunch. In the daytime you only find the mater at home, and she would bore you to death. Hi, Reggie," she cried, as her brother re-entered the room with Lady Dare, " here is a splendid opportunity of furbishing up your French. Come and talk to her."

" Her " ! That was me, but I would not speak a word of French, so indignant was I at their *sans-gêne*.

" Are they English ? " I asked Lady Dare after they were gone.

" Very much so," she said, with an amused smile.

" And are all English girls like her ? "

" No," with an uplifted glance of gratefulness ; " you have seen the sporting type to-day, but her unconventionality is only conventional, you know, child, and she is a very nice girl really, when you get to know her ; and the boy is rather nice too, don't you think ? "

I shrugged one shoulder. " Oh, *comme ça*, and he is not so much of a boy not to have better manners." You see he had not paid the slightest attention to me except when he wanted my help in the murdering of his French.

All the same I did go on the Friday. Anything was better than the routine of a dinner with only Aunt Barbara.

The Youngs have a lovely pair of twins. They are seven, and full of fun. We had a romp à *tout casser* in the nursery before dinner.

I forgot the dignity of my seventeen years and taught them a French rondeau, words and mimic. " On the bridge of Avignon, this is how they dance,"

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and The Four Corners, and The *Main Chaude*, and all the games father used to play with me in his studio between two sittings. I had no nursery, of course. French children in my time did not know what it was. I played where and when I liked.

I have often heard it said that our children were horribly spoilt. This may be true in many cases, but they could not be more lamentably spoilt than are English children.

The English nursery system is to be commended thus far, that it ensures the tranquillity of the parents, but at the same time it gives a child a kingdom of his own, where, like all young rulers, he often abuses his power and independence. In France the child living with the parents has to submit his tastes, his little conveniences, to those around him. He has to subdue his mischievous instincts and his fondness for too noisy pastimes. This in itself teaches him gentleness and self-control, while his close contact with his parents enables them to know the child better than by the accounts from the governess or the nurse, and to adapt their methods of education accordingly. An English mother who sees her child for an hour a day, when he is brought to her in an pinafore and best behaviour, may be blissfully ignorant that the same little angel was ten minutes before kicking his nurse's shins, or hiding the housekeeper's Sunday bonnet in the coalscuttle.

And there are chances that the nurse should value her situation more than her shins, or that the housekeeper should prefer to sacrifice her best bonnet rather than a comfortable living. So Master Teddy's or Miss Dolly's

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peccadilloes seldom reach the ears of the fond mother. She will not know that Teddy's pale face after tea was to be more justly attributed to a corner in buns than to growing pains, or that Dolly's cold was caught through dancing in her nightgown in the cold nursery, while Fräulein was penning sentimental variations on the "Vergiss mein Nicht" theme to a distant Fritz.

The English child is perfectly aware that he is surrounded by people paid to serve him, and towards whom consideration from him is not expected. There is no one in the nursery to check his tyrannical instincts, and it is no wonder that too often he grows up selfish, rough and self-assertive; while, having mixed very little with grown-ups or refined people in childhood, the English boy of twenty, or the English girl of seventeen is painfully awkward and self-conscious when they emerge from the chrysalis stage.

Now, though I mean all I have said, I have not said all that I mean, and I want to add that there is a freshness and an ingenuousness in the England of the school-room which the French system of education does not tend to develop in our children. A French boy of fourteen who accompanies his mother from the *couturier* to the fashionable tea-room, who helps her to receive her lady friends on her "day" with a delightful grace, keeping his ears and eyes open the while to the twitter and the flutter of the feminine aviary in which he finds himself, will gain a premature and not always an edifying knowledge of the world which all the efforts of poor Monsieur l'Abbé, his preceptor, will be unable to neutralise.

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As for the modern French girl, convent education is out of date, and there was never any "finishing school." She attends a few fashionable "*cours*" and lectures, accompanied by "Miss," with whom she is on the best of terms, but in whose judgment she has not much confidence—because "Miss" does not know how to do her hair. The French girl of sixteen does not go to the theatre, *et pour cause*, but the piece is analysed and criticised before her with a very enlightening openness. Her library is limited to a few indifferent translations of the most anodyne of English novels, but in her mother's drawing-room the latest divorce is wittily dissected, with many unfinished sentences and warning nods in her direction, while, very much interested, she listens with a perfectly assumed pretence of not understanding. And she grows up in that way, artificial, not over-frank, tactful, quick of perception and charming—in a word, eminently feminine.

Evidently this is not the ideal bringing up, but this constant companionship has one great redeeming feature in the close relationship and love between French parents and their children. This is especially true in the case of the mother. The same sentiment may be as fully exhibited by the English mother when her children are still in the featherless stage, but seems to cool somewhat the more they leave childhood behind them, while for the French mother, her grey-haired son and matronly daughter are as narrowly entwined around her heart as when suckling at her breast.

I would not have romped so heartily with the children had I known I could not make myself tidy and present-

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able before going down. I asked Marjorie where I could arrange myself, and she took me to the bathroom. It seems it is not the custom to have a *cabinet-de-toilette*, and in that bathroom there was only soap and water, towels and nail-brushes—enough to make oneself clean, I dare say, but not to make oneself nice. There was a small glass hanging on the wall, where I could see only the top of my hair; there was no powder to be had, and no *vaporisateur*. So that I got to the dining-room pretty much as I was in leaving the nursery, except that I had washed my hands.

The children did not come down. I missed them. They were typical English children—pretty, fresh, pink and white little devils with angels' faces.

In England childhood is the time in which good looks attain their *apogée*, and juvenile beauty is, I think, represented at its best in a beautiful British child—a privilege of infancy which too often is lost as the child emerges from its teens. Compare this ideally pretty little girl of ten with her plain sister of twenty—it is exactly the woman she will one day become. The fact has often struck me that the reverse process takes place with French children. Our children are seldom as beautiful as the little Briton, but we trust to time for the embellishing touches, and, chiefly in the case of girls, time does not as a rule disappoint us. The old story of the chrysalis and butterfly.

"And Teddy," I asked, "and Dolly, are they not coming for dinner?"

"Oh no," I was told, "the children will have supper in the nursery." I was disappointed, but quite aware that

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this was better than our French system, and that if we, the grown-ups, would miss much of the sunshine of innocent gaiety, on the other hand, the conversation could flow more freely, unchecked by the thought that young ears were there, eagerly receptive.

The dining-room was pleasant to look at, and eminently comfortable, if somewhat conventional. There was the mahogany sideboard, with a fair show of silver plate, of the same pattern as I had seen before in other houses. Evidently English silversmiths, like English jewellers, will not give themselves meningitis in their efforts at designing. They have but a few stock patterns, commonplace, monotonous, unchangeable, and, search as you may, one shop after another offers you the very same goods. The other day I wanted to make a present of a silver toilet set to a girl friend. I was shown the same, identical ware in every jeweller's shop. "Those 'Lily' sets are very dainty, are they not? We have also the 'Cupid' pattern, or the 'Louis XVI.' in embossed silver." I bought something else.

But it is not only where jewellery is concerned that I have noticed the touching and faithful fondness of the English people for one accepted, universal type. You can never have anything in London that your next-door neighbour does not also rejoice in. Is it all due to the conservatism of the English character, or is it that England has no designers in architecture, in dress, in jewellery, etc., nobody to create for them the "thing of beauty which is a joy for ever"?

The table was prettily decorated with chrysanthemums in their dishevelled beauty, far more prettily

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decorated than it would have been in a middle-class French family for an ordinary everyday dinner. The maid also contributed to the pervading aspect of gentility in her befrilled cap and apron, and her correct black gown, moulding her square waist and flat bust.

The hosts themselves presented a strikingly handsome family group. The father, a grey-haired Apollo, his once pretty, now faded, gentle-mannered wife, his four stalwart sons, and five determined-looking daughters. All were in evening dress, which surprised me as much as the floral decoration and the display of silver plate (though it may have been electro-plate), for I expected to see a very modest interior. A Frenchman of the same class, with a family of nine children (if it is possible at all to imagine a Frenchman with so numerous a family) would certainly have lived in a far more modest manner; but then, he would have to think of saving for his daughters' dowries, while those five big girls of mine host will be chosen for their *beaux yeux*. Another system better than ours, that of the English marriage, I thought.

The men looked irreproachable in their evening dress, but many things in the toilettes of the women "*laissaient à désirer*." Most of the girls had very brown necks—vestige of the summer sun. Two of them had evidently given a hasty brushing back to their hair before dinner, while the hair of the others, on the contrary, was over-frizzled, and made their heads appear twice their natural size. Their frocks too were badly cut, with a superabundance of common lace, and with ribbon of the wrong shade.

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When the ice had melted between the feminine portion and myself—a process in England never characterised by any undue haste—I found myself overlooking the *lèse-élégance* offences in my new friends, and began to enjoy them thoroughly—to enjoy them as a species of girl up to now quite new to me. They were frank, gay, simple girls, with open minds and breezy manners; girls who had thought for themselves, and, though of the upper bourgeoisie class, were working for their living; girls without any of those petty artificialities which spoil so many Frenchwomen. I decided that if I had had brothers I would have wished them to be like those girls.

The dinner I did not enjoy so much, though I dare say it was very good as English dinners go. The father said that he believed in the good old English plain fare. I suppose that accounted for the boiled vegetables and the heavy puddings. The coffee was as unlike coffee as any beverage I could think of. They kindly forced me to take two cups, as they knew how fond of coffee French people were. I could not tell them my liking for it had considerably diminished since I came to London.

They were all very thoughtful, though not quite so attentive to my wants as French hosts would have been. But after a while I discovered that they expected me to make myself "at home" and ask for or take what I wanted. I thought that this too might be a better system than ours, provided the guest was trained to it, otherwise he might vainly sign for more salt in his soup and have to drink his coffee without sugar.

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The dinner passed with a quiet gaiety, but all the time I missed something without which no French family gathering is deemed complete. And, though sentimentality is hopelessly *démodé*, I will confess that what I missed was the presence of a dear old grandmother and of a little child in the circle round the table.

Everybody showed me that simple kindness which is the very best kind of politeness, and which English people seem particularly to possess. They apologised most repentantly each time I made them laugh at my undaunted and experimental English, and in return carefully explained all their jokes to me. But the only two people I understood were the father and the mother. As to the boys and girls, I missed half they said, and naively told them so.

"Oh!" said one of the former, "it is our beastly slang, I suppose. And the girls, too, have got into a rotten way of talking. As for the governor and the mater, why, even a Chinaman could understand them."

XXI

LONDON AND OUR PENATES

EVELYN YOUNG is to be married. I was very surprised when Marjory told me.

"Why," I said, "I always thought she was the youngest of the whole lot of you girls."

"So she is," said Marjory, "and Edith is the eldest."

"And what does your father and mother say to that?" I asked. "Did they not want Edith to marry first?"

"Of course not. What a funny notion! Edith will marry or not as she pleases and when she pleases. Never fear, the pater and mater are too good a sort to put a spoke in our wheel."

It is no concern of mine, of course, but I fear poor Mr and Mrs Young are mismanaging the placing of their girls. Fancy allowing that chit of an Evelyn to come out and actually get engaged before securing husbands for all their eldest daughters; and there are five of them! They'll never manage it now. I have never heard of such a thing—disposing of one's spring goods before clearing away the old stock. It is not business. They manage these things better in my country. My little friend Jeanne, for instance, I remember what she told me about her marriage and that of her elder sister. They lived in the country and knew nobody,

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though their papa had made quite a fortune in buttons ; and they had an uncle who was a minister. When Thérèse, the elder sister, reached twenty and was still unmarried, the whole family got frightened she might *coiffer Sainte Catherine*, and mamma thought something must be done ; so, besides sundry candles and neuvaines to the patron saint, the godmother was consulted.

God helps those that help themselves.

The godmother lived in Paris, had a son in the army, and knew legions of nice young officers. So one day the godmother epauletted one of the nicest of the young officers, and told him she knew of such a charming girl, just the girl to suit him, two hundred thousand francs of a *dot*, and an uncle who . . . There the uncle was made to froth for all he was worth or might be worth. And one day the young man was carried off to a "fevoclock" visit and a cup of perfumed strawberry leaves—a decoction baptised tea—to my friend Jeanne's house. There was Thérèse handing the cups and saucers in a little bib apron of pink batiste and Alençon, of the same cut as those of Dinizulu's wives, only more of it, and, in the case of Thérèse, there was a pretty frock under the apron. All the same, I am glad it's no longer the fashion of mock aprons. The godmother pointed out how beautifully embroidered the tea serviettes were, and she felt sure it was the work of *cette mignonne*. Thérèse blushed, and her mamma said it was, and that there was nothing Thérèse liked better than to stay at home and do some needlework, even plain sewing ; *ainsi* she delighted in darning stockings and sewing buttons. The godmother said what a splendid training it was for the *chère enfant*.

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Then Thérèse offered some cakes, and her mamma said, "Oh, do taste one, Monsieur X., my little girl made these; cooking is her supreme distraction. Her great joy is to make some surprise dish for her father, who is a bit of a *gourmet*." And Thérèse, who did not know a leek from an onion, reblushed, and looked almost pretty. I don't know if I have said that Thérèse was *pas mal*, certainly but *rien d'extraordinaire, vous savez*. By-and-by the paragon in the bib apron was made to play a duet, but for that Jeanne had to be fetched from the schoolroom, where she was doing her lessons. They did not let her arrange herself, *vous pensez bien, pas si bête*, so she came in her black overall and inky fingers and her hair anyhow. Now though she has freckles Jeanne is or rather was a little pig-tailed Venus, and the black overall quite eclipsed the pink apron when she bounced in, all dimples and sweet eyes. I don't mean she made sweet eyes out of mischief; no, no, it's only a way some girls have of looking at people. They can't help it, poor things, no more than the people who squint.

That's what I had to explain to Aunt Barbara the other day when she took me to the bazaar—she was rather nasty about it, I think, though I sold such a lot of her crochet things—as if it were my fault about my eyes; it is constitutional. Why not reproach me with not laughing like a horse or not stalking like an ostrich. I went to the Zoo yesterday. Monty was there, and we had a ripping time. I would not like to be as floppy as a seal. They reminded me of a concierge we had—the same build, the same jellified,

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quavering carriage, and she used to flop about her loge in slippers and a night camisole at any hour of the day.

But I am forgetting Jeanne. Well, she played all wrong, and quite put Thérèse out, and to make matters worse she said it was the fault of Monsieur X.—that she could feel his eyes through her back, and that it made her all hot. Of course it was very tactless, but what will you? She was only sixteen! It would never do for girls to tell all that they feel, *d'abord*, because girls are not supposed to feel—physical things, I mean. What would Sir Austen think of me, I wonder, if I were to tell him that sometimes I'd like to rub against his sleeve and purr like a cat? Jeanne behaved so badly, and looked such a delightful, mannerless young thing that Thérèse's prospective *fiancé* fell in love with her there and then. Men are so indiscriminating, are they not? Mamma would not hear of Jeanne getting engaged before Thérèse had *trouvé preneur*, but Monsieur X., after some trouble and time, discovered a comrade of his with *bonne volonté* who consented to oblige everybody and marry Thérèse, but, as the friend said, Monsieur X. having got the best of the girls, the parents ought to make it two hundred and fifty thousand francs for Thérèse—and they did.

Evelyn is looking for a house or a flat. Her brothers are hinting that a change for the worse has come over her temper. It seems her choice is limited because eighty pounds or so is all the young couple will be able to afford for house rent at first. Evelyn's *fiancé* is a fifth son and a solicitor, but, on the other hand, he is good at all games and can ski like an angel.

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I told Evelyn she ought to be able to get quite a nice little flat for eighty pounds. That is what my piano teacher in Paris was paying for her flat, and she had a lovely little home near Auteuil racecourse and the Bois. It was on the fifth storey, it is true, but there was a lift and the telephone, and electric light, of course, three bedrooms, dressing-room, bathroom, two reception-rooms, large entrance hall, and——

“Don’t,” said Evelyn, “you make my mouth water. I am sure I won’t get anything like that in London !”

“Of course you will,” I affirmed ; “buck up, old girl (I am priding myself on my colloquial English, which, thanks to Monty and the Youngs, is improving wonderfully). And when you go flat-hunting again, will you take me with you ? I love to see new places and the insides of houses.”

So Evelyn took me with her, and for a week, propping up each other’s courage, we searched London together.

You have no right to be poor in London. Not only, as Mr Bernard Shaw has it, is it a crime, but it is a most painful sort of crime—it is suicide. In London everyone with less than a thousand a year is very poor indeed. A man of taste and refined inclinations has no business to expect comfort and happiness here, unless he is a man of means as well.

To begin with, the first condition to happiness is, I think, congenial surroundings. Where will you find congenial surroundings in London if you are not willing to pay a bigger rent than you can afford ? Don’t talk to me of “desirable residences,” “charming maisonettes,” and “bijou villas.” They are most tempting in the

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advertisement columns. I know all about them. I went, I saw, I wept. Have you ever been house-hunting in London, I wonder? And are you men and women of flesh and blood, or sheep willing to be bled by your landlords?

We first explored the south-west. The house agent, a wonderfully dressed young man, took the utmost pains with my accent and our requirements:

"Two reception-rooms, three bedrooms, dressing-room, usual offices, telephone, electric light? I think we have exactly what you want on our books. I dare say No. 32 would do very well, don't you think so, Snelgrove?"

Snelgrove said it was just the thing.

"How much?" we inquired.

"Two hundred and fifty pounds."

"Two hundred and fifty pounds? But we don't want a flat in Park Lane!"

The smart agent raised his eyebrows and informed us a shade less suavely that it was not in Park Lane, that it was above a shop, but very close to South Kensington Station, and would we care to view the flat? We declined. A look through his book convinced me that south-west was a forbidden land to people of moderate purse.

To west, and south, and north we turned like weather-cocks under the storm. At the east we drew the line, though I doubt if it could be much worse than some of the "up-to-date" flats and "choice" houses I saw elsewhere. Carpetless stairs, dark rooms, halls with dirty distempered walls, sooty backyards, slummy

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streets and decaying districts, that is all you are entitled to for your paltry eighty pounds a year. In one respect only does the landlord of flats rise to, or, indeed, above, our expectations—that is, in the christening of his barrack-like property. Nothing could sound better and look worse than the London flat.

How a painter can paint, a writer write, a poet dream, a musician play, young couples love, children sing and laugh between those dismal brick walls I cannot understand. It seems to me that once immured in those square blocks of monotonous symmetry, faced by "apartments" and a public-house, and backed by a mews, there are but two prospects in front of the average man with a mind not limited to a meal and a bed—namely, to give way to neurasthenia, and change his flat for a better and cheaper abode in the district mortuary, or else fly away, fly before it is too late, fly to Brussels, Paris, Berlin, to any city where the land system is not the abomination it is in England.

It would seem that chiefly in London is a cheerful home necessary to keep in you the joy of living which the town itself, with its depressing atmosphere, its dirt and its wayward climate, does so much to crush. Southerners who loll in the sun all day, take their meals out of doors, and only appreciate a roof at night and in time of sickness, do not need so much the cheering influence of a bright and beautiful *chez-soi*. But here landlords weigh your refinement in the same balance as your banking account. Beauty and cleanliness have, it seems, to be bought, like coal and bread, instead of belonging to us by right, like the air and the sun. Nowhere, I think,

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are the middle and working classes more grudgingly and meanly catered for.

Foreigners are struck with the hushed melancholy, like a moral fog, hanging over London and its inhabitants. But for the traffic the streets would be almost silent—no laugh, no song, no impetus. Imagine dolls with the spring inside them broken and you will have a good idea of how Londoners first appear to the stranger. And the stranger, seeing all those people with sober faces, says to himself: "This is indeed a serious race." The stranger is wrong. They are not a serious race, they are a resigned race. I am not speaking of the wealthy or the aristocracy. They cannot be called Londoners, who spend but two or three months in town, and are to be found in turn in Cairo, or the Riviera, in Biarritz and Paris, hunting in the country, fishing in Scotland, winter-sporting in Switzerland, everywhere, in fact, except at home.

If you are a person of leisure, or care to spend your life in a train, from home to town and from town to home, there is the country for you, the beautiful, serene, tidy English country. . . . There are still some rustic parts the vandals (I mean the builders) have not yet desecrated, where you can secure a mansion or a cottage according to the *embonpoint* of your purse. But be sure you go far enough. The demarcation line is very thin sometimes between the streeety, modern part of a village near London and the rural portion of some suburban land, where one type of architecture serves for the whole street, thus sparing the strain on the creative powers of Messrs the architects. Suburb is province, and province is stagnation. In the suburbs, as in a pro-

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vincial street, you see a fluttering of the window curtains at your neighbours' houses when a cab stops at your door, or when your wife displays a new hat.

A house in Suburbia is, I am told, cheaper and healthier than any house you could get in town. No doubt one can be materially very comfortable in a suburb, but the atmosphere is like a heavy suet pudding, wholesome enough, but lies on your chest and flattens in you all incentive to work and success. Under a thatched cottage and in a garret, Ideal and Ambition sometimes elect to lodge with you, not so in a fifty-pound suburban villa.

In London a small house means a mean house. The fifty-pound villas are those that are semi-detached, with a small garden front and back. The forty-five pound ones are all in a row, and the garden—when there is any—is still smaller, and looks more sooty. To worldly-wise people who choose their acquaintances with an approximate knowledge of their income, these indications simplify their selection. The eighty-pound residences—but then, we are again getting too ambitious. What with rates and taxes!

But I must say I like the porters' system in London. Why, here you can actually pass the porter of your flat with an air of independence. You feel your fate does not rest in his hands. In Paris you slink by the loge where the Power is frying onions or perusing your correspondence, and you think there may be something in the evolution theory after all, for, from a human being you feel yourself suddenly becoming a worm. Yes. Oh, Paris would be quite an Eden, if it were not for the Apaches

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and the concierge. And then the Apaches (if they are caught), they are punished sometimes; not often, of course, but now and then, while the law hasn't invented anything yet to tame a concierge.

