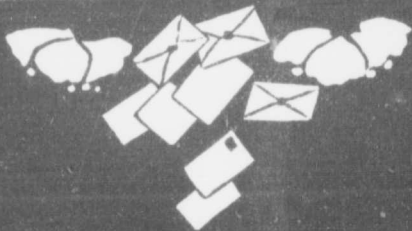




*A*  
*DETACHED*  
*PIRATE*

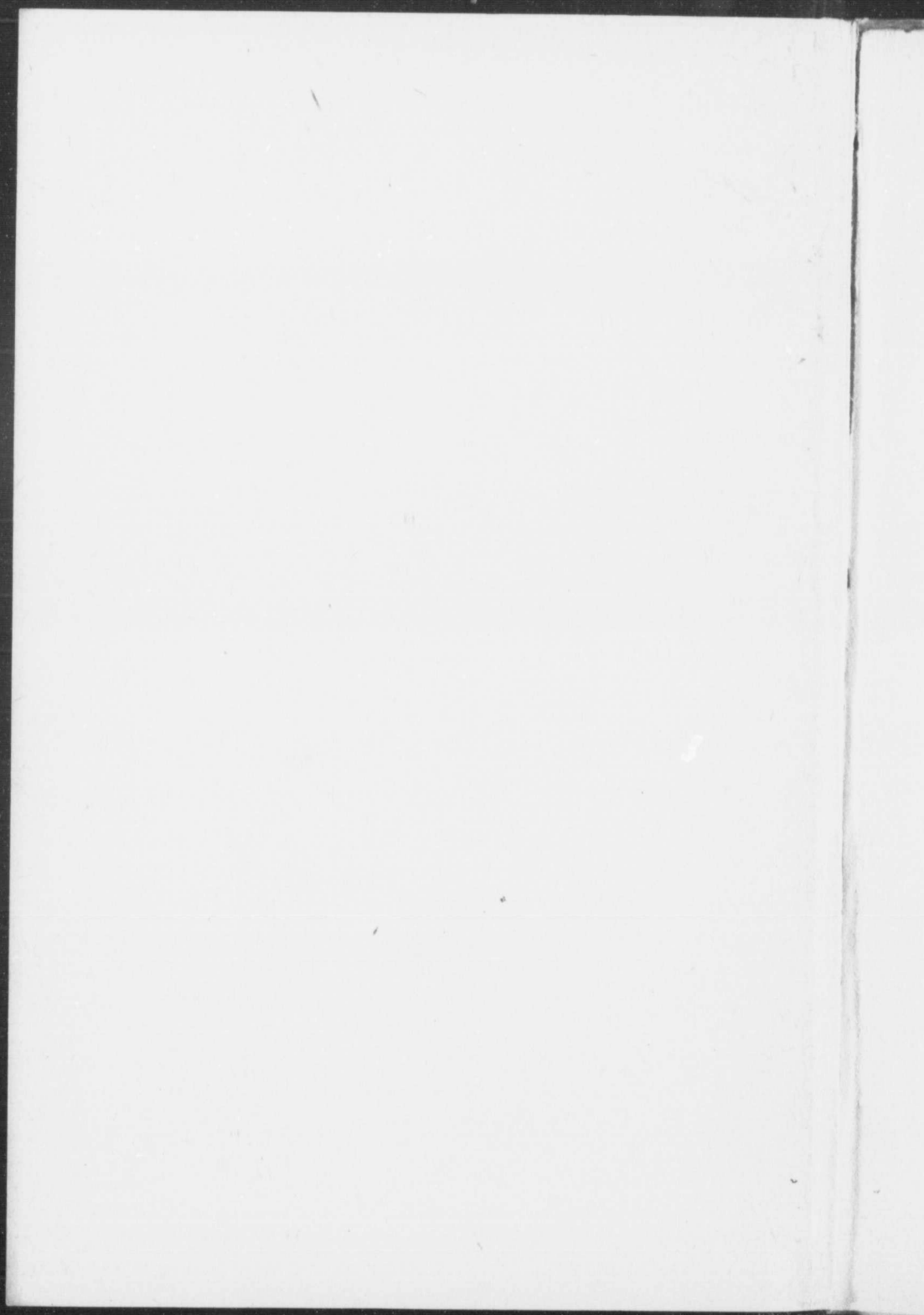


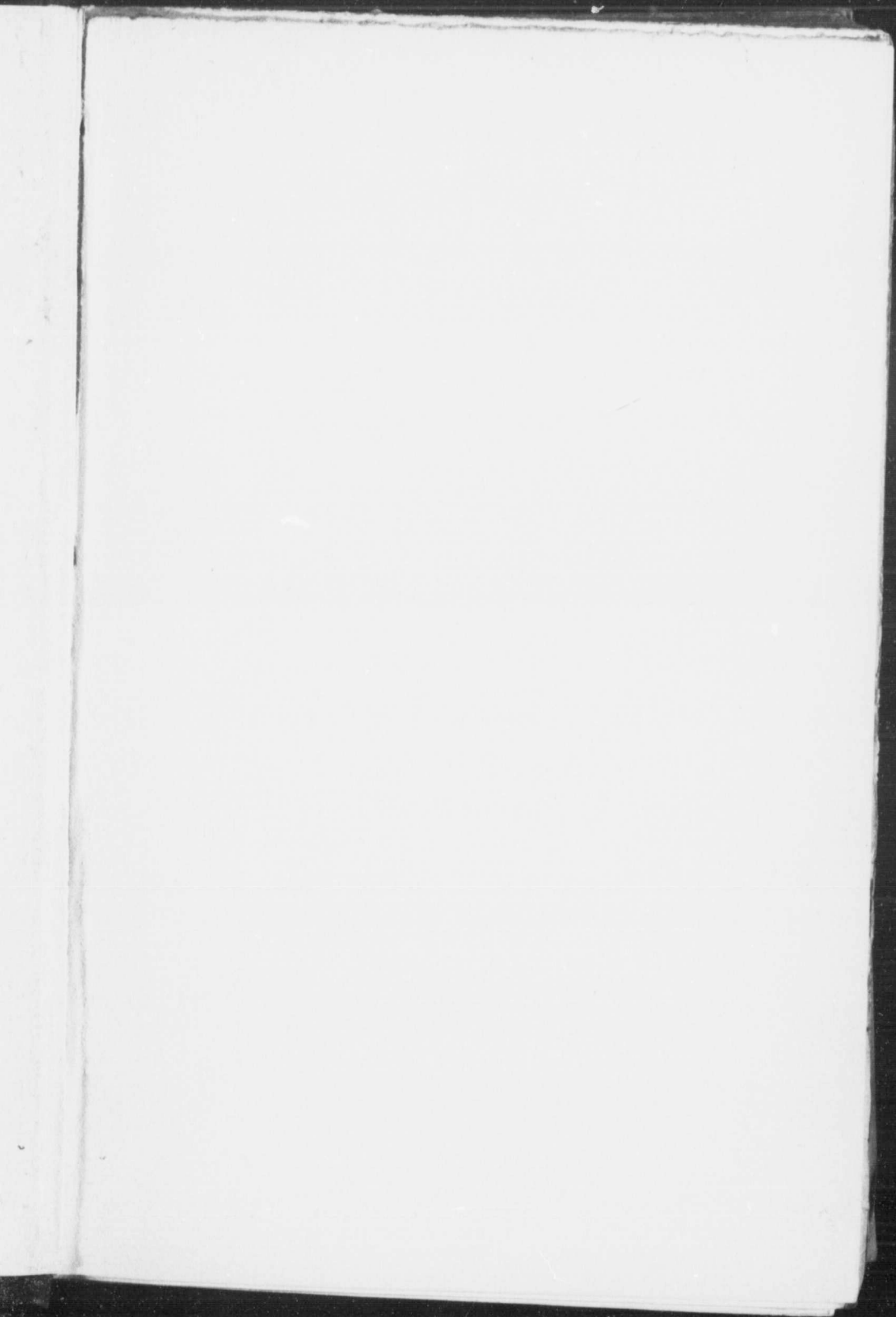
*HELEN · MILECETE*

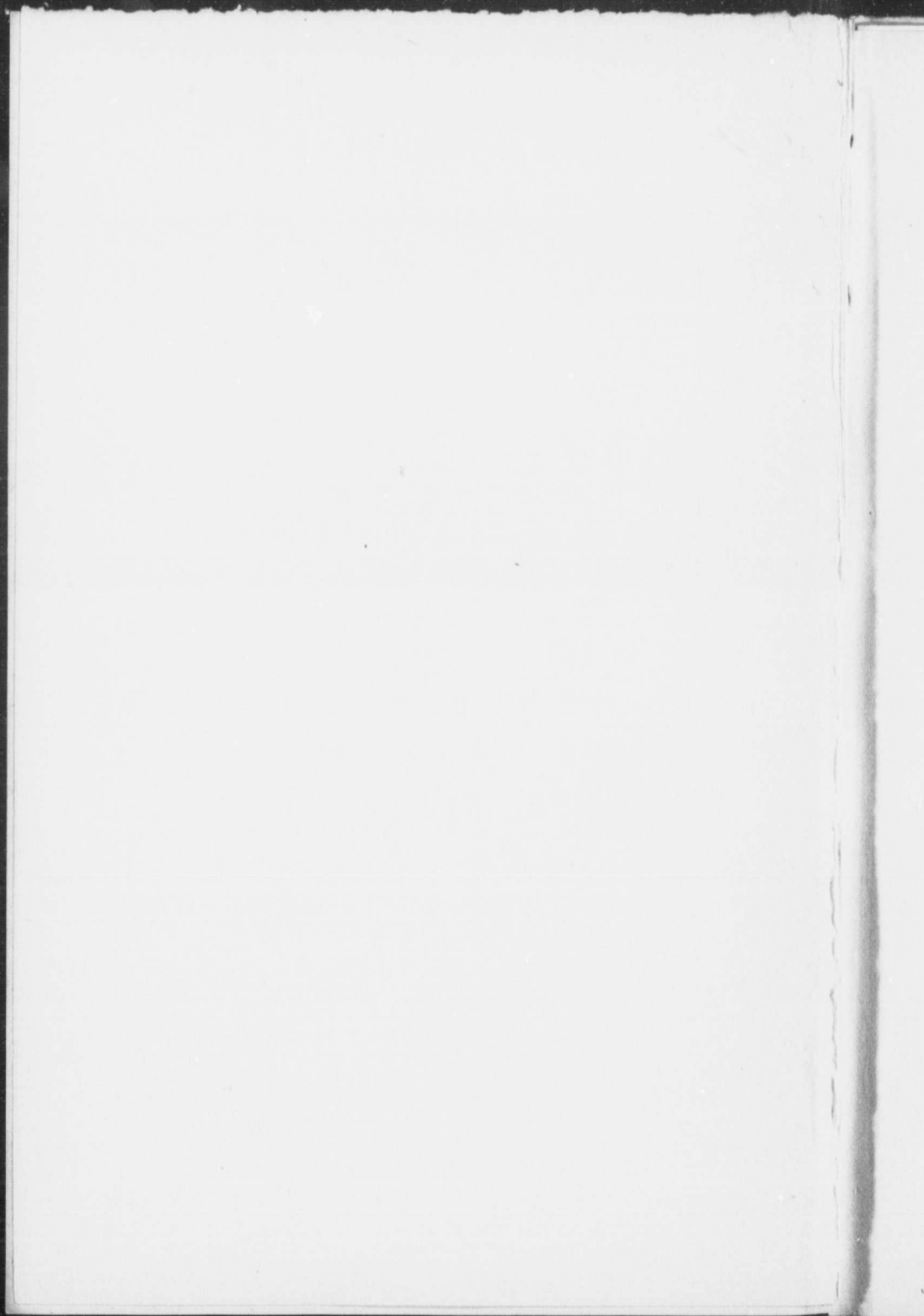


2nd. Copy

Car. Jones, Susan M.

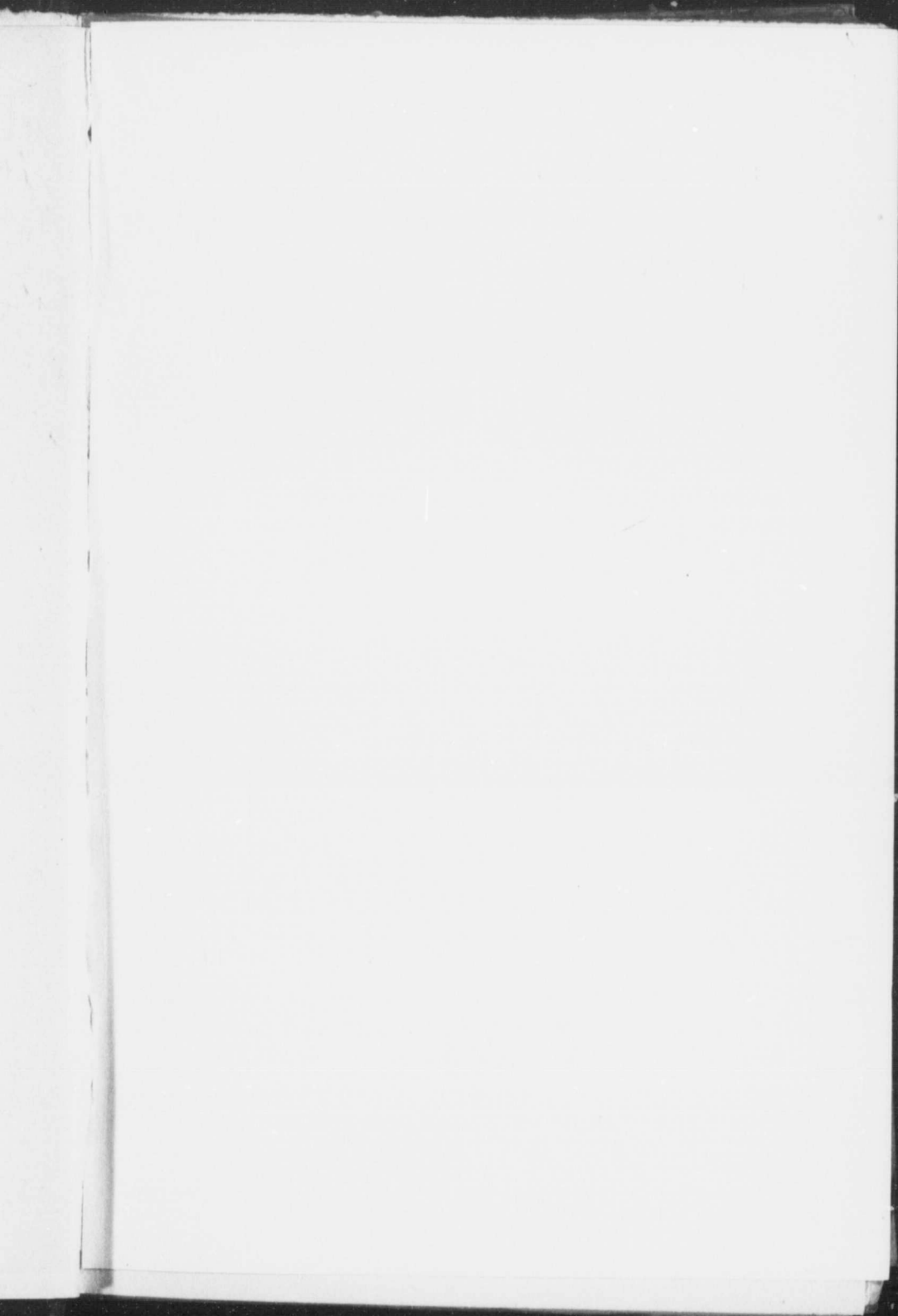






A Detached Pirate

*Tēladadēk megwāāk 'Mpedūn.*







# A Detached Pirate

*The Romance of Gay Vandeleur*

By

Helen Milecete

Author of "A Girl of the North"

With Illustrations in Color by

I. H. Caliga

Montreal

The Montreal News Company, Limited

1903



# A Detached Pirate

*The Romance of Gay Vandeleur*

By

Helen Milecete

Author of "A Girl of the North"

With Illustrations in Color by

I. H. Caliga

Montreal

The Montreal News Company, Limited

1903

PS8469

057

D47

1903

C. 2

① ② ③

*Copyright, 1900,*

BY ESS ESS PUBLISHING COMPANY.

*Copyright, 1903,*

BY LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

*All rights reserved*

Published May, 1903

---

UNIVERSITY PRESS • JOHN WILSON  
AND SON • CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

## Illustrations

FROM PASTEL DRAWINGS BY I. H. CALIGA

Gay Vandeleur . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
“Do you believe in love at fifty?’ he asked” . . . . .	<i>Page</i> 91
“I was coming downstairs on my way to the drawing-room” . . . . .	” 107
“There, in a big chair by the fire, . . . sat How- ard Morgan!” . . . . .	” 158
“Gay, Gay, forgive me and love me a little’” . . . . .	” 336

PS84

057

D47

1903

C. 2

⊙ ⊙

FIRST LETTER





# A DETACHED PIRATE

## I

THE LONDON AND NORTH-WESTERN  
HOTEL, LIVERPOOL.

*My Dearest Vera,*

**H**ERE I am just sailing for America, for Canada. I think this little island has had quite enough of me, don't you? After a woman has been divorced and had her name in all the half-penny papers, she is not worth much. I am going to be an old-maid pirate — can a divorced woman be an old maid? I suppose not. Still I am not a wife nor a widow, nor can I, I fear, have Mrs. on my tombstone. Verily, my glory has departed.

I am so glad that divorce is over. What I thought of most at the time was how horribly the court smelt and how ugly the judge looked. Did n't my hus-

band — (what shall I call him? I think my Past would be the best name) — didn't he look abominably pleased? What a fool I was to marry him! I cannot even say I was too young, which is the excuse most girls make, nor would I dare — to you — say I was misunderstood. That is the common cry of all wives — they are misunderstood. Are they? I was n't. He, Colonel Gore, understood me too well. I hated him for it, for his air of superiority, for his frequently displayed authority, and, worst of all, because he *would* read my letters. That is why I am here now, with only my maid. Two thousand pounds is all the wealth I possess. I have no prospects, no home, no more money to come, no future, and a large lettered Past. I am off to Canada just for fun, the last I shall ever have; you know I was born there, when my father commanded his regiment.

Yet I am happy. You are shocked? I am gay (by nature as well as by name). I am free.

A Detached Pirate 5

I am just going down to the steamer ;  
the faithful Pringle has packed all my  
best dresses. I have a dream of a skating  
gown, and a heavenly ball-dress. I shall  
be the fashion, I shall be young again and  
frivolous once I am beyond the sky-line.  
Farewell, angel. Expect my next letter  
from Halifax. — Yours always,

GAY.

How good you are ! You don't believe  
in me, I know. Some day I will explain  
Charlie and all the rest ; meanwhile,  
think of me as your loving

GAY.

S.S. "CANADIAN,"

THE MID-ATLANTIC.

I did not post the above at Liverpool.  
It will go with this from Halifax.

It is gorgeous — the sea, I mean, the  
colouring ! the waves ! "The crash on  
her bows, dear lass." The keen air is  
like new life. Miss Vandeleur, that's I,  
has removed her wedding-ring and thrown

6            A Detached Pirate

it into the Atlantic. I daresay a mermaid will find it and use it for her wedding, and I hope it will bring her luck. The career of the black pirate has begun. I don't want to kill any one as pirates always do. I only want a little joy. I believe pirates only become such because they are bored and dull and lonely, and like the fun of chasing ships, not the horror of plundering them and killing the men when caught. And who am I going to chase?

The purser on this ship is a man of discrimination. I saw him when I came on board.

My name was down as Vandeleur and maid. He saw my ticket, and wrote Miss Vandeleur and maid on his list, asked if he was right? I said yes; what else could I say? He added with a very noble bow, that I looked too young to be married. Why are married women popularly supposed to write dulness on their faces and marriage on their backs?

## A Detached Pirate 7

I must tell you about the passengers. I hope they did not see my photograph in the *Morning Scorchers*. It was so ugly, however, that they would never recognise me if they had seen it.

There are three women on board, all ill. I am never ill and I wear a pink toque and curl my hair! After that, you will not take any further interest in my health.

The men are a mixture of the Englishman going out to join the garrison and the commercial traveller. I take no interest in the latter, but in the former I do. When you hear that the General, Sir Anthony Erskine, and his A.D.C., the Hon. Howard Morgan, are the principal passengers, you will gather that I am not dull.

Sir Anthony you have heard of. I met him at your house, when my Past (he deserves a capital letter) made me wear black and part my hair in the centre. I look hideous in black with

my hair parted. I did not marry to be a nun; now it's curled, and I never will have another black frock. Sir Anthony of course does not know me.

He is a credit to the British Army — tall, slight, with thick grey hair and an iron-grey moustache and brown eyes. I sit by the Captain at meals. At my first appearance I felt dreadfully frightened, the cold chill of the divorce court was in my bones, the fear caused by that horrible sketch in the *Scorcher* seized my soul, and I was pale, too pale; but Pringle and the little china pot saved me from utter destruction, and I sailed into dinner late, secure of my looks and my china-pot complexion. I did look nice; you know my figure is good, and my hair, so brown and queer, is odd in these days of peroxide. My eyes, so dull and dingy in the past, showed green and brown and witch-like in the noble looking-glasses in the saloon. You will observe I am not backward in the appreciation of my own

A Detached Pirate 9

charms. But my legs! how they shook; and I did wish I had taken a wee glass of brandy before I came into the cold world.

No ladies appeared at dinner. The ship was riding gaily on the top of the waves and rolling into the hollows with a twist that was very discommoding, but I felt proud to think my inside muscles were steady, though my poor legs were so weak and shaky.

A guilty conscience, you will murmur. Nothing so stupid, my dear; only the fear of having to turn back from Halifax because of that horrible portrait.

The A.D.C., the Hon. Howard Morgan, sat beside me, and Sir Anthony was opposite. The Captain introduced us and we talked gently—you know how one does—and then Sir Anthony insisted on taking me on deck to see the stars. How I longed to smoke! But I believe the unattached female is never allowed to do such a thing; a married woman can



always say her husband taught her. We talked of all things, and the only disquieting incident was, when he remarked he had a strange presentiment that he had heard my voice before. I suggested that his cabin might be near mine, but he said no, that he felt sure he had met me somewhere. Here prudence and propriety bade me seek my couch; generals, however amiable, are not the most desirable society for an unprotected lady (who wishes to preserve her immaculately new reputation) at night on board ship. Somehow it is hard to remember that I am not married. I dread the women. Some of them may know me; they always see those papers, crowd to hear a divorce case, and love details of every sort. The rustle of silk gowns the day I got my freedom was like the wind in the trees, but not cooling to the nerves, rather the reverse. I am sure my face blazed like a furnace. Fortunately, in the middle of the conversation my maid ap-

peared with my cloak, and, shivering delicately, I departed, led to the companion by my new annexation, and followed by Pringle, who is a treasure. I hope she won't be sea-sick. I should hate the stewardess fussing, and Pringle, as you know, shares my cabin; need I say more? I love the sea. I would have liked to stay on deck and watch the stars and the waves, and feel free — free — free — oh, how glorious! I could see the dark sea all around us, and the wake behind was shining like gold. Ah! my dear, what will you say when you hear the real truth? I am arrayed in my dressing-gown now and trying to write in my cabin. I wish this voyage could last for ever. No one to bother me, no solicitors, no ringing of bells, no cabs driving up, and, best of all, no husband. I have a huge pastille burning, and a large cigarette in one hand. I hear the bedroom steward asking Pringle if I am a Roman Catholic; poor man, he imagines

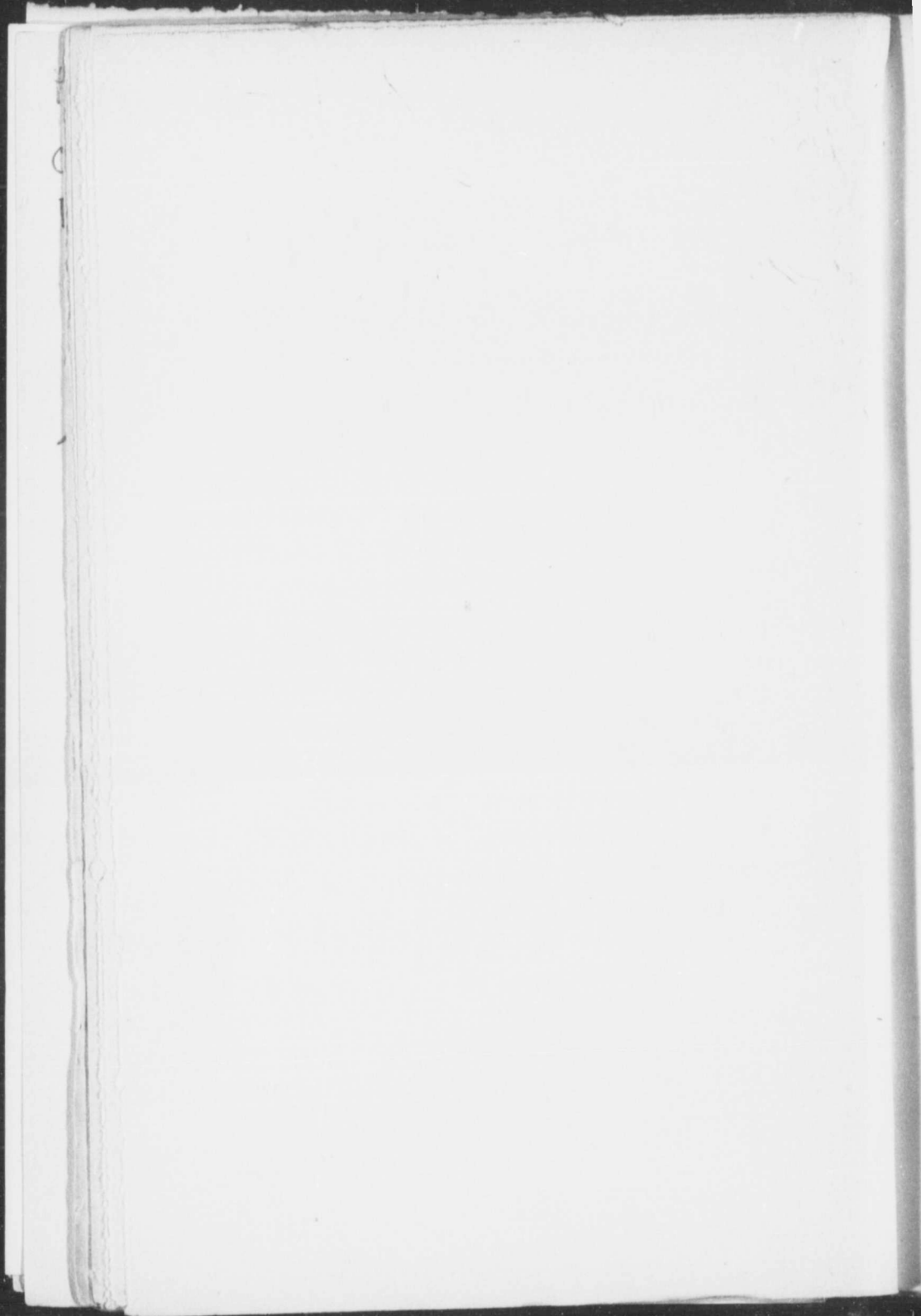
me at my prayers! Let him continue his good opinion of me; it will do him no harm, and it will perhaps benefit me. He thinks the pastille is incense; so it is, offered to the god of narrow-mindedness, which says women may not smoke except in secret. I shall invent a motto for myself: "Cigarettes next her heart and eau de Cologne on her handkerchief."

How good of you to send me that wire to say farewell; your letter also I found at the hotel. I may always consider your home my home? Dear, I have no home, but I know how good you are.

Your postscript amuses me. What about Charlie? Are you desirous of comforting the man who never turned up to clear himself or to incriminate himself and support me? He may be dead or in Africa, or perhaps in America, for all I know, but I will go to bed and tell you more tomorrow. — Yours ever,

GAY.

SECOND LETTER



## II

*My Dear,*

I HAVE not written for three days; the sea was somewhat rough and my hand shook. Now we are getting near land and I feel afraid, afraid of the future and of women. Those on board I have reduced to pulp by the bravery of my behaviour and the attentions of my adorers. Every morning when, curled and arrayed in a gown which only Curtis could have cut, I make my appearance on deck, followed by Pringle with my rug, Sir Anthony with my smelling salts, and Mr. Morgan with my cushions, the female element gaze with surprise and envy at my — well, my gown, I suppose.

Sir Anthony is more than attentive, and the Captain is sublime. There is one woman, here, a Mrs. Goldsmith, who lives in Halifax, where I am going

to stay. She is fat and, I should think, fifty, but she imagines that she has found the secret of everlasting youth in a golden wig, a new set of teeth, and a smile; she is very like a coquettish cow, but Sir Anthony assures me, her dinners are good, and that she is most kind, most hospitable. She is very anxious to know my family history. I told her my father and mother are dead, and that I am alone in the world. She looked suspicious, and said: "Even an aunt is a great safeguard." "A sort of policeman," I answered, and she said no more. Mr. Morgan and I tramp up and down the deck; he prides himself on being intellectual, and makes love to me delicately, veiled by quotations from the minor poets.

Mrs. Goldsmith has struck up a mighty friendship with me. I feel as though I ought always to don a thick veil when I see her, she is so proper, so absolutely correct.

A Detached Pirate 17

"My dear," she said, "you are a little younger than I am" (about twenty-five years, I suppose, but I am learning that fear of truth is the beginning of worldly wisdom). "I will help you in all your difficulties and chaperon you when you go to tea in Sir Anthony's cabin."

Her self-sacrifice is marvellous, for she loves Sir Anthony and seems to fear me. She talks of a good marriage with the air of a missionary, and asked me if I were engaged. I said, "Not yet." My indecision was masterly, for she said patronisingly: "Can't I help you to make up your mind?" and added, "Men are all deceitful, but a husband must pay your bills."

I wonder what her experiences have been. She continued:

"You will marry a nice man in Canada with some money and a house on the North West Arm."

"What an awful name! What does it mean?" I asked.



“That is a small suburb of Halifax,” she said.

“It sounds like a haven for wives,” I retorted. “I don’t want a North West Arm, I want two arms when I marry,” and then she said, “How witty!”

I thought I was leaving the spiteful women behind me, and she is the same as my dear friends who cut me in South Kensington. But there, what does it matter?—though to you and my heart I may as well confess that I am losing my nerve. The divorce court is a trying ordeal.

Mr. Morgan has left the minor poets and taken to quoting Shelley. I am rather bored by his sentiments, and, tell it not, a little fearful, for, well, no doubt I am needlessly apprehensive. Sir Anthony is very kind, so gentle, so thoughtful. He is always good to me and said to-day:

“You ought not to be travelling alone, Miss Vandeleur.”

"I have Pringle," I answered.

"You ought to have a husband, some one to love and look after you."

"A husband does not always fulfil either of those requirements," I said, while I despised myself for cheap cynicism.

"My dear," he answered kindly, not sentimentally, "believe me, love is the best thing this world can give, loneliness is the worst."

"One can be lonely while not alone," I answered. "There is a companionship that stifles, that fetters." I paused, I felt like crying. Besides, how could I know anything about hateful companionship?

"You are too young to be so despairing," he answered.

We are very near land now. Mr. Morgan and I have spent the whole day on deck together. Sir Anthony was captured early by Mrs. Goldsmith, and has remained at her side ever since.

It was a lovely evening; the coast

showed dim and misty in the distance, the soft haze turned to gold as the sun touched it, and the throb, throb of the engines was soothing. Mr. Morgan was very quiet, and, for the time, had buried Shelley and all his works.

The dressing-bell rang, and I struggled to rise gracefully from my long chair without displaying too much of my tan silk stockings.

"Don't move," he said, "I want to talk to you."

"Be quick, then."

"I can't talk to order," he remarked fretfully, "like a phonograph. I wanted to ask you — well, I love you!"

I gazed at the sea, the ship and the sky.

"You are silent. Is it so surprising? You knew it — you must have known it," impatiently.

I looked at him. There he was, fair, young, smooth-faced, with blue eyes that sparkled and looked full of — what? — passion, perhaps, but not love. Then

A Detached Pirate 21

before my eyes came another face, dark, brown, hard, with a scar on the left cheek and a white mark across the upper part of the forehead. What woman would wear the image of a tanned, world-weary face next her heart when a fresh smooth one could be there instead?

"Rubbish!" I said shortly; "you don't love me." Oh, propinquity! thy victims are many! "Thank you, Mr. Morgan, but I can never marry."

"Marry?" he repeated, with a little laugh that sounds in my ear now, that seems to hit me and to make my cheeks flame.

"It is getting very cold, Miss Vandeleur," and Sir Anthony stood behind us.

Mr. Morgan jumped up.

"I am cold," I answered, and went below.

I did not go to dinner; I felt unnerved, shaken, lonely. Pringle brought me some soup, and I had a wee bottle of champagne. Then I lighted my pastille

and my cigarette ; but the beloved smoke was not soothing, so, wrapped in my big fur coat, I went on deck. The ship was rushing through the water, the stars were bright, and, like a great flame, Orion showed over my head ; and suddenly sheets of light began to glow and flash, slowly, grandly, across the sky. I remembered I had read of this dance in a northern night, when the lights flash across the heavens. Is it those who have gone before looking out of Heaven's gate, hoping, perchance, that the loved ones they have left behind may see the flashing of the lights of Heaven, as the gates open and shut, and find courage? I wonder.

The gorgeous pageant soothed me. Who have I there to care for me? Surely my mother loves me still, and you think, dear Vera, that she will be weeping for my sins, if she knows ; but you do not know all. I will tell it to you when I am on dry land again. . . .

A Detached Pirate 23

A step disturbed my meditations and Mr. Morgan stood before me. He looked fresh and gay.

"Taking the air?" he asked cheerfully, and I said, "Yes."

"I won't ask for an answer to my question yet. When you are settled and can receive me, I would like to point out the advantages of it to you."

"I shall never marry any one," I answered. "Good-night."

But I did not feel afraid of him; somehow the night, the air and the glorious sky had revived me.

What do you think he means, Vera? I have told you everything faithfully, and he is not in love with me. That is to say, he does not love me.

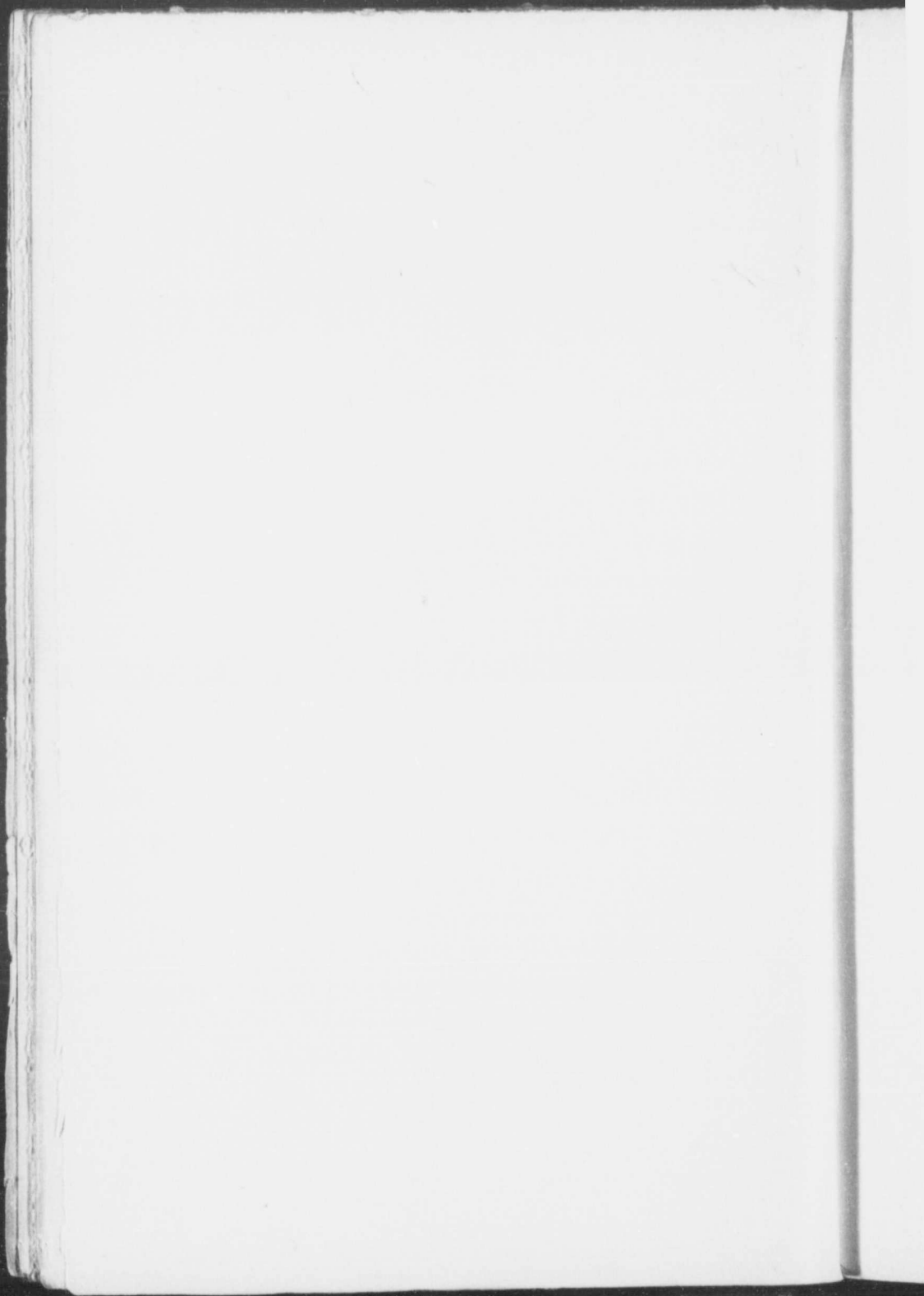
Well, my dear, we are getting near the end of the voyage, and I am sorry. I think I shall go as a stewardess when my money is all spent. I don't wonder the *Flying Dutchman* sails the sea for ever, but I suppose the ghostly captain would give

— what? his soul? — to be on land again. How solemn I am getting. Prepare for my next letter from Halifax. — Yours ever,  
GAY.

What a silly name! I wonder why I was called it. We are at Halifax. I will tell you of the glorious view as we strolled up the harbour, for we did merely stroll. The wharf is crowded, the custom-house people are searching the boxes. Sir Anthony is having a great reception. I hear Mr. Morgan's boyish laugh above the din, and as for me — well, there is no one to welcome me, to kiss me on the cheek for courage. I wonder if it will ever be "mouth on mouth" for love?

THIRD LETTER





### III

KING'S HOTEL, HALIFAX.

O H, my dear Vera, the days are lovely, the air is like champagne, and I am in a whirl of gaiety, of dances, teas, drives, and I am going to a ball to-night! A real ball given by Sir Anthony, and my gown, my triumph by Felix, is all ready for me to put on. I have been here ten days, days of terror at first, of doubt, of — well, they are over now. I am feeling gay — gay — gay — think of it. I am sure you remember me sobbing over cold tea in those dreary Porchester Road rooms the day before I sailed; now I have forgotten yesterday and to-morrow, and I have the joy of living in my blood. I am getting fat; my cheeks are round, my eyes are bright, and I never require any of the complexion put on — it still dwells in the little china pot.

I got your letter the day after I arrived. Dear, I know you are worrying about me. I laugh when I think of Charlie. What can one expect from a mere man? You say that I ought to be with him. No, my dear; surely you forget I have to wait six months. Besides, Charlie has fled; my late lamented did not get his damages out of him, so my solicitors said. Charlie belonged to no club; he left his rooms in Jermyn Street, as you know, and can't be found. You think that his name was an assumed one? You also think that he is some great man, of vast and high rank, a man with a wife, for whose sake he would not face the public and disgrace? Some of your thoughts are wonderfully correct, some very much off the right road. But I don't want to think of my Past, with a big P. The present is gloriously cheerful.

Mrs. Goldsmith started my campaign, and all the notable people have followed her. They have taken me on Sir

Anthony's recommendation; an unmarried General is a great joy to the place. He may marry one of the pretty girls.

Why am I so happy? I am back in the old life, the old air. I believe there is nothing like the air one breathed first; anyway, I feel born again, new. But I am wandering, and my career demands attention. Mrs. Goldsmith launched me. She came for me the second day of my arrival and took me to a big tea; every one was there — smart women and pretty ones. (How seldom does a woman combine the two.) Lots of soldier men also. The men of the place are always at work, and don't patronise the parties much. Led by Mrs. Goldsmith, who is well off and a Power, I made my first appearance. They were all very nice to me, and my visitors since then have been a huge army. I have dined three times at Sir Anthony's — an unattached woman without a boring husband is useful, for that allows of a change in the ordinary Noah's Ark official

dinner, and an odd and perhaps amusing man can be thrown in.

Mr. Morgan is my dearest friend; he has sent one of his horses, a big bay, every day for me to ride. His servant escorts me, and we scour the country. Oh, the life and the air in the glorious gallops! I don't know where we ride, but that does n't matter; down warm, grassy roads with the red of the maple and the yellow of the birch, that seem to be singing their swan song to an accompaniment of joy and triumph. The summer is ending in a magnificent crescendo. The days are warm, but the nights are cold.

I met such an interesting woman to-day — woman, did I call her? She is a girl, tall, slight, with lovely blue eyes and auburn hair, but her eyes look so terrified, as if she saw wolves or murder or something terrible in front of her. She is married, her name is L'Esterre. I wonder if she is happy. Perhaps it is only a

look; I have often known women who look sympathetic, and ice isn't harder than they are.

I am getting fonder of Sir Anthony, for he is all a man should be. I am hard and cold; no protestations would move me, no ardent love-making make me care. I have dug a grave and buried things in it, and every day when I wake, I say, "I have forgotten," and every time I say it, I know that I remember just the same. But though I say no protestations would move me, the strong arm of a man appeals to me, the attentions offered so quietly, so thoughtfully, kindnesses that no words can repay, make me grateful, so grateful!

He thinks of everything, he sends me books and fruit, my rooms are full of the most lovely flowers. His carriage comes for me whenever he knows I am going to a party, and everything is done so considerately, so thoughtfully; he never intrudes himself, he has only been to see

me once since I came. My dear, he is a man in a thousand, a man who deserves to be loved as I shall never love any one; but oh, the joy of being taken care of! Poor Vera! how tired you will be of my rhapsodies, and I have n't told you anything in answer to your letter. What you really want to know I have not mentioned. Well, to be truthful, I loathe returning to the past again; I dread writing it down. The things I have never told any one you want me to tell you, and I will *tell* you, for you ought to be told, both for my sake and yours. But now I feel shaky and miserable, and in a few minutes I am going to the ball, dressed in a dream. My last ball was given by the Downshire Hunt. How tired I was, and I danced all night with Colonel Allen. The women all pretended to be shocked; he is no favourite of fortune or of mothers. He has a charming voice, and eyes which seem to tell every woman he meets that he loves her; but there is

a bond between us that will never be broken, though I am nothing to him nor he to me. I think it is because he speaks the same language—all people do not—and I know his story. Bad, wild, reckless he may be, but—well, he adored my mother. How angry Colonel Gore was! He glared at me as I sat in corners with Colonel Allen or flew round the room in his arms. When we returned to our wee house near the barracks, he nearly flung my bedroom candlestick at me, for you knew we had reached the two-bedroom-candlestick stage very soon after we were married, did n't you? Two rooms are healthy, but lonely, and one quarrels much more. One can hardly keep up the din of battle always with a husband who shares one's bed.

Now I must cease, Pringle grows rampant. I will write about the ball to-morrow.



THE DAY AFTER.

It was a ball to dream of — heavenly flowers, a good floor, divine music, and more partners than I knew what to do with. Am I getting old? Men in a mass don't appeal to me. They were more than kind, but the desire for the society of the indiscriminate young man gets weak at twenty-four, while it revives and is strong at forty-two. My gown was heavenly, a dream of soft chiffon and lace, made on lace; no other dress looked like it. By the way, this ought to be called the naked year; we seem to be taking off more and more. The only addition we have made to our attire is ear-rings. Some of the women here might be so pretty! they do not know how to use their possibilities; with brains and a good hairdresser, they could be made quite lovely.

Well, I got there late; the General met me and took me into the room, and I was surrounded. I felt afraid that I

might see some one I knew or who knew me ; but no one seemed ever to have seen me before, though they gazed at me with all their eyes, in which, thank Heaven ! was no recognition. I have lost my taste for green apples and very young men, but I discoursed madly with the best of them, and talked rubbish with the gaiety of sixteen. One sporting boy in the gunners danced with me six times, and was enamoured of my charms, for he tried to put his arm round me in a dark, secluded corner, which I had considered safe with him. He reproached me plaintively, when I said :

“ I don't care for that sort of thing,”  
and he answered :

“ You are very cold.”

He worried me. I am always a fool, and I wondered if he had ever seen me or heard of me before. I had the next dance with Sir Anthony. I was tired, deadly weary, and my heart felt sick of it all — the noise, the music, and the men.

Like a fool, I did not dance, and Sir Anthony was so kind and gentle, that I sat and wept! Think of it! You will exclaim, "You! — weeping!" We were under a bright light; he laid his hand on my arm and wisely let me cry. I am a fool. I sobbed, and he called to one of the servants, who brought some champagne. Then I laughed, and if the laughter was not merry, it was a substitute for tears, and better than they were. With what horror my good Three Years' System (an excellent name for my three years' husband, isn't it?) would have gazed at me drinking champagne in the greenhouse, with Sir Anthony fanning me with the devotion of a lover, and my eyes a little red from my tears.

Colonel Gore liked the evening party, which is now a little obsolete, a little music, cake and sherry! I met him at one given by my relatives, who lived at Blackheath. They had come from India, and I had never met them. They wrote

that it would be so nice for us all to meet. That gladness is like the air in soda-water; it soon vanishes if exposed for very long, and I did not feel exhilarated. Family reminiscences bore me. Colonel Gore and I amused each other, for he was a relation on the other side, and neither of us remembered nor cared when Fanny and William were married sixty years ago. When I mildly suggested that my father and mother were not married then, and if I did remember Fanny's and William's wedding day it would be highly improper, the company looked pale. I felt grateful to Colonel Gore for that evening, and we drifted into matrimony; but one should never marry on gratitude, it is too stodgy. I hate middle-aged passion, it is like weak tea in the morning; one longs for mad music, strong wine.

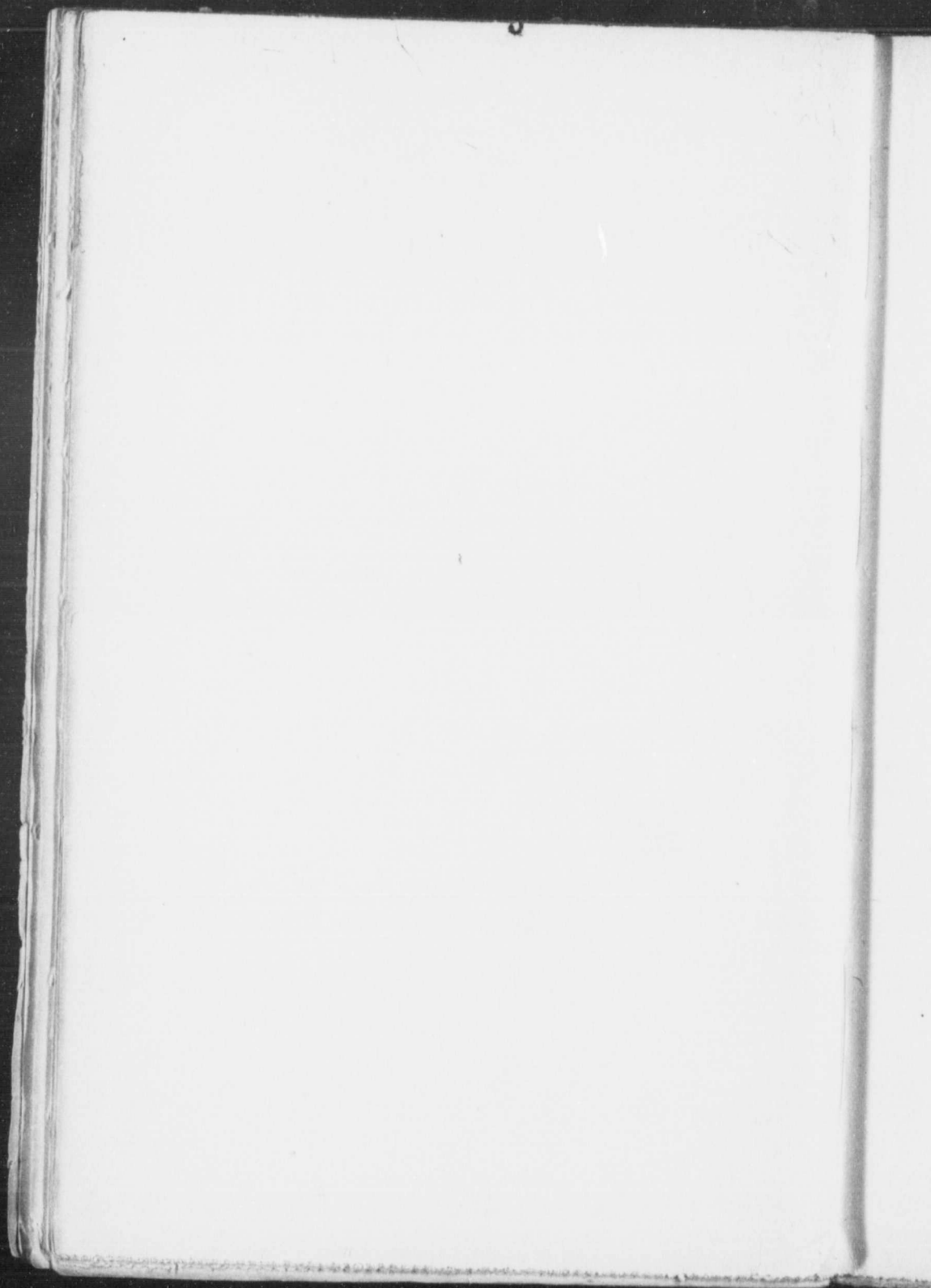
How much I have written and how little I have told you about the ball! I had four dances with Sir Anthony and

38      A Detached Pirate

three with Mr. Morgan, who has not mentioned his desire for solitary conversation with me. He is only a boy. Dear Vera, good-night. — Yours ever,

GAY.

FOURTH LETTER



#### IV

##### THE DAY OF ALL SOULS.

WELL, I have just come from church, where I have been praying for the souls of the dead and the souls of the weary living. May I not pray for them, dear Vera? There is a little church near my hotel; it is dark and quiet, and the music is good. A pale young priest, with big dark eyes and red lips like a cupid, sang "Vespers for the Dead." The flowers looked so lovely, the white were so peaceful and pale against the altar, while the screen was done with bright red chrysanthemums, verily symbolic of the path of pain the souls have to travel before they get home.

You accuse me of not being literary; how can I be? You know I am not a genius; to be one would be appalling.



I should have to wear vile clothes, and think of nothing but work.

A genius should always live in a little back room, and make vast creations to astonish the world. Books should be read, but the authors thereof are not meant to be looked at. I would rather be a view than a book.

You know Lassen's song, "All Souls' Day;" I have just been singing it. The German words are splendid: "*Ein Tag im Jahre ist den Toten frei.*" I am dead but I will have my one day yet. You say that I am trying to whitewash myself; no, I am not. Besides, whitewash does not wear, it cracks if one moves; now, enamel might stick, but I doubt it.

I have seen a lot of Mrs. L'Esterre. She is thinking of going for a driving tour; a queer time of year, you will say. We are waiting until the first snow comes, and then we are going down the coast to the westward, where the pine woods are. Her husband is to

## A Detached Pirate 43

drive tandem and me — a good combination. We are to take snow-shoes, and make excursions from the various farm-houses where we put up. Mr. Walters will drive Mrs. L'Esterre; he is about thirty, a man with a face like a wall and blue eyes. They are not much interested in each other, but I think they have something which binds them to one another, but what I don't know. They skate and drive and dance, but talk very little; but when they do converse, they look as if they were glad to be natural and were speaking over a grave.

It is a lovely day and I am going shopping. I never told you how pretty my rooms are. I have a bed-room and a sitting-room, both looking out over the harbour, the glorious blue water with its ships and steamers and tugs. The old tramp steamers appeal to me on which the pilgrims of life travel; the big liners, with their bands, their electric light and smart women, interest me not at all.

Across the harbour I see the bright scarlet leaves of the huckleberry bushes and the white granite cliffs shine in the sun, while George's Island, with its soldiers and guns, is as green as if it were summer.

. . . . .  
I have had a strong brandy-and-soda. Oh! my dear, my dear, the terror of the world has gripped my heart; all the realities that I have buried, that I have forgotten, are with me once more. Like marching grey troopers, they seem to be coming round every corner of my mind. I dressed, I looked nice, and went forth to buy some big flower-jars for the branches Sir Anthony sends me.

The town was very full, and I met people I knew all along my route. But in front of the largest shop I stopped. I wanted to see myself in the big glass in the window. I felt dissatisfied. My brown cloth gown and coat are beautifully made, but I don't like the hat Curtis sent me;

it is too bright, too red. My gown was too sombre, my hat too frivolous. I looked, I thought, like a funeral with a comic opera on top. I turned away. On the other side of the road was Mrs. L'Esterre, smiling; she was coming over to speak to me. My smile froze on my face, I stood absolutely petrified with terror, I know my teeth began to chatter and my jaw to fall, and the top of my immaculately waved head felt cold. There, *before me*, gazing at me with something in his eyes that I had never seen before, stood the Three Years' System — Colonel Gore!

I tried to hold up my head; I prayed for an open coal-hole in the pavement into which I might fall and break my back or my legs — *anything* to get away from his eyes, they are such a dark blue; but, of course, there was n't any hole, and I saw Mrs. L'Esterre, Captain Smith, and Mr. Walters bearing down on us.

“For God's sake!” said the System,

“brace up, don’t faint,” and a hateful voice behind us said:

“Hullo! Colonel.”

There stood Mr. Morgan, a placid smile on his lips, a cigarette in his hand.

“You are coming to the tea?” he said to me, but I stood dumb. I had forgotten everything.

What was Colonel Gore going to say?

“I have neuralgia,” I muttered at last.

“You will come and have tea with me,” announced the System. “Morgan, tell me of a decent place where we shan’t get poisoned. Miss Vandeleur and I have met before.”

How did he know my name, Vera? Did you tell him?

“Mitchell’s is all right,” answered Mr. Morgan. “I must be off.”

Then I found my tongue.

“I don’t want any tea,” I said.

“I must talk to you. Come, Mitchell’s will do as well as anywhere.”

A Detached Pirate 47

He led the way and I meekly followed. I felt a horrible irresistible desire to laugh stealing over me, then for tears—hysterics?—the saints forbid! We entered Mitchell's; he ordered tea and we sat down.

Fortunately the room was empty, the silence was terrifying.

“For Heaven's sake, speak,” he said.

“I have nothing to say.”

“Tell me, you are not poor, you are here alone, why alone? Where is that—the—he—that man?” stammered he pitifully.

I laughed a little; that irritated him.

“What are you doing here?” I demanded.

“I am on the staff.”

“On the staff! stationed here! what cruelty!”

“I wanted to tell you, you can remain quite happily; I never go out. All these parties these foolish women have don't appeal to me; I hate them. You will

never be annoyed by being in the same room with me, and I need not say that your secrets are as safely locked up as my own."

"I was so happy," I retorted. "Why did you come to make me miserable?"

"Hush!" he answered, looking round apprehensively. "I must take you back to your hotel. I only wanted to reassure you. You looked at me as if I were a wild beast or a fiend coming to hurt you. Besides, those people knew you."

"I felt afraid, terrified, as if you were a steam-roller bent on crushing me."

Why am I so often flippant? I could see it annoyed him. To cultivate the expression of one's feelings is a nuisance; to hide them under flippancy is often the signing of one's death-warrant.

I rose. "I will walk home," I said; so together, in the dark of the November day, we walked down the street to my hotel.

“Will you,” he said, “tell me one thing? Tell it as if you were on your death-bed — where is he? Why are you alone? Shall you marry him when the decree absolute is pronounced?”

He gripped my arm, he hurt me; I felt paralysed. He stopped near a bright electric light and stared at me.

“Never,” I answered, shaking his hand off my arm; “never.”

“Good God!” said the System, and we reached the hotel.

“You will let me help you if you need it,” he said, and took off his hat and was gone.

I came up to my rooms, to my pretty, peaceful abode that I hate now because he is near. I cried, I cried until my eyes were too swollen to open. Then I rang for a brandy-and-soda and Pringle, and put on a tea-gown, ordered her to leave me and bring me my dinner at eight. I locked the door, and now I am facing life and all the rest of it in



torture. I feel as if some one had skinned me and was beating me on the raw flesh.

What shall I do? Shall I go? Go where? I can't face loneliness in England. Shall I stay and brave it out? I have announced my intention of remaining here for the whole winter; what will they think if I suddenly depart? What does he think? Isn't it an awful situation?

I can't eat, I can't sleep. I will take a few drops of chloral; anything is better than counting the hours. To-morrow I dine at Sir Anthony's — well, I will dine, I will be brave, I will not care; but oh! I feel weak and weary, and there's no place for me. — Thine always.

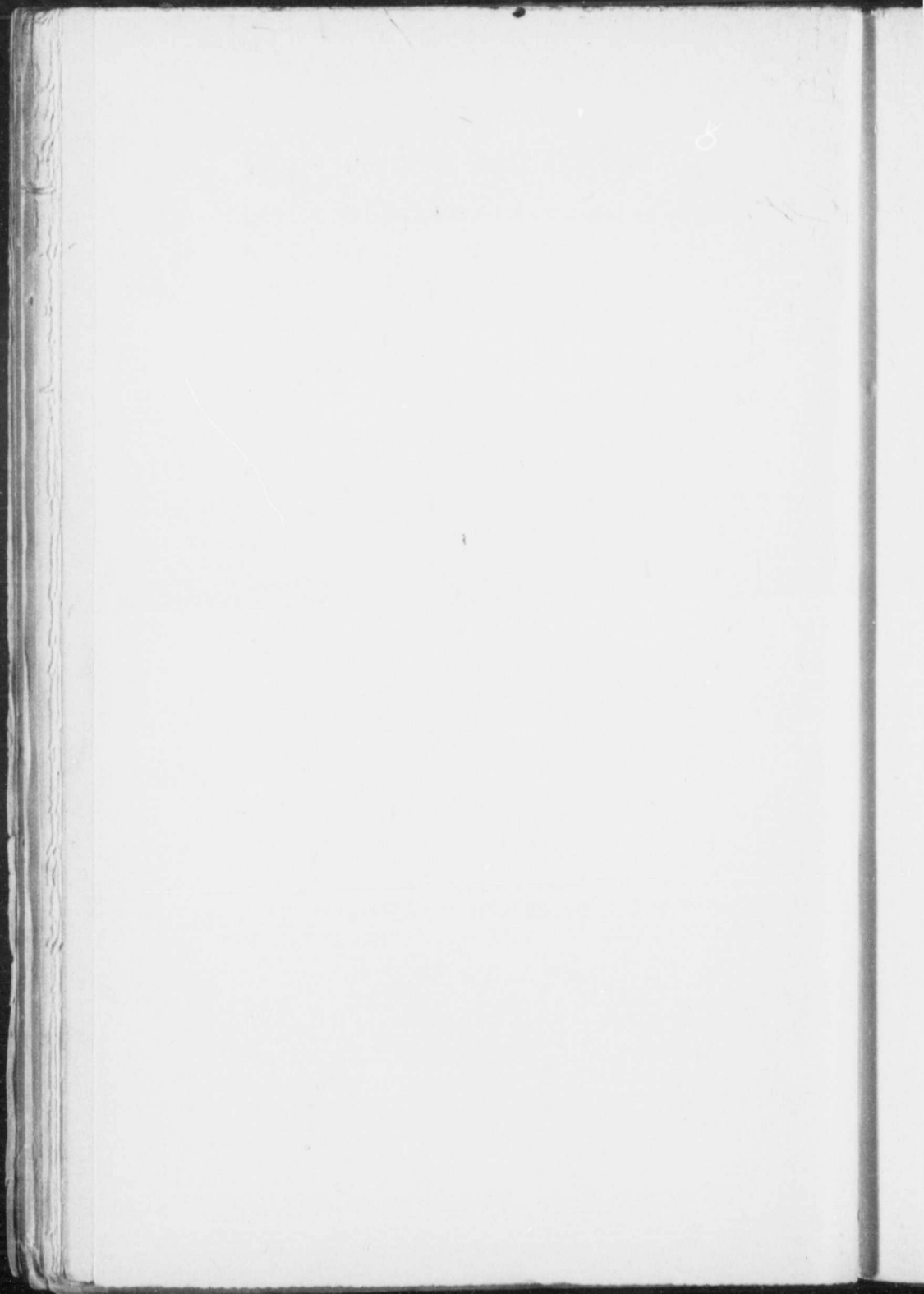
I can't sign myself "Gay," for I am misery itself.

*P.S.* — I must tell you I dined at Sir Anthony's. I put on my china-pot com-

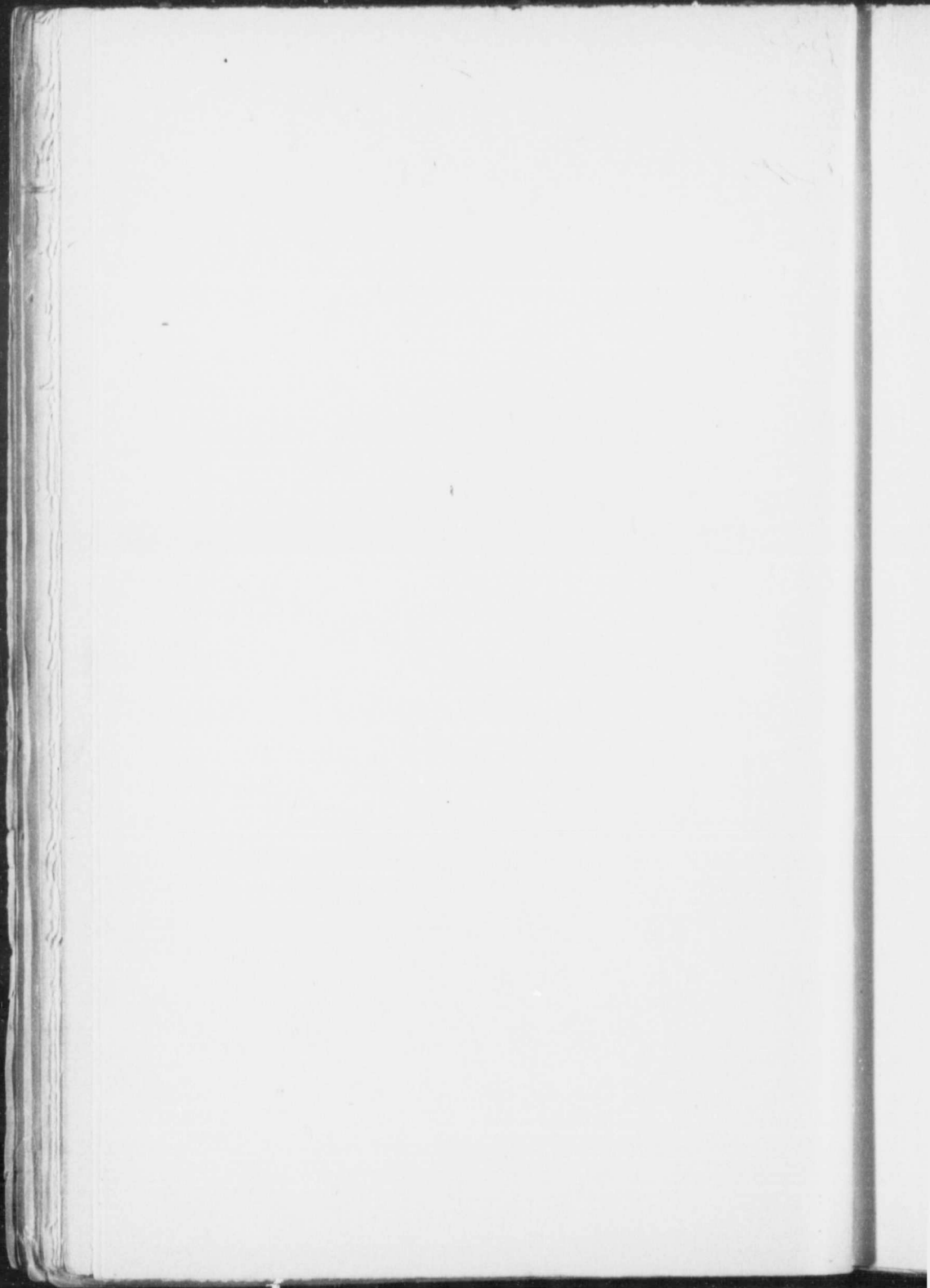
A Detached Pirate 51

plexion, and Colonel Gore took me in to dinner!

Fancy! a husband taking his divorced wife in to dinner. One can't forbid the banns, but one feels as if one ought to forbid the dinner.



FIFTH LETTER



*My Dearest,*

**H**ERE I am in bed with a cigarette in my hand and no pastille next my heart. I care not for the susceptible conscience and nose of the hotel servants. Why should I be responsible for their imagination?