At the end of the week we had found nothing, and lost every shred of our courage. On our way back from Streatham, or Putney, or God knows where, we stopped at Fullers' to recuperate, and sobbed on each other's shoulders in our cosy corner as we compared notes and as a vision of bleak, barrack-like blocks and suburban streets obscured to our brimful eyes our appetising *marrons glacés*.

"This will never do," I sighed, after the third meringue, "your nose is already all shiny. Here, take my pocket glass and *papier poudré*. And why don't you stay on with your papa and mamma? The house is plenty big enough. Your Jim would not make much difference—one more *couvert* at meals and a thick tobacco atmosphere about the house, that's all. Such a lot of *jeunes mariés* in France live with their parents, at least for the first year or two. It is so much more jolly for everybody; it softens the brusqueness of parting from one's parents; and when one is not rich I believe it is a very economical arrangement."

She laughed at the idea. "No, no," she said, "Jim would not hear of it, and if I marry I want my own home. Besides, it is never done here."

Vainly I pointed out to her that her last argument was no argument at all, and also the various advantages of a community life. Mamma to help bringing up the kids, papa taking you out when Jim is busy or cross,

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the scolding of the servants to be dared by somebody else, etc., etc. . . . But no, what will you, she wanted all the worries as well as all the pleasures of married life, and the jealous enjoyment of her Jim in outsiders-tight-compartment. Very bourgeois, isn't it? I know my father would have had the best room in my house if he had lived to see me married, and I would have worried him and cajoled him into consenting to spend most of his time with us, if not living with us for good. And my Jim would have had to say yes or—or repent.

"Eureka!" I cried suddenly, and in my enthusiasm swallowed a *marron glacé* quicker than was prudent or decorous, "I have a splendid idea, both practical and picturesque. Kiss me quick and say I am a darling and I'll give you my idea gratis and by return."

She did not kiss me. English girls are rather matter of fact, I think, and are not much given to kissing between themselves. They do not deem it worth their while in a land where—in spite of the admirable "ladies-only" system—mixed kissing is so widely enjoyed. Instead, she gave me a friendly pat and said, "Out with it."

"Well, take an old-world cottage in the country, thatched roof preferred. You can get them ridiculously cheap, and have it furnished by Liberty. You'll be saving enough on the rent for your hats and Jim's cigars."

"Don't be a goose," she said. "It would mean being buried alive, and how would Jim come to town every day?"

"Why," I answered, disgusted at her lack of practicability, "nothing simpler. You'll keep a motor car."

TO-DAY it rained, so I put my drawers in order : everything on the carpet and then a methodical arrangement of gloves and veils, chocolates, and beauty recipes that one cuts out of newspapers never to read them again. Some people would never need putting their drawers in order—my aunt, for instance. Hers are always like a Dutch garden ; so are mine after one of my sweeping tidying-up, but they don't stay so, and if it were not for Gracieuse—Machin was quite right when he said that " as to the qualities mistresses require of their maids, how many mistresses would make passable servants ? " or something to that effect. If only I could remember who Machin was. I fear my head must be pretty much in the same state as the contents of my drawers. Whenever I try to pull out of it a little bit of information, the rest remains entangled behind. Perhaps time will put it all in order some rainy day. Let it be as late as possible. It is so good to be young and foolish ! There is one corner of my brain that I cannot put ship-shape just now, anyway, the corner where I keep my *affaires de cœur*. Phrynette's affairs of the heart ! Doesn't it sound big, though there is only one as yet.

When I had finished my tidying up—the concrete one,

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I mean—it was still raining, and when it rains in London you have not even the compensation of looking at wet people in the street. They take their revenge on your selfishness by depressing you horribly. I have heard *petit père* say that the sight of a woman crossing a muddy street compensates one for the mud. Well, it does not here. The women of London do not walk if they can help it; even in fine weather they go in carriages, cabs, down to omnibuses, and when it rains there are hardly any women to be seen except servants, charwomen and factory girls. Besides, the little manœuvres which render women attractive on a rainy day, the dainty picking of dry places with the pointed toes, the art of tucking up a skirt, simply do not exist. The average woman here holds her dress in a way suggestive of the pulling at the leash of a refractory dog. The pretty *dessous* are also absent. I don't know who buys the frilly things one sees in the shop windows. I very much suspect that a large number of the women who pass you when the streets are wet—wear knickers. I suppose that legally they have the right to do so, but *bonté Divine*, why don't the men protest? A woman under the rain should be to the community what the dove was to Noah during the deluge—a God-send of hope and joy.

Having nothing better to do, I re-read what I had written since I came here. It is not so very long ago, and yet through all these untidy pages I see myself under another aspect. How could I ever have said I hated London? Reading what one wrote and has had time to forget is like looking at an old photograph of oneself—strange and somewhat ridiculous. Yet even now I can

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understand why I did not at first like London. London's charm is like that of a plain woman, it slowly grows on you. Now I feel myself at home, thoroughly at home in England, not only because it has become more familiar to me, but because to know England and the English is to learn to like and respect them. I truly believe England to be the most civilised of all countries at the present time. It is an eminently just and humane country. And civilisation is based on justice, wise laws and obedience to the same. I feel sure that Russian Pogroms, American lynching, and, to go nearer home, an affair Dreyfus (with its—well, not very nice cortege of racial and religious prejudices and petty personal spites), none of these things could occur in England. But the moral elevation of a country is perhaps less proven by the scarcity of her lapses from civilisation than by the light in which such lapses are considered, and chiefly by how the voice of the nation's spirit, the Press, treats of them. The English Press is a liberal education in justice, decency, and abhorrence of cruelty. I was reading the other day some virtuously indignant comments in the morning paper about a man fined severely for driving a horse in an unfit condition. Well, in spite of our expressive phrase, "as unhappy as a Paris cab horse," who ever thinks of their fate in France, except a few humane individuals and La Société Protectrice des Animaux? But those are helpless, for their efforts break themselves against a formidable wall—the indifference of the Law and the latent Latin cruelty of the public spirit. I have seen, but no, I won't think of it any more, *à quoi bon*? I can't help.

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What we want are up-to-date laws and their strict application by judges who won't be afraid of the mob, however awful the French mob may be. I fear we shall have to wait a long time for that. Laws that allow of Soleilland, the torturer of little Marthe, to escape with his life and one day perhaps to sow throughout the community seeds of murderers, those same laws are not likely to trouble themselves about minor cases of cruelty, such as farmers skinning rabbits while they are only half stunned, and plucking feathers from live poultry. It sounds as incredible as a nightmare, but Gracieuse tells me that these are done every day in beautiful rural France, these and many other horrors! *Mon Dieu, Mon Dieu*, I am ashamed sometimes for my own people when I think of these unspeakable things. I'd rather we were not so clever and a little more humane. Good holy Virgin, *vous qui pouvez tout*, please ask God. I'll go and put a taper at the Oratory, for one must be practical.

To come back to the English Press. Long before I had seen any of the great London dailies their names were quite familiar to me. I read them every morning on the black board outside the Bourse or the Bank on which the latest telegrams are chalked up in every important town in France. I suppose English newspapers are the first to know everything that happens in this topsy-turvy universe, and the medium, *par excellence*, for supplying the world with news. So much, at any rate, is ungrudgingly conceded to them abroad. If English people are regarded as insular, their papers are certainly not open to that reproach. They turn their

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searchlights on every nook and corner of the world's surface. Did not the Skibbereen Eagle feel constrained to keep its piercing eye on the Czar of all the Russias on his oscillating throne? So eager is the English Press to serve you news hot-baked that the garnishing is usually left to the imagination. You see, garnishing takes time and space—space that seems to be the great autocratic power behind the editorial throne in England.

I know our French papers don't come up to yours at all in the matter of get-up and size and advertisement. Their print is a sight-destroyer, the paper is coarse, everything is done on the cheap, but you must admit they manage somehow to make them interesting, and perhaps with a more literary flavour than yours. If they have not the advertisements and the news of the English journals, one can always find in them splendid articles by some of the best writers in France. Then the French journalist develops his subject. He condenses in three lines things of no interest—for instance, a dozen generals of sanguinary repute were blown up in St Petersburg last evening; but then he will consecrate half-a-column to some *crime passionnel*, he will tell you where the man bought his knife, the colour of the victim's hair—things like these interest the public. He does not fear to round off his story.

I have often been struck by the outspoken way of the English Press as regards personal intelligence. Messieurs les Journalistes Anglais would prefer to lose a witty anecdote, a brilliant paragraph, if there happens to be a word or suggestion of which morality—the English

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version—would perchance not approve, but the same gentlemen will be astonishingly frank in their remarks concerning people. You read in the fashionable reports that Lady Plainface, the bride-elect, cannot be called beautiful, but has a very attractive personality, that her engagement with the Marquess Badlot is a very brilliant match, that the Marquess is seven years her junior, will inherit a large fortune on his mother's death, etc. Such comments do strike strangers as somewhat lacking in tact. And then, when some wealthy commoner is enrolled in the golden book of nobility, how dearly the Press makes him pay for the honour. Mrs Baker, now Lady Fussing, wears her new title as if she had been born to it. The impertinence! and all the while they meant to offer a delicate praise.

Another thing that strikes me is the number, the varied nature, and the ingenuity of the advertisements in an English paper. Every want, every wish, finds expression in the advertisement column. In the "Employments Wanted" alone, to the uninitiated foreigner, what a rich find of new professions, quaint occupations, some humorous, some pathetic, from the dog governess to the lady cook. And the Sale and Exchange, the Agony columns, the begging appeals, why, the advertisement page is the most interesting feature of the English dailies, and gives the clearer insight into the English character. Only it is to be wished they would keep those advertisements in their proper place, at the back pages. Nothing grates so much on the reader's nerves as to be lured by a quotation from Shakespeare into reading the merits of a corn ointment. But in this

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respect our own newspapers are becoming just as bad, even worse, because less skilled and daring. But I must say for the French Press that it does not indulge in those lengthy and incomprehensible accounts of football and cricket matches, or whatever you call them. I can't believe anybody ever reads them, do you ?

XXIII

OÙ LES AFFAIRES NE SONT PAS LES AFFAIRES

LONDON is the city of dentists and magazines. It is wonderful how they can all flourish and prosper. Do dentists choose London because people here have especially bad teeth? Or do people have to adopt bits of porcelain because dentists pull out their victims' own teeth *à tort et à travers*? I have heard English people say that the complicated French cooking and rich sauce are the cause of gastric troubles and bad teeth, but it strikes me that "plain English fare" must be still worse. Every other person I have met in England is a dyspeptic and undergoing some sort of a cure, and as for their teeth, well, they are too evenly beautiful to be the real thing. And the young people too! I hate seeing glints of gold in a girl's mouth; it is as abnormal as wrinkles and grey hair. There never was so much theorising on food fads and on health, with as little result, as in England to-day. Perhaps it is tea that is brewing all the mischief for the coming generations. Ought I to warn my Paris friends when, in a spirit of duty, as fashionable people, they ingurgitate a daily copy of a beverage they dislike, together with buns and muffins that they like no better, merely because *noblesse oblige*? *Attention, messieurs, mesdames*, have a care of your teeth and of your stomach!

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My aunt says one must not use the word "stomach." Just fancy, what is one to call it then? I always have the feeling I am juggling with daggers when speaking English. I dare not think of all the mistakes I must have made. No wonder Lady Dare screams with laughter sometimes. If "stomach" is not to be mentioned, what a number of other unmentionable things I must have aired now and then without knowing it. But it is not my fault, only people simply won't pick me up when I make a slip.

Monty even says, "Correct you! The deuce if I will, why it's much more jolly like this, one never knows what enormities you are going to trot out next."

Now I call this very mean and unsportsmanlike. And I a poor foreigner too! Even Sir Austen says I am not to become perfect—in my English, he means—nor to lose my accent (I am not likely to do that, I am too old now)—as it sounds "very pretty and piquant."

But it rather annoys me to be popular because I am funny, as if I were an Albino or a Manx cat. I saw some for sale at a bazaar the other day, *ce sont des amours!*

As for the magazines, they are legion in London. There are so many that I wonder who buys them all, chiefly when such splendid reprints of standard works can be bought for a few sous. The illustrations are wonderful in these magazines. English and American black-and-white artists are not to be surpassed, I think. They are photographers and poets rolled into one. Our *Je sais Tout* is very good too, but it has so very few competitors. The truth is we do not like spending money on magazines of light and ephemeral interest. When we do buy

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them we get them bound neatly at the end of the year, and they help to fill the library shelves, while the English reader throws away his magazine once he has read it, and "bang goes saxpence," as friend Donald would say. And it is rather humiliating that French magazines should go in so much for English translations when we have some of the ablest writers in the world. It is true they are merely for adults and not young people, whether taken in large or small doses, before or after meals.

Who will have pity on us French girls? (I am not speaking of myself, who have been able to read pretty much what I liked, but then I had no mamma, you see. If I had I would have been more stupid, but better "brought up.") The French young person badly wants a writer she not only can read, but that she can read with interest. He should be that phoenix, a cross between Bourget and Madame de Ségur.

The literature of the average Frenchman comprises his halfpenny paper, and occasionally a 3f.50 paper-bound novel, not bought at a venture at a bookstall. Three francs and a half are not to be hazarded in a light way! But the investment will be made on sound securities, a name like Anatole France, for instance, Zola, or Daudet. Speak to me then of these, and of the long list of the "youngs" who are favourably reviewed, or again the good old friends, the classics. Of course we have the trashy writers too; these, like the poor, will always be with us. They have not much of a chance in novel-writing though, but they do very well in *feuilletons*, which I truly believe are the worst possible rubbish

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produced. It is true nobody reads them except those for whom they are intended. There is one strange thing which I had not noticed before coming here—how is it that we French readers, who combine a taste for literature and economy—how is it we have no cheap books and so few lending libraries? In large provincial cities there may be two or three or four such libraries, with no system to speak of, no check, and no free delivery. And as for small towns or the country, there the book-lover must either buy all the books he wants to read or else starve his mind. And yet we are an intellectual people, are we not? Perhaps it is all due to our lack of enterprise and business instinct, for the Frenchman is not a business man. He can work steadily and laboriously; he can take an interest in his work; he can even love it; but to him business is merely synonymous with employment, and seldom, if ever, can the business instinct attain in him to such development as to become genius, as with the Englishman and the American. Besides, he lacks the strongest of all stimulus in any pursuit of life—he lacks ambition. A Frenchman seldom starts with the fixed, haunting determination to make a fortune. And after all, he may be right. One should work to live, but not live to work. Passion for work can be as immoral as any other passion, don't you think? Let the Frenchman make a living out of his trade, let him put aside enough to start his son, to secure a little *dot* to his daughter, and retire in his ugly little house in some ugly suburb, and the few desires of his heart are fulfilled.

Our largest shops are owned, as a rule, by companies,

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but even the most important of these could not rival the English houses. I fear my veracity would be strongly suspected by many of my countrymen were I to tell them of some English shops where one could buy food and clothing, be hair-dressed and take one's meals, buy a house or find a servant, be photographed and get a nice funeral. Yes, and even read the French papers in a French salon! I can imagine them saying, with a sceptical shrug: "*Phrynette, ma chère, a beau mentir qui vient de loin.*"

The Frenchman will not risk enough. He has none of those audacities that sometimes tame Dame Fortune—in a word, he is no gambler, such as I imagine every business man must be at heart. And, compared to England and America, the art of advertising is as yet *chez nous* in long clothes. See our advertisements in even the foremost papers. Are they not very timid and amateurish compared to the showy, eccentric and expensive lures sandwiched between the pages of English magazines and great dailies. "But then it costs a lot to advertise," sighs the Frenchman. "It will pay us," shrugs the Englishman—and here you have the two systems.

This morning Gracieuse and I went into a small shop in Brompton Road to buy a penny skein of grey silk to darn some stockings of mine. It was a difficult match, and they had not in the shop the exact shade we wanted, but—would you believe it?—they actually offered to get it for us! Fancy those shop people taking all that trouble for a penny skein! Do you think that they would have shown so much complaisance (or such

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business acumen) in a French shop? Not a bit of it. Under the same circumstances the *commis* would have told me how "desolate" he was and, perhaps, would have added consolingly, if not to a very business-like purpose, that "possibly mademoiselle may find what she requires in the shop opposite."

Then another reason why the French shopkeeper seldom achieves so great a success or such a rapid one as his English confrère is his reluctance to entrust to clerks and attendants what work himself or his wife can undertake—economy, *vous comprenez*, but mistaken economy. It is fortunate we have not adopted "Time is money" for our motto, for in most shops the time spent in waiting would drive really busy people to an assault on the innocent attendants.

Of course I only see all these drawbacks now that I have tasted of the comfort and splendid organisation of England; they did not strike me before. And if anyone were to ask my opinion (no one ever does, because I am only Phrynette), my opinion from the business point of view of the two countries—the one that I love, the other that I like and admire—my mother and foster-mother, see?—this is what I would say to French parents: "If you want your son to become a practical, enterprising man of business, send him to England. N'est-ce pas, Gracieuse?"

"Oh, the grey silk has come already, and a perfect match, is it? *Ça c'est très chic! Ils sont épatants, ces Anglais!*"

To come back to books.

There is, in literature, yet another category we have

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not got in France either. It is the bourgeoisie of book hierarchy, literature not sublime but interesting, not brilliant but bright, not psychological but healthy and clean. We have men of genius but we seem to lack skilled artisans.

I do like English novels, and all the more so that as I had no one to advise me as to the choice of English books I thought it wise to cling to the authors on whom one may depend, people above suspicion, so to speak. There are so many even of those that I cannot understand why readers should ever be satisfied with skimmed milk when rich, delicious cream can be had for the asking and at the same price. When I was little, I was already very fond of books, though my literature was limited to *la Bibliothèque Rose, Berquin, et les Contes de Perrault*. One day I remember asking *petit père* anxiously whether I might one day exhaust all the books ever written. I was very much relieved when he told me that even by reading day and night I could not devour a thousandth part of all the books produced. I felt as pleased as a gourmand in a sweet shop. Even now I can't pass a book shop without wishing I could be let loose in it and forgotten. I love the very smell of print, and with such a discriminating love that I could recognise an English book from a French one in the dark merely by the different smell of their ink. But among the moderns I find something that "crumples" me. I know this is not good English, it is not even good French, but it means just what I feel. In other and less slangy words, the modern girl, such as the modern author will have her, grates on my nerves. She is gone,

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the gentle heroine, gone out of life, gone out of fiction, gone out of our ideal, and the world is the poorer for her disappearance. She is not wanted in the rough, hurry-scurry, mannerless, modern life—the sweet-voiced, tactful, feminine woman with whom our fathers and elder brothers fell in love. She would be very uncomfortable among us, I fear, and at a great disadvantage—a refined, well-bred woman thrown in daily contact with the “jolly” girls of the present generation. The girl of to-day is not sweet, she is smart, and what is worse, she does not want to be sweet. Nobody wants her to be. English novelists don't, anyway, if one is to judge by the unlovable heroines of modern fiction. Sweetness is now mistaken for weakness. There are a few other current aberrations entertained by the up-to-date young woman. In the modern jargon, to be rude is “to have grit”; to be crudely outspoken, “to be frank”; to be tactless, to be “straight.” To-day, the merest tyro in the great brotherhood of novel-makers would be ashamed to ask the reader's sympathy for a maiden meek and mild. To be a success the modern heroine must talk and behave like a badly brought up school-boy. To be interesting and attractive in the eyes of the modern reader, and, it would seem, of the men of her set, the fictitious *femme du monde* is made to assume the manners or lack of manners of the *demi-mondaine*.

Do not expect charm or sympathy from the modern heroine. Indeed novelists seem to rival one another as to who will produce the most callous, cold, ambitious and unsympathetic creatures, whom they are pleased to call women, though they do not possess any other

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womanly attribute than their Christian name and the wearing of petticoats. From Mrs Warren's daughter to the heroine of "The Woman with the Fan," all the women of modern fiction try to cast off from them sweet femininity as they would an old-fashioned garment. Even Mr Hope's clever, bright, outwardly girlish and altogether delightful Dolly is a reproach to womanliness in her monstrous, calculating egotism. You may happen to love Dolly—indeed she is lovely enough for that—but is she lovable? And while you love her, are you not aware that she does not deserve it, that she, and all the attractive young ladies of the Dolly pattern, are just pretty, intelligent, wide-awake, well-dressed girls, a credit to their dressmakers, perfectly able to secure and keep a comfortable rank in society, perfectly able to make money, or lose it on the Stock Exchange, and as unable to give back love?

It is not a question of morality, or what they call goodness in English. Woman is now as good as she ever was. Indeed there are chances for the woman of the present generation to be more strictly virtuous than her grandmother, for the girl of to-day possesses a stronger will and a prosaic mind, and is, therefore, better equipped against influences and circumstances; but surely lack of manners is just as regrettable as lack of morals, and far more inelegant. We are often interested in the modern heroine, we no longer sympathise with her. For one thing, she does not want our sympathy, she is a superior, independent young person and she takes care to let you know it. Neither have you any fear lest the girl in the love story should break her heart; that

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part of her anatomy has become very much atrophied of late. It is no longer fragile in any way, neither brittle nor susceptible. Perhaps it is better so, and if man himself is satisfied with good-humoured tolerance and mere chumming instead of love and sympathy, then he does not deserve any sweeter fate. The evident deterioration in men's manners has its explanation and—yes, its justification—in the attitude of women towards them. It is very seldom now, I am told, and judging by the snappy attitude of girls towards men, that man hears from the woman he loves the two sweet, simple, little words: "Yes, dear." They seem to have gone the way of the ringlets and the crinoline. Instead, the factory girl will emphasise her push with a "go on," and the middle-class young person will yawn aloud and tell you not to talk "rot." Perhaps in the princess and the milkmaid—the one guarded by ambient etiquette, the other by isolation and beautiful surroundings—sweet womanliness may yet be found, but it is not given to everybody to jog elbows with princesses or delight in the graceful shyness of rustic beauties.

Who can explain why a deeper mental culture in the modern girl, instead of developing her refinement, seems to have had the contrary effect? Sweet Florence Dombey had not many accomplishments outside her piano and her tapestry, but she had delicacy and distinction, and she was essentially lovable. To-day a girl fresh from college will pat her father on the head if she deems him to be a "good sort" or "run him down" in the most frank and disconcerting manner to her outside acquaintances, and nobody looks shocked.

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I don't begrudge the English girl of my age her independence and her newly acquired privileges. Let her enjoy her cigarette by all means—smoking is a pretext for many pretty attitudes; let her drive her own motor car; let her claim her right of voting—everything she feels herself able to do she is justified in attempting to do, but *mademoiselle, je vous en prie*, do it gracefully.

“Everything worth doing at all, is worth doing with grace.” I am not surprised at the nagging, disagreeable types of womanhood Mr Jacobs writes about, his heroines being, as our girl friend would say, “no class,” but when a delicately brought up girl like, for instance, the heroine of “The Four Feathers,” destroys in the opening chapters the love of the reader by her lack of sympathy, her bad taste, and her absence of tenderness, the case indeed becomes serious. That men, chiefly that soldiers, should deal harsh, insulting treatment to one of themselves we can understand, but that a young and refined girl should join them in pitilessly abusing the man whom she is told—she loves, says very little for womanliness as it is understood in English fiction. Is the real English girl depicted with sincerity by the modern novelist? I prefer to think that he is more gifted with imagination than observation.

Clarissa Harlowe, Amelia, dear little Nell, you are indeed dead to the world. We may have thought you somewhat too naïve and unsophisticated, but we loved you, sweet, soft, departed things; while we do not care very much whether the modern heroine is “all right in the end,” do we?

The “girlish” girl is becoming a very obsolete type

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all the world over. I suppose French girls are also changing, and perhaps to their detriment, but they have not yet acquired the rough-and-ready attitude of their English sister. They may not be, some of them, quite so frank, but they are better mannered, and we still in literature, as on the stage, cling to the "young, tender thing" as our ideal of lovable girlhood.

Our English girl friend (not the real girl, oh, dear, no! I mean the girl in the book) would do well to remember that since

"L'hypocrisie est un hommage rendu a la vertu . . ."

refinement of mind, if it does not exist, at least should be simulated by refinement of manners. Do let us be hypocritical rather than vulgar!

And yet another thing which shocks both sentiment and tradition in France is the light, unaffectionate relations represented by English novelists as existing between parents and children. There seems to be only one kind of love in English fiction, love between man and woman, with the exception—taking, however, a secondary place—of the mother's love to the child, and that only as long as he is a child and helpless. As for devotion and sacrifice of sons and daughters for their parents, one hears very seldom about it. The other day, seeking enlightenment on the subject, I was discussing it with a young novelist I met at Lady Dare's.

"It is because," he said, "in spite of the realism of French literature it still clings to certain conventions quite contrary to the laws of nature. We dare be more frank in our portrayal of the relations between human

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beings not only as they are, but as they ought to be. Look at the sane and sincere animal life. You see the attraction of the male for the female, the devotion of the mother for her young, her unconcern for her grown-up offspring and their unconcern for her."

There is nothing new in what he said, I had heard it all before, but his argument is but a half truth. We are not animals, not even natural beings. We are civilised beings. Why then should we have purely animal thoughts and feelings? And why should these be less sincere and less real because they are born of altered circumstances. Books and pictures are unnatural things, do we not love them with sincerity? Religion was made by man, do we not find people dying gladly for religion? *Patrie* is a mere symbol, a man's fatherland is just that man's own acre. why then should he kill other men for the sake of other acres far away from his own? *Mais à quoi bon continuer?* It won't even bear discussion. I maintain that ^{al}ial love does exist in spite of Messrs the English novelists, and that it is a deep and strong and common thing in spite of what they may think, unless they draw their example from their own kith and kin, which God forbid.

I shall love no one more than I love *petit père*, as much perhaps, and in a different way, *voilà tout*. A husband is, after all, but a loved stranger, and a masked stranger always, who comes into your life through the door of illusion, but father is me and I am father. I have his corner smile, and, in my poor efforts at painting, the same trick of holding my brush. He is not quite dead to me, because I am made of him. If such an

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absurd thing could be possible I would say that father is to me like an older twin brother. Mother, except for her beauty, was, I understand, very much like Aunt Barbara ; yet if I had known her, she could not have been indifferent to me. I am she, and one is too egotistic not to love oneself. Enmity or indifference to those who made us seems to me as about as natural to our present state of mind as the eating of raw meat, the marrying between brothers and sisters, and as living in damp caverns clothed in the hides of beasts is natural to our present state of body. Anyway I know I would never marry a man, even if I loved him, who spoke disrespectfully of his parents, ill treated animals, or deceived a woman. I'd sooner marry a negro, if it were not for the *café-au-lait* little children ; that would be hardly fair to them. That is one reason why I don't like Americans as a whole. The way they treat negroes is worse than unchristian ; it is very bad taste, I think, and after having made themselves at home in Blacky's own place too. But then the Spaniards were no better. I hope they'll improve now they have got a nice English girl on their throne, and her sons after her. It's not only Spain that has shown discrimination, English alliances have become quite the fashion. Look at Sweden, Norway, Germany. The European political situation will be quite simplified now, it is to be hoped. Instead of settling squabbles with big guns and other horrid things, the different powers *laveront leur linge sale en famille*.

It was a marriage pleasant to think upon, that of Princess Ena. It is not often royal marriages are so

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romantic and pretty and hopeful. But it must be very rough on the Queen of Spain sometimes to live backwards into the Middle Age in her new country, and I wonder how she stands the corridas. I went once with father. Some girl friends of mine had told me it was *très drôle*, and they were all more or less in love with the famous Minuto, the star of the arena, so I cajoled father until he reluctantly took me to the corrida. But we had to leave before they had quite finished ripping open the first horse.

I went straight to bed, and father had to take a stiff whisky-and-soda, which he never liked and never tasted except when he wanted to show his English friends how cosmopolitan he was in his habits—a very innocent weakness of the up-to-date, educated Frenchman.

With my right foot on Gracieuse's lap—she is buttoning my boots for me—I translate aloud to her what I have just written, balancing myself on my left toe the while.

She listens with a rapturous expression, the poor old darling, and when I stop she exclaims, tapping her forehead with the button-hook :

“ Oh, but thou art clever, ma belle, it sounds as beautiful as *Le Petit Journal* ! And as for the Queen of Spain ” (she saw her on post cards), “ thou art right, *elle est gentille tout plein, très sympathique*. She reminds me of our own poor Empress. I saw her often in the Jardin des Tuileries with the handsome Prince by her side. Thou wert not born at that time, my angel. She was the idol of Paris then, and so good, but after the defeat ”—she shook her robust honest peasant

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list in a vague direction which for her represented the Paris mob of forty years ago. "*Ah, les gredins!*" she said, which shows that a sense of injustice can turn a generous soul even against her own race and people. I am proud of my maid. She is a character.

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XXIV

AT A LIBERAL MEETING

HAVE you ever seen anyone in an ordinary conversation emphasise an argument with the help of his right knuckles and of his left palm? Of course you have not, no one ever does it except on a public platform. Why can't an English orator or actor be quite natural? I am not saying this for Monsieur Lloyd George but for the others who spoke after him yesterday night. They all did the same stupid gesture, and all started to speak in too high a key. Monsieur Lloyd George did not because he has genius, and men who have that invariably cultivate outward simplicity to set it off—just like women with good figures always wear frocks built on plain lines.

Have I said before that Sir Austen is a Liberal? I don't think I have; besides, it is a detail without importance. However, he is a Liberal, and it is he who took us to the meeting at Queen's Hall at my request. I am not in the least interested in those things really, but I never neglect an opportunity of hearing English spoken by other persons than my friends, because when you know people well you guess them before you understand them, and so you make no progress. On

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Sunday I go to two or three churches and chapels irrespective of creeds. The Hyde Park orators have no more conscientious listener than I. There are never any other women there but Gracieuse and myself, but I don't mind if people stare. I want to learn English. I love to listen to auctioneers, suffragettes, music hall funny men, Salvation Army preachers and newspaper vendors. But if this is good for my ear, it is very detrimental to my judgment. I am afraid when we women shall have the franchise I shall always vote for the candidate who spoke last. An earnest speaker invariably wins me to his side. Narrow have been my escapes from buying faked grandfathers' clocks, roll-top desks and typewriting machines after hearing a particularly convincing auctioneer, or enlisting myself with the Salvationists after some more vibrating appeal of the big drum.

Lady Dare came with us to oblige me, and very much against her will. I had been dining at her house, and it seems that I can go out alone with Sir Austen until dinner-time, after which a chaperon is necessary.

Both my companions were cross—Lady Dare because she was sacrificing her bridge and Sir Austen because of his sister's attitude.

"I wish," she said in the brougham, "we had had time to change our frocks."

"Why?" I asked. "On the contrary, one always looks best in a low dress."

"Quite so, only we'll be conspicuous, that's all. I dare say no one else will be in evening dress there;

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however, I have had no voice in the chapter." She closed her eyes and lolled back in her corner. "I have a headache already."

"Of course you have. We shall all have," said her brother. "It's that beastly perfume of yours. I told you before you put on far too much. It's quite sickening."

"It's not perfume. It's Florida water mixed with a disinfectant. I don't want to run risks. We are all sure to catch fleas and things—ugh! You two people are mad, I think, to drag me to such places."

But Lady Dare was exaggerating. Everybody there looked quite clean. She had guessed right, however, as to evening dress. We were the only ones there to wear it, and people did look, but perhaps they would have looked in any case. Lady Dare is so beautiful and smart and Sir Austen is so tall and manly.

We sat on the platform where the musicians sit usually. The hall was full. I sat between my two friends, and Sir Austen explained to me *sotto voce* who the people were and what the interrupters said. I think political meetings are lovely. Lady Dare complained of the draughts. But I did not feel any. I was very comfortable and very happy. Sir Austen was between the door and me, and he is so huge, how could the draughts incommode me with such a screen?

A Mr Masterman spoke, and spoke well. I remembered seeing him on the terrace of the House.

Is Mr Lloyd George an Englishman? He does not look very much like one. I mean he has such a

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quick, intelligent face, and he does not speak merely with his lips, but with his eyes as well.

Now, I am not much of a politician, as I have said before, but I understand the trend of things well enough to be vastly amused by the attitude of my countrymen as regards the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Some of the Paris papers seem to know so much about him that they call him, in all *naïveté*, "Lord George Lloyd," and their grasp of his politics is about as clear as that of his name. When people don't know, they should not pretend they do, unless they are clever enough to carry the farce through. Well, France knows nothing about English politics, nor about the character of the people, nor the social conditions here, and so when she gives her opinion she is merely talking through her Phrygian cap, as Monty would say if he knew what a Phrygian cap is. As for the French who live in London, and who might be supposed to know England well, who are they? The Corps Diplomatique who do not write for the papers, the modistes, and the small tradespeople who live in Soho among Italians and Anarchists. What do they know of the country they live in, they who flock together and bring with them the dust of their motherland on their shoes and the smell of garlic in their homes?

French people, if you notice, never settle in London for their pleasure as so many wealthy English people do in Paris. I never meet anyone here whom I knew in France, and yet in Paris *petit père* was always running against some English friend or other.

Don't you think France should put her political house

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in order first before criticising other countries' leaders? Of course Mr Lloyd George may be an ogre for all I know, but for us to call him a revolutionist is somewhat laughable.

What I said on holding one's tongue about things one does not know does not apply to girls who write their journal, not at all. They may fancy themselves historians and scribble anything they please. Whatever I write can't bring an international war about anyway, but even journalists should try and get some information about their subject.

After the speeches we met the speakers in the hall and there was an introduction, and "Lord George" asked me how I liked London (of course!), and Sir Austen answered for me, which was quite unnecessary, seeing that I can speak English very well if only people will give me a little time, and not look at me. But then the Chancellor was off in a great hurry as if he had been afraid I was going to ask him to write in my album. Some women do that, you know.

Lady Dare wanted stamps, and her brother did not happen to have any, which surprised and irritated her very much. She asked of heaven how was a man to justify his existence at all who did not carry stamps, a string, a penknife, safety-pins, and a reliable watch.

Sir Austen said he had a safety-pin, and that he had noticed my cloak did not fasten high enough, and that London nights were treacherous.

He put the pin in himself.

For the stamps we drove to Charing Cross Post Office.

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When Lady Dare had had stamps she said she wanted oysters. Some people are never satisfied. And she wanted them at once, so to the nearest restaurant we went.

"Well, what do you think of Lloyd George?" he asked. In future "he" will stand for Sir Austen for short.

"I find him very well," I said, "only I would find him better if he wore his hair shorter. like yours."

"Hush, my dear, hush," warned Lady Dare. "*Quand on parle du loup . . .*" And *le "loup,"* the "ogre," the "revolutionist," who really looks none of these things, sat at the table opposite with three other men.

Lady Dare said the oysters were luscious. So I asked him ("him" also will stand for Sir Austen) how could I be like an oyster?

"How, what do you mean?"

"Well, at the ball the other night there were two men speaking behind me, not very loud, but I could hear, and one of them said, 'No, I would not call her pretty, it's so seldom you find a really pretty French girl, but luscious would better describe her.'"

"Oh, you *enfant terrible,*" shrieked Lady Dare. "Austen, tell her she is not to repeat everything she hears."

But it is not I that said it, it was the man, and if I had known it was only an oysterish quality I would have pulled my tongue out to him. Luscious, indeed! I am not luscious, I am pretty, there!

The champagne was, oh, so nice, and the oysters were

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prett—luscious, and everything was just delightful when he had recovered his good humour (why did he lose it, I wonder ?). But I could not tell you what else we had for supper. I was so happy I remember nothing—not even the speeches !

THE MODERN SARAH GAMP

GRACIEUSE has been very ill with congestion of the lungs. She says it is that treacherous English spring. As a matter of fact it is not so much the weather as her French underclothing. A Frenchwoman's underclothing is inadequate to any climate except the tropics; batiste for the rich, cotton for the poor, but wool—ah, *fi donc!* woollen combinations are horrid things, I admit, but in the case of Gracieuse, what can it possibly matter, I ask you? I call it *coquetterie mal placée*.

Fortunately she is ever so much better now; the nurse is going. The effect must not be mistaken for the cause; the nurse is not going because Gracieuse is better. Gracieuse is better because the nurse is going. Sarah Gamp was old, ugly, and slovenly. Our nurse is young and neat, if not actually good-looking, but the differences stop there. As regards lack of refinement, quarrelsomeness, aggressiveness of tone and manners, garrulousness, Sarah Gamp and our nurse have nothing to envy one another. For a fortnight the whole house, overruled and overridden by the tyrant in cap and apron, has been in a state of hushed submission. Even Aunt Barbara, the invincible, autocratic Aunt Barbara, meekly submitted when the nurse, putting her

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hands on her shoulders, peremptorily turned her out of the sickroom. The servants have been on their best behaviour during that fortnight. I would not have believed that English servants could have a respectful fear of anyone, but they have—of the nurse; while cook has been honoured by the friendship of the Redoubtable Power, who evidently has a sweet tooth. For the doctor alone—a young, unmarried man—does the nurse's face lose some of its sourness. The rest of us might be as many convicts and she the warder. Gracieuse claimed in vain for a *bonne sœur*. I told her she could not have one here, that even in France they were out of fashion. The good sisters were turned out of the Hotel-Dieu amidst the unanimous lamentations and benedictions of their patients. But the parting was not quite so touching here when we heard the last of our nurse's policeman-like step. And yet the doctor actually recommended her as the best on his book. What a choice collection of Sarah Gamps that good doctor must have! It was due to me that the enemy did not triumph for long in vanquished territory, for I could see that if the nurse was allowed to pull Gracieuse through her pneumonia, Gracieuse would wrench success out of her hands by dying of a fit.

“Lock the drawers and take the keys, *mon petit chou*,” Gracieuse would beg of me while her ministering angel was downstairs comforting the inner woman; “that creature is so *sans-gêne*, *vois-tu*, *elle jouille partout* when she thinks I am asleep, and she pulls my hair terrible when she is combing me, and the water is always too hot when she washes me, and she

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says 'Nonsense' when I complain . . . and——" Poor old Gracieuse! her grievances were very petty perhaps in themselves, but enough to cause the patient's temperature to fluctuate between calm and fever, according to the absence or presence of her nurse.

I thought nursing was a vocation, but I see it is a trade. In my blessed ignorance of nurses in general, and this one in particular, I thought that a "qualified" English nurse was a superior being, the essence of sweetness and womanliness, soft of hand, light of foot, of a gentle nature and kind temper, in a word, a lady, and that being granted the rest could be taught. But then English people, many of them, think we feed on frogs, don't they? Mrs Young, who is so sympathetic and so motherly that you simply must tell her all your troubles, says that we are very lucky indeed that our nurse's drawbacks were only vulgarity, bump-tiousness and tyranny. "Why," she said, "that is nothing. I too had nurses"—she sighed at the recollection—"nine of them, never the same one, hoping for better luck each time. Out of the nine two drank, and another mistook a few things of mine for her own when packing!"

"Oh," I protested, horrified, "I thought that nurses were only recruited among gentlewomen of some sort!"

Mrs Young shook her head. "A parlour-maid of mine whom I discharged for impertinence is now doing very well as a maternity nurse," she said. "Nurses, my dear, are like medicine, necessary evils!"

I hope I won't be ill in England, and if I am I won't

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have any nurse but Gracieuse; better an untrained nurse than an unrestrainable one. All her hospital training won't prevent a tactless nurse from irritating her patient's nerves. Perhaps English patients have no nerves, but alas, I plead guilty!

Gracieuse will be all right in a few days. I go to her room ten times a day. I bring her some jessamine from the garden. It's baby jessamine, just born, though this is April, smutless and *sans tache*, unlike the young ladies in the matrimonial column of *Le Journal*. I sit on the foot of her bed and translate for her benefit jokes and conundrums out of *Tit Bits*; sometimes puns suffer in the process, but Gracieuse is not hypercritical, and things you don't quite understand sound all the more clever.

I must say Aunt Barbara is "downright decent" since Gracieuse is ill, though there is no love lost between them as a rule, but now that her foe is incapacitated Lady Barbara is too much of a . . . Monty suggests "sportswoman." It does not strike me as the proper term. What have sports to do with it? What I mean to say is that Lady Barbara is above taking advantage of her advantage. Monty is also responsible for "downright decent." That does not sound appropriate either, at least, it makes my aunt's decency only an occasional occurrence, as it were, while, whatever she may be, Lady Barbara is never indecent. Monty came this morning to fetch me for the dog show at the Agricultural Hall, but as it happens, and as I told him, I have made a vow to Saint Phrynette not to take any pleasure until Gracieuse is quite well again. Monty says it is quite a mediæval

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notion, that of the vow, and perfectly useless besides. "However," he adds, with his good-humoured smile, "that is real nice of you to consider it a pleasure coming with me."

"Not at all," I said, "I like dogs very much, except bull-dogs and those short-legged ones that sweep the floor with their ears and their little Marys. As for Saint Phrynette, you may say what you like, but I have faith in my *patronne*. Besides, father always maintained that a touch of fervour and a grain of mysticism were very becoming to girls, and father had perfect taste."

Here Monty laughs and asks irreverently if these are my conceptions of religion. Nothing is sacred to some minds.

"I am not going to discuss those deep subjects with you, you are a Huguenot and I am a Papist—it sounds far more romantic than Protestant and Catholic, doesn't it?—Yes, a fellow may smoke, but open the window, or Aunt Barbara will think I have got hold of 'my darlings,' which she confiscated. That was mean of her, wasn't it? It was the doing of a curmudgeon."

Monty asked what that meant in English. Fancy not knowing his own language! I told him to look in the dictionary.

"What church do you go to?" Monty asked me. I told him the Oratory, and sometimes Farm Street with Lady Dare. "But," I added, "you know what we say in France, there are three subjects well-bred people make a point of never discussing—religion, politics and love!"

"Upon my soul, I was not going to talk about religion, nor politics," he protested, "but if you exclude

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every interesting subject, I had better not interrupt you with my rot. Please go on writing, I'll sharpen your pencil for you."

"*Très bien*," and I picked up my copy-book, "but first give me back that book. I can't write English without having my dictionary at my elbow."

"Lucky book!" said Monty. "Do let me be your dictionary."

Are there women who know how to consult a timetable and a dictionary, I wonder, let alone sharpening a pencil properly? Then they deserve the vote. I can do none of these things. By the time I have found the word I wanted I have forgotten what I was looking for. Monty says that this is an Irish bull, but he is quite unable to explain to me what the difference is between an Irish bull and an English one. I'll ask Sir Austen. He has a place in the country and must know all about cattle, and I am sure he won't roar to my face with laughter nor ask of his cigarette:

"Isn't she just sweet?" Monty has no manners.

So no more of him, I'd rather write about my aunt. As I was saying to Lady Dare, what my aunt wanted to be quite nice was to have had a few children of her own; it would have prevented her heart from getting so—what shall I say?—so stale.

"And then," said Lady Dare, "there is the Scotch bringing up, you know. The Scotch are rather tough people."

"Oh, I thought the Scotch had the best possible bringing-up, fed as they are on porridge and principle. Are they not the most religious and moral nation?"

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"H'm, mens sano in corpore sana," quoted Lady Dare without a blush. Sir Austen coughed behind his paper. One advantage of being a woman is that you can misquote without losing your prestige. "Religious, *c'est possible*, but moral, why, nearly half the children in Scotland are ill——"

"Some of your hair is coming off," Sir Austen interrupted with more hurry than diplomacy, I thought, and coolly his sister made secure her latest acquisition.