I have decided that I will no longer be dismayed. I will no longer fear. To-day is mine; of to-morrow I will not think. I played the game well last night and so did he. I will give him so much credit. He is a brave soldier and so am I. I belong to a legion that carries no colours except the red rosette of bravery, and that we wear hidden next the heart. The desire for victory makes me impulsive and foolish sometimes, for I have nothing to make me fear. You will contradict me in your next letter, I

know; I wait for that to explain my meaning more fully.

Well, to return to the dinner, which I seem to be in danger of forgetting — the food was good; a *chef* is a wonderful help in providing the rose-colour of life. We talked amiably, and if once or twice I felt as if I must scream, or rise and say, "Do you see this man? He is my husband (was my husband, I suppose I should write), and he divorced me!" My ill-regulated mind, no doubt, inspired these thoughts. Suppose, then, I had proclaimed on the mountain-top (or the dinner-table, which is the same thing in this world) that I am a divorced woman; if the punishments and awards were meted out now, I should be repenting in a convent or else in the arms of a man, who brought me to this pass, instead of indulging in shrill tragedy, for only a man can be impressively tragic. But instead of my screaming, we talked of my driving tour, and wondered how

A Detached Pirate 57

long it would be before the first snow came.

Colonel Gore assured me that I should find snow-shoes clumsy at first, but excellent vehicles for motion in the deep snow. "In fact," he said, "it would be impossible for you to get on without them when the snow is soft." We talked about the rink, and wondered if I should find skating very difficult. I felt amused, and longed to laugh, for the System looked so solemn, and talked like Whitaker, with carefully placed full stops.

At last Sir Anthony broke into our question-and-answer conversation by saying genially to me:

"Gore will help you to learn to waltz; he is the best dancer we have."

"I did not know you could waltz," said I, for once speaking indiscreetly.

"I was stationed here long ago, before I met you," he answered.

Mr. Morgan had not been provided with a Jill to lead into dinner, and was



bounded on one side by a most mountainous gentleman, a minister of ships, or fish, or hens (I don't know the names of half the officials here), and on the other by a lady whose exuberant charms were laced into a last year's dinner dress with evidently a last year's waist, and she alternately declined food and gazed at the door with a yearning in her eyes that only tight garments could produce. Poor Mr. Morgan's countenance expressed boredom unutterable, and he rushed into our conversation with an impetuosity that I blessed, and said :

“O Miss Vandeleur, I was your first friend on Canadian soil. I claim the privilege of teaching you to dance.”

“Is the deck of a ship soil?” I asked. Then an argument arose.

Was the ship owned in England or Canada? To what line did it belong? How slow the steamers were getting, how many had lately been lost, the Gulf as a summer port would have to be given

up. The lady of the undulating figure explained bitterly that her new evening dresses had not yet arrived (hence that small waist, I thought), and the official gentleman tried to make himself heard above the din, which was tremendously loud; and unheard in it, Colonel Gore turned to me and said:

“I am going to live at York Redoubt, a fort some distance from the town. This is my last appearance.” He returned to his dinner.

“When do you go?”

“Next week.”

After dinner, the ladies — it was a little awkward without a hostess — sat in the drawing room and had a real good gossip on the wickedness of their servants. I, not possessing any of these important aids to conversation, turned my attention to some poetry I found on the table. The lady of the tight bodice had sought the refuge of the dressing-room.

At last I heard a murmur:

"I am sure Mr. Morgan is extremely alarmed. He is Sir Anthony's heir." Then they almost whispered.

Why Mr. Morgan should be alarmed I could not tell, unless he fears my charms! How ludicrous! The entrance of the men (I could not smoke, and how I longed for a cigarette) created a little stir. The other ladies spread out their skirts and grinned, but Mr. Morgan, Sir Anthony, and Colonel Gore stopped by my corner. Mr. Morgan sat down and said: "I am fatigued." Colonel Gore fell into the clutches of the fish man, who is Minister of Marine, and Sir Anthony hastened to dispel the frowns which were gathering on the faces of his guests.

"Do you like kissing?" asked Mr. Morgan, gazing at his well-shod feet.

"No." I could see the System keeping one eye on me and one on his prosy old companion.

"Ah!" said this audacious youth. "I thought at dinner I would have loved to have got up to come and kiss you."

“Really!” said I gaily. “If you had wished to turn such a noble assembly into a bear-fight, you would have succeeded, for I should have run away.”

“I think it is so selfish,” in the voice of one pleading for a much needed reformation, “of you women to refuse a man what can’t hurt you and would amuse him.”

I laughed.

“Suppose, for instance, there was one woman in the world——”

“I hope she would not be like that one,” he interrupted, nodding in the direction of the last year’s waist.

“Don’t interrupt. Suppose you wanted to kiss one special woman, would another do as well?”

I lowered my voice so that the System might not hear, but he did, for he stamped his foot impatiently, and turned round to stare at me. He makes me feel as if I were standing facing a bright incandescent light when he glares like that,

—and, think of it, I once called him Dick! but not for very long, soon he became Richard. If I were a man, I would not live with a woman who called me Richard.

“No,” replied Mr. Morgan; “I suppose not.” Slowly, “Do you feel like that?”

“Like what?”

“The one woman or the one man way?”

“I call that an unwarrantable question.”

“Then I know you do,” he remarked triumphantly. “I wonder when you will let me kiss you,” somewhat seriously.

“When? Never.” My gaiety was forced.

“Don’t say that. Don’t be so cruel — so cold. By the way, Mallock blurted out at mess last night, that you are very cold. He said ——”

“I don’t want to hear what he said,” I exclaimed.

“Old Gore shut him up.”

Mr. Morgan did not continue to discourse about Colonel Gore.

“I wish you loved me,” he observed sadly.

“Well, I don’t,” I retorted.

“Will you ever?” his tone was beseeching. “Do try. I’d be so good to you. We’d have a rippin’ time. How shall I know if you ever think of it?”

He sat in silence, evidently thinking; then he exclaimed:

“Wear a red rosette, will you, if you ever can love me? Do — my lady of the red rosette; it would be becoming to you — just above your heart, and I’ll know, and I’ll ——”

“Morgan,” said Sir Anthony, “get Miss Kitson’s music.”

Like a sulky little boy, he rose and said:

“Is she here?”

Sir Anthony nodded and I sat thinking. The System stood before me.

“Is there anything I can do for you?”

“Nothing,” I replied.

“Watch old Gore,” said Mr. Morgan, when he returned; “he is supposed to be in love with Miss Kitson. She is not a beauty, but she is a good sort. You know she is very High Church, and she won’t have him.”

“What has the Church got to do with it?”

“Why, he divorced his wife.”

“Did he?” was the voice mine?

“Yes. She *was* a goer,” with great gusto, as if he enjoyed the remembrance of the lady’s frailties. “But any way, things have come to a deadlock there. Miss Kitson’s father is anxious for the match. He says, ‘My daughters are a fine family, but they have scruples, scruples.’ He is a rum old Scotchman. Gore might do worse. And she would be a stayer, a relief after the last one.”

“Probably Miss Kitson will forget her scruples,” I said, as I watched Colonel Gore. He seemed very much absorbed in her. She wore her hair flat, her skin

A Detached Pirate 65

was good, but freckled, and her colour was too purple to be considered beautiful. Yet she looked very nice and quiet, and no doubt will suit him well.

I wonder if he will marry her when he can, though it seems indecently soon for him to think of marriage.

FRIDAY NIGHT.

I put your letter away and now I will finish it. I was so glad to hear from you. You urge me to come home, live in a two pair back on £50 a year, and try and get the indefinite "something to do." What could I do? No, I will not come. I am out on the wide sea now, and "there is no discharge in this war." One cannot get away from one's self. St. Paul was a wise man.

The snow has come. The whole country is white; slowly and quietly it began, and now the sleigh-bells ring clearly, and I don't feel a bit cold, though the thermometer is very low.

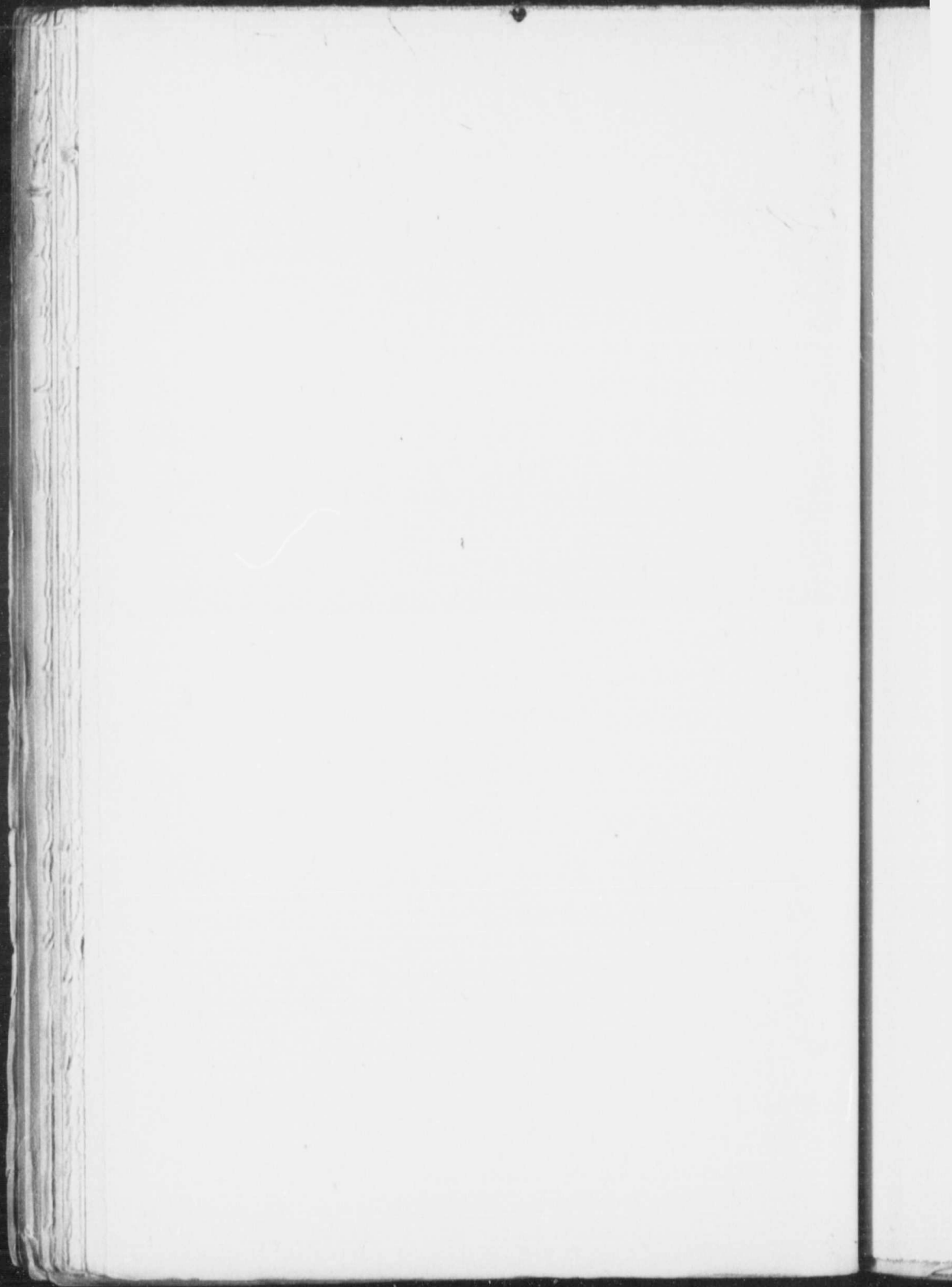


I went for a ride to-day. Mr. Morgan sent his horse. I was a little afraid at first, but I braced up and it was glorious.

We galloped through the pine trees, and the snow was packed even, and yet soft, for my horse's feet made no noise on it. I came home glowing with air and warmth, and now I have on a tea-gown, and am at peace. When all my money is spent I shall join a circus. I can ride. Think of always travelling and waking up every day in a new place! on the other hand, think of sleeping in a different bed every night! I am only a vagabond after all, and love the joys of the road, but I suppose the day will come when they will be dust and ashes and rheumatism. Farewell. — Yours always,

GAY.

SIXTH LETTER



## VI

*My Dearest,*

**I**F you only knew the difficulties under which I have laboured to write you a letter, for we have been driving for a week, and I provided myself with lots of note-paper and pens, but no ink, and at each farmhouse it has been absent — hence no letter. Mr. L'Esterre has just interrupted me; we are going on now, so I must cease. They fear a big snowstorm, and we must get into better quarters, as these are very primitive.

CAMP, NEAR HERRING COVE.

We are not far from home now, but the big storm is raging, and we are hoping the snow may pack in two or three days, and then we can go on. We are in a lumber camp. They have given us, Mrs. L'Esterre and me, a big log hut; it is warm and clean. The banks of snow round it keep out the wind, a huge fire

roars in the middle, and outside all day the wind has been moaning, and now it has increased to a loud yell. I write under difficulties, but I have so much to tell, that I must pour out my soul to thee. Our beds are made; they consist of boughs of hemlock covered with rugs; never have I slept so well as on this soothing couch. Our toilette—well, I shall take off my moccasins and put on a flannel dressing-gown. Mrs. L'Esterre is gazing at the fire. I hear wild sounds of revelry from the camp. Mr. Walters and Mr. L'Esterre are there, and, no doubt, they are all outdoing one another in their tales of adventure. One of the men has just come in with a load of wood for us for the night; we must keep up our fire, or we shall feel the hand of the Spirit, whose face no man can see, on our throats before dawn.

We have had a glorious time. The weather has been perfect—very cold, still, and clear, with bright sunshine.

## A Detached Pirate 71

We have driven miles nearly every day; the horses seem to love their work. Sometimes we have stopped for two days and had a long tramp on snow-shoes. I can manage them quite well now, and we cover the ground very quickly.

One day we went to the lake where the Indian girl died with her lover. They threw themselves from the cliff because she would not marry an old chief her fond papa had selected for her. We went there on snow-shoes. The country would have been impassible without the snow, Mr. L'Esterre told me; the high rocky boulders and the thick bushes would have prevented my progress, anyway. The lake is big; it was frozen, and lay white against the black rocks round it, and at the end a stream rushed out over a huge rock and down again with a tremendous thud. The stream seldom freezes, the force of the water is too great. The Indian girl ran away on her wedding morning and met her lover here, and to-

gether they jumped into the water by the rocks. Their bridal star shone only for one minute, and now the Indians believe that at night a dark canoe shoots out from the rapids, and in it are the girl and her lover, returning for an hour from the Spirit Isle.

It is very extraordinary, and due to reflection, Mr. L'Esterre tells me, that I really felt I saw a canoe with two crouching forms in it coming towards me through the spray. It was a glorious day, and we were late leaving the Lake of the Mist. We had our lunch on the edge — never was I so hungry; and when we had walked up the hill, the sun had already gone down, and flames seemed to be moving across the sky. The Aurora was gorgeous, great measured steps of the dancers prancing across heaven. It almost seemed as if I could hear distant music. I walked with Mr. Walters. He is not clever, but very useful, and I need not exhaust myself making conversation

## A Detached Pirate 73

for him. Mrs. L'Esterre has such an odd jerky manner to her husband, she seems so nervous and frightened.

I felt very tired, and so I arrayed myself in my one tea-gown, and tried to find comfort on the farm-house sofa. I do miss Pringle. My hair—well, it curls naturally, and, tell it not, I never do it up. I braid it like a school-girl and it suits me. The men, strange to say, have not mentioned this, but it is true. Still, I am like the man from the wilderness, I long for evening-dress. If I once embark on descriptions of the air, the absolute stillness of the snow-wrapped land, and the joy of the creak of the snow-shoes and the sleigh-runners on the snow, I shall bore you immensely. My thoughts, which seem mighty to me, will be paltry to you when I express them.

The sofa was full of bumps, so I sat in the corner of the big farm-house sitting-room; the huge log fire burned and dimmed and crackled, and I fell asleep. Something



woke me, a low moan of agony. I looked up; it was dark in my corner, and by the fire stood Mrs. L'Esterre and near her a man; he was tall, lithe, long-limbed, and his face was hard and set; he had the look of an Indian.

"You!" she said, and her voice was unlike her soft tones. Scorn and there was love, I could have sworn, in it. "What are you doing here?"

"I have come for you."

"For me?"

"Surely you heard, surely you know. Haven't you hungered for me as I have for you? I was shipwrecked, I have been ——"

"Listen!" she interrupted. "I would have died last year to have known you loved me; now I am dead, dead, and you left me to bear the burden. It was madness for me to have stayed at that hotel alone — maddest of all to have dined with you in a private room. My aunt was there; she saw me ——"

“I know, I know. I have written to her, to tell her. I have the money now — my uncle is dead; you will be mine — mine — MINE!”

Was it only a woman's scream that rang through the room?

The man took her in his arms.

“Hush, sweet. You belong to me. It is all over.”

“All over? You think you can wipe away the scars of eternity by words. Listen!” she said hurriedly. “When you left me I was desperate, heart-broken. Aunt Mary came to me, she said awful things.” She gasped as she spoke. “She said I was all that was bad; in vain I denied it. We came home. She said Mr. L'Esterre would marry me, he loved me, to save me and my name. She talked of the others, and said I had ruined them all. I waited — waited — waited; you never wrote, never came. You had told her, you had said I was ——”

“I? Why, L'Esterre told her. He

saw us; he — My God! Phil, don't look at me with those eyes of horror. L'Esterre told her in London, and they followed us to Liverpool. I have her letter, she wrote to me. I only got it the other day at the club in New York."

Shall I ever forget her face? — scarred with anguish no words could describe.

"I am his wife, I married him six months ago. He saved my name, and for the others' sake, for my sisters' sake, I ——" She fell at his feet, an inert mass.

"Don't, Phil, don't!" he cried. "My God! I see it all."

Then, Vera, I got up and ran.

They did not notice me. My one idea was to help them to say good-bye alone, for that they would say good-bye I felt sure.

I did sentry, up and down, up and down, outside that door for hours it seemed. How he had come here, what he was

doing, I don't know. I only know they were lovers.

Mr. Walters came in brushing the snow from his feet and whistling "Tommy Atkins."

I had to trust him.

I told him, not what I had heard, but that they were there together, and he — well, he said :

"Poor soul!"

"Where is *he*?" I asked.

"He?" contemptuously, "up at Hartigan's — he's safe until morning."

Then we waited — waited.

At last the man came out.

"Walters," he gasped, "how can I get away?"

"Walker will lend you a sleigh. Come with me."

Afterwards he told me he had given Mr. de la Bère a stiff brandy-and-soda and sent him off bound for no one knew where.

I took her to sleep in my room and

she never said one word, but I could see the agony in her eyes, and she sobbed half the night.

Next day we came on here.

I drove her. We came in Mr. Walters' sleigh, and the two men went together. I wonder how much Mr. Walters knows — all, I fancy. I did n't enjoy my drive. She, Phil — what a dear little name! — talked as if she were dreaming, and I hardly felt the joy of holding the reins, for her face looked deathly, and her eyes were full of terror.

Mr. L'Esterre is just as gay as ever. I don't like his lips, they are cruel. I wonder what she will do.

FRIDAY.

Are you tired, my Vera, of my rambling adventures? I hope not. You say I never mention Charlie, and you wonder how I can bear to see Colonel Gore again. One bears most things; it is only slow starvation that kills. I would like the

A Detached Pirate 79

hot passionate love of a good man once,  
but I shall never get it.

I am draining the cup of life to the  
dregs, my dear, alone, and I feel sore.  
We go back to-day, stop at Umlaw's for  
tea, and dine in Halifax to-night. They  
are all coming to dinner at my hotel.  
It will be better for her; she seems numb  
— dead, and he is just the same.

KING'S HOTEL, SATURDAY.

I am here; my rooms are bright with  
flowers, my hair is well done. Pringle  
has fallen in love with a gunner, and Sir  
Anthony was here this morning. I think  
he is in love with me, and I feel ashamed.  
Yesterday, when we arrived at Umlaw's,  
there were a lot of people before us, who  
occupied the best sitting-room, to our  
woe; we did not see them, but as they  
came out to go away, I saw Colonel  
Gore and Miss Kitson. They seemed so  
friendly, so happy, and I was outside,  
alone.

"You know what I feel," he said to her as they stood in the doorway.

I was waiting for the sleigh, and dressed in my furs with such a high collar, that he did not know me.

"I know," she said softly. They drove off together after he had wrapped her up tenderly.

What a pig he was to me! he never wrapped me up tenderly. — Yours ever,  
dearest, GAY.

If Sir Anthony asks me to marry him, I shall tell him my whole history.

I had a long talk with Mr. Walters to-night. He is rather phlegmatic, but he brightens when I mention Phil. I fancy she might have made him different if she had loved him. You will have gathered the whole of the story from my wandering account. Mr. L'Esterre arranged it all, and she was the victim. She had gone to Liverpool to say a harmless farewell to a forbidden lover. L'Esterre, who

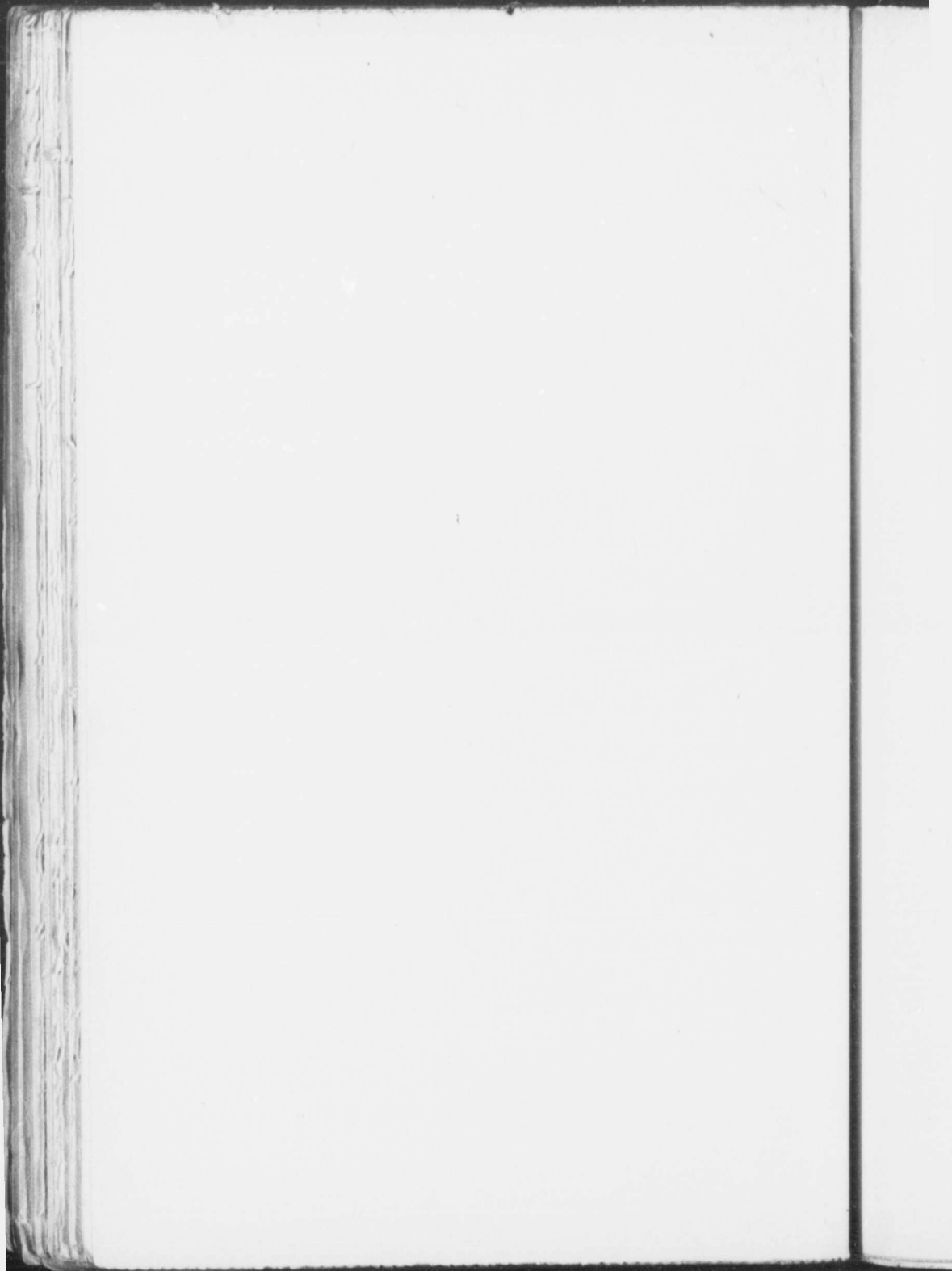
A Detached Pirate 81

was madly in love with her, discovered that she intended to make this contraband excursion, and made her aunt do the heavy father business. Then De la Bère vanished (his ship was wrecked, but she didn't know that). They all came here, and the aunt worked the never-to-be-forgiven dodge, L'Esterre played the virtuous lover with the whitewash brush. Phil denied and asserted, but finally gave in, and swore that she would love, honour, and obey Mr. L'Esterre for ever, and now the lover turns up. Oh! what fools girls are. If Mr. L'Esterre had been a gentleman, and the aunt a woman of sense, they would have saved one woman from an everlasting heartache.





SEVENTH LETTER



VII

KING'S HOTEL, HALIFAX.

I HAVE not felt like writing, somehow, dear Vera; I am living in the past and wishing I could undo it.

I don't know why things went all wrong with my marriage. Colonel Gore made a perfect lover, but once we entered on the second month of our married existence we fought. I forget what about, something foolish. I was a fool, I did n't understand him and I did n't try to. My Aunt Lydia, who has now cast me off completely, brought me up in the atmosphere of a prison. We were taught to talk and smile by rule, and I never would do that. Her daughters are models of propriety, and are unmarried. We had too much to eat and too little exercise. I don't wonder women are giving up the dreary homes, where they are regarded as

schoolgirls at thirty, and going out into the world to feel the wind of life in their faces and to hear the stirring notes of the music of action, which make one's blood run quickly, as it never does in those dull middle-class houses behind the laurustinus bushes.

The woman who goes to work has my sympathy. The people who talk of England and her heroes seem to forget that the same blood runs in the veins of the women as in those of the men.

Well, Aunt Lydia sent me to balls on approval, and lectured me on the desirability of marriage. She was shocked when I said marriage was like hanging — irrevocable, and when the drop falls, one enters either Heaven or Hell. All their friends lived the same life and talked the same talk, and labelled every one neatly in the well-arranged cubby hole they call their mind. I was labelled "Fast."

To the day of her death, Aunt Lydia will never forgive me for not marrying

Mr. Bernard, the diamond merchant, who dwelt in the big villa on the Downs. He was very rich. His mother lived with him, and he informed me he would refurnish the drawing-room in the most expensive style for my benefit. When I again said "No," he enquired sadly if a European tour would be any inducement. Poor man, he could have covered me with diamonds, and still have been able to pay Worth for my clothes and to feed me with oysters and champagne.

Aunt Lydia considered herself an excellent imitation of Providence; she pulled the strings and we ought to have danced to her pulling. I never yearned to wrestle with the dark things of life; I only wanted to work and live, and over and over again she refused to let me. I should have been a better woman (or a worse one) if I had been allowed to fight for myself and look inside the cupboards of Bluebeard. It is when a woman sees the dark corners, the loveless, dreary lives,

which often are made loveless only through lack of opportunity and perspicacity, that she can appreciate love, care, and a man as God and a woman have made him. I would have a woman cold or hot, passionate or indifferent, but not colourlessly amiable. Aunt Lydia thinks men are angels or gods, and we poor women were created to smooth the way for them. Well, enough of women and Aunt Lydia. She breathed rapturously when she saw me in orange blossoms and knew that Colonel Gore would have to be responsible for my future.

He, poor man, was very good to me at first; but the man from Borneo (*appassionato furioso*) was so keenly, so wildly, so openly in love with me, any one but Colonel Gore might have guessed that the man was slightly off his head, for he once had sunstroke. No one minded him when he swore by all the gods in heaven that he loved me. One night (I laugh when I think of it) he came and rang

our door bell at two o'clock. The System rose and went down; he well might, for the electric bell rang as though some one were sitting on it and as if the day of judgment were about to dawn. *There* stood the man from Borneo, and insisted that it was morning, though dark. He swore he had just eaten his breakfast, demanded an interview with me, and generally behaved like a lunatic.

Colonel Gore promptly lifted him by the loosest part of his clothing and deposited him into the street. Then he returned to me, to harangue, to scold, and to leave me with scorn so intense that it was laughable. The fine emotions of rage and jealousy when a man is sitting in a frock-coat are worthy of admiration; but at 3 A.M., when he is wearing pyjamas and a grey dressing-gown, they are ridiculous and do not seem real. When my irate lord strode up and down, his elegant draperies waving in the breeze of wrath

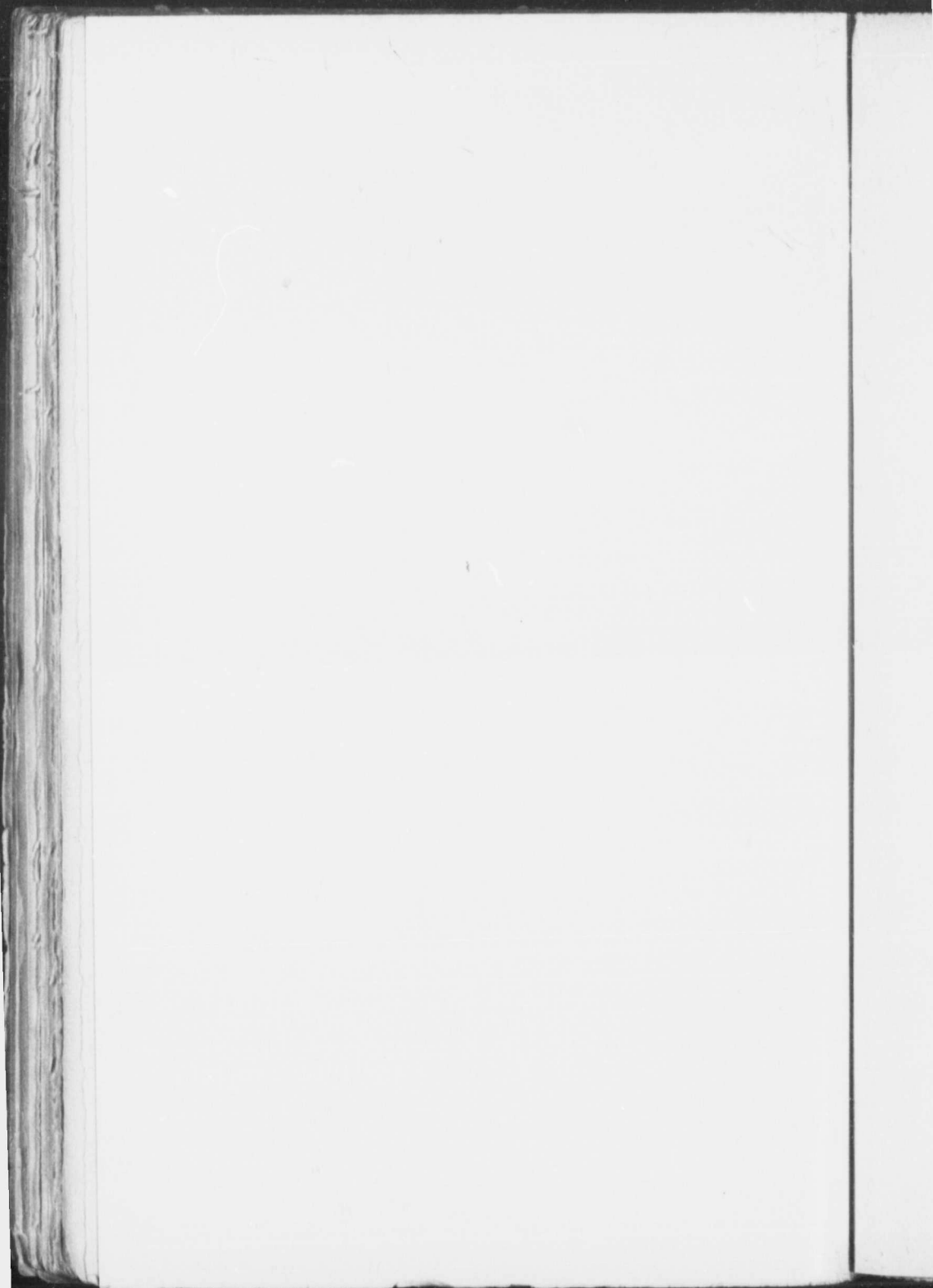


which he created by his indignation, I giggled. It has always been my fate to do something flippant at the most solemn moments; so the System left me to reflection, which ended in sleep. I never believed he could be seriously annoyed or blame me for the courage and cheek displayed by the man from Borneo. Of course, I thought the System would have attributed his ardour to the quantity of champagne he had no doubt imbibed at some wild orgy. But the System did blame me for it all, and when we met at breakfast, he was belligerent and I was illogical.