"I am sorry so many little Scotch children are ill. What can be the cause, do you think?" I asked wonderingly; "perhaps the climate is responsible for it!"

They both laughed. "The climate a *bon dos*!" said Lady Dare.

Aunt Barbara spends fully half-an-hour every day by Gracieuse's bedside. She brings her knitting and talks gently to her in the quaint, old-fashioned French of her schoolroom days. She says "*servante*" for *domestique*, "*parée*" for *habillée*, and lots of rusty, musty, rococo words, but it is very nice of her all the same, and I can see Gracieuse is very pleased and flattered.

The other day Aunt Barbara said to me, "I am sorry, but I have no Bible in French, or I would have read some of it to your maid. Have you no Bible among your books, child?" As you may think, I defended myself vehemently.

"Certainly not, Aunt Barbara, I assure you. *Petit père* was not very strict about what I read, it is true, but he drew the line at Zola and the Bible."

It is difficult to say which of us was most shocked.

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"What," my aunt gasped, "have you been brought up like a young heathen, without any religious teaching of any sort?"

"Oh, my aunt, no," I protested, "I went through the Catechism, like all French children, and 'Holy History,' that is like the Bible, only expurgated and rendered fit for the innocent, but the Bible—father said some parts would cause a trooper to blush!"

I am sorry I have hurt Aunt Barbara's feelings, but I am sure father must have been right. I'll know later on. I'll read the Bible when I am married; you can do whatever you like once you are married, it seems it makes you proof against anything, and I'll read "Nana" too.

XXVI

ON AN ENGLISH RIVER

E NGLAND in June is like a beautiful woman who throws off her wrap. You are dazzled, you are charmed, you are grateful for so much beauty displayed; and the foreigner is more than all this, he is also surprised, he who did not suspect what was hidden beneath the grey cloak. London itself struggles valiantly to be clean, and almost succeeds, flaunting the freshness of her parks like so many new green ribbons to smarten up her sooty-stained garment. The soot in London is a real rock of Sisyphus, ever lifted, ever falling. *C'est ennuyeux à la fin.* The cleaner's bills make Gracieuse groan. Twenty times a day when I am out, and when anybody looks at me, I ask anxiously :

“Tell me then, Gracieuse, have I got any spot of soot on my face ?”

“*Eh, que nenni, it is not the soot, it is thy face they are looking at, mon petit agneau.*”

Yet in spite of its hopelessness, the love of white is shared here by all classes. In no other town, I believe, except in the colonies, does one see so much would-be white, and that under more adverse circumstances. The little slum children chiefly are lamentable to look

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at in their grey-white and yellow-white imitation furs, and their unwashed white little faces.

Sir Austen said once that Phrynette in London made him think of a butterfly immured in a coal-pit. London is not to me like a coal-pit any longer, and every day I find it more lovable, perhaps because . . . well, shall we say because the spring is making it more lovely.

The English are inimitable as regards scenery, whether on the stage or in the arrangement of their public gardens. Their parks stand and stretch as so many proofs to their good taste. There, flowers don't grow in ridiculous lozenges, diamonds and crescents. I have seen crocuses and daffodils peeping up, as it would seem, at their very sweet will, at quite unexpected places, and with such an air of feeling themselves at home that made you fancy that an English park was just a bit of real country transported to London and put between railings. In an English park you can actually walk on the grass, and, to complete the rural illusion, herds of sheep have been trained to wander between the trees and on the lawns as if in real fields, and pretend to graze when one is looking at them. I don't know what is done with these four-footed walkers-on during the winter. I think they must be old Londoners, judging by their pepper-and-salt fleece.

I have seen the real, genuine country too. I only had a glimpse of it from Dover before, but it was so cold then, all my faculties were chilblained, so stiff and numb. I can't understand people getting married in winter. Fancy having to sustain love between a

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shiver and a sneeze. I don't think we were meant to do anything in winter but just curl up and sleep it through, like the dormouse and the . . . the rest of them. I don't remember exactly what other animals do sleep through the winter, the snake, I fancy, no, that is while digesting—a very human process this. However, it is immaterial, some animals do, the most intelligent. How nice it would be to awake after a winter doze just in time to take a sun bath. I can't understand either that some people can be found who choose to spend their winter in London, apart from chimney sweeps and French cleaners; for people in such professions London is of course the very place where to prosper. But one must have a perverted taste and be proof against melancholy who stays there for his pleasure. Aunt Barbara says it is just as cold in Paris. Of course it is, but I don't mean the cold specially, I mean the atmosphere. It envelops you like grey cotton wool, it deadens every sound, it closes your horizon, it smothers you. You feel, or rather no, you don't feel, that's just it, it's like a dose of cocaine, benumbing pain but also robbing you as well of any acute feeling of joy. I wonder there are not more suicides in London during winter time, and yet it was not winter but March already when I arrived. Brrr . . . I dare not imagine what London is in December!

But I won't think of it, *vivons le présent*! And the present is so sweet and pretty. The Youngs took me down the river the other day, and I don't think there can be anything more lovely than the English country, and particularly the valley of the Thames.

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I am like a film roll inside a holiday camera. I will be full of picturesque England, and I hope the film will be developed, the photos finished and catalogued before the freshness of my receptivity is dimmed. Every picture I register may have the too pronounced light and shade of an *instantané* taken in the full sun of novelty, but it is for that reason all the more vivid. They are delightfully strange, one's first glimpses of England and English people and things. Of course we all know the English—they take good care to make themselves known all the world over. But the English you see in Paris and the English you see at home are dual beings, and I must say *l'Anglais chez lui* is the nicer of the two. What we abroad are quick at calling their eccentricities we soon discover to have their *raison d'être*. Indeed *raison d'être* is the basis of every English action and, whatever the good people may lack, common-sense cannot be denied to them. They understand life—material life, I mean—ininitely better than we do.

Our makeshift ways would astonish even the poorer classes of England. We put up with so many things in the way of discomfort that a stay in well-appointed, methodical, rational England must perforce awaken new material wants in every French visitor.

For instance, the very first thing I did when on English soil was to establish a comparison between our trains and the ones here. In France it is somewhat of an athletic feat getting into your compartment, you have to climb up so I had never been struck with this inconvenience before—I bore patiently with it as with

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the unavoidable—until I noticed that in England the platform and the train were on a level. Simple, but sublime!

My first acquaintance with English outdoor life was a great, and I must say, a delightful surprise to me.

When I went to Maidenhead I had put on a sailor hat, a short skirt and a linen shirt, and I was a little taken aback to see my lady friends all frills and lace and trailing skirts. I did not know they dressed for the river as for a garden party! I thought the men were just splendid in their pink or green shirts and white trousers. The way they go about with head uncovered suits them, too.

As a matter of fact, a well-bred Englishman always seems to me somehow to hit upon the right thing, either to do or to wear. I wonder why now, for, after all, Englishmen are not so particularly clever. Our men have a more subtle mind, a quicker brain, and an intuitive gift not to be found in the average Briton. Yet the Englishman is just the right stuff. Do English women realise that their men put them somewhat in the shade? In France it is the contrary. The feminine portion is the one good to look at, the majority of our men being somewhat indifferent specimens of manhood, physically speaking.

But all this is digression. Well, they were all in flimsy stuff that day at Maidenhead, and I was almost sorry I hadn't put on a casino frock instead of my Doucet skirt. It strikes me that English women seize every opportunity to dress. We don't

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even dress for dinner in France, except on extraordinary occasions.

They had some trouble in inducing me to go in a punt, and I only yielded not to appear a ridiculous coward.

But oh, *mon Dieu* ! I wonder how people other than expert swimmers or would-be suicides can go in for that terrible pastime. You can lose your pole, then it seems you are quite unable to control your boat, and that is more exciting than reassuring. Then poles break sometimes, causing you to sit down in your punt with more hurry than grace, capsizing it, unless you fall direct into the water, but in either case you take a cold bath, and when there are long weeds they say you can't always swim to the bank.

Then you have got to stay in a half-reclining position all the time, and, if a cramp comes, you must on no account jump up and stretch your leg, or else you will be forced to try the effect of a cold plunge on cramps generally. Those English girls are just heroines. And they punt so charmingly too ! One, two, three, down goes the pole, up go the little hands, onward goes the punt, and then the water runs and trickles in jewelled drops down the bare arms and small, brown hands, and every time the arms go up you see the clear outline of a supple figure and just a slight, but very fetching, twist of the hips.

I can quite understand why there are so many heroic girls in England ready to risk such dangers for the sake of this sport. But then, one must have a pretty silhouette !

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I was quite envious of them, and I felt so cowardly, but *que voulez vous* ? Every time we crossed another boat, or one of those horrid little launches appeared in the distance, I had to close my eyes and promise a candle to Saint Phrynette if we escaped.

Then we had lunch at the river club. It went off all right, except that the salad is served at table in the natural state in which it left the field. It is simply washed. I had to dress mine in my plate. For people who don't like to eat salad as a goat eats grass, we were served with a sort of prepared dressing in a bottle, which reminds me of Scott's emulsion. I tried it ; I want to get into English ways, you know. Well, I think I prefer the emulsion, after all.

They all ate the salad with their fingers. With this exception, English people eat in the daintiest possible way. We use our fork as we think most convenient ; with them I notice it never leaves the left hand, and they handle everything in the most precise and deft fashion.

If the lunch was good, I could not say the same of the conversation. From midday to seven P.M. my friends spoke about nothing but punting, the size of a punt, the solidity of poles, the races, their personal experiences, the good punters, and the "rotters." I pretended to listen, but was being bored to death. I suppose the English are so successful because they go in so thoroughly for whatever they take up, but oh, dear, how trying must be the company of people who are always in earnest !

Once, to divert the conversation, I put my oar in

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and spoke of one of their clever writers, much admired in Paris.

“ Oh yes,” one man said, “ an awfully clever fellow ; he has two splendid race horses, don't you know ! ”
Of his writings, not a word !

XXVII

VIVE LA REINE¹

I HAVE seen her. I saw her twice, once at the theatre and the other day in the Park. And I think I understand now what means that fanatic love, that sublime subjection of self to one's sovereign which is called loyalty. Ah, *mes enfants*, *c'est que* the Queen of England, one must have seen her to know what a real queen looks like, or rather, no, that is just it, Queen Alexandra does not look like a real, ordinary, everyday queen. As a rule real queens are too often distant beings, refrigerated by etiquette, dowdy in spite of their gorgeous robes, at least so the camera translates them for us, for I only saw one other sovereign before Queen Alexandra, and that was Queen Elena of Italy during her visit to Paris, and she looked a very nice tidy little bourgeoisie, but would not have intimidated me, but there, not a bit! While the Queen of the English, she looks for all the world like the queens of good old Perrault (that wizard of our youth) must have looked in their enchanted castles amid the impenetrable forests of fairyland—beautiful, bountiful, all youth and charm and femininity. And it is pleasant and hopeful to find that in England, where, more than in any other country, with perhaps the

¹ This chapter was written before the death of King Edward.

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exception of America, the type of womanhood is inclined to become masculined both in mind and manners—also, alas, in body—it is pleasant and hopeful to find the first lady in the land so remarkable for her extraordinary feminine charm and sweetness.

What is there in a national anthem? I know of far more beautiful tunes to which I can listen with an imperturbable enjoyment. Why then did I feel such a delicious discomfort the other night at the theatre when they began playing "God save the King"? Strange effect of a popular tune! I suppose its power to touch us lies in the fact that this simple tune is loyalty in sounds. Like all young animals, it is more natural to me to feel than to think, so I could not exactly describe what I did think when we all rose and the band started. . . . But this is what I felt. I looked at the Queen through the music, at the Queen so slim and yet stately, so sweet and yet so regal, at her pretty waist, at her beautiful arms, ah, but it is her eyes that I must speak about. They are the finest eyes in the world, and brimful of kindness. And as I looked I felt a pleasurable little shiver down my back, and the shiver rose and enveloped me, my pearl necklace felt very tight around my throat, and there is one big spot now on the satin of my bodice. Gracieuse, who sees everything and who is the most careful of all maids, scolded me for having spilled some champagne. Ah! *ma brave* Gracieuse, it was much sweeter than champagne. But a sort of *fausse honte* prevents me from telling my sensible *femme de chambre* that this is merely a drop of salt water.

As for her Gracious Majesty, *bien sûr*, I am not a snob.

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It is not the prestige of her royalty that dazzles me—I would still think her one of the sweetest of women with or without a crown—but somehow one can't help thinking that her royal rank is the proper frame for her regal beauty. I adore *le théâtre*, but that night I paid less attention to the stage than to the royal box, though I know very well my lazy self would never take the trouble of even rising from my chair and opening the window to see *notre cher brave homme de Président* passing below in all the glory of his Élyséen turn-out. Speak to me then of a queen; but what is there interesting, I ask you, in a fat, middle-aged gentleman even coming from the South, our glorious South, as prolific in celebrities as Brittany is of sardines.

The second time I saw the Queen she was driving between Albert Gate and Hyde Park Corner. We stopped our carriage—when I say our carriage I mean Lady Dare's, my aunt's carriage and horses are very much to her what a watch is to a woman, a thing as costly and beautiful as one can get, a thing to be had, but seldom to use. The Queen was all in black, and simply dressed. She was smiling sweetly as she bowed right and left, and here happened a glorious incident which I am not likely to forget—the Queen smiled to me. Lady Dare says it may as well have been to Miss Meany, who was also with us, sitting in front of the carriage with the “darling,” but it was not, really, it was to me, *ma parole d'honneur*, it was to me!

“Is the Queen going to pass this way again?” I asked Lady Dare.

“Very likely,” she said. “Why?”

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"Couldn't we wait for the royal landeau to come back?"

"Oh, my dear, no, it is impossible. They are expecting me to tea at Rumpelmeyer's, and it is a quarter past already. But I daresay you will see the Queen another day. Her Majesty sometimes passes this way." This was but a distant hope, however.

"You don't happen to know if there is a post of lady-in-waiting to her Majesty vacant at the present moment, do you?" I resumed, passing in review my chances of coming close to my idol.

"Good gracious, child, what are you thinking of? A lady-in-waiting is chosen years in advance, you know. It is a great favour; and then, she must be of noble birth, of course."

"My mother was a MacGuinness," I ventured, but without undue pride.

"My poor Phrynette, I don't think it is at all feasible; think of another plan."

"Well, then, does it still hold, your offer of presenting me next year?"

"Ah, ah, Miss Girouette, so you do not turn up any more that *retroussé* nose of yours at the notion, eh?"

"Dear, darling Lady Dare, do present me. And shall I kiss the Queen's hand? No, only curtsy; still, even that is worth striving for. Oh, if only I were a man, instead of a nobody in petticoats, I'd ask for an audience. I would get it, wouldn't I? They say the Queen is so kind, and I would offer her my services. I would say, '*C'est moi, me voilà*, your Majesty, please give me something to do for you. I abhor war, and if I could I would

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put all soldiers in safety behind iron cages and feed them on raw meat alongside wolves, lions, tigers and other confreres, but let your Majesty command me and I will enlist and fight any people, and for any cause, just like any other soldier. Paris to live in and the adorable country to be lazy in for two months of the year would be all my unnomad spirit requires to be happy, but let my gracious sovereign wish it and I'll broil in the desert or cut my way—but not because it is the latest craze—through the ice to the North Pole, exploring and civilising to the best of my ability and my knowledge of the latest Paris fashion.' Tell me, then, *ma chère petite* Lady Dare, do they still use such creatures as jesters at the court of England? How would I look in cap and bells?"

"What a baby you are, Phrynette. Jestere are gone, my dear; besides, I never heard of any jester who did not belong to the *sexe fort*."

"Then I see no other way but for you to find me a nice English husband. Why? Well, because, don't you see, the wife always becomes of the same nationality as her husband, does she not? It is very unfair, but in my case I would not complain—because then, becoming an English subject, your Queen would be my Queen too."

Lady Dare's expressive eye twinkled under her heavy eyelid.

"And once I thought you were a Republican!"

"So I am, at least, so I was, but then I had not seen the Queen, *vous comprenez*? Long live the Queen!"

XXVIII

A "BULLY" BOW OF BLACK VELVET

I LIKE a bazaar very much. I had not been to one since father took me to the Bazar de la Charité, the day before it was burnt; but I was very little then and I did not remember very well how "things passed themselves." But what I do remember is how indignant Parisian society was when told by their favourite preacher that the bazaar catastrophe was the just tribute God exacted for their sins. The habitués of La Madeleine were not used to be flagellated so harshly, and they took it rather badly. London churchgoers, on the contrary, seem to relish being told their "truths" when it is told them in beautiful language, in a fiery voice, by an eloquent preacher, and in a fashionable church. I went with Mrs Marvin to Farm Street Church last Sunday. One could hardly enter it for the crowd. All the feminine Mayfair and Park Lane, in their pretty spring frocks, all the men about town seemed to have flocked there to hear themselves denounced from the pulpit as dissolute, extravagant, cheating, moral wrecks, "the boil on England's neck." How good-natured are those English!

As to the bazaar, I had found means of helping my aunt, after all. Though unable to make d'oyleys and

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table centres I painted dozens and dozens of menus, no forget-me-not garlands and pansies, but vulgar, ordinary, everyday little scenes of French life, a *pioupiou* and a nurse, a *sergent de ville* showing the way to an eminently British lady, American tourists in front of Notre-Dame, etc. My menus sold like small pies; you might have thought they were highly original. I was glad I had not courted meningitis in seeking for new subjects; we all know that innovating ideas are never popular, and I wanted to make a good *recette*. Bridge markers and shaving books with painted covers were among my stock-in-trade, together with half-a-dozen painted gauze fans with ornamental nymphs dressed in nymph-land fashion. The reason why nymphs are so popular in fan decorations is, I suppose, that a fan must suggest coolness. There was the usual smart crowd with the vivid colours, the patchwork-quilt effect, that greet one wherever many Englishwomen are gathered together; also a fair sprinkling of idle men of means, all either old or very young—the doomed preys—the helpless and the inexperienced. I felt sorry for them as they were pounced upon by the sellers and stallholders, and it was curious to see how the shy debutantes, as well as their tactful, well-bred mammas, forgot shyness, tact and breeding in the holy cause of charity. What a formidable spider is a virtuous woman! What must it be then with the unscrupulous ones? Poor men!

I had a stall opposite my aunt's and next to a very pretty girl who sold horrid hatpins made by herself out of breadcrumbs, or sealing wax, or some extra-

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ordinary stuff like that. To realise what utterly useless and forbidding-looking things sane people are able to produce one has need to visit a charity bazaar. I knew my neighbour must be an American by her figure, and her way of holding herself; and her voice also had not the pretty sing-song of the English woman. But she was so charming that it would seem all the men there wanted to buy hatpins for their mothers and sisters. I was jubilant, and did not grudge her her success, for I profited by the tide of purchasers that passed my stall. I bought two of my neighbour's hatpins for Gracieuse. If she knew at what fancy prices she would certainly have a fit, she who, like a true Frenchwoman of the people, insists on getting value for her money.

The American had sold her stock quicker than I did, so I asked her if she would come and help me to dispose of mine. She came at once. She was the jolliest girl, with admirable business aptitudes, and absolutely no scruples as to the palming off of unwanted goods on to the cowardly male.

"See," I said, "we have only those few menus left. I think you must be a mascotte. Father used to say I was his mascotte."

"I guess I am then, we have made over one hundred dollars right away already, and you must not sell these menus for less than two dollars each, they are just too elegant."

As we sold we talked, and as we talked I learned that my helper was a Miss Wiley from Texas. Several times she referred to her "work," with such an air of taking for granted that of course I must know all about it and

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her, that I thought she must be indeed a *persona grata*. Later on Lady Dare, whom I asked, told me that Miss Wiley's "work" was coon songs, "not music hall, you understand, concerts and private entertainments. She has lovely frocks and she sings charmingly, everybody sees her."

London, it strikes me, is far more generous and liberal towards artists than intellectual and artistic Paris. Here society and the artistic world mix and intermix, not so in Paris. Our actresses are as pretty as English actresses, and more clever, but, except in exceedingly few cases, they marry, when they do marry, in their own world, not in the aristocracy. True, our actresses are to be seen wherever society goes, and are *fêtes* by all the Parisian world, but not by his wife, still less his daughter. I wonder why, now. The time is gone by when "play actors" were excommunicated.

"In New York, at the last bazaar where I 'loaned' my humble help," said the vivacious Miss Wiley, "my stall was next to that of our Princess Alice."

"Oh, really? I suppose you were pleased? She is a great favourite in America, is she not?"

"I should think so! We all adore her, she is so charming, so original!"

There! I had been expecting it. Whenever Mrs Longworth is mentioned her originality is sure to follow in the same breath. I believe she is worshipped in her country, yet do they ever praise her for her beauty, her kind heart, her cleverness? No; they adore their "Princess Alice" for her originality. Originality, though so highly valued, is, it seems, cheaply bought

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in the States. It does not consist so much of what one thinks, but of what one does. And anything done *en dépit du bon sens* is deemed original. Put your cap with the vizer at the back of your head, for instance, like an English postman, and that is a good claim to independence of thought. I believe Mrs Longworth only attained the height of her popularity after she jumped through the window in disdain for the door, and cut her wedding cake with a sword instead of a knife.

I am afraid I am prejudiced against Mrs Longworth—*ce que ça lui serait égal*, if she knew it—yet I'd like to like her. She has a strong, arresting face, and her father is *un si brave homme*. If only Americans and American papers could be muzzled about her originality! We hear less about it since her marriage.

The menus were not long in the stalls.

"There is nothing left," I sighed with pleasure, "look, nothing."

"Nossing," she said, with a good-natured laugh, parodying me, I think. Then, with a toss of her huge hat, "I guess we must find something for them though," she added as two men she knew approached the empty stall.

"This elegant Maréchal Niel," she resumed in the tone of an auctioneer, quietly unpinning a large rose from her bodice, still fresh and odorous.