That was the beginning of the end, and Charlie was only the result of boredom, boredom so intense that nothing ended it except mischief.

And so I sold my soul for nothing. Oh, well, my System is a hard man and blind. I never saw the man from Borneo again, but he wrote to me, once, the wildest, maddest note you ever saw. Now, I





s  
l  
c  
a  
a  
a  
h

have drifted long enough in the past; it is of no use to remember it; anyway, it is dead and buried, and, thank the saints, I can laugh at my misfortunes, and I belong to no man.

I have been to see Mrs. L'Esterre, who looks awful. Mr. Walters hovers round her like a worried hen.

I have just seen Colonel Gore walking with Miss Kitson; they were shopping together. Sir Anthony has sent a note asking if he may come and dine. Mr. Morgan is away. Well, he came, we spent a very cheerful evening, dined in the big room, and drank champagne. After dinner we smoked. I felt bold and not afraid.

"Do you believe in love at fifty?" he asked.

"That depends on the woman," I answered, purposely misunderstanding him.

"Woman! I meant man."

I did not want to discourage him, but,

also, I did not desire to have his heart laid at my feet, for I have not decided what to say. I believe I shall have to refuse him.

“Sir Anthony,” I said, “I do believe in it. I believe in hate, too.”

“In hate! Whom do you hate?”

I longed for a commonplace subject of conversation; this was too personal, too near my heart.

“To hate successfully,” he continued, “one must have loved” — his voice trembled — “and then been hurt or scorned.”

“I know but little of either,” I said, indifferently. “When are you going to have your tobogganing party?”

“You will promise not to toboggan with any one but me?”

“I promise.”

How gladly would I throw myself for ever into his strong, kind arms, to be at peace, to be cared for, loved. Ah me, I could not do it; the face that is close to mine when I shut my eyes is not Sir

A Detached Pirate 93

Anthony's, the arms that hold me till I feel faint with joy are not his either.

Why are women taught that love and marriage are the only successful finish to the maiden race? Love is so slight; it is not by any means a necessary adjunct to life. The work goes on, while love drones by the wayside, forgotten in the hurry and scramble for success. I wish I had been born twenty years later. I wish that Providence, Aunt Lydia, had not had my training in her power. Her ideas are so petty, so feeble, and life is so big and men are so hard.

I wonder if many men know the inner life, the thoughts of the women they have married.

We most of us live two lives, and how many women want to know a man's thoughts? Women are brought up to consider a husband an amiable person who will flatter, who will work for them and give them all good things; but do many of them look on his heart as anything but

a blank slate, washed clean for them to write on it what they will. I wish I had known more. I was brought up to think of a husband as a sort of universal provider; that he would expect anything in return from my mind and my heart, never entered my head.

I wish I had realised that a man loves a woman most when he says least, and that the love of a man — not of an effeminate fool — is a possession the angels might envy.

I was so glad to hear from you to-day. You say my letters amuse you vastly, and you long to embrace me and to see me happy with Charlie, and that I must build up my house again with the stones I have thrown down and start fresh with Charlie, which sounds like a Scotch song. I will tell you his story some day. At present I am toiling on the road of pleasure. The waters of Lethe seem near my grasp. My whole life is Sir Anthony, and I hear from Mrs. L'Esterre that the announcement of

his engagement to me is expected daily by the elect. She says that the maidens who hoped are despairing, and those who are just coming out are rejoicing, for they think I will make a cheerful hostess for them. I wonder.

I met Colonel Gore to-day. He stopped and said, "You are happy here?" and then he walked away down the street, with a long stride that suggested the jingle of accoutrements and the leading of men. Mr. Morgan is expected home to-morrow.

The snow is very deep and hard, and the air is so clear, so crisp, it feels like champagne in my throat. I could die gladly in the soft drifts and sink into my last sleep, lulled by the walker of the snows.

Pringle's love affairs are progressing. I am glad she has found him at last. He is a gunner, but he can marry her soon. I am living very extravagantly. I have entertained half the town, and I am go-



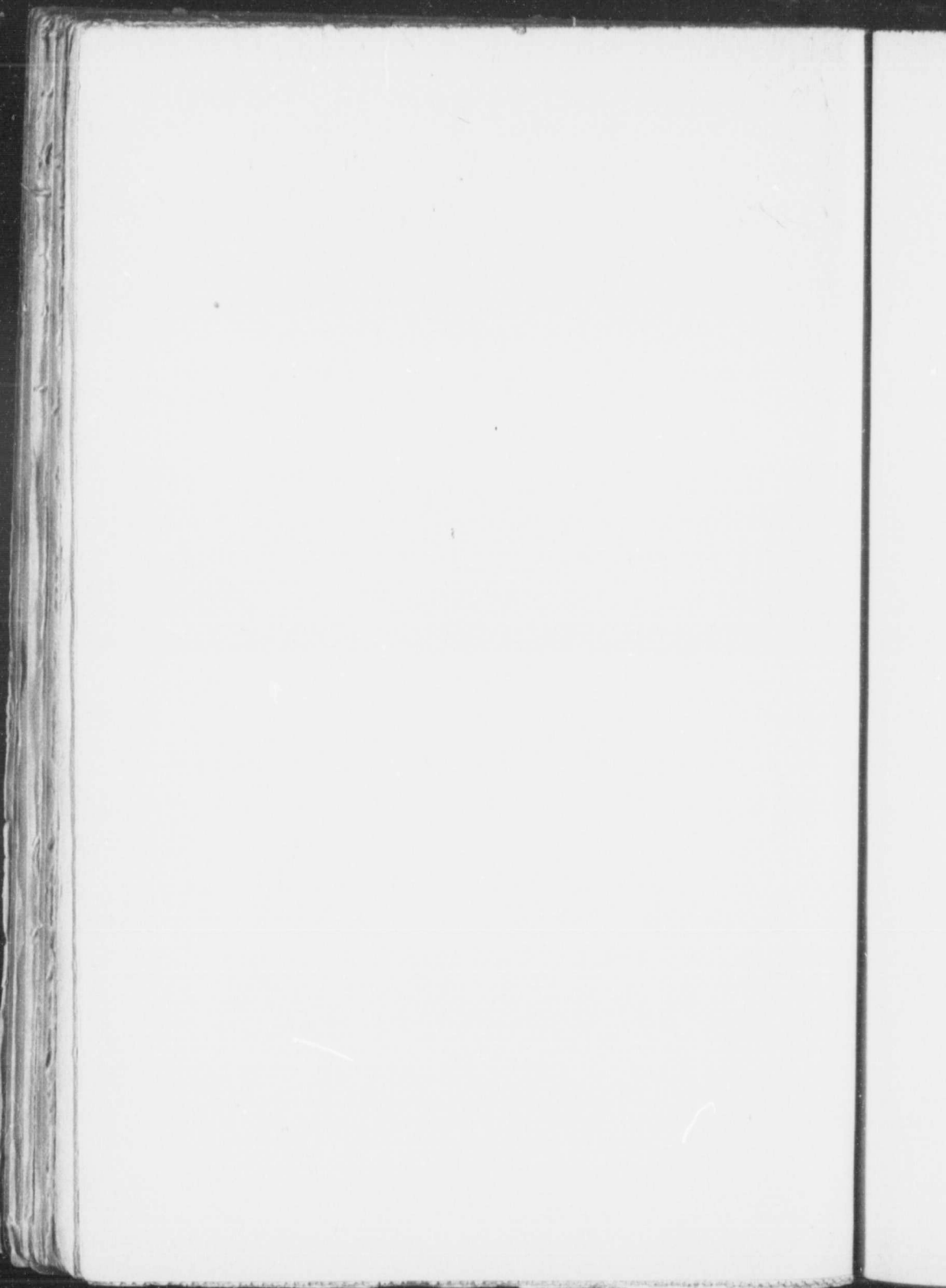
ing to give a ball. Yes, I will go with the band while I have the money, and then ride in a school in New York, or somewhere, to train the ignorant how to sit on a horse.

Perhaps I may end in — well, no matter. For to-day I will not think nor plan.

Yours ever,

GAY.

EIGHTH LETTER



## VIII

**W**OMEN are fools, my friend, all of them. You, toiling for fame and thinking you hear the far-off music of success underneath the noise of the tramp of the army of failures (perchance you only hear their shrieks of triumph when one falls out by the way), and I, because I have longed for love, and tried to grasp it with one hand while I threw it away with the other.

Position and peace are the only things worth striving for. Utter selfishness is the best virtue for a woman. I think selfishness has masqueraded as Purity and Truth very often, and kept the wolf of Despair from many doors.

I have laughed madly to-day and gone with the crowd. I have been dressed as a peasant and sold many useless garments and more useless ornaments at a bazaar.

The little priest at the church I told you about got it up. He takes a priestly interest in my soul, and we have had many an argument on various topics. I am a possible convert to him; he longs for my total conversion as the saints long for heaven or the soldiers for the Victoria Cross. *I* made the bazaar; *I* am a success. If I wear a bunch of red berries and my hair dressed as a Geisha, they all copy me; if I walk in a light skirt and a dark coat, they all get one. I am the fashion, but it will soon be over, this game will; it was only for a jest after all. Hence my laughter.

This afternoon Colonel Gore and Miss Kitson managed the bran pie. They devoted more attention to conversation than to the pie, and I felt like screaming and saying to her, "Don't, don't trust him; he will take all you can give; he will take your soul and your name and never fling one hand out to help you if you are in deadly peril."

A Detached Pirate 101

Why do we give our hearts — we women, merely for that which is not love?

Mr. Morgan amuses me vastly. He is a queer youth, and waxes plaintive over my heartlessness and my refusal to wear the red rosette.

I see Sir Anthony very often. He is growing very fond of me, but he does not inconveniently parade it. We meet often when I am riding, for I have bought a horse; and though they say it is very dangerous to ride on the snow, because one's horse might slip, yet it is so glorious, I risk it, as long as we don't have a thaw or any drifts. I don't mind the cold, though it is rather trying.

Sir Anthony talks of his loneliness and his love.

I told him I could not listen yet, and he said:

“You will soon; you will hear my story and judge for yourself. I could not tell you I love you, if you did not know all about me.”

His presence fills my soul with a peace that I never imagined attainable. Mr. Morgan asked me yesterday if the rumours about Sir Anthony and me were true and I said :

“What are they ?”

“That you are engaged.”

I was feeling the old memories, the old regret in my soul, so I said :

“I shall never marry.”

And he laughed.

He pretends to love me, but it is only pretence, for his tongue runs like the line off a reel when one has hooked a big fish, and he says too much ; he has too many feelings, too many longings — thus much have I learnt.

THREE DAYS AFTER.

I am staying at the North West Arm. The name of the abode of bliss of the young married women with money. He, the System, is here too — the irony of fate. How could I ever have imagined that I cared for him? Hard, cold,

impassive, he never addresses one sentence to me, never seems to see me when I go into the room, never takes my empty tea-cup to be refilled, never opens the door for me. Mr. Morgan does it all. Oh, that man, with his hard, tanned face, and his dark blue eyes and his impenetrable expression! Why does n't he go and sit on top of the sphinx? I suppose he is annoyed that Mary Kitson is not staying here.

We all arrived in little bits, as it were. I went by train, and there was Colonel Gore on the platform. He just said, "I was told to wait for you; the others have gone on." He shouldered my dressing-case and put Pringle into a sleigh. Then he drove me up to the house. He was quite conversational when alone with me in the dark, but no sooner did we arrive than he grew as silent as a deaf-mute. I tried so hard to be nice to him. I always do. I assume such an interested air and treat him as a new acquaintance.



Why can't he pretend, too? All society is pretence. No one takes a real interest in the other woman's baby, or clothes, or toothache; and we talk all day of things we really don't care two straws about.

Why does n't he stay at York Redoubt? And I once loved him. Loved his hard, burnt face, his dull blue eyes, the diagonal strip of white skin on his forehead. (I have even kissed the join of the white and the brown.) I loved the mark of the chin strap. Dear God, what a fool is a woman! How we imagine Love and Marriage and Heaven.

Mr. Morgan tells me I am driving him to the devil by my indifference. I, who never drove or led a man anywhere. I told him he was only using me as an excuse, as a peg on which to hang the remorse of his misdeeds. How convenient it still is for men to say, "The woman tempted me," though only the weak ones say it.

A Detached Pirate 105

This house is immaculately beautiful. The walls are all covered with flowery papers, but there are no books, no cushions, no sofas, and no coffee after dinner. I thought, when I entered the hall, that I would like to have a house all white paint and flowery papers, with chairs covered with chintz; but now I don't want it. Chintz is cold, and a house means a husband. Mrs. Goldsmith has been telling me, with pride, that she has no imagination. I think she lacks one of the great attributes an unhappy life has to bestow, for the happy people do not need to imagine: life plants its flowers at their feet and they pick them; but we have to imagine the joy the flowers of happiness could bring us. The happy people miss some of the points of life; if they have no pain, do they ever feel the bliss of getting what they have waited for, longed for, prayed for, and despaired of attaining? Am I writing all this to impress you or myself?

Pain and sorrow may make one sympathetic or give one insight, but would I change those qualities for one week's joy? Ah! that I would, and not shrink from the pain that might come afterwards.

"Happiness," said Mrs. L'Esterre, "belongs to the dull, to those who never long for the impossible."

And Mrs. Goldsmith said:

"A woman finds happiness in her position and her husband's——"

"Love," interrupted Mrs. L'Esterre, with a little joyless laugh.

"Income," continued Mrs. Goldsmith. And we all sat silent.

"I have no husband and no income," I said, and then saw Colonel Gore behind me.

"Both can be supplied," said Mrs. Goldsmith, with the playfulness of an elephant.

"By whom?" asked the System, quietly, of me. Fancy telling one's former husband the name of his probable successor!



l  
l  
l  
l  
c  
v  
s  
l  
t  
g  
d  
d  
h

I was coming downstairs on my way to the drawing-room before dinner. My dull red velvet gown made my shoulders look like cream. Mr. Morgan was slowly going down before me. You know how heavy a velvet gown is round one's feet, don't you? As I stepped down the stairs, my little black shoes and open-worked stockings were displayed. Mr. Morgan looked back and stopped; he turned round as I reached him, and, stooping, gave my ankle a little quick pinch. The rustle of a woman's gown and the sound of a man's voice made me silent when I would have remonstrated. Below us I saw Colonel Gore and Mrs. L'Esterre. He was glaring at me; he had seen, thought—what did he think?

“You brute!” I said, and Mr. Morgan's air of injured innocence would have done credit to a Saint Elizabeth.

Fortunately he did not take me in to dinner, and I never spoke one word to him all the evening. The System played

billiards; the rest of the company showed its ignorance of spelling by a little game.

I do hate being misunderstood, and I know Colonel Gore misunderstands me. I hate him for it. Will Sir Anthony come to-morrow? We shall see. I am determined to let him tell me all, everything in his heart. Most truthful men, when discoursing of that organ, could only recite a *menu* to be eaten when drinking the best champagne. Good-night. It is cold.

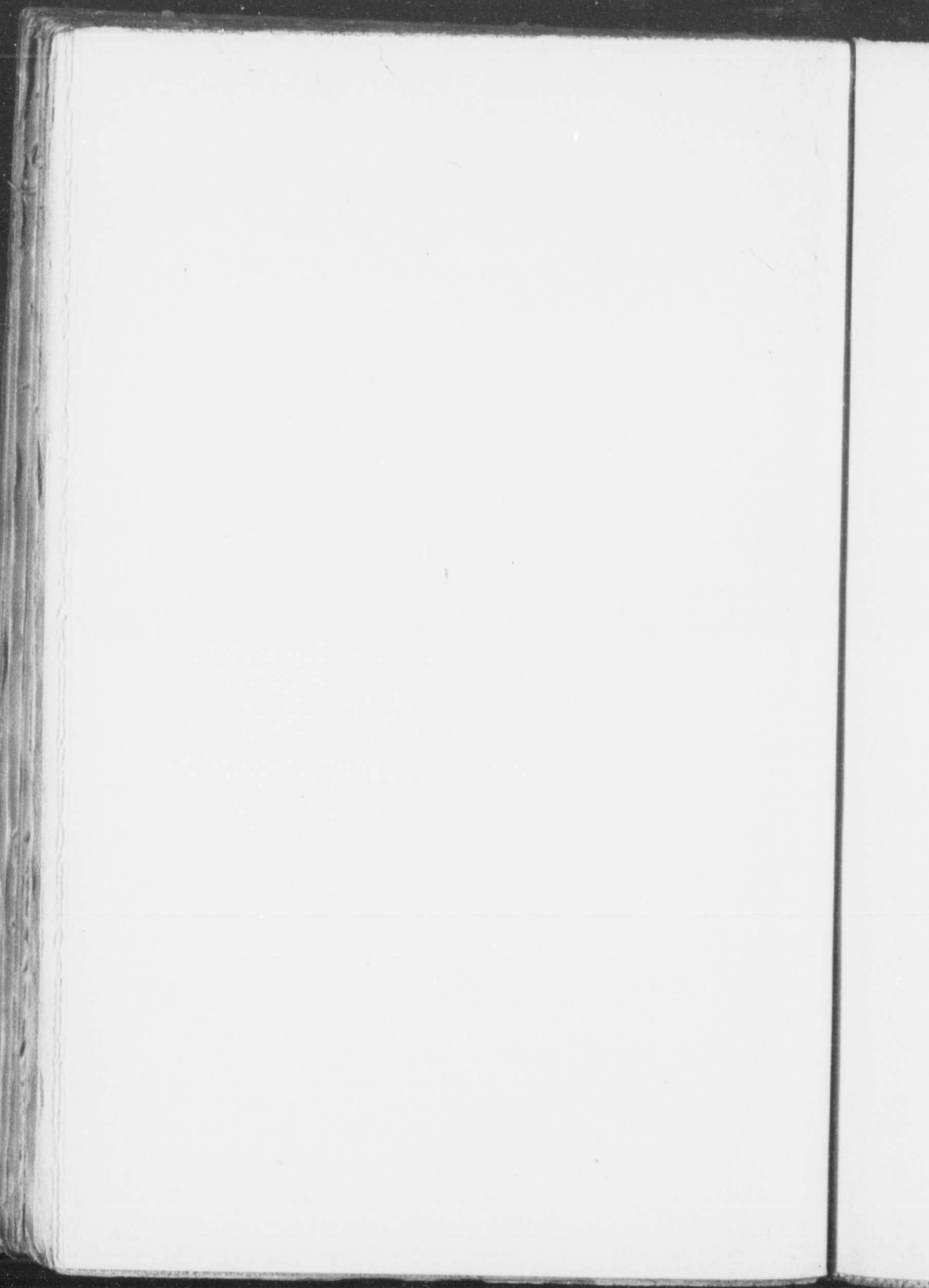
Thine,

GAY.

I shall accept Sir Anthony to-morrow.

NINTH LETTER





## IX

THE TOWERS, NORTH WEST ARM.

**W**HO says morning brings counsel?  
It does not. I resolutely make up my mind in the night and break it in the morning. It is a horrid time; the world is not warm, and breakfast and conversation are a bore. My last night's reflections seem silly, futile. I think of all the past, and it is horrid. I remember my rapidly dwindling money, and I don't want to marry Sir Anthony.

Oh dear! if only I could breakfast in bed. That meal is responsible for many quarrels, especially matrimonial ones, and even a badly cooked dinner is not so tragic as the ordinary breakfast. Miss Kitson has arrived. I can't talk to her; she is so limp, and her discourse so uninteresting. Colonel Gore and she want to play

golf all day, and they abuse the snow for covering up the country. Dear snow, I love it. I was born in the winter, that's why. How hard it is to prevent one's self from telling the things one ought not to tell. When in a country house, and one is dying of boredom, to shock the assembly would be, at least, a short relief. I am not a secretive person—few women are; we can keep our own little mistakes to ourselves, though it is a bore to do it. Now men are as deep as the sea; they never tell one anything true.

## THE SAME EVENING.

I have been tobogganing since dinner with Sir Anthony. There is a hill behind the house. It stretches to the sea, which is frozen, and the course is lighted with torches. The night was cold, but clear and still. The gliding motion is entrancing, the pace at which one goes down the hill, tremendously fast. It is a glorious

A Detached Pirate 113

sensation; numbing yet exhilarating, with a rush of air that almost makes me feel faint.

We went down two or three times, and then sat on rugs at the top, by a big pine-tree.

Sir Anthony talked.

He told me he loved me, and I was silent with shame.

I feel as if some one had stolen my dearest possession from me; yet what I have lost I know not.

He talked for a long time.

He told me he married a woman when he was young, whom he loved madly. They went to India, and she left him for another man. He tried to divorce her, but was defeated. The court suggested connivance, which by lies was proved. She had a friend staying with her — a beautiful girl — who, as soon as Lady Erskine had gone with her lover, came to Sir Anthony and told him she loved him. He treated her with scorn, scorn so intense

that she grew plaintive, beseeching, then like a fiend.

“I’ll ruin you through her, and I believe you love her,” she said.

And she did. She debased herself and swore that Sir Anthony was her lover, that it all had been arranged; and they were ruined by one woman’s lies.

Sir Anthony told it very slowly; he evidently had loved his wife.

“What happened to her?” I asked.

“She came back begging me to upset the girl’s evidence, to set her free to marry her lover; but — I could n’t; it was hopeless. No one could contradict — I won’t say her name — the girl’s statement. No one could be called as a witness except my wife and myself, and we were no good; so she — and — and — she killed herself.”

We sat in silence.

At last I said: —

“I, too, have a story, a ——”

“Never mind,” he retorted. “I want you to spend your future with me. I

A Detached Pirate 115

don't care about your past. At the worst you were only engaged to some one else."

I shall have to tell him.

"I can't tell you now," I stammered.

"I understand," he answered. Mrs. Goldsmith appeared and murmured supper. After the tragic conversation, she sounded quite cheerful and we both laughed.

"Women are fickle," said Colonel Gore behind me. He was speaking to Miss Kitson. Can he imagine her becoming anything so frivolous as fickle? He speedily conveyed her away from my contaminating presence. No doubt he fears I may corrupt her virgin charms. After all, we are not so fickle as men are. I think a man is harder to understand than a woman. Men have more ballast and less impulse. I would follow the man I loved through all torment. How few men love a woman well enough to stand by her side through everything; they let her go. And then the woman

counts the cost and makes another man pay. That is the reason why, until the judgment, we shall never cease trying to play the devil against the man, as Eve did.

My couch, my beauty sleep, and my last new novel, purveyed by Sir Anthony, have great attractions for me. I will make a little bovril; Pringle has a spirit-lamp. It is a harmless drink, and it will warm me, for, in truth, I am cold and shivering and my heart aches.

I think, when the angels relieve the guard, we shall get a little credit for the sins we have not committed when the temptation has been almost too much for us. You will say I am guilty of the worst, perhaps; but you do not know the temptations to which I have not succumbed.

I can tell you this now, because I will tell you all later. I am going home to-day with Mrs. L'Esterre; she looks so pretty. I saw her last night after we had

A Detached Pirate 117

been tobogganing; she was near me, standing in the dark by Mr. de la Bère. She looked absolutely happy and quite beautiful, but he did not come back to supper. I wonder if they had arranged a meeting.

There are going to be proceedings, my dear. She is coming to stay with me at my hotel. I can hear you saying, "Don't have anything to do with her." Well, if I can teach one woman that a happy life is merely the possession of a good digestion and a banking account, I shall have done well for once. The delirium of love is nothing.

KING'S HOTEL, HALIFAX.

The day after Christmas. One A.M.

Oh! Vera, how can I tell you; how can I begin? Christmas is over. I hate dining with ghosts. We dined at the R.A. Mess and drank "Sweethearts and wives." But that's all ordinary, that's only sentiment; and to-day I felt so



lonely and sad and miserable. It snowed and snowed, and no one came, not even Sir Anthony, who has influenza, so I sat and sewed, and thought and smoked, and almost wept. I told Pringle she could go to a sergeants' ball with her beloved, and I dressed myself in tweed knickerbockers, long stockings and moccasins, a Norfolk jacket and a fur cap. I rolled up my hair and put on a short curly wig, light brown, and a light brown moustache. Where did I get all these luxuries?—never mind. Then I locked the door, put the key in my pocket, after looking at myself in the glass with rapture. I crept down the back stairs and stepped out into the night and the storm, feeling — *a man*.

The cold was intense and the wind cut like whip lashes; the snow was thick, fine, and powdery; it was drifting down the street and the wind was yelling round the houses; the grey troopers were out like the marauders they are. I put on my

snow-shoes and tramped off. The streets were deserted, the electric lights out, and I walked and walked, loving the battle, the cold, the exertion, and the whirling snow, the keen deadly cuts of the wind. I was getting tired, so I turned to come back, and I faced the full frenzy of the storm; but where was I? I didn't know. Which way I had come or which I should go, alas! I knew neither. I struggled — I walked. The snow, the drift whirled round me; my legs were so tired and my feet so heavy I could hardly crawl, and I just began to feel sleepy, and some lovely music — the music of heaven — sounded clearly in my ears. And then I fainted or fell asleep, and the next thing I knew I was in a sleigh. We were driving in at a brightly lighted gate. Some one lifted me out and carried me into a room with a big fire and a very bright light.

“He'll be all right soon,” said my rescuer, in an unpleasantly familiar voice, and I lay absolutely at peace and at rest.

Who had found me?

Some one gave me a cup of steaming hot coffee. I was half awake and half unconscious; happy, joyous dreams floated through my brain, but I can't tell them.

By-and-by I realised that some one was looking at me. I tried to sit up. There, staring at me, was Colonel Gore. *I was in his quarters in barracks; he had rescued me.* I grew hot and cold with shame, for I was wearing man's clothes and he thought me a man — had he not spoken of me as *he*? How could I get away without betraying myself by my voice? Could I pretend to be deaf and dumb? I tried to rise. He did not speak; he came nearer; he had a photograph in his hand; he gazed at it and at me. "For God's sake, tell me your name," he gasped. "You are — this — you are — you look like this photograph." Here I fainted.

The best thing I could do! When I came to, I lay in a pool of water. My wig was off — had he been shaking me?

My moustache was gone — had he been kissing me, or did I imagine that? He stood beside me like a judge about to assume the black cap and to decorate me with it.

“Gay!” he said.

And I wept, howled and sobbed, and murmured:

“I want to go home; where is Pringle?”

“What are you doing in these clothes? Why are you dressed like a man?”

“I went for a walk; I was stifled. Women’s clothes are a nuisance in snow,” I began glibly. “I thought it would be all right; I thought no one would see me.” I was growing incoherent. I gazed at my indecently exposed legs, and shame unutterable turned me purple with horror. I yearned for a skirt, for a rug, for a frill. I tell you that even a knitted antimacassar, any drapery thrown over me, would have filled me with courage. I don’t wonder that savages wear fringes.

“Let me go; oh! let me go,” I begged.

“I very nearly took you to the mess,” he said, sepulchrally.

I laughed — laughed and cried.

“Don’t, don’t cry!” he said. “You need not explain now; you are not fit to talk to-night. I will go to the hotel and get you a cloak — something to wear. I will order a sleigh and take you back. You are all right now; be quite happy and rest. How did you get out of the hotel without being seen? You must go in by the front door and be seen.”

“Pringle has gone out. I have the key of my room,” I gasped, meekly.

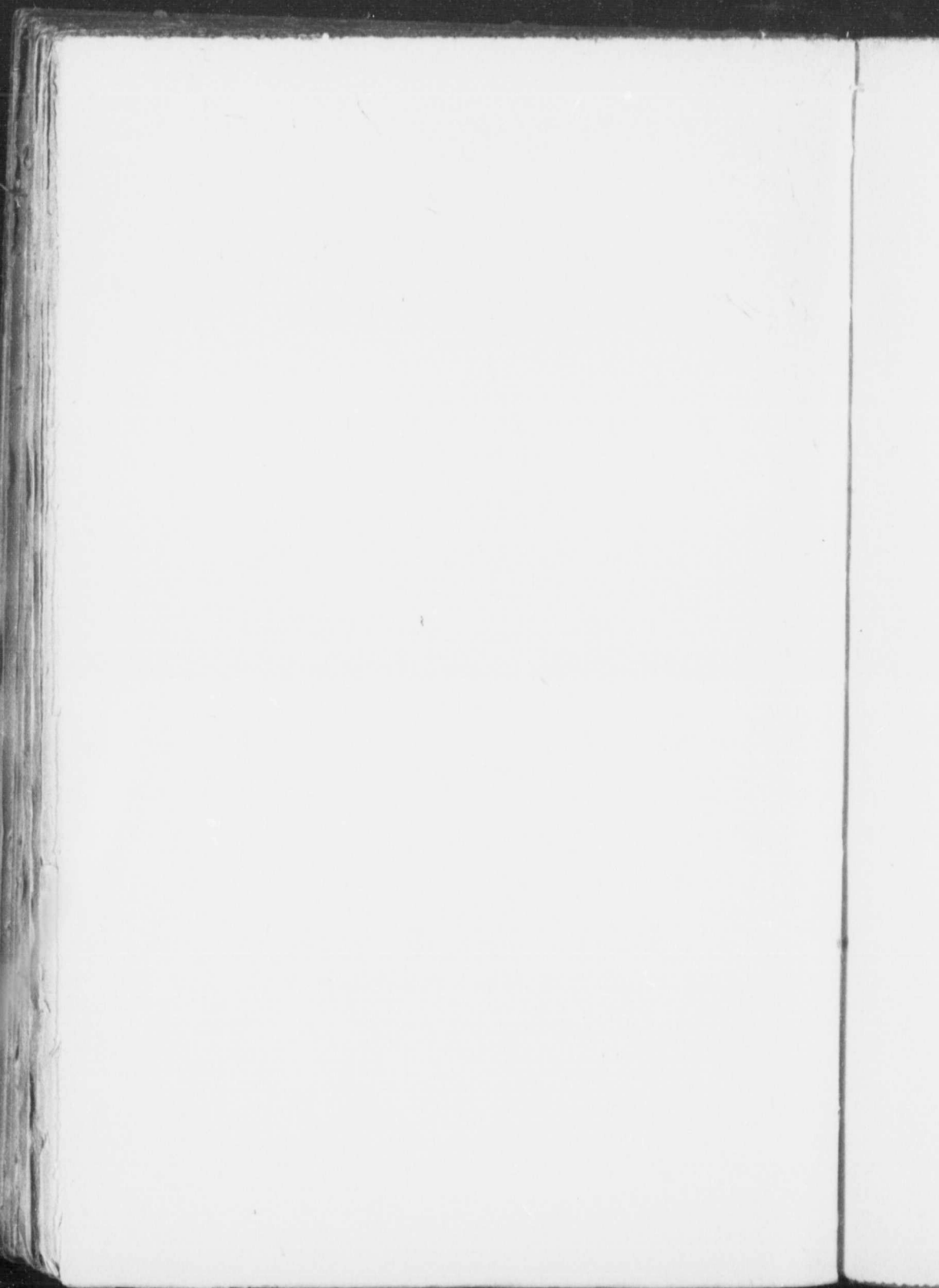
“Give it me; I’ll go and get you a cloak and a hat and something to wear. I’ll see the chambermaid and tell her you got wet in the snow. Don’t cry, don’t cry, Gay!” in a tone of anguish, no doubt well simulated.

The clock strikes two. I am cold and tired. I will tell you more to-morrow.

Yours ever and ever,

GAY.

TENTH LETTER



I SAT alone in the funny little room with its queer furniture. The absence of anything frivolous struck me, there was not even one photograph of a woman. I felt — well, awful; you can imagine that. I longed for the hotel, for my own room, and I thought of running away before he came back, but I abandoned that. How could I enter the King's Hotel arrayed in knickerbockers, and face the servants in my own hair, without my wig, my moustache, and my linen collar? For I had omitted nothing to make the picture complete.

There were two or three photographs of men lying about — hard, stern-faced men that he particularly affects; men who are as unyielding as stone. They think of soldiering always, and live their lives without any frills — lines of gold



braid are their only joy. One frame was heavy. I touched it. There was a spring; it opened, and inside there were two photographs — an ingenious idea, no doubt invented by my System to save weight and room in packing. He is very keen on such details.

The two photographs were of me — one head and shoulders, one full length in my wedding-gown. I laughed when I saw them. When the full-length one was taken, Colonel Gore hovered so near me that half of him, just a shadowy outline as he moved, is visible beside my white gown.

I felt faint and weary and lay down on his sofa. To seek repose thereon would rapidly drive me to bed; it was hard, lumpy, and slippery; a most uncomfortable resting-place. Then I thumped the apologies for cushions, when my heart stood still with fear; *horrible, awful numbness seized me.* Above the noise of the wind and the rattle of the snow outside,

I heard a voice. It was Mr. Morgan's. What would happen if he saw me? In such clothes — at night — alone. What would Sir Anthony say and do when he heard of this mad escapade, this worse than mad freak of mine? Just then a vision of life's peaceful road in the character of Lady Erskine looked blissful to my lonely mind; it seemed to be my one ungratified longing, and now I should never realise it.

“Colonel Gore has gone out, sir.” It was Colonel Gore's servant speaking.

“Oh, well, I have an important message for him from the General. I will go in and wait,” said Mr. Morgan.

I sought for a hiding-place; there was none; not a cupboard, not a corner. Colonel Gore's bedroom. I rushed into it, sat down on his boots, knocked my head against the wall — it was pitch dark — then I crawled under the bed. There I lay — under the bed in a barrack room — giggling hysterically, and shivering

with nervousness and cold. Oh that checked suit! how it had betrayed my confidence. To begin with, it was so tight and so thin that the floor hurt my bones. Be thankful for the folds of a skirt; they do keep one from becoming petrified and numb.

It was frightfully stuffy and frightfully uncomfortable under that bed. I would have given anything to have been able to put on a flannel petticoat.

I heard him stamping about in the other room. He said "Damn" once or twice, and I nearly cried, "Hooray! I agree with you." It made my misfortunes more bearable when I knew some one else was quite as uncomfortable. Then I heard him say, "By Jove!" I sat up suddenly and bumped my head, and the bed rattled. He opened the door. "No one here!" he muttered. "Miss Vandeleur, of all people!"

*He had seen my photographs. I must have left the case open.* I rolled about,

stuffing my handkerchief into my mouth to keep from crying out.

I was having a nice time, and I had got myself into a pretty mess.

I heard Colonel Gore outside.

To my joy his voice sounded horror-stricken.

“Mr. Morgan waiting for me? What has become of the other gentleman?”

“I don’t know, sir; I suppose he is there too.”

“And without his wig,” murmured Colonel Gore, sadly.

I laughed then. Oh! if only this little room had a door leading into anywhere — into a cellar, a pigsty — but it had one entrance only.

“I’ll leave this coat here,” said the System, firmly; “you had better go home now.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“How are you, Morgan?” his voice sounded austere. Ugh, how cold I was!

And then Mr. Morgan repeated his

message — something about a march, an attack, and guns and forts — while I lay and shivered.

The soothing smell of smoke was wafted to me. How I longed to smoke!

“What good photographs of Miss Vandeleur,” said Mr. Morgan. “Private theatricals, I suppose, as she wears a wedding-gown?”

“They are photographs of my wife, not of Miss Vandeleur,” and his voice was hard and cold. I think his eyes must have looked pretty nasty.

“Oh! I did n’t know. I beg your pardon.”

“She is like Miss Vandeleur,” said the System, calmly; “but Miss Vandeleur’s face is harder.”

At last Mr. Morgan went and I crawled out; dusty, dishevelled, and deadly cold, I staggered into the sitting-room.

“Why did you keep him so long? I have been under your bed.”

“Gay!” and he put his arm round

A Detached Pirate 131

me. I was tired and faint and ill. What a horrible situation to be in — looking like that, too. To have been hiding under the bed of the man who had divorced me. Oh, I felt a fool ; but his arms were so strong, I looked like a shrinking little boy — so slight — and I suppose he felt sorry for me.

“Where’s my coat?” I demanded at last.

“I brought it and your hat. I managed most beautifully, and now you must have some hot coffee. I’ll make it; I am awfully good at it,” with quite the jovialness of a boy. What a nice pal he makes when he is cheerful.

“I was worried to death about you,” he said, “when my servant told me Morgan was here. I did not know what had become of you, or where you were, and I did n’t dare ask. And you were so uncomfortable, so cold in my room.”

“Under your bed,” I said, dolefully.

“Poor —— ” He was going to say

a word beginning with a "d," but he did n't. "Poor soul," he substituted. He never said, as he certainly would have said in the old days, "It was all your own fault."

We drank our coffee with a well-simulated gaiety, and then he told me that he had ordered a sleigh to be outside the barrack-gates at eleven.

"I feel as if it were four o'clock in the morning," I remarked, feebly.

I put on the long cloak and the hat he had brought me, and we drove slowly to the hotel. The roads were very bad, it had snowed so much, so our progress was slow. The chariot, a sort of glass coach on runners, tilted and wobbled and shook, and he put his arm round me — merely for my protection and comfort, he carefully informed me, in case I should fall and knock my face against the sides of the sleigh.

"I will see you to-morrow," he remarked, as we parted.

A Detached Pirate 133

“Oh, you are not going to scold me?” I cried, involuntarily, forgetting the strained and unusual position we are in.

“No, of course not,” he remarked hastily; “but I want to have one or two things cleared up.”

I gave him my hand; he pressed it, and I went to my room.

Never in all my life was I so glad to see it again, and how I rejoiced Pringle was out.

I took off my garments and buried them in the recesses of my locked private trunk. Then I made some tea and wrote half of this letter to you. I laugh now when I remember the situation and my cramped legs; but I think, of all terrifying positions, life without a skirt would be the worst possible.

I have just heard from Colonel Gore; he has had to go to York Redoubt, and will call on me on Sunday. This is only Wednesday. I am glad he is not coming until Sunday, and yet I am sorry.



I'd like to get it over. Sir Anthony is much better; he is coming here this afternoon.

Well, he has been — Sir Anthony, I mean. He looks wan and white, and we had heavenly muffins for tea. I have trained the cook how to do them. He urged me to say yes, and to consent to marry him at once.

I felt mean and small and despicable. Oh! what comfort a skirt lined with silk gives! If I had had on my knickerbockers, I should have lain down and howled.

“I can't say anything until you know my story.”

“I don't want to know it. I am tired of stories and tragedies, and I want you and love. You came like a nymph” (I was more like one last night, I thought) “from the sea, and I love you. If you honour me by giving me charge of your future, I shall be happy indeed;” and so I said “Yes,” and he kissed me. I shuddered a little, but he liked it. I think,

A Detached Pirate 135

in his heart, he felt a little—well, I won't tell you my thoughts; you always tell me that I think the worst of every one. He has lots of money, and I am going to be married soon; but he must know, before he takes the final fence, that I am a divorced woman; in fact, I will tell him the whole story! And now I will tell it to you, dear heart, as I have so often promised to do.

You know I was married young—most women are, I believe; they are frequently misunderstood, and mostly married from the school-room. But I really was twenty, and now I am nearly twenty-four. The man from Borneo was the beginning, the night he rang the dirge of my happiness—perhaps I should say rang the dirge of divorce. Well, we lived in a flat, and the System was dull, morose, reproachful in look. Taciturn at dinner, grumpy at breakfast, he took to staying out for lunch, though, before, he always came home to it.

Then I sought for mischief. I tried everything. I made myself cheap. I dressed to please him. I talked to please him. He was as numb as the sphinx, and so I grew desperate and tried to find a devil to fight his devil, or, rather, to amuse the little devil in me.

Then I thought of Charlie. Before I married, we, my cousins and I, had adored a man named Charlie — just a silly school-girl's adoration for a man one never meets. I raked him out and displayed him in every way; but the best of it is, there never was any Charlie Woodward. He never existed. The rooms in Jermyn Street were taken by me dressed up as Charlie, and so — well, I'll explain tomorrow. You will say it can't be. It can, and so I'll tell you, *for it was*. Well, here's luck? Drink to the health of the future Lady Erskine.

Yours ever,

GAY.

I shan't tell Sir Anthony anything.

ELEVENTH LETTER



XI

*My Dearest, —*

I AM going to relate my past now. Get your screen ready to hide your blushes. Well, as you know, Colonel Gore got a good billet at the War Office, and I grew very dull. I tramped London; I saw the weirdest places; I had the wildest adventures, until, at last, playing the part of a woman was so cumbersome to my development ( I am quoting the new woman's jargon now ) that I decided to be a man. Fortunately it was November, and I am slight. How I could have carried out my design in long light evenings with a fat figure, I know not. I sought a man's clothing establishment, and asked for garments for private theatricals. They were all ready made and all cut the same shape, and I grew wildly embarrassed when they

suggested I should put myself into the garments to see if they would fit. I carried a suit off in triumph without trying it on. My face was burning; even my nose shone with reflected guilt. But when I did get into them, I looked so nice — I really did — I was quite enraptured with my own appearance. I began to go out at night. I went to music-halls, to plays, and always got home unseen, unnoticed. At last it seemed to me it was too dangerous to be going in and out of my husband's abode dressed in man's garments. He or the servants were bound to discover me and put a stop to it.

One dark afternoon, being specially venturesome, I wandered round Jermyn Street. How lovely it is to be a boy — nobody looks at a boy; a woman is always stared at, and I hate it. I saw a label in a window: "Furnished chambers to let." The brilliant idea seized me; I would take them.

The housekeeper was fat and suspi-

## A Detached Pirate 141

cious, but grew amiable when I paid a quarter's rent in advance. I dined there and went off to one of the big tailors in the Hampstead Road, where I bought a new suit — those checked ones; knickerbockers this time — the first suit were trousers. For the next three months I had a glorious time of freedom, of seeing London. Alas! regardless of my doom, I played. I always drove to my chambers in Jermyn Street dressed as a woman. It never occurred to me that I was watched; that the housekeeper imagined me a guest of Mr. Woodward's; that a detective followed me there and followed me home. I left some of my garments in Charlie Woodward's bedroom — a powder-puff and various other things marked with my name. Twice I lost the latchkey of my chambers, so I went back to the flat, and sneaked in without any one seeing me, as I thought, in my ignorance. Well, one morning Colonel Gore came in; his face looked grey and lined; his



voice was hard. He wasted no time in civil preliminaries.

“I have had you watched by a detective. I have found out all about your friendship with this Mr. Woodward. Your audacity in bringing him to your home is too scandalous for me to overlook. I might have forgiven the rest, if you had refrained from that, this last insult to me. Now my evidence is complete. I have applied for a divorce. The housekeeper, the detective, all can bear witness. You had better see Mr. Woodward and get him to marry you as soon as it is possible. Have you nothing to say? No excuse? No ——”

I interrupted him.

“You left me alone. You cared nothing for me. I am young; I was lonely. I have no excuse to offer you.”

“I loved you once,” he said, slowly.

“Love! you don’t know what it means. I am glad to be free,” I said.

“I shall leave here to-day.”

And I did.

Charlie's landlady sighed for him in vain. He never went back to Jermyn Street. And you know the rest.

I stayed in Porchester Terrace, and Colonel Gore divorced me. He moved heaven and earth to find Charlie Woodward, who was branded as a coward and a villain — and it was only I.

At first I meant to tell ; then it seemed a good way of getting rid of Colonel Gore. I knew I had done nothing wrong and he was tired of me. You despise me. If he had seemed to believe in me ; if he had — well, if he had been interested in me from the beginning ; but he was n't, so all is said.

That dream is over ; those days are done. I was always inclined to be flippant when I should have been serious. Now he is coming to see me. Let him come.

. . . . .  
He has gone.

He — well, he is a hard man, and I like blue eyes. Sir Anthony's are brown.

How can I tell you our conversation? He inquired after my health, and then he said suddenly :

“ I believe we are not divorced.”

As you know, my voice is *never* shrill ; indeed the man from Borneo often called me “ his golden voiced one ; ” but I was vehement — I *was* shrill ; and I said — I almost screamed :

“ What ? ”

“ May I take off my coat ? ”

He wore the heavy military coat trimmed with fur, for it was only twelve o'clock in the morning and he was in uniform. He spoke very quietly ; some file had toned down his emotions. I always thought of him as a primitive man, who swore when he was angry, and kissed a woman when he felt any of the impulses called love ; but evidently he has gained self-control.

“ You said —— ? ”

“ What I said does not matter. I want you to swear by all you hold sacred that

A Detached Pirate 145

Charlie Woodward exists. That you loved him and hated me."

Now, I did not want him to know the truth. And I could not swear a lie.

"The past is dead," I remarked; "let it rest. You got your divorce; we are free."

"I have been studying that photograph ever since I found you in the snow. Of course it is only a snapshot, but it looks more like a woman than a man."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Your imagination is great."

He took the photograph out of his pocket. The horrible checked suit blazed at me.

"Are you not glad to be free?" I asked.

"Not at the price of your good name."

"You cannot pay for that now. 'The sins that you do by two and two, you must pay for one by one.' No doubt I shall pay soon."

He rose and put on his coat.

"Can we not bury the past?" he asked.

“If you had said that before,” I answered, “I would have loved you until death; but now — now I am cold; I am dead; I am free.”

“Let us bury it together.”

“No! You go your way and I will go mine. I killed my love and buried it at Life’s cross-roads, in a suicide’s grave. Besides, how can a photograph of a checked suit whitewash a woman?”

“I think this can.”

Why had he been resigned in days of yore? A devil would have kept me; the resignation of the saint let me go.

He threw the photograph at me.

“Look at the wrist.”

I glanced at it — at my own; there was a bangle; it was a twisted Canadian canoe — the light had caught it and it shone brightly. It had been given me by my father when I was very little, and as it is very uncommon, I always wear it.

“There might be another bangle.”

“Never,” he answered. “You must

have hated me to hold your tongue so well. To face shame, loss of position, everything, just to get rid of a man. I can't understand it at all."

"How do you know I did not do it for love of a man?"

"I believe you did not, do not, love any one. I have watched you often, when you have been talking. You are good because you are cold. Most cold women value position, too," he added.

"Who would respect the virtue which is reflectively created by necessity?" I demanded.

He did not answer.

"Promise me, if you are in trouble, I may help you; if you want anything, I may get it for you."

"I am going to marry Sir Anthony."

"You are going to marry him?" he asked, incredulously; and then eagerly, "Does he know the story?"

"Not yet. I shall tell him. Of course, your name will not be mentioned."

“I don't care if it is. I shall take care of you, whether you like it or not,” and he departed, banging the door. He is human anyway. He was quite different. I liked him much better.

Now to face Sir Anthony and the explanation. Poor little Past. How I have to dig you up from where you lie sleeping, and dress you in emotions and motives. Sir Anthony shall know the worst of me, and then he can take me or leave me.

There has been a great deal of noise in the hotel this morning—luggage and very heavy boxes being carried up and down the stairs. The mail is in; I wait for a letter from you. I am going for a walk on snow-shoes down to the big pine woods where the trees murmur and whisper, and where I can feel young and gay. I can't make the System out—his stern manner, his occasional lapses into desperate earnest. Is he lonely? Does he want his housekeeper back? No, for he can get Miss Kitson.

A Detached Pirate 149

I came home to lunch, and as I passed through the hall, in the bar, where most of the idle men congregate, I heard a voice—a rasping, jovial voice—that made my flesh shrivel as if alum had been poured over me. My dear Vera, it was the man from Borneo.

What on earth has driven him here?

Yours ever,

GAY.





TWELFTH LETTER



## XII

*Soul of My Soul, —*

I AM terrified. I dare not move, except by the back stairs. I am afraid to go out in the daylight; I shiver when any one knocks at my door. I have all my meals brought up to me, and I am sad and lonely.

To make it worse, Sir Anthony has gone away to Ottawa to see Lord Loftus.

I wonder what you will say when you get my letter about Charlie; will you believe me or not? Can you imagine a woman, driven by desperation and hatred, clasping shame to her heart to be free? Perhaps you can't. Neither can I, in the cool daylight of reflection, which shows up all the crowsfeet in my mind, and tells me that I am not a detached pirate, but only a woman who has no one to kiss her on the cheek for courage, no one to greet

her when she comes home. You got my letter, and you are nearing the top of the mountain where fame stands — that cold white woman with the burning lips. Well, the sting of life is regret ; and if I were brave, it would spur me on to work, to do something to help those others ; but I am made of chiffon after all, and no doubt I shall vanish, when the crash comes, as those who have taken to the road (as I am supposed to have done) always do vanish.

But enough of my moralising. A detached pirate has no need of such a luxury. "Take and hold" is, or ought to be, my motto. Sir Anthony is on a good big liner with electric light and music, and, most important of all, with a pilot. My little ship is nearing the rocks, and I doubt whether there will be room for me on that liner with the red velvet (sticky stuff it is too) and the search-light. He does n't know my history yet.

A Detached Pirate 155

But from the future to the undivine present, which is the man from Borneo. I don't believe he can know that I am here; he may be doing a tour. If he once sees me or guesses I am within his reach, he will chase me; he will lay himself at my feet; he will do everything in his power to *make* me marry him. He considers himself merely a half-circle without me. I am the other half that he has yearned for since his youth. He is only flopping round the world, sliding but never rolling, with his personality incomplete. How gaily he could roll on if my half-circle were linked to his! I can hear you laugh and say, "Don't be alarmed; he will have forgotten you; there is nothing so potent as the divorce court for blotting out a man's recollections."

You can argue as much as you like. I have a presentiment, and presentiments never lie, that he is just as absurd, just as "appassionate furioso" as he ever was. Do

you remember that ridiculous name I gave him? It is the direction for the emotions in singing one of my songs, and on the next page comes "appassionate entusiasmo." He will be singing his song according to those orders when he knows I am here.

Last night Sir Anthony returned. Tonight he gives a dinner to introduce me as his future wife. Mr. Morgan has gone to kill moose with some youngster in the gunners; he won't be at the dinner. I have a heavenly gown—a satin that is white, that is dull pink, that is soft as pearls, shaded by pink chiffon; one strap on my arm of blood-red chiffon, and one of rubies across my shoulder, make my skin like cream; a wee fichu thrown round my bodice, of the same red, and a rosette to finish it, make my toilet complete. My skirt fits as if I had been poured into it, and it is very long and I am very slight. Thus arrayed, I start with the rosette of courage—is it

not the same colour as that of blood? — next my heart.

The dinner is over. It was a success ; no one was surprised ; every one drank my health and said nice things to me.

“ Sir Anthony is infatuated,” said Mrs. Goldsmith ; “ he looks at no one but you.”

I stayed rather late. Anthony makes a good lover, and you will not be surprised to hear that I did not dig up my past ; it is dirty work for an engaged woman dressed in white satin to bother with earth in a grave. I am a coward ; I am afraid of losing him. Once I jeered at the lives of those behind the laurustinus bushes. I would sometimes (at night and in the grey dawn, when my thoughts rush on me like a river) that I had always lived behind a bramble hedge.

I told Pringle not to sit up for me. She always leaves my spirit-kettle and tray ready, so that I can make myself a



cup of tea after I come in at night. If you don't let the tea stand too long, it is the most soothing drink possible just before one gets into bed without a book ; with a book one's eyes will never close.

I lighted the kettle, poked the fire, and began to smoke. My gown of beauty was tight, and I went to my bedroom, where there was also a fire, to get a tea-gown.

There, in a big chair by the fire, a chair that I had bought for myself and which is specially comfortable, sat or reclined Howard Morgan! I was too much surprised to say a word. The clock struck one. Of course you will say, "You screamed, rang the bell, and otherwise conducted yourself as a virtuous lady should." Not I—I wanted to know why he had come. I was wondering how I could get rid of him quietly, and fear—the fear of what he might know—gripped my heart and made me cold and tremble.





"My lady of the red rosette," he cried, and pointed to the badge on my gown. He threw his arms round me. I struggled; I did not dare scream. He tried to kiss me, but I shoved him away and the kiss fell on my neck. His lips burned. He had been drinking. How could I get him out?

"I can wait," he said. "Surely the kisses of your bought red mouth will be sweet. I will buy you, for you have your price just as sure as any and every woman has hers."

"How did you get here? How do you dare speak to me like that?"

"Dare?" and he laughed softly. "I dare anything for love."

"Love!" I retorted, forgetting the hour, forgetting everything except that there was going to be the hardest battle I had ever fought, and I'd die or win game — "possession you mean."

"It is all the same. What do men marry for? — possession. What do they

love for?—the same thing. Come, be reasonable. Listen to me. Sit down. I don't intend to go until you have heard me, and I mean to have that little talk now for which I told you on the steamer I would come, so you may as well be quiet. You can scream yourself hoarse, and be in the paper to-morrow just as well after I've said my say as before."

"You asked me to marry you on the steamer and I refused."

"Pardon me," with a wave of his hand. "I said I loved you."

"Marriage and love go together."

"Very seldom. According to your experience, marriage and the divorce court; love and a flat. There are isolated cases in life of course, but they have nothing to do with you. I have not come here to talk of isolation, but of you and me."

"I am going to marry Sir Anthony."

"That is only a statement. I assure you, you will never carry it out. I love

you and I mean to have you ; besides, I am Sir Anthony's heir. Do you think I would allow him to marry at all ? Do you think I will let him marry you ? — *Colonel Gore's divorced wife ! Never.*"

For one moment I lost my courage. I nearly cried. Then I braced myself up. The worst blow I ever had imagined had fallen on me. He knew, and I am an idiot not to have guessed it before.

"You saw my portrait in the *Morning Scorch* ?"

The ridiculous and the tragic ever chase each other.

"I recognised you the moment you walked down the saloon on board the *Canadian*, but I was not absolutely certain until I saw your photographs in Gore's rooms. If you will come with me to New York, I will settle one thousand pounds a year — pounds, mind, not dollars — on you. I will love you until I tire of you ; then you will have the money. Anyway you won't be Lady Erskine ; that would

be like putting a racehorse into a cab. Not one word of your former history shall ever cross my lips. Say 'yes' quickly. You're on the wrong side of the fence to refuse."

"With my past you have had nothing to do; with my future you will likewise have nothing. If I were to be the sort of woman you think me, I should choose a better man than you are. I am meat for your masters."

His face grew red. I could see I had touched him on the raw. For me to assume the garb of virtue for him would be like reciting Shakespeare in a public-house. Some men are like that, but I never knew it until lately.

"If you persist in your absurd refusal," he continued, "I shall tell all I know. I will hound you out of this and out of everywhere else. Your money won't last long. You see, I know all your affairs. Take me, give up Sir Anthony, and you will be happy; refuse me, and every

A Detached Pirate 163

one shall know what you are. Choose quickly, ruin or love?"

"Ruin!" I answered. I must have a little courage, Vera, somewhere. "Now go," I added.

"Go? — not I!"

I rushed out of my sitting-room. I heard a noise of men talking; surely some one would deliver me from him, and I did not care who the some one might chance to be. The corridor was lighted. I saw a door open, heard voices and sounds of revelry, and I met Colonel Gore!

I will tell you the rest to-morrow.

Yours always, Vera, lovingly,  
GAY.





THIRTEENTH LETTER



### XIII

**W**ELL, Vera dear, to resume my thrilling narrative, do you feel as if you were in a front stall at the Adelphi? I did not give Colonel Gore time to be offended, frightened, modest, or anything. I just dragged him into my bedroom. He resisted slightly—dragged is a good word.

“Take him away,” I said, and I pointed to Howard Morgan, who sat up, looking rather surprised, and murmured:

“I am going.”

Colonel Gore's face was a study. He gripped Mr. Morgan by the shoulder, and gently drew him to the door; they were more like prisoner and captive than two friends. By my sitting-room door they stopped, and Colonel Gore said:

“ I have been dining with an old school friend ; Morgan also has been dining. You may be quite sure he mistook your room for the bar, shall I say — bar, Morgan ? Yes, for the bar.”

And this extraordinary pair walked down the stairs together. They did not keep step, and Colonel Gore marched like a policeman leading an unwilling captive.

I have had my wish. I have played and am playing in drama, but I would that it were comedy. Besides, there is no applause. I am growing older, but I am not acquiring more sense — common sense, as it is erroneously called ; it is most uncommon, and is an inherited blessing accompanied by an income. Rudeness and unpleasant candour are often mistaken for it.

It is terrible to be twenty-four with a past, a heart, and no money. Tell me something comforting when next you write, dearest, for my little ship is drift-

A Detached Pirate 169

ing away from the path of the liner and the black flag flies tremulously. I shall have to pull it down and substitute the red one of courage.

I have just been reading a book by a woman, railing against matrimony. What a confounded fool! — excuse strong language. Why don't women take liver pills when they begin to be discontented, or ride? I wonder if these disillusioned ladies ever realise how trying their husbands must find them? I fancy they never analyse a man's sentiments, though they waste time enough on their own.

I have learned to skate, to waltz, to dance the lancers. Think of it. The motion is perfectly glorious, the music heavenly. We dance twice a week, and now are getting ready for the carnival. That, my ignorant Englishwoman, consists of a fancy dress ball on the ice. I am going as a poppy. You laugh. Poppies in winter. My dress, which has

cost a pretty penny in New York, is made of velvet. I am a double poppy, and the bright red velvet is shaded and cut in petals up to my waist. It is made princess; the waist line is plain; three petals form the bodice, and one poppy crowns my "wood-nymph hair." I quote Sir Anthony. The dress is very short; shaded soft frills of silk show when I waltz, and my stockings are pale green, so are my boots. My hair hangs loose and curly. It is a triumph. My banking account is pretty low. The day of my departure draweth near, and soon I shall have to make tracks for some vast city to earn my bread.

I can see your face of horror. Well, my dear, let me alone. I am making up for my dull youth, and a pirate is ever gay to-day; to-morrow may never dawn.

The System has just been here. We met with great amiability. He was somewhat nervous. I felt very grateful and showed it.

“Have you vanquished my enemy?” I inquired.

“I have muzzled him.”

“How?” I asked.

“You may as well know. I happen to possess a little information about him. He is married. If Sir Anthony knew to whom, he would leave his money elsewhere.”

“Am I safe?” I inquired.

“For a time, yes.”

“I would not have asked your assistance,” I said, “but you were the first man I saw, and I needed a man’s strong arm to put him out.”

“You needed a man strong enough to hold his tongue,” he answered. “What would have been the result if you had summoned any man to your aid? He would have sworn secrecy, have confided in every man at the club the next evening, and all the women would have known and probably have cut you the morning after.”



"Then I can trust you?"

"Absolutely."

"You don't ask what Mr. Morgan had come to say to me."

"I don't care to know. If you had liked his conversation, I suppose you would not have turned him out, nor would he have sworn so vilely."

Then he went away. How snubbed and small I felt after that plain hint that I can go my own way. He takes no interest in me. Why should he? asks my humble mind. He never did, answers my practical one. For a husband who has divorced his wife to continue to take an interest in her welfare, is to proclaim him — perhaps an angel.

So I have time to enjoy my carnival before Lent. To dance my few dances and hear a few more pretty speeches before the curtain comes down. To tell you the truth, I am not unhappy nor worried. I take each day as it comes,

A Detached Pirate 173

and the danger of discovery is rather intoxicating.

The man from Borneo is still here. I wear a thick veil and never go in or out except by the back stairs.

I will chance fate.

If a blow is coming, let it come.

We are going to practise the serpent march for the carnival to-night. Mr. Walters is my partner. He skates beautifully, and Mrs. L'Esterre leads us all; and who do you suppose is going to dance with her? Mr. de la Bère. He is the hero of the driving-tour episode. He is a French Canadian, and his grandmother was a squaw! That accounts for the Indian in him. He is strong and lithe, and she—well she hardly looks at him, but people are beginning to talk about her. The women hate her; she is too cold, too indifferent; and they think her indifference is pretence. Her husband is a snake. What am I going to do about Sir Anthony? Cry to the housetops and

the telephones that I am a divorced woman? Not yet — not yet!

Is it fair? Has the judge at the divorce court unmarried me? Bah! I will not reflect. When I take my room, my two-pair back, and live on a pound a week, there will be time for much reflection; and if I become Lady Erskine, there will not be time for any. Either way, whatever is, will be best. So much for my philosophy. I may do foolish things, but I am not going to be weak-minded enough to regret them. The woman who regrets always tells and makes others miserable.

Mrs. L'Esterre has come to stay with me, and we have been to many little pious teas in little pious houses. Nice little white houses with clean papers and none to adventure, none to fight; just sitting down to wait for what? If I lived that life I should have to run up and down and pretend to be a steam-engine, to create an excitement. Waiting for the judg-

A Detached Pirate 175

ment day is dull work, and I would like to hear a few trumpets in life before I hear the last one of death. Now, if I had a house in the woods, miles away from every one, that would appeal to my soul. Think of the possibilities of wolves and bears! Think of the glorious summer, with the wind blowing over the swamp lands and the Indian pears in blossom, the miles and miles of country over which one could wander and be lord! In autumn here, in the long still days, one feels lonely, for the sun and the frost do battle for this mysterious land; until suddenly, the king, the monarch, whose horses are the north wind, who marches with Fate and Time, crushes the summer, having first sent his vanguard to paint the leaves scarlet, yellow, and orange. They shout their death song to the mad music of colour, for is not colour a song, just as much as music? I hope, by this time, you have ceased to apply the ordinary rules of life to me; that you are not

shocked because of the copy-book maxims I have outraged. Life is not a copy-book.

Just as I was writing the System appeared. He has ceased to be conversational. He looked as if he had news of dire import.

“Do you know the man from Borneo is here?” he asked.

“He has n’t seen me,” I retorted.

“No; but he will. Now let me advise you to leave this place and go back to England.”

I was thinking of it, but his suggestion made me long to throw something at him, and I immediately decided to stay, to face everything rather than take his advice.

“I have an aunt,” he continued (I can imagine his aunt—at a distance, thank heaven), “who would be glad to have you to stay until you found something to do, and you would be out of the way of all trouble and ——”

"I am not going away," I interrupted. "Why should I? I am going to marry Sir Anthony."

By-the-by, I forgot to tell you that he comes every day to see me. He always says the same things. He loves me; I look charming. He is most amiable, his manner divine, his attentions unobtrusively offered; but perhaps, if he were worse, if he were less charming, I might love him.

"I know," said Colonel Gore, "I know; but I would not risk that. Why won't you explain everything to me? Why do you refuse to clear up this mystery? *I am certain there was no Charlie.*" He whispered this, but it sounded in my ears like a shout.

"Sir Anthony Erskine," said the bell boy, throwing open the door with a flourish.

"Ah! Gore," said Sir Anthony, cheerfully. "How are you?" and turned to me with a smile of possession.

"Very well," I replied. "Colonel Gore is telling me to go and live quietly. He thinks this mad career of gaiety is too much for me."

Sir Anthony smiled.

"I hope soon to take you away," he said.

Did I hear the System murmur something faintly?

"I must go now," he said. Then he turned to me. "You are quite sure, Miss Vandeleur, that you have no message for my aunt? I shall write to her to-day."

"I have no message," I said. "I have no use for aunts," playfully, with a glance at Sir Anthony. "I shall soon have——"

"A husband," he interrupted.

"My modesty forbade my mentioning it," I replied, still playfully. Then the System said good-bye and took my hand. His eyes seemed to be depressed. He has very expressive eyes.

I followed him into the dreary hotel corridor.

A Detached Pirate 179

“Why do you say such things?”

“What things?” I demanded.

Why do men never understand? They want their pictures in such lurid colours. Only a weak man really understands a woman's impulses, moods — call them by what name you like — and that man would never appeal to me.

“Good-bye,” I said, cheerfully, and went back to Sir Anthony. I shall marry him and never tell him the truth about myself. When he finds out — well, until the dawn of that day, I shall be happy.

Thine,

GAY.

The man from Borneo has gone.  
Hooray!





FOURTEENTH LETTER



XIV

*Dearest Vera,—*

**Y**OU are shocked ; you are horrified. You are all things, and simply because of a postscript in which I said I meant to marry Sir Anthony. What you will be when you get my letter containing the whole history of Charlie, I don't know. You have made the usual mistake, my dear, in taking me for what I said I am. You should never believe in the virtues which a man or a woman announces he or she possesses. If a woman says she is modest, you may be perfectly certain that she is a bold-faced jig ; for, of course, we none of us are very intimate with our virtues, but our vices are our constant companions. And so you are annoyed with me, because I once said "a divorced woman who marries again is quite shameless." Forget what I

said. I have forgotten everything. You say that there is only one man in the world I should marry, and his name you don't know. Even if I am heart-broken by his cowardice, I am married to him, as you and all the others of your creed agree. Well, you will get my letters and you will wonder and think me perhaps worse, perhaps better. I made no defence when the System exhibited our want of unity to the world. How on earth did they get my photograph in the *Morning Scorchers*? I suppose some one stole it from my flat. I wish I were a good woman, for now I long to wipe off my past from life's slate. And yet I suppose, if I had nothing to regret, I should regret that. I am in the arena, and if the wild beasts tear me, or if I get stained, I can't help it. To keep one's garments white is an impossibility. Ah! Vera, I may be weak-minded, but I wish I had.

Mrs. L'Esterre is staying with me. I am glad, for she is human and I can't

A Detached Pirate 185

bear living with ghosts. When I am alone I see them. Mr. L'Esterre is also an attaché. He comes frequently; he is trying to construct a midnight passion for me. I call it midnight, because — well, I leave that to your intelligence.