"One pound ten," said one of the men, looking not at the rose but at the fair flower-seller.

"Two pounds," said his companion, and he stretched his hand. The contest lasted for some time, but finally the first man had the Maréchal Niel for three pounds,

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and the smart American pinned it herself to the lapel of the higher bidder.

"And now," I said, "we may as well close shop, every single thing is gone." But as I said this I had a keen thrill of joy and then some regret that I had nothing left to sell, for, towering over the crowd of flowery hats, I saw a fair head shot with grey, above two broad shoulders clearing the dense mass of people like a swimmer does the waves. Sir Austen had seen me too and was making for my stall.

"What, nothing left for me to buy, and I had set my heart on one of those beautiful shaving books I saw you working at so industriously. Do find something to sell me, for charity's sake!"

But my pretty counter was now quite bare except for its blue and white draperies. I turned towards the American.

"And not even a Maréchal Niel for sale!" I bemoaned.

"Let me see." Her quick, business-like eye searched me from head to foot, and she pounced on the velvet bow that fastened my hair. "Sell him this," she said eagerly, with the true, shameless, grabbing instinct of the society *vendeuse* at a charity bazaar. "I can easily settle the curl with a hairpin afterwards," she added with feminine psychological intuition. "This 'bully' velvet bow for sale, suitable for, for"—a helpless pause, at which we all laughed, then a sudden change of tack—"having belonged to a mascotte and guaranteed to bring luck to the bearer."

"Do let me have it," pleaded Sir Austen as I shook my head, blushing at the suggestion of my partner,

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"I need luck badly, the elections are in a fortnight, remember the poor," and he pushed a five-pound note on the counter. A white little hand covered with rings quickly closed upon it.

"This brings our total to twenty-five pounds," said the American, her voice trumpeting her triumph. "Won't the Marchioness be pleased if all the other stallholders bring her only half that for her poor."

Nobody forced me to take off my bow, it is true, still there is what is called a case of moral compulsion, *n'est ce pas ?* My aunt, who all the afternoon had kept one eye on her d'oyleys and the other on the American seller and myself, frowned and energetically shook her bonnet—I imagine that bonnet must be a penitence for her sins—as Sir Austen placed his purchase in that mysterious receptacle of untidy odds and ends—a man's pocket-book. Later I was told that my neighbour and myself had acted with very little discretion, shown bad taste in fact, she in putting to auction her rose and I in selling my bow. *C'est bien possible*. I had had my own misgivings about it, only somehow, whenever I do something I ought not to, qualms always trouble me when it is too late. It's so unfortunate.

Surely my bow can't be of any possible use to him. Did he buy it out of charity for the sake of the poor. I wonder, or because? . . . I felt very elated that night. How rightly they say that charity is a source of joy!

This has been a busy week. The bazaar was on Monday, and on Tuesday I went to an "at home" with my aunt. The tziganes were delightful, and the frocks

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indifferent. An old gentleman fell in love with me, but had no opportunity of becoming disrespectful, as old gentlemen are wont to, because my aunt never left me. Is it not a very droll thing that I should be such a favourite with veterans, though I am such a kid. Or is it *because* I am such a kid ?

On Tuesday Lady Dare and Sir Austen took me to Ascot. I was hoping the populace might set the stand on fire to enliven things a bit, as they did in Auteuil last time I was there with *petit père* ; but my expectations were not rewarded, and nothing happened except that our coach almost ran over a drunken man on the return journey. Betting must be thirsty work. It is incredible the number of drunken people I saw that day—more than I saw in France in a whole year. I won three pounds, all by my own intuition. I would not take any tip from Sir Austen. I just put my money on the jockey with the prettiest colours. Very simple, isn't it ? I distrust tips because *petit père*, who had always (*à l'entendre*) the most wonderful tips, invariably lost at the races. He was no horsey man, *le pauvre chéri*.

On Friday Lady Dare took me to see an exhibition of wedding presents. I wonder what incorrigible parvenu invented such a disgraceful thing—a display of wedding presents ! How is it that the English, a race distinguished by its good taste, reserve and correctness, should have adopted so vulgar a custom ? Lady Dare is the godmother of the happy *fiancée* (a girl of eighteen and just out of school), and on that account was very pleased and proud of her god-daughter, who had managed to make the match of the season. The *fiancé*,

A "BULLY" BOW OF BLACK VELVET

by the way, is fifty, and looks ten years older. He has very little hair, but makes up for it by a great deal of—waistcoat. But what will you? One cannot have everything, a peer and an *éphèbe* who is an Adonis into the bargain. And, as Lady Dare says, "the girl is no fool. Let her first get her peerage, and she can have a good time afterwards." It's curious; sometimes I could imagine myself back in France again.

I am glad that *l'exposition des cadeaux* has not yet entered *dans nos mœurs*, except in the Paris-New York section of heiress brides. It seems there were two detectives in plain clothes watching over the presents of Lady Dare's god-daughter. How pleasant for the friends and acquaintances of the *fiancée* to be followed by diligent eyes whenever they went near her treasures! I felt quite nervous.

Among the gifts the number of clocks, tea-services and cigarette-cases was appalling. The young *maîtresse de maison* will be able to indulge in frequent changes in those articles, as the Japanese do with pictures. Such an exhibition may be flattering to wealthy and generous relations and friends, but what about those who cannot afford to make handsome presents? Do they not suffer from the proximity of their own modest "Life and Letters of Queen Victoria" to the rare Elzevir of a more fortunate giver? And does not the elbowing of a sumptuous diamond bracelet by their humble silver candlestick make them uncomfortable? I won't have any exhibition of presents when I marry, if I marry, and I do hope I shall. But I do not envy Lady Dare's friend her *fiancé*—no, not if he were ten times a peer

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and possessed half England. I want to have a good time *with* my husband, not *though* I have a husband.

"You won't see my present there," said Lady Dare. "I sent my god-daughter a cheque."

"A what?"

"A cheque."

"Oh, and wasn't she offended at being offered money?"

"Offended? What a droll little girl you are! Of course not. She'll buy what she likes with her one hundred pounds, and it will save me the bother of choosing and most likely choosing the wrong thing."

Well I dare say it is a very practical and sensible idea, but—well, it's a little too modern, even for me.

XXIX

THE BACHELOR GIRL

SHE was a friend of Marjory Young. They had been schoolfellows together, I believe, and the friendship had lasted till now, the non-gushing, unemotional friendship of two healthy, self-reliant English girls. Miss Croucher was a six-footer, a photographer by trade, a suffragette by conviction, and the best of fellows to boot. So much I knew by what the Young girls had told me, but Miss Croucher herself was quite a revelation to me, the discovery of a new species unknown in my country. Miss Croucher lived alone in London without a chaperon of any kind, though she was still a girl, and had a father and mother living somewhere in a little country vicarage. She bounced into Marjory's sitting-room one afternoon as we two were having tea. Miss Croucher is just as abrupt and unconventional as Marjory, but you feel somehow that it is all put on, and that she is a lady under her nasty slang and her rough manners. We had hardly been introduced when she came and stood in front of me, her hands behind her back, and looked at me fixedly with her frank, big blue eyes, until I felt somewhat *gênée*.

"Glorious!" she said at last. I blushed; the drawback of being fair is that your skin is perpetually giving you away.

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"Do you mean my hat?" I asked. "Do you like it?"

"Your hat, bless you no, I think it is a most absurd-looking thing, that hat of yours, with all those birds sticking out. Why not wear a hen-coop?"

A minute before I had seen her remove her fur toque and slip it without more ado in the pocket of her coat.

"No," she went on. "I mean your hair; does it curl naturally? Stunning, it looks like a breed of copper snakes." (Fancy, what a comparison!)

Marjory roared, I was awed, imagining myself as a new Medusa.

"You are lucky too, to have that colour of hair!" went on the irrepressible Miss Croucher; "nothing else could possibly 'go,' you know, with those green eyes of yours. Marjory, you must bring your friend when next you come. My partner will just rave about her hair. By the way, you know, she has three miniatures at the Academy this season! Oh, we are getting on! I photographed royalty a week ago, and the next Drawing-Room will give me some more work." And she went on in that way, gay and *bonne enfant*, talking about her work with a smile so courageous that no one would have thought that this was no hobby of hers, but a real fight for the right to live. Englishwomen all seem to have a wonderful backbone, that's perhaps why their back is so long and straight up and down.

"So you are French?" asked Miss Croucher, when she had disposed of a respectable pile of cucumber sandwiches. "You don't look it if it were not for your frock."

It is strange that English people seem to believe that

THE BACHELOR GIRL

all Frenchwomen ought to be short, fat and black, with the upper lip of a boy of sixteen. As if we were all of one type over there; as if the red-haired, green-eyed, mystic Yvonne of Quimperlé, was not the living antithesis of the red-lipped, black-haired, effervescent Mireille sung by Mistral. Why, each of our provinces has a different type. And this is what contributes to the attraction Paris has for the admirers of feminine beauty, for towards Paris converge all shades, reflections and variations of womanhood. La Normande, tall and fair, with strong structure and flat hair, the least coquettish of the daughters of France; the Meridionale, with her generous bodice and vivacious mien; the Tourangelle, with her quiet dignity, charming talk—all of them different, and only alike in one thing, their intuition for wearing their clothes the right way (even the cheap *cotonnades*), their tripping walk even in their wooden sabots, and their generic charm, charm sometimes vulgar and often unaccompanied by beauty. But fortunately charm can more easily dispense with beauty than beauty with charm, *n'est ce pas ?*

"What part of France?" inquired Miss Croucher. "Oh, Paris! I don't know Paris, but I have been to France, to Brittany, last summer. I went for a cycling tour."

"Oh, indeed! Do you speak French then? Perhaps you went with some French friends?"

"No, I only speak school French, but of course I never spoke it, as I always found somebody or other who knew English. I went with my partner."

"Only you two, were you not frightened?" Miss Croucher exhibited a huge fist and hard, shiny knuckles.

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"What would a French rough say to this?" she asked with a triumphant laugh and a twinkle in her mild blue eyes. "Besides, I have practised ju-jitsu for two years."

"Miss Croucher, how I admire you!" And I did, but without envying her. An independent woman is never helped along, and it's so nice to be helped.

"If any wicked little Frenchman had tried to interfere with me, I would have taken him by the neck like this"—she put her two hands around my waist, lifted me up in the air, and dropped me, panting, into an arm-chair. "You foolish little creature, why, I declare, you are not more than twenty-one round the waist."

"Twenty-two," I corrected apoloisingly. "I don't pinch really, but how is one to go stayless now that tight-fitting frocks are the order of the day?"

She shook her head sadly. "'Many are called, but few are chosen.' You are not ripe for the vote yet, child," she said.

"And she has just spent a fortnight in jail," said Marjory when Miss Croucher, after having fished her toque out of her capacious pocket and shaken it with a virile fist, had once more covered with it her indescribable chignon and taken her departure, and left us to go and do "sentry go" at the House of Commons. I had a vision of Miss Croucher as a highwayman practising ju-jitsu on our peaceful Breton peasants.

"In jail!" I gasped, horrified. "Mon Dieu, Mon Dieu, and your mother allows you to receive such a person! What has she done?"

"Oh, nothing to be ashamed of, don't look so

THE BACHELOR GIRL

horrified, only created a little animation in the House, that's all. She would not yield to man-made laws, you see, but she does not mind the prison a bit. She is a born fighter. I am sorry for the poor policeman who had to arrest her."

"Fancy Miss Croucher a heroine ; she does not look it, she is so jolly and matter-of-fact. But don't you think it a little stupid of the suffragettes to pit their strength against man's and convention. It will be a very rough fight, and takes such a long time that way. Why don't they choose their prettiest campaigners and set them to coax the men who can wield some influence in favour of the Cause. I would make it an affair of the drawing-room and the political salon, not of the public platform. They rely on the public ; they are wrong. There is no such thing as a public conscience, just as there is no such thing as a reasonable crowd. Besides, it is a pleasanter task to appeal to one well-bred man than to a horde of roughs at Peckham. Why, how do you think that French history is made ? By us women, of course, and if we have not been given the franchise it's because we don't care very much for it. We are too busy managing our husbands and sons, who are so utterly dependent on us. Let suffragettes try and send a few pretty scouts in petticoats in political circles. They must not be Miss Crouchers, though, but the soft, small, helpless women who know how to twist men around their little manicured fingers."

"But it is not very sportsmanlike, what you suggest, you know, Phrynette," remonstrated Marjory with a pretty show of scruples.

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“Sportsmanlike, of course not, but it is diplomatic. Besides, to the fair all is fair, and don't you think beauty and wits will do more to help women than the most thorough ju-jitsu ? Oh, why can't they see it is no good using their umbrella against a policeman ? Better play your fan against a minister. Especially if the first method must lead you to prison, b-r-r-r . . . *l'horreur !* And I dare say they haven't even a mirror in their cell.”

The more I think about it the more I wonder. Marjory took it as a joke when I told her, and said I had a riotous imagination. *C'est bien possible*, but all the same I have my doubts about Miss Croucher—about her being a girl, I mean. You should have seen how she lifted me up, and I weigh nearly nine tons, or is it stones ? And her appetite, *bonté Divine !* And then when she put her toque on she did not even look in the glass to see if it was straight. Now is that natural ? But why should she masquerade as a woman if she is a man ? I could better understand the contrary process. There must be a mistake somewhere. Of course, to pretend in earnest like that must have its funny side, and pleasant too—she told us her partner was a very pretty girl. Perhaps, if she is a he, she wants to escape conscription. Oh, I don't know, but I'll investigate before I go to her studio. *Je ne sais pas le ju-jitsu, moi !*

XXX

AT MOUNT HAZEL

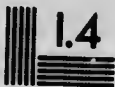
I SIMPLY love the English country. I had no idea it was possible to find such charming, real rusticity allied to the progress, the comforts of modern civilisation. Here is a small country town, where the streets are lit by electricity, where you find two libraries, a club, and where the postman comes four times a day. All around is the green, magnificent, smiling, undulating country, dotted everywhere with beautiful mansions set in large, imposing parks. And there are deer in the parks. I had never seen deer except in museums and zoological gardens.

But where are the peasants—the “bold peasantry, their country’s pride”? The land seems quite deserted. Now and then you see a solitary man perched on an automatic farm machine. By the way, is it not wonderful? They do all the work here by machinery. I saw a machine that cut the corn, bundled it up, and laid it aside in neat little heaps all by itself. In France they have those in exhibitions, in model farms, and agricultural schools kept by the Government. The ordinary farmers use hand labour, and everywhere you still see men and women with reaping hooks, their backs slowly roasting under the broiling sun. But here you hardly see any women working the land. All French peasant



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(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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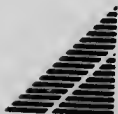
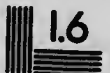
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women spend their day in the fields, doing as much as, and sometimes more work than, the men.

My friends told me I should soon tire of the country. Of course they are *blasés*. It is their own country, so they don't admire it. I have a good mind to take "English leave," as we say in France—leave them behind, and play the vagabond just for a week.

I am not a bit afraid to go about alone in England. People are so quiet, well-behaved and law-abiding.

And then I have my revolver. They asked me if it was a new idea for a perfume bottle. I said it was a real revolver, and that I always carried it when going about with Gracieuse in France, and that at home we all slept with our revolvers handy. They inquired "what for?" I told them, "the Apaches." They wished me not to "lay it on too thick," whatever that means, and seemed not to believe I spoke seriously.

Yet of course I meant it. Why, a flat in Paris is not a bit safer than the Tsar's bedroom, for instance, and it is only foolhardy people who keep no arms by them.

Yes, I am enchanted with the English countryside. It is like a young English matron (of the old regime, though), not piquant, but fresh, placid, serene and fruitful. As October advances it becomes lovelier still, less emerald, more gold, with already some ruby leaves in the hedges.

When it is not fine we go for long walks in the forest, Sir Austen and I. Then we stand amidst the trees under the wounded, fainting leaves, and listen to the third waltz of Chopin being played around us by autumn, with the accompaniment of the rain. If Chopin had

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consulted me that particular waltz should have been called "October." Listen :

Lento.

SME.
VALESE.

p *legatissimo*

Can you not hear the wind waltzing on the dead bracken?

Sometimes we find mushrooms. There are some things as subtly delicious as, but none more so than, the smell of mushrooms. The other things are: the smell of roasting coffee (infinitely superior to its taste), the smell of strawberries (the same remark applies), then oysters and ices. To call those things good is lamentably

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inadequate. They are, oh, divinely luscious ! They are seconds of ecstasy under trivial shapes, and the proof is that you must needs close your eyes when a bit of ice is slowly melting on your tongue, don't you ? I do.

What a rich, beautiful country is England !

I won't discuss its land system. It may be unfair, oppressive, if you like, but a redeeming feature is that it is the beauty-preserver of the country. Imagine a nation like ours, where everyone is or can be a landowner. This may delight the philanthropist or the land reformer, but it means lawful vandalism, the morselling of fine stretches of land, the cutting down of trees, the building of hideous houses, the abolition of these beautiful estates which are the glory of England.

Imagine these delivered over to the vulgar and the builder ! Why, the English country would soon be as ugly and commonplace as the English towns—row upon row of "desirable residences" and "charming maisonnettes," all so much alike that if you are not sure of the pattern of your window curtain you may find yourself in your neighbour's house instead of your own sweet home.

Small country towns have their charm—they are wonderfully up-to-date. I wonder if we are privileged here, or if it is so in all English country towns ; watering-carts pass along now and then, and the County council actually sends a man round to collect the dustbins. Why, these are the luxuries of our big towns in France.

I have in my mind a typical French village only a few miles from a large city. In size it is very similar to the one we live in just now, but as for comfort this English

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village is fifty years ahead. There is no large shop in the French village I mean, the housewife buys her provisions at the small market held every morning on the *place*. There she is buttonholed by every *marchande*, called by the most endearing terms, and sometimes even pulled by the sleeve. Nothing is left untried that can wheedle her into buying what she does not want.

"Look at these soles, darling, caught this very morning, and as fresh as the eye."

"Come, my heart, just you weigh this melon, full of juice, *ma petite*. I have not sold anything; you have the 'good hand,' my pretty one, you'll bring me luck," a widespread superstition among French tradespeople.

There is only one pastry shop in the place, ah! but what pastry, my friends! something different from the *sultana* loaves, the buns and sponge cakes of the English confectioner.

That is the great drawback of English life—the unpalatable, monotonous, indigestible cooking. To grow rich rapidly in England, you have only to invent a pill! How is it English people abroad can enjoy the best of everything, especially our cuisine, and yet at home are content with such primitive dishes? Their food is cocked, not *apprêtée*.

In country inns it is deplorable; joints, ham, boiled, watery vegetables, and heavy puddings—that is the menu all over England. And don't ask for an omelette, because they don't know whether it is meat or fish. Why, in the smallest of *auberges* in France, in the meanest village, you can get for two francs and less quite a decent little lunch—hot, nicely prepared, and

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served under whatever trees have been spared by the axe.

The other day we stopped at the "Hare and Hounds"—or "Pig and Whistle," is it? They have a lovely garden there. Of course I expected they would lay the table under the shade on the lawn. They condemned us to their best parlour, where I had for *vis-à-vis* a grinning Nelson and a view of Margate Pier. I would not have minded: I was hungry. They served us cold roast beef, overdone; boiled potatoes; and boiled cabbage with water still oozing from it. They asked me if I would like tomatoes. I love them. Now, would you believe it? They brought me the tomatoes raw, not *farcies*, nor as a sauce to take with the meat, nor in a salad—no, just raw!

"Are you coming with me, Phrynette?" Lady Dare asked me the other morning, "I am going to see our cottagers and give some presents for the little children. You never saw our poorer English peasants in their homes, did you? It will interest you."

The motor car was packed with parcels of blankets, provisions and clothing, while here and there, from a rent in the brown paper, the tail of a horse or the golden hair of a cheap doll showed that the children had not been forgotten.

"We do our best," said Lady Dare, as we stopped in front of a lovely, tumble-down little cottage near the church, "but some of our tenants are terribly poor. Austen has made several improvements in the village and I also have started a lace industry to help the women to make a little money, but the result is not very encouraging."

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The door was open. We entered the kitchen. On the floor, in the draught, a little mite of three, dirty and stockingless, was playing with a knife, forgotten by the mother, in a pail of water, together with several half-peeled potatoes. Another detail that I noticed which would make the heart of any French housewife swell with rightful indignation was that the peels were, without exaggeration, nearly half-an-inch in thickness, what was left presenting the appearance of small sculptured white blocks. There is no small economy, as we say in France, and the waste, of which this is a characteristic example, amongst the poorer classes in England, strikes me as positively sinful. The proverbial French thrift at which English people often smile is founded not in any spirit of niggardliness, but springs from a righteous hatred of waste. I fail to see why there should be any meanness in economy, or any nobility in extravagance.

I took from the child its dangerous plaything and put him away from the draughty door. Guided by the screams of another younger baby, we entered the back room in search of the mother. There was nobody in the room except a howling little bundle on the bed, making itself hoarse in its exasperation of suffering. Clutched in its wee fist was a caoutchouc soother, the end of which was missing, so that the baby had been sucking the air with a will, which explained its present temper. We found the mother, a pale, hollow-chested, flat-hipped woman, in the narrow back garden in animated conversation with a female neighbour over the fence. On seeing Lady Dare she blushed painfully and seemed to

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lose altogether the power of talk she was so evidently enjoying as we came. She invited us back to the house, all awkwardness and embarrassed smiles, visibly overburdened with the honour of her ladyship's presence, as only the English lower classes can be in face of nobility.

"I have brought some little things for the children," said Lady Dare, "but your youngest did not seem to take my present very kindly; the poor thing was crying terribly when we came in. Is he not well?"

"There is nothing the matter with him at all," said the mother. "Why, he took his bit of pork and his drop of beer with us last night like a little man. It's just his temper, that's what it is."