This is the night of my ball. I have been so busy about it. Sir Anthony's assistance with the invitations has been delightful, and he is going to help me to receive the guests. I sent the System a card, but, needless to say, he has refused my invitation.

I had an awfully good time at the carnival, and my dress was perfectly lovely — so becoming and so delightful to skate in.

Sir Anthony did not skate; he stood watching me. He loves me — there is no doubt about that; and I — well, I am fond of him, and if I keep that little corner of my mind shut up, I can drift on pleasantly, and corners are always awkward things.

The only spectator who made me feel unhappy was the man from Borneo. I did not see him until the end of the serpent dance, and if he recognised me, he did not show it. Probably he has forgotten me. Men always can forget. They are delightful philosophers when their passions are not strong.

Sir Anthony has got lovely family jewels. He has sent for them to give me, and my engagement ring is a blaze, just like the northern lights.

Mr. Morgan is evidently vanquished. He came here yesterday with some flowers from Sir Anthony; we met on neutral ground. I was very stiff and dignified and he most polite.

"I receive you as Sir Anthony's messenger," I said, when he was shown in.

"I have to apologise for my remarks the other night."

And I replied, "I shall forget them."

But I have not done with that man yet. I feel it in my bones that he will

A Detached Pirate 187

appear again in a way I shan't like. Perhaps I am too apprehensive ; perhaps my liver is out of order.

AFTER THE BALL.

How delightful to be taken care of! The sun, moon, and stars were at my feet, Sir Anthony looked after me with the practicalness of the new husband (why do they do their work better when they are unused to it?) and the tenderness of a lover.

I must say that once, dearest, my courage left me.

It was late, and I had shaken hands with the last arrival, feeling a weariness that made me glad I had decked myself with my china-pot complexion, and could not look pale nor tired. Sir Anthony was by me and we were talking of the prosaic subject of the colour of the new furniture for the drawing-room.

“Darling,” he had said, for he grows more lover-like, “choose your own colours.”



“Dull red pink — no blue,” I answered.

“Little woman, you can have it striped if you like, like ice-creams.” I laughed and looked up.

“Would you mind, Anthony,” with a pause before his name, “getting my scent-bottle from Pringle? She has it in the dressing-room.”

He obeyed at once.

Thank goodness my colour was stationary — coming in at the door, led by Mr. Morgan, and looking even more “*appassionato furioso*” than usual, was the man from Borneo.

“I think you have met Mr. Maul,” said Howard Morgan.

How I hated him!

The man from Borneo took my hand, and said, softly:

“Are they cruel to you? I have come to rescue you from all this. I am your deliverer.”

So that is his *rôle*. I nearly laughed. He is quite capable of carrying me off on

a fire-engine, or of doing any mad thing to get possession of me. Why do not the authorities banish men who have had sun-stroke to the uttermost parts of the earth? He looked so ridiculously amorous, so full of importance, yet so kind.

“Are you come in peace or in war?” I cried.

“In love,” he answered.

That is much more dangerous than either, I know; still, he never surprises me, for I am aware what a firebrand he is — his emotions are absolutely ungovernable, his actions inspired by the devil. I am sure of that.

“I met Mr. Morgan at the club. I told him I was looking for you.”

Looking for me! Worse and worse. At any moment the future autocrat of my destiny might return, and I would not introduce him to this past lover of mine. I must hear the worst. I said, calmly:

“I am very glad to see you. Come, take me to have an ice, to somewhere quiet, where we can talk.”

His eyes glowed with rapture, and we strolled downstairs, fortunately without meeting Anthony.

"How did you explain to Mr. Morgan your anxiety to find me? By what name did you call me?"

"Mrs. Gore. But," he continued hastily, "I know you are not here as Mrs. Gore. I know you have thrown off that man's name, as you should have done long ago, brave darling, that you are! I was talking to Mr. Morgan, and I said that if there is one man on God's earth I hate," then he clenched his teeth, as if he were a little dog growling, "that man is Colonel Gore."

"Have you mentioned the same thing to many people?" I asked, feeling that fate had dealt me its worst blow.

"Not to very many. Then, of course," he proceeded with great cheerfulness, "Morgan asked, 'Why do you hate him?'" and I said, "Because I love his wife, whom he divorced. Mrs. Gore

A Detached Pirate 191

is an angel and should be in Paradise' (I wish I was). You see, I always talk and dream and think of you as my saint."

Worse and worse. When a man glorifies a woman into a saint, he always wants to put her in a shrine, that he may worship there alone.

"I thought," continued he, "that I saw you last night at the carnival, and so I said, 'I thought I saw Mrs. Gore skating at the carnival last night, but it must have been only a dream.' But Morgan said, 'Oh! dear, no. She was there.' Then I sprang to my feet, and caught him by the collar and said, 'What! tell me again.' All the men in the room sprang to their feet too, and we had quite a scene," he observed complacently, "for I think I nearly choked Morgan. Then that scoundrel Gore came in, and by that time I had let go Morgan's collar, so, of course, we had to be quiet, for Gore always hated me; and Morgan

whispered that you were giving a ball, and called yourself Miss Vandeleur now. No one heard him, I assure you. Your secret is safe with me. Did you know I was coming here? What luck that I came after you!"

Luck! ye gods!

"I came away from England," I said, "to make a new life for myself, to forget all the past."

"You are engaged to be married to Sir Anthony Erskine?"

"Yes."

"Look here, marry me. I love you. I forgot how madly until I saw you again. I would be so good to you. Oh! my dearest, my love, my ——"

"I must go," I cried, hurriedly. "I must go back."

"When may I see you? Where shall we meet alone? Let it be soon."

"Come to tea to-morrow," I murmured. "But if you betray me!"

"Why should I? I love you."

A Detached Pirate 193

And so we went back to the music ;  
they were playing a *pas de quatre*. Sir  
Anthony was looking into vacancy.

I wonder into how many ears the man  
from Borneo has poured the tale of his  
hopeless and hopeful passion.

"I won't drink any more to-night," he  
muttered, as my rightful owner offered  
me his arm.

"Don't," I whispered.

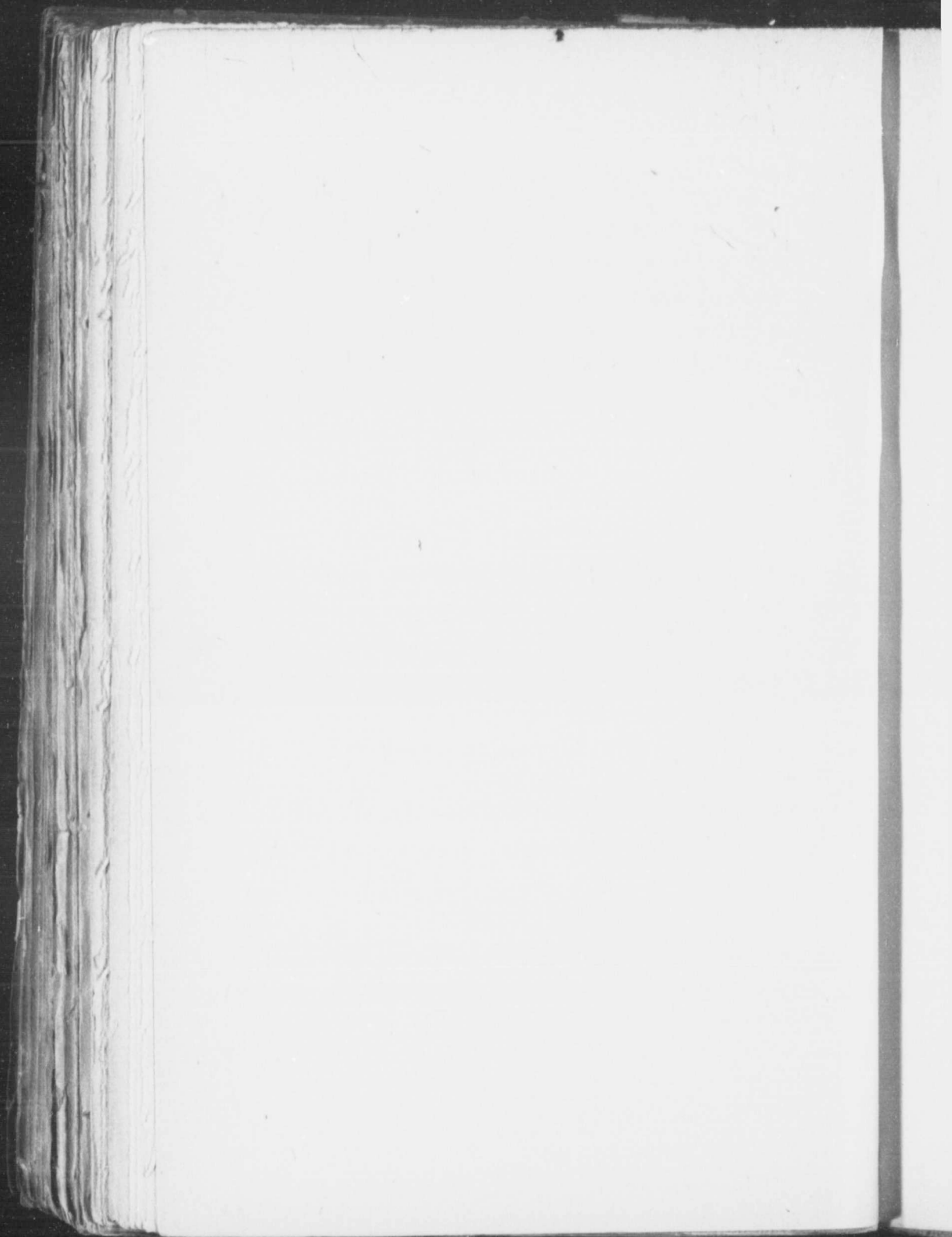
If he once becomes talkative, he will  
ruin my life.

Good-night, dearest. You say my let-  
ters are like a story. My adventures may  
be, but I am so tired of shocks. If it  
were not for what my System used to call  
my cursed pride, I should go away from  
here. But why should I please him ?

Thine ever lovingly,

GAY.

What tune will the band of life play  
to-morrow, I wonder ? Some dirge, I  
suppose.



FIFTEENTH LETTER





XV

*My dear Vera,—*

I DID not finish the account of the great ball — great bawl would be a better name, for I howled myself to sleep after it.

Well, when I returned to Sir Anthony, he remarked, crossly :

“You were a long time talking to that fool of a man.”

“Poor soul,” I answered, “he was hungry ; he had not had any dinner, and I am hostess to-night.”

“Pringle never brought your smelling-salts,” he said morosely.

“Never brought them ?” I repeated, indignantly (I knew she had n't) ; “and she knows I never move without them,” crescendo indignation.

“She was very sorry,” he remarked, in an absorbed way. Then :

"Tell me, Gay, what is there between you and that man?—Maul, he calls himself."

"Space now."

"Yes, yes, I am aware of that," with impatience; "but how does he know you? where did you meet him?"

"At my Aunt Lydia's," I replied, "at home. She lives in Buckinghamshire." (He will *never*, never meet her.)

For once I told the truth.

"Oh," in a somewhat mollified tone, for Aunt Lydia sounds so respectable, as indeed she is. *I* am the disreputable member of the family.

"Tell me about your Aunt Lydia."

Then (without waiting for me to relate my relation's undated history, which fact rejoiced my soul; if I had announced that she was Mrs. Bracebridge of Bracebridge Hall, he could soon have discovered the different points of my career) he continued:

"That wretched man looked at you."

“Anthony,” I murmured, reproachfully, “why should n’t he look at me?”

All men are alike. I have been through exactly the same experience with the System. Why do they marry a pretty woman — for I am pretty — and expect other men not to look at her? What is the good of asking why? It is but vain.

My own private opinion is, that most men like a wife who is no trouble to them. Matrimony is such a permanent arrangement, and it would be so wearing to be permanently jealous. The husband likes to feel he can leave his wife to sit in a railway station where no man will look at her — the lover wishes all men to admire his choice; such men should not marry an attractive woman; they should choose a worthy creature who never curls her hair and has no figure. They frequently do this, I will say that for them, else how is it that one sees such plain wives? But I am deserting the conversation of my future husband and wandering

from the point which gives you the opportunity of saying that I never do stick to it.

“Howard tells me,” said Sir Anthony, “that this man is a company promoter — just a swindler — who is trying to persuade silly women to believe in him. Don’t invest any of your money in anything he recommends.”

I smiled. My money! How reassuring it is to know that no one will ever be able to waste that, for it is nearly all spent.

If it were not that the System told me I had better leave here and go to his maiden Aunt, I really think I would depart, for I am getting tired of everything, and I know my life can never be as I like. I can never drain delirium, so I may as well prepare for peace.

That fool! the man from Borneo — oh! how I wish he were at the bottom of the sea — came up to me to say good-night. He had, I am sure, been drinking

more champagne, and Anthony was listening.

"I will call to-morrow," he whispered, in what he imagined was a soft, tender tone. It was more like the growl of an irate terrier.

"Yes," I said, while the band was playing the Mulligan Guards, they were finishing up with lancers; that tune always makes me want to weep. It reminds me of a pillow fight, of a dark brown face, of a wet day; it is like a red-hot iron on my heart. Across the room I could see Mrs. L'Esterre talking, with badly feigned polite interest, to Mr. de la Bère. The league of the red rosette of courage has more members than we know. How did all these bogies get invited to my party? I never asked Mr. de la Bère nor the man from Borneo.

"We will smoke and talk of the happy days of yore," cried my deliverer, still growling.

Anthony offered me his arm and led

me to the stairs. I could see he was annoyed.

The last guest had gone—the rooms looked tawdry, though the decorations had been lovely. The Colonel of the Engineers managed them for me. Did I tell you he is one of my annexations? I always forget to mention these details. You see, I write you the truth. I can pour out my real self to you; to most women one has to say what one knows they think. Between you and me, it has ever been heart to heart, my dearest.

Passing the love of women—he uses the plural, and love of women means their love for men. A woman *can* love another woman through good and evil report—through good and evil certainty. Have you not helped me when all the world passed me by? Have these other women no sins to regret? Some of those I meet here think the Sunday morning repentance obviates any necessity for not seeing their lovers on Sunday night.

A Detached Pirate 203

Meanwhile Sir Anthony and his jealousy are waiting, and if you think a man's jealousy cools and grows flat like a *soufflé*, you have not the experience Solomon had, when he said, "Jealousy is as cruel as the grave." He knew it could wait, and grow more cruel in waiting.

The only way to keep a man is to always act as if you loved him wildly. Let him be your God; fall at his feet when he is angry; kiss him (ugh, it's horrid!) when he scolds you. To tell you the truth, however, Sir Anthony's attitude towards me does not really agitate my brain. Why should it? I don't love him; and to thee, dear heart, to-night, I can say, I don't care whether I marry him or not. But I pretended to hear his counsels; in reality, I was in the middle of a pillow fight, and a man had caught me in his arms and was carrying me down the hall, kissing my hair, my neck, my lips, and some one was playing the Mulligan Guards, while the hoarse



voices rose in the chorus: "We shouldered arms and marched, and marched away."

I will tell you the story; indeed, I have almost told it; but Sir Anthony is still holding forth, and I believe to obey is better than to love in the mind of the ordinary husband.

Well, he has finished his harangue, and my thoughts were interrupted by his last sentence:

"I really think, Gay, that you ought not to smoke. It is very nice of you to do so when *with me*."

How well I know men. How many have said, "Oh, it is all right when you are with me!"

"I understand," I retorted. "You may enter the yard; the others may not look over the fence."

"I did not say anything about a yard; I was talking about smoking. When we are alone, together, it savours slightly of Bohemia; it is peaceful; and a woman

A Detached Pirate 205

who smokes, does not talk too much, and ——”

“Never mind, you old bear,” I exclaimed, putting my arm round his neck — we were driving home, I forgot to tell you. “I shall always smoke and you will always adore me.”

For a wonder, he said no more—we parted, and I went up to my room. Tearing through my brain came my thoughts, galloping like horses, roaring like the sound of many waters.

The past, the present, the future, all paraded before me, and made little mocking curtsies.

I slept and rose unrefreshed, and after my bath, arrayed myself in a tobogganing coat of bright scarlet. I must have colour near me to-day or I shall weep. I met lots of people as I walked out to the tobogganing hill. They all congratulated me on the success of my ball. I had forgotten it. I am glad they liked it. To me it resembled the day of judg-

206      A Detached Pirate

ment and a visit to the dentist rolled in one. Anthony said he would come to lunch. He did not; he sent a wee note.

DEAREST,—Only important business could keep me away from you. I will come for some tea at five.

Yours while

ANTHONY ERSKINE.

I wrote him a note and told him I was too weary to see him at five. I am not fit for polite conversation, I said. At four o'clock in pranced "appassionate furioso."

He had assumed a saintly air and looked subdued.

I was determined he should be humbled, that I would trample on him and reduce him to pulp.

So I did not hold out my hand, and I said:

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself after last night."

He looked doleful; evidently, he did

not remember much, and had gone to bed in a very cloudy state of mind.

“Once, long ago,” I said, “you behaved like an idiot, and made Colonel Gore so angry with me, that he — well, that is how the trouble began. And now you appear again; you behave vilely and talk about odious things; and oh! for heaven’s sake, say what you have to say to me *and go!*”

“I won’t. I am your deliverer. I shall stay.”

“Then you will ruin my life. Sir Anthony ——”

“Surely *he* knows.”

“Of course, of course,” I observe hastily. “He is jealous.”

“Of me!” joyfully, “of me!”

“Not of you; of my past.”

“I love you and I won’t go away. I am sure you will need help some day, and then — then I shall be here.”

I would so much rather he were not here, but he is infatuated, illogical, and

all the rest. Here Pringle interrupted us with tea, and then a call-boy to say Sir Anthony was waiting to know how I was. I will tell you the rest to-morrow.

Yours, a very depressed and weary

GAY.

us  
ir  
s.

SIXTEENTH LETTER

27

XVI

*Dearest,—*

**Y**OU should have seen his face — the man from Borneo — when the message was brought in. “You told him you were ill; you told him not to come for my sake? I shall certainly never go away until you are married,” he shouted triumphantly.

Verily I had turned on the “appassionate entusiasmo” label now.

“Naturally,” I said, “he has more sense than you have. He knows that I should be exhausted after last night, and,” I turned to the bell-boy, “tell Sir Anthony I am resting and I feel much better.”

I followed him to the head of the stairs and heard him deliver my message.

“Miss Vandeleur is resting, sir, and feels much better.” Then, by way of encouraging him, the little fiend added, “Mr. Maul is with her, sir, having tea.”



I rushed back to my room and gazed at Anthony as he drove away. His sleigh was a high one and I could see his face under his fur cap; it looked set and very stern. The sooner my death warrant is signed the better.

“What did the boy tell him? My message, I hope. I gave him a dollar to tell every one who came to-day that I am having tea with you. Tea alone with Mr. Maul — every one left out. What a gorgeous circus!”

“Do you know,” I said, calmly, “that I think you had better go. I have nothing sharp here or I would certainly kill you, and ——”

“Don’t talk in that tone,” he begged. “You can’t *bate* me, you can’t; and I am here to shield you from everything,” he grew plaintive, “and ——”

“Colonel Gore,” announced the devil’s own agent, that little boy.

The System looked — well, rather cross, and he ignored “appassionate

furioso," who murmured, "My God, the husband!"

"I was passing and I heard the boy give Sir Anthony Erskine a queer message from you, so I told him I knew there was a mistake and came up to tell you. I frightened that boy out of his wits first."

My deliverer departed after shaking my hand ardently and left me alone with Colonel Gore, who sat down, ate two pieces of cake, and remarked:

"I hear you looked perfectly lovely last night. Every one praised your ball; the floor, the music, and the champagne were above reproach."

"They played the Mulligan Guards."

He actually started.

"That was strange. Do you remember how loud Mr. Murphy would sing? And I carried you down the hall. I think you look thinner than you did."

"I — am thinner."

"I hope you will be happy with Sir Anthony."

“Will you have some more tea?” I was glad to flourish the tea-pot. It was a great relief to me.

“Thank you, yes; but it is a great risk.”

“What! tea!” holding the tea-pot in my hand and gazing at him. He has a funny little way of flashing his eyes at one as if some one turned the light on. “It is not a risk,” I remarked. “It is good tea and it won’t hurt you. Your nerves are all right?” I inquired anxiously. “I hope you wear warm jerseys!”

“I meant, a great risk for you to marry him. He is a very just man. My nerves are all right, but his relatives are rather narrow, and they are regular ferrets for finding and displaying the rats of any one’s past.”

“Rats in the past,” I repeated.

“I wish,” he added, warmly, “that you would take my advice and go back to England. I should be able to think of you, cared for and at peace.”

"Are you going to be married?"

He looked surprised, and I continued,

"They say so here, to Miss Kitson."

"Why did you come here? Why have I seen you again?"

"What harm have I done?" I inquired, innocently. "You should greet me as your benefactress, as — I did not know you were here."

"That is all right."

"Well, don't begin to throw stones at me; don't ask me why I came or why I do anything? I shall soon go somewhere, that is as certain as death."

"Do you love Sir Anthony?"

"Love? That is out of fashion — it is not worn. It will probably be used as a decoration in the twentieth century — a nice little medal to hang on one's coat."

"Good-bye," he said, stiffly.

I always show him my worst side.

I walked Anthony.

I hate every one.

Of course, Colonel Gore left us. En-

gaged mortals are always left in seclusion ; but Anthony's love-making is like Christmas-card pictures of polite ladies and gentlemen, whose attitudes are arranged with a due regard to picturesqueness and an audience.

I felt very tired after so many shocks in one day ; but there was no time to meditate, and only the prospect of my lonely future on nothing a week kept me from telling Anthony to go away.

We had some fresh tea, and he said :

“Are you better, dearest ?”

“Yes,” I answered, — not knowing whether to explain or to deny everything until he gave me a lead.

“Gore tells me that Mr. Maul wants to marry you.”

I laughed.

“A whirlwind would be more reliable as a husband than Mr. Maul. A few men have wanted to marry me,” I remarked, this modestly and reflectively. I can fence, but I can't repent or explain.

A Detached Pirate 217

Something seemed to have pleased Anthony. Probably he had been worried about some business arrangement or a letter from the War Office, and his wrath merely with the other people was expressed by his countenance. Men are made that way.

So I curled myself up on the sofa, and we talked prettily. He will never win my heart, but he does not want to. Yet how kind he is! I wonder if he and I will get on when we are married? He said at last:

“Gore is a good chap, one of the best. I hope he may be lucky now. You knew he divorced his wife?”

“I have heard it mentioned.”

“Yes, poor chap. I believe she was a charming girl; no one could understand it. Evidently some one gayer and younger than Gore appealed to her.”

“Really!”

“Yes; women are queer, Gay. Even you — you are impulsive. You take likes

and dislikes suddenly; you are a wee bit of a flirt, you know you are," he said it gaily, yet reproachfully.

"I don't trust a woman who can't flirt," I answered, hurrying him off the uncertain ground.

"Before marriage," he suggested.

"And after," I announced. He might just as well hear my opinions. "You men live your lives as you have carved them; we women are supposed to live ours according to the views of the man who gives us his name. Marriage is but a dull feast if a woman does not realise that to keep her lover she must turn him into her friend, her pal."

"Whence all this worldly wisdom?" he said. "Don't make a mistake. A young man may like a pal, but a man of my years wants a pretty woman in a tea-gown."

So much for my theories, Vera. I seem always to acquire them too late. I shall probably turn my life with Anthony into

A Detached Pirate 219

a hash, by living up to the ideas my experience with my three years' system planted in my soul. How wearing it must be to be a piano on hire to be played by light hands, by heavy hands, to racket with young subalterns, and sing the moonlight sonata softly.

One should love with one's head, never with one's heart. Had I done that, I should not be where I am now, at the cross roads. The four roads lead — whither? I fear me the path of happiness is a lonely mountain top with a rough water-swept pathway leading thereto. How uncomfortable it is not to have Fate in large letters to rail against. I made my own. The day Colonel Gore told me he intended to apply for a divorce, instead of quietly accepting it as I did, and packing my boxes with the philosophy and leisureliness of the man from the piano emporium, who locks the piano and removes the candlesticks with calmness and forethought, I should have screamed and wept.



I forget whether I told you he said the one thing that impressed the fact of my guilt on his mind, was the deliberate manner in which I left his house. That I packed all my belongings, all my personal property; and that I even called him in to decide whether he or I owned the silver candlesticks on my little table. If I had thrown off my wedding-ring and left his house in a cloak with a bundle of hair pins and no tooth-brush, he would have believed in my innocence and virtue. It was the only occasion in my life that I acted with deliberation, and my deliberation was wasted; my forethought impressed him by its heartlessness. If I had raved, ranted, and stormed, I should still be under his roof. What a fool I have been! Never mind. I shall be petulant, silly, childish, vain with Sir Anthony. I shall display all the wilfulness and the varying moods he expects from a woman. The strong-willed, self-reliant women who make plans and let a man know them, are

A Detached Pirate 221

always left to fight the battle of life alone. The weeping creature, who cries at a look and has hysterics at a word, is the character to assume now-a-days. For men are tired of women who work and succeed, and I should think the women would be tired of it too. Marriage is the best profession for a woman. I shall have a class for girls, to teach them wise maxims for the marriage state.

Anthony left me early after a little more courtly love-making. I will tell you about the Mulligan Guards and girls' maxims.

Yours with love, dear,

GAY.

Oh, the joys of the road! I am really happy, for I don't care for any one.



SEVENTEENTH LETTER



## XVII

**V**ERA, dear. The heartache the Mulligan Guards gave me has vanished; it was merely nerve-ache. How often the two are mistaken! Well, you must know that in the old days, before those wolves, Tragedy and Suspicion, entered our abode, the System used to be fond of having lots of his subalterns at the house, and I must say they seemed to like to come. One wet Saturday, a dull wet day, when the rain was soaking and the wind high, five of them arrived, and we played games. We played every absurd game that ever was invented, and finally ended in pillow fighting. When it was over, and dishevelled and laughing they all tore downstairs, — oh! well, but I can't tell you anything more; they played the Mulligan Guards, and sang it — *roared* it explains their method of song better —

and that is all. It was only nerve-ache or toothache, or something, that made me feel like memory and torment.

My maxims for young girls interest me muchly. I have been making them up all day. No one would send girls to me to be trained for the married state, would they?

These maxims are constructed for the very newly married before they have learned wisdom by snubbing.

I would tell them never to mistake a man for a god.

Never imagine slights, men don't hint; they hit hard when they are angry.

Be happy in yourself. A man is not always thinking of you when he looks cross. Don't flatter yourself it is because your nose is red, or that he fears you do not love him. Probably something has gone wrong with his work, and he will tell you when he feels like it. Don't ask too many questions, and never say, "I told you so." Always dress well, take more trouble for your husband than your

A Detached Pirate 227

lover — a husband lasts until death, a lover is easily lost.

Remember that a man does not always want to kiss you; never at an exciting moment, when he is very much interested in anything. A man leads a much more dual life than a woman; he is two people.

We forget that, and want him to live for love only. When he wants kisses, let him have them, but stop him, leave him, before he has had too many; he can have too much of you, little as you think it. And this I would say to the woman who loves with her head as well as her heart: be two different beings with your husband, his mistress and his friend, his pal. Be different in each capacity; then he won't tire of you. Don't mix up the parts; that would spoil both. Stage them differently.

How do you like my teaching? Isn't it sensible?

I should be a success as a trainer of young married women, if I could bury the divorce court.



Mrs. L'Esterre is the greatest joy to me. She plays divinely, and in her music I drift on, out on the streams of dreamland, and I am happy. I love Wagner; he wears such big emotions. You will, no doubt, consider my criticisms of music are somewhat like a description of gowns. Never mind; I trust to your understanding.

Hooray! That odious but for once blessed little boy has just brought me your letter. Oh, dear, dear Vera, how delightful it is to hear from you. What a lovely letter you write. I had lighted all my pink-shaded lamps to give an air of jovialness to my mind; but I don't need pink shades now I hear from you. But, oh! oh! oh! Vera! I am wrong. I am wicked. I have deceived every one, and I am not really divorced at all. Your wisdom is wonderful, but I am quite sure you are mistaken. You say the only thing that annuls a marriage is taking another man in the place of one's lawful husband, and

A Detached Pirate 229

I did not do that; therefore I am not free to marry again. Surely the judge can divorce me if he likes; he has the power. Here is my point of view: because they believed me guilty, I am guilty. You know that no one in heaven or on earth would believe my story. If I had tried to prove there was no Charlie Woodward, could I have done it? I believe it would have been quite impossible. It is all over, and I have to face life as best I can. I am sorry I told you the truth. I am free; Colonel Gore is free, and about, they say, to console himself with Miss Kitson.

In spite of your lecture, dearest, how I long for you. I am weary for the sound of your voice. If I were a man, I should love you mighty badly. I always think your lips are so beautiful, so red and curved, and I like your blue eyes and dark hair. I wish I were a poet. I would write you a sonnet.

FOUR DAYS AFTER.

Mrs. L'Esterre has been so ill. Oh! dearest, I have not had five minutes for anything, and no time for a pen. He, the husband, has my supreme contempt. He is still calm and as cruel as a cat, and so indifferent. But, no matter; I am going with her to New York to-morrow. Anthony and I are to be married very quietly when I come back.

I hear that Colonel Gore is engaged to Miss Kitson; the fine family has overcome its scruples at last. Well, may his soul rest in peace. That sounds as if I were condemning him to be hanged, but I am not. I preached a nice little funeral sermon to myself last night, and it is all over now. I have put up a little white tomb-stone to him in my mind, and on it is written — on second thoughts I won't tell you what I wrote.

Mrs. L'Esterre and I are going to see Dr. Hervey — (I must try and be coherent) — to get his opinion on her case.

A Detached Pirate 231

Something is wrong with her heart, and I believe she will die. I wish you could see her! She is so pretty; she has lost the terrified look, and is so gay. We laugh all day. He is surprised, but he is not emotional.

But you wretch, Vera! Oh! you awfulest of friends, why did you do it?

I had just put Mrs. L'Esterre (Phil I call her — her name is too long to write) to bed. I was feeling like Captain O'Neil in a tea-gown.

“From sword-belt set free, and released from the steel,  
The peace of the Lord was with Captain O'Neil.”

The fire was good; my cigarette perfect. I suppose soon I shall have to buy cheap ones like those the little London boys smoke on the top of omnibuses. “Sweet sixteens” they are called, but “diabolical nineties” would be a better name.

Well, to resume. In walked Colonel Gore, heralded by a little boy. Now, if they had proper men-servants at this

hotel, surely they might know that 10.30 P.M. is not the time for a man to call on an undefended lady, especially when she is "Captain O'Neiling" it. Why did n't that fool of a boy first bring up his name?

The System had just come from mess; he looked as smart as they make 'em in scarlet and gold. He is well built and quite straight, but so hard. I would rather be his friend than his enemy.

I think I guessed why he had come, for he looked a little nervous.

If his eyes only had a little more of the devil in them, I should fall instantly in love with them, or rather him; but a woman can't love a saint, because she always knows what he is going to do. A saint lives up to one law, a real woman to none; that is why we are so attractive.

I am writing in bed and have just upset the ink bottle. Isn't it sickening? It is all over the sheets. What an anti-climax to spill ink on the sheets, in the

midst of an exciting relation of an exciting situation.

He appeared worried, for, as I tried to rise elegantly, he strode across the room and took my hand.

"I have had a letter from Vera; read it."

And I read your note.

How could you write it?

"DEAR COLONEL GORE,— Make Gay tell you all about Charlie Woodward. I think she may, now. If she refuses, I will.

"Yours sincerely,

"VERA LESTER."

"Make!" I repeated, "make!"

"I know I can't make you," he said, humbly; "but you will tell me *all*, won't you?"

I heard a noise in Mrs. L'Esterre's room.

"We leave here to-morrow, early," I said, "and probably we shall be away for

two or three weeks. Can you possess your soul in patience for that short space of time? It is rather late now for an explanation."

I wish he had been masterful; if he had insisted on my telling him.

"I will be patient," he answered (he can be too; he could wait calmly for anything).

"You promise to tell me *everything*?"

I nodded.

I felt weary, yet peaceful. I wished he would go, yet I longed for him to stay for ever. I wish he had taken me in his arms and kissed me. I should not have told him to be patient then. I wonder why he wants to know more; it is not for love of me.

Probably it is some idea of justice, of truth. Why didn't he have that idea before?

I wonder now, as I sit by the fire writing to you, if a man ever wants the whole love of a woman's heart. Does a man love one woman, or is each one, one of

A Detached Pirate 235

the many? If I loved a man, I should remember every word he had ever said to me, every look he had given me; and each day in the year I should keep as a joyful or a sad festival, according to whether we had been happy together, or lonely and apart.