"This is a sad case," said my friend as we left the house. "This poor woman has been married for nine years, and has had six children. Four of them died in their first year—one was smothered in the mother's bed, one was burned to death from an open fire in the grate, one died of croup, and a few months ago she lost her last-born from bronchitis."

"And by what we saw," I said, "the two that are left are likely soon to join the other little martyrs."

I felt indignant. This only confirmed what I had heard and read about the enormous death-rate amongst the unfortunate babies of the English mothers of the poorer classes. But had I not seen it, I could not have believed that common-sense and maternal love and instinct would be unable to counterbalance the ignorance natural enough after all to such people.

In the next cottage at which we called was a poor

AT MOUNT HAZEL

widow who, I was told, lived on the charity of the parish and the hall. She was out when we entered, but came back shortly from the village, where, she explained, she had been to take back a bit of washing. Her aspect matched that of the cottage in unkept wretchedness. Her skirt was frayed and had many holes, but no patch or darn; her jacket was patterned with dirty spots from sundry and varied sources; and a long wisp of grey hair fell untidily from her chignon. She showed none of her neighbour's bashfulness in talking to us. She recited all her past and present hardships in a tearful, wailing, high-pitched voice, fixing her sharp eye all the while on Lady Dare, to whom she particularly addressed herself.

"And my daughter has been in service for these past twenty years, your ladyship, and in a good situation too, but never a penny have I seen from her. All goes to buying finery, no doubt, while her poor mother often goes to bed without tasting bread."

As we went out I noticed a piece of soap in a basin of water forgotten, melting away! In the yard a dustbin uncovered was vitiating the air with the smell of stinking refuse, on top of which was a lot of stale bread. Why, I wondered, should a hungry woman let all this bread go to waste when, with a handful of vegetables or a little milk, it could be made into tasty and nourishing soups?

"Is it true," I asked of Lady Dare, "that the woman has a wage-earning daughter?"

"Yes, and also a son who is a prosperous little tradesman in London, but she keeps a soft corner in

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her heart for him and never mentions his heartlessness towards her."

"But have you no law here, similar to the one we have in France, compelling unwilling children to provide for the wants of their old parents according to their means."

"No," said Lady Dare, "but we ought to, or rather there ought to be no need for it."

Nowhere was any engaging smell of cooking emanating from the little kitchens of the workmen's cottages. In the poorest home of the French labourer there would have been at least a substantial soup or a ragout in the making. The only culinary preparations I witnessed in the home of the English labourer was the peeling of potatoes. I wonder what the poor man's dinner is composed of.

More often than I could have believed we saw in the pretty cottages a disheartening spectacle of want and waste and neglect, of poverty victorious over self-respect and effort, and, in many cases, I saw even worse. At the door of the public-house, in a broken-down perambulator, insufficiently wrapped, was a few months' old innocent little victim—doomed in advance to the saddest of all lots, that of the English poor—waiting, with his little pinched face blued by the cold, for his mother to emerge from the "bar."

On our return journey we passed a cottage as pretty and picturesque as only an English cottage can be. The place was closed, and looked uninhabited. "We shall not stop here," said my friend, with a sigh, "there is no one. The children are in the workhouse, the mother is dead,

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and the father is in prison. Both wretches drank, and one night the man kicked the woman to death . . .”

I shuddered. The pretty English village, the beautiful country, seemed to use for me their attraction. That night at dinner, as I listened to a brilliant young Socialist, I thought that, after all, the English poor had far worse enemies than conservatism and the land system—extravagance, ignorance and drink.

In England it seems the reserved privilege of the rich to enjoy in turn, and according to weather and season, a house in town and a country residence. The week-end cottage is, I am told, a modern idea chiefly put into practice by artists or bachelors, a not uncommon plan being for several town dwellers but country lovers to join their inclination and their purse, and from Saturday to Monday forget, in one another's company, London, its smoke and its dirt, under a rustic roof. In France such a plan would find no adherents, for the same reason which prevents clubs and boarding-houses from attaining the flourishing state they enjoy here. The Frenchman with regard to his home is neither so sociable nor so hospitable as the Englishman. He wants his home to be his very own, and though we may be said to be a nation of “flat dwellers”—speaking at least for the Parisians—yet in many cases flats are only endured by the occupants either by necessity or as a temporary habitation, the longing for a house, chiefly for a house in the country, representing the ambition of the average Frenchman.

The instinct of proprietorship is indeed with us more than a penchant, it is a national trait, and perhaps

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one of the most powerful incentives to labour and thrift—our renowned thrift so often gently derided by other countries less privileged than ourselves in that respect. From the *haute noblesse* to the frugal bourgeoisie, down to the laborious artisan classes, all Frenchmen are born with a sixth sense, that of proprietorship, and a country place, whether it is a chateau or a wooden, one-roomed shed, is the goal and the purpose of all their energies—of the professional man, of the tradesman, of the working man.

Besides his hotel in the Faubourg St Germain, Monsieur le Duc has, somewhere in Touraine, a chateau whose treasures have escaped the Revolution, and where once a year, on his return from Biarritz, M. le Duc, with a few chosen friends, will hunt the scarce and fast-disappearing stag. Next in importance to the landed proprietor comes his country neighbour, some rich preserve maker, who, having bought his historical castle from a penniless young "blood," has improved it greatly, as he thinks, by sundry decorations in the way of glass globes, Chinese pavilions, and sacrilegious tidying-up of the once magnificent park. More modest than either, Monsieur Durand, the French cousin of Mr Brown of London town, is quite content with his "petite villa," a squat, square, ugly erection in the centre of a square, and not less ugly, barren piece of land, not much bigger than the house it contains. On the walls of the four or five rooms with their beflowered papers, are seen the only floral specimens observable in M. Durand's country "place"; no, stay, we were overlooking the magnolia in infancy adorning the centre

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of the parterre. The odds are against that magnolia developing to an adult age, but if it did either it or the villa would have to be abolished. Not room enough for the two on M. Durand's domain. To be strictly accurate, there is also in that garden a moribund fuchsia and a chestnut-tree still in long clothes, which M. Durand declares is growing *à vue d'œil*. Two beds, one of parsley, the other of sorrel, which Madame Durand plunders for her sauces, complete the garden landscape. How many busy years of obstinate pig-killing have at last been rewarded by the acquisition of the "Villa Margot"!—name of M. Durand's spouse—for M. Durand is an artist in sausages and black puddings, as his numerous customers may tell you, and his little shop is as clean as a sou and fragrant with spices. How happy are the moments snatched from the scales and the knife! moments of bliss which M. Durand spends in watering and pruning his precious plantations, and methinks also in counting their leaves, while Madame his wife is concocting some *bon petit plat* in her kitchen for to-night's dinner, and while he who rules the household, and completes the usual French family trinity—viz. M. Durand, junior—is charming the echoes of this sylvan retreat with the help of his cheap phonograph. Ah, what happy people these Durands! But one could be just as happy in less affluence. Would you be surprised if I told you that Madame Durand's charwoman and her husband, the sweep, are also prosperous landowners? Their place is not as sumptuous as that of M. Durand, *ma foi, non*, being built entirely by the handy sweep himself with second-hand and refuse material. Still it

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is their house, their very own, where on Sundays and other holidays Monsieur Sweep, Madame Sweep and the little Sweeps seek repose from the excitement of town life. Alfresco meals taken on the grass are the rule, the residence having as yet no window, and the equilibrium of the furniture being describable as unstable, but their town-bred appetite is all the keener and the general joy almost pathetic. Next year, with the joint savings of the whole family, the Sweeps may perhaps boast of a donkey and cart to bring them and their provisions to their *pied-à-terre*. Meanwhile they are content to trudge several miles on foot, from their garret to their Eden, in the dusty road, with blistered feet, thirsty tongues, and souls full of enthusiasm. The baskets full of provisions are heavy ; so much the better, there will be all the more to eat. The road is long, what matters ? Homeless tramps and vagabonds might well complain, not so proud landowners going to their country seat. And they challenge gaily the passing trippers and the other small *propriétaires* on their way to their small *propriétés*. Happy Squire Sweep, Madame Sweep and their children and heirs, for the republic of France belongs unto them !

Now the artist, the poet, and also, I think, M. le Duc, who, if he has no longer any principles, still clings to his prejudices, all these gentlemen, who are people of refinement, well read and travelled, will tell you :

“ This is all very well, but compare France, the land of small holdings, to the delightful English country, for instance, where ancestral homes and magnificent domains are not threatened by partition and dissolution.

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Your poor landowners and their poor bits of land are an eyesore, and between them spoil our once beautiful rural France."

I fear it is so, but then isn't it better to be poor in France than poor in England, in Spain, or in Russia ?

XXXI

ELECTION TIME

IN England they do not placard horrors about the rival candidate's great-uncle or great-grandmother on the town walls as they do in irrepressible Paris; but even here election time is not a rose-scented *divertissement*. It is a rough and grim time. Everyone seems to be wonderfully interested, though I always imagined that politics were unpalliatively uninteresting, but I am beginning to think there may be some sport and fun in it after all, for here not only men, but women, and even chits of girls, no older than I, seem for once to lose their placid English calm and get almost as excited about politics as they would over a football or a cricket match. I can't pretend I understand all that has happened this week, but this is what I make out. Sir Austen wanted to be elected as a Liberal member, and he was defeated by Colonel Chalcote, a Tory. Why by a Tory? I can't follow the trend of the working men's mind. Then it is possible for an Englishman to be at the same time a working man and a Conservative? Strange race! I suppose I ought to be sorry for Sir Austen, as he and Lady Dare and their friends are so disappointed, but I can't. That a man with intellect, leisure and money, able to do good in a thousand refined ways, should choose politics of all things, *ça me*

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surpasse ! Sir Austen says as he can't fight with his sword any more he must plunge in a battle of another kind. What an aberration ! Why fight at all ? But fighting is like second nature to the English, and though it is a silly occupation, one must admit they do it well.

Lady Dare has splendid endurance. She spent the three last days preceding the fight motoring up hill and down dale collecting votes for her brother. Of the actual elections and the complicated preliminaries I saw nothing. I refused to go. I gave the time-honoured excuse that I had a headache, but the real reason, the reason I could not give, was that I never could have gone through Sir Austen's speeches. It sounds very uncharitable. What I mean is that I would have listened to his speeches with the same painful tension as I watch acrobats in a circus. I never would let father take me to see "the looping the loop." How then could I have borne to see my dearest friend trying to speak amidst a shouting, vulgar, and perhaps hostile crowd ? And if he had been interrupted, and pelted with orange peels and rotten eggs, as I hear such things are done, what would have happened to me then ? *Une attaque de nerfs, bien sûr*. They said I missed all the fun, that Sir Austen was splendid, that he was only beaten by a small majority, and that he was sure to get in next time. And it seems everybody was vastly amused by the disappearance of a powerful suffragette through a rotten wheelbarrow, where she had mounted herself so as to better harass Sir Austen. I hope the disappearing lady was not my friend Miss Croucher. The description rather fitted her.

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She is my friend. I quite like Miss Croucher now, though, or perhaps because, she is so extraordinary. I have met her many times since that day at the Youngs', and she has a perpetual good humour and valiant spirits that cheer me up when my eighteen years weigh too heavily on my boneless back. She has almost converted me to the "Cause." I don't want the vote, but I think women should have it *si ça peut leur faire plaisir*, so that handsome men will have a better chance in politics. And I have no longer any doubts that she is a woman, in spite of appearances. I had lunch with her one day, and she takes too much vinegar, adores French pastries, and collects actors' photographs. So there!

I have been here for over a week now and I love it. "Mount Hazel" itself—the house, I mean—is old enough, but has no beauty and no style to speak of, but it has the *coquetterie* to hide its commonplace hugeness under a dishevellement of clematis, honeysuckle, ivy, and all kinds of charitable creepers. As for the garden, it is a dream, full of things I had read about but did not believe in. There is a sundial, and a rose garden, and a park with real live deer and rabbits and glorious ferns so high that some dare tickle my chin when I pay them a visit. *Qu'il doit faire bon vivre ici!* The air is heavy with the scent of green things, undergrowth of moss and a hundred herbs I don't know the names of. The air is not quite so clear, the sky not quite so vivid, and the atmosphere not so dry as during a French autumn. I have not once felt too hot. I think I would prefer England to be a little warmer. You have more resources—to dress well, I mean—in a hot climate. You can wear

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muslin and lawn and lace and eliminate from the quantity of your clothing until you feel cool without any loss to your appearance. But how is one to be elegant under an accumulation of tweeds and furs, and heavy, cumbersome stuffs? Greek sculptors, who knew something about dressing their statues becomingly, did not pile up furs on the form divine, as modern sculptors and painters are so fond of doing. Funny that in the art of dress and architecture, both so important to the joy of life, we should have made no progress at all for centuries. Poppée's dressmaker knew her business just every whit as well as Worth and Paquin, and the Arc de Triomphe I saw with father at Orange, and the Arc de Titus that is among my picture post cards, seem to me to be as elegant as the Marble Arch.

I like the English custom of putting up hedges as boundaries instead of the straight, jealous walls that spoil so many of our rustic lanes. It is selfish of the proprietors to put a wall between our vision and the greenness of their gardens. A wall is a tantalising thing, like the veil of a Mussulman woman, but when a wall is surmounted by broken glass for the benefit of tramps and other "worth-nothings," it can be sinister as well.

There are six other people staying at Mount Hazel. Monty is there, and an old lady, Lady Kerker, mighty cross and ugly, who is related in some way to Sir Austen and Lady Dare, and also a very pretty young widow who has exquisite frocks and very bad manners, and a greyish man who is something in politics, I don't exactly know what, and who is not otherwise interesting except that he gulps his food as a conjuror does with his

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extraordinary victuals. But all English people eat too fast, and they don't talk enough between each mouthful; that's perhaps why they are on such bad terms with their digestion. There is also a rather shy girl, who looks like a Liberty calendar, with prominent eyes and large flat wrists. She has the room next to mine, as I know to the cost of my nerves; she has brought her violin with her, and practises three hours after breakfast and again as much in the afternoon. And there is a young man, his name is Valentine, very tall, very fair and very slender—a type of man not seldom met with in London—Greek gods dressed in Saville Row. It is only a pity he yawns quite so much, and aloud too, and articulates as if he were always eating very thready macaroni. It's the strangest house-party I ever saw, it's true I never paid country visits in England before. When I was invited at poor Aunt Hortense's for Easter holiday there was never any guest but myself and Monsieur le Curé, who came for dinner every Sunday after the eleven-o'clock Mass, and now and then the old Marquise de Grayolles and her two unmarried daughters, who came to spend the evening with us, when we played *lotos* at ten centimes *la partie*. There are people who are living tragedies, the Marquise was one, while her two daughters were two depressing, cheaper reprints of their mother. The Marquise was always dressed in black; for her husband, who was killed in a duel—this happens sometimes even in French duels. The daughters were plain, but with a sort of negative distinction. They find comfort for their celibate state by being "Enfants de Marie" and telling their beads

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for the restoration of the Bourbons and the conversion of sinners in general. They will never marry now, for their *dot* has been given over to pay the debts of the young Marquis—his mother's delight and despair—who leads a gay life in Paris. The only hope of the family is for the young man to make a brilliant marriage, if he lives long enough for that. It was a question of a rich American when last I heard of Gaston. Poor Yankee girl, she won't get her money's worth in the broken-down, bloodless, morphiomaniac, neurasthenic product of a degenerate generation.

My only other experience of a house-party was a few weeks at "La Closerie," at my little friend Jeanne's country house; but there was never any guest there either, except on Friday afternoon, when the daughter of the village doctor came to partake of a collation and sew for the poor with us. There was never any man allowed within the precincts of La Closerie. Jeanne's mother knew her duty to her daughters and to *les convenances* too well for that.

So that my stay at Mount Hazel is a novel and enjoyable experiment. None of the people here are related to one another. The old lady is not the girl's mother, as I thought at first. Her mother is visiting some other people at some other place. Just fancy!

It's lucky Gracieuse is such a good needlewoman. She has just made me two lovely teagowns in two days; I very much suspect she spent the nights over them too. The brave, excellent girl! I had not brought any teagowns, I did not know girls were allowed to wear them here just like married women. But I find

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English girls dress just like young matrons, jewels and all. And why not, after all? I don't see why the fact of being married should make such difference. So I wrote to town for pale blue satin, white silk and lace. I designed the gowns and Gracieuse made them, and they are such a success, with darling little sleeves to the elbow. I wonder where the girl musician fished out the thing she had on. It clings where it had better not and hangs loose where it should reveal. It is supposed to be an artistic gown, it's yellow, with angels' sleeves. Poor thing, with her wrists too! And then she wears bracelets and a necklace of beads and shells to go with it.

The meals here are very amusing, I say the meals because it is about the only time when people come together except at breakfast, which Mrs Warble takes in her room. Mrs Warble is the fascinating lady I have already mentioned. She is a widow, and she is merry, and yet we do not call her the "Merry Widow," which shows what a little crowd of strong-minded people we are down here. Lady Dare also takes breakfast in her room. Extraordinary proceedings these, but I don't mind, because like this I have all the men to myself. The other girl does not count much, and the old lady—oh, by the way, I have discovered why she is always so cross-looking; she has very good reasons too, I think, though it may be also partly temperamental. It seems she was the mistress of Mount Hazel until Sir Austen came into it. I don't understand quite the arrangement, but so it is. It seems while an estate is yours, it is not yours exactly. You can't sell it, nor give it, nor destroy it, you only have it for some time. The late husband of the pretty widow

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must have felt somewhat like an English landowner. It is not very pleasant to think that what you once possessed is destined to change hands.

It is a charming hour, the hour of breakfast at Mount Hazel. I would not miss it for anything. First of all, in the morning one is always conscious of looking one's best, and then the French windows are wide open on the terrace, where the pink and red climbing geraniums are embracing the balustrades; and there comes faintly the glad morning choir from the park, where birds and all sorts of beasties are rejoicing over their own breakfast. I'd love to live here, and I would have every meal taken outside under the trees. Lady Dare says all the servants would leave. I am not surprised, English servants don't look at all obliging. They may be well trained in their particular branch of service, but change their routine of work and they are lost, and lost for you too. We are very fond of laughing at our French general, "*Une bonne à tout faire*," say we, "*n'est bonne à rien*," but she expects far less and does far more than the English general. You can put her to darning your stockings or watering the garden, without being told that the former office is the work of a lady's maid and the latter of a gardener. The French servant is good-humoured and adaptable, even in Paris, but chiefly in the provinces, where rough diamonds like my own Gracieuse can still be found to love you and serve you for a lifetime.

Sir Austen is very nice to Lady Kerker, but his patience does not seem to propitiate her very much. She is always making *aigre-douces* remarks, which

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make me feel very uncomfortable, but no one else seems to mind. The first night she said Sir Austen was very wrong to have dropped the general prayers, and that it was quite natural servants were getting demoralised, were degenerating, were, in fact, much worse than in her time. She blamed the housekeeper for having changed some of the tradesmen.

"No wonder," she said, "I found the meat tougher and not at all so juicy as in my time; the tea too has not the same flavour."

I find that, very often in England, to be a lady entails more latitude than obligations. It's not *noblesse oblige*, but *noblesse permet*. I can see Lady Dare bridling up when her old kinswoman is more than usually disagreeable, but Sir Austen only smiles and changes the conversation. He is so very kind, oh, he is a darling, and I am afraid I am not the only one to think so. The pretty widow, too, she is like a peacock in front of the men, but chiefly when he is there; the very train of her skirt when she passes him seems to caress his feet. She makes her voice ring like a silver bell when she speaks to him, but I heard her scold her maid the other morning and she had almost a common voice then. I distrust people with two voices. *Et quelle tenue!* She holds herself as if she was always expecting to be kissed. You know the look: half-closed eyes, tilted chin and throbbing throat. She grates on me, that woman! Whenever she opens her reddened lips to say something she concludes with a little laugh in *do, do, ja*. Oh, it's a pretty enough little laugh, but so evidently *pour l'effet*. I think what also prejudices me against her is that

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her hair is exactly of the same colour as mine, and she has no right to, I am convinced, judging by her lashes and eyebrows. In our epoch of would-be blondes, if only brunettes knew what a charming relief they are to the eyes! Lady Dare and the widow "darling" each other, though somehow I don't think there is much love between them. Oh, it is not nice of me, and I really do like Lady Dare. Pity I can't help being frank with myself, it's so unfeminine. But it amuses me to see them both with handsome Valentine, though in these circumstances Mrs Warble is seen at her best when Sir Austen is not present. It is difficult even for a clever woman to kill two birds with the same stone. Val Gregory is too lazy to court women, but he lets women court him with very decent good grace. Monty feels himself in the way very likely, for he plays the good doggy to me. I do not flatter myself; I am merely a *pis aller*, no doubt, but still I am grateful, for if it were not for him I would often be left to my own resources. Sir Austen is a very kind host, as men go, but he is often very busy, shut up in his library preparing speeches, statistics, or what not. He is also writing a book. I never imagined he had the literary gift at all, but in England it seems everybody who is anybody at all must write a book. It is as imperative as playing bridge. Men write about warfare, travels or big-game shooting; women publish memoirs of their celebrated relations or retail their lives and those of their bosom friends in spicy society novels. How nice it must be to be so clever as to write a book! Then besides his work Sir Austen has the old lady, and the

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girl, and the political men to think of now and then, for Lady Dare is the most casual of hostesses. Her whole conduct seems to say to her guests, "You know there will be food on the table at such an hour, and I also provide beds; for the rest I trust to your ingenuity." The system has its good points, for you are absolutely free.

Lady Kerker has her grievances, the Liberty girl has her violin, the political man has his newspapers and his correspondence, I have Monty and the park, Lady Dare has Valentine, and, as for the pretty widow, she will have whoever she can get. I promised a beautiful taper to my patron saint if it is not Sir Austen. It would be too great a pity. I have said that Mrs Warble is vulgar and coquettish and affected, and in a word too much of a female. It is true she is all that, but the real reason why I don't like her is that she is prettier than myself. It would serve me right if, after admitting this, everybody was to find me horrid. When a woman (I was eighteen last month)—when a woman discards her hypocrisy, what has she left, I ask you? Hypocrisy is to us like a padded frock to the scraggy, and who wants them to discard it? I am always grateful to hypocritical people. I like them to call my hair "Titian's beloved colour," even if they mentally call it red: I like flattery, I like pretence, I approve of a woman's self-defence against time. I worship the rouge pot and the dye bottle. I delight in the man who professes to love only you. I bow to hypocrisy—charitable, sensitive, considerate, refined hypocrisy—the oil in the wheel of life, the kernel of civilisation.

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My aunt says I lack moral sense. I don't know exactly what she means by that, but if it is true, moral sense cannot be so very important, for I never felt the lack of it; and it's wonderful how one can get on without it. After all, I have a kind heart and an ear for music, and those are the two great essentials, are they not?

Every dog has its day, as they say here, and every girl has her happy hours. I have many such at Mount Hazel. Is it possible that there are women who have never been made love to? I suppose so, *les pauvres*! I remember Friday had never tasted salt before he met Crusoe. When I speak of "love" I perhaps amplify; it is not love-making, but it is very sweet and it quite satisfies me. Girls have not sufficiently shaken off the child not to be pleased, like them, with trifles and shadows where I suspect married women would require a more—what shall I say?—energetic love-making. Flirting is essentially a girl's sport. They know no better and no worse, *les jeunes filles*!

Sir Austen showed me the place—the stables, the hot-houses, some bits of park which are more pretty and intimate than the others and where he used to play and hide from his lessons when he was a boy. It is hard to imagine that he had ever been a mischievous boy. "Duty" is written in his well-cut mouth, and in his strong, large, well-formed hand. It is not necessary to be Madame de Thèbes to tell a nice person by his hands.

I love the park as if I were myself a fern, a red,

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autumn fern, and had taken root in its damp, good-smelling earth. In the afternoon, when everybody retires for a nap behind drawn blinds, I slip in the park with a book. There, in one of the historic spots where years ago a gay boy played at being Robin Hood, I choose a tree with an arm-chair in it (an arm-chair is a branch with a bifurcation), and there I sit in mid-air, making the branch sway with my weight for the greatest enjoyment of my animal spirits and to the wrathful consternation of Gracieuse when she overhauls my frocks.

" Mon Dieu, c'est il bien possible? Encore un accroc! Voyons ma mie, il n'y a pas d'autre enfant au monde pour s'abimer comme toi! "

And she feels very much tempted to put me in the "corner," with my nose against the wall, as when I had been very naughty in my youth. To Gracieuse I shall never be grown up. And invariably I humbly apologise to her. For is not a woman a fool who quarrels with her maid, her doctor, or her *confesseur*?

At night, after dinner, while the others play bridge and the pretty widow gives imitations of popular singers, we two (I don't mean Gracieuse) have many nice *flâneries* outside on the terrace or on the lawn. Judging myself through French lights my behaviour seems to me nothing short of scandalous. Leaving the other guests is abominably rude, and to go out at night with a man who is neither my husband (I am sorry to say), nor my brother, or father—it's enough to ruin my reputation if my Paris friends knew it. But one must do violence to one's own feelings and prejudices and adopt the customs of the country one lives in, is it not

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so ? And, with a finger on the pulse of my conscience, I can flatter myself on my adaptability.

Sir Austen is never very eloquent at best, but in our alfresco nightly talks he seems tongue-tied, or too lazy to talk, so he asks questions, which is the easiest form of conversation. He asked me if I liked this place.

"Like it ? I love it. I could not have believed a garden could be so delightful, so large, so natural. It is an earthly paradise. I wonder you don't live half of the year at least here."

"Because, unlike Adam, I have no Eve, and I am of a sociable nature."

"But I thought Englishmen could suffice unto themselves without the *frou-frou* of a petticoat about them."

"Oh yes, I dare say that is what you thought ; but you still have very many erroneous notions about us, you know. We are not all the cold, cantankerous, tactless boors I suspect you believe us to be."

"*Par exemple!* How can you say that ? And I have such a good opinion of English people ! What you—as a race, I mean—may sometimes lack in—I won't say tact, but intuition, you more than make it up in dignity and natural kindness—that is, instinctive, impulsive, and not taught and superficial politeness."

One night, sitting by the sundial just as we were very quietly guessing at Mars' possibilities, with our noses and souls in the air, someone in the drawing-room began playing the "Dream Waltz." Who could have resisted ? I bounced in a ray of moon and started dancing. "Do come," I cried, "and dance too !" But Sir Austen

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still sat in the shade. It was exquisite, like flapping about in the waves. I felt almost swimming in music and in the whiteness of the moon playing on my face and my frock and on the scarf I waved in my hands. Why should we think at all when we are the most physically alive, the most animally happy? I thought of Regina Badet. I saw her dancing in front of the stone god, and the god remains of stone, and *crac!* the inspiration deserted me, I could not dance any more. I was no longer a young rabbit darting in the dew, nor a nymph dancing in the glade, but just a forward girl who had danced while a man watched her, and for his benefit. Which was not true. I had danced for the delight of motion and music, but perhaps he was thinking I was posing. At the thought I got hot and red in the dark, and I went and sat in the shadow at the other end of the bench.

"You are Latin all through," he said after a pause. "You owe hardly anything to the MacGuinness."

"What makes you say that?"

"Because no English girl would have danced just as you did, like that, without a partner, through sheer impulse. She would have been too self-conscious."

"Self-conscious! But there was only you!"

He laughed.

"I mean, I don't think I could have danced in front of unsympathetic people; and yet, I don't know, I just had to. The music told me—'Get up and dance.' Music is a kind of Esperanto, you know, which speaks to everyone in their own tongue, and then '*l'occasion, l'herbe tendre.*' Yes, I had to, just as I have to walk

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to the rhythm of a barrel organ when I pass one in the street."

"How old are you?"

"Eighteen. I have told you already, you know, but you have forgotten it; and the next most impolite thing, after asking a woman's age, is to forget it."

"Eighteen. You are younger than that; you are the very soul of youth, embodied in a lace frock. I don't believe you will ever get any older."

"Well, but it sounds very nice. I don't see why you should seem to pity me."

"Pity you? No, it was a sigh of self-pity."

That's envy, I suppose. He would like to be eighteen again like me and dance in the moonray without appearing ridiculous.

I used to think that if I had to earn a living I'd like to be an attendant in a museum, a lady cab-driver, or an employee at Liberty's, with a gown to match my hair like they have, and live like them amongst quaint and beautiful things. But I have discovered yet another profession still more enjoyable—to be lodge-keeper on an English estate, to have the sweetest little cottage, with old-world windows and a porch and a wealth of clematis and red roses and a huge park where you can roam at will with your book and your pleasant thoughts. I wonder all English lodge-keepers are not poets, with surroundings so full of simple and restful charm.

There are two pretty children at the lodge here, a little girl and a toddling boy. They have hair of washed-out gold and eyes of washed-out blue, and cheeks so red and rotund that it seems as if the shining skin was

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going to crack open like that of an over-ripe cherry. The little girl was rather shy at first, but since I have eaten apples with her and skipped with her we have become a pair of friends. She only knew plain skipping; I taught her to twist the rope three times above her head like this between each skip and then to skip backward again like that. Everybody knows it. I was caught at it the other day by Mrs Warble. I would not have minded if she had been alone, or if she had come with any other man but Sir Austen. I hate being taken at a disadvantage. She had a trailing white muslin dress, the sort that men think simple and which costs so much—and a pretty red sunshade that gave a delicious rosy colour to her face, while I was red in earnest, and so hot, and I had pinned my skirt up all round so as to skip the better.

“What a lovely picture those three children romping on the grass,” she said, with her usual little laugh and a graceful wave of her gloved hand.

“Three children!” Fancy the impertinence! And before Sir Austen too, who always seems to consider me as if I were still cutting my teeth.

“And what a delightful little fellow!” she added (seeing Sir Austen, who, like most Englishmen, is fond of children and very gentle with them, patting the small boy on his sandy head). She dropped on the grass in a ravishing attitude—though I could see her high busk hurt her—and put out her arms to the “delightful little fellow,” while I was busy unpinning my skirt and trying to make myself generally presentable. She teased him and rolled him on the soft turf like *Eucharis* play-

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ing with Cupid, while Sir Austen looked complacently on the pretty picture. I suppose I would have enjoyed it too if I were not such a jealous minx. Just then, and to my relief, a groom came to speak to his master on some matter of the stables, and as Sir Austen and the man disappeared behind the hew hedge the pretty widow got up, more laboriously this time than she had sat down, and began searching her frock for any spot of dew. Unfortunately Cupid, who, while playing with her, had picked up her watch with his little fat, cushiony palm, baby fashion, tightened his grip of it when the pretty lady rose to her feet, with the result that the chain snapped in two.

"Oh, you stupid little thing!" said the sweet Eucharis, reddening with anger and snatching the glittering plaything from the pink little paw.

"Oh, take him away, do!" To the sister, as the baby opened his mouth at its widest, preparatory to a howl.

"What a nuisance children are!"

I would have willingly given anything, even my new hat, for Sir Austen to appear and see the change of scene. Oh, I know very well it's mean of me, but if there is any woman who would not have thought the same, let her put up her hand.

The pretty widow came and sat by me on the mossy stone bench near the sundial.

"I have not seen dear Vi this morning," she began.

"Where is she, do you know?"

"Yes; she went in the dogcart with Mr Gregory to show him some ruins, I believe."

She gave a laugh, not so melodious as her usual laugh.

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“ Oh, ruins, is it ? Well, I hope for his sake he won't find them too dilapidated ! ” she said, with a nasty look on her pretty face as, with the butt of her sunshade, she pushed back down his hole an innocent worm who was venturing out for a little fresh air. Her thoughts must have been engaged in the exploring worm all the time, because there was no sense in what she said. I never heard of brand new ruins before.

She asked me to come and see her in her flat in Knightsbridge when I am back in town. I said I would like to very much, but, of course, I sha'n't go. I don't want her as a friend and still less as an enemy, and, as everyone knows, with women the one is but the *acheminement* towards the other. As we were still talking, a carriage passed down the drive with two very well fed and richly dressed ladies in it, mother and daughter evidently.

“ These are the Willockses,” said Mrs Warble, “ who live at ‘ The Elms. ’ I met them here last summer. They are very wealthy, I believe—beer, you know. The girl is all right if she would only lose weight, finishing school on the Continent, and all that. But her mother must be a thorn in her flesh. Poor thing. However, I dare say the old man will be knighted some day. He does his very best, anyway, he is at the head of all subscriptions. Then poor Mrs Willocks can be as vulgar as she pleases. They were calling here almost every day last summer. You see Sir Austen is the attraction, and then Lady Dare's patronage, of course. Between ourselves, Austen might do worse. You have seen the girl, she is not bad looking, and quite *comme il faut*, and Austen is not at all so well off as he used to be. This place costs an

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awful lot to keep up, and then Vi is so extravagant ; he has paid her debts again and again, as I happen to know. If he marries at all, which is rather late in the day, for he is forty-five if he is a day, he'll have to marry money. Last year I quite thought there was something between him and the Willocks girl, but this, you know, is quite *entre nous*."

So, though it is not recognised, marriage here is the very same business transaction as it is in France. Money first and foremost, amongst the upper classes anyway. That girl with her large cheeks, she would not fit in a fairy garden such as this one at all. However, if he must, he must. I am glad he does not know I like him so much. Oh ! *mon Dieu*, so very much ! And yet, who knows, perhaps if he knew—— ? Very often I thought that he did like me. But with a very reserved man like Sir Austen, one can't be sure. There are ways of making sure. If I dared to adopt the airs and graces of the pretty widow I'd know very soon, but she is not a nice woman, and I want to be a nice girl, though to be nice has its drawbacks. When you are a child you can't ask for a second helping of dessert, when you are a girl you can't let a man see that you like him, and when you are old and miserable you can't escape life and its bother by lighting the charcoal stove like a charwoman, because it's so vulgar.

If I were really ill-natured, I had a splendid opportunity of making the pretty widow very uncomfortable yesterday. Between ourselves, I am afraid she is a thief—the dangerous, fascinating society thief. There are some, of course, though less than is said

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and more than is believed. At least so says Lady Dare, who had a pearl necklace stolen from her once by a most charming woman staying at her house. The bitterness of it was that Lady Dare saw, later on, her lost possession adorning the pretty neck of her ex-friend. But what will you? Pearls are as alike to one another as peas, or as English houses, and besides, having to show proofs, there are things you can't always do, (not a nice woman like Lady Dare, anyhow), and that is sending your friends to prison. Monsieur Bernstein may well shrug his shoulders at those critics who protested that a refined woman like his heroine would never stoop to thieving, or else explain to me then how it is I found—but I'll take the facts in order. The room of the pretty widow is two doors from mine, and the other day her door was open as I was hurrying to the bathroom, in my dressing-gown, and she must have seen me, for she told me, when next we met that day, what a "devey" wrapper I had, and was it French? And would I mind letting her maid take the pattern of it? I could have it back in an hour or so. I could not say "no," I never could; it's constitutional and hereditary with me, I suppose, for *petit père* used to say that only a *rustre* could say "no" to a woman. I thought that Mrs Warble was rather *sans-gêne*, but nevertheless Gracieuse took the *peignoir* to her room. That night I went to bed rather late as the Liberty girl, Sir Austen, Monty and I had been looking for glow-worms on the lawn. Who has not searched for glow-worms in an English garden, in an English night, and with English people as easily amused as three-year-old

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urchins, does not know a delightful game. The rules are simple. It is somewhat like the finding of the Easter eggs that the bells returning from Rome have dropped in the garden on Easter morning. You must find as many worms as you can in a given time, and it would be quite easy but for their knack of putting the lights out suddenly, as if they knew they were intended as a diadem for my hair. Monty was quite excited by the chase; he found an awful lot, and arranged them like a star on my head, and kept an eye on the nomad worms that would stray from their place. He is such an obliging boy. Sir Austen was the first to tire of the game. I think he is rather inclined to be sulky now and then. If only that could make me like him at all the less, but it doesn't. We no more hate men for their defects than we love them for their qualities; rather the reverse. At least it is like that in novels and history—the faithless and the tyrant are always the best beloved. Gracieuse scolded me for bringing "*cette sale engeance*" in my room.

"*Tu es faite comme une petite folle, ma mie, une vraie Bohemienne.* Thank God, Madame your aunt does not see you like this!"

"'*Sale engeance*'! My beautiful worms! They are fallen stars, Gracieuse, you prosaic creature."

She was going to throw them through the window, but at my prayer, and to save their spine, she gathered them in her two hands and went to repatriate the pretty things on their native lawn. Meanwhile I had undressed, and then reflected that Mrs Warble had not yet returned my dressing-gown. I peeped in the hall,

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no, she was not in bed yet, I could see a rod of light at the bottom of her door. I threw a shawl over my nightie and went towards it. I could hear the pretty widow speaking softly to her maid, but as I knocked she abruptly ceased talking, and then the light went out. I knocked louder, thinking she might have gone to her dressing-room.

"Is that you, Adèle?" she asked impatiently. "I told you I would not want you any longer. I am going to bed." Then if Adèle was not there she was talking to herself, like a madwoman.

"It is not your maid, it is I, Phrynette. If you have quite finished with my dressing-gown perhaps I might have it back now, but if I disturb you, it does not matter, I'll send Gracieuse for it in the morning."

There was a scuffle and a smothered laugh, though there was nothing funny in what I said. Then I heard the door of the dressing-room being locked, and the pretty widow appeared on the threshold of her room, panting a little but wreathed in smiles, a vision of loosened copper hair and pink silk.

"You are not disturbing me in the least, my dear, why should you? Sit down, do," she waved me towards the couch, "while I take your wrapper from the press."

I sat down upon what seemed to be a somewhat hard object, but I had not time to analyse my sensations, and rose to go as she hurriedly deposited the gown on my arms and kissed me good-night with an affection she had hitherto never shown me. "Good-night, darling, it was very sweet of you to lend me this. Good-night."

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The something hard proved to be a gold cigarette-case with the initials "V. G." in the corner in diamonds and rubies. It dropped from my shawl as I threw it on a chair, the woollen fringe must have caught in the clasp when I sat down on it. I knew it at once. It was Valentine's, I had seen it in his hands very often. Perhaps, I thought at first, he has given it to Mrs Warble, though I don't suppose she would accept a present from a man, and besides, she does not smoke. I confess I felt curious to know how handsome Val's cigarette-case came to be in the pretty widow's room, but, as I did not dare disturb her a second time that night, I postponed the giving back of it until the next morning. I found her in the rose garden some time before lunch, choosing a bloom to match her bodice. Would you believe it? She simply denied all knowledge of my find. According to her she had never seen the thing before, it was quite impossible I had found it in her room, it must belong to one of the men. Perhaps it caught in my dress while I was in the drawing-room last night.

But, as I pointed out, I was not in my nightdress and shawl when last in the drawing-room. She got very red, and had an angry look.

"Very well," I said, "it is of no importance whatever. I believe this to be Mr Gregory's."

"Oh, do you think so?" she exclaimed, a shade too surprised.

"Yes, but I will make sure. I'll ask the men at lunch, and return it to the owner."

"Oh, don't trouble. Now that you mention it, I

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remember. . . . Yes, it is Val's cigarette-case, . . . he lent it to me a week or so ago, . . . he wanted me to try a special brand of cigarettes. . . . I quite forgot all about it"—holding out her hand for the case. "Thank you, I must try his brand, I suppose, and I shall give him this back myself. People might wonder seeing it in your hands."

Quelle audace! In my hands indeed! In her room it was perhaps less suspicious? She says he lent it to her a week ago, but I saw him using it only yesterday—a liar must have a good memory, and evidently that of the pretty widow is very capricious. I am convinced she had stolen the case, even if I have to accuse myself of a temerous judgment when next in confession. Why should she have been so disconcerted, if she had nothing to reproach herself with? It was evident she did not wish me to tell the others. All the same, though I did not tell her of my own suspicions, I related the facts to Lady Dare—I was afraid that if it had become known about the case I might have been suspected of either taking it or of having accepted it from M. Gregory.

Lady Dare was simply furious. The most charming woman can be now and then. She was pale, and her hands trembled so, as she was unpinning her hat before dressing for dinner, I wondered if she ever could find the hatpins in her agitation.

"I knew it!" she exclaimed. "I was a fool to invite them together. She shall go, and as for Val, oh, men are all alike!"

Perhaps, but women are not fair. Lady Dare seemed as angry with M. Gregory as with the widow. It is hard

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on a man to have things taken from him by one woman, and then be abused for it by another.

"Then you think she had stolen the case?" I asked.

"Stolen the case? Of course not! What has put such an idea into your head? But I don't like the woman, and I shall never ask her again, and you won't tell anything of all this to anyone, will you? There is a darling."

If she does not think Mrs Warble is a thief, I don't see why she is so angry. *Tout ça voyez vous, c'est bien embrouillé!*"

It's evident I have no chance at all between the Willock girl who is so rich and the pretty widow who is so deliciously bewitching and who has been so much married. It seems her last husband was her third. Sam Weller's father was a man of the world, as his advice showed. He knew that in marriage—as in everything else—it is the experienced hand that has to be reckoned with. Men generally choose women either for their *dot* or their beauty. I have neither the one nor the other. I wish I had not come to Mount Hazel, or that I could go back to town, but my aunt expects me to stay a month here. She is gone to Scotland to look after some property of hers there, and she gave a holiday to several of the servants. I can't upset all her plans, and I have no reason to give her.

Who would have thought it? I have received a proposal, my first, isn't it enchanting? At last, I am being taken seriously! But by Monty, of all men! I haven't recovered from my astonishment yet. It was yesterday morning, we were playing croquet together,

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he had been watching me for some time, and then he said in a funny, raucous voice :

“ Phrynette, will you stop it a minute, please. I want to speak to you.”

“ Oh, I know what you are going to say, but you are quite mistaken. I did *not* cheat, only your ball was——”

“ No, it is not about the game. I only wanted to say I love you. And will you marry me ? ”

It came as such a shock, I had to sit down on the grass. The idea ! Picture the scene, standing there in the broiling sun, playing a stupid game, and then being asked in marriage without any warning. It quite took my breath away, but still I was very glad, and I became all red with surprise and pleasure.

“ Do you really mean it ? ” I asked.

“ Mean it ! I have wanted to ask you for ever so long, since we went to the Zoo together. I remember very well when I began to love you, it was opposite the lions' cage——”

“ Perhaps it was my contrasting mildness,” I suggested.

“ Oh, don't talk rot. Every time I saw you I thought, ‘ Now, I'll tell her,’ but then you never gave a fellow a chance ; you always laughed at everything I said. But I am going back to town to-morrow, so I had to risk it to-day. I have no wish to play the dog in the manger like—like some fellows.”

I clasped my hands. “ Oh, Monty, I am so glad, but do you know, I have not a penny ? ”

“ Yes. I don't care. I have quite a beastly lot of money myself——”

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"And that I am very fond of pretty clothes and things; in fact, that I am rather expensive."

"So much the better. I hate dowdy girls."

"And do you know I am not at all domesticated, though I am a French girl."

"Oh, what next? I don't want you to cook my dinner for me."

"Then you know all my drawbacks, and you want to marry me all the same? Monty, I adore you!"

"Then it is 'yes.'"

"Certainly not. Oh, Monty, don't look like that. You are an angel, but it is 'no.' I haven't the slightest wish to marry"—which was not true, but one does not expect girls to be truthful, only to be womanly.

"But you seemed so pleased when I proposed——"

"And so I am. It's very nice of you, and very chivalrous, and it's a pity you are not a girl, because I would kiss you. No, please don't, you are not a girl, you see, and it might be misinterpreted. Don't be sad, *mon ami*, you'll fall in love again one of these days and you'll forget all about me, but I shall never forget my first proposal."