Sometimes I think that men's love is merely fancy, and they have many fancies. When they think, do the women they once thought they loved pass before their eyes in a long, varied procession? One was dark and one was fair; one was a beauty, one was amusing.

I think Colonel Gore's motto must be :

“Red lips tarnish the scabbarded steel.  
High hopes faint on a warm hearth-stone,  
He travels the fastest who travels alone.”

Here I am wasting time by reflection; it would be much more to the point if I thought of my banking account, which is dwindling slowly.

I told you that Anthony and I are to be



236      A Detached Pirate

married as soon as I come back. I love the idea of being taken care of, but somehow I don't love him. That will come, for I feel tired and I feel old.

S. S. "HALIFAX" AT SEA.

Here we are, dear, on our way. How I am enjoying the sea! As we crept down Halifax Harbour, I gazed with such rapture at the snow-covered land, and there were big blocks of ice floating about. The sea was so blue and the land so white, much more like Heaven than the golden floor idea. What was the Norseman's legend of Heaven? I know not. I have just dined, and Phil is better. I am feeling as if she were my baby, and Pringle and I guard her carefully.

We had a great send-off. Mr. L'Esterre was there, as calm as Fate; he is not agitating himself about his wife. Anthony presented me with flowers, all white ones. I don't like them; they look so white, like death, as if we had parted for ever.

A Detached Pirate 237

“Appassionate furioso” arrived too late to say “Good-bye.” Just as we were leaving the wharf, he tore down; his air of sorrow was lovely, and he waved his handkerchief in a way suggestive of much desire for conversation and more bad temper.

Well, I shall go to bed now, wishing you were in New York, and that I were going to you.

The stars are gorgeous. I sit and count them on deck. You in your smoky city never see the sky jewels as we do here; the colours that flash in this northern sky are the colours of triumph and despair.

Yours ever,

GAY.



EIGHTEENTH LETTER



## XVIII

VERMONT HOTEL, NEW YORK.

*My dear Vera,* —

**W**HO do you suppose followed us here? “Appassionate furioso.” We have treated him with scorn and indifference, but he wanders round us with offerings of flowers, and gazes at me like a hungry little dog looking for a lost buried treasure bone.

He sought a solitary interview with me. It is always well to listen to one’s lovers and one’s enemies. I may as well know the next card he intends to play. He begged, he besought me to marry him. Vera, he *cried* — he really did.

I was kind to him, but I told him the truth — that I meant to marry Sir Anthony; and I said, “You must forget me.”

He glared at me, and then ran away, literally ran. There will be trouble yet.

To-day I had a letter from Colonel Gore. I was rather anxious to see what he would call me — “Dear” what? But there was no beginning, no dear, only these lines :

“Be sure you do not forget your promise;” and he ended, “with best wishes,

“Yours sincerely,

“R. H. GORE.”

With best wishes! That sounds like a Christmas card. What does he mean?

I met Howard Morgan in the hall to-day. He said he had come to New York to hear a little music and go to a few operas. He invited Phil and me to dine with him, and go to hear “Lohengrin,” but I refused. I will not pretend to be civil to him, though I know that I shall spoil the game by declaring war so soon. He is only muzzled after all, and a cur can growl through a muzzle.

I have just had a letter from “appas-

sionate furioso," asking me to allow him to call to say "Good-bye." I wish it were. I feel happy when I believe it, but fear grips my soul when I think; I know he has some trump card he means to play.

I dressed myself in scarlet; I would face him bravely.

Mrs. L'Esterre went out with Pringle to give me the sitting-room to myself. The man from Borneo entered, followed by Howard Morgan.

"Surely," I said, "you can say what you mean without mixing Mr. Morgan up in it?"

"No, I want him to hear it."

He could not intend to carry on an affectionate conversation with a witness, so I resigned myself to fate.

"I hate that pharisaical fool, Gore," cried "appassionate furioso;" "I won't let you marry Sir Anthony Erskine."

Can you imagine the pantomimic gesture in which he indulged? Before I could reply, Howard Morgan said:



"You can squash that, Maul, very easily. You were the co-respondent."

"I *was not*." "Appassionate furioso" can be very emphatic when he likes. "I wish I had been."

"Well, you can say you were."

"How?"

"Say it," shouted Mr. Morgan. "Who can contradict you?"

"She can. Miss Vandeleur can."

"Who will believe her? Would any one believe you, Miss Vandeleur?"

"Every one would," said the man from Borneo.

"No one," contradicted Howard Morgan. "Try it and see. Ask her what she thinks."

I did not answer. It was an impossible question to answer — a diabolical situation to be in. Like a flash it dawned on me — they had me in their power, they had concocted this plot. In the eyes of all the world I was done for. Howard Morgan would have no mercy,

and the man from Borneo would be an easily used tool, especially as their plan would enable him (as he no doubt thought) to attain his heart's desire. I sat thinking. My lips felt dry and parched, and my heart sank. I saw all that I must lose pass before me, before the eyes of my mind like the slides of a magic lantern.

My voice was husky as I said :

“I will never marry you, I would rather die.”

By the way, it is harder to live than to die.

Neither of them took any notice of my protest.

“She will marry you then. She will be thundering lucky to get you,” said Mr. Morgan.

“Now, Miss Vandeleur, Maul will make you awfully happy. I shall tell my respected uncle, Sir Anthony, the glorious news of your death and resurrection — I mean of your divorce and mar-

riage. What a lark! Old Gore, too, shall hear the tidings from me. I wish I had a kodak; I'd photograph them both. One never has what one wants at the right moment," he added, sadly.

"You would be awfully happy with me," said "appassionate furioso."

I laughed and said:

"Why are you both in New York?"

"I came to see you; I followed you," said the man from Borneo, meekly.

"I came to meet a lady," said Mr. Morgan.

"Well, I want you both to make me a promise. You are quite determined to tell this vile lie about me?"

"Quite," said Howard Morgan, and "appassionate furioso" fidgeted and muttered, "Yes."

"Wait until I get back to Halifax before you do it."

For, dearest, I have hopes of the System; he will never believe it, I feel sure.

"Your nice little plan will be more

dramatic if I am there when you play your last most dishonourable card. Mrs. L'Esterre is very ill, and I cannot leave her yet."

"I say," said Mr. Morgan.

"Will you both promise?" I demanded.

"Certainly," said "appassionate furioso."

"Of course," said Mr. Morgan; "but would n't it be easier, better for you, to wait for him here?" nodding in the direction of my lover, whose expression did credit to his much vaunted affection.

I laughed.

"I prefer to be in Halifax," I said.

"If you could face the divorce court, you could face anything," murmured Mr. Morgan.

"I wonder what you think of yourselves?" I asked. "You are honourable gentlemen." The scorn that I felt broke loose; it had no effect on them, I may tell you.

"When I arrive at the King's Hotel,

I will let you both know; then you can do your worst."

I left them.

"We'll drink your health," cried Mr. Morgan, while that lunatic from Borneo grinned feebly.

It is my one chance, Vera, my one chance.

. . . . .

It is days, weeks, since I have written, dearest. Black Death and Despair have been my portion, and I am alone.

Phil, dear little Phil, is dead. We arrived here in comfort; we lived in simplicity. Oh! I am in the stream of life now and it hurts me—scars—for Death is the only certainty we can expect, the only thing for which we can wait.

I went with her to the specialist, Dr. Hervey, and he said a lot of things; he talked like a mill stream, and so I, like a fool, derived comfort from his conversation. I might have known doctors talk most of trivialities when they really can

## A Detached Pirate 249

do nothing. We drove every day, and she seemed to be better ; I read to her—such funny books. I love to think of them now — adventure stories, and miles of Kipling. Oh, how I love Kipling! The days passed like whirlwinds in doing nothing, but we were so happy. Mr. L'Esterre did not come, but Anthony wrote every day. Phil took her medicine with divine regularity, and we went to a few concerts. But gradually she seemed to be weaker, duller, more resigned to lie on a sofa. I saw the doctor ; it seemed to me it was time for us to go back to Halifax — I for my wedding, and she to return to her husband. Besides, our money was running away, and she certainly was better and out of pain. The hotel was expensive ; everything in New York is expensive. Do you know, it terrifies me? I am afraid of the great city demon who crawls abroad like a big serpent at night. How shall I feel when I fall into its clutches — when, with no

money and no friends, I make my bow to this fiend of civilisation? Bah! I shall marry Anthony.

So I sallied forth to see the doctor, and found him alone. He is very abrupt, and he does n't like me, I fancy; anyway, he thinks me tinsel. So I am, you can't warm tinsel; it is cold and shines, and is all sham.

I told him we were going home, and I added that Mrs. L'Esterre had lost the terrible pain that was so unbearable when first we came. He smiled.

"Yes," he answered. "She will never feel that pain again."

"You are sure of the effects of your prescription?" I asked.

"A greater physician than I am has written her one," he answered. "If I could counteract the effects of His touch, I should be a magician."

I felt queer and cold.

"What do you mean? When may we go home?"

A Detached Pirate 251

Do you know, I felt a yearning for my funny little rooms at the King's Hotel, for the sound of the sleigh-bells, and even for that horrid boy?

"Mrs. L'Esterre will probably not live more than two weeks, if as long," he said.

I felt a hand at my heart, the most terrible clutching pain. I don't know what I said, I don't know what I did. That does n't matter.

He gave me some sal volatile and put me in a cab, and I drove off. There's no snow here; it will be gone in Halifax now. I went round and round the city, seeing the awful faces of the women — world-weary, life-weary women! At last I went back, and I was cheerful, very cheerful, and she never suspected where I had been nor what I had heard. I had to write to her husband for more money. I told him to come at once.

He answered my letter, and said he felt sure I was worrying myself unnecessarily about his dear wife, that we had



spent too much money, and we had better find a cheaper hotel. He said my wild letter amused him, and I could send him a telegram if she got worse. He finished by adding that he believed two ladies of such boundless experience as his wife and myself could never need the assistance of a mere man — a husband — unskilled in doctoring, nursing, and affairs of the heart. What did he mean? Has Mr. Morgan talked?

Phil grew weaker and weaker. First she lay on the sofa and gave up her drive; then she stayed in bed for half the day, then all day. I felt my heart was breaking. She did not suffer, and Dr. Hervey said she would not.

The hardest road I ever travelled was keeping her amused, while I wanted to cry, to howl.

Her money was all spent — thank Heaven! I had some left. “To move her would finish her in an hour,” the doctor said.

At last she realised she was dying.

"How long have I to live?" she asked Dr. Hervey one day, just as I might ask Pringle, when she calls me, if the day is fine or wet.

"A few days," he answered.

"Literally, only a few days?"

"I think so." His voice was very gentle.

"How comforting!" she said. "Now I may dare to be happy. Gay, telegraph to Claude; he is in Montreal."

Mr. de la Bère came that night and Phil got up.

She said to me when I was helping her:

"If I thought I was getting strong, Gay, I should be so sorry; now I know that my strength is the joy of the end coming."

Mr. de la Bère came to dinner that night. I left them alone. If you could have seen her face and his! They looked so absolutely happy and not a bit awkward.

A tragedy usually makes a man awkward, but he only loved her.

That night Pringle and I put her to bed, and she slept a little. I thought her better, and I stayed talking in the sitting-room to Mr. de la Bère. Phil had told him so much about me, and I had done nothing, nothing. Oh, God! I wish she were back.

She called me and I sent for Dr. Hervey and Mr. de la Bère.

*"To die is gain!"* she said.

Dr. Hervey soon left us; he could not shut the gates of Death.

At four o'clock I was called away to see Mr. L'Esterre. I was surprised, for I had forgotten all about him.

"Dr. Hervey sent for me," he said.

Then he saw Mr. de la Bère; but Death is a gentleman and brings peace in his train.

"For Heaven's sake, leave them alone," I said; "she will never speak again," and she never did.

I left Claude de la Bère alone with his dead and went to find the husband. He

A Detached Pirate 255

said things that I won't write. Then I sent Mr. de la Bère away.

Of the funeral, of the days of horror and blackness, I can't tell you; and I want her back, I miss her so much, my gay, loving little Phil. I am numb and cold. He, the husband, has gone. I don't know where Claude de la Bère is. I have written to him to tell him about her grave.

Oh, what a game is Life! I envied Phil with all my soul.

Well, now, I have paid our bill; Mr. L'Esterre never offered to do it. Pringle and I leave to-morrow.

Will the bells toll or ring for me in Halifax?

Thine ever,  
GAY.



NINETEENTH LETTER



## XIX

KING'S HOTEL, HALIFAX.

*My best Beloved, —*

I FEEL as if death and desolation had overtaken me. I arrived here last night.

My rooms are full of flowers. Anthony sent them. I feel grateful to Anthony.

Mrs. Goldsmith has just been here.

“My goodness! you do look a wreck,” she said, candidly. No doubt that remark was inspired by common-sense.

“One does not usually return from a death-bed looking cheerful,” I retorted.

“No, oh no, but Mrs. L'Esterre was nothing to you. You can't care. There must be some other reason.” And so she prattled on.

“Mr. L'Esterre says he saw you with Mr. Maul, that queer, odious, foreign-looking man — he is English, I believe.”

“Did he?”



"Now, do tell me about Mrs. L'Esterre. Did n't you have an awful scene with her when she knew she was dying? Is it true that she went and stayed at another hotel with Mr. de la Bère, and that he and the husband had a terrible encounter?"

"Not one word of it is true," I answered. "Can't gossip let the dead rest?"

For once I was grateful to Mr. Morgan, for in he walked. He discoursed of many things, and at last he said:

"I got your note. I have done what I agreed to do."

"Then we have declared war," I remarked.

"Yes. I wish you looked more fit to fight," he made answer.

"Are you afraid of my breaking down? Your anxiety for my health is too touching."

"I am not afraid."

Then Mrs. Goldsmith left, convoyed by Mr. Morgan.

A Detached Pirate 261

I could have torn that woman to pieces for her hateful insinuations, her vile mind. I wish to-day that I were dead. I believe that wish is supposed to be a sentimental solace. Well, I have to face ruin now, and I am anxious, so anxious, to know what Colonel Gore will do.

Do you know, dearest, in my little heart of hearts, I think that he will horse-whip "appassionate furioso" and Mr. Morgan. That he will come here — that — oh, well, what a fool I shall feel if he does not come!

The days are all blank.

The paper this morning in the society notes has its heading in large, extra large type.

SCANDAL IN SMART SOCIETY.

*Colonel Gore's Divorced Wife masquerading as an Unmarried Lady.*

It is all up now. I wonder which of my friends writes for the papers.

Here is Sir Anthony's carriage. Branches of flowers and a note from him.

"MY DEAR GAY, — I hear from Howard Morgan that you are Gore's divorced wife. In spite of that, I would marry you to-morrow, except that Mr. Maul, whom I have always detested, acknowledges his guilt and his ignoble conduct in not appearing before. In the face of his much earlier and superior claim to your possession, I must reluctantly resign mine.

"Yours truly,

"ANTHONY ERSKINE."

I began to feel numb.

Anthony believed it, and yet I knew he would — but did every one else?

I have been out shopping. Every man I knew betrayed a desire to stop and shake hands with me, every woman cut me. The club windows were full of men. They watched me go by. I met Mr.

A Detached Pirate 263

L'Esterre and I cut him ; for once I was first in the field.

But, dear Vera, I cannot understand where Colonel Gore is. Why does he not deny all these stories? He knows that Mr. Maul was not Charlie, he *must know* it. You know I promised to tell him everything when I came back from New York. I am waiting for him, and I will tell him the truth. Surely he won't, he *can't believe* what Howard Morgan says. That I could give up all things for "appassionate furioso!" — he can't believe *that*.

Vera, he does! My God! he does!

He has gone away. This is the note I have had from him.

"I am glad that 'Charlie Woodward' has turned up at last. I suppose you will be married at once. My congratulations! I am going away.

"Yours,

"R. H. Gore."

His congratulations!

The manager has just been up to say he wants my rooms for some one else.

“You can have them by to-morrow,” I answered.

Pringle has come to say her gunner wishes her to become his wife in a week. I suppose he is afraid of my contaminating influence on her.

I said:

“You can marry to-morrow.”

There is a concert to-night at the Orpheus Club.

I shall go to it.

“Appassionate furioso” came in.

“Don’t talk to me,” I said. “Take me out to dine. Give me some champagne; take me to the concert to-night.”

He was always good about feeding one. I am sure he dates his emotions by the kind of soup and the brand of champagne he drinks.

“You are either very good or very

bad," he retorted. "Jove! I don't know which appeals to me most. But you look too ill; can't you rouge or drink or *something?*"

"I'll be all right," I said.

And I put on my dull pink gown and my jewels — I have n't pawned them yet — and we dined.

I could not eat by reason of my weeping, but I was exquisitely painted.

"You look sixteen," said "appassionate furioso."

He tried to be entusiasmo, but I could not jest with the King of the Revels. I felt numb and cold, and I was running on my courage. I would face it all.

When we walked up to our seats, the house rustled like the wind in the aspen trees. I don't know what the music was that we marched to. Afterwards some one sang "As once in May," and they played the "Walküren Ritt." magnificently. Oh, the shriek of the Walküren! I felt cold water running over me, as if

they had taken out my heart and were playing on its strings.

I did not see one face clearly, they were all blurred. No doubt I knew every one, and the day before yesterday they had all been my dearest friends; but I did not see them though they stared at me.

At last it was over. Escorted by "ap-passionate furioso," I drove to my hotel.

His conversation had chiefly consisted of "By Jove" at intervals.

"You looked a Queen," he said, humbly, when we parted at the principal entrance of the hotel.

You will say my last appearance was in the worst taste imaginable, that I am everything that is heartless, noisy, detestable. Dear heart, I know it. I should have spent the evening in prayer and fasting instead of flaunting myself before the eyes of outraged society. I know all you would say. I am made that way. I am not repentant nor retiring.

Do men know nothing? They never give us a hand to help us up. Never; do I say never? They always believe the worst of a woman, and find extenuating circumstances for a man in the fact of his being a man.

Who do you suppose has just been here? Miss Kitson. She must have had great difficulty in getting in. I know even the servants, whom I have tipped royally, look on me as pitch, defiled, outcast.

We talked. She looks kind. I did not feel embarrassed, not like Mrs. Marchmand — do you remember her? — who said she felt every one knew she was leaving her husband, and they stared at her thick white veil as if she had the plague. I need more than a white veil.

Miss Kitson's countenance is full of shy amiability.

"I fear you are lonely," she said. "You are going away?"

"Yes. I don't want any one to know when I am going."



“Are you happy?” she asked, anxiously. “I have so often wanted to know how a woman feels when she has broken her word, her vows ——” She stopped.

Was n't it funny for her to take off the mask of civility? Well, the ball is over, and every one knows I have been masquerading.

“Why should I tell you anything about myself?” I asked.

“Perhaps it is you that he loves.”

What an idea! A woman's idea!

I laughed a little. It was so silly; so futile. The Past and The Present sitting side by side, wondering about the feelings, the impulses of a man.

To feign the madness of happiness is an easier portion than to show one's heart in its rawness to be chastised by scorpions.

“I came to tell you,” she said, “not to be *hard*; don't let it make you hard. Marry Mr. Maul, and — oh, do marry him!”

She laid her hand on my arm, and her eyes were beseeching. Her sorrow was not for me, but for herself.

“Why do you want me to marry him?”

“Because I am afraid of you — Colonel Gore —”

Jealousy, I suppose, afflicts her, poor soul! She will outgrow it.

“I am going away,” I said, slowly. “I shall never see you nor Colonel Gore again; you need not be afraid of me. Perhaps he loves you, and in any case he despises me — if a man once despises a woman, he can never love her again. To despise is worse than to hate; the one is nearly related to love, the other is as far from it as indifference, no! farther.”

I don't know why I talked to her. I really was thinking aloud.

“Is n't he right to despise you?” she asked.

“Right? Really, I have packing to do,” I answered, “and ——”

“You want me to go? Well, good-bye! Thank you for seeing me. Is there anything I can do for you? I am sure he would like me to help you if I could.”

That spoiled it, and I got rid of her before I scratched her face or pulled her hair — my revengeful impulses are always absurd. She is a good girl, and will marry Colonel Gore and be placidly happy for evermore as she deserves, and he will respect her, which is cold — respect, I mean.

She thinks she loves him, but she does not. She has fallen in love with the notion of his loving her — women often do that. The man becomes an idea to worship. You know fools (I class myself among them) do more harm than sinners; but enough said, and we never think that marriage is merely life; it is not a dance with champagne. How will that man's mind answer my mind? — we never ask, How will my mind answer his? — of that we never think.

A Detached Pirate 271

Marriage means breakfasts and long evenings, it means dulness unless a man and a woman are friends. There is no band as there is at the restaurants where we dine with the lover. How shall we like him when it is quiet, and we are slowly passing life's milestones? Bah! I grow long-winded, and as dull as the man from Borneo when he talks of his feelings.

I have packed my clothes, and I leave here to-morrow.

First, I have to say farewell to my deliverer, as he calls himself. He deserves it. An everlasting farewell! Would God I had never seen him!

The lights are going out, the play is over, and the pirate flies the black flag again. It is cold and dreary, the fog-bank and the icebergs are not cheerful, the sea of life looks grey and angry and I have to face the music of despair. Well, I have faced it before.

THE NEXT DAY.

When I look back, I have played the game well, and "he who laughs last, laughs well."

I go to New York to-night, but no one knows this.

"Appassionate furioso" has just left me. Vera, he wept, he howled, he sees his folly now as I see mine.

He arrived this morning at eleven o'clock, flowers in his hand, and a gardenia in his buttonhole. I used to love gardenias, now they savour of death and despair.

He looked somewhat nervous.

I looked awful — haggard, and ugly, and yellow.

We talked about Colonel Gore, and then he said, with an attempt at jauntiness:

"Well, when are you going to marry me?"

"Going to marry you?" I repeated.  
"Why should I?"

“Well, it is usual to marry the correspondent;” he fidgeted uneasily.

“You never were that,” I answered.

“I shall be your husband, which is better.”

“When we began this jest,” I remarked, “you surely did not expect me to carry it through to the bitter end?”

“There will be no bitter end, Gay — only Life, and Hope, and Love with me.”

“I want you to understand from today I have done with you. You have made use of me; you have done me the worst injury a man could do a woman.”

“Gay! I have not. Besides, you let me. You agreed to it, you knew my plan, you knew ——”

“Could I have prevented your plan? Could I have foiled you and Mr. Morgan in any way? In any way if I had tried?”

“No,” triumphantly, “for I was determined if I could not have you, no other man should.”

274      A Detached Pirate

“Exactly,” I replied; “so now no other man will have me, nor will you. Go — go away for ever — I’ll dree my weird alone.”

He raved, he ranted, he wept, but at last he realised that I meant it, that I would *never* marry him; and he has gone, with a little fear of God in his soul, repentant, and I am alone — alone — alone for always, with a dead heart, a black flag, and no courage. I have drained the cup to the dregs.

Thine,

GAY.

Do not be surprised if you hear nothing of me for a long time. I am tired. I do not repent.

TWENTIETH LETTER





XX

NOWHERE.

This is my address.

*My beloved Vera,*—

IT is six weeks since I have written to thee, oh, my beloved! “Drink to the men that were broken,” dearest, and I am one of them.

It is not for want of thought of thee that I have not written. At first, I could not. I had a bruised, stunned feeling; my brain was made of wool. I believed that a man has two faces—“one to face the world with, and one to show a woman when he loves her”—and my bold pirate ship thought it had reached the port of missing ships and would never have to take the main again. I built my heart’s house on the sands of belief, forgetting that *a man accepts facts, as he sees them, as the law of the prophets,* and explanations are to him nought. But, mind, I don’t

blame him. I know too well that I have been a fool.

All this is a mystery to you! Well, let it be. It is buried and over, and I am working, working. You laugh. I don't mind ridicule, and I know if you laugh, it is only you.

I left Halifax in the night, unknown and unnoticed. No one played a funeral march for my little hopes. I travelled to New York and took ship in a slow old tramp steamer — good-bye to liners, with their electric light and velvet chairs! Then I went to bed and stayed there for the whole voyage.

I need not enlarge on my adventures since I reached Liverpool. Pennies became as valuable as sovereigns, and note-paper an unknown luxury.

I tried everything. Men are not pleasant when one is alone in a big city and possesses a good figure; but as I expected soon to pawn all my clothes and go out draped in house flannel, it did not

seem to matter. The only two occupations I did not endeavour to fulfil were those of a charwoman and player of a drum in an orchestra; both need strong arms and I am pretty thin. On the whole, I enjoyed myself. My two pair back was my own. I cooked unholy concoctions, which formerly would have laid me low for a week, but being hungry, really hungry, they did not affect me at all.

I love the wilderness, and I only felt frightened sometimes. I am a little lonely, but I have courage and I sleep well.

At last one night, feeling a mad yearning for air, I got on a tram (and spent one of my black sovereigns, so precious are my pennies) to go to the river.

What did I mean to do there? I don't know.

We drove through noisy slums. The tram was full of evil-smelling beings, whose clothes were dirty. They gradu-

ally got out, and the horses crawled on through the gloom.

Two men and I were the sole occupants of the proud eminence, the top of the tram. We all looked mouldy. The horses were tired, for the night was very hot. A thick, mirky fog fell on us, and the whole universe seemed to contain nothing except death. To die would have been like lifting the curtain of the fog and seeing behind it. I listened idly to the men's conversation.

"She'll never ride again," said one; "we're ruined without her."

"Damn her," said man No. 2. "How was it she fell?"

"I don't know. Well, the first young woman who can ride is my motto, and they are all cowards."

I turned round and said:

"Do you want some one who can ride? Try me. I want work."

I left my pride on the Atlantic Ocean. I may as well mention that fact.

"Where have you ridden?" asked one, who I found out afterwards was the master of the circus ring.

"In Canada."

"Can you come now and show us what you can do?"

"Yes," I said.

We stopped the tram. We got off and walked down a road, at the end of which were rain-dulled merry-go-rounds and drink-dulled men.

A big tent was lighted badly.

"The performance begins at eight," said my guide, "but we have no lady rider."

Well, dearest, they put me on a horse, an old circus ambler.

"You must come up to-morrow morning and be trained," said the ring master. "Your name?"

"Miss Hughes." Vandeleur would not be safe.

"Your salary? We'll settle that in the morning."

“Have I to go through hoops and jumps?” I asked, “because I don’t know how.”

“No. We want a lady rider.”

So I went back next day and practised. The horse knew his work ; he waltzed and lay down dead, and we went through the regular circus performance. I had only to sit still. It was warm weather and we travelled all over the country. I hated it. The noise, the jeering crowd, the evil-smelling lights ; but I loved Time, my horse. The ring master, Mr. Trevelyan (Smith, I suppose, is his real name) was a decent sort, and the others — oh, well, there were about twenty — the dregs of the earth. My groom, Barty, was an officer in the 7th Dragoons, and the clown had been a clergyman.

Barty was as hard as nails and as thin as a post, but tall, rather good-looking, and absolutely uninterested in every one and everything.

If I wanted to be dominated by a man,

A Detached Pirate 283

I'd like one to shake me, to love me, to hold me, aye, to beat me, and I'd follow him through the whole world — but to be tolerated! I know, for I have been that, merely tolerated as one does a chair or a table. I took my own road searching for life's music, and heard only the dead march.

I have had to give up frills and laces, and my habit is very plain, but scarlet, bright scarlet. You would laugh if you could see me on my horse careering round the ring, the band braying, the feathers in my impossible hat waving, and the people cheering. The applause is pretty bad, but my horse makes his bow — I don't.

Well, write to me, Miss Hughes, Post Office, Vere Street, London, W. I'll get the letters. There is no need for you to know where I am. My society is too choice, and we play in such awful places. You would be shocked if you could see the men who haunt our exits and our



entrances. The comments of the crowd are more audible than polite. One man I heard say of me the other night :

“I wonder which one is her lover ? A pretty woman of her type could get plenty, and the ring master runs after her all day.”

Such are the comments, my dear ; I wonder why they suppose that a pretty woman can never resist a lover, and seldom be virtuous ? It seems to me that the plain woman would be more like the ripe cherry, and fall into a man's mouth. A pretty woman can get lovers by the score, while the plain one naturally desires to keep the one man who offers her any worship ? Write me a letter, think of me leniently, and pray for the soul of

GAY.

THE DAY AFTER.

I sent you a letter yesterday, to-day I am adrift again. The affection of the ring master overcame his prudence, and

A Detached Pirate 285

the Canadian Queen of the Arena (that's I, would you recognise the description?) is dwelling in a little room, with five shillings to pay every week for rent, and two pounds in her pocket. Sole stock in trade — one very mouldy black gown and a scarlet habit, which she is keeping as she had to buy it herself. I shall construct my lonely and frugal lunch — one toasted tea-cake and a cup of cocoa. I don't drink tea now (it is not staying enough), and my cocoa costs me sixpence a week. It's the stodgy kind, made with a pennyworth of milk. I find the diet filling but not exhilarating, useful but not clever.

We had a royal row — the ring master and I — finished by a push from me, which sent him flying. Naturally, such an exit caused him to return in war with my money, and the remark, that the sooner I left the better.

My groom had gone; he came into some money and went to the Midlands

to start a stable, with the hope of getting some men to put up their hunters in the new emporium. Can one keep hunters in an emporium? I know not, I leave the word to your mercy.

I wandered out to take the air, for I felt chilly though it is summer. Better a good walk than a red nose. I met Barty, the groom — Captain Wilde now if you please, with five or six hundred pounds capital, and a stable full of horses in the Midlands.

He is just the same, as dull and as queer, but he wants *me* to help him. He is on the edge of a hunting centre, and is starting a riding school to train the ladies to ride whose papas have made fortunes in oil and cotton and leather. This is where I come in. I am to ride with them, I am to hunt — joy of joys! I shall be an advertisement, and at first I am to have thirty shillings a week and a percentage on all the horses I sell. Was n't there a book called *A Pretty*

A Detached Pirate 287

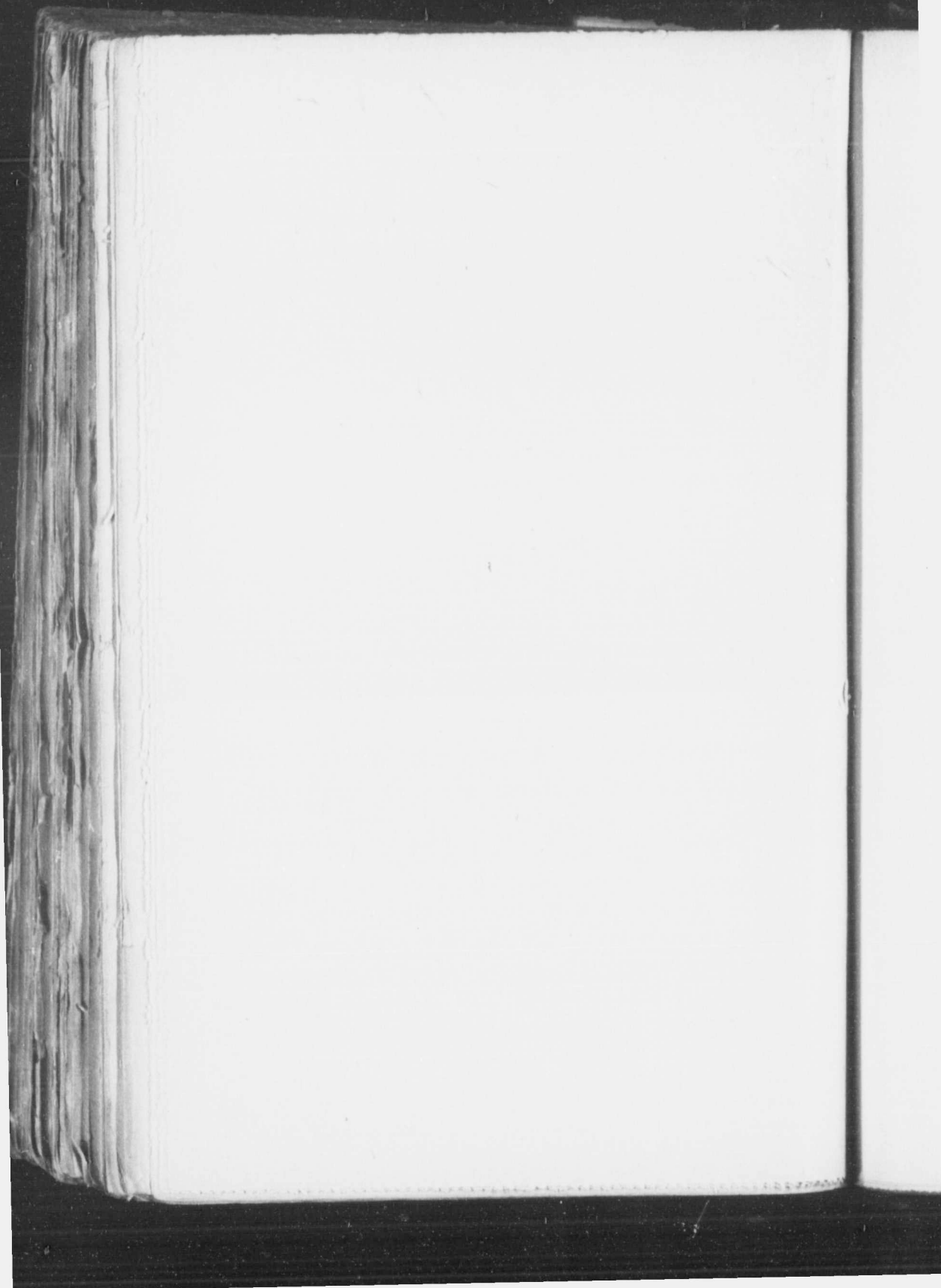
*Little Horse Breaker or Trainer?* That's I, dear Vera. I am off now to Mudshire with an empty portmanteau, and a heart? (hearts are only worn on long chains now) — a mind-full of hope. The less one digs at one's feelings the better; they don't grow up so strong and green when neglected. If one waters them with tears every day, they sap the vitality of the woman who works.