I felt many inches taller. I think I may put up my hair now. He asked me to take time and consider it, that he would ask me again every month until I said "yes." That's what I call determination. He has not got prominent teeth for nothing. They say that bulldogs, who also have teeth like that, never loosen their hold of the thing they bite. That will never do. I must not compare the first nice man who proposes to me to a bull-dog, and I am not a bone. *Dieu merci!* I went

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indoors with a headache and a lighter heart. Then I am really lovable and marriageable. Dear Monty, I almost love him !

I ruminated the whole thing in my mind during the afternoon. It gives one a very pleasant and comforting feeling to be loved, even if you don't love back. It is far more comfortable than to love oneself. I was still thinking of it at dinner-time and, remembering what Monty had said, "Do you keep dogs in mangers in England, or is it just an expression?" I am sorry I asked because Monty became like a peony, and Valentine drawled out that 'pon his soul he simply loved foreigners, they were so quaint. Sir Austen first looked at me, then at Monty.

"Where did you hear that expression?" he asked.

"Oh, I must have read it somewhere, but I did not catch its exact meaning."

So Lady Dare explained it to me. Of course I ought to have guessed that Monty meant Sir Austen when he said that. How stupid of me !

Every night, brush in hand, I go to Lady Dare's room or she comes to mine, for a little quiet chat before going to bed. That night I had not been with her two minutes when she had guessed something unusual had happened to me.

"You are fairly bursting with self-importance, child. Have you come into a fortune, or bought a new doll, or what?"

"I have been asked in marriage."

"Good gracious ! Surely not—— Who can it be?"

I winced. She had been ready to say, "Surely not

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Austen," but the idea had seemed too ludicrous to her.

"Monty."

Lady Dare had a good long laugh.

"Monty, fancy, how boys grow! Is Monty a marriageable man, then? And you? Why, you are still in short frocks."

"Oh, it would not be done, how say you?—on the spot"—she laughed again. "He would be quite willing to wait."

"Then you have accepted him."

"Er—no, not exactly; I have not made up my mind yet."

"Well, you might do worse than take Monty. He is an eminently comfortable companion, simply invaluable when travelling. He is used to and fond of women. It is I who trained him. He never expects too much of us; he knows we have headaches, and tempers, that we flirt, gamble and run into debt, and that on the whole we are still much better than men."

"*Mon Dieu*, but I don't do all those horrid things!"

"Perhaps not, but you will. He is a third son, you know, of course, but he has money of his own. Yes, you might do worse."

"If I married him it would not be for his money, and I don't object to his having brothers, why should I? The more he has the better pleased I should be. I always wanted a lot of brothers and sisters, but in France, you see, *ne se fait plus*."

I made her promise absolute secrecy, but I had only told her in the hope she would tell her brother. It would

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show him that after all some people did not think me a little girl any more. What I told her about not having made up my mind is of course all nonsense. I shall never marry Monty, and told him so. But let Sir Austen think what he likes, and let him be jealous too, if he can.

It is dull, dull, dull! For two days, except at meal-times, I have seen hardly anything of my brother Austen, and then he is a real icicle. It gives me chilblains but to look at him. I can't think why he is so changed. He spends hours in the library over his silly book. Fancy writing a book when one has a park all to oneself, and when autumn is here. This morning I went to the library to fetch "The Woman who Did," because Lady Dare said I was not to read it, and that it was beautiful, and because I badly wanted a book friend now that Sir Austen is as sociable as a porcupine and that Monty is gone.

In the library I got quite a shock. Imagine the prettiest girl anybody ever saw sitting at the table, the very table where we had looked at my sketches, he and I. She had black hair and blue eyes, and he was bending over her, looking at some papers or pretending to look, unless he really is a stone god. She had a velvet ribbon around her neck—she wore a hair net and a four-and-elevenpenny blouse, and she was pretty in spite of it all. Besides, men don't see those things, at least some men don't. Father would—Frenchmen have so much taste where their own clothes are not concerned—and Lawrie would too, but not Sir Austen, nor Monty. To see that beautiful girl fallen from the sky and Sir

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Austen together, and so engrossed that they did not even hear or see me coming, I was so thunderstruck that I quite forgot what I had come for. I took a book haphazard, and retired softly with Mill's "Political Economy" !

It was only when I was back in my room it dawned on me that this must be the typewriter Sir Austen was expecting.

Ought a typewriter to be pretty ? I for one think not. Only the typewriter of a poet in want of a Muse should be so pretty as that. . . . I remember visiting with father a champagne merchant's huge house and cellars in Epernay, and expressing my surprise that he did not employ any girls in his office.

"*Ça distrairait les employés,*" he said. He knew human nature. I cannot understand how Sir Austen can go on with his dry work when there is so much beauty to look at all the time. Why, even myself, I sometimes forget to eat at table, watching the pretty widow, her arch smile, her plump shoulders, like those of a Rubens' Cupid, and her dimpled fingers.

And she drinks so prettily. Her hand, like that of a Boucher's shepherdess, pink, tapered, adorable, but rather nerveless, and where no knuckles show, holds the glass just high enough to display the most charming elbow in the world. She has the only pretty elbow I have seen in a woman. Beautiful knees are rare enough, especially among *dévotés*, but an elbow which is neither red, nor thick-skinned, nor angular, nor hidden in fat, is a rarity after six years of age. The elbow of the pretty widow is, like the rest of her person, lus-

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ciously seductive. When she drinks I look at her with envy: her head is held back, her eyes are two golden slits like those of a sleepy cat, her lips are parted, her throat swells—I never saw anyone who drinks so indecently.

It is not nice to be jealous, is it? I am jealous, terribly so. I was jealous of Mrs Marvin once at her ball, now I am jealous of the widow, of the Willocks girl, even of the typewriter! I don't excuse them, but I think I understand the women of the people who throw vitriol about and hide a knife in their garter. It hurts so to be jealous!

Phrynette, *ma pauvrette*, remember you are poor and only fitfully good-looking. Are you going to stand there and be made miserable without trying to react against illusions and melancholy? A little pride, *que diable!* as father used to say.

I am not of the type of girl who sighs and waits. I am neither plain nor patient. I think I'll go.

XXXII

THREE WOMEN IN A GALÈRE (WITHOUT EVEN A DOG)

I HAVE left Mount Hazel. I pretended that my aunt had called me back to town. I chose a morning when the men were out fishing, as I could not have trusted myself to tell a lie to my brother Austen. To Lady Dare it did not much matter somehow. Women excuse these things in one another, but some men seem to consider the smallest lie as a very big sin. Lady Dare was very sorry and very affectionate. I kissed her good-bye with regret too, but nevertheless I wanted to be off, far from the very air of Mount Hazel, which made me feel so silly and sentimental. I feverishly helped Gracieuse to pack up, without a care for the crushing of blouses or the uncorking of the scent bottles, as scent bottles have a knack of doing.

At the station, just as I was going to take the tickets, a broad back and a chignon in the shape of a bottle intercepted the booking-office from my smaller and less determined person. There was something in the tweed Norfolk coat covering the broad back and in the artless chignon which seemed familiar to me.

"Miss Croucher," I said tentatively.

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The broad back suddenly became a profile, my hand was almost dislocated in a hearty shake.

“ Good heavens ! Phrynette of all people ! And what are you doing down here ? Don’t tell me you have been working with Us, with all those trunks and bandboxes too ! ”

“ If you mean by working with you, interrupting, worrying and henpecking a nice man who was one of your warmest supporters had you but known it, no, I am glad to say I did not work for the Cause.”

“ My dear child, don’t discuss politics. You know no more about them than I about frocks. What brought you here then ? ”

“ I have been paying a country visit, but *tout passe, tout lasse*, you know. I am tired of rusticity and longing to be back in London. I dare say I shall find the house all deserted, and the cook on her holiday. My aunt is in Scotland, and I have not told her yet of my return.”

“ Well, then, come and stay with me ; my partner deserted me three weeks ago, to get married ”—she said this with an amusing air of commiseration at the weakness of human nature—“ her room is at your disposal for as long as you like to stay, if you don’t mind your maid sleeping in your room.”

“ How very nice of you. I should like to very much, if you are sure we sha’n’t be in the way.”

“ What say you to that, Gracieuse ? ” But I knew she would do just as her “ little cabbage ” wished it.

And this is how it came to pass that after travelling together to London, my boxes and Miss Croucher’s

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businesslike portmanteaux fraternised on the summit of a four-wheeler, while their respective owners were busily engaged making plans inside *en route* to Regent Street.

Miss Croucher's "diggings," as she calls them, are composed of a large studio, two small bedrooms, and another room transformed into a bathroom—no cupboards, no hanging wardrobe, nowhere to put your clothes; that is a very serious drawback to my vocation. I had been seriously considering whether I could not desert the luxurious habits of idleness and earn my living making posters or as a black-and-white artist. Miss Croucher says she is sure I could (humph!), and what is still more doubtful is whether I could endure being an independent woman in diggings like my friend the photographer. She bears it up with heroism, but to be hooked at the back by charwomen, and to take one's meals at a little Soho restaurant amidst fleas and tobacco smoke, have their terrors.

I have not written to my aunt yet. I simply don't know what to say. And yet I suppose I ought to have consulted her before leaving Mount Hazel and before accepting Miss Croucher's invitation. An aunt is not merely a cashier given by nature. I hope everything will arrange itself. Wouldn't it be fine if I could have started work before my aunt returns to London! But she cannot possibly have any objection to my earning my living. As for Gracieuse, she is quite up in arms against the idea. Like not a few of her countrywomen, she considers it derogatory that a "*jeune fille comme il faut*" should work.

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"*Ma mie*, don't talk to me then of such eccentric notions. It would break my heart asunder to see the daughter of poor Monsieur, my own nursing, slaving for money. Tell rather Madame your aunt to find thee *quelque gentil garçon* for a husband."

"*Et la dot, Gracieuse ?*"

"Ah, that is a drawback, *bien sûr*, my lamb, but I'll pray *tant et tant* our good holy Virgin; thou wilt not *coiffer* Sainte Catherine, *ma belle*. Be tranquil."

And time creeps on, pairfully, purposelessly. I who used to love curling up in an arm-chair and imagining things with my eyes closed, chiefly towards evening—at the mauve hour when all things are possible—I try now not to give to my mind a chance to think and suffer. When I am not drawing, I play the piano and sing the mournful "Elegy of Massenet" until everybody around me feels so depressed that they speak in whispers as at a funeral. When I am not singing I read the newspapers. I seldom read them in Paris; *petit père* did not like me to. What sort of a writer, I wonder, would a genius be who had lived intensely but read nothing but newspapers? No traditions, no reminiscences, no conventions, no trammels. He might be the Wagner of literature.

There is nothing for teaching you life like reading newspapers. It's a much better teacher than life itself, for no one could possibly gather as much experience in a whole existence as there is in a halfpenny paper, could one? That's why you can't read the papers and not become mentally soiled. Having a wide experience is like being old. I am fifty since I peruse

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the Press assiduously. And you can't be old and keep good. By good I mean kind, and generous, and disinterested. All these qualities only exist where there is ignorance of humanity. To live is to deteriorate. That's why the young is nobler than the old. People, *voyez-vous*, are like chickens—the tenderer the better, and that is a question of age.

"Ah, Gracieuse, how much younger I was a week ago!"

"Yes, *mon petite chou*, eight days younger."

"Eight days, you big silly one, eight years! All my milk of kindness is dried up. *Tu entends*, Gracieuse, I am a *nourrice sèche*, now!"

"Yes, *ma mie*?" says patient Gracieuse.

"And I have no more any sympathy for humanity, not a grain, I tell thee—wait, though, except with Jews, negroes, little children, and dogs—and, and perhaps with disenchanted lovers. . . ."

"Yes, *ma mie*," docilely repeats Gracieuse to the click click of her needles, "thou art right, *mon ange*."

Which, of course, she does not mean, her sympathies and mine being widely apart. Dogs she does not like because she says they have fleas, children she excuses for the only reason that I was a child once, negroes are too black, even the fast dye fails to appeal to her instincts as a good housewife. She'd rather starve than let a blackie prepare her food. As for Jews, she knows very little about them, but "was not one condemned to wander eternally? Then he must have deserved it, *ma mie*, he and all the race." She hesitated a long time

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before coming to England. "The English, *mon petit chou*, they must be so very wicked, for did they not burn Joan of Arc?"

Very stupid, isn't she? But what an immense heart she has, and I fill it all.

XXXIII

THE END OF THE BEGINNING

I AM happy, so happy. I don't know how it all happened, but it has happened, and everything is different now. I used to laugh when in the poor old *Dragons de Villars*, Rose Friquet, rolling her eyes upwards, sang :

“Espoir charmant, Sylvain m'a dit 'Je t'aime,'
Et depuis lors tout me semble plus beau.”

Well, it happens to be a very truthful description of what I feel. I have quicksilver in my veins instead of mere blood. I feel like bathing in a salt lake, floating, floating, and so light. It is delicious. As a matter of fact I have never bathed in a salt lake, but I can well imagine the sensation.

It happened like this, at least I believe it happened like this. I did not trouble asking for explanations, nor did I give many in return. I had a lot of prettier and less tedious things to tell and listen to instead.

The other day, then—who said it was an unlucky day? I want to be married on a Friday, so there—I was sitting forlornly in the studio drawing a poster of John Bull embracing a lively France. This poster was to bring me fame and cause numerous orders to rain on my lucky head, but John Bull's arm just then

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simply would not be right. Those foreshortenings are my weak point. And it was hot; the odour of tar from the melting streets came in through the window, there was a yellow light, precursor of a storm, and you could feel in the air something was to happen, at least I could. I am as full of electricity as a cat; perhaps it is dangerous on stormy days. Gracieuse in the next room was passing aloud remarks about a "little cabbage" who was getting pale (quite true, I was almost of the colour of a French novel), and I was thinking somewhat forlornly about Mount Hazel and a few people there. All of a sudden——. You know the rest—it always happens like this. I was not surprised either, and only five minutes ago had looked in the glass to make sure my velvet bow was straight. Presentiment, I suppose!

Sir Austen did not say much after formulating a stilted "how do you do" through sheer force of habit, but handed me two letters from my aunt, which had been sent to Mount Hazel, from there to Cromwell Road, and from Cromwell Road back again to Mount Hazel. It is little oversights like that that enable criminals to be tracked. I fear I would make a very amateurish criminal. I had never even thought about my correspondence!

"Put your hat on directly," he said, "and come with me. Gracieuse will pack at leisure."

"How did you ever find me here?" I asked. "My aunt——"

"Lady Barbara wrote to us for information, you naughty child." Gracieuse, an accusing redness ver-

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milioning her sallow cheeks, was over-busyng herself in a far corner of the studio.

"Oh, you traitor!" I shrieked with a sudden intuition. Then I ran to her and hugged her, and, turning on my heels, meekly followed my warder downstairs. We walked a few minutes in silence, he with his resolute compass-like English walk, I hurrying up at his side at a guilty little trot.

"How could you do it?" he exclaimed all of a sudden, almost fiercely.

I really think they must have been anxious on my account. Sir Austen at any rate looked as if he had passed several *nuits blanches*. Perhaps they thought I had been murdered by the London "Apaches."

"I suppose you never gave a thought to your friends. Vivian wanted to communicate with the police, and—and—I——"

He stopped at a shop window and studied a collapsible shaving stand with an engrossed expression, sundry frowns, and biting of lips. I am sure he must have forgotten the time, for we stayed there fully five minutes. At first I thought Sir Austen was studying the mechanism of the shaving contrivance, until I happened to discover a glass at the back of the window, and in the reflection two blue eyes met mine, two blue eyes, very kind, very grave, and very anxious. Fancy, that is not fair, it's a woman's trick. Stupidly I blushed, and started walking on. Sir Austen signalled to a taxi-cab, and once we were installed he began in a low, husky, tremulous voice that for some unaccountable reason made the tears fill my eyes.

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"Phrynette, to-morrow is my birthday, do you know?" I tried to check off the rush of emotion in me with a banter.

"Why, then," I said, "I guess why you were so eager to find me; you wanted to make sure of the promised birthday present."

"Even so, Phrynette. I'll keep you to your promise. Yes, to-morrow I shall be forty-one. It seems very old to you, little one, does it not?" he ended with an attempt at a laugh that made me feel I wanted to cry: "Don't!" A break in a man's voice is so much more piteous than any woman's sob. It almost frightens me.

"Old? No, father was older than that and yet I always thought him young and charming," I answered, perhaps not very tactfully. "Well, I know what it is you specially want, it's the 'collapsible patent shaving-stand, unequalled for trav——'"

My head was pulled down with a delightful roughness, and the rest of the collapsible shaving-stand's advantages were smothered in the lapel of a tweed coat.

"Hang the collapsible patent rot, Phrynette. You dear, darling little goose, can't you guess what I want you to give me?"

It's funny when English people want particularly to be nice, it is then that they are the most unpolite, *n'est ce pas?*

My ring is delicious. He asked me what stones I liked best.

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" Pearls and opals," I said ; " the opal is a feminine stone, for, of course, gems have their sexes too. Now, for instance, the diamond is a male gem, hard, handsome, strong, solid, isn't it ? Compare it with the opal, which has such an elusive, fugitive beauty, do you know it reminds me of a snatch of melody ? You hear it to-day and it stirs your soul with quite a different sensation from that of yesterday, just as *changeant* as the opal with its prodigalities of exquisite milky blues and pinks. Or, to use a more prosaic comparison, do you know a liqueur called Anisette ? Well, an opal seems to me a drop of Anisette and water solidified, and I love Anisette."

He laughed, and I notice his laugh has become quite boyish these last days.

" You will have your opals, but, dear me, what a lot you see in things ! What do you see, I wonder, in an old bear, with only one arm for you to lean upon ? "

" The densest, stupidest of men not to have seen long, so long ago, that he was also the dearest to me."

I am really too busy now to go on with that journal of mine. Besides, I don't want to write or read or do any unnatural things, now that I have such real, delightful hours that want to be lived. Oh ! I am happy, too happy. It's almost painful to bear. Such an enormous wave of joy submerging one suddenly like that, it takes one's breath away, *vous comprenez*. Love's draughts should be taken out of a graduated glass, I think.

This evening I showed a page of my journal—the one

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relating to white mice—to Austen, because he would not believe that I loved him so far back as that. I let him read it after he had promised he would not look at me for five minutes afterwards—but his watch was fast, I suspect. Then he folded the page and put it carefully in his pocket.

“ Well,” he said, “ and the white mouse is caught in the trap now. How does she like her prison ? ”

I was going to say that the circle of an arm was a very soft prison, and that I found the cheese rind particularly sweet, but he did not give me time. What is the good of asking questions if you don't wait for the answers ? But it would seem some incredulous natures merely believe in facts. Austen is particularly incredulous. For instance, he told me that he never would have believed that I could care for him otherwise than as a big brother because of his poor arm. *Que les hommes sont bêtes, mon Dieu !*

I did not know kissing was allowed here when you are merely engaged. I suppose it would not do for me to rebel against established customs. Only it's funny that that which is a sin in France should be all right on English soil, and that morality should be so entirely a matter of climate. But then, kissing is not a matter of morals but of shape, the shape of your lips. There are some people—we all know them—whom no one would kiss except in duty bound. That does not prove that they are good, not even that they are plain, but simply that their lips are not of the kissable kind. Temperamentally, lips that know what they owe to themselves and to others should be whimsical, often

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parted, though never for any length of time, easily amused, indulgent, and self-indulgent. A touch of *gourmandise* is permissible. For why should to *gourmandise* be considered a sin, while so many other indulgences of the senses pass for qualities? Take love of music, for instance, it is a far more voluptuous passion than liking for food. Nothing can make me feel so wicked as music does. A second helping of *galantine* of chicken produces a very innocent sensation compared to, say—Chopin's "Second Nocturne." True, it has not the same effect on everybody. To some it suggests "calm beatitude, somewhere, near a lake," that's what Monty says. To me, no, it's not that at all. It—it, oh! I can't explain. It sets up a tornado in my soul, and I suffer in my flesh as if my limbs were being twisted. Mixed pleasure, as you see!

Where was I, oh! yes, lips, was it not? Physically, they should be very supple and soft; the upper one when it is curled up is in itself a certificate of wit, and the more it resembles a columbine's hat the more we are charmed. I need not explain that these are feminine lips. As for masculine ones, the suggestion in them of a clear sabre cut is not displeasing. A man with a mouth like a Cupid's bow—faugh!

I'd like things to stay as they are for ever and ever. I am disappointed that Austen should be in such a hurry to have this delightful time over.

"*Mais pourquoi, pourquoi*, big silly one? *C'est si bon comme ça!* As for me, I am always so *triste* when I hear the last note of a love song!"

He bites the end of a stray, crisp little curl that had

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been tickling his cheek provokingly as I bend over the back of his arm-chair.

"But this is not the song, little white mouse, this is the prelude!"

Lady Dare is coming to Paris to help me to choose my things; and Austen is coming with us, of course. It will be like taking a slice off the honeymoon, will it not? Oh, *petit père*, darling, *que je suis contente!* White satin is the best, I think, and made quite plain, as I am such a *gosse* really. Aunt Barbara has given me such a handsome cheque. I am so glad she did not choose anything for me herself, and I won't rail against this English custom any more. And she has been just sweet since I am engaged. Funny how well everybody is disposed towards you when you die or get married!

Gracieuse is very happy, chiefly for my sake, but she is not at all suffocated by pride, you know; on the contrary, she thinks that Austen has done remarkably well for himself by choosing me.

"Oh, Gracieuse, I am so light!" (a bounce) "And I love thee!" (a tempestuous kiss) "and I love all the world!" (a pirouette with arms outstretched).

He has just told me that one of his names is Marmaduke, but it does not matter, I love him all the same.

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