GREEN COTTAGE, MUDSHIRE.

Well, here I am. The stables are round the corner. I possess a sitting-room with a piano in it! Verily the millennium is about to dawn. I suspect Captain Wilde in that piano, not that he is hidden there — the notes and strings forbid! — but I think he got it for me. Now I shall be able to play the "Mulligan Guards," and go out on the past with them. Thine ever,

GAY.

The same address, Vere Street, dearest.



TWENTY-FIRST LETTER



XXI

I GOBBLED your letter, Vera, this morning, dear, dear Vera, twenty times dear. No, I won't give you my right address or tell you where I am. I am tired of being known, I am afraid of my shadow, I — well, I won't.

I have seen my master, Captain Wilde. He has lent me the money to buy my habit, and I go out with him and the hounds next week.

My rooms are celestially comfortable, but I am out all day in a riding habit which the genius of the country tailor faked up for me. Captain Wilde's horses are ripping. The select young ladies, whom I escort round the newly erected riding school twice a week, are awful. Smirking, cowardly creatures with arms like a bargee and hands like sixteen pound weights. I have insisted on the head an-



nexing several ancient gees whose mouths are as hard as iron and whose spirits are ground to nothing. To train bumping, flopping women to ride the horses that Captain Wilde (I must call him Barty to you, but he is n't Barty to me — you understand the distinction?) has provided, would ruin any horse under twenty with a decent mouth. And my pupils like the patient amblers I have provided much better than their former wild steeds, for, of course, as Miss Thompson (Moonlight Soap: you can guess her history and her fortune) wisely observed:

“Papa will buy us” (there are three of them) “horses well trained, so that a touch will make them understand our wishes.”

I can see the horses the Thompsonian family will purchase.

“Why should n't I buy your horses?” I suggested, mindful of my percentage.

“Oh! do,” said Miss Thompson. “Two will be sufficient; we have four carriage

horses already. But spare no expense, Miss Hughes; papa always likes to pay two hundred and fifty pounds for his horses — he says you must pay for blood," in a tone of horrible solemnity.

They are amusing, those girls. On the other hand, Lady Sybil — well, I won't tell you her name, for you will know the county if I do — came to buy a horse. She did not see what she liked, and next day Barty sent me with a groom and three horses — the groom led one — to The Towers.

Lady Sybil can ride, but she is about as insolent a woman as I have ever met. Oh! my dear, how women, some women, love to kick the others if they can. But no matter. Smiles never gained a woman a decent living from other women. She bought a horse, and offered me beer in the servants' hall! Needless to say, I refused. I heard her brother ask Smithers, my attendant (who is old and somewhat grumpy), who I was.

"Lady, sir," said Smithers, and I loved him for it.

"Ah!" said this insolent youth, while I sat perfectly still as Lady Sybil patted the bay mare I rode, "and lives with Captain Wilde?"

"No, sir," rapped out Smithers, "she lives alone."

And the young man then offered me a brandy and soda, but I said "No, thank you," and got home starving and weary. After having a warm bath and some dinner, Barty came in with orders for tomorrow. I am to ride to the meet at Varley Cross on Shadow. Barty is coming too. Shadow is, or rather was, a fiend of a horse, and Barty wants to sell him. Woe betide the man or woman purchaser, if he or she has not light hands, a good temper, and a fancy for a shadow!

. . . . .

We had a glorious run; dear Vera, I felt as if all I had yearned for had come

to me as I followed the hounds. Life! freedom! were in the air. The wild rush, the glorious life of my horse, and the mad exhilaration made me forget, forget everything except that Shadow and I were together. He enjoyed it; I have to sit still when I ride him and let him alone. I don't mind confessing that he can do just as he pleases with me, and carry me for ever and end my life if he liked, and I would not be able to stop him, but he chooses to obey my lightest touch. Why I called him Shadow? I don't know, simply because he is dark, and, well — why does a woman do anything?

I must say the remarks that I overhear are embarrassing.

“Who is she?” over and over again, as we waited at Varley Cross.

“What! a horse-dealer, with Wilde? You don't mean to say so? Ripping girl! and how she rides! Well mounted, though. The horse is fit to carry more weight than her figure.”

"She is out on spec," said the first man, "and that horse is for sale."

"I'll buy him. He'd carry me," and that's how they discoursed.

"What is she?" said a woman.

"Protégée of Wilde's," man's voice.

"Fair and square?" the woman inquired.

"Fair and round," he answered.

"Has a past, I suppose?" said the woman.

"Nonsense, pasts are not worn; every one has one, but they bury it, and women are all romantic, young, and fresh nowadays."

Well, I am yarning to you, oblivious of everything.

To-day, as I rode in the school, Captain Wilde appeared with the man I had seen in the hunting field, who had announced his intention of buying Shadow.

"Lord Varley has come to see Shadow," said Barty, "and thinks of buying him."

A Detached Pirate 297

I felt tears in my eyes. Shadow and I are such friends. I regretted I had displayed the horse to such advantage. Lord Varley insisted on my riding him, and he accompanied me on a big lumbering cob.

"Anything is good enough to jog about the roads on," he said, "but for hunting you must have the best."

What a funny idea! I believe men look on non-hunting horses as they do on a motor car, — merely a vehicle to carry them from place to place.

"I would prefer a bath-chair or a cradle to your mount," I retorted.

He laughed. I could see Barty looking daggers at me. But what could I do? I know I was engaged to sell horses, and sell them I must — but Shadow!

"He goes awfully kind with you," said this ugly man. He has heaps of money and no brains; for once the gods have been kind.

"Don't you want to ride him?" asked Barty.

"Oh, certainly," said Lord Varley. So we changed saddles, and Shadow's eyes looked nasty as if he didn't like it.

Then the would-be purchaser had a pleasant quarter of an hour. Shadow did everything that the mind of horse can conceive and the legs of horse execute in the way of wickedness. I don't wonder Lord Varley rides a horse like a bath-chair! His hands are as heavy as a coster's after driving a donkey, and Shadow's mouth is as tender as mine. At last Barty rushed out and took hold of the horse's head.

"You'll never be able to ride him," he said, candidly.

Lord Varley looked perturbed.

"He's a brute, he certainly is not safe for — a," he looked at a loss for a word to describe me, "for a lady," with a gulp.

A Detached Pirate 299

He deserves the Victoria Cross for that.

"He goes very well with me," I answered. I could not help saying it.

"I want to buy him, Wilde. I think if you let Miss Hughes ride him every day, he will improve, for I intend to buy the horse."

And then he departed, and Shadow, my beloved Shadow, is going, I know, because I love him.

After Lord Varley's departure Lady Sybil and her brother appeared. How lovely it would be to be like her and all those women who are rich enough to have life staged to suit their beauty, their talents, and their particular bent! To have the environment that suits a woman, means she has won the greater part of the battle of this life.

One sees life and love so much more clearly when it is over. It is a joy to lay all at the feet of a strong man; love is worth having.



My dear, I realise there is a great gulf fixed between the people who are face to face with destiny, who fight with a demon that may pull them down any day, and between those who face the commonplace, the neat ways of life; whose lives are soft and well regulated, and whose career is bounded by dinners, followed by balls. One dinner differeth from another in the glory of the entrée — that is the only way they mark the feast.

Lord Varley still comes over to ride Shadow, so far unsuccessfully as regards making the horse do as his rider wishes. Barty glares at him. He evidently suspects him of trying to make love to me. At all the meets I find that women stare harder than men — why, I wonder? I heard Lady Sybil say the other day to her companion, a man :

“He is only beating about the bush; if he really meant anything, he would climb into it and not mind the thorns.”

“Wilde can't say the alphabet after the

letter L," retorted the man. "Love is as far as he can get with her," and they both laughed.

Barty is so good to me. He works me pretty hard, but he knows I like that. Now, by being good to me, don't imagine I would insinuate that he wants to make love to me: that would be the cruellest cut Fate's whip could give me. He comes to see me occasionally, and smokes a silent pipe by my fireside. We make jerky remarks about the horses, and he only stays an hour. Besides, in this dim borderland of existence, unpeopled by chaperons and eligible men, we are friends as a man and a woman can be.

When a woman works for her living, there is no time to hear the clamouring of the crowds who murmur marriage. I made a mistake in my life. First I tried to be what Colonel Gore thought I was. Secondly, I pretended to be fast, to put it mildly; if only I had let him re-create his opinion of me as I am. I tried to

302      A Detached Pirate

live up to his gospel instead of preaching  
one of my own, and a sickening failure I  
made of it.

Thine as always, as much thine as when  
I wrote more frequently,

GAY.

TWENTY-SECOND LETTER



i  
t  
e  
l  
g  
s  
c  
a  
g  
  
A  
ar

## XXII

*My dear Vera, —*

I HAVE not written for ages ; the peaceful pall of lots of work, which tires my body and mind so completely that my thoughts are dead, has descended upon me and I am getting quite fat.

Lord Varley still yearns to own Shadow, and frequently appears at the stables, though I am sure Shadow will never allow himself to behave quietly with him. Barty hates Lord Varley — why, I can guess, for Shadow is only an excuse for seeing me. The other night we were coming home from a meet, and Barty announced sadly that Lord Varley was no good.

“Don’t misunderstand me,” he said. And I interrupted him by saying, “You are afraid Lord Varley’s reputation here

as an excellent landlord has quite obscured the variableness of his affections as regards women. You might as well tell me what you mean. You are afraid of my vanity being flattered, and of my heart being broken, by thinking that he has contracted an undying passion for my charms?"

"Yes," answered Barty, simply.

"Put all those ideas out of your head," I answered. "It is most improbable that I shall ever be flattered again by any man's passion for me. No doubt Lord Varley thinks me fair and unprotected game."

"I'll break every bone in his body if he dare think anything of the sort," growled Barty.

We went into the stable-yard, and I dismounted.

The horses' beds were being put down, the smell of the fresh straw was good, and the clinking of pails and the light from the big harness-room was very cheery.

Barty went off to look after one of the horses that has influenza, and I strolled down to speak to George, the head of the stables.

He was in the harness-room, but not alone. Sitting before the fire was a woman, dishevelled, yet with the remains of a certain amount of beauty, but her eyes glared and the pupils were unnaturally distended — evidently a woman who drank, and whose tongue could be used like a whip. I certainly did not approve of George's friend.

"Who is this?" she demanded, and as George did not answer, she turned to me:

"Who are you? One of my husband's fancy ladies, I suppose," with a sneer.

"I am Miss Hughes," I said.

"Well, Miss Hughes, I have come to look after my husband, Captain Wilde, myself."

I departed in haste, and went to look for Barty.



"I am afraid we are in for a nice epidemic," he announced, sadly. "Pride is dying."

"Your wife is in the harness-room," I answered.

He said something under his breath, and then looked up at me. His face was drawn and white; it looked like plaster of Paris, in which some one had cut deep lines.

"I am going home," I said. "If you want me, send for me."

"How did she find me?" he muttered. "Well, she'll ruin the whole show now."

When I went round to the school next morning, my usual pupils were there, and I took them out for a good gallop, which gave those beef-fed, phlegmatic young women such a shaking as they never will have again. I did not see Barty, and the day passed in exercising various horses which he wants trained as ladies' mounts.

The next day there was a meet and we started early; the cold fog struck terror to my usually never faint heart.

A Detached Pirate 309

Who do you suppose I met as we reached the cross-roads? Sir Anthony Erskine. He knew me. I avoided him, and gave him no chance of speaking to me. He is engaged to Lady Sybil. She, mounted on an ambling old horse, held a court of congratulation.

We had a good run. As we came home, Shadow seemed to be very tired; it surprised me, for the pace had not been very fast, nor the going heavy. He held his head down and stumbled; his feet seemed to be too large for him.

"Shadow is going to be laid up," said Barty, laconically, as we went in at the yard gate, and Shadow gave a little cough.

By next morning, when I came round, Shadow seemed better, though his eyes looked very dull; his coat was all rough, and his cough was very bad.

We were in the middle of going over hurdles, for it was pouring rain, and there was no cross-country work to be done, when in rode Lady Sybil followed by Sir

Anthony. He immediately seized Barty and they went off to look at a hunter. Lady Sybil signed to me and said:

“I should like to get off; can you hold my horse?”

One of the boys came forward and Mrs. Wilde appeared. She explained to Lady Sybil who she was.

They departed into Mrs. Wilde's sitting-room after Lady Sybil had accepted her offer of a cup of tea.

The lesson was finished. The ladies of soap and blacking renown vanished after trying to obtain a glimpse of Lady Sybil, whom they were very anxious to know. The great gulf that fixes itself between the Lady Sybils and the soap is not bridged in a day by horses nor lady trainers like me.

It was time for my lunch and I felt tired, but I went to Shadow to see how he was.

George was standing by him, his cheerful countenance puckered up gruesomely.

A Detached Pirate 311

"I guess he will die," he remarked. "The vet. 's been here four times, and I know as much as any vet., and I can't save him."

Shadow was lying down. He lifted his head when I called him softly, and his poor glazed eyes brightened a little.

"Oh! Shadow," I murmured, and I sat down by him. They had tried everything, mustard blisters, and all the medicines that could be found. Brave old Shadow! he knew me, and I sat and stroked him. We had had many a good day together, many a weary fit of moping of mine had he cured. We had followed the hounds and were good comrades always. My friend, to whom I could talk and tell everything, my dear old Shadow, was dying, and I could only pat him.

Once or twice he scrambled to his feet and then fell down again; he was too weak, his eyes gazed at me with the torture of the unknown in them.

"Oh! Shadow, Shadow," I murmured. "I wish you would take me with you into oblivion, or to the happy hunting-ground, where we could ride on for ever."

By four o'clock in the morning he was dead, and as I made my way across the stable-yard Mrs. Wilde met me.

"Oh!" she said as I passed her, "Lady Sybil brought me a fine history of you. Sir Anthony told her. Fancy! your darling to come here, Miss Vandeleur! Miss Hughes! You should be called Mrs. Gore."

"What does it matter?" I asked, feeling quite indifferent to her gibes.

So she gazed at me somewhat disappointedly and let me pass. Had she sat up all night to tell me what she had heard?

Sir Anthony must be like wax in Lady Sybil's hands. I suppose she has found the way to his head as well as his heart.

What is going to be the end of all this?

Surely I have paid to the uttermost farthing. Now Shadow is dead I don't care for anything. I shall never take any more pleasure in the gallops again. I wish—— Barty interrupted me. He came to tell me that the other horses are all better; that Sir Anthony has bought two. That means thirty pounds percentage for me.

“You have heard what Lady Sybil said?” I inquired.

“Yes.”

For I had told him my history before he engaged me.

“Your wife will spread it all over the town.”

“She has done so already,” he answered. “It does n't matter; keep up your courage.”

Here we reckoned without the soap and blacking young ladies.

They paid well; they had been a great help to Barty. I was interrupted, and now I must go to Lady Sybil

314      A Detached Pirate

to give her a lesson. I am a teaching machine.

Vera, Vera, why do you write to me about the past? It is dead.

Yours ever,

GAY.

TWENTY-THIRD LETTER



v  
li  
g  
d  
h  
  
so  
of  
Di  
no  
th  
has  
of  
Ho  
of  
mal  
his

XXIII

*My Dearest, —*

I HAVE not written for some days. Oh! my beloved, the world is hard without any padding of love to prevent one feeling the bumps and jerks of life's coach. But no matter; I will be gay, and never think of the bogies in the dark places of the road or of what might happen.

The death-knell of my career here has sounded. Mrs. Wilde has spread the news of my former part on the stage of the Divorce Court. The first alarm was the non-appearance of my pupils; their enthusiasm was unbounded; my reputation has killed it. I have one pupil left, one of the newest, who hopes to marry an Honourable, an Irish one, who is Master of Hounds in the Emerald Isle. He makes it a condition, before bestowing his ancient name on her, in exchange for

the ample fortune her fond papa is willing to provide, that she must be able to stick on a horse's back long enough to ride to the meet and home again.

I fear the lady will never do more than that, for she bumps and wobbles and screams at every movement of the ancient steed provided for her. Her society is depressing.

The other ladies have not turned up, and Captain Wilde has received epistles from their respective papas declining to send their daughters for lessons because of the rumours they have heard about the reputation of the instructress.

Lord Varley haunts the stables.

Mrs. Wilde remarks every day :

“It is not a Shadow that Lord Varley comes after now.”

Of course I must go. The business is being ruined, and all on my account. The little country paper rings with my record, the shop people stare at me, my landlady is morose. The career of a de-

tached pirate is dull in the country, where a divorced woman has appeared once in a thousand years, perhaps not so often.

Yesterday, at the meet, I rode a big chestnut that Barty wants to sell, and who do you suppose came to speak to me? Sir Anthony!

I looked at him after politely returning his bow.

"I thought," I said, "that there was honour among men, even if there is none among women. Why did you tell Lady Sybil my history? She told the county!"

"Sybil! Impossible!"

"Then ask her," I retorted, and I rode after Barty.

I saw Sir Anthony speak to his future wife. She grew scarlet. He is a just man, for has not Dick Gore said so? I know Lady Sybil will wish she had held her tongue.

We had a glorious gallop, and at what a pace we went!

I never rode so recklessly nor so well. The chestnut took his head and the biggest fences, and I did n't care whether I lived or I died. Perhaps death would be better after all. You know there is no place in this world for the likes of me. Men believe me bad, and women won't give me a chance. I don't belong to the ranks of the vast army of women who have gone under. I *won't* belong to them. So where am I? Between death and the devil, it strikes me.

Sir Anthony came over this morning. He brought Lady Sybil and left her outside. He says she regrets having confided in Mrs. Wilde, but she did it for my good. Her only regret is that he has found out she has told. I know that well.

He offered me all kinds of assistance, but I said:

"No, thank you. You can't white-wash me; what you have said, you have said, and it is all over."

A Detached Pirate 321

Mrs. Wilde has been more civil to me. Sir Anthony talked to her, I know.

She reminds me of a very sad old dog. Her huge upper lip trembles, and her jaw drops in such a funny way. Yet she might be pretty, but she has ruined herself and drinks far too much, and looks worried to death.

Lord Varley has paid me a state call; he came to offer me his hand and title.

“I am not much of a chap,” he said, jerkily; he takes about a minute to say each word; “and I can’t ask you to love me. I know I have very bad hands for riding, but if you could marry me, I’d make you happy.”

“You want me to marry you?” I enquired. I never was so surprised in my life. “Have you heard the gossip? Have you heard my story?”

“You are the pluckiest woman and the best rider I ever saw,” he answered, growing a dusky red, “and I never ad-

mired any woman so much; you have the real thing, *courage*."

Ah, Vera, the men we don't want always see and admire our virtues!—If only the other man saw them as plainly!

"Don't answer me; don't be in a hurry at the fence," he said, beseechingly. "Give me time, wait for a week," and so he departed.

What shall I do? Here's an honest man with a decent heart, and a better stable, offering me all—fortune, title, and a home. My weary mind says accept it, and my heart says refuse; if you can't get what you want, don't take a substitute. I want a home and money and many things. How would I like, how would I tolerate Lord Varley? For breakfast, for lunch, for dinner, except at a dinner party; but there would be no dinners given in my honour in this county. I think Sir Anthony might have warned me. I wonder if I could dye my hair and paint my face and look

A Detached Pirate 323

so different that, as Lady Varley, the county would receive me without recognising me as the woman with the piebald reputation (as they consider it) through the paint and the wig? No; then I should be afraid to hunt, for the rain would wash off my paint, my false eyebrows, and change the colour of my hair, or else my wig would blow off.

How true it is that time deadens the smart of the hard things those we love have said to us, but does it deaden the stabs of those we hate? I think not. I seem to remember the kind things the System has done for me. (You never mention his name in your letters; I suppose he is married and repenting, or, hateful thought, rejoicing.) I remember we had been at a dinner-party and it was a very cold night; my feet were frozen, and he rubbed them so gently, so firmly, so kindly. Here I am, just like a woman, digging up the past.

I have been packing my few books



and pictures, but I am not poor. It is easier to march with the army when one has a little money in one's pocket. Barty has a friend in one of the big towns, who has a business of this sort, and I shall go to him if he will have me. Barty has written a panegyric on my virtues in the saddle. I go, if I refuse Lord Varley. What would you advise? It is so hard to know. He knows the worst of me, and that is a consolation. I shall act on impulse, as I always do.

I have not heard from you for some time. My trusted messenger has not been to Vere Street to get your letters, so I will send this short one, and let you know to-morrow what is to be my fate.

Yours always,

GAY.

*P.S.*—I had just written my name when in came Barty with one from you. I devoured it.

Shall I come and see you on my way

A Detached Pirate 325

to my new work? I think not. But oh! my Vera, your offer of a home made me sit down and fall to weeping, as say the ladies of the olden time. How could I quarter myself on you, whose burden, dearest, is as great as mine? No, alone I started my career, and alone I will finish it; while none the less do I value your friendship, the gift of the gods.

Here I stopped and began to consider the frocks I would have in my trousseau if I marry Lord Varley. I was lost in the mysteries of accordion-pleating. What man ever thought of the possibilities of new neckties if he marries? I verily believe it is new clothes which drag half of us to the altar. What woman can resist the prospect of a totally new outfit. No bridegroom ever looked as important in a frock-coat, as his bride does in her long court train?

I was vulgarly employed in tossing with a shilling to see if I would marry

Lord Varley. The shilling hopped, skipped, and jumped under the sofa, and I lay down on the floor to find it, to see whether it was heads I married him, or tails I did not.

At this awful moment, my landlady (who has heard rumours of Lord Varley's infatuation, and whose former contempt for the divorce court has changed into admiration for me — to think of my luck, being divorced by a colonel! and married again by a marquis!) — well, at this moment she opened the door and ushered in Lord Varley. I rose with disarranged hair and a scarlet countenance, to face the possibility of this man being my future husband, without having found the answer! Even if that shilling said yes, I decided at that instant to say no, for he wore a triumphant air of possession. No woman ever knows what a man can be like as her husband, until she sees what effect the idea of the possession of herself will have on him.

A Detached Pirate 327

“You were looking for something?” he inquired, gazing at me. “What was it?”

“For you,” I retorted, and there, there was my shilling by the fender. I threw myself down by it—it was tails! My intuition, which, by the way, is a little gland in the brain, and is larger in a woman than a man, had not played me false. I blessed it. And Lord Varley sat down.

“For me?” he gasped.

I will tell you more to-morrow.

It is post time.

GAY.



TWENTY-FOURTH LETTER

h  
li  
a  
h  
it

al

he  
to  
a l  
pre  
off  
I e  
inst  
an

XXIV

*Dear Vera, —*

**H**E took his blow well, that little man. If his hands are heavy, his heart is kind. He told me he had come for his answer. I talked a little. The light that I loathed gradually died out of his eyes, and I felt sorry for him, though I would not have rekindled it for all the world can give.

Sympathy is the most weak-minded of all the virtues, I believe that.

I said good-bye to my little adorer, and he departed somewhat dolefully. I began to pack in real earnest, for Barty sent me a letter from his chum in the south, expressing huge delight at my advent, and offering me a much larger salary than I ever dared dream about. The new instructress here, who takes my place, is an ancient lady who wears a gauze veil.



She is like a plucky, wornout old hunter, but looks as game as possible. Mrs. Wilde and she have already groaned over my wickedness, and arranged for the curses of Heaven to fall on my head. The ladies, who feared my contaminating influence, have returned to the school, and their horses trot and canter up and down in a very quiet way compared to the paths by which I led them.

I could n't have married Lord Varley, I could not stand him. I will never marry any one. He grew so hatefully pawing when he wanted to express his affection for me, and yet his only fault really is, that he is himself. I know what you would have said if I had agreed to be Lady Varley. You would have produced the old arguments, the old assertion, that in spite of all, I am no more free to marry than a woman whose husband is in Hong Kong, and who thinks she'll take another because she feels lonely. But you need not again

A Detached Pirate 333

preach me such a long sermon as you did when I suggested marrying Sir Anthony.

Do you know, I believe I am not half as good-looking as I used to be? My figure has not faded, and my feet are as pretty as ever — they, praise the Saints, seldom fade — but I look worn and thin. Of course, I don't wear the good clothes I used to, money dear and no audience. One can't walk down the street of a village arrayed in a Felix savoury. Why not savoury? A much nicer dish than a confection, and dressmakers still label their works as if they were sweets. I suppose the word arose in the days when we wore pink and blue and white gowns just like Gunter's ices or sticks of toffee. Well, now, we must call them savouries. But, to return to my looks, I am tired of a riding habit, I yearn for frills again, and I bear in my face the marks which my once worst enemy and my now dear friend Time has planted there. He was my enemy because I hated to think of getting

old; he is my friend because he brings that passage with Charon nearer. Morbid, you will say! Not at all, only philosophical, for we have to die, and we may as well think of it with joy.

You know, it is only in books that the heroine remains as beautiful as Venus through all the tragic adventures that nearly turn the poor reader's hair grey, but which have not the slightest effect on the lady's bloom. Fortunately, one is seldom so despairing nor so wildly elated as the people in books. Those emotions do not wear.

I am gazing at my little cottage rooms, and saying good-bye to them. I know there are spirits in rooms. How is it some houses strike terror to one's soul, and others are full of peace?

Barty has sent for me, and disturbed me. It is dark and cold, and I don't want to turn out. I shall have to put on my habit, for he wants me to ride the chestnut. Some purchaser has turned up,

A Detached Pirate 335

I suppose. Since my history was published in the paper, the business among men has been very brisk, — too brisk.

Vera, may the Gods send me coherence !

I dressed and went over to the riding school, which has lately been fitted with incandescent gas.

I got on the chestnut, and rode him over all the hurdles. Barty and a man were standing in the distance at the end of the chilly, dreary place. The chestnut was pulling, but he settled down pretty well. I felt tired, and my arms ached. The lights flickered and jumped and gurgled, in the irritating way such lights do. At last I stopped.

“Will that do, Captain Wilde?”

“Yes, thank you,” answered Barty. “I’ll go and tell some one to bring Dark-eye,” and he vanished.

My fidgety mount began to show his desire to return to his stable, and I got off, as George came to fetch him. I

strolled across the tan bark, and just as I reached the platform, the lights went down, until a dim glitter was all that remained. The would-be purchaser came out of the black shadow, and as he neared me he whispered :

“Gay, I am here. Forgive me. I love you.”

It was Dick. My System. Colonel Gore!

I was too surprised to speak, and after an appalling century of silence I whispered “Dick!”

He put his arms round me — not weak, inanimate arms, but strong ones! strong! — how lovely — yet I pushed him away.

“I am tired. Let me go.”

“I have seen Vera. I have read your letters. Gay, Gay, forgive me and love me a little. I love you absolutely. I know the truth. I have come to take care of you. I have come for my wife.”

His arms were round me.



t

g

n

A Detached Pirate 337

Oh, Vera! I have you to thank for this.

And he loves, loves, loves me. I am gorgeously, gloriously happy. Good-night, my best friend.

Thine ever,

GAY.





TWENTY-FIFTH LETTER

J

n  
s:  
M  
“  
V

cl  
di  
T  
ha  
m  
Ba  
Di

for

XXV

HOTEL METROPOLE, LONDON.

*Dearest,—*

**W**E were re-married at the Registrar's last week. Dick said that was the best way of arranging matters. We could n't go to court and say, *I had not told the truth, could we?* Nor produce a checked suit and say: "Here is all that ever existed of Charlie Woodward."

My gown was sweet. A dull tan cloth cut as only Curtis can cut, and I did not require any china-pot complexion. There is nothing so good for the skin as happiness, but the beauty doctors would make no money if we were all happy. Barty and Sir Anthony were the witnesses! Dick told them the truth.

We are soon coming to see you, but for the present Dick says he wants me

alone. Fancy his saying that! He is not a husband; he is a lover! We quarrel, you will be glad to hear, but only to avert the day of judgment and also to create conversation.

After we were married, we drove here in a hansom; there were no favours nor orange blossoms. Aunt Lydia gave us too many of them at our first marriage. We sat down and talked — talked like Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, of all things in our hearts, and Vera, I am not afraid of him now.

Dick says that he never passed through such days of torment as he did when he thought I was in love with Charlie Woodward, and then again in Halifax, “between Sir Anthony, the man from Borneo, and that brute Morgan” (I quote his words), “I was desperate. I nearly carried you off.”

“If you only had,” I said. “If you only had.”

“Has life been so awful for you,

A Detached Pirate 343

Gay? Can I keep you from feeling the scars?"

"Yes," I said. "I am not going to remember it ever again. I feel as if there were no yesterday, no to-morrow, only to-day, and I am so happy."

He still has the diagonal line on his forehead. I kissed it. Oh, Vera! the rest, the peace, the absolute calm of it, to know that he loves me, and that I can do no wrong. I think my life has made me see more clearly; my eyes are opened, and I know that his love is worth all the moonshine rubbish of the world; and he — he is as I would have him, for he *loves* me and shows it. It is of no use to bury love in the dull grave of friendship; it is much better to resurrect friendship and mix it with love.

Dick is going to command the depôt of the old regiment: it is in such a good hunting county; and though I fear the comments of the women, yet I can face

anything with his arms round me, and his voice to say, "Well done, sweetheart." He will never write a sonnet to my eyebrow, but he has strong arms and often carries me in them, to punish me, as he calls it, for what?— for leaving him. I wish you could hear him say "sweetheart," but you never will, for he says it only to me. You must not think a second honeymoon is necessarily dull; it is not at all. I told Dick this morning that this was the nicest honeymoon I had ever spent, and he laughed, for you see he knows all about both. When I was first married, I was a fool: an utter out-and-out one. But now I know. I have never asked Dick about Miss Kitson. She does not exist for me. He reminded me of her this morning, and told me she said that I was the bravest woman she ever knew.

"Why didn't you marry her?" I asked; "you might have got on well together, as she appreciated my one virtue."

A Detached Pirate 345

“I did not marry her because I loved you, and she discovered that. She has married a parson.”

“Dick,” I whispered, “did you ever really have a doubt about Charlie Woodward?”

“Yes, after I rescued you that night in the snow; but when Maul turned up and said he was Woodward, I let the fiends of rage and jealousy kill all belief in you, and, though the idea of your marrying him or any one else was like whip cuts to me, I ran away to York Redoubt until you had left Halifax, as I thought, with him. He went the day you did; every one thought the same. I thought you had been fooling me. Sometimes, Gay, I nearly grovelled at your feet and begged you to take me back.”

I knew that, but I did not say so. Vera, if it had not been for you, I should still be miserable—if you had not insisted on seeing Dick. Dear, I think you are an angel.



We drank your health at dinner on our wedding night — as they drink Omar Khayyám's in silence, with a glass turned down for you, and a little prayer in my heart.

Through you Dick found me ; through you he believed in me.

“How many letters of mine did you read ?” I asked.

“All Vera would give me ; she said some of them made her cry. But I had such a wild-goose chase to find you. You gave yourself away by mentioning Lady Sybil. When all the papers announced her engagement to Sir Anthony Erskine, and said he was staying at the Castle, then we knew where to find you. I came down early and told Wilde the whole story ; he managed we should meet without your knowing you were going to see me.”

And now, Vera, we are coming to see you when this two months' leave is over. Dick says I am prettier than ever, and he

A Detached Pirate 347

is so good to me. All he regrets are the days, the months, we have wasted, but I tell him, perhaps we might have settled down a dull, grumpy couple, with no love for each other, just indifference, not even hatred, but now we know.

My foolish letters have done some good; they and you have given me my heart's desire, and what more can I want, for I am a woman?

Yours, until we meet, dear,

GAY.

THE END.